

ROYAL BERKSHIRE FIRE AUTHORITY



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Your reference:

My reference: RBFA/DRW
(please quote on all correspondence)

When calling ask for: David R Weller
Direct Line: (0118) 932 2288
E-Mail: wellerd@rbfrs.co.uk

Date: 12 June 2002

Dear Councillor

AGENDA FOR MEETING OF ROYAL BERKSHIRE FIRE AUTHORITY

I have pleasure in attaching your Agenda for the Annual Meeting of the Royal Berkshire Fire Authority to be held on Wednesday 19 June 2002 in the Council Chamber at the Royal Borough of Windsor and Maidenhead, Town Hall, St Ives Road, Maidenhead commencing at 6.30pm.

The Town Hall is situated between Park Street and St Ives Road and the car park adjacent to the Town Hall, which is available after 5.00pm, is accessed via Park Street. A map showing the venue is attached.

Members are advised that they should approach Maidenhead via the M4 Motorway and leave at Junction 8/9. At the top of the slip road take the second exit (A308(M)) and at the next roundabout turn left into the A308 Braywick Road. Continue on the Braywick Road and at the roundabout whilst remaining on the A308 move over to the right hand lane as you pass under the Railway Bridge. Stay in the right hand lane turning left at the traffic lights into the one way system (Grenfell Road). After approximately 50 yards turn right, moving into the middle lane and at the traffic lights turn right into Broadway. Keeping to the left hand lane continue down Broadway turning right at the T-junction into Park Street. (The Town Hall should be opposite you at this point). The entrance to the Car Park will be on your left approximately 50 yards from the Park Street/Broadway junction.

Entrance to the Town Hall is via the Desborough Suite in Park Street where a Security Officer will be on duty to assist Members. The Council Chamber is located on the first floor and the Briefing Rooms can be found at the following locations:

Members Room: Turn left out of the Council Chamber, through the double doors and the room is the first door on the right hand side

Meeting Room A: From the Council Chamber go down the stairs directly in front of you. At the bottom of the stairs turn right. Meeting Room A is the first door on the left.

Ceremonial Entrance: From the Council Chamber go down the stairs directly in front of you and the Ceremonial Entrance is opposite the bottom of the stairs.

If any Member is travelling by train the Town Hall is a short walk from the Station via King Street, Queens Street and York Road, taking the second left into Park Street. (Please refer to map). Alternatively please let me know, by Monday 17 June 2002, and I will arrange for you to be collected from the Station forecourt.

Yours sincerely

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: Annual Meeting of the Royal Berkshire Fire Authority

DATE AND TIME: Wednesday 19 June 2002 at 6.30pm

VENUE: Council Chamber, Royal Borough of Windsor and Maidenhead, Town Hall, St Ives Road, Maidenhead, 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

Mrs C Bateson, Mrs P Bray, J C G Brooks, T Bucknell, Ms C Borgars*,
C Clacey, R A Flood, E L Glasson, John P Green, J S Grewal, P Hingley,
Mrs V Howes, Owen E Jeffery, D W Liddiard, P Love, C Maskell,
D McCarthy, T Mills, J E R Mole, D Morgan, B J S Patman, M Pritchett,
A J Ross, D J Smith, D J Wilson (**Subject to confirmation of appointment*)

Briefing Meetings:

Conservative Group: 5.30pm – Ceremonial Entrance – Ground Floor
Labour Group: 5.30pm – Meeting Room A – Ground Floor
Liberal Democrat Group: 5.30pm – Members Room – First Floor

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 19 JUNE 2002



AGENDA

PART I AGENDA

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	<i>To elect a Chairman of the Royal Berkshire Fire Authority for the ensuing year.</i>	
2	Election of Vice-Chairman	-
	<i>To elect a Vice-Chairman of the Royal Berkshire Fire Authority for the ensuing year.</i>	
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To note that the next Fire Authority meeting is scheduled to take place on Wednesday 11 September 2002 in the Council Chamber, Bracknell Forest Borough Council, Easthampstead House, Town Square, Bracknell commencing at 6.30pm.

The December Fire Authority Meeting (Budget) will take place on Wednesday 18 & 19 December 2002 at West Berkshire Council, Council Offices, Market Street, Newbury, commencing at 6.30pm.

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**AGENDA ITEM 4: MEMBERSHIP OF THE ROYAL BERKSHIRE
FIRE AUTHORITY**

To: Royal Berkshire Fire Authority
Date: 19 June 2002
Officer Contributing: Clerk & Monitoring Officer

A PURPOSE OF REPORT

To advise on the District/Borough Council Member appointments to 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 Following the Elections in May the District/Borough Councils in Berkshire have appointed the following Member representatives to the Fire Authority. New Members are shown in **Bold Type**:

Bracknell Forest Borough Council (3) – No Change

R A Flood (Con), E L Glasson (Lab), T Mills (Con)

Reading Borough Council (4) – Representation Changed

Ms C Borgars (Lab)**, P Hingley (Lab), C Maskell (Lab), D Morgan (Lib/Dem)
 (** *Subject to confirmation by the Borough Council's Cabinet on 10 June 2002-
 Cabinet's decision will be reported at the Authority meeting*)

West Berkshire Council (5) – No Change

J C G Brooks (Lib/Dem), O E Jeffrey (Lib/Dem), J E R Mole (Lib/Dem),
 D W Liddiard (Con), T Bucknell (Con)

Slough Borough Council (3) – Representation Changed**J S Grewal (Lab), D McCarthy (Lab), D J Smith (Con)****Royal Borough of Windsor and Maidenhead (5) No Change**Mrs C Bateson (Con), Mrs V Howes (Lib/Dem), P Love(Con), M Pritchett (Lib/Dem)
D Wilson(Con)**Wokingham District Council (5) - Representation Changed****Mrs P Bray (Lib/Dem), Mr C Clacey (Lib/Dem), John P Green (Con),
B J S Patman (Con), A J Ross (Con) -**

2 The Political Parties representation is therefore as follows:

Conservative	11
Labour	6
Liberal/Democrat	8
Total	25

E BACKGROUND PAPERS

Confirmation of appointments received from District/Borough Councils in Berkshire

Contact Officers:	Clive Williams	(0118) 932 2284
	David Weller	(0118) 932 2288

AGENDA ITEM 5: MINUTES: 13 MARCH 2002

MINUTES OF A MEETING OF THE ROYAL BERKSHIRE FIRE AUTHORITY HELD IN THE FRANK HUTCHINGS MEMORIAL HALL, BRADLEY MOORE SQUARE, HARTS HILL ROAD, THATCHAM ON WEDNESDAY 13 MARCH 2002 COMMENCING AT 6.30PM AND CONCLUDED AT 8.12PM.

Present: J C G Brooks (Chairman), B J S Patman (Vice-Chairman), Mrs C Bateson, John P Green, E E Herbert, D W Liddiard, C Maskell, T D McCann, D McCarthy, T Mills, J E R Mole, M Pritchett, D J Wilson

Apologies: T P Dredge, R A Flood, E L Glasson, A Gregory, P Hingley, Owen E Jeffery, Mrs J Orton, A J Ross

(Councillor B J S Patman, Vice-Chairman in the Chair)

1.01/02 MEMBERSHIP OF THE FIRE AUTHORITY

It was reported that Councillor T P Dredge had resigned as one of the Fire Authority representatives from Wokingham District Council with effect from Thursday 15 March 2002.

NOTED

1.02/02 MINUTES: 19 DECEMBER 2001

The Minutes of the last meeting held on Wednesday 19 December 2001, having been previously circulated, were taken as read and signed by the Chairman as a correct record.

(Councillor J C G Brooks in the Chair)

1.03/02 PART I MINUTES OF SUB GROUPS

The Authority was advised (Agenda item 3 – not reproduced) of the Performance Review and Audit Panel, Personnel Committee, Community Safety Panel, Urgency Committee and Fire Liaison Group meetings that had taken place since the last meeting in December 2001 or would be taking place in the near future.

Members were advised that copies of the Part I Minutes were available on request from the Committee Administrator (0118) 932 2288)

NOTED

1.04/02 CHAIRMAN'S COMMUNICATIONS

The Chairman had nothing further to report.

1.05/02 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.

1.06/02 QUESTIONS FROM MEMBERS

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

1.07/02 NOTICES OF MOTION

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

1.08/02 DATES FOR FUTURE FIRE AUTHORITY MEETING – SEPTEMBER 2002 TO JUNE 2003

The Authority, having considered the suggested dates for future meetings for the period September 2002 to June 2003 **RESOLVED: That future Fire Authority meetings be held on the following dates in 2002/2003, commencing at 6.30pm, and subject to confirmation, at the venues shown:**

Wednesday 11 September 2002 at Bracknell Forest Borough Council
Wednesday 18 December 2002 (Budget Meeting) at West Berkshire Council
Wednesday 12 March 2003 at Wokingham District Council
Wednesday 25 June 2003 (Annual Meeting) at Frank Hutchings Hall, Thatcham

(Post Meeting Note: The venues for the meetings being held at Bracknell, West Berkshire and Wokingham have now been confirmed).

1.09/02 MODEL CODE OF CONDUCT

The Authority was requested (Agenda item 9 – not reproduced) to consider and adopt the Model Code of Conduct which came into effect on 27 November 2001 in accordance with The Local Authorities (Model Code of Conduct) (England) Order 2001.

Having introduced the report the Clerk reminded Members of the effects of the Code,

which is now mandatory. If the Authority is minded to adopt the Code, each Member must sign up to it within two months or cease to be a Member.

RESOLVED: That the Model Code of Conduct be adopted with the effect that:-

- a **Within two months (13 May 2002) each Member of the Authority must sign a written undertaking to observe the provisions of the Code, failing which the Member shall cease to be a Member of the Authority.**
- b **Within twenty-eight days (10 April 2002) each Member of the Authority must register with the Clerk and Monitoring Officer, any financial or other interests as laid down in the Code and must also advise the Clerk and Monitoring Officer, in writing, within twenty-eight days of receiving any gift or hospitality in excess of £25.00 in relation to his/her position as a Member of the Authority.**

1.10/02 STANDARDS COMMITTEE

The Authority was advised (Agenda item 10 – not reproduced) of the receipt of guidance from the Standards Board of England to (inter alia) Combined Fire Authorities on the implementation of Part 3 of the Local Government Act 2000.

As a result of this the Authority was requested to review its decision of 13 December 2000 to constitute a Standards Committee of seven, with four Independent Members. Having discussed the options available it was **RESOLVED: That the Fire Authority's decision of 13 December 2000 to constitute a Standards Committee of seven, with four Independent Members be reaffirmed and that the Clerk and Monitoring Officer be requested to proceed with the advertisement seeking nominations for the Independent Members and report back to a future Fire Authority meeting.**

1.11/02 ADOPTION OF CIPFA'S TREASURY MANAGEMENT IN THE PUBLIC SERVICES: CODE OF PRACTICE 2001

The Authority's approval was sought (Agenda item 11 – not reproduced) to the adoption of the revised Code of Practice issued by CIPFA to take effect from 1 April 2002 as described in Section 4 of that Code and reproduced as Appendix A (not reproduced).

The CIPFA Code of Practice on Treasury Management in Local Authorities was last updated in 1996 and has been substantially revised in 2001 in order to reflect developments since then. The Institute believes that this major revision is timely for a number of reason as summarised in paragraph 1 of the report (not reproduced).

Members were advised that the adoption of the new Code will require some minor amendments being made to the Authority's Financial Regulations.

RESOLVED: That:

- 1 **This Authority adopts the key recommendations of CIPFA's Treasury Management in the Public Services: Code of Practice (the Code) 2001 as described in Section 4 of that Code and reproduced as Appendix A.**
- 2 **Accordingly, this Authority will create and maintain, as the cornerstones for effective treasury management:**
 - **a treasury management policy statement (TMPS), stating the policies and objectives of its treasury management activities.**
 - **suitable treasury management practices (TMP), setting out the manner in which the organisation will seek to achieve those policies and objectives, and prescribing how it will manage and control those activities.**
- 2 **This Authority will receive reports on its treasury management policies, practices and activities including, as a minimum, an annual strategy and plan in advance of the year, and an annual report after its close, in the form prescribed in its TMPs.**
- 4 **This Authority will be responsible for the implementation and monitoring of its treasury management policies and practices. It delegates to the Authority Treasurer the execution and administration of treasury management decisions who will act in accordance with the Authority's policy statement and Treasury Management practices (TMPs) and if he/she is a CIPFA member, CIPFA's Standard of Professional Practice on Treasury Management.**
- 5 **The Authority's Financial Regulations be amended accordingly.**

**1.12/02 TREASURY MANAGEMENT POLICY AND STRATEGY
2002/2003**

The Authority's approval was sought (Agenda item 12 – not reproduced) to the Treasury Policy and Strategy Statements for 2002/2003 and also to determine the Fire Authority's overall borrowing limit and limit on the proportion of total interest payable which is payable at a variable rate.

In noting the main requirements of the CIPFA Code of Practice on Treasury Management in Local Authorities as set out in paragraph 1 of the report (not reproduced), Members were advised that Treasury Management Practices would be drawn up to cover how treasury management activities are actually implemented in accordance with the Treasury Policy Statement and Strategy Statement, a copy of which was presented as Appendix 1 (not reproduced).

In addition the Authority had a statutory duty to determine its borrowing limits as set out in Section B of the report.

RESOLVED: That:

1. **The proposed Treasury Management Policy Statement and Strategy Statement for 2002/2003 be approved.**
2. **The following determinations be made for 2002/2003:**
 - a **An overall borrowing limit of £3,044,000**
 - b **A short term borrowing limit of £1,097,000**
 - c **A maximum limit of 50% of total interest paid, being on variable rate loans**

1.13/02 EQUALITY AND DIVERSITY STRATEGY AND ACTION PLAN

The Authority's approval was sought (Agenda item 13 – not reproduced) to the Equality and Diversity Strategy and Action Plan as recommended by the Personnel Committee at its meeting on 19 February 2002.

Members were reminded that the Fire Authority had approved the Brigade's Equal Opportunities Policy Statement and framework Strategic Plan at its meeting on 15 September 1999. Since that time there had been a number of developments in the area of equality and diversity which included the publication of various documents as summarised in paragraphs 2 and 3 of the report (not reproduced).

In response to these developments an updated Equality and Diversity Strategy and associated Action Plan for 2002/2003 for both the Authority and Royal Berkshire Fire and Rescue Service has been developed. A copy of both documents was presented as Appendices B and C respectively (not reproduced). The Representative Bodies and the Reading Council for Racial Equality have both been consulted on the Strategy.

On the invitation of the Chairman, the Chief Fire Officer reflected on the outcome of the recently held "Have-a-Go" days which whilst being very positive events provided clear evidence that many potential recruits, whilst wishing to join the Brigade, were being put off by the current pay scales (the national rates of pay being substantially below commensurate salaries in Berkshire).

In response to a question the Chief Fire Officer explained that the Brigade does respond to all requests to attend Summer Fairs, Fetes and Schools. He also referred to the Fire Cadet scheme introduced at Crowthorne and suggested that the introduction of similar schemes in Reading and Slough could make a significant difference to recruitment figures.

In noting that progress against the Action Plan will be reviewed annually and reported to the Personnel Committee/Fire Authority and if necessary updated, Members asked that a progress report on the Connecting Communities Project be presented to the Fire Authority at its meeting in September 2002.

RESOLVED: That:

1. **The Equality and Diversity Strategy and Action Plan for 2002/2003 be approved and implemented accordingly.**
2. **The Chief Fire Officer reviews progress against the Action Plan on an annual basis and if required presents a report to the Fire Authority in March 2003 seeking approval to any necessary updates.**
3. **The Chief Fire Officer be requested to present a progress report on the Connecting Communities Project to the Fire Authority at its meeting in September 2002.**

1.14/02 STRATEGIC ANALYSIS OF THE PROPERTY ASSETS OF THE AUTHORITY

The Authority's approval was sought (Agenda item 14 – not reproduced) to the Property Management Strategy produced in response to the findings of a strategic analysis of the Authority's property portfolio.

Members were reminded that the principles of the premises strategy and property asset management plan were approved by the Fire Authority in December 2001 and the plan remains as detailed in that report and presented as Appendix A (not reproduced), which requires the completion of a strategic analysis of the Authority's current property portfolio. In partnership with the Brigade's property advisors, Vail Williams, a strategic analysis of the options available for the management of the Authority's property was undertaken. The report from Vail Williams, a copy of which was presented as Appendix B (not reproduced), identified four options as summarised in paragraph 2 of the report (not reproduced).

The fourth option "Opportunity Lead Initiatives Portfolio" was preferred for the reasons set out in paragraph 3 of the report (not reproduced) which in summary retains the ownership and overall management of the property portfolio within the Authority, whilst utilising private sector expertise to provide strategic advice.

RESOLVED: That the Property Management Strategy as presented in the report be approved and adopted accordingly.

1.15/02 REPLACEMENT FIRE AND RESCUE BOAT

The Authority's approval was sought (Agenda item 15 – not reproduced) to purchase a replacement Fire and Rescue Boat, in accordance with phase three of the Brigade's Water Safety Strategy approved at the last Authority meeting in December 2001.

In noting the background information relating to the purchase of a replacement Fire and Rescue Boat, Members were advised that in accordance with the decision made at

the last meeting, other organisations who provide some form of waterborne service were consulted on the feasibility of utilising their boats to provide an emergency service. The outcome of this comparison, as summarised in paragraph 4 of the report (not reproduced), indicated that no suitable vessel was available to enable the Brigade to respond to an emergency situation in a reasonable time.

The cost of replacing the current fire and rescue boat was £64,000 and had been identified in the approved 2002/2003 Capital Programme.

Following further discussion by Members on the advantages and disadvantages of providing a new boat the Chairman, in summing up the debate, proposed that a replacement Fire and Rescue Boat be purchased. The proposal having been seconded was put to the vote and carried by ten votes for with none against and three abstentions.

RESOLVED: That the purchase of a replacement Fire and Rescue Boat be approved.

1.16/02 STATEMENT OF ACCOUNTS

The Authority received a copy (Agenda item 16 – not reproduced) of the Audited Statement of Accounts for 2000/2001, which had recently been published.

The Authority was required to advertise the completion of the Audit and the availability of the Statement of Accounts for the year ended 31 March 2001 for inspection by local government electors. A joint advertisement with the Berkshire Probation Service will therefore be inserted in relevant local newspapers across the County.

NOTED

1.17/02 2002/2003 CONTRIBUTIONS TO THE COMBINED FIRE SERVICE FUND

The Authority was informed (Agenda item 17 – not reproduced) of the exercise by the Treasurer of his delegated authority to fix the contributions to be made by each Constituent Authority to the Combined Fire Service Fund for 2002/2003.

The total contribution to be made by each Constituent Authority together with details of the instalment payments was set out in Appendix A (not reproduced).

NOTED

1.18/02 THE LOCAL GOVERNMENT WHITE PAPER: STRONG LOCAL LEADERSHIP – QUALITY PUBLIC SERVICES

The Authority received a report (Agenda item 18 – not reproduced) on the content of the Local Government White Paper together with details of how it may or will affect Fire Authorities.

The Secretary of State for Transport, Local Government and the Regions had presented the White Paper to Parliament in December 2001 and in response to this the Local Government Association had produced a “rough guide” a copy of which was presented as Appendix A (not reproduced).

NOTED

1.19/02 2001/2002 BUDGET MONITORING

The Authority was informed (Agenda item 19 – not reproduced) of the Revenue and Capital Expenditure against Budgets up to 31 January 2002 as presented in Appendices A and B respectively (not reproduced).

NOTED

1.20/02 2002/2003 BUDGET

The Authority received (Agenda item 20 – not reproduced) details of the 2002/2003 Budget, consequent on the approval of the overall revenue Budget of £23.890m by the Fire Authority at its meeting on Wednesday 19 December 2001, and presented as Appendix C (not reproduced).

NOTED

1.21/02 RATING ASSESSMENTS – APPEALS 1995 LIST

The Authority was informed (Agenda item 21 – not reproduced) of the settlement of appeals lodged in respect of rating assessments against property values included in the 1995 list by Vail Williams on the instruction of the Authority Treasurer.

The Appeals in respect of the 1995 list have now been concluded and a reduced valuation in respect of eleven of the Authority’s twenty assessments has been agreed. The resulting refunds for the years prior to 2001/2002 and the reduction in the bills for 2001/2002 total £82,500. Having paid the agreed professional services fee of £17,274 the net benefit to the Authority, as measured by refunds and reductions in non-domestic rate bills is £65,000.

Members were advised that as reported to the Personnel Committee, at its meeting on 19 February 2002, a major proportion of this sum had gone to meet unforeseen, additional expenditure.

The Chairman wished to place on record his thanks to the Authority Treasurer for securing the refunds.

NOTED

1.22/02 PARTNERSHIP FOR COMMON SENSE UPDATE

The Authority received an update (Agenda item 22 – not reproduced) of the Partnership for Common Sense initiative currently taking place within the Brigade.

In noting the background to this initiative Members were advised that as the process develops and a Project Plan is formalised it is proposed that particular attention will be paid to the objective of integrating the process into the everyday work of the Brigade.

The Chairman sought Members' approval to the suspension of Standing Orders to enable the representatives of the Fire Brigades' Union (FBU) to address the meeting. In thanking the Chairman for the opportunity to speak the FBU confirmed its support and commitment to the partnership initiative.

In thanking everybody involved in the process for all their hard work, the Chairman asked the Chief Fire Officer to include the following new section within the template for future Authority reports:

“Assessment Against the Partnership for Common Sense”

NOTED

1.23/02 REPORT ON SONNING FIRE STATION

The Authority was advised (Agenda item 23 – not reproduced) of progress in establishing a “Partnership Board” at Sonning Fire Station which is operated by the Authority on land owned by the Sonning Volunteer Fire Brigade Trust.

In speaking to the report the Chief Fire Officer drew Members attention to the following amendment to the text in paragraph of the report:

In lines three and eight delete “£3,000pa and £8,000pa” and insert “£5,000pa and £8,000pa” respectively.

A meeting had taken place on 11 March 2002, between Officers of the Brigade and Officers of the Sonning Volunteer Trust to discuss the issues outlined in the report.

The Chief Fire Officer reported that the Chairman of the Trustees had accepted the need for a longer term lease and had suggested the possibility of a 15/20 year lease being offered rather than the five year lease originally proposed. The Authority is therefore awaiting the arrival of a formal offer. Further progress reports would be presented to future Fire Authority meetings.

NOTED

1.24/01 IMPLEMENTATION OF SPECIAL APPLIANCE BEST VALUE REVIEW: PROGRESS REPORT

The Authority was advised (Agenda item 24 – not reproduced) of the progress made to date towards the implementation of the Best Value Review of Special Appliances. Members were reminded that as part of the settlement of the recent Trade Dispute a Working Party had been instigated to review the recommended outcomes of the Best Value Review. The report presented was therefore intended to provide Members with a detailed summary of progress to date and further reports would be presented to future Fire Authority meetings.

NOTED

1.25/02 FIRES, INCIDENTS AND ISSUES OF INTEREST

The Authority received a report (Agenda item 25 – not reproduced) which summarised some of the notable incidents attended, together with letters of appreciation received, by the Brigade during the period 1 January to 1 March 2002.

NOTED

1.26/02 DATE OF NEXT MEETING

It was noted that the Annual Fire Authority meeting is scheduled to take place on Wednesday 19 June 2002 in the Council Chamber, Royal Borough of Windsor and Maidenhead, Town Hall, St Ives Road, Maidenhead commencing at 6.30pm.

1.27/02 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
28	Part II Minutes of Sub-Groups	1, 7 & 8
29	Recommendation of the Grievance Panel	1
30	Clerk and Treasurer's Review of Contracts	1

(Note: The following is a summary of the items considered in the Part II Agenda of the Fire Authority meeting held on Wednesday 13 March 2002)

1.28/02 PART II MINUTES OF SUB-GROUPS

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

1.29/02 RECOMMENDATION OF THE GRIEVANCE PANEL

The Authority approved the recommendation of the Grievance Panel in respect of a grievance determined under Stage 4 of the Grievance procedure.

(Note: Prior to Members consideration of the next item the Authority Clerk and Authority Treasurer withdrew from the meeting)

**1.30/02 CLERK AND MONITORING OFFICER'S AND AUTHORITY
TREASURER'S REVIEW OF CONTRACTS**

The Authority approved an extension of the contracts for the Clerk and Treasurer for a further year until 31 March 2003.

AGENDA ITEM 6: PART I MINUTES OF SUB-GROUPS

To: Royal Berkshire Fire Authority
Date: 19 June 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 and the Fire Liaison Group that have taken place since the last meeting of the Fire Authority in March 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 March 2002:

Performance Review and Audit Panel	Wednesday 20 March, Thursday 25 April and Thursday 30 May 2002
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Personnel Committee	Wednesday 10 April 2002
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Community Safety Panel	Monday 29 April 2002
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Fire Liaison Group	Wednesday 5 June 2002
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- 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 11: CHANGE OF GOVERNMENTAL
RESPONSIBILITY FOR THE FIRE SERVICE**

To: Royal Berkshire Fire Authority
Date: 19 June 2002
Officer Contributing: Chief Fire Officer

A PURPOSE OF REPORT

To advise Members of a change in Governmental responsibility for the Fire Service.

B PROPOSED ACTION

The Authority is invited to NOTE the report.

C FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

There are no financial implications arising from this report.

D CONTRIBUTION TO THE STRATEGIC PLAN

This report does not contribute to the Strategic Plan

E ASSESSMENT AGAINST PERFORMANCE FOR COMMON SENSE

This report does not contribute to the Partnership

F SUPPORTING INFORMATION

- 1 The 10 July 2001 Fire Authority was advised of the creation of the Department for Transport, Local Government and the Regions (DTLR) and the transfer of Governmental responsibility for the Fire Service from the Home Office to this Department.
- 2 Members will be aware of the recent division of the DTLR to form a Department of Transport and the Office of the Deputy Prime Minister.
- 3 It has been confirmed that with the exception of the Health and Safety Sponsorship Division (which has transferred to the Department of Transport), the Directorate responsible for fire and building regulations is transferred to the Office of the Deputy Prime Minister. This includes HM Fire Services Inspectorate.

- 4 The Deputy Prime Minister will be supported on fire and building regulations issues by Nick Raynsford MP as Minister of State, and Christopher Leslie MP as Parliamentary Secretary. However, these appointments have not yet been confirmed as permanent.

G BACKGROUND PAPERS

None

Contact Officer: Mike Clement-Green (0118) 932 2225

AGENDA ITEM 12:**CHANGE IN THE DELEGATED POWERS OF
THE CHIEF FIRE OFFICER**

To: Royal Berkshire Fire Authority
Date: 19 June 2002
Officer Contributing: Clerk & Monitoring Officer

A PURPOSE OF REPORT

To seek the Authority's approval to a change in the Delegated Powers of the Chief Fire Officer following the decision to remove responsibility for the Fire service from the Home office, initially to the Department for Transport, Local Government and the Regions (DTLR), and latterly to the Department overseen by the Deputy Prime Minister.

B PROPOSED ACTION

The Authority is invited to **RESOLVE:** That the Chief Fire Officers Delegated Power Number 38 be amended to read:

"To authorise secondment to the Fire Service College and/or the appropriate Government Department with responsibility for the Fire service."

C FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

There are no financial implications.

D SUPPORTING INFORMATION

- 1 Under the current Delegated Power Number 38 approved by the Fire Authority the Chief Fire Officer is empowered to authorise any secondment to the Fire Service Collage and the Home Office.
- 2 Following the Fire Services move from the Home Office initially to the responsibility of the Department for Transport, Local Government and the Regions (DTLR) this Delegated Power needs to be amended to cover the change in responsibility. Members approval is therefore sought to the Chief Fire Officer's Delegated Power Number 38 being amended as follows:

"To authorise secondment to the Fire Service College and/or whichever Government Department has responsibility for the Fire Service."
- 3 As reported in the previous Agenda item the Directorate responsible for fire and building regulations, together with Her Majesty's Fire Services Inspectorate, has been transferred to the Office of the Deputy Prime Minister.

E BACKGROUND PAPERS

Notification of the change in responsibility following government restructuring

Contact Officer: David R Weller (0118) 932 2288

AGENDA ITEM 13:**APPOINTMENT OF COMMITTEES, PANELS
AND WORKING PARTIES**

To: Royal Berkshire Fire Authority
Date: 19 June 2002
Officer Contributing: Clerk & Monitoring Officer

A PURPOSE OF REPORT

To invite the Authority to re-appoint the Personnel and Urgency Committees, the Performance Review and Audit Panel, Community Safety Panel, Budget Working Party and the Joint Member Steering Group on Future of Control Rooms for the ensuing year

B PROPOSED ACTION

The Authority is invited to RESOLVE: That:

- 1 The Personnel Committee be re-appointed for the ensuing year with the following membership:
2 Conservative, 2 Labour, 2 Liberal Democrat
- 2 The Urgency Committee be re-appointed for the ensuing year with the following membership:
1 Conservative, 1 Labour, 1 Liberal Democrat
- 3 The Performance Review and Audit Panel be re-appointed for the ensuing year with the following membership:
3 Conservative, 3 Labour, 3 Liberal Democrat
- 4 The Community Safety Panel be re-appointed for the ensuing year with the following membership:
2 Conservative, 2 Labour, 2 Liberal Democrat
- 5 The Budget Working Party be re-appointed for the ensuing year with the following membership:
2 Conservative, 2 Labour, 2 Liberal Democrat
- 6 The Joint Member Steering Group on Future of Control Rooms be appointed for the ensuing year with the following membership:
1 Conservative, 1 Labour, 1 Liberal Democrat

C FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

There are no financial implications.

D SUPPORTING INFORMATION

1 Under Standing Order 27, the Authority is required to decide by resolution at its Annual Meeting which Committees it intends to establish as "Standing Committees" and to appoint Members to each Standing Committee.

2 Members are therefore invited to re-appoint the Personnel and Urgency Committees, the Performance Review and Audit Panel, Community Safety Panel, Budget Working Party and the Joint Member Steering Group on Future of Control Rooms and approve their membership which is currently as follows:

Personnel Committee (6)

P Hingley, C Maskell, O E Jeffery, D Morgan, B J S Patman, D Wilson

Urgency Committee (3)

J C G Brooks, *E E Herbert*, B J S Patman

Performance Review and Audit Panel (9)

E L Glasson, *E E Herbert*, Mrs V Howes, *T D McCann*, T Mills, *Mrs J Orton*, M Pritchett, D Wilson (One Conservative vacancy)

(Note: The Chairman, Vice-Chairman of the Fire Authority and Leader of the Labour Group are Ex-Officio Members of the Panel)

Community Safety Panel (6)

E L Glasson, Mrs V Howes, D McCarthy, D Morgan, *D Parker*, A J Ross, D Wilson

Budget Working Party (6)

J C G Brooks, *E E Herbert*, T Mills, J E R Mole, *Mrs J Orton*, B J S Patman

Joint Working Party on Future of Control Rooms (3)

J P Green, O E Jeffery, M Pritchett

3 Those Members shown in bold italics are no longer members of the Fire Authority. **Members appointed to the Personnel Committee will be asked to remain behind at the conclusion of the Fire Authority meeting to arrange a suitable date for its next meeting.**

E BACKGROUND PAPERS

None

Contact Officer: David R Weller (0118) 932 2288

AGENDA ITEM 14:**APPOINTMENT OF FIRE AUTHORITY'S
REPRESENTATIVE - LOCAL GOVERNMENT
ASSOCIATION'**

To: Royal Berkshire Fire Authority
Date: 19 June 2002
Officer Contributing: Clerk & Monitoring Officer

A PURPOSE OF REPORT

To appoint the Fire Authority's representative on the Local Government Association.

B PROPOSED ACTION

The Authority is invited to RESOLVE: That Councillor B J S Patman be appointed to represent the Fire Authority on the Local Government Association for the ensuing year.

C FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

There are no financial implications.

D SUPPORTING INFORMATION

- 1 The Fire Authority has been invited to its representative on the Local Government Association for the ensuing year. The appointed representative will also represent the Fire Authority at the Annual Meeting and Conference of the Local Government Association's General Assembly.
- 2 As reported at the meeting in March 2000 the Fire Authority, as a result of population changes, are now entitled to a Voting Entitlement of 17 for 2002/2003. A provisional place has been booked for this Authority.
- 3 Councillor Patman has expressed an interest in remaining as the Fire Authority's representative and Members are therefore asked to support this appointment and Resolve accordingly.

E BACKGROUND PAPERS

Invitation from Local Government Association

Contact Officer: David R Weller (0118) 932 2288

AGENDA ITEM 15:**APPOINTMENT OF FIRE AUTHORITY
REPRESENTATIVE ON THE ASSOCIATION OF
COUNCILS FOR THE THAMES VALLEY
REGION (ACTVAR)**

To: Royal Berkshire Fire Authority
Date: 19 June 2002
Officer Contributing: Clerk & Monitoring Officer
 Chief Fire Officer
 Authority Treasurer

A PURPOSE OF REPORT

To appoint the Fire Authority's representative on the Association of Councils for the Thames Valley Region (ACTVAR).

B PROPOSED ACTION

The Authority is invited to **RESOLVE:** That Councillors and be appointed as the Fire Authority's representative and Standing Deputy respectively on the Association of Councils for the Thames Valley Region (ACTVAR).

C FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

The cost to this Authority of membership of ACTVAR is £1,111 per annum based on the fact that there are three Fire Authorities in the Thames Valley and the Thames Valley Police Authority pays an annual subscription of £3,333. Provision to meet this cost is contained in the Budget for 2002/2003.

D CONTRIBUTION TO THE STRATEGIC PLAN

There is no contribution to the Strategic Plan

D SUPPORTING INFORMATION

- 1 In response to a request from the Local Government Association Fire Service Executive, ACTVAR's Member Steering Group at its meeting in May 2000 considered the possibility of Fire Authorities liaison arrangements being brought within the framework of the Regional Association.
- 2 ACTVAR welcomed such a development and agreed to make its arrangements available to the three Fire Services operating within the Thames Valley as a means of facilitating discussion of Fire Service issues. The Regional Secretary of ACTVAR has indicated that

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appropriate mechanisms could be devised to accommodate the wishes of the three Thames Valley Fire Authorities to deal with "service" issues across the three Counties covered by the LGA Regional Association.

- 3 Whilst membership of the Association would entitle one Member and one Officer to attend all meetings there would however be only one vote for all three Fire Authorities. It should be noted however that business is normally conducted on a consensus basis.
- 4 ACTVAR already has Community Safety on its Agenda's, although it tends to revolve around crime and disorder issues for the Police and Local Authorities. Nevertheless the Regional Secretary of the Association is of the opinion that membership would enable the development of Fire Service issues into the Agenda which could then, if necessary, be referred to the Local Government Association.
- 5 Councillor B J S Patman is the Fire Authority's current representative on ACTVaR with Councillor T D McCann being appointed as his Standing Deputy. As Councillor McCann is no longer a member of the Fire Authority, Members are therefore asked to consider the appointment of the Fire Authority's representative and Standing Deputy for the ensuing year and Resolve accordingly.

F BACKGROUND PAPERS

Invitation from ACTVAR to appoint Member representative

Contact Officer: David Weller (0118) 932 2288

AGENDA ITEM 16: AMBULANCE CO-RESPONDER SCHEMES

To: Royal Berkshire Fire Authority
Date: 19 June 2002
Officer Contributing: Chief Fire Officer

A PURPOSE OF REPORT

To advise Members of the Service's participation in Ambulance Co-responder schemes.

B PROPOSED ACTION

The Authority is invited to consider the report and **RESOLVE** to approve in principle the Service's participation in Ambulance Co-responder schemes at retained stations where the Royal Berkshire Ambulance Service (NHS Trust) has requested that such a scheme be implemented, and where the Brigade's staff at those stations are willing to participate on a voluntary basis, subject to any contrary determination resulting from the Fire Brigades' Union's 'failure to agree' with the Authority's decision.

C FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

There are no financial implications arising from this report. All costs associated with the scheme are borne by the Royal Berkshire Ambulance Service (NHS Trust).

The Service did supply a vehicle for the pilot scheme based at Mortimer fire station. This was an existing asset from the Authority's light vehicle fleet, and was exchanged with the Station's existing Land Rover as being a more suitable vehicle for the purpose. Thus, there was no addition to the fleet.

D CONTRIBUTION TO THE STRATEGIC PLAN

This report contributes directly to the Authority's strategic aim to reduce the number of deaths, injuries and damage caused by hazards other than fire and render appropriate humanitarian services.

E ASSESSMENT AGAINST PARTNERSHIP FOR COMMON SENSE

This report recognises the conflict within the Partnership which exists in respect of this issue, in that the Fire Brigades' Union has a national policy not to participate in co-responder schemes, whereas a number of retained staff wish to carry out the service in support of their communities.

F SUPPORTING INFORMATION

- 1 The Health Service nationally is seeking to improve its services through partnerships to achieve more efficient response times to life threatening emergency incidents. Royal Berkshire Ambulance Service (NHS Trust) is one ambulance service which operates a criteria based despatch system, whereby ambulances are not positioned on ambulance stations, but 'stand by' in key areas at times when statistically, it is probable via computer analysis that a call for an emergency ambulance will occur.
- 2 In the case of heart attack victims, it is known that clinically the patient's chances of survival and full recovery is improved if an appropriate level of immediate attention is administered within 8 minutes of the event occurring. In rural areas, where it is not cost effective to maintain an emergency ambulance either by stationing or on standby, because the incidence of need is relatively low, the Health Service is seeking to provide this immediate medical care for heart attack victims through co-responder partnership schemes.
- 3 Co-responder schemes do not replace trained emergency ambulance paramedic care. They supplement it by providing immediate and appropriate first aid until the paramedic arrives. Both the paramedic ambulance and co-responder are mobilised simultaneously. Co-responders are equipped with, and trained by the Royal Berkshire Ambulance Trust in the use of automatic defibrillators, and are also trained in the use of cardio pulmonary resuscitation (CPR - the 'kiss of life'). The automatic defibrillator, when connected to the patient, automatically assesses the patient's condition and instructs the co-responder on the action required (ie to provide an electric shock to the patient to attempt to restart the heart, or to return it to the normal rhythm) and the scale of electrical charge to be given. The machine also records the actions taken to assist the further treatment by paramedics upon arrival.
- 4 There is no set model for the operation of co-responder schemes. Ambulance services are developing these against perceived needs in different areas of the country. Co-responders are drawn from private citizens operating from their homes, from village shops, police cars etc. Indeed many large shopping centres in towns and cities are now provided with defibrillators with staff trained to use them. The sole intention is to reduce the unnecessary loss of life, or unnecessary reduction in the quality of life for heart attack victims, by providing an appropriate level of trained first aid.
- 5 A number of ambulance services have developed partnerships with their local fire brigades to establish co-responder schemes in rural areas through retained stations. They recognise the benefits of using disciplined, well trained staff who are able to cope with crises and who are generally able to provide round-the-clock availability, are committed to their communities and who are used to making an immediate response when called.

- 6 In Berkshire, as one of a number of pilot schemes to assess different models of co-responders, a unit was instituted at Mortimer fire station in December 1998. From the outset it was reinforced to staff at the station that participation was on a purely voluntary basis, and the scheme did not rely upon all staff entering into membership. However, not only did all of the staff volunteer (and subsequently successfully complete their training) but because they saw this service as directly benefiting their own community, they are determined to give their services to this without charge. (That is to say, for co-responder calls, the staff at Mortimer do not charge an attendance or turn-out fee, which otherwise would have been recharged to the Royal Berkshire Ambulance (NHS Trust).
- 7 To facilitate the scheme, the station's Land Rover (used predominantly as a personnel carrier for training evenings) was replaced with an existing Peugeot staff car which was 'dual badged' to show the partnership between the Brigade and Royal Berkshire Ambulance Service. Both the Ambulance Service and personnel at the station accept that the station's primary responsibility is to provide fire cover. Thus, it is accepted that the co-responders may only respond providing that sufficient crew remain available (4 personnel) in the event of a subsequent need to mobilise the fire appliance. Most co-responder schemes operate with a single responder, but in the case of the Mortimer scheme, it was agreed with the Ambulance Service that where possible (subject to maintaining a fire crew), 2 staff would respond in the car in order to be able to afford the patient better care. To date, the Mortimer co-responder unit has been mobilised on xx occasions.
- 8 The Mortimer scheme provoked much interest amongst the other retained stations in the County, with requests for more information being sought through the Brigade's Retained Council consultative forum (on which the Fire Brigades' Union holds a seat) from November 1999. A presentation was given by the co-responder staff from Mortimer and by the Ambulance Service to the Retained Council in January 2001, at which the Ambulance Service sought expressions of interest, on a without prejudice basis, from other stations. As a result of this, a programme was devised to enable more detailed presentations to be made to all staff at those stations which expressed interest, where the Ambulance Service perceives that it has the need for a co-responder service, with the intention of phasing in additional schemes.
- 9 The next 2 schemes were scheduled to 'go live' at Ascot and Lambourn fire stations on 1 August 2001, the staff there having volunteered to form a co-responder unit on the same basis as at Mortimer. Two equipped and dual-badged cars were provided by the Ambulance Service for this purpose and are still held by the Service.
- 10 The Annual Conference of the Fire Brigades' Union, 2001, adopted a policy to oppose the use of fire service personnel for any co-responder scheme. *A copy of the Union's policy is attached to this report as Appendix 1.* On this basis, the matter was discussed with the FBU at the Fire Liaison Group on 25 June 2001, in consequence of which a report was prepared by the Chief Fire Officer for submission to the September Fire Authority.

- 11 On 30 July 2001, the Fire Brigades' Union registered a trade dispute in respect of co-responder schemes. Under the 'status quo' provisions of the disputes procedure, this prevented the schemes at Ascot and Lambourn from coming into operation. The dispute could not be resolved by the Chief Fire Officer, and was therefore referred to the Fire Authority's Disputes Panel. In consequence, the proposed report to the September Authority was withdrawn so that the Panel might not be influenced in its decision by prior consideration.
- 12 The Disputes' Panel considered the dispute on 22 February 2002 and resolved that.
- (a) The Chief Fire Officer be authorised to introduce co-responder schemes at Ascot and Lambourn together with the continuation of the scheme at Mortimer as pilot schemes for a period of six months.
 - (b) The Chief Fire Officer seeks to reach an agreement with the Fire Brigades' Union on the introduction of adequate safeguards for staff in respect of insurance cover based on the following:-
 - Retained Firefighters should be added to the Brigade's insurance cover when undertaking the voluntary co-responder duty.
 - Retained Firefighters should be advised to consider taking out their own individual insurance cover and that guidance on this procedure be produced.
 - (c) The Chief Fire Officer presents a report to the Fire Authority in six months on the outcome and potential implications of the Pilot Scheme.
 - (d) All Officers involved are to make sure that the statistical evidence gathered is relevant to the situation.

In reaching this decision, the Disputes Panel noted that there was virtually no national data to support either side's (FBU or Management) position and the Panel hoped that Royal Berkshire's stations could be used as test cases to give some feedback at national level and to help inform the national debate.

- 13 On 19 May 2002, a letter registering a 'failure to agree' with the Panel's decision was emailed to the Chief Fire Officer. The Clerk will advise the Authority verbally on the mechanisms available to seek resolution. However, Members may wish to take a view on whether the Authority should approve the principle of the Service's participation in such schemes.
- 14 Members will note that the FBU policy requires its members to oppose and not participate in any co-responder scheme and to cease their participation in any such existing scheme. Staff at Mortimer fire station (some of whom are believed to be members of the FBU) and staff at Ascot and Lambourn fire stations (some of whom are believed to be members of the FBU) have indicated their willingness to continue as, or to become co-responders irrespective of this policy.

G BACKGROUND PAPERS

1. FBU Policy on Co-responding – *(Copy attached as Appendix 1)*
2. Agenda and Report: Personnel Committee's Disputes Panel - 22 February 2002.

Contact Officer: Mike Clement-Green (0118) 9322225

FBU NATIONAL POLICY on FIRST RESPONDER and CO-RESPONDER SCHEMES

Introduction

For the avoidance of doubt, this policy statement applies to any co-responder scheme, first-responder scheme or any other initiative, which would involve the mobilisation of fire crews to 999 calls that:

- Are the statutory responsibility of the ambulance service;
- Request a response to a purely medical emergency.

Throughout the preparation of this policy statement, the Executive Council has considered three key questions about mobilising fire crews to such 999 calls:

1. "Is it in the best interests of FBU Members?"
2. "Is it in the best interests of the fire service?"
3. "Is it in the best interests of the Public?"

First-responders were born out of the under-provision of professional emergency services in other parts of the world and their idea spread to the UK in the mid and late 1990's through Government driven initiatives such as the Review of Ambulance Performance Standards (1996), the Modernisation of Ambulance Services (1999) and followed by The Future of Fire Control Rooms and Communications (2000). As a consequence, it would be foolish to consider the merits of any particular co-responder or first-responder scheme in isolation; due weight must also be given to the political motivation and historical background that has seen their manifestation on the "joined-up government" agenda.

FBU NATIONAL POLICY on FIRST RESPONDER and CO-RESPONDER SCHEMES

Background

In 1974 the Holroyd Commission Report on the Fire Service concluded: "We can see no good reason for their having additional responsibility for organising an ambulance service and its control arrangements...control of the fire and ambulance services should not in the future be combined..."

In 1986 the Audit Commission suggested turning the clock back: "...it may be worth asking whether firemen's skills could not be put to fuller use by, for example, taking over emergency ambulance work in certain areas or at certain times of the day (or night) when the likelihood of a fire call is low."

The Joint Working Party set up by the Central Fire Brigades Advisory Council (to consider the Audit Commission's suggestions) concluded:

"...the idea of amalgamation or reorganisation of the fire service and the emergency ambulance service should not be pursued...It would, furthermore, be impractical to expect firefighters to develop, in addition to their own skills, the same high level of expertise demanded by the duties of the ambulance service."

In 1996, in response to public outcry at the demise of the desperately under funded ambulance service, the Review of Ambulance Performance Standards recommended to the Government:

- abandoning the principle of mobilising an immediate response to every 999 call;
- prioritising 999 calls into Categories
 - A – Immediately life-threatening
 - B – Serious
 - C – Not life-threatening or serious
- using ambulance service rapid response vehicles and immediate care scheme doctors to deliver professional medical treatment at the scene to casualties suffering "immediately life-threatening" (category A) conditions;
- alternatively, introducing non-paramedic "first-responders" to make the initial attendance to "immediately life-threatening" (category A) calls.

The Review stated:

"National statistics show that, if 90% of high priority 999 calls were met within 8 minutes, a further 300,000 patients with potentially immediate life-threatening conditions would be reached within the critical period. Even an illustrative interim target of 75% within 8 minutes would result in an extra 190,000 responses within this period."

"Independent operational research consultants have estimated the annual revenue cost to the ambulance service of reaching 90% of Category A calls within 8 minutes to be £50 million (excluding London). The cost of reaching an interim of 75% would be £15 million.

The review steering group recommended that the performance standard of response within 8 minutes for category A calls should be achieved on 90% of occasions.

In 1999, disappointingly (but perhaps predictably), the Department of Health set the standard to be achieved at the lower level of 75%, deciding that, at an estimated cost of £320 per call, it is too expensive to try and save an additional 110,000 casualties suffering "immediately life-threatening" conditions – what price a life? The instructions set out in Health Service Circular "Modernisation of Ambulance Services" went further. The Department of Health:

- required Health Authorities and NHS Ambulance Trusts to implement call prioritisation systems and achieve the categorised response time targets by 31st March 2001,
- encouraged first-responder schemes "as the way of meeting the new standard for Category A calls",
- invited "joint proposals from Ambulance, Police, Fire and other rescue services to pilot the sharing of a range of facilities including communication and control rooms."

Equally disappointingly, the Department of Health declined to support the NHS steering group's recommendation of responding to Category A calls "through the use of ambulance service rapid response vehicles and immediate care scheme doctors." Instead they preferred first-responders schemes as the cheaper option – what price a life?

Then, in April 2000, the Home Office published their review *The Future of Fire Control Rooms and Communications*.

In the preparation of this policy statement, genuinely well-meaning advocates of co-responder and first-responder initiatives were keen to stress that the development of their schemes are intended to be a further enhancement of, and not a replacement for, an emergency ambulance response within 8 minutes; it is not their intention for their first-responder/co-responder scheme to be used to paper over the cracks of an under funded emergency ambulance service, nor as a stepping-stone towards the merger of fire and ambulance services.

However, *The Future of Fire Control Rooms and Communications* report repeatedly refers to first-responder initiatives in its deliberations and adds: "...a more multi-functional role for emergency service personnel could be envisaged. For example, some firefighters could be trained as paramedics. This may be helpful because ambulance services have been set a response time target of 8 minutes to be met on 75% of occasions, for life-threatening cases. This target is required to be met by 2001, but it seems likely that by then it will not be achieved by many Trusts."

A number of Chief Fire Officers have embraced this notion, as they have the merging of Emergency Fire Control Rooms and the amalgamation of emergency services. In the circumstances, whilst some advocates of first-responder/co-responder schemes are well intentioned, there are many others in influential places whose determination is politically motivated.

Operational Implications

1. Save Life

Advocates of first-responder/co-responder schemes point to the "immediately life-threatening" incidents that have been dealt with by a first-responder/co-

responder and to the greater number of casualties that have survived against the number that have died. To their credit, they openly admit that it is impossible to claim that those casualties that survived were "saved", or in fact, whether they would have survived without the intervention of the first-responder/co-responder?

The more important question ought to be: How many of those casualties that died would have been saved had the response to their 999 call been immediately attended by a professional paramedic in a properly equipped, ambulance service rapid response vehicle? Sadly for the families of those that have lost their loved ones, the Department of Health shall be allowed to avoid answering that question so long as first-responder/co-responder schemes are used "as the way of meeting the new standard for category A calls."

2. Fire Cover

It has been argued that participation in a first-responder/co-responder scheme offers some protection from the threat of cuts in appliances or fire station closure. However, there is no provision in the current Standards of Fire Cover for consideration to be given to any additional factors or emergency services provided by a fire station – the only consideration is whether there is sufficient "risk of life loss or damage to property in the event of fire". It is the statutory duty of the fire service to make provision "for fire fighting purposes". Under section 3(1)c of the National Health Service Act 1977, it is the statutory duty of the ambulance service to provide the necessary ambulance aid on site and en route.

3. Priority Emergency Calls

Unlike the police or ambulance service, the Fire Service receives and responds immediately to every 999 call we receive. The FBU is opposed to any priority-based delay in mobilisation to, or call queuing of, 999 fire calls. First-responder/co-responder attendance within the required response time reduces the priority need for an ambulance response. An inevitable consequence is that instead of being used to enhance emergency ambulance response times, under "Best Value" legislation, successfully established first-responder/co-responder schemes shall be used to identify reductions in ambulance cover.

There is also a consequential priority dilemma for the fire service. If a fire service agrees to participate in a first-responder/co-responder scheme, by necessity, there will be a need to introduce priority-based mobilisation to 999 calls. It is inevitable that at some time an emergency fire control operator shall mobilise a fire crew as a first-responder/co-responder to an ambulance call and then moments later receive a fire call on the same crew's station ground. What should be the decision? What should be the criteria? Should we prioritise an "immediately life-threatening" ambulance call above an automatic fire alarm or an abandoned call? Does it matter what category of fire call it is, after all it is our statutory duty to respond to any fire call? It would also be inevitable at some time for a fire call to be held "in queue" awaiting an emergency fire control operator to finish handling an ambulance call. At first it may seem quite innocent but the implications of allowing call-prioritisation in through the back door are far-reaching and very serious.

4. Training

The current nationally agreed job description for firefighters expects firefighters to "apply basic first aid when necessary". Most firefighters receive a three-yearly first aid training course consisting of between two and four days. However, the immediate treatment for category A conditions is more advanced than "basic first aid". To qualify, Paramedics receive in excess of five and a half months of training. Most first-responder/co-responder courses currently available are five-day courses.

Furthermore, even though paramedics use their specialised life-saving skills and equipment on a daily basis, they undertake regular refresher training. They also receive additional refresher training if absent from work for relatively short

periods. The same high standards should apply to first-responders/co-responders.

The HMI statistics published in December 2000 show that many fire brigades dedicate less than five shift-days per firefighter per year to meet all their centralised firefighter training needs. Clearly, additional 'ambulance' training would compound the under-provision of much needed firefighter training. Whether it is flashover, EFAD, silo, water rescue, manual handling or additional retained training, the growing list of Health and Safety Improvement notices is testimony to the fact that too many firefighters have already been killed or seriously injured because of insufficient and under resourced training in brigades.

Some Chief Fire officers argue that we should participate in first-responder/co-responder schemes because the training would improve our ability to treat casualties at fires or in road traffic accidents and would be of benefit for treating ourselves in the event of an accident. Surely, if they have identified the training need and there is sufficient time in the brigades training year, then we should not need the excuse of first-responder/co-responder?

5. Competence

Initially, the development of first-responder/co-responder schemes were intended as a cost-effective means of tackling incidents of cardiac arrest primarily with an automatic defibrillator. However, conditions/symptoms that are listed under category A calls (and to which the ambulance service may wish to mobilise a first-responder/co-responder to) include:

- Chest pain
- Unconscious, fitting or unresponsive
- Severe breathing problems
- Trauma with penetrating injuries to head or trunk
- Anaphylactic shock
- Women with severe obstetric haemorrhage
- Children under the age of two.

The symptoms for many Category A conditions are very similar, but the treatment can be very different. This places extreme importance and pressure on the individual responding to "immediately life-threatening" calls to make the correct diagnosis and administer the appropriate treatment. Incorrect diagnosis and/or treatment can be fatal.

6. Insurance/Liability

Given the extreme importance attached to the correct diagnosis and treatment of "immediately life-threatening" conditions, first-responders/co-responders are vulnerable to, and can be found personally liable for, legal claims. It is because of their vulnerability to litigation that many ambulance workers take out private insurance cover.

The 1996 Review of Ambulance Performance Standards recommended that the ambulance service would be responsible for the liability arrangements of first-responder/co-responder schemes. The FBU has legal advice from Thompsons Solicitors concerning the reliability in law of such an arrangement:

"Vicarious liability refers to the liability of the employer for the act or omission of the employer's employees. Quite clearly your members are employees of the Fire Authority and not of the Ambulance Trust. A claim in these circumstances will be brought not against the Ambulance Trust but against the Fire Authority and/or the member personally. Even where carrying out the duties of ambulance personnel your members are employees of the Fire Authority not of the Ambulance Trust. Therefore it is the Fire Authority and not the Ambulance Trust which will be vicariously liable for the acts or omissions of your members. In the absence of insurance then the financial liability would fall upon the Fire Authority itself.

It may be that there is an agreement by which the Fire Authority will provide the services for and on behalf of the Ambulance Trust and, in return, the Ambulance Trust will agree to indemnify the Fire Authority in respect of any

claim brought against it. An agreement is irrelevant as far as any potential Claimant is concerned. The Claimant would bring the claim against the firefighter(s) involved and/or the employer who is vicariously liable for his or her acts or omissions, the Fire Authority. In the event of a successful claim it would be the Fire Authority which would have to discharge that liability and then seek to recover that from the Ambulance Trust.

Contracts of insurance are private contracts between the insured, in this case the Ambulance Trust, and the insurer. Neither the Fire Authority nor your members can rely on the contract of insurance."

Summary

"Is it in the best interests of FBU Members?"

FBU Members and their families are also members of the Public, so in that context the Public Interest is also applicable. Similarly, FBU Members were and are responsible for the professional, independent fire service we have today, and for the national conditions by which all firefighters and fire control staff work, despite the best efforts of our employers to hold the fire service and us back in the dark ages. So, in that context the Fire Service Interest is also applicable.

The under funding of the fire service has led to the consistent under-provision of training for firefighters. The Joint Working Party of the CFBC concluded: "It would, furthermore, be impractical to expect firefighters to develop, in addition to their own skills, the same high level of expertise demanded by the duties of the ambulance service."

What has changed in the meantime? More calls, more hazards and even more of our own skills need developing with less and less resources. Ultimately, dedicating our valuable time to develop the "high level of expertise demanded by the duties of the ambulance service" could compromise the provision of much needed firefighter training and lead to the death or injury of FBU Members.

Until such time as there is more convincing legal opinion that either vicarious liability or private brigade insurance provides the required personal protection, participating in a first-responder/co-responder scheme could be the most expensive mistake in an FBU Member's life.

"Is it in the best interest of the fire service?"

The fire service is facing a period of concerted and politically motivated change. There is considerable pressure on our national conditions of service and the main attacks are coming in the shape of emergency service mergers and a wholesale review of the Standards of Fire Cover. First-responder/co-responder schemes are intrinsically linked to both issues.

Attendance at "immediately life-threatening" medical incidents is not the statutory responsibility of the fire service, but, through the Review of Ambulance Performance Standards, the fire service may respond as a first-responder/co-responder. Coincidentally, the fire service equivalent of that review is the on-going Review of Standards of Fire Cover: We would not welcome our review recommending a reciprocal arrangement that would allow an ambulance or police car with water extinguishers and B.A. sets on board to be considered as a "first-response/co-response" to a fire call.

Neither the Government, the Home Office nor our employers have approached the FBU nationally with the view that the fire service is the most effective emergency service for attending ambulance calls. Of course if that were their view then they would have to provide additional funding and resources. No, the introduction of first-responder/co-responder schemes has been left to be delivered through local flexibility. The FBU believes that firefighters and control staff deserve national conditions of service because they face the same potential risks and do the same job throughout the UK. Locally and flexibly introduced first-responder/co-responder schemes in the fire service would undermine the FBU's defence of our national conditions and the independence of our service.

"Is it in the best interest of the Public?"

The public expect their fire calls to be answered immediately. An emergency fire control operator already handling an ambulance call will not be available to receive a fire call.

The public expect their local fire engine to be available to respond immediately to their fire calls. A fire engine attending an ambulance call will not be available to respond to a fire call.

The public deserve and expect a professional, dedicated paramedic to respond to their immediately life-threatening calls. At a cost of only £320 a call, 110,000 members of the public suffering from immediately life-threatening symptoms (1996 figures) could benefit from the response of a professional paramedic or rapid ambulance response vehicle within 8 minutes. That is what is in the best interests of the public.

A properly funded, independent, emergency ambulance service and a properly funded, professional, dedicated fire service are in the Public's best interest.

The Minister responsible for the fire service, the Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State, Mike O'Brien has set out his view:

"It is obviously important that the service does not become diverted from its primary function, ensuring that we have fire safety and putting out fires. And the vision is not for the Fire Service to take the place of other essential services."

The Fire Brigades Union agrees.

Conclusion

Fire Service participation in first-responder/co-responder schemes:

- will leave firefighters and the fire service liable for facing legal claims without adequate protection,
- will compound the already dangerous under-provision of training for firefighting duties,
- will inevitably lead to delayed turn-outs to fire calls,
- will be used, under "Best Value" legislation to reduce emergency ambulance cover,
- Is already used to argue for emergency service mergers and more locally flexible conditions of service.

FACT - There is no national agreement for the fire service to participate in first-responder/co-responder schemes.

FACT - There is no national recognition for the fire service to participate in first-responder/co-responder schemes.

FACT - There is no appropriate additional funding for the fire service to participate in first-responder/co-responder schemes.

The policy of the Fire Brigades Union shall be:

All FBU Members shall oppose, and shall not participate in any proposed first-responder or co-responder initiative and shall cease their participation in any such existing scheme.

**AGENDA ITEM 17: DISPUTES PROCEDURE AT AUTHORITY
 LEVEL**

To: Royal Berkshire Fire Authority
Date: 19 June 2002
Officers Contributing: Clerk and Monitoring Officer

A PURPOSE OF REPORT

To review existing procedures for hearing Disputes at member level, having regard to the recommendations of the Disputes Committee which met recently to consider a Dispute raised by the FBU in relation to Discipline procedures.

B PROPOSED ACTION

The Authority is asked to consider the recommendations in paragraph 7, Section F of the Report and RESOLVE accordingly.

C FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

It is not thought that these procedural changes will incur costs.

D CONTRIBUTION TO THE STRATEGIC PLAN

There is no contribution to the Strategic Plan.

**E ASSESSMENT AGAINST THE PARTNERSHIP FOR COMMON
 SENSE**

Bearing in mind the dispute which the Committee heard recently turned in part on delay in disciplinary investigations, any streamlining of the process for considering and determining disputes is to be welcomed.

F SUPPORTING INFORMATION

1 The Disputes Committee which met on 25 September 2001 and 18 March 2002 has made the following recommendations to the Authority –

- a There is a need to clarify and set out a reasonable timescale in which a Trade Dispute can be considered and determined at Elected Member level and that for those Members appointed to the Personnel (Disputes) Committee the procedure is clearly defined in advance of the meeting taking place.**

- b Evidence from all parties involved in the Dispute needs to be produced in writing and presented to Members of the Committee at least seven days before the meeting.
 - c That in cases where witnesses are to be called by either party, the names of those witnesses are to be provided to the Committee in advance by being referred to in the Agenda and, if possible, together with an assessment on the estimated time required for them to be questioned.
 - d A full and detailed Training Programme should be established to enable those Members wishing to be involved in the Disputes process to be fully trained.
 - e That an Agreement between Brigade Management and the Fire Brigades' Union be produced on the way in which all representatives should conduct themselves during the course of the Hearing with a view to reducing the time taking in the presenting and giving of evidence.
 - f That the Disputes Committee should consist of either three or five Elected Members, depending on availability, and that in the event of a Member having a different opinion to that agreed by a majority of the other Members present, he/she shall be allowed to put his/her case during the presentation of the Committee's final decision to both sides involved in the dispute.
 - g On the delivery of the verdict, it is suggested that to avoid the Committee being put under a time constraint to determine the dispute, the Committee should have the ability if it so chooses, to adjourn and reconvene at a later date to consider the evidence and produce their findings by means of a written statement. The power to adjourn should be included in the agreed procedure.
 - h That the outcome of the Hearing be formally reported to the Fire Authority under the Part II Agenda, but that Officers be asked to ensure that the Committee's decision can be produced in a form that can be cited at future Dispute Committee Hearings and disseminated to staff.
- 2 The Committee's recommendation need to be considered in the context of Circular NJC/3/01 which revised the NJC Disputes procedure. The revised procedure, as far as the Authority is concerned, now provides as follows.
- a In the case of any dispute not falling under paragraph 1 above, the matter should be considered through the agreed local disputes machinery. The local machinery should be compatible with the local organisation structure and should provide for disputes to be resolved at

the lowest appropriate level. In all cases there should be a facility for the dispute to be pursued through to Chief Fire Officer level. If the dispute has implications for the whole organisation, then it should be considered by the Chief Fire Officer in the first instance.

- b Whatever conditions, practice or agreement existed prior to the dispute shall continue to operate pending resolution of the dispute. The normal conditions existing prior to the dispute include the normal operation of the service and this should therefore continue pending resolution of the dispute.
 - c If at the conclusion of the disputes process at Chief Fire Officer level there is recorded a failure to agree, the matter shall be referred, as soon as possible, but in any event within one week by either party to the dispute, to the Chief Executive or Clerk to the Fire Authority or such person as he or she may nominate in his or her absence. The Chief Executive or his or her nominee will convene a meeting of representatives of the Fire Authority within 14 days of receiving the notice of a failure to agree at Chief Fire Officer level.
 - d The representatives of the Fire Authority shall comprise not less than three elected members. The Chair will be taken by the Chair or Vice-Chair of the appropriate committee which determines fire service matters or by the relevant portfolio holder. The representatives of the Fire Authority may call upon any Officer of the Authority or witnesses or experts (including the Chief Fire Officer) to advise them in the presence of both parties. Any advisers present shall be required to withdraw while the representatives of the Fire Authority consider their decision/
 - e In presenting its case the Fire Brigades' Union may call upon any of its members or witnesses or experts to assist in that presentation in the presence of both parties.
 - f The representatives of the Fire Authority shall be allowed three weekdays after the Hearing to inform all parties concerned of their decision, although it is anticipated that in the majority of cases their decision will be made known on the same day as the Hearing.
 - g In the event that the Fire Brigades' Union does not accept the decision of the Fire Authority, the matter shall proceed to paragraph 10 or paragraph 20 of this procedure as appropriate.
- 3 The requirement to convene the Disputes Committee within 14 days of notification of a Dispute is not presently being met and given that the members of the Authority have many other calls on their time and full diaries, is unlikely to be met. It is also highly unlikely that either Management or the FBU could

arrange for their cases to be with the Disputes Committee within seven days of a Dispute being declared.

- 4 It follows that it would make sense for there to be a local variation on timescale to adopt more realistic timescales for hearing disputes. This would need to be negotiated and agreed with the local FBU Branch. If the Branch feel constrained in agreeing a formal variation, the Clerk would suggest that there needs to be an agreed informal arrangement to provide for Committee Disputes to meet within say 30 days of the Dispute being lodged.
- 5 The timing issue relates to reserved judgements. The national scheme refers to three days, but the Clerk would suggest that if a Committee wishes to meet again to deliberate, this should be allowed up to seven working days to arrange to meet and deliver judgement.
- 6 The Clerk would also refer to the Clause 6 of the National Scheme, which refers to the requirement that all advisers should withdraw while the Committee deliberate. It has been the practice in this Authority and it is understood elsewhere, for Committees to have their own legal adviser, administrator, and in once case, personnel adviser, whose role has been to advise the Committee. Such advisers have not been involved in presentation of the management or FBU case. The Clerk is checking whether Clause 6 is understood to be interpreted so as to apply to all Officers.
- 7 Having regard to the foregoing points, the Authority is asked to consider the Dispute Committees recommendations
 - a Need to clarify timescale for determining Trade Dispute.
Recommended for agreement subject to discussions with the FBU as there would need to be a variation from the nationally agreed timescale (see paragraph 3 above).
 - b Evidence needs to be produced in writing at least seven days before Hearing.
Recommended for agreement if agreement forthcoming on (a) above.
 - ✕ c Witnesses names provided to Panel in advance.
Recommended for approval.
 - d Training Programme to be established for Members.
Recommended for approval.
 - ✕ e Agreement between Management and FBU on presentation of evidence at meetings so as to reduce time.
Recommended for approval.
 - f Disputes Committee to consist of 3 or 5 Members and a minority decision to be permitted to be recorded. - *Recommended for approval.*

g Committee to have ability to defer a decision.
A power to adjourn for up to three days is included in the National procedure. This is considered at paragraph 5 and the Authority is asked to consider and resolve.

X h Report outcome to Authority under Part II Agenda but ensure decisions are capable of being promulgated to staff.
Recommended for approval.

G BACKGROUND PAPERS

1. NJC Circular 3/01.
2. Minutes of Disputes Committee held on 25 September 2001 and 18 March 2002.

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COPIED TO DAVID WALLACE
DAVID WALLACE
17/6/02 ES

FIRE BRIGADES National Employers

Mr C Williams
Clerk to the Authority
Royal Berkshire Fire and Rescue Service
103 Dee Rd, Tilehurst
Reading
Berks RG30 4FS

Your ref: CW/ES

13th June 2002

Dear Mr Williams,

DISPUTES PROCEDURE

I refer to your letter dated 10TH June addressed to Mr Nolda which has been passed to me for attention.

Paragraph 6 of the disputes procedure requires any advisers present to withdraw while the representatives of the fire authority consider their decision.

At the time of issuing the disputes procedure an Employers' circular (EMP/9/01) was also issued giving guidance on the procedure. Paragraph 14 of that circular refers to this specific matter and reads:

"For the sake of clarity, though it is assumed that this reflects existing practice anyway, paragraphs 6 and 7 of the procedure make it clear that, at local hearings, either party may call upon its own witnesses and experts. When the fire authority has heard from each party, which should always take place in the presence of the other party, then all participants are required to withdraw while authority members consider their decision. Any officer with a legitimate role in advising members on legal or procedural matters may remain but fire service management are required to withdraw."

The position of Clerk would fall into the category of "...any officer with a legitimate role in advising members on legal and procedural matters" Accordingly, the Clerk may remain whilst fire authority members consider their decision.

Yours sincerely,



Gillian Gittins (Mrs)

AGENDA ITEM 18: JOINT MEMBER STEERING GROUP ON THE FUTURE OF CONTROL ROOM COLLABORATION: NETWORKED FIRE CONTROL SOLUTION FOR FIRE AND RESCUE SERVICES IN THE THAMES VALLEY

To: Royal Berkshire Fire Authority
Date: 19 June 2002
Officer Contributing: Chief Fire Officer

A PURPOSE OF REPORT

To update Members on the work undertaken so far by the Authority in conjunction with Buckinghamshire and Milton Keynes Fire Authority and Oxfordshire County Council in respect of joint Fire Controls, and to seek the Authority's approval to the exploration of a networked Fire Control solution.

B PROPOSED ACTION

The Authority is invited to consider the report and **RESOLVE:** That its representatives to the Joint Member Steering Group be authorised to explore appropriate options, including a networked solution for Fire Controls, and to inform the Authority of progress appropriately.

C FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

Financial implications arising directly from this report are minimal and confined to Members' expenses and Officer costs in undertaking this work, plus potential consultancy costs which have not yet been determined.

The financial implications arising from a potential solution emanating from the decisions of the Joint Member Steering Group have not yet been costed. Such decisions will be subjected to ratification by the full Fire Authority, at which stage costs will be considered.

D CONTRIBUTION TO THE STRATEGIC PLAN

This report contributes directly to the Strategic Plan, as the ability to receive emergency calls efficiently and to mobilise and control resources is fundamental to the Authority's targets to meet attendance times, to reduce the number of injuries and deaths from fire, and to reduce the occasions when fire in dwellings is able to spread beyond the room of origin.

E ASSESSMENT AGAINST PARTNERSHIP FOR COMMON SENSE

This report affects staff engaged in operational response at all levels, and in particular those staff who work in the Service's Control Room. It is essential therefore that the consultation measures already in place with the Fire Brigades' Union, directly with staff employed in the Control Room and with staff on stations are continued and strengthened as the project progresses.

F SUPPORTING INFORMATION

- 1 The 6 September 2000 Fire Authority received a report (not reproduced) advising the publication of a report by HM Fire Service Inspectorate which recommended a reduction in the number of Fire Control Rooms by Fire/Fire or Fire/Police/Ambulance amalgamation of this function. The report identified the potential for an amalgamated Fire Control room for Royal Berkshire, Buckinghamshire, Northampton and Oxfordshire, but noted that it would be unlikely that Northamptonshire County Council would pursue this option. The Authority resolved to authorise the Chief Fire Officer to explore the creation of a Thames Valley Fire Control as a separate agency, of which the Royal Berkshire Fire Authority would be a full partner, and requested the Chief Fire Officer to present further reports to future Fire Authority meetings as appropriate to keep Members informed of progress or to seek political direction.
- 2 The 13 December 2000 Fire Authority approved the creation of a Joint Member Steering Group by the three authorities (Royal Berkshire, Buckinghamshire and Milton Keynes Fire Authority and Oxfordshire County Council) for this purpose and appointed Councillors Green, Hingley and Pritchett as its representatives to that Group. This Authority's Clerk, Mr C Williams, was appointed as the Clerk to the Group.
- 3 At its meeting on 29 January 2002, the Steering Group considered a briefing note submitted by the three Chief Fire Officers (not reproduced) which reminded Members of the functional best value reviews of Control and Communications being undertaken by each authority at the direction of the Minister, advised Members of the factors which would be likely to impinge upon successful amalgamation of Fire Controls and offered alternative solutions for consideration. The Steering Group resolved that:
 - (a) The three Chief Fire Officers be asked to consider the feasibility of maintaining the three existing Brigade Control Rooms based on a common hardware/software infrastructure, interoperable between the participating Brigades in respect of the mobilising and communications systems;
 - (b) The three Chief Fire Officers be authorised, based on the approved minutes of the meeting, to advise the Representative Bodies of the progress to date, in an attempt to allay any fears amongst Control Room

personnel and to confirm that further full and detailed consultation will take place before a final decision is made;

- (c) The views of the relevant Ambulance Services and the Thames Valley Police be sought on the potential for their benefiting from the proposed scheme.
- 4 At its meeting on 20 March 2002, the Performance Review and Audit Panel resolved to approve the best value review of Control and Communications undertaken by the Service. The Primary recommendations of this review were that the Fire Authority be recommended to retain the current facilities with a commitment to introducing new efficiency, effectiveness and economy measures to maintain continuous improvement. In addition, that the future procurement of Control and Communications equipment is undertaken in collaboration with our neighbouring Fire Services within the Thames Valley, with a view to establishing a network of interoperable and supporting Control Rooms.
- 5 The Berkshire Secretary of the Fire Brigades' Union has been consulted on the proposed networked Fire Control solution.
- 6 All staff within the Control Rooms are updated on progress personally by the Chief Fire Officer on a monthly basis.
- 7 Staff have not, as yet, been formally consulted more widely within the Service. This needs to be done within the spirit of the Partnership for Common Sense and subject to Members resolution to approve this report, the Chief Fire Officer will undertake to do this.

G BACKGROUND PAPERS

- 1 Report into the Future of Fire Service Control Rooms and Communications in England and Wales – HM Fire Service Inspectorate.
- 2 Agenda and report Fire Authority Meetings - 6 September and 13 December 2000
- 3 Agenda and report: Joint Member Steering Group on the Future of Control Room Collaboration - 29 January 2002
- 4 Agenda and Report Performance Review and Audit Panel - 20 March 2002

Contact Officer: Mike Clement-Green (0118) 932 2225

