

ROYAL BERKSHIRE FIRE AUTHORITY



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Your reference:

My reference: RBFA/DRW

When calling ask for: David R Weller

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Date: 11 December 2002

Dear Member

AGENDA FOR MEETING OF ROYAL BERKSHIRE FIRE AUTHORITY

I have pleasure in attaching your Agenda for the Budget meeting of the Royal Berkshire Fire Authority to be held on **Wednesday 18 December 2002 in the Council Chamber at West Berkshire Council, Market Street, Newbury commencing at 6.30pm**. A buffet will be provided in the Council Chamber.

Car parking is available in the Public Car Park adjacent to the Council Offices. Car parking charges do not apply after 6.00pm. **Members are advised not to park in the Multi Storey car park opposite as the gates may be locked before the conclusion of the Fire Authority meeting.** A map showing the venue is reproduced overleaf. To reach the Council Offices Members may use either the M4 Motorway or A4 from Reading.

M4 - Leave the Motorway at Junction 12 (Newbury) taking the first exit signposted A34. After approximately one mile the A34 Newbury By-Pass will go off to the right. At this point you should take the left exit signposted Newbury/Thatcham. Follow this road until you reach a set of traffic signals and move over to the right hand lane. Continue on this road passing through the next roundabout (Robin Hood) and continue to the next roundabout (Police Station will be on your left) and as you approach move over to the right hand lane. As you go around the roundabout move over to the left hand lane and take the second exit signposted Town Centre. Continue down this road to the next set of traffic signals and turn left. Follow this road which bears to the right and then passes the Bus Station on your left. Just after the entrance to the bus station turn left at the mini roundabout signposted Council Offices (The Multi Storey Car Park exit will be on your right), and then left again into the Car Park.

A4 - Leave the Motorway at Junction 11 and take the A4 signposted Thatcham/Pangbourne. Follow the A4 passing through Woolhampton and Thatcham until you reach the Robin Hood roundabout in Newbury where you turn left onto the old A34 and follow the directions above from the Police Station roundabout.

Yours sincerely

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "David R Weller".

David R Weller (Committee Administrator)

To: All Members of the Royal Berkshire Fire Authority

ROYAL BERKSHIRE FIRE AUTHORITY



Headquarters · 103 Dee Road · Tilehurst · Reading · Berkshire · RG30 4FS
Telephone Reading (0118) 945 2888 Facsimile (0118) 959 0510

MEETING: Royal Berkshire Fire Authority

DATE AND TIME: Wednesday 18 December 2002 at 6.30pm

VENUE: Council Chamber, West Berkshire Council,
Market Street, Newbury, Berkshire

NOTICE OF MEETING

You are requested to attend the above meeting at the time and date indicated, when it is proposed to deal with the business set out in the attached Agenda. A Buffet will be provided.

D C H Williams
Clerk to the Authority

To: MEMBERS OF THE ROYAL BERKSHIRE FIRE AUTHORITY

J C G Brooks (Chairman), B J S Patman (Vice-Chairman),
E L Glasson (Leader of the Labour Group), Mrs C Bateson, Mrs P Bray,
Dr P Bryant, Ms C Borgars C Clacey, R A Flood, John P Green, J S Grewal,
P Hingley, Mrs V Howes, Owen E Jeffery, D W Liddiard, P Love, C Maskell,
T Mills, J E R Mole, D Morgan, A J Ross, M Scott, D J Smith, D J Wilson
(one vacancy)

Briefing Meetings:

Conservative Group: 5.30pm – Committee Room 1 – First Floor
Labour Group: 5.30pm – Committee Room 3 – First Floor
Liberal Democrat Group: 6.00pm – Chairman's Office – First Floor

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For Further Information regarding this meeting, please contact:

David R Weller: (0118) 932 2288

E-Mail: wellerd@rbfrs.co.uk

ROYAL BERKSHIRE FIRE AUTHORITY
WEDNESDAY 18 DECEMBER 2002



AGENDA

PART I AGENDA

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**AGENDA ITEM 2: MEMBERSHIP OF THE ROYAL BERKSHIRE
FIRE AUTHORITY**

To: Royal Berkshire Fire Authority
Date: 18 December 2002
Officer Contributing: Clerk & Monitoring Officer

A PURPOSE OF REPORT

To advise Members of a change in the representative membership of the Fire Authority.

B PROPOSED ACTION

The Authority is invited to NOTE the report.

C FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

There are no financial implications.

D CONTRIBUTION TO THE STRATEGIC PLAN

There is no contribution to the Strategic Plan.

E SUPPORTING INFORMATION

1. The Fire Authority has been advised of the following change in the Member representation for Slough Borough Council and West Berkshire Council:

Slough Borough Council (To be advised)

Councillor (Labour) replacing the late Councillor Dennis McCarthy

West Berkshire Council

Councillor Dr Paul Bryant (Conservative) replacing the late Councillor Tom Bucknell

It is understood that Slough Borough Council will be appointing its replacement Fire Authority representative on 17 December 2003 and will therefore be reported at the Fire Authority meeting.

F BACKGROUND PAPERS

Information received from Slough Borough Council and West Berkshire Council

Contact Officer: David R Weller (0118) 932 2288

AGENDA ITEM 3: MINUTES: 11 SEPTEMBER 2002

MINUTES OF A MEETING OF THE ROYAL BERKSHIRE FIRE AUTHORITY HELD IN THE COUNCIL CHAMBER AT THE BRACKNELL FOREST BOROUGH COUNCIL, EASTHAMPSTEAD HOUSE, TOWN SQUARE, BRACKNELL ON WEDNESDAY 11 SEPTEMBER 2002 COMMENCING AT 6.30PM AND CONCLUDED AT 9.47PM.

**Present: J C G Brooks (Chairman), B J S Patman (Vice-Chairman)
Miss C Borgars, R A Flood, E L Glasson, John P Green,
J S Grewal, Mrs V Howes, Owen E Jeffery, D W Liddiard,
P Love, J E R Mole, A J Ross, D J Smith, D J Wilson**

Also Present: Councillor M Scott (RBWM Observer)

**Apologies: Mrs C Bateson, Mrs P Bray, P Hingley, C Maskell, T Mills,
D Morgan,**

3.01/02 CHAIRMAN'S ANNOUNCEMENTS

The Chairman reported with great sadness and regret the sudden and untimely deaths of Councillor Dennis McCarthy, a Fire Authority Member from Slough Borough Council and Councillor Martin Wallis a Member of the Bracknell Forest Borough Council and Mayor of the Bracknell Town Council.

He also referred to the fact that it is twenty-five years since the Royal Berkshire Fire and Rescue Service had lost two Fire-Fighters. Fire-Fighters David Barnes (Station 1-Caversham Road) and Neil Mark Goldsmith (Station 2-Wokingham Road) had lost their lives in the line of duty whilst attending an incident at Elgar Road, Reading.

It was also the first anniversary of the terrorist attacks in the United States when so many New York Fire-Fighters and public had lost their lives in Pennsylvania, Washington and New York. Members therefore stood in silent tribute to the memory of all those mentioned above.

3.02/02 MEMBERSHIP OF THE ROYAL BERKSHIRE FIRE AUTHORITY

Members were advised (Agenda item 2 –not reproduced) that subject to Cabinet approval being given on 12 September 2002 Councillor M Scott would be replacing Councillor M Pritchett as one of the representatives from the Royal Borough of Windsor and Maidenhead. The Chairman extended a warm welcome to Councillor Scott who was attending the meeting as an observer and also to Councillor P Love who was attending his first meeting.

NOTED

3.03/02 PART I MINUTES: 19 JUNE 2002

The Part I Minutes of the last meeting held on Wednesday 19 June 2002, having been previously circulated, were taken as read and signed by the Chairman as a correct record.

3.04/02 PART I MINUTES OF SUB GROUPS

The Authority was advised (Agenda item 6 – not reproduced) of the Personnel Committee, Community Safety Panel, Urgency Committee and Fire Liaison Group meetings that had taken place since the last meeting in June 2002. Members were advised that copies of the Part I Minutes were available on request from the Committee Administrator (0118) 932 2288.

NOTED**3.05/02 CHAIRMAN'S COMMUNICATIONS**

The Chairman had nothing further to report.

3.06/02 PETITIONS AND QUESTIONS FROM THE PUBLIC

The Authority noted that no Petitions or Questions had been received from the Public under Standing Orders 8 and 9.

3.07/02 QUESTIONS FROM MEMBERS

The Authority noted that no questions had been received from Members under Standing Order 10.

3.08/02 NOTICES OF MOTION

The Authority noted that no Notices of Motion had been received from Members under Standing Order 12.

3.09/02 CHIEF OFFICERS DELEGATED POWERS CELLULAR AGREEMENTS

The Authority's approval was sought (Agenda item 9 – not reproduced) to amend the Chief Fire Officer's Delegated Powers in relation to Cellular Agreements.

The Brigade has recently started using Vail Williams as property Agents who have advised that in the case of Cellular Agreements, the Authority would have better

protection if the provisions of the Landlord, Tenant Act were excluded from the present Agreement. To compensate they have suggested that Companies should be granted a ten year term against the current arrangement of five years with a right to review for a further five years.

Under his Delegated Powers the Chief Fire Officer has the power to enter into leases, licences or agreements in relation to land for up to seven years. In view of the suggested change in policy approval was sought for the Chief Fire Officer to enter into Cellular Agreements for a period not exceeding ten years and that his delegated Powers be amended accordingly.

RESOLVED: That the Chief Fire Officer be authorised to enter into Cellular Agreements for a period not exceeding ten years and that his delegated Powers be amended accordingly.

3.10/02 LOCAL GOVERNMENT ACT 2000 – ALLOWANCES FOR MEMBERS OF LOCAL AUTHORITIES AND SIMILAR BODIES

As the information requested from the Office of the Deputy Prime Minister had not been received the Chairman sought Members' approval to withdraw this item from the Agenda. With Members' support he did however ask the Clerk and Monitoring Officer to write to the Leaders of the Constituent Authorities to see whether it might be possible to come to an arrangement whereby the appropriate constituent paid a SRA it was then reimbursed by the Fire Authority who have already made financial provision in their Budget. He also encouraged all Fire Authority Members to talk to their Leaders regarding the payment of allowances.

NOTED

3.11/02 ANNUAL REVIEW OF HEALTH AND SAFETY AND NEW HEALTH, SAFETY AND WELFARE OBJECTIVES

The Authority received (Agenda item 11 – not reproduced) an update of the Brigades Health and Safety performance against the objectives set for the period 2000-2002 and were asked to approve the proposed Health and Safety objectives for the period 2002-2004.

Members attention was drawn to Appendix A (not reproduced) which provided an update of the progress made with the Health and Safety objectives set by the Brigade for the period 2000-2002. Since these objectives were set, the Government in conjunction with the Health and Safety Commission has introduced a strategy for "Revitalising Health and Safety". This strategy sets national targets and is intended to give new impetus to occupational safety and health and includes a ten point strategy and a forty-four point action plan, offering employers a combination of incentives, practical support and enforcement criteria. There are three specific national targets

which are to be met by 2010 as summarised in paragraph 1 of the report (not reproduced).

Members approval was therefore sought to the Brigade's Health and Safety objectives for the period 2002-2004, as approved by the Brigade Management Team in August 2002, and reproduced in Appendix B (not reproduced).

RESOLVED: That:

1. **The progress against the objectives set for 2000-2002 be Noted.**
2. **The proposed Health and Safety objectives for the period 2002-2004 be approved.**

3.12/02 EFFECT OF COST OF HOUSING IN BERKSHIRE UPDATE

The Authority received an update (Agenda item 12 – not reproduced) of the effect upon recruitment and retention of Wholetime staff, which the cost of housing in Berkshire is having upon the Service. The report had been prepared in accordance with the Resolution approved by the Members at the Authority meeting in September 2001 and reproduced in paragraph 3 of the report (not reproduced).

In noting the background to this particular issue as set out in the report Members were advised that the Chief Fire Officer had made written representation to Her Majesty's Government and has also continued to lobby government with the support of some Berkshire Members of Parliament. The response received together with details of the continuing liaison with Berkshire Constituent Authorities in respect of key worker housing provision was summarised in paragraphs 4 and 5 of the report respectively (not reproduced).

During the period 1 October 2001 to 31 July 2002 thirty-six Wholetime operational staff have left the Service against twenty-four who have joined leaving a net deficit of twelve Wholetime operational staff compared to the operational strength at 1 October 2001. Members were advised that this trend is not sustainable.

In noting the advantages and disadvantages of the current national pay claim by the Fire Brigades' Union in respect of the recruitment and retention of staff as set out in paragraph 11 of the report (not reproduced), the Chairman sought Members views on possible subsequent action by the Authority. Having discussed this matter further it was **RESOLVED That:**

1. **The Constituent Authorities be thanked for the work that they are doing in introducing schemes to assist Fire-Fighters to live in Berkshire.**
2. **The Chief Fire Officer be asked to circulate to Members identifying the Berkshire Members of Parliament who have supported the Authority in its lobbying of Central Government**

3. **As Fire-Fighters are seen as being key workers at Constituent Authority level the Government be asked to consider that Fire-Fighters are included in the same category and priority level as other key workers in Health, Police and Education.**
4. **The Chief Fire Officer be requested to write to the Office of the Deputy Prime Minister on the issues raised above and to all Berkshire MPs seeking their support.**

3.13/02 RECRUITMENT AND RETENTION INCENTIVES

The Authority's views were sought (Agenda item 13 – not reproduced) on the introduction of measures to aid the recruitment and retention of Fire Authority employees.

Members were advised that as a result of a combination of the high cost of living in Berkshire, in particular housing, national pay scales for uniformed staff and a competitive local labour market, the Royal Berkshire Fire and Rescue Service has encountered difficulty in maintaining a full and stable establishment as highlighted in the previous Agenda item.

In order to address the current recruitment and retention problems, three Options have been identified as reproduced in paragraph 2 of the report (not reproduced). In supporting the proposals put forward, Members agreed to the insertion of a new Option 4 as follows:

“That the Fire Authority may consider acting as a Guarantor for Fire-Fighters wishing to take out a mortgage on a property in Berkshire subject to agreed terms and conditions yet to be determined.”

The Chairman also asked the Fire Brigades' Union to send him their views on this matter in writing.

RESOLVED: That the detailed proposals be developed and where necessary Budget Bids are prepared for recruitment and retention incentives for consideration as part of the 2002/2004 Budget process.

3.14/02 FINAL ACCOUNTS – YEAR ENDED 31 MARCH 2002

The Authority's approval was sought (Agenda item 14 – not reproduced) to the Statement of Accounts for the year ended 31 March 2002 which had been produced in accordance with Part III of the Local Government Finance Act 1982 and the Accounts and Audit Regulations 1996. Authority approval is required before they are submitted to the District Auditor.

In speaking to the Statement, a copy of which had been circulated with the Agenda (not reproduced), the Authority Treasurer drew Members attention to page six which

showed that whilst the Fire Authority's net revenue budget was set at £22.420m the actual expenditure for the year was £22.454m a variance of £34,000. The sum of £34,000 had therefore been transferred from the Asbestos removal provision, which is no longer required, to fund this variance which includes a one-off payment to the Berkshire Pension Fund for liabilities arising from the early retirement of Workshop staff following the outsourcing of this function.

The Audit of the Final Accounts will be followed by a Management Letter meeting, which is likely to take place in late November/early December 2002.

The Chairman, on behalf of the Fire Authority, wished to place on record his thanks to Donald Illingworth and Andrew Vallance for all their hard work in managing the Fire Authority's accounts and for producing the Final Statement of Accounts.

RESOLVED: That the Statement of Accounts for the year ended 31 March 2002, as presented, be approved.

3.15/02 IMPLEMENTATION OF SPECIAL APPLIANCE BEST VALUE REVIEW: PROGRESS REPORT

The Authority was advised (Agenda item 15 – not reproduced) of the progress made to date towards the implementation of the Best Value Review of Special Appliances and were asked to approve, as part of that review, the trial of two rescue pumps.

As part of the settlement of the trade dispute against the outcome of the Review of Special Appliances, it was resolved that a Working Party be established to review the recommended outcomes of the Review. In noting the actions of the Working Party to date and the associated financial implications as set out in the report Members were advised that one of the agreed actions requires Fire Authority approval, namely the provision of two Rescue Pumps. These will be based Station 16 Bracknell and Station 20 Whitley Wood for a pilot evaluation of the vehicles role and capability. The trial will last for approximately nine months to enable conclusion to be drawn in time for the 2004/2005 Budgetary process. The estimated cost of fitting and equipping the two pumps is £18,000, which can be funded from within existing approved budgets.

Members also noted that a report on the Working Party's firm proposals for the provision of welfare on the incident ground and the location of the Chemical Incident Unit (CIU) would be presented to the Fire Authority meeting in December 2002.

RESOLVED: That the purchase and trial of two Rescue Pumps be approved.

3.16/02 CORPORATE COMMUNICATIONS STRATEGY

The Authority's approval was sought (Agenda item 16 – not reproduced) to the Corporate Communications Strategy, a copy of which was presented as Appendix 1 (not reproduced). In speaking to the report the Chief Fire Officer advised that the

Strategy had been prepared to take forward the corporate communications within the Brigade.

In noting the aims of the Strategy as set out on page 44 (not reproduced) Members considered the remainder of the document and the following is a bullet point summary of the comments made;

- Page 42 – Executive Summary: Amend final sentence to read “It will also help the Brigade to maintain its high profile public image and assist in furthering good industrial relations.”
- Page 52 – Written Publications: In supporting the production of two additional monthly publications, produced in-house, and aimed at Elected Members and staff some Members enquired into whether it would be possible to combine the two documents into one publication. The Chief Fire Officer indicated that whilst it may be a possibility the timescale may create difficulties in view of the fact that the Brigade’s Corporate Communications Manager was currently on sick leave. In view of this Members suggested that the appointment of the Partnership at Work Project Co-ordinator should be treated as a matter of priority
- Page 54 – Stakeholders: It was agreed that the Office of the deputy Prime Minister (ODPM) should be added to the list of Stakeholders.

In response to a related question from Members as to whether the publication of Press Releases could be reinstated the Chief Fire Officer confirmed that it was to be reintroduced on a quarterly basis and if possible would be circulated via the E-Mail system in an effort to save paper.

In supporting the Strategy Members suggested that it be reviewed in twelve months time.

RESOLVED: That the Corporate Communications Strategy (as amended) be approved and adopted and that it be reviewed in twelve months time.

3.17/02 LOCAL GOVERNMENT FINANCE FORMULA GRANT DISTRIBUTION: A CONSULTATION PAPER

Approval was sought (Agenda item 17 – not reproduced) to the Fire Authority’s response to the Consultation Paper issued by the Office of the Deputy Prime Minister, which is required to be submitted by 30 September 2002.

The consultation covers authorities in England who currently receive grant via the Standard Spending Assessment System (SSA). In partnership with Local Government and other interested parties, the Government has been reviewing how these resources are divided up between Authorities (in the annual local government finance settlement). The Government made a commitment to consult on how the new system might work. As the Draft Local Government Bill provides for Combined Fire Authorities to become precepting and grant receiving Authorities it is important that the Fire Authority responds to the Consultation Paper.

In noting the contents of the report and associated Appendices (not reproduced) which detailed the implications in terms of this Authority, Members supported the proposed response subject to the deletion of Resolution 2 and other minor amendments suggested by Members with the actual wording to be determined by the Authority Treasurer.

The Chairman called upon the Fire Brigades' Union to support the Authority's response and also to lobby the appropriate Government departments regarding the potential loss of £1.8m from the SSA which would have a significant effect on the staffing and the provision of equipment.

RESOLVED: That the Fire Authority's response to the Consultation Paper on Formula Grant Distribution, as set out below, be approved and forwarded to the Office of the Deputy Prime Minister:

1. **In view of the current gap between Berkshire's actual spending £23.89m and Standard Spending Assessment of £22.0m which widens further by a range of £2.6m to £900,000 none of the four options for fire recognise a proper level of funding for the fire and rescue service. The Authority therefore reject the four options and request a complete re-examination of the proposed Formula Grant Distribution aimed at producing a closer match with the spending needed to run a fire and rescue service.**
2. **A factor that undoubtedly adds to Berkshire's costs is the fact that the whole length of the County is traversed by one of the busiest lengths of the M4 motorway. An exercise should be undertaken to measure the effect on fire and rescue costs and recognise this in the formula.**
3. **Attention be drawn to the recruitment and retention difficulties in Berkshire due to the high cost of housing accommodation and the need subject to a proper level of grant settlement to consider local weighting. The only Area Cost adjustment option that appears to recognise these higher costs is ACA 5.**
4. **It is noted that in the education block there is an option based on variation in house prices. A similar recognition of this fact should be made in the fire formula.**
5. **Support for the Fire Authority's representation be sought from:-**

The Berkshire Unitary Authorities by letter to their Leaders and Chief Executives and Berkshire Members of Parliament
6. **Members be asked to support the Fire Authority within their own Unitary and by letter to the Office of the Deputy Prime Minister.**

3.18/02 2002/2004 BUDGET

The Authority was informed (Agenda item 12 – not reproduced) of the:

- Preliminary indications of Budget requirements for 2003/2004 and the prospect for 2004/2005 – Appendix A.
- Budget Pressures
- Government's Comprehensive Spending Review 2002
- Best Value and Efficiency Savings
- Service and Financial Planning
- Standard Spending Assessments and Government Expectations – Appendices B and C.
- Budget Process and Timetable – Appendix D.

and approval was sought to the presentation of future reports and the proposed Budget process and timetable for future meetings of the Budget Working Party.

RESOLVED: That:

- 1 Officers be asked to submit a report on detailed Budget requirements to the Budget Working Party**
- 2 Any proposal for Budget growth or contractions must incorporate a defined link to the Strategic Plan priorities and be prioritised.**
- 3 A forecast of the likely Budget requirements for 2004/2005 and 2005/2006 be produced.**
- 4 The proposed Budget process and timetable as set out in Appendix D be approved and adopted.**

3.19/02 RACE EQUALITY SCHEME

The Authority's approval was sought (Agenda item 19 – not reproduced) to a Race Equality Scheme which will form part of the Fire Authority and fully discharge its responsibilities under the Race relations (Amendment) Act 2000.

Members were reminded that the Authority, at its meeting in March 2002, had approved the Equality and Diversity Strategy and associated Action Plan. In accordance with the legislation a proposed Race Equality Scheme for the Fire Authority has been drafted and to form part of the existing Equality and Diversity Strategy. In addition it is proposed to add further items to the associated Action Plan in order to implement the proposed Race Equality Scheme in 2002/2003. A copy of the proposed scheme and additions to the Action Plan was therefore presented in Appendices 1 and 2 respectively (not reproduced).

If members are minded to approve the Race Equality Scheme it will be reviewed on an annual basis as part of the annual review of the Fire Authority's Equality and Diversity Strategy.

RESOLVED: That the proposed Race Equality Scheme be approved as an

addition to the approved Equality and Diversity Strategy together with the associated additions to the Equality and Diversity Action Plan for 2002/2003.

3.20/02 2002/2003 BUDGET MONITORING

The Authority was informed (Agenda item 20 – not reproduced) of the Revenue and Capital Expenditure against Budgets up to 31 July 2002 as presented in Appendices A and B respectively (not reproduced).

NOTED

3.21/02 JOINT MEMBER STEERING GROUP ON THEN FUTURE OF CONTROL ROOM COLLABORATION: PROGRESS REPORT

The Authority was informed (Agenda item 21 – not reproduced) of the progress made by the Joint Member Steering Group on the Future of Control Rooms which included a summary on then outcome of the last meeting held at Fire Station, Haddenham, Buckinghamshire on Monday 22 July 2002 when the Authority had been represented by Councillor John Green. A further meeting has been arranged for Monday 23 September 2002 at Brigade Headquarters for the purpose of determining the final methodology for the selection of consultants, to be followed by a presentation from the short-listed consultants.

NOTED

3.22/02 DEVELOPMENT OF COMMERCIAL PARTNERSHIPS: PROGRESS REPORT

The Authority was informed (Agenda item 22 – not reproduced) of progress with the Partnership's Advisors plan to seek additional income for the Brigade from commercial partnerships.

In noting the contents of the report Members were reminded that as forecast at the Authority meeting in June 2002 no input of cash is expected before October three reasonably encouraging prospects have already emerged as summarised in paragraph 11 of the report (not reproduced). As example of the proposed Marketing Brochure was shown at the meeting and the estimated cost of printing 1000 copies was £1,400.

If the plan is successful there should be significant income generation and the Partnership Advisor will be expected to recover the costs of his appointment. A further detailed report will be presented to the Fire Authority at its meeting in December 2002.

NOTED

3.23/02 REPORT ON THE PROGRESS OF THE STANDARDS OF FIRE COVER REVIEW

The Authority was advised (Agenda item 23 – not reproduced) of the current position regarding the standards of fire cover review. Members were reminded that following the dispute between the Fire Brigades' Union and the Royal Berkshire Fire and Rescue Service part of the resolution was to undertake a review of Standards of Fire Cover of certain parts of the County.

The process of the review which has been agreed between both parties to the dispute utilises the ORIS system to which has been added the Brigade's incident statistics for the last two years. It has now been determined between the two parties that further detailed investigation is now required of a number of areas of the Brigade as summarised in the report. Further progress reports will be presented to future Fire Authority meetings.

NOTED

3.24/02 BRITISH NATIONAL EXTRICATION CHALLENGE 2002

The Authority was advised (Agenda item 24 – not reproduced) of the Brigades involvement in the British National Extrication Challenge hosted by Tyne and Wear Metropolitan Fire Brigade between 8-10 August 2002. Fifty one teams from across the Country entered this year's competition and this Brigade were represented by teams from Slough and Newbury.

Both teams performed well with the Slough team progressing through to the final eight teams to compete in the final. At the end of the competition they were placed in fifth position overall and Station Officer Ian Cox was placed in fourth place for his team leadership, command and control. This result in the national competition is a very significant achievement and secures the team a place in the World Championships to be held in Dallas next August, for which attendance there will be funded by the competition organisers.

The Authority also received a visual presentation from Station Officer Cox on the teams attendance at the 19 International Extrication Competition held in Bloomington, Minnesota, USA between 19-24 August 2002. The team returned as overall winners of the competition taking five of the six trophies, which were displayed at the meeting. The team also took part in the Rapid Extrication Competition sponsored by Bosch where they also gained first place.

The Chairman, on behalf of the Authority, wished to place on record his congratulations to the Team for their outstanding success in this year's competition.

NOTED

3.25/02 RE-ALIGNMENT OF SERVICE DELIVERY DIRECTORATE STRUCTURE (THE ROLE OF THE AREA ASSISTANT DIVISIONAL OFFICER)

The Authority was advised (Agenda item 25 – not reproduced) of a proposed re-alignment to the middle management structure within the Service Delivery Directorate on a pilot basis.

The existing system of seven Area ADO's managing designated geographical areas for Community Safety, Fire Safety and Operations was introduced in May 1998. Whilst the structure has served the local communities well over the past four years problems have been identified as summarised in paragraph 2 of the report (not reproduced).

The Directorate Policy Group has been considering alternative arrangements for six months and has proposed a new structure, which is hoped, will alleviate the problems. It is proposed to run the new system as a pilot for one year and the anticipated benefits were summarised in paragraph 5 of the report (not reproduced).

Although such decisions are within the Delegated Powers of the Chief Fire Officer it was considered appropriate that Members were advised of the proposed changes.

NOTED

3.26/02 BRIGADE CONTROL SICKNESS LEVELS

The Authority received (Agenda item 26 – not reproduced) further details of the levels of sickness absence in Brigade Control as requested at the Authority meeting held in June 2002 when the figures relating to Control were noted as being high.

A direct comparison between the years 2000/2001 and 2001/2002 was presented in an Appendix (not reproduced) and it was considered that with the measures outlined in the report it is expected that improvements in sickness levels will be achieved in 2002/2003.

NOTED

3.27/02 RETAINED FIRE-FIGHTERS AND THE PART TIME WORKERS REGULATIONS – OUTCOME OF TEST CASES

The Authority was advised (Agenda item 27 – not reproduced) of the outcome of the test cases brought by the Fire Brigades' Union (FBU) to determine whether or not Retained Fire-Fighters are covered by the Part Time Workers (Prevention of Less Favourable Treatment) Regulations 2000.

In noting the background to this case as set out in the report Members were advised that the Employment Tribunal decided that Retained Fire-Fighters are not part time

workers for the purposes of the Part Time Workers (Prevention of Less Favourable Treatment) Regulations 2000. Since the publication of the Agenda the FBU have submitted an Appeal against the Tribunal's decision and although not confirmed it is likely to take up to twelve months for the Appeal to be determined.

Members were reminded that the issue of providing Retained Fire-Fighters with a 'stakeholder' pension opportunity was deferred pending the outcome of the test cases. In the light of the Tribunal's decision it is now necessary to re-open consideration of this issue and a report will therefore be presented to the Fire Authority at its meeting in December 2002.

NOTED

3.28/02 HAND OVER OF MONIES FOR 9-11 DISASTER FUND TO US EMBASSY

The Authority was advised (Agenda item 28 – not reproduced) of the official handover of the monies raised by staff of the Royal Berkshire Fire and Rescue Service to the US Embassy following the terrorist attacks carried out in the United States on 11 September 2001.

A cheque in the sum of £90,658.68 was formally presented to Ms Joyce Rabens, Councillor Minister for Economic Affairs from the US Embassy in London by Leading Fire-Fighter Matthew Martin on 31 July 2002 at Whitley Wood Fire Station. Since then the fund has been increased by a further £400 following the decision by Barclays Bank to refund the bank charges.

The Chairman wished to place on record his sincere thanks to the staff of the Royal Berkshire Fire and Rescue Service for all their fund raising efforts and also to the people of Berkshire for their generosity.

NOTED

3.29/02 FIRES, INCIDENTS AND ISSUES OF INTEREST

The Authority received a report (Agenda item 29 – not reproduced) which summarised some of the notable incidents attended, together with letters of appreciation received, by the Brigade during the period 1 July to 5 August 2002.

NOTED

3.30/02 DATE OF NEXT MEETING

It was noted that the next Fire Authority Meeting (Budget) is scheduled to take place on **Wednesday 18 December 2002 in the Council Chamber at West Berkshire Council, Council Offices, Market Street Newbury, commencing at 6.30pm**

3.31/02 EXCLUSION OF THE PUBLIC

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:

	Agenda item	Paragraph
32	Part II Minutes: Wednesday 19 June 2002	1,7 & 8
33	Part II Minutes of Sub-Groups	1, 7 & 8
34	Provision of Treasurer Services to the Fire Authority	1
35	Fire Brigades' Union Pay Claim – Latest Position	1
36	Briefing Report on Potential for Industrial Action	1

(Note: The following is a summary of the items considered in the Part II Agenda of the Fire Authority meeting held on Wednesday 11 September 2002)

3.32/02 PART II MINUTES: 19 JUNE 2002

The Part II Minutes of the last meeting held on Wednesday 19 June 2002 were received and approved as a correct record.

3.33/02 PART II MINUTES OF SUB-GROUPS

The Part II Minutes of the Sub-Groups were received and Noted.

3.34/02 PROVISION OF TREASURER SERVICES TO THE FIRE AUTHORITY

The Authority approved the provision of Treasurer services with effect from 1 April 2003 upon the retirement of the current Treasurer, Mr Donald Ilingworth.

3.35/02 FIRE BRIGADES' UNION PAY CLAIM – LATEST POSITION

The Authority was advised of the latest position regarding the Fire Brigades' Union 2002 Pay Claim.

3.36/02 FIRE BRIGADES' UNION (FBU) - POTENTIAL INDUSTRIAL ACTION

The Authority was advised of the potential for industrial action arising from the current pay claim by the FBU and the contingency arrangements being put in place to deal with any such action.

AGENDA ITEM 2: MINUTES 23 OCTOBER 2002

MINUTES OF AN EXTRAORDINARY MEETING OF THE ROYAL BERKSHIRE FIRE AUTHORITY HELD IN THE FRANK HUTCHINGS MEMORIAL HALL, BRADLEY MOORE SQUARE, HARTS HILL ROAD, THATCHAM, BERSKHIRE ON WEDNESDAY 23 OCTOBER 2002 COMMENCING AT 7.00PM AND CONCLUDED AT 8.45PM.

Present: J C G Brooks (Chairman), B J S Patman (Vice-Chairman), E L Glasson (Leader of the Labour Group), Mrs C Bateson, Miss C Borgars, John P Green, J S Grewal, P Hingley, Owen E Jeffery, D W Liddiard, P Love, C Maskell, J E R Mole, D Morgan, D J Smith, D J Wilson

Apologies: Mrs P Bray, R A Flood, Mrs V Howes, T Mills, A J Ross, M Scott

4.01/02 COUNCILLOR TOM BUCKNELL

The Chairman reported with great sadness and regret, the recent untimely death of Councillor Tom Bucknell, a Fire Authority Member from West Berkshire Council. Members stood in silent tribute to the memory of Councillor Bucknell.

4.02/02 DATE OF NEXT EXTRAORDINARY MEETING

In response to a suggestion by the Chairman it was agreed that the date of the next Extraordinary Fire Authority Meeting would be left to his discretion.

4.03/02 EXCLUSION OF THE PUBLIC

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:

Agenda item	Paragraph
3 Fire Brigades' Union Industrial Action 2002 Update	1

(Note: The following is a summary of the items discussed in the Part II Agenda of the Extraordinary Fire Authority Meeting held on Wednesday 23 October 2002).

4.04/02 FIRE BRIGADES' UNION INDUSTRIAL ACTION 2002 UPDATE

The Authority received an update from the Chief Fire Officer on the current situation regarding the proposed Industrial Action by the Fire Brigades' Union.

AGENDA ITEM 4: PART I MINUTES OF SUB-GROUPS

To: Royal Berkshire Fire Authority
Date: 18 December 2002
Officer Contributing: Clerk & Monitoring Officer

A PURPOSE OF REPORT

To advise Members on meetings of the Performance Review and Audit Panel, Personnel Committee, Community Safety Panel, Urgency Committee and the Fire Liaison Group that have taken place since the last meeting of the Fire Authority in September 2002.

B PROPOSED ACTION

The Authority is invited to **NOTE** the report.

C FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

There are no financial implications.

D SUPPORTING INFORMATION

1 The following meetings have taken place since the last Fire Authority meeting in June 2002:

Community Safety Panel Tuesday 19 November 2002

Fire Liaison Group Monday 2 December 2002

Urgency Committee Monday 14 October, Monday 4 November
Friday 22 November and Monday 2 December 2002

2 Copies of the Part I Minutes (if available) can be obtained from David Weller on (0118) 932 2288) – E-Mail address: wellerd@rbfrs.co.uk

E BACKGROUND PAPERS

Agenda's and Minutes for the above mentioned meetings

Contact Officer: David R Weller (0118) 932 2288

AGENDA ITEM 9: DATES FOR FUTURE MEETINGS OF THE FIRE AUTHORITY – SEPTEMBER 2003 TO JUNE 2004

To: Royal Berkshire Fire Authority
Date: 18 December 2002
Officer Contributing: Clerk and Monitoring Officer

A PURPOSE OF REPORT

To agree on dates for future meetings of the Fire Authority for the period September 2003 to June 2004.

B PROPOSED ACTION

The Authority is invited to consider the report and RESOLVE: That future Fire Authority meetings be held on the following dates in 2003/2004, commencing at 6.30pm, at the following venues (where confirmed):

Wednesday 10 September 2003 at Slough Borough Council (TBC)
Wednesday 17 December 2003 at Reading Borough Council
Wednesday 12 February 2004 – Budget and Precept Setting (Venue TBC)
Wednesday 17 March 2004 – at Bracknell Forest Borough Council
Wednesday 30 June 2004 - Annual Meeting – at Thatcham or Newbury (TBC)

C FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

There are no financial implications

D SUPPORTING INFORMATION

- 1 It will be necessary to agree on dates for meetings of the Fire Authority in 2003/2004 and to assist Members the following dates are suggested, all commencing at 6.30pm:

Wednesday 10 September 2003
 Wednesday 17 December 2003
 Wednesday 12 February 2004 – Budget and Precept
 Wednesday 17 March 2004
 Wednesday 30 June 2004 - Annual Meeting

- 2 Members attention is drawn to the inclusion of an additional meeting date in February 2004. This has been done on the assumption that the Local Government Bill will be enacted and the Fire Authority will become a Precepting Authority in its own right. If this is the case then it will be necessary for the Authority, at that additional meeting, to consider and set its Budget and Precept for the 2004/2005 financial year.

- 3 Members are therefore asked to consider the above dates and Resolve accordingly. If Members are minded to approve the dates then provisional bookings of suitable venues, already made will be confirmed at the meeting. In addition the Unitary Authorities will be asked to include the dates in their Meeting Diaries.

E BACKGROUND PAPERS

None

Contact Officer: David R Weller: (0118) 932 2288

- 5 StephenTaylor, District Audit and Hassan Rohimun, Audit Manager will attend the meeting to present the Management Letter and answer Members questions.

F BACKGROUND PAPERS

- 1 Local Government Finance Act 1982.
- 2 Accounts and Audit Regulations 1996.
- 3 Statement of Accounts 2001/02.
- 4 District Audit Management Letter to Members – Audit 2001/02

Contact Officer: Donald Illingworth (0118) 932 2294)



Royal Berkshire Fire Authority

Annual Audit Letter 2001/2002

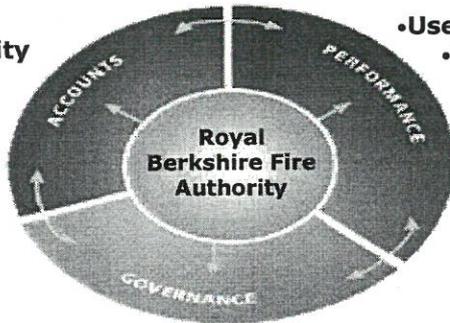
Stephen Taylor – District Auditor
Hassan Rohimun – Audit Manager

18th December 2002

Royal Berkshire Fire Authority



- Opinion
- Regularity

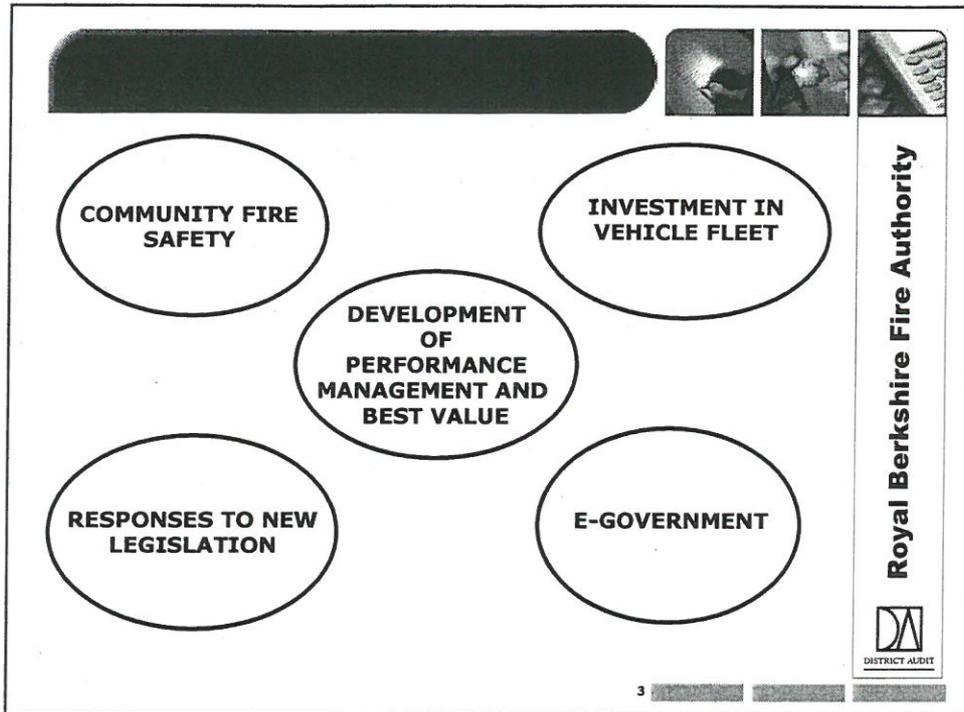


- Use of Resources
- Best Value
- PIs

- Internal financial controls
- Legality
- Financial standing
- Fraud & corruption
- Probity and propriety

Royal Berkshire Fire Authority





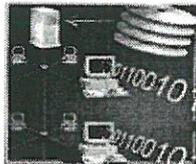
-
- **Good Performance Management Framework in place**
 - **Authority is proactive in using its performance measurement system to set targets, monitor performance and inform management decisions.**
 - **First year of single corporate plan, which is to be commended. Need to ensure it is a flowing document.**
 - **Framework can be improved by ensuring there is evidence to ensure that actions are being achieved.**
- Royal Berkshire Fire Authority
- DISTRICT AUDIT
- 4



- **BVPP compliant in all significant respects**
- **The 'Partnership for Common Sense' is helping to shift the culture. Members need to ensure momentum is not lost.**
- **Review programme revised and focus is now on completing wider based reviews**
- **Review guidance is being revised. Need to ensure review guidance provides an effective tool and is consistently applied.**
- **A completed BV review is yet to be inspected. Need to ensure the focus is on implementing action plans and if required alternative targets should be set to ensure improvement is secured.**



- **The Authority needs to take action to ensure it is complying with the requirements of the Data Protection Act.**
- **Need to establish all systems that process and maintain personal data**
- **Need to develop a security policy which:**
 - **cover the principles underlying all access control measures to personal data and**
 - **clarify and distinguish the organisational roles in relation to data security.**





'Adequate' arrangements for:

- **ensuring effective systems of internal financial control**
 - Adequate systems of internal financial control are in place.
 - Able to place reliance on the work of Internal Audit.

- **securing legality of financial transactions**
 - Satisfactory arrangements in place
 - currently no issues to bring to members' attention

- **ensuring proper standards of financial control; preventing and detecting fraud and corruption**
 - satisfactory arrangements



• Overall financial standing remains healthy

- **2001/02 expenditure met budgeted expenditure of £22.42m which indicates good overall budgetary control. .**

- **Provisions are being utilised. In total provisions amounted to £1.15m, which included £1.1m for future costs arising on the Fire-fighters pension scheme.**

- **Budgeted requirement for 2002/03 was £23.9m which is 8.5% above SSA. The projected outturn for 2002/03 is in line with budget.**





• Future Pressures

- The 2003/04 budget is likely to be dominated by any pay settlement which will depart from the pay formula operative up to 2001/02.
- Uncertainty regarding Local Government financing, the Revenue Support Grant is being replaced by a Formula Grant. Under options being considered there will be significant reductions for the Authority compared to the 2002/03 SSA
- The ongoing impact of the cost of fire-fighters pensions. The pension scheme deficit is anticipated to increase by £52,000 in 2003/04 and by a further £792,000 in 2004/05.

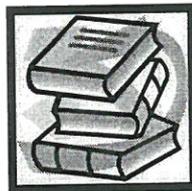


Positive features

- Unqualified opinion to be given

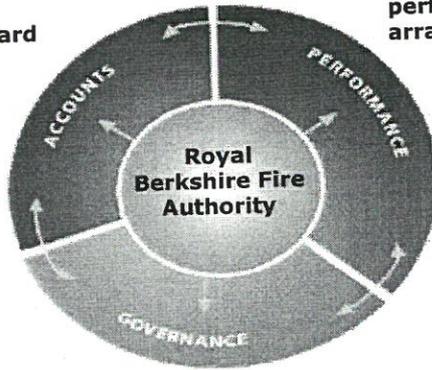
Areas for attention

- Should consider whether further disclosure should be made in reference to the national dispute under Post Balance Sheet Events





- Bringing forward timetable for WGAs



- Continuing to progress performance arrangements

- New Legislation

Royal Berkshire Fire Authority



DISTRICT AUDIT

Annual Audit Letter

**Royal Berkshire Fire
Authority**

INSIDE THIS LETTER

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- Introduction
- Audit objectives
- Background to the audit

PAGE 3

- Key messages

PAGES 4-7

- Performance management
- Financial aspects of corporate governance
- Accounts
- Future audit work
- Status of our Annual Audit Letter to the Authority
- Closing remarks
- Reports issued during the audit

APPENDIX 1

- Statutory Report on the Best Value Performance Plan



DISTRICT AUDIT

Reference:	HRBE007AALo2W – Draft 1
Authors:	Stephen Taylor – District Auditor Hassan Rohimun – Audit Manager
Date:	November 2002

Introduction

This Annual Audit Letter summarises for Members the more important matters arising from our audit for 2001/02 and comments on other current issues. We have produced separate reports during the year on completion of specific aspects of our work, which are being discussed in detail with officers. The reports are listed at the end of this Letter for Members' information.

Audit objectives

Our Code of Practice requires us to design a programme of work to address the significant operational and financial risks you face which impact on our responsibilities. Our work focuses on whether you have adequate arrangements for the following.

Accounts

- We have to give an opinion that your accounts present fairly the Authority's financial position.

Financial aspects of corporate governance

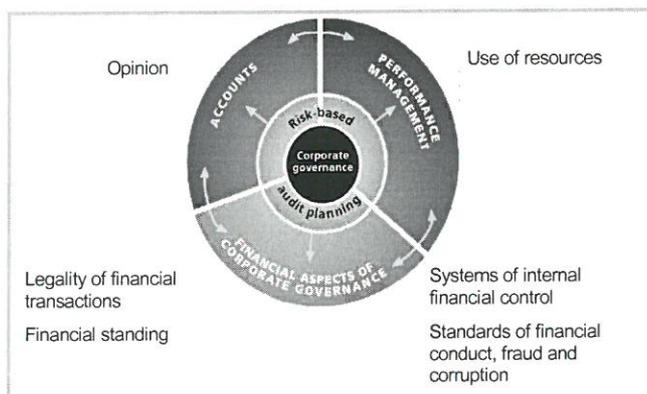
- Ensuring your financial standing is soundly based.
- Satisfying yourselves that your systems of internal financial control are both adequate and effective.
- Ensuring proper standards of financial conduct and to prevent and detect fraud and corruption.
- Securing the legality of transactions.

Performance

- Securing economy, efficiency and effectiveness in the use of your resources.
- Best Value Performance Plan (BVPP).
- Producing performance information.

The position is shown in the exhibit below.

THE AUDIT COMMISSION'S CODE OF PRACTICE



Our audit has addressed the requirements of the Code of Audit Practice and we have worked with the Authority to maximise the benefits of the integrated audit approach. We have reviewed your arrangements for dealing with risks and we have undertaken more detailed work in selected areas of higher risk. We also liaise with HM Inspector of Fire Services to maximise the benefit from our different roles and responsibilities.

Background to the audit

Once again it has been a demanding year for the Authority in its endeavours to contribute to making Berkshire a safer place.

Amongst the various national and regional issues which have impacted on 2001/02 are:

- Ensuring attendance time targets are met in responding to incidents (in 2001/02 the standards were met on 91.9 per cent of occasions) continued investment in community fire safety.
- Investment in new equipment and vehicle improvements.
- Continued development of performance management and Best Value.
- Responses to new legislation, including the Local Government Act 2000 and the e-government initiative.

The key messages emerging from this year's audit are set out below.

KEY MESSAGES

Overall conclusion

It is acknowledged that against an agenda of competing national and local priorities, the Authority has continued to deliver quality services overall.

A key challenge for the Authority will be to build on the sound performance management processes which are in place to demonstrate that service improvement are being secured.

The issues relating to the national dispute are noted and in an environment of limited capacity, it is important that the Authority remains focused on maintaining performance and developing processes as far as practical.

The following key messages are highlighted for Members.

Performance management

The Authority has a good performance management framework in place and continues to develop the proactive use of the performance management system.

The Authority needs to strengthen the links in the corporate plan and ensure it can demonstrate achievement against corporate objectives.

Best Value

The Authority has made progress in developing a culture of Best Value at all levels in the organisation and now needs to build on its work to date. Best Value Reviews are focusing on wider based areas and it is now important to ensure the actions from reviews are achieved.

Our statutory review of the 2002/03 Best Value Performance Plan (BVPP) found that this complied in all significant respects with legislation and statutory guidance.

Data Protection Act

The Authority needs to take action to ensure it is complying with the requirements of the Data Protection Act.

Financial standing

The Authority's financial standing at the year-end reflects good overall control of spending and the expenditure for 2001/02 met the budget of £22.42 million.

However, the financial pressures which the Authority faces in the short and medium-term will be challenging and emphasise the need for continued prudent financial management and monitoring by Members.

Accounts

We will shortly be giving an unqualified audit opinion on the Authority's financial statements.

Performance management

The Authority has a good performance management framework in place and continues to develop the proactive use of the performance management system.

The Authority needs to further strengthen the links within the corporate planning processes and ensure it can demonstrate achievement against corporate objectives.

The Authority has a good performance management framework in place and there continues to be a high awareness of performance management issues amongst senior officers.

To ensure there is a clear focus on the overall corporate aims and objectives, the Authority has produced a single Corporate Plan which brings together the Strategic, Best Value Performance and Community Safety Plans. This approach is innovative and is to be commended, however there is still scope to further develop the new style corporate plan to ensure it is a flowing document. In particular the Authority should improve the links between the strategic aims and objectives, the service aims and objectives (including community safety) and the performance targets.

The Authority has good arrangements to manage performance this includes the level of Member involvement. The corporate plan sets out the service aims and objectives which are then broken down into targets, with identifiable responsibilities and incorporated into departmental plans which are cascaded down into personal development plans. The overall framework can be further strengthened by ensuring action points are achieved. To do this the Authority should regularly monitor departmental business plans, for example, the directorate policy groups could monitor the progress of proposed actions within the relevant plan on a quarterly basis to ascertain whether they are being achieved.

Performance measurement is a key aspect of a good performance management framework and the Authority is very proactive in using its performance management system to set targets, monitor performance and inform management decisions.

Best Value

The Authority has made progress in developing a culture of Best Value at all levels in the organisation and now needs to build on its work to date. Best Value Reviews are focusing on wider based areas and it is now important to ensure the actions from reviews are achieved.

The BVPP provides an effective and comprehensive overview of the services provided and objectives planned and achieved.

Our statutory review of the 2002/03 BVPP found that this complied in all significant respects with legislation and statutory guidance.

We have therefore issued an unqualified opinion on the BVPP, included as Appendix 1 to this Letter.

In 2000/01 we reported that the industrial dispute reflected a potential lack of ownership of the Best Value principles below senior management level. We recommended that the Authority needed to develop its Best Value culture to improve ownership of performance management as a means of seeking service improvements and efficiencies. Our work this year identified that in setting up the 'Partnership for common sense', which allows employees at all levels within the Brigade to meet and discuss issues such as communication and working practices, the Authority has established a forum which is shifting the culture within the brigade. We recognise however that the current national dispute may have impacted on the progress made by the Authority and it is important that Members continue to progress with the work it has undertaken so that momentum is not lost.

The Authority has revised its review programme in line with guidance received from District Audit and the HMFSI. Resources are now being focused on completing wider based reviews, where there is greater scope of achieving efficiency or economic benefit. All services are scheduled to be reviewed within a five-year time frame. Guidance is also being prepared to direct review teams through the process. The Authority should ensure it reviews the guidance issued and the new review methodology to ensure reviews are effective and the process is consistently applied to current reviews.

Although the Authority has yet to have an inspection of a completed Best Value Review area by HMFSI, it is important to ensure that it focuses on the implementation of action plans in order to demonstrate achievement and secure improvement. In cases where progress against particular points slip or where actions lose their relevance the Authority should ensure that alternative targets are established in order to continuously drive forward improvement.

Data Protection Act

The Authority needs to take action to ensure it is complying with the requirements of the Data Protection Act.

The past 12 months has seen the implementation of the Data Protection Act (1998). The main driver being to give the citizen significantly enhanced powers to access information held about them by both public and private bodies and, through the Information Commissioner, to question the security and use made of that information.

These added rights for the citizen create greater obligations on data controllers to ensure that personal data is identified, notified to the Commissioner, is made as reasonably secure as possible and is available to any citizen who is legally entitled to ask for it.

Although our work in this area is yet to be finalised, we have found that the Authority needs to develop strategies and policies to ensure that it fully complies with the requirements of the Data Protection Act 1998. Our review established that insufficient progress has been made by the Authority to make sure it is compliant with the Act; this is evidenced by the fact that all the recommendations made by Internal Audit, in their Computer Audit, 'Data Protection and IT Acquisitions' report were still outstanding. Two priority areas where action is required are:

- undertaking an audit to establish all systems that process and maintain personal data
- the development of a security policy which cover the principles underlying all access control measures to personal data and clarify and distinguish the roles of IT,

management, user management and line management in relation to data security.

These two areas are an essential prerequisite for having robust security arrangements to ensure compliance with the Act and proper controls to comply with a data subject access request.

Members should ensure that the Authority complies with the requirements of the Act as soon as possible.

Financial aspects of corporate governance

Legality of financial transactions

We are satisfied with the Authority's arrangements for ensuring the legality of transactions with financial consequences.

During the year we have reviewed the Authority's overall arrangements and have no issues to raise. Furthermore no matters have been raised during the audit by members of the public.

Financial standing

The Authority's financial standing at the year-end reflects good overall control of spending and the expenditure for 2001/02 met the budget of £22.42 million.

The financial and other pressures which the Authority faces in the short and medium-term will be challenging and emphasise the need for continued prudent financial management and monitoring by Members.

General Fund Financial Position

The Authority's expenditure for 2001/02 met the budgeted expenditure of £22.42 million which indicates good overall budgetary control.

Provisions at 31 March 2001 amounted to £1.15 million, which included £1.1 million for future costs arising on the Firefighters pension scheme. In previous Management Letters we raised our concerns in respect of certain provisions not being utilised, we are pleased to note that this was not the case in 2001/02.

2002/2003 Forecast

For the financial year 2002/03 the Authority increased its budget requirement by £1.47 million to £23.89 million, this amounts to an increase of 6.6 per cent. As is the case with most fire authorities, budgets are above the Government's Standard Spending Assessment, and in the case of the Royal Berkshire Fire Authority, the budget is 8.5 per cent above the SSA, which compares to an average of 13.7 per cent nationally. The 2002/03 budget position reported to the November meeting of the Budget Working Party indicates that the projected outturn for the year will be in line with the original budget.

The future

There are a number of financial pressures facing local authorities and fire authorities in particular. Key issues which will have a significant impact on the future financial position of the Authority are:

- strategic financial planning is difficult with the ongoing national dispute and the 2003/04 budget is likely to be dominated by any pay settlement which will depart from the pay formula operative up to 2001/02
- there is uncertainty regarding the future path of Local Government financing, the Revenue Support Grant paid to local authorities is being replaced by a Formula Grant. Under the options under consideration for the fire formula there will be significant reductions for the Authority compared to the 2002/03 SSA
- the ongoing impact of the cost of fire-fighters pensions. The pension scheme deficit is anticipated to increase by £52,000 in 2003/04 and by a further £792,000 in 2004/05.

With the growth needs of the service, there will be continued pressure on the annual budget, and on the levies required of the constituent authorities. This represents a significant challenge and emphasises the need for continued prudent financial management and monitoring by Members.

Systems of internal financial control

On the basis of our work, we are satisfied that overall adequate systems of internal financial control are in place.

Our review in this area found sound arrangements for internal financial control to be in place. We were able to place reliance on the work of Internal Audit in undertaking our work.

Prevention of fraud and corruption

Arrangements for preventing and detecting fraud and corruption are satisfactory.

Overall arrangements for prevention of fraud and corruption have been reviewed and there are no significant issues to raise.

Accounts

We will shortly be giving an unqualified audit opinion on the Authority's financial statements.

Members approved the Authority's financial statements in advance of the 30 September deadline. Having concluded our audit we will be issuing an unqualified audit opinion in December.

Our work on the audit is nearing conclusion and the only issue which we wish to draw to Members attention are:

- the Authority should consider whether further disclosure should be made in reference to the national dispute under Post Balance Sheet Events.

The draft 2003 accounts and audit regulations will require the approval of the financial statements to be brought forward incrementally in future years, until they are prepared by 30 June from 2005/06. As with most authorities this will present a significant challenge.

Future audit work

We are currently considering the significant operational and financial issues facing the Authority that will need to be addressed in next year's audit.

We will discuss our risk assessment with your officers before producing an Audit Plan.

As a result of current changes within the Audit Commission and in order to bring the audit year in line with your own financial year, the next Audit Plan will cover a 17-month period up to 31 March 2004. Within this plan, we will include all the audit work to satisfy our responsibilities in respect of the Audit of Accounts for 2002/03 and 2003/04.

District Audit will also be merging with the Best Value Inspectorate to become the Operations Directorate of the Audit Commission.

We look forward to working with you in addressing the challenges you face.

Status of our Annual Audit Letter to the Authority

Our Annual Audit Letter is prepared in the context of the Statement of Responsibilities of Auditors and Audited Bodies issued by the Audit Commission. Annual Audit Letters are prepared by appointed auditors and addressed to Members or officers. They are prepared for the sole use of the audited body, and no responsibility is taken by auditors to any Member or officer in their individual capacity, or to any third party.

Concluding remarks

We would like to take this opportunity to express our appreciation for the assistance received from officers during the course of our work. Our aim is to provide a high standard of audit service which makes a practical and positive contribution to the work of the Authority. We recognise the value of your co-operation and support.

Stephen Taylor
District Auditor

November 2002

Reports arising from the audit

- Best Value report (October 2002)
- Data Protection Act (November 2002)
- Final accounts and Regularity (November 2002)

Statutory Report on the Best Value Performance Plan

Auditor's Report to Royal Berkshire Fire Authority on its Best Value Performance Plan for the year 2002/2003

Certificate

1. I certify that we have audited Royal Berkshire Fire Authority's best value performance plan in accordance with section 7 of the Local Government Act 1999 (the Act) and the Audit Commission's Code of Audit Practice. I also had regard to supplementary guidance issued by the Audit Commission.

Respective Responsibilities of the Authority and the Auditor

2. Under the Act, the Authority is required to prepare and publish a best value performance plan summarising the Authority's assessments of its performance and position in relation to its statutory duty to make arrangements to secure continuous improvement to the way in which its functions are exercised, having regard to a combination of economy, efficiency and effectiveness.
3. The Authority is responsible for the preparation of the plan and for the information and assessments set out within it. The Authority is also responsible for establishing appropriate performance management and internal control systems from which the information and assessments in its plan are derived. The form and content of the best value performance plan are prescribed in section 6 of the Act and statutory guidance issued by the Government.
4. As the Authority's auditor, I am required under section 7 of the Act to carry out an audit of the best value performance plan, to certify that I have done so, and:
 - to report whether I believe that the plan has been prepared and published in accordance with statutory requirements set out in section 6 of the Act and statutory guidance
 - where appropriate, recommending how the plan should be amended so as to accord with statutory requirements;
 - to recommend:
 - where appropriate, procedures to be followed in relation to the plan
 - whether the Audit Commission should carry out a best value inspection of the Authority under section 10 of the Local Government Act 1999
 - whether the Secretary of State should give a direction under section 15 of the Local Government Act 1999.

Opinion

Basis of this opinion

5. For the purpose of forming my opinion whether the plan was prepared and published in accordance with the legislation and with regard to statutory guidance, I conducted my audit in accordance with the Audit Commission's Code of Audit Practice. In carrying out my audit work I also had regard to supplementary guidance issued by the Audit Commission.

6. We planned and performed our work so as to obtain all the information and explanations which we considered necessary in order to provide an opinion on whether the plan has been prepared and published in accordance with statutory requirements.
7. In giving my opinion I am not required to form a view on the completeness or accuracy of the information or the realism and achievability of the assessments published by the Authority. Our work therefore comprised a review and assessment of the plan and, where appropriate, examination on a test basis of relevant evidence, sufficient to satisfy me/ourselves that the plan includes those matters prescribed in legislation and statutory guidance and that the arrangements for publishing the plan complied with the requirements of the legislation and statutory guidance.
8. Where I have qualified my audit opinion on the plan I am are required to recommend how the plan should be amended so as to comply in all significant respects with the legislation and statutory guidance.

Opinion

9. In my opinion, Royal Berkshire Fire Authority has prepared and published its best value performance plan in all significant respects in accordance with section 6 of the Local Government Act 1999 and statutory guidance issued by the Government.
10. On the basis of our work:
 - I do not recommend that the Audit Commission should carry out a best value inspection of Royal Berkshire Fire Authority under section 10 of the Local Government Act 1999.
 - I do not recommend that the Secretary of State should give a direction under section 15 of the Local Government Act 1999.

Signature Date

**AGENDA ITEM 11: FREEDOM OF INFORMATION ACT –
PUBLICATION SCHEME**

To: Royal Berkshire Fire Authority
Date: 18 December 2002
Officer Contributing: Chief Fire Officer
 Clerk & Monitoring Officer

A PURPOSE OF REPORT

To seek the Authority's approval of a draft Publication Scheme which meets the Fire Authority's obligations under the Freedom of Information Act 2000 for submission to the Information Commissioner for approval.

B PROPOSED ACTION

The Committee is invited to **RESOLVE:** That the attached Draft Publication Scheme is approved for submission to the Information Commissioner.

C FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

There are no direct financial implications arising from this report. It is expected that there will be additional costs arising from the operation of the proposed Publication Scheme but these are difficult to quantify at this time. Initially, the additional costs will be met from the income from the charges included in the draft Scheme and existing revenue budgets. If necessary, a further budget bid will be made in the future.

D CONTRIBUTION TO THE STRATEGIC PLAN

The introduction of a Publication Scheme will contribute to the achievement of Service Aims 5; to provide and develop cost effective services in consultation and partnership with the local community within the Best Value framework and 6; to provide enhanced services to the local public and businesses and be recognised as doing so.

E ASSESSMENT AGAINST THE PARTNERSHIP FOR COMMON SENSE

This report does not contribute to the Partnership for Common Sense.

F SUPPORTING INFORMATION

1 Section 19 of the Freedom of Information Act 2000, places a duty on public authorities, including the Royal Berkshire Fire Authority, to adopt and maintain a publication scheme.

- 2 Publication Schemes are a new feature of UK legislation on access to information held by public authorities. Their purpose is to be a means by which a public authority can make a significant amount of information available routinely, without waiting for someone specifically to request it.
- 3 The implementation timetable provides for publication schemes to be brought into effect over a two year period. For local government, including Fire Authorities but excluding Police Authorities, schemes must be implemented by February 2003. Prior to implementation, Publication Schemes must be approved by the Information Commissioner. For Fire Authorities, the Information Commissioner has been accepting submission of draft schemes since 1st October 2002 and they must be submitted by 31st December 2002.
- 4 In order to assist Fire Authorities to meet their duties under the Freedom of Information Act and avoid duplication of effort, the Fire Lawyers Network has been co-ordinating the preparation of a model publication scheme for Fire Authorities, in liaison with the Information Commissioner's Office. The attached draft publication scheme (Appendix A) is closely based on the model scheme and it is therefore anticipated that it will receive approval from the Information Commissioner.
- 5 The publication scheme has been designed on the basis that the Royal Berkshire Fire and Rescue Service's web-site will be the main vehicle for publishing information about the Brigade. As a result it is proposed that the officer responsible for the operation and maintenance of the publication scheme will be the Corporate Communications Manager.
- 6 It is proposed that there will be no charge for information available via the web-site and that stakeholders will not be charged for the provision of information under the publication scheme. However, it is proposed that there will be a charge for others obtaining information under the scheme, but at this stage there is no requirement to specify charges. They will be based on the costs reasonably and directly incurred in locating and providing the information sought.

F BACKGROUND PAPERS

- 1 Freedom of Information Act 2000
 2 Freedom of Information Act 2000 Publication Schemes Approval Documentation – Information Commissioner's Office June 2002

Contact Officers: David Wallace (0118) 932 2227
 Nicole Targett (0118) 932 2283

APPENDIX A

This is the Royal Berkshire Fire and Rescue Service Publication Scheme which covers the county of Berkshire.

Our full title and address for sending any documents is: Royal Berkshire Fire and Rescue Service

103 Dee Road

Tilehurst

Reading

Berkshire RG30 4FS

The senior officer responsible for maintenance of this scheme is: Corporate Communications Manager

1. Introduction: what a publication scheme is and why it has been developed

One of the aims of the Freedom of Information Act 2000 (which is referred to as FOIA in the rest of this document) is that public authorities should be clear and proactive about the information they will make public. To do this they must produce a publication scheme, setting out:

- *The classes of information which they publish or intend to publish;*
- *The manner in which the information will be published; and*

- *Whether the information is available free of charge or on payment.*

The Authority's publication scheme consists of information already published and held by the Authority or information which is to be published in the future. That means that all information in our publication scheme is either available for you on our website to download and print off or available in traditional document form. Information within the publication scheme will be available either free or at a charge – we explain which is free or which will be provided at a charge later in this scheme.

Some information which we hold may not be made public, for example information about national security or court records.

2. Classes of information published by the Authority

The publication scheme guides you to information which we currently publish (or have recently published) or which we will publish in the future – this is split into 'classes' of information.

The 'classes' of information currently published are contained in section 4 of this Scheme. Details of how the information is or will be published and any fees charged for information contained in the publication scheme are set out in the same section.

The classes in the scheme are based on our departmental functions. Under each heading there is a list of the information which we publish which relates to that function.

For example, information under the heading of 'personnel' includes recruitment, training, discipline policies and so on.

3. What we do: Functions of the Combined Fire Authority and Fire and Rescue Service in Berkshire

The Authority is responsible for carrying out the duties required by the Fire Services Act 1947. These include:

- securing the services of a fire brigade for its area;

- securing the efficient training of its fire fighters;
- making sure arrangements are in place to receive calls and summon members of the fire brigade;
- gathering information on the character of buildings and water supplies;
- securing arrangements to alleviate damage to property in the course of firefighting;
- giving fire safety advice; and
- enforcing laws providing for fire safety within its area.

The Authority sets the fire authority's annual budget and the cost of carrying out its duties are met partly by council tax in each council area and partly by government grant and business rates.

The Authority also carries out other functions, such as rescue services or attending non-fire incidents. These include:

- rescuing trapped and/or injured people where no fire is involved e.g. at road accidents;
- dealing with spillages and accidental release of substances endangering life or the environment e.g. chemical or toxic substances inadvertently released; and
- responding to extreme weather conditions e.g. pumping water from flooded property (for information about this see under Rescue Services below)

As part of its duties laid down in the Fire Services Act 1947, the Authority provides fire advice in the community. This means educating the public about fire safety.

The Authority was established in 1997 following local government reorganisation. West Berkshire council, Reading Borough Council, Wokingham District Council, Bracknell Forest borough council, Royal Borough of Windsor and Maidenhead and Slough borough council are the Councils responsible for the Authority but are independent from it. Representative members of each Council sit on the Authority which then oversees the Fire Brigade's finances, strategies and operations.

4. Classes of Information Currently Published

Class	Sub-Heading	Format of Information	Availability & Cost
Operational – fire fighting & rescue.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Fire Cover/Areas • Vehicles/Appliances • Equipment 	Brochures & Internal documents website	Free to stakeholders, will be charge to others where information not on website

Human Resources and Personnel	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Recruitment • Terms and Conditions • Discipline Procedure • Staff Appraisal Policy • Statistics • Equal Opportunities • Training Strategy • Pension information • Operational Training Manuals • Non-Uniformed (excluding Personal Data) • Integrated Personnel Development System (IPDS) 	Application Forms Documents Website	Via website or direct contact, free Free of charge to stakeholders, will be charge to others where not available on website
Occupational Health and Safety – advice to staff and public on fire-related issues.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Occupational Health Advice • Risk Assessment –evaluating risks to people • Welfare • Statistics 	Leaflets	Free of charge to stakeholders, will be charge to others where not available on website
Managing the Service	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Guidance on Management • Policies and Procedures • Brigade Structure 	Website	Free to stakeholders, will be charge to others where not available on website
Plans and Procedures	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Corporate Plan • Best Value Plans • Strategies e.g. <i>Community Fire</i> 	Authority Reports	Document and website, free

	<p>Safety</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Service Orders e.g. dealing with burning vehicles • Service Plans 	Document Website	Included in annual plan, free
Budgets	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Annual Budget • Financial Summary • Annual Statement of Accounts 	Authority Reports Website	Included in annual plan, free
Premises (locations of stations etc)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Fire Stations • Training Centres • Headquarters 	Website	Free
Purchasing and Supply	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Policy Statement – purchasing strategy • Uniforms • Operational Equipment • Vehicles, Appliances & Cars • Smoke alarms 	Documents Website	Free to stakeholders, will be charge to others where not available on website
Information and Communication Technology	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Equipment: Software and Hardware • Policies & Strategies e.g. the <i>Implementing Electronic Government Statement</i> • Technical Specifications • IT Development 	Documents Website	Free to stakeholders, will be charge to others where not available on website

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Communications Networks • Communications Procedures • Collaborative Projects e.g. <i>Radio Strategy Project</i> 		
Public Relations	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • News/Press Releases • Incidents of interest • Complaints Procedure • News Letters 	Documents Website	Free
<p>Fire Safety:</p> <p>Community FS</p> <p>Technical FS & Enforcement</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Community FS Plan – how we promote Fire Safety • Fire Safety at Home and Community • FS for Schools/Kids • Statistics • Fire Safety Campaign • Young Firefighters • Other initiatives • Commercial FS • Policy and Procedure • Guidance • Statistics 	<p>Leaflets</p> <p>Brochures</p> <p>Posters</p> <p>Stickers</p> <p>Manuals</p> <p>Documents</p> <p>website</p>	Free
Performance	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Best Value Indicators • BV Performance Plans and Reviews • Statistics • Audit Reports • HM Fire Service Inspectorate 	Reports and Documents	Included in annual plan, free

	Reports	As above	As above
Committees and Partnerships *	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Performance Management • Fire Authority • Public Protection • Premises • Trades Unions Liaison • Management Board • Equal Opportunities • Local Partnership Agreements <i>e.g. smoke alarms</i> 	Agendas/ Open Reports & Minutes Reports Brochures website	Free to stakeholders, charge to others where not available on website
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Civil Defence plans • Control of Major Accident Hazards Plans • Pipeline and Radiation Plans • Public Information Zone (high risk areas) • Public information 	Documents Website	Free of charge to stakeholders, charge to others where not available on website
		Leaflets Website	Free

* some information might be confidential or exempt from publication by law - we cannot therefore publish this

- **Information available on our website**

Royal Berkshire Fire Authority maintains a website at rbfrs.co.uk and has an ongoing commitment to make as much information available on our website as possible.

5. Other useful website addresses

The information you are looking for may also be available from the following organisations or on their websites. The websites listed below are an excellent source of information and if the documents are downloaded or printed off by the enquirer they provide a quick response at little cost.

However, the Authority takes no responsibility nor warrants the accuracy of information contained on the following sites:

- Chief and Assistant Chief Fire Officers Association (CACFOA) -www.fire-uk.org
- Office of the Deputy Prime Minister (ODPM)
 - *Fire Health & Safety Directorate*
 - *Fire Research Division*
 - *Fire Policy Division*
 - *Her Majesty's Fire Service Inspectorate*
 - www.odpm.gov.uk/fire
- UK Online Government – www.ukonline.gov.uk
- Local Government Association (LGA) - www.lga.gov.uk
- FireNet International – www.fire.org.uk

6. Making an application for other Information to the Authority

As well as being able to access information which is publicly available under the Publication Scheme we will answer queries under the existing Code of Practice on Access to Government Information. This allows you to write and ask us to supply you with specific information.

You can also apply for a copy of the personal data we hold about you under the Data Protection Act 1998 - that is information relating to an applicant that has arisen through their employment with the Authority or information obtained about an individual through the Authority's statutory functions. There is a fee of £10 and you should contact the Authority's Corporate Communications Manager on 0118 932 2283.

7. Applications for information after January 2005 under FOIA

After January 2005 you will be able to ask the Authority for information which is not already published elsewhere nor exempt under the FOIA. Under the FOIA you will have the right to ask for information to be provided in a particular way and we will try to meet your request. You will be able to ask for assistance if you have any difficulty in formulating or making an application by contacting the Authority's Information Officer. We will help you as much as possible but we are not required to look for the information you request unless we have:

- a clear and understandable request with enough detail to locate the information;
- your name and address so we can respond to your request; and
- an indication about the form in which you want the information.

This will ensure that your application is dealt with as quickly as possible. You should give as much detail as you can in order to assist us in locating the information that you require. Some documents may include exempt information so you will only get the information which is not exempt. You only have a right to information and not necessarily to documents. Some documents may include exempt information so you will only get the information from them which is not exempt.

Any fee charged will be calculated by looking at the costs directly and reasonably incurred locating the information you have asked for and giving it to you. You will then be sent a 'fees notice' which you will have to pay within three months of your request – you will not receive information until you have paid the costs in the fees notice.

If the estimated cost of providing the information would be above the appropriate limit set by the government then we will not be under a duty to provide the information. However, the Authority will inform you if the limit will be exceeded and we will try to let you know what can be provided within the limit. Despite not being obliged to provide information which exceeds the limit the Authority will still be under a duty to advise and assist.

In order to protect the Authority there will be rules which govern multiple applications for information which are clearly trying to avoid the financial limits set by the government. However, we will try to help you as much as possible to get the information you want.

8. Complaints and Feedback

If you want to make any comments about this publication scheme or if you require further assistance or need to make a complaint then initially this should be addressed to the Authority's Corporate Communications Manager at targettn@rbfrs.co.uk.

If you are not satisfied with the assistance that you get from the Authority or if we have not been able to resolve your complaint and you feel that a formal complaint needs to be made then this should be addressed to the office of the Information Commissioner. This is the organisation that ensure compliance with the Freedom of Information Act 2000 and that deals with formal complaints. They can be contacted at:

Information Commissioner, Wycliffe House, Water Lane, Wilmslow, Cheshire, SK9 5AF

or

Enquiry/Information Line: 01625 545 745

E Mail: data@dataprotection.gov.uk

*This document will be made available in other languages
or on audio cassette upon request.*

Explanatory Notes Model Publication Scheme for Fire Authorities

The model publication scheme has been approved by the Information Commissioner for;

- A fire authority constituted by a combination scheme under section 5 or 6 of the Fire Services Act 1947.
- A joint fire authority established under Part IV of the Local Government Act 1985.
- The London Fire and Emergency Planning Authority
- A joint fire authority established by virtue of an order under section 42(2) of the Local Government Act 1985.

These notes are aimed to help you when deciding whether the model scheme is appropriate for your organisation and will explain the steps you need to take in order to adopt the scheme. Having adopted the model scheme your organisation will then be obliged to publish the information set out in it.

The model scheme was developed and submitted by the Fire Lawyers' Network. Contact David Cutting, Solicitor, South Yorkshire Fire and Civil Defence Authority, 18, Regent Street, Barnsley, South Yorkshire, S70 2PQ. Phone 01226 772855.

Is the Model Scheme appropriate for your organisation?

The Freedom of Information Act 2000 defines the public authorities that are covered by the Act and so are required to adopt and maintain a publication scheme. The types of fire authorities listed above are all identified in Schedule 1, Part II of the Act as public authorities covered by the Act. It is for these fire authorities that this model scheme has been prepared. It is your responsibility to check whether your organisation falls within any one of these definitions.

Although all such fire authorities are required to adopt a publication scheme, they are not obliged to adopt the model publication scheme. It is anticipated that this model scheme will cover most of the core functions undertaken by a fire authority. However if you wish to, you may submit a bespoke scheme for approval by the Commissioner which better caters for your organisation's individual circumstances. If you decide you would prefer to submit a bespoke scheme, you should follow the procedure detailed in the Commissioner's booklet; Publication Schemes – Approval Documentation, which you should already have received. This booklet is also available from our website.

The Model Scheme

The model scheme has been developed in a way that should allow a fire service to simply insert its own details into the appropriate places as indicated by the bold text in capital letters contained in square brackets.

The Classes of information.

Section 4 of the model scheme presents the classes of information to be published in the form of a table. Included in the table are details of what format the information will be published in, how the information can be obtained and whether it will be provided free of charge or for a fee.

The left hand column of the table gives the general class heading, whilst the next column contains the definition detailing the sort of information intended to be included in that class. The third column informs users how the information will be presented, the final column provides details of how to obtain the information. The final column also indicates whether a charge will be made for the information.

Optional documents and classes

The model scheme recognises that there are some variations in the services provide by different fire authorities. For example not all services will have a fire fighting at sea function. Within most of the classes there are optional documents listed under the second column in order to accommodate these variations. These are shown in bold text.

There are also two optional classes, one of which relates to those functions unique to the London Fire and Emergency planning Authority and one relating to those services who either operate a museum or provide information on the history of the brigade to the public.

How do you select the optional documents and classes?

The Commissioner needs to be aware of which, if any, of these optional documents or classes a fire authority has selected. Therefore you should submit a completed copy of the model scheme with all the appropriate contact details etc of your fire authority and showing the options selected.

We will acknowledge receipt of your submission and then, later, the Commissioner will advise you formally when your declaration has been accepted.

What will adopting the model publication scheme commit a fire authority to do?

Simply submitting a completed copy of the model scheme does not in itself fulfil a fire service's obligations under the Act in relation to publication schemes. A public authority has to make its publication scheme available and publish information in accordance with that scheme. By adopting the model scheme, your organisation is committing itself to publishing the information described by the classes that you have selected.

As new information is produced which falls within a class definition, it should be prepared for publication and made available.

How should the information be made available?

The scheme provides scope for a fire service to publish information in a variety of ways. It is anticipated that a lot of information could be made available on the authorities own website. Other information may only be available on request from the appropriate person. There is also the option of making copies of information available through local libraries.

We are very aware that not all people have access to the internet for a variety of reasons. Therefore even where information is available on a website the Commissioner would still expect hard copies to be made available.

The Freedom of Information Act aims to develop a culture of openness amongst public authorities. Fire authorities should raise awareness of the existence and contents of the scheme it adopts to, the general public.

Fees

A fire authority may choose to charge for the information it is making available. It is sufficient for the purposes of this Office, that you simply indicate whether any of the information contained in a class is to be made available free of charge or not. For example it is likely that all the information made available under the Public Relations class will be free. This can be indicated by simply putting “**Cost – Free**” in the fourth column. If however any newsletters produced would be charged for, then the column should be completed by entering “**Cost - £**” to indicate some of the information in that class would be charged for. It is not necessary, for our purposes, to state the actual price of the newsletter.

The Duration of the Model Scheme

All publication schemes, including model schemes, will be approved for a specified period, this will generally be 4 years. The Commissioner will advise you whether your organisation’s adoption of the model scheme has been accepted. At that time you will also be informed of the date the approval of your model scheme will expire.

Further Help and Assistance

For further information about the way in which this model scheme was developed or its contents please contact Dave Cutting of the Fire Lawyers Network.

Queries about the submission process and subsequent operation of the scheme once adopted should be addressed to the F.O.I team at the Information Commissioner’s Office.

AGENDA ITEM 12: CHARGING FOR BRIGADE ATTENDANCE AT ROYAL ASCOT

To: Royal Berkshire Fire Authority
Date: 18 December 2002
Officer Contributing: Chief Fire Officer
Authority Treasurer
Clerk and Monitoring Officer

A PURPOSE OF REPORT

To seek Members approval to commence charging on the basis of full cost recovery for the annual attendance at Royal Ascot.

B PROPOSED ACTION

The Authority is invited to consider the report and **RESOLVE:** That charges should be made to recover actual costs for the annual attendance at Royal Ascot.

C FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

The Brigade attendance and special arrangements put in place on an annual basis for Royal Ascot costs the Authority approximately £6,600; this could be fully recovered from the event organisers.

D CONTRIBUTION TO THE STRATEGIC PLAN

This does not directly impact upon the Strategic Plan

E ASSESSMENT AGAINST THE PARTNERSHIP FOR COMMON SENSE

There are no implications to the partnership for common sense

E SUPPORTING INFORMATION

- 1 A review has been carried out on charging for Brigade attendance at major events. Currently full cost recovery is made for attendance at Henley Regatta but no charge is made for attendance at Royal Ascot Races.
- 2 Historically the Brigade has attended the Royal Ascot event without charge. Over the 5-day race period Ascot town becomes grid locked with traffic and as such crews are deployed to standby at the station throughout the day in order to respond immediately to an incident. Although Ascot racecourse remains Crown Property, responsibility for the management of the site and the running of the event is now in the hands of a private company and not the Royal Household.

- 3 The approximate costs and associated resources deployed over the 5-day period are as follows;

11 retained personnel to crew a water tender ladder, the L6P and operate the radio	£ 4000.00	
2 Officers for fire safety, operational command		£ 1300.00
1 Sub Officer for event planning and liaison		£ 1000.00
Catering for the above personnel		£ 300.00
Approximate total		£ 6,600.00

- 4 The Head of Financial Services has advised that it is not acceptable for the Authority to make a profit for our attendance at the event. As such any charge levied should be on a full cost recovery basis.

F BACKGROUND PAPERS

None

Contact Officer: Olaf Baars (0118)932 2226

ROYAL BERKSHIRE FIRE AUTHORITY

WEDNESDAY 18 DECEMBER 2002

AGENDA ITEM 13: BUDGET 2003/2004

As the Fire Authority's Budget Working Party does not meet until Wednesday 11 December 2002 the report has been marked to follow and will therefore be circulated after the Fire Authority Agenda has been published.

