

ROYAL BERKSHIRE FIRE AUTHORITY MEETING - PART I



Held on Wednesday 11 October 2006

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

Those present:

Councillor Mike Adams	Councillor Mrs Christine Bateson (<i>part meeting</i>)
Councillor Andrew Bradley	Councillor Jeff Brooks
Councillor Dr Paul Bryant (<i>Chairman</i>)	Councillor Geoff Findlay OBE
Councillor Mrs Mary Rose Gliksten	Councillor John Green
Councillor Jagjit Grewal	Councillor Mrs Pauline Helliar-Symons
Councillor David Howes	Councillor Mrs Vicky Howes
Councillor Peter Jones	Councillor Fred Pugh
Councillor Angus Ross	Councillor Dexter Smith
Councillor Alan Ward	Councillor Miss Emma Webster
Councillor Derek Wilson	Councillor Sean Wright

In attendance:

- Olaf Baars (Deputy Chief Fire Officer)
- Iain Cox (Chief Fire Officer)
- Lynda Kenyon (Committee Manager)
- Rosemary Lansdowne (Clerk and Monitoring Officer)
- Des Tidbury (Assistant Chief Fire Officer)
- Andrew Vallance (Authority Treasurer)
- David Wallace (Director of Human Resources)

03.01.06 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Apologies for absence were received from Councillor Mrs Prue Bray, Councillor Tom Crisp, Councillor James Mole (Vice-Chairman) and Councillor Peter North.

03.02.06 DECLARATION OF INTERESTS

Having been reminded that in accordance with the Fire Authority's Code of Conduct, Members are required to declare interests which are Personal or Personal and Prejudicial, where appropriate, it was **Noted** that on this occasion there were no such declarations made.

03.03.06 PART I MINUTES OF THE MEETING HELD ON 28 JUNE 2006

The Part I Minutes of the last meeting held on Wednesday 28 June 2006 were received and **Approved** as a correct record, and signed by the Chairman.

03.04.06 PART I MINUTES OF COMMITTEES, WORKING PARTIES AND OTHER GROUPS

Action

The Authority was advised of the meetings of the Fire Authority's Committees, Working Parties and other Groups held since the last Fire Authority meeting.

The Fire Authority:

- **Noted** the Part I minutes of the Committees, Working Parties and other Groups.

03.05.06 PETITIONS AND QUESTIONS UNDER STANDING ORDERS 8 AND 9

The Fire Authority **Noted** that no Petitions or Questions had been received under Standing Orders 8 and 9.

03.06.06 CHAIRMAN'S COMMUNICATIONS

- The Chairman reported that Hertfordshire County Council had passed a motion requiring all municipal buildings to be equipped with sprinklers. The Chief Fire Officer (CFO) confirmed that, through Local Development Plans, it had been suggested that sprinklers be fitted to high risk buildings, although he reiterated that it was not a requirement. The Chairman asked Members to consider whether the Fire Authority should pursue this in the interests of public safety. The CFO stated that the Royal Berkshire Fire and Rescue Service (RBFRS) would be available to assist Authorities in identifying those buildings which were high risk.

Councillor Mrs Mary Rose Gliksten was fully supportive of the proposal.

Councillor Alan Ward was cautious, and felt that an evaluation of the proposal should be considered before any decision was made.

Councillor Mrs Pauline Helliar-Symons believed that the Chairman's proposal was excellent. She stated that the Housing Department at Wokingham District Council was considering the financial implications. She noted the cost implications and the budget challenges faced the Unitary Authorities.

Councillor Miss Emma Webster proposed that a report to inform the anticipated financial costings, the identified savings and the benefits to support the installation of sprinklers to high risk buildings be presented to a future meeting of the Fire Authority. The Fire Authority **supported** this proposal, and the CFO agreed to present a report to the Fire Authority meeting in December 2006. Councillor Geoff Findlay asked that the report be circulated for early consideration.

- The Chairman reported that he had attended a recent Regional Management Board (RMB) and Chief and Chairs' confidential meeting. He stated that the Business Case for the Regional Control Centres (RCCs) was still awaited, and referred to the anticipated timescales for their implementation, however he had some concerns regarding the achievability of these.
- The Chairman provided an outline of the Fire Authority's response submitted in respect to the consultation for the 'New Look' Local Government Pensions Scheme.

CFO
(Agenda
13.12.06)

- The Chairman stated that the Executive Committee had adopted the new discretions contained within Regulations 32, 25 and 121 relating to the policy on the use of the Employer discretions included in the Local Government Pension Regulations.
- The Chairman reported that the Audit Commission would be issuing an unqualified audit opinion on the 2005/06 accounts.
- The Chairman stated that an internal Audit Annual Assurance Report 2005/06 had been received by Reading Borough Audit Service.
- The Chairman reported that the Executive Committee had agreed, in principle, to the establishment of a Mutual Insurance Company, and that it was anticipated that financial savings would be realised.
- The Chairman noted that there continued to be a slight underspend to date in respect to the 2006/07 budget monitoring.
- The Chairman referred to the report on the 'Retention of Staff' that was presented to the Overview and Scrutiny Committee at its meeting in July 2006, and noted that there were still some concerns regarding staff retention, however these were being closely monitored.
- The Chairman referred to the many public events, for example fetes, where the RBFRS was represented, and he encouraged the attendance of Members at these events. He asked the CFO to circulate a list of these public events to the Members. CFO
- The Chairman referred to a media article that had been published in the Windsor and Slough Express on 29 September 2006 which had cast doubts on the ability of Retained Firefighters. He stated that he had been disappointed with the article, and he read out his response to the article which had now been published in the Windsor and Slough Express.
- The Chairman was disappointed that the recently held Member Induction day, although aimed at the new Members of the Fire Authority, had not been well attended. He noted Members' other commitments, and asked Members to indicate their preferred times for future Member sessions. The majority of Members felt that evening programmes would achieve improved attendance, and the CFO agreed to take this forward. CFO

Councillor Derek Wilson wished to pay tribute to the RBFRS operational staff and to the CFO for the assistance and support provided in response to an incident on 17 September 2006. He was grateful for the swift response, and asked that his thanks and appreciation be conveyed to the personnel concerned, and, in particular to Paul Southern (Senior Divisional Officer, Service Delivery) who had kept him informed throughout. The CFO agreed to action this. CFO

03.07.06 QUESTIONS FROM MEMBERS UNDER STANDING ORDER 10

The Fire Authority **Noted** that no Questions had been received from the Fire Authority Members under Standing Order 10.

03.08.06 NOTICES OF MOTION UNDER STANDING ORDER 12

The Fire Authority **Noted** that no Notices of Motion Questions had been received under Standing Order 12.

Councillor Mrs Christine Bateson joined the meeting.

03.09.06 PRESENTATION - "THE ROYAL BERKSHIRE FIRE AND RESCUE SERVICE'S APPROACH TO ARSON REDUCTION"

David Phillips (Divisional Officer, Community Fire Safety) gave a presentation entitled "The Royal Berkshire Fire and Rescue Service's approach to arson reduction" (*copy available from Lynda Kenyon, Committee Manager*), in which he described the impact of arson, the RBFRS's approach to arson reduction, key themes for the Community Safety Strategy, the work being conducted to reduce arson and antisocial behaviour, the engagement between education and community initiatives, the management of performance and action planning, partnership working and Community Safety development.

The Chairman thanked David Phillips for his presentation.

Councillor Sean Wright noted the benefits of local partnership working.

Councillor Geoff Findlay asked where the responsibility lay with the licensing of 'House(s) with Multiple Occupancy' (HMOs). The Deputy Chief Fire Officer (DCFO) confirmed that the RBFRS Fire Safety Manager had met with HMO Licensing Teams within each Authority, and that the RBFRS's preferred approach was through joint inspections, however, he noted that Authorities did have some resource issues. He stated that the RBFRS would be developing its own inspection programme and would share this with the respective Authorities.

Councillor Geoff Findlay asked whether, within West Berkshire, there was scope for sourcing of intelligence in terms of projects associated with, for example, antisocial behaviour. David Phillips acknowledged that there was still further work required to improve the sharing of this intelligence. The DCFO stated that the initiatives and capabilities in respect to the RBFRS's work with young children, as alluded to in the presentation given, was an integral component of the initiative 'Every Child Matters'.

03.10.06 RE-EMPLOYMENT OF MEMBERS OF THE FIREFIGHTERS' PENSION SCHEME FOLLOWING RETIREMENT

The Director of Human Resources advised Members of a new discretion within the Firefighters' Pension Scheme (FPS) to re-employ members following retirement, and referred to the potential advantages and disadvantages and to the issues pertaining to equality and organisational development, as detailed in the report presented.

Councillor Derek Wilson proposed that the recommendations be resolved, and this was seconded by Councillor Miss Emma Webster.

The Fire Authority:

- **Resolved, unanimously**, that it would not re-employ members of the Firefighters' Pension Scheme who retire unless they are successful in an open and competitive recruitment and selections process on the basis of 'best person for the job'.

03.11.06 CHANGE TO COMPULSORY RETIREMENT AGE AS A RESULT OF THE AGE DISCRIMINATION REGULATIONS 2006

The Director of Human Resources advised Members of the need to review and amend the current compulsory retirement ages for operational staff, as a result of the implementation of the Age Discrimination Regulations 2006, and the proposal to standardise the compulsory retirement age for all Fire Authority staff at age 65 years.

The Director of Human Resources proposed that the resolution presented be expanded to include that, for those operational staff age 55 years and above, there be an annual health and fitness review. He confirmed that advice had been sought from Occupational Health.

Councillor Mrs Christine Bateson asked if there had been any consultation conducted, and the Director of Human Resources affirmed this. He reported that the Fire Brigades Union wished the Fire Authority to be informed of their considerations, which were, that if age 65 years was adopted, the options should be made available to staff, that the CFO's current delegated powers should remain valid to extend service for up to 12 months beyond compulsory retirement age, and that the Fire Authority consider that operational personnel over 55 years receive a medical."

Councillor Dexter Smith asked whether there were any opportunities for operational uniformed staff to migrate to non-operational work. The Director of Human Resources stated that there were opportunities in, for example, Community Safety.

Councillor Geoff Findlay asked if an analysis had been conducted into what the implications might be for the Fire Authority in forthcoming years. The Director of Human Resources stated that such an analysis had not been conducted, however he noted that the RBFRS had a relative young age profile.

Councillor Geoff Findlay proposed that the recommendation, as amended, be resolved, and this was seconded by Councillor Angus Ross.

The Fire Authority:

- **Resolved, unanimously**, that a standard compulsory retirement age of 65 years be adopted for its entire staff, and that for those operational staff age 55 years and above, there be an annual health and fitness review.

03.12.06 FIRE AUTHORITY RISK MANAGEMENT STRATEGY/POLICY

The Authority Treasurer tabled a report entitled ' Fire Authority Risk Management Strategy/Policy' (*copy available from Lynda Kenyon, Committee Manager*) and provided a detailed account of the Risk Management Policy, its aims and objectives, its scope and approach, its roles and responsibilities and of the risk management process. He referred to the sample Risk Register within Performance Pviews (*RBFRS computer programme*), and to the scoring system in place to identify risk.

Councillor Derek Wilson proposed that the recommendations be resolved, and this was seconded by Councillor Miss Emma Webster.

The Fire Authority:

- **Resolved, unanimously**, that the Risk Management Policy and Strategy be accepted, and that the Executive Committee receive regular progress reports on corporate risk management.

03.13.06 2006/2007 BUDGET MONITORING

The Authority Treasurer tabled a report entitled ' 2006/07 Budget Monitoring' (*copy available from Lynda Kenyon, Committee Manager*) and referred, specifically, to the £200,000 additional income received so far this year which would be spent on specific earmarked Community Safety projects, and underspending on pensions, with £34,000 used to pay for a new payroll system and £15,000 on 40 additional internal audit days.

Councillor Angus Ross felt that the income generation was commendable and should be acknowledged.

The Fire Authority:

- **Noted** the 2006/07 Budget Monitoring report.

03.14.06 CHAIRMAN'S REPORT - LOCAL GOVERNMENT ASSOCIATION FIRE SERVICE FORUM

The Chairman noted that this report was an informal report.

The Fire Authority:

- **Noted** the Chairman's Report on Local Government Association Fire Service Forum.

03.15.06 ASSOCIATION OF COUNCILS FOR THE THAMES VALLEY REGION (ACTVaR) - REPORT FROM ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING HELD ON 9 JUNE 2006

The Fire Authority:

- **Noted** the report from the ACTVaR's Annual General Meeting held on 9 June 2006.

03.16.06 DATE OF NEXT MEETING

The next Fire Authority meeting is scheduled to take place on:

- **Wednesday 13 December 2006 at 6.30pm**
Reading Borough Council

03.17.06 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 28 June 2006 (*Paragraphs 1, 2, 3, 4 and 5*).
 - Part II Minutes of Committees, Working Parties and other Groups (*Paragraphs 1, 2, 3 and 4*).

Note: The following is a summary of the items considered in the Part II Agenda of the Fire Authority's meeting held on 11 October 2006:

03.18.06 PART II MINUTES OF THE MEETING HELD ON 28 JUNE 2006

The Part II Minutes of the last meeting held on Wednesday 28 June 2006 were received and **Approved** as a correct record, and signed by the Chairman.

03.19.06 PART II MINUTES OF COMMITTEES, WORKING PARTIES AND OTHER GROUPS

The Fire Authority was advised of the Part II minutes of the Committee, Working Parties and Other Groups that had taken place since the last meeting of the Fire Authority on 28 June 2006.

Consideration was given to the case management of ill-health cases for personnel.

The report was **Noted**.