

## ROYAL BERKSHIRE FIRE AUTHORITY MEETING - PART I

Held on Wednesday 13 February 2008

Council Chamber, Wokingham Borough Council, Civic Offices  
Shute End, Wokingham, Berkshire, RG40 1BN



### Those

**Present:**

Councillor Mrs Christine Bateson	Councillor Chris Bowring
Councillor Mrs Prue Bray	Councillor Jeff Brooks
Councillor Dr Paul Bryant ( <i>Chairman</i> )	Councillor Tom Crisp
Councillor Colin Dudley	Councillor Mrs Sue Evans
Councillor Geoff Findlay OBE	Councillor Chris Harris
Councillor John Lenton	Councillor Fred Pugh
Councillor Angus Ross	Councillor Dexter Smith
Councillor Miss Emma Webster ( <i>part meeting</i> )	Councillor Sean Wright

### In

**attendance:** Olaf Baars (Deputy Chief Fire Officer)  
Jonathan Ball (Information Systems Manager) (*Item 01.15.08*)  
Iain Cox (Chief Fire Officer)  
Iain Cox (Station Manager) (*Item 01.10.08*)  
Mike Cox (Environmental System Advisor) (*Item 01.09.08*)  
George Cross (Area Manager, Support Services)  
Lynda Kenyon (Committee Manager)  
Richard Taylor (Clerk and Monitoring Officer)  
Des Tidbury (Assistant Chief Fire Officer)  
Andrew Vallance (Authority Treasurer)  
David Wallace (Director of Human Resources)

**Observers:** Members of the public  
Royal Berkshire Fire and Rescue Service Officers  
Representative Bodies

### 01.01.08 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Apologies for absence were received from Councillor Phillip Bicknell, Councillor Andrew Bradley, Councillor Mrs May Dodds, Councillor Adrian Edwards, Councillor Mrs Pauline Helliard-Symons, Councillor Peter Jones, Councillor Iain McCracken and Councillor Mrs Kathy Newbound. Apologies were also received from Councillor Miss Emma Webster who would be late to the meeting.

### 01.02.08 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.

### 01.03.08 PART I MINUTES OF THE MEETING HELD ON 12 DECEMBER 2007

The Part I Minutes of the meeting held on Wednesday 12 December 2007 were received and **Approved** as a correct record, for signing by the Chairman. The Chairman noted that all the Actions from the last meeting had been discharged.

Action

#### **01.04.08 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 12 December 2007.

##### **The Fire Authority:**

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

#### **01.05.08 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.

#### **01.06.08 CHAIRMAN'S COMMUNICATIONS**

- a) The Chairman reported that the Assistant Chief Fire Officer, Des Tidbury, would be leaving the Royal Berkshire Fire and Rescue Service in March 2008 to take up his new appointment as Deputy Chief Fire Officer at Wiltshire Fire and Rescue Service. The Chairman, on behalf of the Fire Authority, conveyed his thanks to the Assistant Chief Fire Officer for all his hard work, particularly in respect to the Integrated Risk Management Plan, and he wished him well in his new role. The Chairman presented him with a token of appreciation.
- b) The Chairman reported that he had recently attended a Firefighters' Passing Out Parade at Eastleigh and that he had been extremely impressed with the demonstration given. The Chief Fire Officer reported that the Silver Axe had been awarded to a Berkshire firefighter.
- c) The Chairman was pleased to report that he had attended a Dedication of the Red Cross Support Vehicle at Wokingham Fire Station on 25 January 2008.
- d) The Chairman reported that he, and the Chief Fire Officer, had attended a Fire and Rescue Services' meeting in Manchester at which the proposed Comprehensive Area Assessments had been considered. He stated that a number of concerns had been raised, particularly in respect to the proposed indicators and targets, and that the Audit Commission's representative present at the meeting would be conveying these concerns to the Commission.
- e) The Chairman reported that he, and the Chief Fire Officer, had attended a seminar on reducing the impact of fire on communities and the environment on 4 February 2008.
- f) The Chairman advised that an advertisement for the appointment of a Clerk and Monitoring Officer had now been placed, and that the intention was that interviews for this post would be held on 27 March 2008. On behalf of the Fire Authority, the Chairman conveyed his thanks to Mr Richard Taylor for the work he had undertaken as the interim Clerk and Monitoring Officer.

#### **01.07.08 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.

#### **01.08.08 NOTICES OF MOTION UNDER STANDING ORDER 44**

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

#### **01.09.08 ROYAL BERKSHIRE FIRE AUTHORITY DECLARATION OF COMMITMENT TO THE ENVIRONMENT AND GUIDING PRINCIPLES**

The Royal Berkshire Fire Authority Declaration of Commitment to the Environment and Guiding Principles which was adopted by the Fire Authority at its meeting on 12 December 2007, was signed by the Chairman and Chief Fire Officer. The Chief Fire Officer introduced Mike Cox (Environmental System Advisor) who had been leading on the environmental work.

#### **01.10.08 WORLD EXTRICATION CHAMPIONSHIP**

The Chairman introduced Station Manager Ian Cox who was the Team Leader for the Royal Berkshire Fire and Rescue Service's Extrication Team. Ian Cox reported on the progress and achievements of the Team over the last year, and he presented pictorial and video footage of the Team's achievements (second place overall) in the World Rescue Challenge competition held in Barcelona in 2007. He was pleased to report that the Team was the most consistent Rescue Team in the world, and he advised of the changes to the Team following his forthcoming retirement. Ian Cox encouraged the Members to attend the annual regional Extrication event taking place this year on 16 May 2008 at Whitley Wood Fire Station. He conveyed his thanks to the Fire Authority for its continued support to the Extrication Team. The Deputy Chief Fire Officer reminded Members of Ian Cox' achievements, both personally and as part of the Team. The Chairman conveyed his thanks to Ian Cox for all his hard work as part of the Team, and this was endorsed by the Fire Authority.

#### **01.11.08 INTEGRATED RISK MANAGEMENT PLAN ACTION PLAN - 2008/09**

The Fire Authority's endorsement was sought to the Integrated Risk Management Plan (IRMP) 2008/09 Action Plan, as recommended by the IRMP Working Party.

The Assistant Chief Fire Officer took the Members through the report presented, and referred them to the Plan's projects and objectives, as detailed on pages 22 and 23 of the report. He was pleased to report that the Fire Authority's IRMP comprised all the major elements that were contained within the National Framework for the forthcoming three years and which was currently being consulted upon. He was also pleased to report that the Projects were on schedule although the Premises Strategy was causing some slippage on the longer term elements.

In response to questions from Members, the Assistant Chief Fire Officer confirmed that changes to night time cover at Windsor Fire Station were not expected to be implemented until early 2010 due to the work required within the Premises Strategy, and that further work would be conducted with the Fire Brigades Union on the Wokingham shift systems. The Chief Fire Officer confirmed that, although there was an outstanding Judicial Review, taken by The Royal Borough of Windsor and

Maidenhead against the Royal Berkshire Fire Authority on the 5-Year Integrated Risk Management Plan only as it relates to the Windsor proposals, planning work would continue.

Councillor Mrs Christine Bateson stated that she could not support the Action Plan due to the changes to night time cover at Windsor Fire Station.

Councillor Geoff Findlay moved that the Recommendation be endorsed, and this was seconded by Councillor Angus Ross. The Recommendation was put to a vote and carried (13 in favour to 3 against).

#### **The Fire Authority:**

- **Endorsed** the IRMP 2008/09 Action Plan, as recommended by the IRMP Working Party.

**Councillor Miss Emma Webster joined the meeting during the next item.**

#### **01.12.08 BUDGET 2008/09**

The Fire Authority was invited to consider and to finalise the Budget requirements and to set the precept for 2008/09.

The Authority Treasurer took Members through the budget summary presented, the budget for 2008/09 to 2010/11, the revenue bids, the revenue savings, the capital bids, the Prudential Code Report and the Treasury Management Strategy Report 2008/09, and the Council Tax Band D comparisons. He noted that the £207k available for Essential Bids was higher than that initially presented to the Executive Committee due to the increase in the Council Tax Base.

The Chairman, in agreement with the Members, invited Christopher Glenn (UNISON) to address the Fire Authority. Christopher Glenn urged the Fire Authority to re-consider the retention of the Station Cooks by utilising the Council Tax collection surplus of £90k for 2008/09, but, at the very least to utilise the collection surplus to enhance the redundancy and compensatory packages for the Station Cooks. The Chief Fire Officer made reference to the recent letters received from Karen Patterson (Station Cook) and the Watches at Maidenhead Fire Station regarding the retention of the Station Cooks.

Councillor Colin Dudley, although supportive of the presented budget, recognised the value of the Station Cooks. The Vice-Chairman reported that he had asked the Human Resources Department to consider the Compensation Policy which he hoped might alleviate some of the Station Cooks' anxieties regarding any future redundancies.

The Authority Treasurer reported that the Executive Committee, at its Extraordinary meeting on 13 February 2008, had agreed that £91k be funded from the 2008/09 budget to enhance the crewing levels at Wokingham Fire Station. The Vice-Chairman referred to the Fire Brigades Union's proposal which would realise improvements to the crewing levels at Wokingham Fire Station, and he was grateful to the Fire Brigades Union for submitting its proposal. He asked the Fire Authority to support these improvements. Councillor Angus Ross was pleased that the Council Tax collection surplus would be utilised for operational improvements. Councillor Mrs Prue Bray acknowledged the work of the Fire Brigades Union to enable the

realisation of improvements to the crewing levels at Wokingham Fire Station. Councillor John Lenton believed that consideration should have been given to investing the savings in retaining 24-hour cover at Windsor Fire Station.

On behalf of the Fire Authority, the Chairman conveyed his thanks to the Fire Brigades Union for its assistance in realising improvements to crewing levels at Wokingham Fire Station.

Councillor Miss Emma Webster moved that the Recommendations presented be resolved, and this was seconded by Councillor Angus Ross, and **Unanimously Agreed**.

**The Fire Authority:**

- **Resolved**, in accordance with the Local Government Finance Act 1992, that the following amounts be now calculated for the year 2008/09:

- 1 The aggregate council taxbase of the six Berkshire unitary Authorities has been notified as 326,493.30.
- 2a) £33,675,529.99 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) £1,232,000 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) £32,443,529.99 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) £15,269,665 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) £19,907 being the net aggregate of the surpluses and deficits on billing authorities' Collection Funds to be received in 2008/09.
- 2f) £52.54 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.
- 2g) The Authority, in accordance with Section 40(2)(a) of the Act, hereby sets the following amounts of Council Tax for the year 2008/09 for each of the categories of dwellings shown below,

Valuation Band	£
A	35.03
B	40.86
C	46.70
D	52.54
E	64.22
F	75.89
G	87.57
H	105.08

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.

- 2h) The 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 2008/09:

Authority	Taxbase	Precept	Collection Fund Surplus/ (Deficit)	Net Yield from Council Tax
Bracknell Forest	42,940.00	2,256,067.60	16,730.00	2,272,797.60
Reading	52,072.00	2,735,862.88	(18,157.00)	2,717,705.88
Slough	40,274.40	2,116,016.98	0.00	2,116,016.98
West Berkshire	62,416.00	3,279,336.64	10,782.00	3,290,118.64
Windsor & Maidenhead	64,434.00	3,385,362.36	10,552.00	3,395,914.36
Wokingham	64,356.90	3,381,311.53	0.00	3,381,311.53
Total	326,493.30	17,153,957.99	19,907.00	17,173,864.99

- 3 **Approved** the Medium Term Financial Plan as set out in Appendix B, the Capital Programme as set out in Appendix E and the Prudential Indicators, Treasury Strategy and Investment Strategy as set out in Appendix F of the report presented.

### 01.13.08 CORPORATE CODE OF GOVERNANCE

The Fire Authority was advised that the Accounts and Audit (Amendment) (England) Regulations 2006 had introduced a requirement for the reporting of an Annual Governance Statement for 2007-08, and that the Governance Statement should provide assurance that the Fire Authority's governance framework was adequate and effective. The report presented described the requirements for a Corporate Code of Governance to be produced in accordance with a Framework published by a Chartered Institute of Public Finance and Accountancy (CIPFA) / Society of Local Authority Chief Executives (SOLACE) Joint Working Group in November 2007.

#### The Fire Authority:

- **Noted** the position with regard to the background and drafting of the Code of Governance.
- **Appointed** a Working Group, comprising the Chief Fire Officer, the Clerk and Monitoring Officer, the Authority Treasurer, the Committee Manager and the Chairman, to complete the drafting and bring a report for approval to the June 2008 meeting.

#### **01.14.08 SOUTH EAST FIRE AND RESCUE CONTROL CENTRE LTD - BOARD ATTENDANCE**

The Fire Authority was invited to appoint another Member to act as a substitute for Councillor Angus Ross on occasions when he was unable to attend the South East Fire and Rescue Control Centre Limited Board meetings on behalf of the Fire Authority. The Fire Authority was advised that the substitute Member would have the same rights as to speaking and voting.

Councillor Angus Ross proposed that Councillor Mrs Christine Bateson be appointed as the substitute Member, and this was seconded by Councillor Colin Dudley. There were no further nominations received.

#### **The Fire Authority:**

- **Unanimously Appointed** Councillor Mrs Christine Bateson as the substitute Fire Authority representative to attend meetings of the Board of the South East Fire And Rescue Control Centre Limited on occasions when Councillor Angus Ross was unable to attend the meetings on behalf of the Fire Authority.

#### **01.15.08 USE OF RESOURCES - ASSET MANAGEMENT PLANS**

The Fire Authority was invited to approve, for publication, the Premises Asset Management Plan which provides a strategic overview of the Service's property portfolio and which describes the way in which the asset planning process was being used to facilitate the achievement of continuous improvement in strategic property management. The Fire Authority was also invited to approve, for publication, the IT and Communications Asset Management Plan which provides a strategic overview of IT and communications.

The Assistant Chief Fire Officer reminded Members that Asset Management Plans were a requirement of Comprehensive Performance Assessments (CPAs). He conveyed his thanks to Pat Arthur (Procurement and Facilities Manager) and to Jonathan Ball (Information Systems Manager) for their work in developing the Asset Management Plans.

The Assistant Chief Fire Officer introduced Jonathan Ball, who provided an explanation of how the Firewatch system (*electronic information system*) had been aligned to enable the population of the Asset Management Plans and how the system could track the Fire Authority's assets. He also referred to the Fleet Management element, the Personal Protection Equipment (PPE) element and the environmental data now available within Firewatch.

In response to a question from Councillor Geoff Findlay, Jonathan Ball reassured Members that security safeguards were in place, including individual identifications (IDs), pin numbers and encryptions.

In response to a question from Councillor Colin Dudley, the Assistant Chief Fire Officer confirmed that a great deal of work had already been conducted at specific workplaces as part of the Disability Discrimination Act Regulations, including disabled access. A substantial amount of money had also been spent at fire stations to improve facilities for female firefighters and that work was ongoing. The Chief Fire Officer confirmed that this work was carried out in order of identified priority.

The Chairman felt that Sprinklers should be included within the Condition Surveys for Fire Precautions. The Chief Fire Officer confirmed that these would be included for high risk premises.

**The Fire Authority:**

- **Unanimously Approved, for publication**, the Premises Asset Management Plan.
- **Unanimously Approved, for publication**, the Asset Management Plan Database.
- **Unanimously Approved, for publication**, the IT and Communications Asset Management Plan.

**01.16.08 REVIEW OF HUMAN RESOURCES STRATEGY (DRAFT)**

The Fire Authority's approval was sought for an updated Human Resources Strategy to cover the period 2008/09.

The Director of Human Resources took Members through the report presented and made reference, in particular, to the National Policy Framework and the Human Resources Strategy to support this.

The Director of Human Resources (DHR) agreed to Councillor Chris Bowring's request, and supported by the Chairman, that any future updates to the Strategy be clearly identified when next presented to the Fire Authority.

**DHR**

**The Fire Authority:**

- **Unanimously Approved** the updated Human Resources Strategy for the period 2008/09.

**01.17.08 REDUCTION OF UNWANTED FIRE SIGNALS FROM AUTOMATIC FIRE ALARM SYSTEMS IN NON DOMESTIC PREMISES - CALL CHALLENGE POLICY**

The Fire Authority's approval was sought to establish a new Call Challenge Policy in relation to unwanted fire signals originating from Automatic Fire Alarms being received by the Royal Berkshire Fire and Rescue Service's Control.

The Deputy Chief Fire Officer provided a brief summary of the report presented, noting in particular the Authority's position, nationally, in relation to its performance for false alarms from Automatic Fire Alarm systems. He was confident that this Policy would realise significant improvements to performance. He introduced Peter Boardman (Temporary Area Manager, Service Delivery, responsible for Protection and Prevention) who referred Members to the impact to Fire and Rescue Services' responses to false alarms, and how, through the Call Challenge Policy, the management of false alarms could be managed. He also advised of the built in safeguards within the Policy to ensure that false alarms were dealt with appropriately.

In response to questions from Councillor Colin Dudley, the Deputy Chief Fire Officer confirmed that alarm maintenance records were checked by the Fire Safety

Inspection Officers, and that further investment would be required to enable more enforcements to be carried out. The Chief Fire Officer also confirmed that there was a range of options in place to ensure that appropriate action was taken by those responsible for fire alarms to meet the statutory regulations.

The Deputy Chief Fire Officer stated, in response to a question from Councillor Angus Ross, that the Regional Control Centres would support each Fire and Rescue Service's Integrated and Risk Management Plan policies, however guidance from the Chief Fire Officers Association could, in the future, lead to a more common approach for all Fire and Rescue Services.

The Deputy Chief Fire Officer noted Councillor Miss Emma Webster's suggestion that the Chamber of Commerce and Small Businesses might be utilised to communicate the future management of false alarms by the Royal Berkshire Fire and Rescue Service.

Councillor Angus Ross suggested that the Fire Authority might wish to scrutinise, at a future date, the data to support the number of false alarms.

**The Fire Authority:**

- **Unanimously Approved and Adopted** the Call Challenge Policy for Automatic Fire Alarms.

**01.18.08 2007/2008 BUDGET MONITORING**

The Fire Authority was advised of the revenue and capital expenditure against budgets, up to the end of January 2008.

**The Fire Authority:**

- **Noted** the 2007/2008 Budget Monitoring report.

**01.19.08 CHAIRMAN'S REPORT ON REGIONAL MANAGEMENT BOARD**

**The Fire Authority:**

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

**01.20.08 SOUTH EAST FIRE AND RESCUE SERVICE CONTROL CENTRE LTD (SEFRCCL)**

Councillor Angus Ross reported that he had attended a meeting of the SEFRCCL on 8 February 2008 and that a formal programme of monthly meetings had now been agreed. He stated that the appointed Regional Control Centre Director was now expected to commence in this role in April 2008. He advised that the SEFRCCL was planning some training and briefing sessions for Company Directors on issues such as the technical specifics and the key responsibilities of the Company, and that the views of the Representative Bodies would be sought through joint meetings. He stated that he, together with George Cross (Area Manager, Support Services), had visited the South East Regional Control Centre building which was on track for completion by July 2008.

### **01.21.08 DATE OF NEXT FIRE AUTHORITY MEETING (ANNUAL MEETING)**

The Fire Authority Noted that the next meeting would take place on **Wednesday 25 June 2008 at 6.30pm in the** Council Chamber, Bracknell Forest Borough Council, Easthampstead House, Town Square, Bracknell, Berkshire, RG12 1AQ.

### **01.22.08 EXCLUSION OF THE PUBLIC**

**The Fire Authority:**

- **Unanimously 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 12 December 2007 (*Paragraphs 1, 2, 3, 4 and 5*)
  - Part II Minutes of Standing Committees, Working Parties and other Groups (*Paragraphs 1, 2, 3, 4 and 5*).
  - Proposal to set up an 'Arms Length' Trading Company to provide commercial training (*Paragraph 3*).

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

### **01.23.08 PART II MINUTES OF THE MEETING HELD ON 12 DECEMBER 2007**

The Part II Minutes of the meeting held on Wednesday 12 December 2007 were received and **Approved** as a correct record for signing by the Chairman.

### **01.24.08 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 Integrated Risk Management Plan Working Party that had taken place since reported to the last meeting of the Fire Authority on 12 December 2007. The report was Noted.

### **01.25.08 PROPOSAL TO SET UP AN 'ARMS LENGTH' TRADING COMPANY TO PROVIDE COMMERCIAL TRAINING**

The Fire Authority approved the Recommendations presented, as amended.