

ROYAL BERKSHIRE FIRE AUTHORITY MEETING - PART I

Held on Wednesday 13 December 2006

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



Those present:

Councillor Mike Adams	Councillor Mrs Christine Bateson
Councillor Andrew Bradley	Councillor Jeff Brooks
Councillor Dr Paul Bryant (<i>Chairman</i>)	Councillor Tom Crisp
Councillor Mrs Mary Rose Gliksten	Councillor John Green
Councillor Jagjit Grewal	Councillor Peter Jones
Councillor James Mole (<i>Vice-Chairman</i>)	Councillor Peter North
Councillor Angus Ross	Councillor Alan Ward
Councillor Miss Emma Webster	Councillor Derek Wilson
Councillor Sean Wright	

In attendance:

- Olaf Baars (Deputy Chief Fire Officer)
- Conor Byrne (Senior Accountant) (*Item 04.16.06*)
- Iain Cox (Chief Fire Officer)
- Ian Cox (Station Manager) (*Item 04.17.06*)
- George Cross (Senior Divisional Officer, Support Services) (*Item 04.09.06*)
- Lynda Kenyon (Committee Manager)
- Rosemary Lansdowne (Clerk and Monitoring Officer)
- Jacky Manning (Senior Personnel Adviser, Equality & Diversity) (*Item 04.13.06*)
- Paul Maynard (Assistant Divisional Officer)
- Des Tidbury (Assistant Chief Fire Officer) (*Item 04.16.06*)
- David Wallace (Director of Human Resources)

Members stood in silent tribute to the memory of Brian Wenbridge and Geoff Wicker, two members of the East Sussex Fire and Rescue Service who lost their lives on 3 December 2006 during a severe fire within East Sussex.

04.01.06 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Apologies for absence were received from Councillor Mrs Prue Bray, Councillor Mrs Pauline Helliar-Symons, Councillor David Howes, Councillor Mrs Vicky Howes, Councillor Chris Maskell, Councillor Dexter Smith and Councillor Fred Pugh.

04.02.06 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.

04.03.06 PART I MINUTES OF THE MEETING HELD ON 11 OCTOBER 2006

The Part I Minutes of the last meeting held on Wednesday 11 October 2006 were received and **Approved** as a correct record, and signed by the Chairman.

Action

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

The Fire Authority was advised of the Part I meetings of the Executive Committee, Overview and Scrutiny Committee, Standards Committee, Fire Liaison Group, Community Safety Forum and Integrated Risk Management Plan Working Party that had taken place since last reported to the Fire Authority on 11 October 2006.

The Fire Authority:

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

04.05.06 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.

04.06.06 CHAIRMAN'S COMMUNICATIONS

- The Chairman reported that he had attended a domestic sprinkler demonstration given by Hampshire Fire and Rescue Service on 29 November 2006 where the effectiveness of domestic sprinklers was demonstrated by the setting alight of a pair of semi-detached houses, one of which was protected by fitted sprinklers. He noted the damage comparisons to the two buildings and that the building fitted with sprinklers was significantly less damaged by fire.
- The Chairman reported that he had attended the Awards Ceremony at Bearwood College in Wokingham on 3 November 2006 where a number of awards were presented, including long service awards for firefighters and cooks, awards to two members of the public who had saved lives and an outstanding award to the Extrication Team.

04.07.06 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.

04.08.06 NOTICES OF MOTION UNDER STANDING ORDER 12

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

04.09.06 PRESENTATION - 'REGIONAL CONTROL CENTRES - OVERVIEW'

The Chief Fire Officer (CFO) introduced George Cross (Senior Divisional Officer, Support Services) who gave a presentation entitled 'Regional Control Centres - Overview' (*copy available from Lynda Kenyon, Committee Manager*) in which he described how FiReControl would improve resilience and would result in a more cost effective service. He referred to the Resilience Programme and the three

critical projects being led by the Fire Resilience Directorate, namely the 'New Dimension Project', the FireLink Project' and the 'FiReControl Project'. He explained the regional and local link responsibilities, the structure in the Royal Berkshire Fire and Rescue Service (RBFRS), the timeline for the three implementation phases, the current issues, the Department for Communities and Local Government's (DCLG) key risks, namely the strategic change/impacts, the critical dependencies and financial resources, and the biggest risks overall in respect to legal, people, funding and technology.

The Chairman asked whether separate radio units for use by firefighters within buildings would also need to be procured, and the Deputy Chief Fire Officer confirmed that the existing fireground radios would be retained, however Airwave would be considering this in 2007.

The Chairman asked what the comparative costs were for the current radio system and FireLink. George Cross stated that the detailed costs were not yet known. The Deputy Chief Fire Officer (DCFO) confirmed that the DCLG would cover the revenue or service costs for FireLink until the last Fire and Rescue Service in each region goes live in the Regional Control Rooms.

The Chairman thanked George Cross for his presentation.

04.10.06 THE FORMATION OF THE REGIONAL CONTROL CENTRE COMPANY FOR THE SOUTH EAST REGION

The CFO highlighted the key points relating to the establishment by the South East Regional Management Board (RMB) under the provisions of the Fire and Rescue National Framework 2006-08 of the Local Authority Controlled Company to operate the new Regional Control Centre, as detailed in the report presented.

Councillor Jeff Brooks felt that the Fire Authority needed to be mindful of the associated budgetary implications and was concerned that there was no reference in the report to the Company's running costs and what the Fire Authority's financial contribution would be. The CFO stated that he was not able to give definitive costings at this stage, and that the final agreement to set up the Company had yet to be agreed. He stated, however, that the national Business Case demonstrated achievable savings of 30% but that this still needed to be mapped across to the Royal Berkshire Fire Authority. The Clerk and Monitoring Officer (CMO) confirmed that, as referred to in the Memorandum of Association, in the event of the Company being wound up, the liability to the Fire Authority would be limited to one pound (£1). She also stated that the Members Agreement, which would need to be signed by all nine Fire Authorities in the South East region, would establish the payment formula and how the budget would be set, which would be presented to the Fire Authority in the near future for agreement.

In response to a question from Councillor Mike Adams regarding the proposed payment of a special responsibility allowance of £1,200 per annum to an appointed Fire Authority Member in recognition of the additional time and responsibility involved to attend the Company's Board of Director meetings as and when appropriate, and Paragraph 49 (Remuneration of Directors) of the Articles of Association, the CMO clarified that the payment to the respective Member would be met by the Fire Authority under Local Government legislation. She confirmed

that it was not related to the aforementioned Paragraph within the Articles of Association.

Councillor Mrs Christine Bateson suggested that the decision to appoint one Elected Member to attend the Company's Board of Director meetings, as and when appropriate, be postponed until the New Year, and that further details regarding the expected role and responsibilities be circulated to Members to enable expressions of interest to be put presented. The Chairman supported this proposal. Councillor Jeff Brooks proposed that once expressions of interest had been received, the final decision regarding the Member appointment be delegated to the Executive Committee. This was **unanimously Supported**.

CFO / CMO

Councillor Angus Ross proposed that the recommendations presented be agreed, with the above amendment to item 2.1c, and this was seconded by Councillor Mike Adams.

The Fire Authority:

- a) **Agreed** to become a Subscriber/Member to the Memorandum of Association and **Authorised** the Chief Fire Officer to sign the Memorandum on behalf of the Fire Authority.
- b) **Agreed** to become a Corporate Director of the new Company.
- c) **Agreed** that the final decision to appoint one Elected Member to attend the Company's Board of Director meetings, as and when appropriate, be delegated to the Executive Committee.
- d) **Agreed** that the special responsibility allowance of £1,200 per annum be paid to the Elected Member (as at c) above) to attend the Company's Board of Director meetings, as and when appropriate, in recognition of the additional time and responsibility involved.
- e) **Appointed** the Chairman of the Fire Authority to attend the Company's Member meetings such as the General Meeting, Extraordinary General Meeting and Annual General Meeting.
- f) **Authorised** the Chief Fire Officer, in consultation with the Executive Committee, to negotiate and settle the terms of and sign a Member's Agreement and Service Level Agreement as to how the South East Fire Authorities would exercise their rights as Members of the Company and how Control Room services would be delivered by the Company to each Fire Authority.

Executive Committee

04.11.06 INTEGRATED RISK MANAGEMENT 5-YEAR PLAN - PROPOSALS FOR FULL PUBLIC CONSULTATION

The Fire Authority's approval was sought for those proposals from the Integrated Risk Management 5-Year Plan (IRMP) recommended for full public consultation by the IRMP Working Party and the Executive Committee.

The Assistant Chief Fire Officer (ACFO) reported that the Executive Committee had, at its meeting on 27 November 2006, considered the proposals in the

Integrated Risk Management Plan (IRMP) 5-Year Plan recommended for full public consultation by the IRMP Working Party, and reminded Members of the caveats for each recommendation, as outlined in the report presented. He noted that the final decisions would not be taken by the Fire Authority until the consultation had been completed, and that it was expected that an extraordinary meeting of the Fire Authority would take place in July 2007 to consider these.

The ACFO reported that, following a detailed review of the work already undertaken and the scrutiny of further evidence, the IRMP Working Party and the Executive Committee had recommended the following suite of proposals to the Fire Authority for full public consultation:

a) **Cookham:**

The transfer of two light 'off road' firefighting vehicles into Cookham fire station to replace the pumping appliance. One of these vehicles, the Mercedes Sprinter will be stowed with sufficient equipment to enable it to be used as a first response into the Cookham area.

b) **Sonning:**

The closure of Sonning fire station.

c) **Wargrave/Twyford:**

The transfer of the Retained Duty System (RDS) unit at Wargrave to a new fire station in Twyford.

d) **Dee Road/Caversham Road:**

The closure of Dee Road fire station with the pump being transferred to Caversham Road - Caversham Road would then become a two-pump station.

The ACFO referred to the options for the provision of a satellite fire station in Calcot and the risk reduction strategies to be put in place, as detailed in the report presented.

e) **Windsor:**

A firefighting unit to remain within the urban conurbation of Windsor.

The ACFO stated that this might result in the transfer of the station to another site in Windsor, provided that it could be achieved with a capital receipt to assist other IRMP strategies.

The ACFO reported that **the following three crewing options for Windsor** be offered for full consultation, as follows:

- **12-hour shifts with cover from 0800 to 2000 hours with RDS cover from 2000 to 0800 hours.**
- **12-hour shift only, with Slough covering outside these hours.**
- **Retention of the current 24-hour shift system.**

The ACFO referred to the 0800 to 2000 hours shift which had been identified due to the diurnal pattern of calls showing the activity levels of Windsor's pump being a total of three calls a week in the Windsor area during the period of 2000-0800 hours, and stated that the total number of calls per week (on average) that Windsor's pump attended anywhere in the County was five during these times. He also referred to the issue of Slough fire station's ability to cover Windsor during this time which might be further enhanced following a review of emergency cover in South Buckinghamshire.

f) Wokingham:

Any efficiency savings gained from the other strategies would be used to provide additional cover in Wokingham; the aim being to provide, on an incremental basis, full cover from 0800 to 2000 hours, with the ultimate aim being to provide 24-hour cover by 2012 provided sufficient efficiency savings can be secured from other IRMP strategies.

g) Crowthorne:

Commence a trial of Camberley's pumps broadly covering the Sandhurst, Yorktown and College Town areas.

The ACFO referred to the strategic overview of the IRMP 5-Year Strategic Plan and noted that any savings achieved would be re-invested to improve services. He noted that a review would take place between each phase to ensure that changes were having the desired effect and that further changes planned would continue to improve performance. He noted that the Plan needed to be flexible and agile which would be responsive to change as circumstances dictated.

The ACFO referred to the consultation process which was currently being discussed by the IRMP Working Party and which might be subject to further change, and to the latest set of consultation proposals from Opinion Research Services (ORS), as detailed in the report presented.

Members considered the representation on the proposed focus groups and the four forums, two of which would be with community Councillors and two with key stakeholders.

Councillor Mrs Christine Bateson asked whether members of the public would be included within the stakeholder forums, and the ACFO stated that they would not. He confirmed that the stakeholder forums would include representation from, for example, the Police, the Ambulance Service, Primary Care Trusts and Local Authorities. Councillor Jeff Brooks felt that the proposed community Councillor forums should include representatives from District and Unitary Councils, and that the stakeholder forums should include representatives from the Parish and Town Councils. In addition, he felt that the forums should also be conducted in the Slough, Windsor, Wokingham and Theale areas.

Councillor Mrs Christine Bateson was concerned with the proposal that the public would be consulted via a quantitative web-based survey. She felt that this was discriminatory as not all members of the public had access to the internet. Councillor Angus Ross supported the need for a comprehensive consultation.

Councillor Mrs Christine Bateson proposed that the IRMP Working Party should further consider that a paper-based consultation be conducted.

Councillor Mrs Mary Rose Gliksten supported the need to widen the forums' representation to enable inclusive public engagement, and questioned what the increased costs might incur.

Councillor Angus Ross noted that the report did not specify the consultation timescales. The ACFO confirmed that the consultation would take place over a 3-month period and that it was expected to finish on 12 May 2007, however the dates might change subject to the considerations of the IRMP Working Party.

Councillor Jeff Brooks, as Chairman of the IRMP Working Party, agreed to take the above proposals back to next meeting of the IRMP Working Party on 20 December 2006 for their consideration.

JB

Councillor Peter North proposed that the recommendation presented in the main body of the report be resolved, but that the proposed Consultation Programme for the 5-Year IRMP Action Plan should not be integrated within this. Councillor Jeff Brooks seconded this.

The amended resolution, as detailed below was carried, by a vote of hands of 14 in favour to 3 against:

- **Resolved that only the suite of proposals, as detailed in the main body of the report, and as recommended by both the IRMP Working Party and the Executive Committee, be subject to full public consultation commencing February 2007.**

04.12.06 AUTOMATIC WATER SUPPRESSION SYSTEMS (SPRINKLERS)

The CFO advised Members of the Business Case and the 3 critical options for providing higher risk premises with automatic water suppression systems (sprinklers), as detailed in the report presented.

Consideration was given to whether the Fire Authority should aim to achieve the fitting of sprinkler systems if appropriate, or wherever possible or wherever it was reasonably practical. Councillor Alan North erred on the side of caution to any firm commitment to the fitting of sprinkler systems in terms of costs. Councillor Angus Ross felt that the risk elements needed to be measured initially and that it was important to ensure that the installation of sprinklers was firmly put onto the agendas of Unitary Authorities.

Councillor Mrs Christine Bateson hoped that it would not be too long until new domestic dwellings were fitted with sprinklers.

The Fire Authority:

- **Noted** the information provided within the report.
- **Approved** the strategy that aims to achieve the fitting of sprinkler systems to all new or refurbished schools and the fitting of appropriate sprinkler systems to high-risk residential premises.

04.13.06 EQUALITY AND DIVERSITY STRATEGY REVIEW

The Director of Human Resources introduced Jacky Manning (Senior Personnel Adviser, Equality and Diversity) who provided an update on the progress of the Equality Action Plan, and the updated Diversity and Equality Strategy and associated Action Plan which included the Fire Authority's new Disability Equality Scheme. She referred to the 4 key actions from the Equality Scheme Action Plan, namely the positive action recruitment days, the commencement of firefighters' modular Equality and Diversity training, the instigation of the community call initiative and the statutory requirement to produce a Gender Equality Scheme in 2007.

Jacky Manning also noted that the Royal Berkshire Fire and Rescue Service was well on the way to achieving the double tick disability symbol user status having met the five commitments required by Job Centre Plus.

Councillor Miss Emma Webster fully supported the Action Plans and the updated Diversity and Equality Strategy, and suggested that the Action Plans could be used to link with disabled groups within Berkshire.

Councillor Mike Adams asked if the 15% employment target for operational women was realistic, and the Director of Human Resources confirmed that this was a national target.

The Fire Authority:

- **Approved** the Disability Equality Scheme.
- **Approved** the updated Diversity and Equality Strategy and proposed Action Plan for 2007-10.

04.14.06 COMMUNITY SAFETY FORUM CHAIRMAN

The Fire Authority was invited to ratify the appointment of Councillor Derek Wilson as the Chairman of the Fire Authority's Community Safety Forum.

The Fire Authority:

- **Ratified** the appointment of Councillor Derek Wilson as the Chairman of the Fire Authority's Community Safety Forum.

04.15.06 MONITORING OF HUMAN RESOURCES INFORMATION

The Director of Human Resources informed the Fire Authority of the Executive Committee's decision to change the current arrangements for monitoring Human Resource information regarding the Royal Berkshire Fire and Rescue Service workforce, as detailed in the report presented.

The Fire Authority:

- **Noted** the contents of the report.

04.16.06 2006/2007 BUDGET MONITORING

The Fire Authority was informed of the revenue and capital expenditure against budgets up to the end of November 2006. The CFO introduced Conor Byrne (Senior Accountant) and referred to the additional income received so far this year and to the revenue expenditure. He anticipated that there would be a slight underspend at year-end. Conor Byrne noted that the RBFRS had received substantial additional income so far this year mainly as a result of Community Safety's successful attempts to increase third party funding for their initiatives. He noted that this had been earmarked for additional Community Safety projects, however income was often apportioned to other specific issues in key areas.

The Fire Authority:

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

04.17.06 2007 WORLD RESCUE ORGANISATION EXTRICATION COMPETITION (SOUTH AFRICA)

The DCFO was pleased to report that the Extrication Team had been placed second overall in the World Rescue Organisation competition which had taken place in Cape Town, South Africa from 9-14 October 2006.

The DCFO introduced Ian Cox (Station Manager) and Paul Maynard (Assistant Divisional Officer), two of the Extrication Team members, who gave a short presentation entitled 'Vehicle Rescue Team' (*copy available from Lynda Kenyon, Committee Manager*) in which they described how the Team had evolved, the competitions that the Team had taken part in during 2006, and their respective achievements, and the competitions which would be held during 2007. Paul Maynard invited Members to the Southern Counties Regional Challenge which would be taking place at Whitley Wood Fire Station on 4 May 2007. He also alluded to the skills learnt during the competitions which had advantaged firefighters during extrication rescues within Berkshire.

Ian Cox conveyed his thanks, on behalf of the Team, to the Fire Authority for their continued support.

Councillor Miss Emma Webster congratulated the Team on their recent success and stated that the professionalism shown by firefighters during a recent extrication exercise that she had taken part in was a credit to the RBFRS.

Councillor Jagjit Grewal wished the Team every success for the 2007 competitions, and this was endorsed by all the Members.

04.18.06 CHAIRMAN'S REPORT - REGIONAL MANAGEMENT BOARD MEETING HELD ON 18 OCTOBER 2006

The Chairman informed the Fire Authority of the meeting of the Regional Management Board (RMB) with the Chief Fire Officer held at Reigate on 18 October 2006.

The Fire Authority:

- **Noted** the Chairman's report from the Regional Management Board meeting on 18 October 2006.

04.19.06 ASSOCIATION OF COUNCILS FOR THE THAMES VALLEY REGION (ACTVaR) - REPORT FROM THE ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING HELD ON 29 SEPTEMBER 2006

Councillor Andrew Bradley informed the Fire Authority of the meeting of the ACTVaR's Annual General Meeting held on 29 September 2006.

The Fire Authority:

- **Noted** the report from the meeting of the ACTVaR's Annual General Meeting held on 29 September 2006.

04.20.06 DATE OF NEXT FIRE AUTHORITY MEETING

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

- **Wednesday 7 February 2007 at 6.30pm**
Wokingham District Council

The Chairman suggested that the annual meeting in June 2007 be held at the newly refurbished Shaw House at West Berkshire District Council.

LK

The Fire Authority **Noted** that the subsequent meetings of the Fire Authority would take place on:

- **Wednesday 27 June 2007 at 6.30pm**
- **Wednesday 10 October 2007 at 6.30pm**
- **Wednesday 12 December 2007 at 6.30pm**

04.21.06 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 11 October 2006 (*Paragraphs 1, 2, 3, 4 and 5*).
 - Part II Minutes of Committees, Working Parties and other Groups (*Paragraphs 1, 2, 3, 4 and 5*).

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

04.22.06 PART II MINUTES OF THE MEETING HELD ON 11 OCTOBER 2006

The Part II Minutes of the last meeting held on Wednesday 11 October 2006 were received and **Approved** as a correct record, and signed by the Chairman.

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

The Fire Authority was advised of the Part II meetings of the Committees, Working Parties and Other Groups that had taken place since last reported to the Fire Authority on 11 October 2006.

The Fire Authority:

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