

MINUTES OF THE EXTRAORDINARY MEETING OF THE ROYAL BERKSHIRE FIRE AUTHORITY



Held on Wednesday 12 March 2014 at 6.00 pm

Strategic Command Centre (SCC), Royal Berkshire Headquarters,
Dee Road, Tilehurst, Reading, Berkshire RG30 4FS

Members:

Councillor Alistair Auty	Councillor Christine Bateson
*Councillor Phillip Bicknell	*Councillor Chris Bowring
Councillor Jeff Brooks	*Councillor Paul Bryant
Councillor David Burbage	*Councillor Diana Coad
Councillor Andrew Cumpsty	*Councillor Haqeeq Dar
*Councillor Colin Dudley	Councillor Adrian Edwards
Councillor Paul Gittings	*Councillor Pauline Helliard-Symons
*Councillor Peter Jones	Councillor John Lenton
Councillor Chris Maskell	*Councillor Tom McCann
*Councillor Iain McCracken	Councillor Edward Plenty
*Councillor Mohammed Rasib	*Councillor Angus Ross
*Councillor Rebecca Rye	*Councillor Alan Ward
*Councillor Emma Webster	
<i>*present</i>	

In Attendance:

Andy Fry (Chief Fire Officer, CFO)
Andy Mancey (Acting Assistant Chief Fire Officer, A/ACFO)
Moira Fraser (Democratic Services Manager, DSM)
Linda Pye (Principal Policy Officer, PPO)
Caroline Redzikowska (Director Corporate Services, DCS)
Fayth Rowe (Committee Officer, CO)
Paul Southern (Assistant Chief Fire Officer, ACFO)
Andrew Vallance (Director Resources, DR)

490. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Apologies for absence were received from Councillors Alistair Auty, Christine Bateson, David Burbage, Andrew Cumpsty, Adrian Edwards, Paul Gittings, John Lenton, Chris Maskell and Edward Plenty.

491. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

In accordance with the provisions of the Fire Authority's Local Code of Conduct there were no Declarations of Interest received from Members or Officers.

492. RECEIPT OF ANNOUNCEMENTS

Neither the Chairman nor the Chief Fire Officer made any announcements.

Action

493. DISCIPLINE, APPEALS AND GRIEVANCE COMMITTEE TERMS OF REFERENCE

Caroline Redzikowska (DCS) introduced the report which sought approval to amend the name of, and Terms of Reference of the Disciplinary Appeals and Grievance (DAG) Committee. The DCS explained that the amendments were being proposed in order to clarify the existing Terms of Reference and remit of the Committee.

Under the current arrangements matters pertaining to discipline and grievance were initially dealt with internally and the DAG would hear the appeals. Authority was being sought to amend the first item under Role and Function. The change would allow the Committee to hear and determine disciplinary matters in instances where the Chief Fire Officer (CFO) was unable to act for example if they were indisposed, being called as a witness to the matter or if they were the subject of the action being taken. The Committee would thereby be able to hear matters of discipline as well as appeals in certain circumstances.

The Chairman clarified that the amendments did not seek to replace the existing usual practice of senior managers hearing these matters in the first instance. The changes would only be applied in certain limited circumstances where the allegations of misconduct were against very senior employees. The DCS explained that where an appeal against the decision of the Committee was lodged the appeal would be heard by four Members of the Committee that were not involved in the initial hearing.

Councillor Emma Webster noted that under the existing arrangements the employee would know that the matter would be heard by the Chief Fire Officer. She therefore queried whether, under the proposed revised arrangements, the employee would be informed of the membership of the panel in advance of the hearing. Officers confirmed that the employee would receive a full copy of the paperwork and would therefore be aware of the make up of the panel. Officers also confirmed that at appeal the Presenting Officer would be likely to present again and that minutes of the hearing would be made available and that discipline notes would be kept for a prescribed period of time.

The Chairman raised a concern about the number of Members on the panel. In his experience five would be more a more beneficial number to prevent a hung decision occurring. The DCS noted the comment but explained that this could only be revisited at the Annual Fire Authority meeting as it might need all Committee numbers to be recalculated. Councillor Colin Dudley did not support the need to increase the numbers of Members on the panel.

Members supported the changes as set out in the report.

Resolved:

- a) that the report be noted;
- b) that the Committee be known as the Discipline, Appeals and Grievance Committee; and
- c) that the revised Terms of Reference for the Discipline, Appeals and Grievance Committee be adopted.

494. DATE OF NEXT MEETING

Wednesday 23 April 2014 at 6.30pm at Wokingham Borough Council, Civic Offices, Shute End, Wokingham, Berkshire RG40 1BN

The meeting closed at 6.10pm