

ROYAL BERKSHIRE FIRE AUTHORITY EXTRAORDINARY MEETING

Held on Wednesday 25 July 2007

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



Those Present:

Councillor Mrs Christine Bateson	Councillor Phillip Bicknell
Councillor Chris Bowring	Councillor Andrew Bradley
Councillor Jeff Brooks	Councillor Dr Paul Bryant
Councillor Tom Crisp	Councillor Colin Dudley
Councillor Adrian Edwards	Councillor Mrs Sue Evans
Councillor Geoff Findlay OBE	Councillor Chris Harris
Councillor Mrs Pauline Helliard-Symons	Councillor Peter Jones
Councillor John Lenton	Councillor Iain McCracken
Councillor Mrs Kathy Newbound	Councillor Fred Pugh
Councillor Dexter Smith	Councillor Alan Ward
Councillor Miss Emma Webster	Councillor Sean Wright

In attendance:

- Iain Cox (Chief Fire Officer)
- George Cross (Area Manager, Support Services)
- Dale Hall (Managing Director, Opinion Research Services)
- Lynda Kenyon (Committee Manager)
- Nicole Targett (Corporate Communications Manager)
- Richard Taylor (Clerk and Monitoring Officer)
- Des Tidbury (Brigade Manager, Support Services)
- Andrew Vallance (Authority Treasurer)
- David Wallace (Director of Human Resources)

The Chairman welcomed Councillor Mrs May Dodds (Slough Borough Council) and Councillor Mrs Kathy Newbound (The Royal Borough of Windsor and Maidenhead) as newly appointed Members of the Fire Authority in place of Councillor Mrs Patricia O'Connor and Councillor Mrs Vicky Howes respectively.

03.01.07 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Apologies for absence were received from Councillor Mrs Prue Bray, Councillor Mrs May Dodds and Councillor Angus Ross.

03.02.07 DECLARATION OF INTERESTS

Having been reminded that in accordance with the Fire Authority's Code of Conduct, Members were required to declare interests which were Personal or Personal and Prejudicial, where appropriate, it was **Noted** that on this occasion there were no such declarations made.

Action

03.03.07 NOTICE OF MOTION BY CHAIRMAN (UNDER STANDING ORDER 44)

The Chairman Moved a Motion:

- 1. That the Meeting receive verbal statements from members of the public present at this meeting on the proposals relating to the Integrated Risk Management 5-Year Plan, subject as follows:**
 - (a) that no one person may speak for more than 5 minutes, and
 - (b) that the total time for such contributions shall not exceed 30 minutes.

- 2. That the procedure for dealing with the items relating to the Integrated Risk Management 5-Year Plan be as set out below:**
 - (a) Petitions and Questions from members of the public will be received in accordance with Standing Orders 19-24 and 25-29 with the usual time limits. (Agenda Item 4).
 - (b) The Chairman will then call individual members of the public, who have indicated, to make their statements. Those statements from members of the public who have advised the Clerk and Monitoring Officer prior to the meeting will be taken first and in the order of receipt. Members of the public will be asked to give their name before making a statement, and the name will be recorded in the Minutes but the content of any statements will not be recorded.
 - (c) There will then follow Agenda Items 5-7 (Constitutional Items) and, subsequently, presentations by Officers and Opinion Research Services as indicated in the Agenda. (Agenda Items 8-11).
 - (d) There will then be a debate by Members of the Fire Authority in accordance with the Rules of Debate (Standing Orders 58-78) on the reports, information, comments etc that they have received and heard at the meeting before they reach a decision. (Agenda Item 12).
 - (e) Members will then vote on the Recommendations and take any other decisions that may be appropriate on the subject of the Integrated Risk Management 5-Year Plan. (Agenda Item 12).

The Motion was seconded by Councillor Miss Emma Webster.

On being put to the vote, the Motion was unanimously carried.

03.04.07 PETITIONS AND QUESTIONS UNDER STANDING ORDERS 19 AND 25

The Fire Authority Noted that two Petitions had been received under Standing Order 19, as follows:

- i) 'We support the Express campaign to save Windsor's 24-hour fire service staffed by full-time serving firefighters and believe that it is of great importance

to the town and surrounds.” (Petition contained 328 signatories and had been conducted by Slough and Windsor Express, and presented to Fire Authority on 27 June 2007 by Councillor Christine Bateson.)

Councillor David Burbage (The Royal Borough of Windsor and Maidenhead) accepted the Chairman’s invitation to speak to the Petition.

- ii) “We, the undersigned, wish to register our concern and objections to the possible closure of Crowthorne Fire Station. We feel that the proposal to cover the Crowthorne and Sandhurst areas using appliances and crews based at Camberley Fire Station is unacceptable. Many of the roads from Camberley to our area are frequently gridlocked. Annually our area suffers widespread heath and forest fires. There has been an increase in three and four storeys high buildings many of them housing the very elderly. We feel that by having cover based in Crowthorne, the initial response would be far more rapid and therefore safer than by having cover based in Camberley.” (Petition contained 520 signatories).

The Chairman invited a local Government elector of the Combined Area to speak to the Petition, but this was not taken up.

The Fire Authority Noted that no Questions had been received under Standing Order 25.

The Chairman invited the following members of the public, who had indicated a wish to address the Fire Authority on the proposals relating to the Integrated Risk Management 5-Year Plan, to make their statements in accordance with the procedure approved under the Motion referred to above:

- Mr David Malia (Chairman, Ward Royal Residents' Association).
- Mr John Holdstock (on behalf of The West Windsor Residents' Association).
- Councillor John Fido (The Royal Borough of Windsor and Maidenhead).
- Mr Richard Coates (Horton Parish resident and representative of Horton Parish Council).
- Eduardo Cardoso (Fire Brigades Union).
- Councillor Mrs Eileen Quick (a Lead Member on The Royal Borough of Windsor and Maidenhead Cabinet).
- Councillor John Penfold (The Royal Borough of Windsor and Maidenhead).

03.05.07 CHAIRMAN’S COMMUNICATIONS

The Chief Fire Officer provided an update position on the ongoing floods within Berkshire and Oxfordshire. Councillor Miss Emma Webster asked that her thanks be conveyed to the Royal Berkshire Fire and Rescue Service, and to the Merseyside and Lincolnshire Fire and Rescue Services for their assistance. This was **unanimously supported**.

CFO

The Chairman reminded Members that, during their considerations of the Integrated Risk Management 5-Year Plan proposals, they should be mindful that it was their responsibility to ensure that the best possible fire and rescue cover be secured for the whole of Berkshire within the available resources. He stated that, following discussions with the political Group Leaders, it had been acknowledged that Members should be given a free vote on the Recommendations presented.

03.06.07 QUESTIONS FROM MEMBERS UNDER STANDING ORDER 30

The Fire Authority Noted that no Questions had been received from the Fire Authority Members under Standing Order 30.

03.07.07 NOTICES OF MOTION UNDER STANDING ORDER 44

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

03.08.07 REVIEW OF INTEGRATED RISK MANAGEMENT 5-YEAR PLAN CONSULTATION IN THE AREAS MANAGED BY THE ROYAL BERKSHIRE FIRE AND RESCUE SERVICE

The Fire Authority was advised of the areas of the Consultation process managed solely by Officers of the Royal Berkshire Fire and Rescue Service, the main areas of interest and the comments and views received from stakeholders.

The Brigade Manager (Support Services) introduced the report presented and took Members through the Consultation process and the responses, and relating comments, received. He noted that a further 2 presentations had now been given to external bodies since the conclusion of the Consultation, namely the West Windsor Residents Association and the Holybrook Parish Council, and that the combined audience of people who had attended the presentations given to external bodies had now increased to 430. He reported that the Holybrook Parish Council had confirmed that it did not have any concerns with the proposals within the Integrated Risk Management 5-Year Plan.

03.09.07 REPORT FROM OPINION RESEARCH SERVICES ON THE INTEGRATED RISK MANAGEMENT 5-YEAR PLAN CONSULTATION FOCUS GROUPS, FORUMS AND QUESTIONNAIRE

The Fire Authority was advised of the areas of the Consultation process managed by Opinion Research Services (ORS), namely the Elected Member and Stakeholder Forums, Focus Groups and the Integrated Risk Management Plan Questionnaire. The Brigade Manager (Support Services) introduced Dale Hall (Managing Director of ORS) and noted that ORS was a 'preferred service provider' for the Fire Services Consultation Association, having had experience of Integrated Risk Management Plan (IRMP) Consultation processes in other Fire Authorities.

Dale Hall gave a presentation entitled 'Report of Consultation on the IRMP' (*copy available from the Committee Manager*) in which he detailed how the Consultation had been commissioned, the Consultation programme, the complaints to the Market Research Service, the Consultation outcomes, the balancing of the evidence and the Questionnaire survey conducted. He also referred to the conclusions as detailed at Paragraph 1.14.1 of the report presented.

Dale Hall provided further explanation to the points of clarity raised by Members.

A number of Members from The Royal Borough of Windsor and Maidenhead stated that they had not received their respective copy of the Integrated Risk Management Plan 'headlines' distributed with the Council Tax precepting leaflets. The Brigade Manager (Support Services) confirmed that 515,000 Council Tax leaflets had been distributed to every household in Berkshire by the relevant Unitary Authority. The Chairman stated that Members might wish to question the distribution of the leaflets undertaken by the Unitary Authorities.

In response to a Member question, the Brigade Manager (Support Services) confirmed that Thames Valley Police had been provided with a copy of the Integrated Risk Management 5-Year Plan but that no subsequent response had been received. He stated that a Police Officer had attended the Reading stakeholder event, and he noted that the Thames Valley Police was broadly supportive of all the proposals.

In response to concerns by some Members regarding terrorism, the Brigade Manager (Support Services) confirmed that it was not possible to predict where any terrorism was likely to take place but that Fire and Rescue Services did have in place robust systems to deal with major incidents. He outlined where major incidents had been responded to across Berkshire in recent times.

The Chairman thanked Dale Hall for his presentation.

03.10.07 OVERVIEW OF MEDIA COVERAGE RELATING TO THE INTEGRATED RISK MANAGEMENT 5-YEAR PLAN PUBLIC CONSULTATION

The Fire Authority was provided with a profile of media activity during the Consultation period of 12 February 2007 to 11 May 2007.

Nicole Targett (Corporate Communications Manager) provided a summary of the report presented, noting in particular the decision taken to be actively proactive with the media throughout the Consultation process. She stated that the media coverage had been regularly monitored and that the Royal Berkshire Fire and Rescue Service had challenged the media when, on occasions, there had been instances of factual misrepresentation.

03.11.07 PRESENTATION OF FOOTAGE OF FIRE APPLIANCE RESPONDING FROM SLOUGH FIRE STATION TO WINDSOR

The Fire Authority was shown some video footage, taken at 1800 hours on 25 June 2007 of a fire appliance responding from Slough Fire Station to the end roundabout on the Ring Road at Windsor. George Cross (Area Manager, Support Services) confirmed that this footage was conducted on a race meeting night at a time advised by the Thames Valley Police as being a particular busy period.

03.12.07 FIVE-YEAR INTEGRATED RISK MANAGEMENT PLAN PROPOSALS

The Fire Authority's approval was sought for the 5-Year Integrated Risk Management Plan (IRMP), in the light of the results of the public Consultation process that was conducted during the period 12 February 2007 to 11 May 2007.

The Brigade Manager (Support Services) took Members through the 5-Year Integrated Strategic Plan, noting that there would be some slippage as this Strategic Plan had been expected to be implemented from 1 April 2007. He also noted that the Communities and Local Government (CLG) required Fire Authorities to have an Integrated Risk Management Plan in place, and that the Fire Authority's Comprehensive Performance Assessment rating was likely to be affected if such a Plan was not in place, bearing in mind that the Authority had been without an Integrated Risk Management Plan in the purist sense since 31 March 2007.

The Chairman paid tribute to the work of the Integrated Risk Management Plan Working Party, chaired by the Fire Authority's Vice-Chairman, and invited him to take Members through the presented 5-Year Plan.

The Vice-Chairman noted the significant work conducted by the Officers and the Integrated Risk Management Plan Working Party in enabling the proposals to be presented to the Fire Authority for consideration. He stated that it was the responsibility of the Fire Authority to ensure that the most appropriate resources were deployed to facilitate a fully integrated fire and rescue service across Berkshire. He noted the local concerns of the residents of Windsor to the proposals presented, however he was surprised that only 123 responses to the Questionnaires had been received from the Windsor and Maidenhead area. The Vice-Chairman stated that Members might wish to consider an increase to the Fire Authority's precept if it wished to retain 24-hour cover in Windsor and still provide an improved service elsewhere in the County.

The Vice-Chairman invited the Fire Brigades Union to, in future, advise the Fire Authority in a timelier manner of their considerations.

The Vice-Chairman moved that the Recommendations presented in the report be approved, including 2.4.v)a) (option for Windsor being 12-hour day crewing with night time cover from Slough during the period 2000 to 0800 hours). This was seconded by Councillor Miss Emma Webster. Councillor Peter Jones, Councillor Iain McCracken and Councillor Alan Ward noted their support, subsequently, to this proposal.

Councillor Tom Crisp, Councillor Peter Jones and Councillor Miss Emma Webster were extremely confident in the methodology and credibility of the work conducted by ORS, and believed that ORS had conducted a completely independent analysis. Councillor Miss Emma Webster conveyed her thanks to ORS.

Councillor Dexter Smith felt that the reported increase in the population figures in the Slough area would need to be considered in terms of adequate fire cover provision. The Chief Fire Officer confirmed that the predicted fire and rescue service provision to specific areas was based on data relating to the number of fires and road traffic accidents in the preceding 8 years, and was not based on population figures.

Councillor Andrew Bradley and Councillor Alan Ward commended the work conducted by the Officers and the Integrated Risk Management Plan Working Party.

Councillor Mrs Christine Bateson moved an Amendment that the Option for Windsor be the retention of the current 24-hour shift duty system (Recommendation 2.4.v)c). This Motion was seconded by Councillor John Lenton.

Councillor Mrs Christine Bateson supported the other Recommendations presented with the exception of Recommendation 2.4v)a). She felt that the financial considerations regarding the proposals for Wokingham had not been considered by any Fire Authority Committee. She believed that an alternative financial solution could be achieved to ensure that Windsor retained its 24-hour cover and improved emergency cover was realised for Wokingham. Councillor John Lenton supported this, and felt that savings could be identified from elsewhere, and not to the detriment of reduced service to Windsor.

Councillor John Lenton believed that the Consultation process was flawed and he felt that the responses received did not coincide with the opinion of local residents in Windsor.

Councillor Colin Dudley did not support the Amendment put by Councillor Mrs Christine Bateson, as he felt that there must be a fully integrated plan for the whole of Berkshire.

Councillor Kathy Newbound supported the Amendment put by Councillor Mrs Christine Bateson.

In summing up, Councillor Mrs Christine Bateson felt that the Fire Authority should establish a Committee to further consider the Recommendations and the financial implications pertaining to the proposal that efficiency savings gained from other strategies be used to improve emergency cover at Wokingham but without any reduction in cover in Windsor, and that the relating decisions be deferred to the next meeting of the Fire Authority.

The Vice-Chairman did not support either the Amendment put by Councillor Mrs Christine Bateson or to any potential delay in the implementation of the Integrated Risk Management 5-Year Plan.

The Amendment moved by Councillor Mrs Christine Bateson was put to the vote, and lost by 7 votes in favour to 15 votes against.

Councillor Andrew Bradley moved an Amendment that Recommendation 2.4.v) (*Agree one Option for Windsor*) be replaced with:

- **A request for a deferral to look at costings by establishing a Joint Committee consisting of all Members of the Executive Committee and Integrated Risk Management Working Party to investigate an option for the Authority to both retain an 24-hour service at Windsor, and to further expand services at Wokingham for the benefit of all affected Authority areas.**

The above Amendment was seconded by Councillor Dexter Smith.

Councillor Miss Emma Webster felt that the Fire Authority should be mindful that it had a statutory duty to have an approved Integrated Risk Management Plan, and that any deferral would negate this. The Working Group had been considering the Plan for more than two years and had considered the financial implications.

Councillor Mrs Pauline Helliard-Symons supported the Amendment put by Councillor Andrew Bradley. She congratulated all those involved who had contributed to the Integrated Risk Management 5-Year Plan. She did not support any increase to the precept, however noted her support to Councillor Mrs Christine Bateson's earlier Amendment.

The Vice-Chairman and Councillor Alan Ward did not support the Amendment put by Councillor Andrew Bradley.

Councillor Mrs Christine Bateson supported the Amendment put by Councillor Andrew Bradley.

Councillor Geoff Findlay moved that Standing Order 75 be evoked, and this was seconded by the Vice-Chairman.

Councillor Andrew Bradley, as mover of the Amendment, declined the offer to sum up.

The Amendment moved by Councillor Andrew Bradley was put to the vote, and lost by 10 votes in favour to 12 votes against. Councillor Mrs Christine Bateson wished her vote (in favour) to be recorded.

In summing up, the Vice-Chairman commended the Integrated Risk Management 5-Year Plan to the Fire Authority.

The Recommendations, as set out below, including Recommendation 2.4v)a) were put to the vote and carried by 14 votes in favour to 8 votes against.

Councillor Mrs Christine Bateson, Councillor Phillip Bicknell, Councillor Sue Evans, Councillor John Lenton, Councillor Kathy Newbound, Councillor Dexter Smith, Councillor Sean Wright, wished their vote (against) to be recorded.

The Fire Authority:

- **Noted** the Review of Integrated Risk Management 5-Year Plan Consultation in the areas managed by the Royal Berkshire Fire and Rescue Service.
- **Noted** the report from Opinion Research Services (ORS) on the Integrated Risk Management 5-Year Plan Consultation Focus Groups, Forums and Questionnaire.
- **Noted** the overview of media coverage relating to the Integrated Risk Management 5-Year Plan Public Consultation.
- In readiness to commence implementation of the 2007/08 Action Plan and to guide subsequent Action Plans:
 - **Agreed** the transfer of two light 'off road' firefighting vehicles into Cookham fire station to replace the pumping appliance.
 - **Agreed** the closure of Sonning fire station.
 - **Agreed** the transfer of the Retained Duty System crew at Wargrave fire station to a new fire station in Twyford, and that, once in place, the station at Wargrave will close.

- **Agreed** the commencement of a trial where Camberley's (Surrey Fire Authority) fire appliances are utilised to cover the Sandhurst, Yorktown and College Town areas.
- **Agreed** 12-hour day crewing for Windsor with night-time cover from Slough during the period 2000 to 0800 hours.
- **Agreed** the closure of Dee Road fire station with the appliance transferred to Caversham Road, and Caversham Road then becomes a dual appliance community fire station.
- **Agreed** that any efficiency savings gained from the other strategies would be used to improve emergency cover in Wokingham.
- **Agreed** to conduct a review of the Royal Berkshire Fire and Rescue Service's Chemical and Environmental Operational Response.
- **Agreed** to continue the IRMP Project Management of the move to Regional Control Centres.

03.13.07 MEMBERS' HANDBOOK

The Fire Authority's approval was sought to the new Member's Handbook.

The Vice-Chairman proposed that the Members' Handbook be approved, and this was seconded by Councillor Miss Emma Webster.

The Fire Authority:

- **Unanimously Approved** the Members' Handbook.

03.14.07 DATE OF NEXT FIRE AUTHORITY MEETING:

The next Fire Authority meeting will be held on Wednesday 10 October 2007 at 6.30pm in the Council Chamber, The Royal Borough of Windsor and Maidenhead.