

MEETING OF THE ROYAL BERKSHIRE FIRE AUTHORITY (PART I)

Held on Wednesday 11 February 2009

Council Chamber, Bracknell Forest Borough Council,
Easthampstead House, Town Square, Bracknell, Berkshire,
RG12 1AQ



Those

present:

Councillor Mrs Christine Bateson	Councillor Phillip Bicknell
Councillor Chris Bowring	Councillor Mrs Prue Bray
Councillor Colin Dudley	Councillor Shafiq Chaudhry
Councillor Adrian Edwards	Councillor Mrs Sue Evans
Councillor Geoff Findlay OBE	Councillor Jagjit Grewal
Councillor Chris Harris	Councillor Mrs Pauline Helliar-Symons
Councillor Peter Jones	Councillor John Lenton
Councillor Iain McCracken	Councillor Mrs Kathy Newbound
Councillor Fred Pugh	Councillor Angus Ross
Councillor Alan Ward	Councillor Miss Emma Webster
Councillor Sean Wright	

In

attendance:

Iain Cox (Chief Fire Officer)
George Cross (Area Manager, Support Services)
Mr Albert Gregory (Independent Chairman, Standards Committee)
Lynda Kenyon (Committee Manager)
Dave Logsdon (Commercial Training Team Leader)
Andy Mancey (Area Manager, Response)
Paul Southern (Assistant Chief Fire Officer)
Caroline Redzikowska (Clerk and Monitoring Officer)
Nicole Targett (Corporate Communications Manager)
Andrew Vallance (Authority Treasurer)
David Wallace (Director of Human Resources)

Observers:

Officers, Royal Berkshire Fire and Rescue Service
Fire Brigades Union representatives
Members of the public

01.01.09 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Apologies for absence were received from the Chairman, Councillor Dr Paul Bryant, and Councillor Jeff Brooks. Councillor Paul Gittings' apologies were conveyed as he was expected to arrive late to the meeting, however he was delayed and could not attend the meeting. **The Vice-Chairman, Councillor Christine Bateson, took the Chair for the meeting.**

01.02.09 DECLARATION OF INTERESTS

The following Declarations of Interest were made by Members:

- i) Councillor Angus Ross declared a personal interest as the Fire Authority's representative and Board Member on the South East Fire and Rescue

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Service Control Centre Ltd (SEFRCCCL), in respect to Agenda Item 17 (South East Fire and Rescue Service Control Centre Ltd (SEFRCCCL)), and stated that he would be addressing the Fire Authority in his capacity as a Board Member on the SEFRCCCL.

- ii) Councillor Phillip Bicknell declared a personal interest as a Company Director of the Royal Berkshire Fire and Rescue (Training) Limited, in respect to Agenda Items 15 and 23 (Royal Berkshire Fire and Rescue (Training) Limited - progress report).
- iii) Councillor Mrs Christine Bateson stated that, as Item 13 (Integrated Risk Management 5-Year Plan - Consultation Report for 2009/10 Action Plan) related to the Integrated Risk Management Plan, and that, regardless of whether or not it may be inferred, she had an interest in that item, and, therefore, did not intend to take part in that item or be present during any discussion. She advised that she would temporarily vacate the Chair for that item and would invite the Clerk and Monitoring Officer to seek nominations for a Member to Chair that item.

The following Declarations of Interest were made by Officers in respect to Agenda Items 15 and 23 (Royal Berkshire Fire and Rescue (Training) Limited - progress report):

- iv) Caroline Redzikowska (Clerk and Monitoring Officer) - as Company Secretary, Royal Berkshire Fire and Rescue (Training) Limited.
- v) David Wallace (Director of Human Resources) - as a Company Director, Royal Berkshire Fire and Rescue (Training) Limited.
- vi) Conor Byrne (Senior Accountant) - as a Company Director, Royal Berkshire Fire and Rescue (Training) Limited.

No further Declarations of Interest were made.

01.03.09 MINUTES OF THE MEETING HELD ON 10 DECEMBER 2008

The Minutes of the last meeting held on Wednesday 10 December 2008 were received and **Approved** as a correct record for signing by the Vice-Chairman.

01.04.09 MINUTES OF STANDING COMMITTEES, WORKING PARTIES AND OTHER GROUPS

The Fire Authority was advised of the meetings of the Audit Committee, Community Safety Forum, Executive Committee, Fire Liaison Group, Integrated Risk Management Plan Working Party, Overview and Scrutiny Committee, Property and Property Resources Committee, and the Standards Committee that have taken place since reported to the last meeting of the Fire Authority on 10 December 2008.

The Fire Authority Noted the Minutes of the Standing Committees, Working Parties and other Groups.

01.05.09 PETITIONS AND QUESTIONS UNDER STANDING ORDERS 19 AND 25

The Fire Authority Noted that no Petitions or Questions had been received under Standing Orders 19 and 25.

01.06.09 CHAIRMAN'S COMMUNICATIONS

The Vice-Chairman advised of the Chairman's Communications, the salient points being:

- a) The Chairman wished to convey his congratulations to the Chief Fire Officer, Iain Cox, and Group Manager Robert Rea, on being awarded the Queens Fire Service Medal in the New Year Honours List, the awards being richly deserved. The Chief Fire Officer introduced Robert Rea who was in attendance at the meeting, and the Fire Authority congratulated them both on their achievement.
- b) On 23 January 2009, the Chairman had attended the launch of the new Command Incident Unit at Windsor, also attended by the Mayor and other dignitaries. He acknowledged the partnership working between the Royal Berkshire Fire and Rescue Service and the builders, W H Bence, Excellerate and Vector Command.
- c) On 21 January 2009, the Chairman had attended the Regional Management Board meeting with the Chief Fire Officer, the business having considered reports with no decisions made, however the future of Regional Management Boards, post Regional Control Centres going live across the country, was being considered.
- d) The Chairman had attended, with the Chief Fire Officer, the National Fire Sprinkler Network Parliamentary Seminar at the House of Commons on 2 February 2009, which was also attended by the Deputy Fire Chief from Vancouver, Les Sziklai, and Gosta Holmstedt from the Swedish Fire Sprinkler Association.

01.07.09 QUESTIONS FROM MEMBERS UNDER STANDING ORDER 30

The Fire Authority Noted that no Questions had been received from the Fire Authority Members under Standing Order 30.

01.08.09 NOTICES OF MOTION UNDER STANDING ORDER 44

The Fire Authority Noted that no Notices of Motion had been received under Standing Order 44.

01.09.09 APPOINTMENT OF INDEPENDENT MEMBERS TO THE FIRE AUTHORITY

The Fire Authority was advised of the recommendations of the Selection Panel, in relation to the appointment of the Independent Members of the Standards

Committee. The Clerk and Monitoring Officer, on behalf of the Chairman, advised that the decision of the Selection Panel had been unanimous.

Councillor Geoff Findlay moved that the Recommendations presented be Resolved, and this was seconded by Councillor Colin Dudley, and was duly carried.

The Fire Authority:

- **Approved** the appointment of the Independent Members of the Standards Committee for the period to the annual meeting of the Fire Authority in 2013, as detailed below:
 - That Mr Jonathan Taylor and Mr John Giles be appointed as Independent Members.
 - That a post of Nominated Deputy Independent Member be created, and that Professor Christopher Guy be appointed to that post.

The Clerk and Monitoring Officer introduced Mr Jonathan Taylor who was in attendance at the meeting, and tendered apologies from Mr John Giles and Professor Christopher Guy who unfortunately had not been able to attend.

01.10.09 BUDGET (2009/10)

The Fire Authority considered the Budget requirements and the precept for 2009/10.

The Authority Treasurer took Members through the 2009/10 budget summary presented, as recommended by the Executive Committee, the recommendation being based on a budget of £33,493,482, with a Band D Council Tax of £55.11, which realised a budget increase of 3.23% and a Council Tax increase of 4.89%. He referred specifically to the grant, reserves, budget scenarios for Council Tax increases of 4.09%, 4.49% and 4.89%, alternative budgets, tax bands and precepts for a 4.09% or 4.49% increase, the Medium Term Financial Plan for 2009-2012, the 3-year budget scenarios, the Revenue bids, the Revenue savings, the Capital bids and the Prudential Code Report and the Treasury Management Strategy Report for 2009/10.

Councillor Mrs Christine Bateson stated that the Fire Authority was a floor Authority on 0.5% this year and the following year, and that it faced some challenging circumstances. She stated that the Executive Committee had recommended, as a majority view, a 4.89% increase, however Members reserved their position, which she stated would realise an increase of 21p per year for a Band D category.

Councillor Mrs Christine Bateson moved from the Chair that the presented Recommendations, in their entirety, be resolved, and this was seconded by Councillor Geoff Findlay.

Councillor Mrs Prue Bray felt that it would be prudent for Members to forgo any increases to their Member Allowances for the forthcoming year, and that the Revenue Bid for Members Allowances should be removed from the budget.

In response to Councillor Alan Ward's question as to how much of the total Revenue Support and NNDR (National Non-Domestic Rates) grant funding was from the NNDR grant, the Senior Accountant confirmed that £2.878m was received from the Revenue Support Grant and £12.468m from Business Rates (NNDR). Councillor Alan Ward felt that the NNDR grant was not adequate, and, as such, this resulted in additional funding having to be sought through the precept. The Chief Fire Officer confirmed that the Chairman, the Authority Treasurer and other Members had recently lobbied Westminster against the Local Government finance settlements for the next two years, however, to date, no meaningful response explanation had been received.

Councillor Mrs Prue Bray moved an amendment to the Resolution that the Revenue Bid of £20k for Members' Allowances for 2009/10 be removed from the budget for 2009/10 to realise a precept increase of 4.78% for 2009/10. This was seconded by Councillor Chris Harris. On being put to the vote, the amended Motion was not carried (3 votes in favour, 16 against, and 2 abstentions).

Councillor Miss Emma Webster advised of the wish of a West Berkshire resident, who had recently been involved in a Road Traffic Collision, that their personal gratitude and thanks be conveyed for the service provided by the Royal Berkshire Fire and Rescue Service, and that this resident fully supported the Council Tax contribution for the Service. Councillor Colin Dudley also believed that the Service provided excellent value for money and he fully supported a 4.89% increase in the budget for 2009/10.

The substantive Motion was then put to the vote, and unanimously carried.

The Fire Authority, in accordance with the Local Government Finance Act 1992, **Resolved** that the following amounts be now calculated for the year 2009/10:

- 1 The aggregate council taxbase of the six Berkshire Unitary Authorities had been notified as 328,782.10.
- 2a £34,209,481.53 being the aggregate of the amounts which the Authority estimates for the items set out in Section 43(2)(a) to (d) of the Act.
- 2b £716,000 being the aggregate of the amounts which the Authority estimates for the items set out in Section 43(3)(a) to (b) of the Act.
- 2c £33,493,481.53 being the amount by which the aggregate at (2a) above exceeds the aggregate at (2b) above, calculated by the Authority in accordance with Section 43(4) of the Act as its budget requirement for the year.
- 2d £15,346,013 being the aggregate of the sums which the Authority estimates will be payable for the year in respect of redistributed non-domestic rates and revenue support grant.
- 2e £28,287 being the net aggregate of the surpluses and deficits on billing authorities' Collection Funds to be received in 2009/10.

2f £55.11 being the amount at (2c) less the amount at (2e) above less the amount at (2d) above, all divided by the aggregate council taxbase at (1) above, calculated by the Authority, in accordance with Section 44(1) of the Act, as the basic amount of its Council Tax for the year.

The Fire Authority, in accordance with Section 40(2)(a) of the Act, **set the following amounts of Council Tax for the year 2009/10 for each of the categories of dwellings shown below:**

Valuation Band	£
A	36.74
B	42.86
C	48.99
D	55.11
E	67.36
F	79.60
G	91.85
H	110.22

being the amounts given by multiplying the amount at (2f) by the number which, in the proportion set out in Section 5(1) of the Act, is applicable to dwellings listed in a particular valuation band divided by the number which in that proportion is applicable to dwellings listed in valuation band D, calculated by the Authority, in accordance with Section 47(1) of the Act, as the amounts to be taken into account for the year in respect of categories of dwellings listed in different valuation bands.

The Fire Authority, in accordance with Section 40(2)(b) of the Act, **set the following amounts payable as precepts by the billing Authorities for the year 2009/10:**

Authority	Taxbase	Precept	Collection Fund Surplus/ (Deficit)	Net Yield from Council Tax
Bracknell Forest	43,350.00	2,389,018.50	8,286.00	2,397,304.50
Reading	52,532.00	2,895,038.52	(18,632.00)	2,876,406.52
Slough	40,804.40	2,248,730.48	19,439.00	2,268,169.48
West Berkshire	62,717.65	3,456,369.69	(16,375.00)	3,439,994.69
Windsor & Maidenhead	64,764.65	3,569,179.86	0.00	3,569,179.86
Wokingham	64,613.40	3,560,844.47	35,569.00	3,596,413.47
Total	328,782.10	18,119,181.53	28,287.00	18,147,468.53

The Fire Authority Resolved the Medium Term Financial Plan set out in Appendix C, the Capital Programme set out in Appendix F and the Prudential Indicators, Treasury Strategy and Investment Strategy set out in Appendix G of the presented report.

01.11.09 RISK MANAGEMENT POLICY

The Fire Authority considered the presented revisions to the Risk Management Policy.

Councillor Phillip Bicknell moved that the Recommendations presented be Adopted, and this was seconded by Councillor Angus Ross, and unanimously carried.

The Fire Authority Adopted the revised Risk Management Policy.

01.12.09 TRANSLATION POLICY (DRAFT)

Following a need identified by the Royal Berkshire Fire and Rescue Service for a single Policy covering the provision of translated material and information, the Fire Authority considered the presented draft Translation Policy, and Nicole Targett (Corporate Communications Manager) took Members through the presented Policy.

In response to Members' questions, Nicole Targett stated that, currently there was no identified budget allocated to the provision of translation services, and that it was difficult, due to the very small number of requests received to date, to project what the future costs might be, however, this would be reviewed should there be a significant increase to the number of requests received.

In recognising that further work was required in relation to the provision of translation services and the mapping of key languages, Councillor Fred Pugh supported Councillor Colin Dudley's suggestion that the Community Safety Forum (CSF) should consider how this might be progressed, and to report back to the Fire Authority with recommendations as to the way forward. Councillor Mrs Prue Bray, as Chairman of the Royal Berkshire Fire and Rescue Service's Community Engagement and Equality Group (CEEG), felt that it would be appropriate for this Group to also consider this.

Cllr Pugh
CSF
Agenda

Cllr Mrs Bray
CEEG
Agenda

Councillor Mrs Christine Bateson asked that Members be provided, in 2010, with indicative costs for Officers' time to support requests for translation services.

**Corp
Comms Mgr**
(early 2010)

Councillor Colin Dudley moved that the Recommendations presented be Adopted, and this was seconded by Councillor Adrian Edwards, and unanimously carried.

The Fire Authority:

- **Noted** the presented report, and **Agreed** to the introduction of a Translation Policy.
- **Approved** the Translation Policy.

01.13.09 INTEGRATED RISK MANAGEMENT 5-YEAR PLAN - CONSULTATION REPORT FOR 2009/10 ACTION PLAN

As referred to at Item 01.02.08 (Declaration of Interests) earlier in the meeting, Councillor Mrs Christine Bateson, as Chair designate, invited the Clerk and

Monitoring Officer to seek nominations for Chair for this item only.

Councillor Mrs Christine Bateson retired from the meeting, as did Councillor Phillip Bicknell, Councillor Mrs Sue Evans, Councillor John Lenton and Councillor Mrs Kathy Newbound.

The Clerk and Monitoring Officer then duly sought nominations for Chairman for this item, and Councillor Colin Dudley nominated Councillor Angus Ross, and this was seconded by Councillor Iain McCracken, and unanimously carried.

Councillor Angus Ross in the Chair.

The Fire Authority was advised of the results of the Consultation process for the 2009/10 Action Plan that forms one year of the 5-Year Integrated Risk Management Plan (IRMP) for 2007/08 - 2011/12, and of the main areas of interest and the comments and views received from stakeholders with a consultation response as appropriate.

The Assistant Chief Fire Officer referred to the minor changes required to the 2009/10 IRMP Action Plan as a result of consultation, as detailed within the "Impact on Publication" column within the "Synopsis of Relevant Comments Received for IRMP Action Plan 2009/10", and a copy of the updated 2009/10 IRMP Action Plan was made available (*copy available from the Committee Manager*).

In response to Councillor Mrs Pauline Helliar-Symons did not believe that the concern expressed over the possible site of a new Fire Station in Twyford due to the location being liable to flooding, as detailed in the comments received during the Consultation, had been addressed fully. The Assistant Chief Fire Officer advised that, following the response provided, the aforementioned site had experienced significant recent flooding issues, and that it was now felt by Officers that a full Environmental Impact Assessment was no longer required on this site and that alternative sites should now be sought.

The Fire Authority:

- **Noted** the Consultation report and the response to the Consultation.
- **Unanimously Approved** the changes to the 2009/10 Action Plan.

Councillor Mrs Christine Bateson, Councillor Phillip Bicknell, Councillor Mrs Sue Evans, Councillor John Lenton and Councillor Mrs Kathy Newbound then returned to the meeting, and **Councillor Mrs Christine Bateson resumed the Chair.**

01.14.09 2008/09 BUDGET MONITORING

The Fire Authority was advised of the revenue and capital expenditure against budgets up to the end of December 2008. The Authority Treasurer reported that the underspend at the end of January 2009 was £850k.

The Authority Treasurer, in response to Councillor Adrian Edwards, outlined the developments with the Mutual Insurance Company, and reported that the Board of

FRAML had met in December 2008 and that a decision was taken to continue with FRAML, subject to the forthcoming Appeals.

Councillor Mrs Prue Bray, in referring to the Capital Programme slippages, stated that she would welcome the inclusion of a 3-year Capital rolling programme within future budget reports. The Chief Fire Officer was hopeful that any future slippages would be kept to a minimum, and he referred briefly to the early considerations for how the Fire Authority's assets might be managed more effectively through Committee structural changes.

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The Fire Authority Noted the revenue and capital expenditure against budgets up to the end of December 2008.

01.15.09 ROYAL BERKSHIRE FIRE AND RESCUE (TRAINING) LIMITED - PROGRESS REPORT

The Fire Authority was advised of the progress made in establishing the Royal Berkshire Fire and Rescue (Training) Limited (RBFRTL) as an Arms Length Trading Company and its Business Plan for 2009/10. Councillor Phillip Bicknell was pleased to report on the progress made by the RBFRTL, and he conveyed his congratulations to all the personnel involved who had worked extremely hard.

Dave Logsdon, as the Commercial Training Team Leader, gave a presentation entitled 'Commercial Training' (*copy available from the Committee Manager*) in which he provided an update on the development of the business.

The Fire Authority Supported Councillor Colin Dudley's suggestion that Dave Logsdon should provide Members with a mail-shot detailing the business of the RBFRTL to enable them to promote it through their respective Unitary Authorities and Parish Councils (if a Member).

Dave
Logsdon

The Fire Authority Noted the presented report.

01.16.09 RETAINED AVAILABILITY AND THE IMPACT ON THE VIABILITY OF PROVIDING A RETAINED SERVICE

The Fire Authority was advised of the current and foreseeable challenges facing the Authority in maintaining an effective Retained Service within Berkshire.

The Chief Fire Officer supported the report with a presentation entitled 'Retained Availability and the Impact on the Viability of Providing a Retained Service' (*copy available from the Committee Manager*) in which he outlined the current Retained Stations/Units, and the Retained costs, availability and activities. He provided a summary of the Retained issues, including modernisation costs, recruitment standards, development of competence for role, EC (European Commission) Working Time Directive, EC Road Transport Directive, social demographics, economic pressures and lower earning potential which were realising significant periods of unavailability, and extended turnout times.

The Chief Fire Officer emphasised that the reference within the presented report that the current IRMP risk model developed on the basis of assumed Retained Duty System availability was flawed, was, in fact, based on false assumptions and,

therefore, this should be re-examined and the assumptions challenged and re-visited based on actual performance.

In recognising the excellent service provided by, and the commitment required of, the Retained Duty System firefighters, Councillor Colin Dudley felt that there was a need to balance both the financial elements of, and the viability of, the Retained Service within Berkshire. The Chief Fire Officer reiterated the value placed on the services provided by the Retained Duty System firefighters, and he referred to the options being considered for how this group of personnel could be more effectively retained, including the provision of Blackberries, and alternative viable options being considered for those Stations not used for first line fire calls.

The Fire Authority Noted the presented report.

01.17.09 SOUTH EAST FIRE AND RESCUE SERVICE CONTROL CENTRE LTD (SEFRCL) UPDATE REPORT

The Fire Authority Noted Councillor Angus Ross' update report on the South East Fire and Rescue Service Control Centre Ltd.

01.18.09 DATE OF NEXT FIRE AUTHORITY MEETING (ANNUAL MEETING)

The Fire Authority Noted that the next meeting (Annual Meeting) of the Fire Authority would take place on:

Wednesday 24 June 2009 at 6.30pm

Desborough Hall, The Royal Borough of Windsor and Maidenhead, Town Hall, St Ives Road, Maidenhead, Berkshire, SL6 1RF

01.19.09 FORWARD PLAN

The Fire Authority Noted the Forward Plan.

01.20.09 EXCLUSION OF THE PUBLIC

The Fire Authority:

- **Resolved** that under Section 100(A)(4) of the Local Government Act 1972 (as amended), the public be excluded from the meeting for the following items of business on the grounds that they involve the likely disclosure of exempt information, as defined in the paragraphs of Part I of Schedule 12A of the said Act indicated, and is exempt information if, and so long as, in all the circumstances of the case, the public interest in maintaining the exemption outweighs the public interest in disclosing the information:
 - Part II Minutes of the meeting held on 10 December 2008 (*Paragraph 3*)
 - Appointment of Independent Members to the Fire Authority (*Paragraph 1*)
 - Royal Berkshire Fire and Rescue (Training) Limited - progress report (*Paragraph 3*).

The following is a summary of the items considered in the Part II Agenda:

01.21.09 PART II MINUTES OF THE MEETING HELD ON 10 DECEMBER 2008

The Part II Minutes of the last meeting held on Wednesday 10 December 2008 were received and **Approved** as a correct record, for signing by the Chairman.

01.22.09 APPOINTMENT OF INDEPENDENT MEMBERS TO THE FIRE AUTHORITY

The Fire Authority previously considered the appointments of the Independent Members to the Fire Authority at Item 9.

01.23.09 ROYAL BERKSHIRE FIRE AND RESCUE (TRAINING) LIMITED - PROGRESS REPORT

The Fire Authority previously considered the progress report on the Royal Berkshire Fire and Rescue (Training) Limited at Item 15. The **Fire Authority** **Noted** the details of the Royal Berkshire Fire and Rescue (Training) Limited Budget for 2009/10.