

MEETING OF THE ROYAL BERKSHIRE FIRE AUTHORITY (PART I)

Held on Thursday 16 April 2009

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



Those present:

Councillor Mrs Christine Bateson	Councillor Phillip Bicknell
Councillor Andrew Bradley	Councillor Mrs Prue Bray
Councillor Jeff Brooks	Councillor Dr Paul Bryant (Chairman)
Councillor Colin Dudley	Councillor Adrian Edwards
Councillor Geoff Findlay OBE	Councillor Paul Gittings
Councillor Chris Harris	Councillor John Lenton
Councillor Mrs Kathy Newbound	Councillor Fred Pugh
Councillor Angus Ross	Councillor Alan Ward
Councillor Miss Emma Webster	Councillor Sean Wright

In Attendance:

- Iain Cox (Chief Fire Officer)
- Mr John Giles (Independent Member, Standards Committee)
- Paul Southern (Assistant Chief Fire Officer)
- Caroline Redzikowska (Clerk and Monitoring Officer)
- Sylvia Simmonds (Personal Assistant to the Chief Fire Officer)
- Andrew Vallance (Authority Treasurer)

Observers: Officers, Royal Berkshire Fire and Rescue Service

02.01.09 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Apologies for absence were received from the Councillor Chris Bowring, Councillor Mrs Sue Evans, Councillor Jagjit Grewal, Councillor Mrs Pauline Helliard-Symons, Councillor Peter Jones, Councillor Iain McCracken and David Wallace (Director of Human Resources).

02.02.09 DECLARATION OF INTERESTS

The following Declaration of Interest was made:

- Councillor Angus Ross declared a personal interest as the Fire Authority's representative and Board Member on the South East Fire and Rescue Service Control Centre Ltd (SEFRCCCL), in respect to Agenda Item 11 (Appointment of a Fire Authority Representative to attend the Annual General Meeting of the South East Fire and Rescue Control Centre Limited).

No further Declarations of Interest were made.

02.03.09 ELECTION OF VICE-CHAIRMAN

The Chairman invited nominations for the position of Vice-Chairman of the Royal Berkshire Fire Authority following Councillor Mrs Christine Bateson's resignation as Vice-Chairman of the Fire Authority with effect from 23 March 2009.

Action

Councillor Mrs Prue Bray proposed Councillor Jeff Brooks, and this was seconded by Councillor Mrs Newbound.

Councillor Phillip Bicknell nominated Councillor Colin Dudley and this was seconded by Councillor Alan Ward. On being put to the vote, Councillor Colin Dudley was elected by 12 votes in favour to 5 against.

The Fire Authority Resolved that Councillor Colin Dudley be elected Vice-Chairman of the Royal Berkshire Fire Authority for the remainder of the year (2008/2009) until the Annual meeting of the Fire Authority on 24 June 2009.

02.04.09 MINUTES OF THE MEETING HELD ON 11 FEBRUARY 2009

The Minutes of the last meeting held on Wednesday 11 February 2009 were received and **Approved** as a correct record for signing by the Chairman. The following are matters arising from those Minutes.

1.12.09 Translation Policy (Draft) – Councillor Fred Pugh informed Members that the Community Safety Forum (CSF) endorsed this Policy. The Chief Fire Officer informed Members that standard translations of core languages would be charged at a nominal rate, but that special translations would cost more and the cost of this is unknown until a request is made, but that all translation costs would be contained within the existing budgets.

1.14.09 Budget Monitoring – The Authority Treasurer confirmed that the Fire Authority's assets will be managed more effectively through one of the new Committees resulting from the Committee structural changes.

02.05.09 MINUTES OF STANDING COMMITTEES, WORKING PARTIES AND OTHER GROUPS

The Fire Authority was advised of the meetings of the Audit Committee, Community Safety Forum, Executive Committee, Fire Liaison Group, Integrated Risk Management Plan Working Party, Overview and Scrutiny Committee and Property and Property Resources Committee that have taken place since reported to the last meeting of the Fire Authority on 11 February 2009.

The Fire Authority Noted the Minutes of the Standing Committees, Working Parties and other Groups.

02.06.09 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.

02.07.09 CHAIRMAN'S COMMUNICATIONS

- a) The Chairman expressed his thanks, on behalf of the other Members, for Councillor Mrs Christine Bateson's valued help and support whilst in the position of Vice-Chair of Royal Berkshire Fire Authority.

- b) The Chairman advised that the Chief Fire Officer had been awarded the Queen's Fire Service Medal (QFSM) in the New Years Honours List. The investiture took place at Windsor Castle on 7 April 2009 and, on behalf of all Members of the Fire Authority, the Chairman congratulated the Chief Fire Officer for this remarkable achievement.
- c) The Chairman reported that he had attended the Elected Member Development Programme at the Fire Service College from 27-29 March 2009 which he found useful and asked Members if they would benefit from a trip around the Fire Service College site. 12 Members expressed an interest and this will be arranged later in the year.
- d) The Chairman also reported that he had attended the LGA Conference in Bristol from 10-12 March 2009, together with the Vice Chair (Councillor Mrs Christine Bateson), Councillor Angus Ross and the Chief Fire Officer which was titled "Improving Outcomes for Communities through partnership working – the role of Fire and Rescue".
- e) The Chairman reported that he attended the Regional Management Board (RMB) meeting held at Surrey Fire and Rescue Service on 1 April 2009 with Group Manager Paul Maynard and had issued a briefing note to all Fire Authority Members.
- f) The Chairman reported that he had attended the LGA Fire Services Forum in London on 2 April 2009 with Councillor Fred Pugh entitled "Improving Fire Safety in Local Communities – New Ways Forward" and had issued a briefing note to all Fire Authority Members.
- g) The Chairman advised that Dan Daly, a Fire Officer involved with the 9/11 disaster in New York City has attended the New Recruits Induction at the Training Centre on 16 April 2009, together with the Chief Fire Officer, and that, in collaboration with the Mayor of Newbury, Mr Daly would be giving a talk on the 9/11 incident at The Frank Hutchins Hall, Thatcham at 1930hours on 17 April 2009.

CFO/
Committee
Manager

02.08.09 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.

02.09.09 NOTICES OF MOTION UNDER STANDING ORDER 44

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

02.10.09 REVIEW OF THE STRUCTURE OF THE FIRE AUTHORITY

The Fire Authority was presented with options for the future structure of the Fire Authority, as recommended by the Executive Committee, the salient points of discussion and consideration being:

- **Reduce the Membership of the Authority to 22.**

The Executive Committee had tasked the Clerk and Monitoring Officer to look at the size of the Authority and present options for 16, 22 and 25 Authority seats. These options had been considered and it was felt that 16 was too great a reduction as Members would need to give a high priority to Fire Authority business to avoid inquorate meetings and to ensure that the Authority was not prevented from carrying out its business. It was felt, however, that a reduction to 22 would be feasible and the Executive Committee agreed that this option should be recommended to the Fire Authority.

Councillor Jeff Brooks stated his concern that the report did not address the fact that some Members have taken on more Fire Authority work than others and informed the meeting that the Liberal Democrats would not support the motion to reduce the Membership of the Authority to 22 as it does not achieve anything, and would recommend that the Membership remain at 25 (but that due to changes in the size of the electorate in Berkshire overall, the number of seats on the Fire Authority would automatically drop to 24 from June 2009).

It was therefore **Proposed** to retained the status quo of 25 (de facto 24 from June 2009) and review in one year. This proposal was put to the vote and unanimously carried.

- **Adopt the proposed revised Committee Structure with effect from the Annual meeting to be held on 24 June 2009.**

The Clerk and Monitoring Officer (CMO) went through the current and proposed Committee Structure and informed Members that she had surveyed all the other Combined Fire Authorities before making her report. The CMO also informed Members that she will be providing guidance on what a "Champion" might do.

Councillor Jeff Brooks informed Members that the Meeting Structure was well thought out and increased Member activity, however he was concerned with the layout of Appendix 2 – Proposed Structure, especially in relation to the Management Committee being left "out of the loop" and the lack of power that this Committee would hold as, at the current time, many other Committees' reports, Minutes and recommendations are reviewed by the Executive Committee before going to the Fire Authority. He further went on to say that this Committee was established so that senior Members of the Fire Authority came together as a management body. Councillor Angus Ross suggested that the Fire Authority review this structure with a proposal on the delegated powers that are both legal and sensible of the various Committees and Councillor Mrs Prue Bray agreed with this suggestion.

The Clerk and Monitoring Officer informed Members that Royal Berkshire Fire Authority do not operate a cabinet system and that the proposed Management Committee would be the same as all the other Committees and would be dependent upon the powers that the Fire Authority gave it. She suggested that the way to solve this problem would be to approve the structure as it is and change the terms of reference for each of the

Committees (with the exception of the Disciplinary, Appeals and Grievance (DAG) and Integrated Risk Management Plan (IRMP) Committees).

Many other Members expressed their concern about where the Management Committee lay within the proposed structure and agreed that, as a matter of principle, no Committee (with the exception of DAG and IRMP) could take a report to the Fire Authority without first taking it to the Management Committee.

Councillor Alan Ward recommended to propose the new Committee Structure in principle, with the Clerk and Monitoring Officer reviewing the diagram, which was **Rejected** by Members. The new diagram is to show a chain of communication to the Fire Authority, therefore taking into account Members concerns that a robust system be put in place.

Councillor Miss Emma Webster therefore **Proposed** that Members look at the changes to the Committee Structure, work on what Committees to elect at the AGM in June, review the Proposed Structure diagram and establish the Terms of Reference for each of the Committees. This was seconded by Councillor Geoff Findlay and unanimously agreed.

Members directed that Officers prepare revised Terms of Reference for Management, Audit and Overview and Strategic Asset Management Committees for consideration by the Executive Committee on 18 May 2009 prior to the Annual General Meeting.

CMO

- **Invite the constituent Unitary Councils to appoint Members for a period of four years.**

The Clerk and Monitoring Officer informed Members that, with the exception of The Royal Borough of Windsor and Maidenhead, all Unitary Authorities made annual appointments to the Fire Authority and the Executive Committee recommended that the Fire Authority request constituent Unitary Councils to appoint Members for a 4 year period. This would mean that only one Register of Interests and one Declaration of Acceptance of Office need only be made and would allow a proper Member development programme that would greatly benefit new Members.

Councillor Angus Ross supported this request in principle with a proposed amendment to add to the end – “subject to them remaining as Elected Members” and this was unanimously agreed.

The Fire Authority:

- **Proposed** to retain the status quo of membership of the Fire Authority at 25 (de facto 24 from June 2009) and to review in one year.
- **Proposed** that Members look at the changes to the Committee Structure, work on what Committees to elect at the AGM in June 2009, review the Proposed Structure diagram and establish the Terms of Reference for each of the Committees.
- **Accepted** the recommendation of the Executive Committee that the

CMO
June 2010

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Members

CMO

constituent Unitary Councils be invited to appoint Members for a period of 4 years, subject to them remaining as Elected Members.

02.11.09 APPOINTMENT OF A FIRE AUTHORITY REPRESENTATIVE TO ATTEND THE ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING OF THE SOUTH EAST FIRE AND RESCUE CONTROL CENTRE LIMITED

The Fire Authority considered its representative appointment to attend, speak and vote on behalf of the Royal Berkshire Fire Authority at the first Annual General Meeting of the South East Fire and Rescue Control Centre Limited (SEFRCCCL).

Councillor Mrs Christine Bateson moved that the Recommendation be approved, and this was seconded by Councillor Colin Dudley, and was carried.

The **Fire Authority Approved** the Executive Committee's recommendation that the Chairman be appointed to attend, speak and vote on behalf of the Royal Berkshire Fire Authority at the first Annual General Meeting of the South East Fire and Rescue Control Centre Limited (SEFRCCCL).

02.12.09 DATE OF NEXT FIRE AUTHORITY MEETING (ANNUAL MEETING)

The **Fire Authority Noted** that the next meeting (Annual meeting) of the Fire Authority would take place on **Wednesday 24 June 2009 at 6.30pm** at Desborough Hall, The Royal Borough of Windsor and Maidenhead, Town Hall, St Ives Road, Maidenhead, Berkshire, SL6 1RF.

02.13.09 FORWARD PLAN

The **Fire Authority Noted** the Forward Plan.

02.14.09 EXCLUSION OF THE PUBLIC FROM THE MEETING

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 February 2009 (*Paragraphs 1 & 3*)

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

02.15.09 PART II MINUTES OF THE MEETING HELD ON 11 FEBRUARY 2009

The Part II Minutes of the last meeting held on Wednesday 11 February 2009 were received and **Approved** as a correct record, for signing by the Chairman.