

MEETING OF THE ROYAL BERKSHIRE FIRE AUTHORITY

Held on Wednesday 17 February 2010

Council Chamber, Bracknell Forest Borough Council,
Easthampstead House, Town Square, Bracknell, Berkshire,
RG12 1AQ



Those

present:

| | |
|---|---------------------------------------|
| Councillor Dr Paul Bryant (<i>Chairman</i>) | Councillor Chris Harris |
| Councillor Mrs Christine Bateson | Councillor Mrs Pauline Helliar-Symons |
| Councillor Phillip Bicknell | Councillor Peter Jones |
| Councillor Mrs Prue Bray | Councillor Iain McCracken |
| Councillor Chris Bowring | Councillor Mrs Kathy Newbound |
| Councillor Jeff Brooks | Councillor Fred Pugh |
| Councillor Colin Dudley | Councillor Angus Ross |
| Councillor Adrian Edwards | Councillor John Lenton |
| Councillor Paul Gittings | Councillor Alan Ward |

In Attendance:

Olaf Baars (Deputy Chief Fire Officer)
Conor Byrne (Senior Accountant)
Iain Cox (Chief Fire Officer)
Mr John Giles (Independent Member, Standards Committee)
Lynda Kenyon (Committee Manager)
Bryan Morgan (Area Manager, Support Services)
Caroline Redzikowska (Clerk and Monitoring Officer)
Fayth Rowe (Committee Officer)
Paul Southern (Assistant Chief Fire Officer)
Andrew Vallance (Authority Treasurer)
David Wallace (Director of Human Resources)
Mr Ronald Webb (Independent Member, Standards Committee)

Observers:

Officers, Royal Berkshire Fire and Rescue Service
Representative Bodies
Mr Richard Coates (Horton Parish resident)

Action

72. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Apologies for absence were received from Councillor Andrew Bradley, Councillor Mohammed Rasib, Councillor Miss Emma Webster, Councillor Sean Wright and Councillor Raja Zarait.

73. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

The following Declarations of Interest were made by Members:

- a) Councillor Angus Ross declared a Personal non Prejudicial Interest as the 2009/10 Fire Authority's representative and Board Member on the South East Fire and Rescue Service Control Centre Ltd (SEFRCCL) in respect to Agenda Item 17 (South East Fire and Rescue Service Control Centre Ltd).

No further Declarations of Interest were made.

74. Minutes of the Meeting held on 9 December 2009

Resolved:

- a) That the Minutes of the meeting held on 9 December 2009 be Approved for signing by the Chairman.

The Chairman noted that the actions from the last meeting had been discharged.

75. PARTICIPATION OF THE PUBLIC UNDER STANDING ORDERS 19 AND 25

The Chairman reported that one Question had been received under Standing Order 25 from Mr Richard Coates (Horton Parish resident). At the invitation of the Chairman, Mr Richard Coates put his question:

“A fire that started with a simple timber fence and developed to totally destroy 2 large houses at Ouseley Road, Wraysbury on the 12 September 2009 at 0145 hours demonstrated the already severe limitations in the provision of emergency fire response in parishes supported by the Windsor fire appliance.

Multiple fire crews from outside Berkshire Fire and Rescue Service were required who did not have the local knowledge/alliance that may well have resulted in a significantly different outcome if Berkshire appliances were immediately available.

The operational issues were so serious that during the incident the Hampshire Fire and Rescue Service were called in to begin an independent investigation following complaints from residents - an unprecedented request during a serious fire incident:

- *limitations in water supplies not immediately recognisable and their use;*
- *an apparent lack of communication between crews;*
- *officers paged and not responding to calls;*
- *a combined delay of over 3 hours before Gas Board requested and arrived on site;*
- *four hours after requests for diesel for fire appliances, the fuel still not obtained.*

Will the Chief Fire Officer and the Fire Authority now admit that cuts already made to the operational response are having such a direct and serious detrimental effect on the effectiveness of response to incidents of fire, that to further reduce emergency cover by taking out the Windsor appliance at night will inevitably lead to future incidents such as that at Ouseley Road, Wraysbury?”

At the invitation of the Chairman, the Chief Fire Officer provided a full response to each of Mr Coates' points (*a copy of the response attached at Appendix 1 to the Minutes*). The Chief Fire Officer confirmed that a copy of the response would be provided to Mr Richard Coates.

Mr Richard Coates asked one supplementary question, and, in referring back to his points regarding operational response to the aforementioned fire incident at Ouseley Road, Wraysbury, he asked whether the Chief Fire Officer would suspend the implementation of the Integrated Risk Management Plan and the closure of Windsor fire station at night between 8pm and 8am. The Chief Fire Officer reiterated he did not believe that the closure of Windsor fire station at night would have altered the outcome of this incident, and that the Royal Berkshire Fire and Rescue Service was resilient in this case. He confirmed that members of the

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public were welcome to respond to future considerations of the Integrated Risk Management Plan through the consultative process.

Councillor John Lenton conveyed his thanks to the Deputy Chief Fire Officer and to Andy Mancey (Area Manager, Response) for attending a recent meeting of Wraysbury Parish Council, and he confirmed that the Parish Council was satisfied with the operational response provided by the Royal Berkshire Fire and Rescue Service to the fire incident at Ouseley Road, Wraysbury.

76. RECEIPT OF ANNOUNCEMENTS

The Chairman referred to the recent adverse weather, and to the partnership work of the Royal Berkshire Fire and Rescue Service and the South Central Ambulance Service during this period. He read a letter received from South Central Ambulance Service which conveyed its sincere thanks and support provided by the Royal Berkshire Fire and Rescue Service. The Chairman stated that he was extremely proud of the way the two emergency services had worked together.

The Chairman reported that he had attended the following meetings:

- Regional Management Board (report provided at Agenda Item 16).
- A 'Fire Sprinklers Around the Worldsprinkler' event at the House of Commons with the Chief Fire Officer.
- Fire Management Committee.
- Local Government Association Fire Forum.

77. QUESTIONS FROM MEMBERS UNDER STANDING ORDER 30

There were no Questions received from the Fire Authority Members under Standing Order 30.

78. NOTICES OF MOTION UNDER STANDING ORDER 44

There were no submissions of Notices of Motion received under the provisions of the Fire Authority's Rules of Procedure.

79. RECOMMENDATIONS OF COMMITTEES

Resolved:

- a) That the Fire Authority's next meeting on Wednesday 21 April 2010 be cancelled in the absence of sufficient business.
- b) That the Arms Length Trading Company's annual report, in this instance, be referred to the Management Committee to consider at its meeting in May 2010.
- c) That the other items of business be deferred to the next meeting of the Fire Authority in June 2010.

80. ISSUES ARISING FROM THE AUDIT AND PERFORMANCE REVIEW COMMITTEE

Resolved:

- a) That it be noted that there had been no reports referred by the Audit and Performance Review Committee.

81. BUDGET (2010/11)

The Fire Authority considered the Budget requirements and the precept for 2010/11.

The Authority Treasurer took Members through the 2010/11 budget summary presented, as recommended by the Management Committee, the recommendation being based on a budget of £33,802,000 with a Band D Council Tax of £55.66, which realised a budget increase of 0.92% and a Council Tax increase of 1%. He referred specifically to the grant, reserves, budget scenarios for Council Tax increases of 0%, 0.5% and 1%, the Medium Term Financial Plan for 2010-2013, the 3-year illustrative budget scenarios, the Revenue bids, the Revenue savings, the Capital bids, the Prudential Code Report and the Treasury Management Strategy Report for 2010/11.

The Chairman advised that the 0% pay increase allowed within the 2010/11 budget was in line with other Fire and Rescue Services.

In response to Councillor Alan Ward's question as to how much of the total Revenue Support and NNDR (National Non-Domestic Rates) grant funding was from the NNDR grant, the Senior Accountant confirmed that £1.956m was received from the Revenue Support Grant and £13.467m from Business Rates (NNDR).

Councillor Chris Bowring asked the Authority Treasurer if he was satisfied that adequate provision had been made for inflation within the presented budget. The Authority Treasurer stated that there were risks in terms of inflation and the potential for any pay awards, however he believed that the level of Reserves held could be used to meet any estimated future expenditure in terms of risk.

In response to Councillor Mrs Christine Bateson, the Authority Treasurer confirmed that allocation had been made for Retained Duty System firefighter pensions within the budget, and that any further impact to the budget in future years would subsequently be required to be factored into the budget.

Councillor Jeff Brooks stated that the proposed Council Tax increase of 1% equated to an increase per household of £0.55 this year, which was in fact one of the smallest increases being recommended and which, he believed, provided extremely good value for money.

Resolved, unanimously:

That in accordance with the Local Government Finance Act 1992, that the following amounts be now calculated for the year 2010/11:

- 1 The aggregate council taxbase of the six Berkshire unitary Authorities notified as 331,102.44;
- 2a £34,819,528.81 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 £1,018,000 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 £33,801,528.81 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 £15,422,743 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 A deficit of £50,376 being the net aggregate of the surpluses and deficits on billing Authority' Collection Funds to be received in 2009/10;

2f £55.66 being the amount at (2c) plus 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 **That, in accordance with Section 40(2)(a) of the Act, the following amounts of Council Tax for the year 2009/10 be set for each of the categories of dwellings shown below:**

| Valuation Band | £ |
|----------------|--------|
| A | 37.11 |
| B | 43.29 |
| C | 49.48 |
| D | 55.66 |
| E | 68.03 |
| F | 80.40 |
| G | 92.77 |
| H | 111.32 |

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 **That, in accordance with Section 40(2)(b) of the Act, the following amounts payable be set as precepts by the billing authorities for the year 2010/11:**

| Authority | Taxbase | Precept | Collection Fund Surplus/ (Deficit) | Net Yield from Council Tax |
|------------------------|-------------------|----------------------|------------------------------------|----------------------------|
| Bracknell Forest | 43,800.00 | 2,437,908.00 | 0.00 | 2,437,908.00 |
| Reading | 52,897.00 | 2,944,247.02 | (28,166.00) | 2,916,081.02 |
| Slough | 41,014.10 | 2,282,844.81 | 0.00 | 2,282,844.81 |
| West Berkshire | 63,402.90 | 3,529,005.41 | (16,324.00) | 3,512,681.41 |
| Windsor and Maidenhead | 64,992.24 | 3,617,468.08 | (25,813.00) | 3,591,655.08 |
| Wokingham | 64,996.20 | 3,617,688.49 | 19,927.00 | 3,637,615.49 |
| | | | | |
| Total | 331,102.44 | 18,429,161.81 | (50,376.00) | 18,378,785.81 |

3 **That the Medium Term Financial Plan set out in Appendix B, the Capital Programme set out in Appendix E and the Prudential Indicators, Treasury Strategy and Investment Strategy set out in Appendix F of the presented budget be Agreed.**

82. INTEGRATED RISK MANAGEMENT 5-YEAR PLAN - CONSULTATION REPORT FOR 2010-2015 5-YEAR PLAN

Councillor Mrs Christine Bateson, Councillor Phillip Bicknell, Councillor John Lenton and Councillor Mrs Kathy Newbound retired from the meeting for this item.

The Fire Authority was advised of the results of the Consultation process for the 2010/11 Action Plan and the 5-Year Integrated Risk Management Plan for 2010/11 - 2015/16, and consideration was given to any required changes to the 2010/11 Action Plan.

In response to the Chairman, the Area Manager (Support Services) reported that the Royal Berkshire Fire and Rescue Service's Integrated Risk Management Plan Team meeting in January 2010 had had to be cancelled due to the adverse weather conditions, and, as yet, the Team had not been able to consider the Fire Brigades Union's response to the Consultation. He confirmed, however, that there were no implications in terms of the publication of the document, and that the points raised by the Fire Brigades Union would be considered in the near future.

Councillor Angus Ross showed his appreciation to the Assistant Chief Fire Officer for consulting with, and providing a full briefing to, Crowthorne Parish Council.

The Vice-Chairman stated that the reference within the presented report to "Winkfield Row" Parish Council should have read "Winkfield Parish Council". He confirmed that Winkfield Parish Council was satisfied with, and accepting of, the proposals.

In response to questions from Councillor Peter Jones, the Assistant Chief Fire Officer confirmed that real incident data was available to support attendance times; and the Chief Fire Officer stated that there were still a number of issues to be resolved, for example the future response model, the Retained Duty Review and property portfolios, before the final site outcomes for the current Dee Road fire station and the Headquarters' buildings were known.

Councillor Iain McCracken retired from the meeting.

Resolved:

- a) That the report and the responses to the Consultation be Noted.
- b) That the proposed changes to the Plan in paragraph 3.9 of the presented report be Agreed and the document amended accordingly.

ACFO

Councillor Mrs Christine Bateson, Councillor Phillip Bicknell, Councillor Mrs Kathy Newbound and Councillor John Lenton returned to the meeting at the commencement of the following item.

83. INTRODUCTION OF PRIVATE MEDICAL INSURANCE

The Fire Authority was provided with additional information to enable it to complete its consideration of the introduction of Private Medical Insurance for Royal Berkshire Fire and Rescue staff.

Councillor Mrs Pauline Helliari-Symons conveyed her thanks to the Director of Human Resources for the work carried out to better enable the Fire Authority to make an informed decision.

Councillor Mrs Pauline Helliari-Symons moved that Recommendation 2.2 presented be Agreed, and this was seconded by Councillor Adrian Edwards.

Resolved, unanimously:

- a) That That the additional information provided in the report be Noted.
- b) That a Group Private Medical Insurance Scheme without a Fire Authority contribution be established and made available to all Royal Berkshire Fire and Rescue Service staff, and that the existing Private Medical Expenses policy continues to be utilised in individual cases of long-term sickness absence where this provides cost benefit to the Fire Authority be Agreed.

Councillor Iain McCracken returned to the meeting at the commencement of the next item.

84. 2009/10 BUDGET MONITORING

The Fire Authority was advised of the revenue and capital expenditure against budgets up to the end of January 2010.

In response to Councillor Adrian Edwards, the Assistant Chief Fire Officer was pleased to report that the revenue underspend identified within Supplies had been achieved as a result of, for example, the appointment of the Procurement Officer and the South East Workwear contract, both of which had contributed to the savings made. The Chairman congratulated the Officers involved in realising these savings.

Resolved:

- a) That the 2009/10 Budget Monitoring Report be Noted.

85. FIRE AND RESCUE CAREER AWARENESS EVENTS

The Fire Authority was updated on the Career Awareness events currently undertaken by the Human Resources Team and the Service Delivery Officers.

The Chief Fire Officer reported that the Royal Berkshire Fire and Rescue Service had assisted in the Communities and Local Government (CLG) National Recruitment Campaign 'Ordinary People, Extraordinary Careers' event held in Slough on 9 February 2010.

The Chief Fire Officer noted Members' keenness in promoting both community safety messages and awareness of the Fire and Rescue Service within Primary Schools. The Deputy Chief Fire Officer reported that it was often difficult for the Service to access schools' curriculums to promote community safety. The Chief Fire Officer agreed to advise Members of the data to support both the visits made to Primary Schools, and of the Berkshire schools visited and targeted as part of career awareness campaigns.

The Deputy Chief Fire Officer reassured Members that all Royal Berkshire Fire and Rescue Service staff were well briefed on career advice when attending school and community events.

Resolved:

- a) That the report be Noted.

86. ENVIRONMENTAL UPDATE REPORT

The Fire Authority was informed of the progress that has been made to improve the Royal Berkshire Fire and Rescue Service's environmental performance and arrangements.

Councillor Paul Gittings welcomed the presented report and conveyed his thanks both to Mike Cox (Environmental Systems Adviser) for his valuable work to realise

**CFO /
Area Mgr
(P&P)**

environmental changes, and to Councillor Colin Dudley as the Fire Authority's Environmental Champion.

The Assistant Chief Fire Officer, in responding to Councillor Mrs Prue Bray's question as to whether the Service was eligible for Salix funding (*Salix being an independent company funded by the Carbon Trust to work with the public sector to reduce carbon emissions through investment in energy efficiency*) advised that although the Service was eligible, he did not believe that this was the most viable way of realising outcomes.

In response to Councillor Adrian Edwards, the Deputy Chief Fire Officer confirmed that alternative fuels were being considered for use in fire appliances.

Councillor Colin Dudley conveyed his thanks to Area Manager Bryan Morgan for an excellent report.

Resolved, unanimously:

- a) That the report be Noted.
- b) That the frequency and timing of reports to the Management Committee and the Fire Authority be aligned to provide combined 6-monthly updates to the Fire Authority, commencing September 2010, be Agreed.

Councillor Paul Gittings retired from the meeting.

87. REGIONAL MANAGEMENT BOARD - CHAIRMAN'S REPORT

The Chairman provided an update report as the Fire Authority's appointed Member to the Regional Management Board.

The Chief Fire Officer agreed to Councillor Angus Ross' proposal, supported by the Chairman, that a report be presented to the next meeting to commend to the Berkshire Unitary Authorities that sprinklers be fitted to all Registered Social Landlords (RSLs) properties and any buildings used by vulnerable groups. The Chief Fire Officer agreed to include example references such as the Meadway Development and the recent fire incident in a tower block in Camberwell, including fire safety issues associated with such buildings.

Resolved:

- a) That the report be Noted.

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

The Fire Authority received a report from Councillor Angus Ross, as the 2009/10 Fire Authority's representative and Board Member on the South East Fire and Rescue Service Control Centre Ltd (SEFRCCCL), from the SEFRCCCL meeting held on 5 February 2010.

Resolved:

- a) That the report be Noted.

89. ASSOCIATION OF COUNCILS OF THE THAMES VALLEY REGION (ACTVAR)

Councillor Jeff Brooks, as the Leader of the Liberal Democrat Group, apologised that Councillor Owen Jeffery (Fire Authority's appointed ACTVaR Member representative) had not provided a report to support this item, and he confirmed that he would be asking Councillor Owen Jeffery to provide a written report to the next meeting.

**Committee
Manager**
(Forward
Plan)

CFO
Agenda
(30.06.10)

Cllr Jeffery
(Agenda
30.06.10)

90. MINUTES OF THE STANDING COMMITTEES WORKING PARTIES AND OTHER GROUPS

The Fire Authority received the Minutes of the following meetings of the Fire Authority's Committees:

- Audit and Performance Review Committee - 17 December 2009 (not yet approved);
- Management Committee - 25 January 2010 (not yet approved).

Resolved:

- a) That the next meeting of the Audit and Performance Review Committee re-scheduled from Monday 15 March 2010 to Thursday 18 March 2010 be Noted.

91. FORWARD PLAN

Resolved:

- a) That the Forward Plan be Noted.

92. DATE OF NEXT MEETING(S)

In noting that the Fire Authority had previously Agreed to cancel its meeting on 21 April 2010, the Chairman advised that the next meeting would now take place on Wednesday 30 June 2010 at 6.30pm (venue to be advised).

Appendix 1

RESPONSE TO MR RICHARD COATES' QUESTION TO THE FIRE AUTHORITY MEETING OF 17 FEBRUARY 2010

Mr Coates' observation:

A fire that started with a simple timber fence and developed to totally destroy 2 large houses at Ouseley Road, Wraysbury on the 12th September 2009 at 0145 hours demonstrated the already severe limitations in the provision of emergency fire response in parishes supported by the Windsor fire appliance.

The Incident started in an 'lean to' structure attached to number 57 and, due to the highly flammable timber and plastic roof construction, rapidly entered the roof spaces of both properties due to their low eaves and proximity to the outbuilding. Both the independent and internal fire investigation reports identify the approximate ignition time as 0120 hours with the first call being received at 0145 hours. The intervening 25 minutes allowed the fire to fully develop and enter the roof spaces of both properties. This is confirmed as the first appliance in attendance sent a radio message upon arrival confirming a full roof fire. The significant delay between ignition and the first call being made to the fire service is the primary contributing factor to the incident escalation.

The assumption that there are severe limitations in emergency response are incorrect as the first two appliances arrived within 10 and 11 minutes of the call being received, both of these appliances were the correct ones as identified within the pre determined attendance of two pumping appliances to a property fire. This is in line with the IRMP response standards of 10 and 12 minutes. The Windsor appliance is identified as sixth on the list for attendance to this area. Each request for additional appliances resulted in the correct appliances being sent and every appliance requested was available at the time of the incident and was despatched. At the height of the fire there were 8 fire service appliances and 4 specialist vehicles in attendance with no lack of availability and there were sufficient available appliances to cover the rest of Berkshire. This, in spite of a concurrently occurring major fire in Sandhurst.

Mr Coates' observation:

Multiple fire crews from outside Berkshire F&RS were required who did not have the local knowledge/alliance that may well have resulted in a significantly different outcome if Berkshire appliances were immediately available.

The Berkshire appliances that were requested were all immediately available and attended the scene. All of these vehicles are fitted with an on board computerised 'Operational Risk Intelligence System' that gave them full access to the required level of local risk and resource knowledge. As previously stated, the fire had breached both roof spaces before Fire Service arrival, and crews entered both properties, however they were unable to fully access the roof spaces due to the extreme heat and potential for collapse of the roof structures. Crews from other Brigades were given the required details upon arrival at the incident. All relevant local information was available to the first attending crews via the on board systems fitted to Langley's appliance.

Additionally the same local risk and resource information is available within Brigade Control and this is passed to attending appliances upon request.

Approved - 30.06.10

It should also be noted that at the same time as this incident there were several

Berkshire Fire Appliances attending a major fire in Sandhurst. These two incidents were both dealt with within the standard operating procedures of the Royal Berkshire Fire and Rescue Service, with no compromise of fire cover in other parts of the county.

It has been common practice to utilise 'mutual aid' arrangements within the British Fire Service since at least 1947. This 'mutual aid' optimises the response times of fire engines to the benefit of those who call upon the Fire Service for assistance. Standard operating practices ensure that upon arrival any required information is passed to personnel from other Brigades. These arrangements ensured that there were 4 pumping appliances from other Brigades at the height of the incident.

It is also of note that all Fire Service appliances throughout the country are currently being fitted with additional mobile data terminals as part of the national FiReControl and Firelink projects. These terminals will contain national datasets that will pinpoint all available water supplies, required area and premises risk data on every fire appliance and for anywhere in the country.

Mr Coates' observation:

The operational issues were so serious that during the incident the Hampshire Fire and Rescue Service were called in to begin an independent investigation following complaints from residents - an unprecedented request during a serious fire incident.

The decision by the Deputy Chief Fire Officer to request an external investigator is well established within the British Fire Service and the purpose of such a request is to ensure a fair and unbiased report can be completed. This proactive request was made due to an allegation being made by a member of the public and not due to 'serious operational issues'.

The independent report from Hampshire Fire and Rescue Service confirms that there were no serious operational issues that contributed to the loss of both properties. To the contrary, the report states that the actions of the first appliances and personnel were reasonable.

A full internal investigation was also undertaken to address the complaint. The outcomes of this were relayed to the complainant in a 4-hour meeting, and the facts were accepted as reasonable and the complainant was satisfied with the outcome. A full report and presentation of the outcomes was also provided to both Wraybury and Horton Parish Councils on Monday 15th February 2010.

Mr Coates' observation:

Limitations in water supplies not immediately recognisable and their use.

The independent investigation and investigations with Veolia water Three Valleys has confirmed that pressures were normal and all available water supplies in the vicinity were used.

Mr Coates' observation:

An apparent lack of communication between crews.

Neither internal nor independent investigations have identified any communication issues at the incident.

Mr Coates' observation:

Officers paged and not responding to calls.

One Officer was paged in error to attend at 0156 hours, but was already in attendance at a fire in Sandhurst. This was noted and a second officer was paged at 0158 hours, he responded and attended. This had no effect on the outcome of the incident.

Mr Coates' observation:

Combined delay of over 3 hours before gas board requested and arrived on site.

It is incorrect to say that TRANSCO took over 3 hours to arrive; a representative of the gas company was on scene much earlier. This representative then had to call for the road team to attend which explains the apparent delay in the incident log; however, this is not within the control of the Fire Service. The delay to arrive had no impact upon the outcome of the incident nor did it delay or impinge upon firefighting actions.

Mr Coates' observation:

4 hours after requests for diesel for fire appliances the fuel still not obtained.

It is correct to say that diesel fuel took over 4 hours to arrive, however at no stage was it an urgent requirement. This length of time was due to diesel being required at the concurrent incident in Sandhurst. No appliances ran out of fuel, neither were replacement appliances ordered to attend. All Royal Berkshire Fire and Rescue Service appliances are issued with fuel cards and alternative strategies are available (use of 4-wheel drive vehicles with canned stock at 3 stations) if required. The Royal Berkshire Fire and Rescue Service's policy is that no Fire Appliance is permitted to run with less than $\frac{3}{4}$ of a tank of diesel. This policy ensures that appliances are able to pump water for in excess of the four hour turnaround time that is usually employed. The length of time it took for the diesel to arrive had no bearing on the outcome of the incident.

Mr Coates' question:

Will the Chief Fire Officer and the Fire Authority now admit, that cuts already made to the operational response are having such a direct and serious detrimental effect on the effectiveness of response to incidents of fire, that to further reduce emergency cover by taking out the Windsor appliance at night will inevitably lead to future incidents such as that at Ouseley Road Wraybury?

The Royal Berkshire Fire and Rescue Service is unaware of any recent cuts that have been made to operational response. The closure of Sonning Fire Station resulted in a transfer of all personnel and allowed for an upgrade to the crewing arrangements at Wokingham. The temporary closure of Cookham Fire Station did not affect the response arrangements for this incident as this appliance would not have been part of the attendance. There is no evidence within the investigations that indicate any problems were encountered within the emergency response to this incident that had a detrimental effect on the outcome. The attendance or not of the Windsor appliance would not have altered the outcome of this incident.