

ROYAL BERKSHIRE FIRE AUTHORITY MEETING - PART I

Held on Wednesday 12 December 2007

Council Chamber, Reading Borough Council, Civic Centre,
Reading, Berkshire, RG1 7TD



Those Present:

Councillor Mrs Christine Bateson	Councillor Phillip Bicknell
Councillor Chris Bowring (<i>part meeting</i>)	Councillor Mrs Prue Bray
Councillor Jeff Brooks	Councillor Dr Paul Bryant (<i>Chairman</i>)
Councillor Mrs May Dodds	Councillor Colin Dudley
Councillor Adrian Edwards	Councillor Mrs Sue Evans
Councillor Chris Harris	Councillor Mrs Pauline Helliar-Symons (<i>part meeting</i>)
Councillor Peter Jones	Councillor Iain McCracken (<i>part meeting</i>)
Councillor Mrs Kathy Newbound	Councillor Fred Pugh
Councillor Angus Ross	Councillor Dexter Smith
Councillor Miss Emma Webster	Councillor Sean Wright

In attendance: George Cross (Area Manager, Support Services)
Lynda Kenyon (Committee Manager)
Kathie Summers (Senior Personnel Adviser, Equality and Diversity)
Nicole Target (Corporate Communications Manager)
Richard Taylor (Clerk and Monitoring Officer)
Andrew Vallance (Authority Treasurer)
David Wallace (Director of Human Resources)

Action

The Fire Authority Members and the Royal Berkshire Fire and Rescue Service Officers present stood in silent tribute to the memory of Firefighter John Averis, Crew Manager Ian Reid, Firefighter Ashley Stephens and Firefighter Darren Yates-Badley, from Warwickshire Fire and Rescue Service and Watch Manager Paul Mallaghan from Hertfordshire Fire and Rescue Service, who lost their lives in the recent blaze at Atherstone-on-Stour, Warwickshire, and in memory of the 30th anniversary of the tragic loss of two of Berkshire's firefighters, Firefighter David Barnes and Firefighter Neil Goldsmith.

05.01.07 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Apologies for absence were received from Councillor Andrew Bradley, Councillor Tom Crisp, Councillor Geoff Findlay OBE, Councillor John Lenton and Councillor Alan Ward. Apologies were also received from the Chief Fire Officer.

05.02.07 DECLARATION OF INTERESTS

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

05.03.07 PART I MINUTES OF THE MEETING HELD ON 10 OCTOBER 2007

The Part I Minutes of the meeting held on Wednesday 10 October 2007 were received and **Approved** as a correct record, for signing by the Chairman.

The Deputy Chief Fire Officer (DCFO) agreed to clarify whether the Chief Fire Officer (*item 04.04.07. second paragraph*) had provided the data for the number of call-outs from Wokingham fire station to the Slough area.

The Chairman noted that a copy of the response to Mr Coates' (Resident of Horton) supplementary question at the last meeting could be provided to the Members if requested.

Councillor Chris Bowring joined the meeting.

05.04.07 PART I MINUTES OF STANDING COMMITTEES, WORKING PARTIES AND OTHER GROUPS

The Authority was advised of the meetings of the Fire Authority's Standing Committees, Working Parties and other Groups held since last reported at the Fire Authority meeting on 10 October 2007.

The Fire Authority:

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

05.05.07 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.

05.06.07 CHAIRMAN'S COMMUNICATIONS

- a) The Chairman referred to the investigation conducted into the complaint made by Mr Coates (Resident of Horton) at the last Fire Authority meeting of 10 October 2007 regarding the notification of the venue on the Royal Berkshire Fire and Rescue Service's website, which he stated was incorrect, and to his request, at that meeting, for an apology. The Chairman confirmed that the information on the Royal Berkshire Fire and Rescue Service's website was checked and the venue details were found to be correct. The Chairman stated that there was no reference on the website to the Guild Hall in Windsor, and that the information published stated that the meeting would take place at the Council Chamber, the Royal Borough of Windsor and Maidenhead. The Chairman reported that the outcome of the investigation was communicated to Mr Coates in writing on 17 October 2007, with a follow up telephone call being made on 31 October 2007 to confirm receipt of the letter, and that, due to no further information being received, Area Manager George Cross had sent a final letter to Mr Coates on the 6 November 2007 stating that, following a thorough investigation, no grounds could be found for his initial complaint and, therefore, an apology was not in order. However, to add clarity, the full address of meetings would be added to the website in future.
- b) The Chairman referred to the complaints to the Market Research Society regarding the conduct of Opinion Research Services (ORS). He reported that, following an E-mail circulated on 6 November 2007 to Members on behalf of the Assistant Chief Fire Officer, further information had been received regarding

complaints against ORS regarding their conduct of the Integrated Risk Management 5-Year Plan consultation process. He stated that it appeared, from the information received from Mr Coates, that a further appeal had been lodged with the Market Research Society against ORS, but unfortunately the Market Research Society had not informed ORS of this further development, hence the E-mail of 6 November 2007 which stated that, as far as the Royal Berkshire Fire and Rescue Service was aware, this brought to a close the complaints against ORS. The Chairman advised that the Royal Berkshire Fire and Rescue Service had now been informed that this further appeal had been heard and had, in line with the two initial complaints and one other appeal, been found in favour of ORS. He confirmed that the Royal Berkshire Fire and Rescue Service was not aware of any other outstanding complaints being lodged with the Market Research Society.

- c) The Chairman reported that the Royal Berkshire Fire and Rescue Service understood that The Royal Borough of Windsor and Maidenhead had applied to the High Court for a Judicial Review into specific aspects of the Integrated Risk Management 5-Year Plan process, particularly those surrounding the decision to alter the crewing arrangements at Windsor fire station. He stated that Officers of the Royal Berkshire Fire and Rescue Service were currently engaged with solicitors in drawing together key evidence to defend any Review that might be forthcoming. The Chairman noted that, although it was likely that the Fire Authority would know within the next few weeks if The Royal Borough of Windsor and Maidenhead's application had been successful, it was highly unlikely, given the High Court's current backlog, that the actual Judicial Review would take place before next summer (2008). He stated that this current position did not affect the implementation of the 5-Year Plan as the crewing changes at Windsor fire station were dependent on the Integrated Risk Management Plan Premises' Strategy that would not be at a stage to facilitate the movement of personnel from Windsor fire station until late 2009. The Chairman reported that the 5-Year Plan continued to progress, with the closure of Sonning fire station due shortly, and corresponding increase of firefighters, paid for through the savings from Sonning, due to take place early in the 2008/09 financial year.

Councillor Iain McCracken joined the meeting.

- d) On behalf of the Chairman, the Deputy Chief Fire Officer reported on the recent success of the Royal Berkshire Fire and Rescue Service's Extrication Team in the World Extrication Championships held in October 2007 in Barcelona, Spain. He was pleased to report that the Team had achieved a very creditworthy second place overall, by taking first place in the unlimited scenario, second place in the Command, Medical and Technical categories, and third place in the Rapid scenario.

The Deputy Chief Officer referred to the extensive achievements of the Team's Leader, Station Manager Ian Cox, both personally and as part of the Team, which also included his personal contribution to the improvement in the skills, equipment and techniques used by the Polish Fire Service, which had contributed towards an improvement in the survivability of road accidents in Poland. He noted that Ian Cox would be retiring in 2008 after 30 years service, and that he would be making a short presentation on the World Extrication Championships to the Fire Authority at its meeting in February 2008.

- d) The Chairman reported that firefighters from the Royal Berkshire Fire and Rescue Service had been recognised, at a West Berkshire Council Reception held on 4 December 2007, for their exceptional contribution to the community during the recent floods.
- e) The Chairman reported that he had taken part in the recently held Business Continuity exercise held in Sonning, and had been very impressed with the way in which the Teams had worked together during the two scenarios acted out. He noted the importance of holding these types of exercises.
- f) The Chairman stressed the importance of Members' advising the Committee Manager, in advance, should they not be able to attend meetings of the Fire Authority's Committees as there had been occasions when meetings had not been able to take place as they had not been quorate. Councillor Adrian Edwards endorsed this.
- g) The Deputy Chief Fire Officer, on behalf of the Chairman, reported that Sonning fire station would be closing on 31 December 2007 at 2359 hours, with the appliance coming off the run at 1800 hours. He stated that the closure would be marked by a low key ceremony attended by Sonning firefighters and the Chief Fire Officer.
- h) The Chairman reported that the Royal Berkshire Fire and Rescue Service had been called in to assist in the national support for the East Anglia region in anticipation of severe flooding during November 2007. He advised that the High Volume Pump from Bracknell and the Water Rescue Team from Reading, together with the Boat and Officer support, had been deployed to the region. He was pleased to report that the predicted floods had not materialised. He reported that the Chief Fire Officer had received a letter of thanks from Councillor Richard Rockliffe, Cabinet Member for the Fire and Community Protection at Norfolk County Council, expressing his gratitude for the assistance provided by the Royal Berkshire Fire and Rescue Service.
- i) The Chairman wished Members a Happy Christmas and conveyed his thanks for their support during the year, and invited them to accept a small environmentally friendly gift from him in lieu of a Christmas card.

05.07.07 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.

05.08.07 NOTICES OF MOTION UNDER STANDING ORDER 44

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

PRESENTATION TO MRS VALERIE MILLS

The Chairman welcomed Mrs Valerie Mills, widow of the late Mr Terry Mills, Chairman of the Fire Authority from 1 January 2004 - 27 December 2005, and her daughter to the meeting. He paid tribute to the achievements and commitment of Mr Terry Mills as the Chairman of the Fire Authority and to his contribution to

Bracknell Forest Borough Council, and this was endorsed by the Vice-Chairman and acknowledged by the Fire Authority Members. He asked Mrs Valerie Mills to accept a plaque as a token of appreciation on behalf of the Royal Berkshire Fire Authority. He also presented her with a copy of a DVD with footage of Mr Terry Mills during the latter days of the demise of Berkshire County Council.

05.09.07 ROYAL BERKSHIRE FIRE AUTHORITY DECLARATION OF COMMITMENT TO THE ENVIRONMENT AND GUIDING PRINCIPLES

The Fire Authority was invited to consider the introduction of a set of guiding principles for the Fire Authority and the Royal Berkshire Fire and Rescue Service to use as its aspirations for how it would reduce impacts to the environment.

George Cross took Members through the achievements to date in respect to the Fire Authority's and the Royal Berkshire Fire and Rescue Service's environmental obligations.

George Cross advised that the Chairman had been nominated to act as the Fire Authority's Environmental Champion, and he welcomed any further nominations. Councillor Mrs Christine Bateson suggested that the Overview and Scrutiny Committee should act as the Fire Authority's Environmental Champion. In response to a question from the Chairman, the Deputy Chief Fire Officer stated that the Fire Authority Environmental Champion could report to the Overview and Scrutiny Committee.

Councillor Mrs May Dodds believed that the financial costs associated with employing a dedicated post to support the Fire Authority's and the Royal Berkshire Fire and Rescue Service's obligations towards the environment could be better allocated to, for example, improving firefighters' pay. The Vice-Chairman noted that the uniformed pay was a directive national award. The Deputy Chief Fire Officer reminded Members that the Fire Authority was subject to environmental legislation and would be at risk if it did not meet its legislative obligations. The Vice-Chairman noted that the merits of the post could be re-visited once it had achieved all of its objectives. Councillor Colin Dudley supported the need for a Civil Contingency Officer (Environment) and both he and Councillor Iain McCracken supported the Declaration and Guiding Principles.

The Vice-Chairman proposed that the recommendations be resolved, and that the Chairman be nominated as the Fire Authority's Environmental Champion to report to the Fire Authority on an annual basis, rather than on a 6-monthly basis, and this was seconded by Councillor Mrs Christine Bateson.

The Fire Authority:

- **Adopted** the Declaration and Guiding Principles (*as attached at Appendix A of the report presented*) to be operative from 1 January 2008.
- **Nominated** the Chairman of the Authority to act as the Fire Authority Environmental Champion for all future issues and **Agreed** that the Fire Authority be updated annually.
- **Resolved** that all future Fire Authority agenda papers have a heading added to show impact of the proposed issues on the environment.

Standing
Agenda Item
(December)
Committee
Manager

05.10.07 MEMBER COMMUNICATIONS

The Fire Authority was advised of the Executive Committee's recommendation of proposals to establish a Members' Bulletin and to appoint a Member as its Communications' Champion.

Councillor Angus Ross noted the development of a quarterly newsletter publication for partner organisations, interested parties and Representative Bodies, as agreed by the Executive Committee.

In response to a question from Councillor Chris Bowring, Nicole Targett confirmed that the preparation of the Members' Bulletin would be absorbed within the current Communications' staffing resources.

Councillor Miss Emma Webster proposed that the recommendations be resolved, and nominated Councillor Dexter Smith as the Fire Authority's Communications' Champion, and this was seconded by Councillor Mrs Christine Bateson.

The Fire Authority:

- **Approved** the development of a Bulletin to provide Members with a regular source of information on items of interest.
- **Appointed** Councillor Dexter Smith as the Fire Authority's Communications' Champion.

05.11.07 EQUALITY AND DIVERSITY STRATEGY REVIEW

The Fire Authority was provided with an update on the progress of the Equality Action Plan, and approval was sought to the updated Equality and Diversity Strategy and associated Action Plan, which had been updated taking account of legislative change, the draft Fire and Rescue National Framework 2008-11 and the draft Fire and Rescue Service Diversity and Equality Strategy 2008-18.

The Director of Human Resources (DHR) introduced Kathie Summers who took Members through the report presented. She noted that the monitoring statistics for 2006 would be circulated to Members after the meeting, and she reported that, to enable improved timely monitoring statistical reporting and update reporting of the Action Plan, the Strategy and Action Plan would now be reported at the Fire Authority's annual meetings in June.

Kathie Summers agreed to consider Councillor Iain McCracken's suggestions for inclusion in the Action Plan of key target dates, and, whether these had been achieved or not, and, if not, when it was proposed that these would be realised.

Councillor Mrs May Dodds asked if the targeting of young offenders could be included within the Action Plan in respect to uniformed recruitment into the Fire Service. The Deputy Chief Fire Officer referred to the long standing policy regarding checks required for the recruitment of uniformed staff. Kathie Summers stated that the recruitment standards would have to be re-visited if this was to be progressed.

Councillor Peter Jones felt that there was a need to be more proactive in the recruitment of women.

Annual
meeting /
Standing
Agenda
reporting

DHR / KS

Councillor Miss Emma Webster proposed that the recommendation be resolved, and this was seconded by Councillor Colin Dudley.

The Fire Authority:

- **Unanimously Approved** the updated Equality and Diversity Strategy and the Action Plan for 2008-11.

Councillor Mrs Pauline Helliar-Symons joined the meeting.

05.12.07 FIRE SAFETY INSPECTION SURVEY 2006/07

The Fire Authority was advised of the Fire Safety Inspection Follow-up Survey 2006/07, as commissioned by Royal Berkshire Fire and Rescue Service, and undertaken by Opinion Research Services.

In response to a question from Councillor Mrs Prue Bray, the Deputy Chief Fire Officer (DCFO) confirmed that the data had been presented in percentage terms as opposed to quantitative statistics, as Opinion Research Services (ORS) had qualified that, due to the number of responses returned, it was not able to present them as statistically significant. He agreed to furnish the Members with the total number of questionnaires circulated and the number of those returned. He also agreed to share with Members the benchmarking data against other Fire and Rescue Services.

DCFO

The Fire Authority:

- **Noted and Endorsed** the Fire Safety Inspection Survey 2006/07.
- **Noted** the informative presentation of the report.

05.13.07 QUALITY OF SERVICE SURVEY: AFTER THE INCIDENT 2006/07

The Fire Authority was advised of the 'Quality of Service Survey : After the Incident 2006/07', as commissioned by Royal Berkshire Fire and Rescue Service, and undertaken by Opinion Research Services.

The Deputy Chief Fire Officer noted that action had been taken to improve the provision of a Fire and Rescue Service information/advice booklet after fire incidents, and he confirmed that all appliances now carry the booklets.

The Fire Authority:

- **Noted and Endorsed** the Quality of Service Survey : After the Incident 2006/07.
- **Noted** the informative presentation of the report.

05.14.07 2007/2008 BUDGET MONITORING

The Fire Authority was advised of the revenue and capital expenditure against budgets, up to the end of November 2007.

The Authority Treasurer confirmed that more detailed information, as requested at the last meeting, had been included within the report presented. He reported that he

expected that there would be a small underspend at year-end. The Authority Treasurer advised that the Revenue Grant Settlement had been increased by 1% above floor level for 2008/09 with ½% increase for Years 2 and 3.

The Fire Authority:

- **Noted** the 2007/2008 Budget Monitoring report.
- **Agreed** that the Fire Authority should formerly respond to the Communities and Local Government (CLG) to the announcement of the Revenue Support Grant, which it felt was not acceptable, as too should the Chairman through the Regional Management Board, and to the Chief Fire Officers Association.

**AT /
Chairman /
CFO**

05.15.07 REGIONAL FIRECONTROL AND FIRELINK - UPDATE

The Fire Authority was provided with an update on the current position regarding the Regional Control Centre (RCC) and FireLink Projects, and George Cross took Members through the report presented.

Councillor Mrs May Dodds stated that she did not believe that Regional Control Centres were appropriate in the future delivery of the service, and that there would be additional financial implications for Fire and Rescue Services. George Cross noted that the initiative of Regional Control Centres had been as result of a national directive, as part of the central Government resilience agenda.

The Fire Authority:

- **Noted** the Regional FiReControl and FireLink report update.

05.16.07 SOUTH EAST FIRE AND RESCUE SERVICE CONTROL CENTRE LTD (SEFRCCCL)

Councillor Angus Ross referred to the key points within his report, including the appointment of the Regional Control Centre Director and to the future issues to be addressed, as detailed in his report presented.

The Fire Authority:

- **Noted** Councillor Angus Ross' written report on the South East Fire and Rescue Service Control Centre Ltd (SEFRCCCL).
- **Noted** the work that Councillor Angus Ross would be undertaking on its behalf.

05.17.07 CHAIRMAN'S REPORT ON REGIONAL MANAGEMENT BOARD

The Chairman advised the Fire Authority of the letter received from Mr Peter Betts (Director of Fire and Resilience, Communities and Local Government) which had alluded to the need to address the 2008/09 transitional funding contribution for Firebuy Ltd. He noted that he had responded to Mr Betts' letter stating that the Fire Authority would only be prepared to consider financially supporting such a scheme if it could be demonstrated that it provided value for money.

The Fire Authority:

- **Noted** the Chairman's written report on the Regional Management Board.

05.18.07 ASSOCIATION OF COUNCILS FOR THE THAMES VALLEY REGION (ACTVaR) - REPORT FROM MEETING HELD ON 28 SEPTEMBER 2007

The Fire Authority:

- **Noted** Councillor Andrew Bradley's written report on the Association of Councils for the Thames Valley Region's meeting held on 28 September 2007.

05.19.07 DATE OF NEXT FIRE AUTHORITY MEETING

The **Fire Authority Noted** that the next meeting would take place on **Wednesday 13 February 2008 at 6.30pm in the** Council Chamber, Wokingham Borough Council, Civic Offices, Shute End, Wokingham, Berkshire, RG40 1BN.

05.20.07 EXCLUSION OF THE PUBLIC

The Fire Authority:

- **Resolved unanimously** 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 October 2007 (*Paragraphs 1, 2, 3, 4 and 5*)
 - Part II Minutes of Standing 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:

05.21.07 PART II MINUTES OF THE MEETING HELD ON 10 OCTOBER 2007

The Part II Minutes of the meeting held on Wednesday 10 October 2007 were received and **Approved** as a correct record.

05.22.07 PART II MINUTES OF STANDING COMMITTEES, WORKING PARTIES AND OTHER GROUPS

The Fire Authority was advised of the Part II meetings of the Executive Committee and the Property and Property Resources Committee that have taken place since last reported to the Fire Authority on 10 October 2007. The report was **Noted**.