

**AGENDA ITEM 1: MINUTES****MINUTES OF A MEETING OF THE ROYAL BERKSHIRE FIRE AUTHORITY HELD AT THE SHIRE HALL, SHINFIELD PARK, READING, ON TUESDAY 25 NOVEMBER 1997, COMMENCING AT 6.30 PM AND CONCLUDED AT 7.50 PM**

**Present:** D Ball, P A Barnett, Mrs C Bateson, J C G Brooks (Chairman), J J Connolly, R J Day, T P Dredge, P G Edwards, J N B Egan, B W Gardner, C J Goodall, A Gregory, A B V P Hickley, D W Liddiard, J Morris, Mrs K Newbound, W J E Onions, H Parker, B J S Patman, Dr L Silverman, A W Spratling, T N Stephens, D Thomas.

**Also in Attendance:** G N Barnard (Bracknell Forest Borough Council)

**1.01/97 ELECTION OF CHAIRMAN**

The following nominations were proposed and duly seconded for Chairmanship of the Fire Authority viz:

J C G Brooks (Newbury District Council)  
J J Connolly (Slough Borough Council)

A vote was taken (16 votes for Mr Brooks and 6 for Mr Connolly).

**RESOLVED:** That J C G Brooks be duly elected Chairman of the Royal Berkshire Fire Authority until its Annual Meeting in 1998.

(Mr Brooks in the Chair)

**1.02/97 APPOINTMENT OF VICE-CHAIRMAN**

The following nominations were proposed and duly seconded for Vice-Chairmanship of the Fire Authority viz:

J J Connolly (Slough Borough Council)  
B J S Patman (Wokingham District Council)

A vote was taken (6 votes for Mr Connolly and 13 votes for Mr Patman).

**RESOLVED:** That B J S Patman be duly appointed Vice-Chairman of the Royal Berkshire Fire Authority until its next Annual Meeting in 1998.

**1.03/97 BERKSHIRE FIRE SERVICES (COMBINATION SCHEME) ORDER 1997**

The Authority received a report advising Members that the Berkshire Fire Services (Combination Scheme) Order 1997 had been made by the Secretary of State on 8 November 1997 and came into force on 9 November 1997.

**NOTED**

### **1.04/97      COMPOSITION AND MEMBERSHIP OF THE AUTHORITY**

The Authority received a report (Agenda Item 4 - not reproduced) seeking endorsement to the composition of the Authority and affirmation of its membership.

It was noted that the Liberal Democrat, Labour and Conservative Members of the Fire Authority intended to form themselves into political groups. Members were reminded of the need to provide formal notice of this intention to the County Solicitor.

**RESOLVED:** That the Fire Authority comprise 25 Members as follows:

- 3 appointed by Bracknell Forest Borough Council
- 5 appointed by Newbury District Council
- 4 appointed by Reading Borough Council
- 3 appointed by Slough Borough Council
- 5 appointed by the Royal Borough of Windsor and Maidenhead
- 5 appointed by Wokingham District Council

### **1.05/97      RECOMMENDATIONS OF BERKSHIRE AUTHORITIES' FIRE JOINT COMMITTEE**

The Authority received a report (Agenda Item 5 - not reproduced) summarising the matters on which recommendations had been made by the Berkshire Authority's Fire Joint Committee to the Authority from its four meetings.

**NOTED.**

### **1.06/97      STANDING ORDERS**

The Authority considered proposed standing orders for adoption (Agenda Item 5A - not reproduced).

The following points were noted:

- a      The Authority was advised by the County Solicitor of two minor amendments to the proposed standing orders.
- b      The agreement of the Authority to a quorum of 9 with no specific minimum number of local authorities being required to be present at any meeting of the Fire Authority.

**RESOLVED:** That, subject to the reported minor amendments, the standing orders as submitted be adopted.

### 1.07/97      **FREQUENCY AND DATES OF MEETINGS**

The Authority received a report (Agenda Item 5B - not reproduced) proposing the frequency of, and dates in 1997/98, for meetings of the Authority.

The Authority agreed the dates of meetings up to and including the meeting on 16 March 1998 and suggested that further consideration be given to the date of the June 1998 meeting.

#### **RESOLVED:**

- 1      That the Authority meets at least 4 times in any "municipal" year.
- 2      That approval be given to meetings on the following dates:  
          Tuesday 9 December 1997  
          Tuesday 3 February 1998  
          Monday 16 March 1998
- 3      That, until 31 March 1998, meetings be held at Shire Hall, Shinfield Park, Reading.
- 4      That a report be made to a future meeting of the Fire Authority with a suggested date for its Annual meeting in June 1998.

### 1.08/97      **COMMITTEE STRUCTURE**

The Authority received a report (Agenda Item 5C - not reproduced) proposing a possible committee structure (set out in Appendix 1 of the Minutes).

Arising from discussion the following points were noted:

- a      The proposal for the notice of meetings/agenda headings of Committees and sub-groups set up by the Fire Authority being circulated to all Members of the Authority for information.
- b      Clarification that the Personnel Committee had some executive powers eg. to determine staff appeals.
- c      Clarification that the quorum for the Personnel Committee was 3 and that provision was contained in the Authority's Standing Orders for the substitution of the Members on committees and sub-groups established by the Authority. It was explained however that no provision existed for substitution of members of the Fire Authority.

#### **RESOLVED:**

- 1      That an Urgency Committee be established, on the basis set out in Appendix 1.
- 2      That, by 31 March 1998, a Personnel Committee be established, on the basis set out in Appendix 1.

- 3 That a Budget Working Party be established, on the basis set out in Appendix 1 and that its existing membership be affirmed, subject to the substitution of Dr Silverman for J Morris.
- 4 That a panel of 3 suitably skilled Members (Messers Brooks, Connolly and Mills) be established to make appointments of the Clerk/Monitoring Officer and Treasurer having:
  - i considered written applications
  - ii shortlisted candidates for interview
  - iii interviewed shortlisted candidates
- 5 That arrangements be made for Notice of Meeting/Agenda Headings to be circulated to all Members of the Fire Authority for information.

#### **1.09/97 STANDING ORDERS AS TO CONTRACTS AND FINANCIAL REGULATIONS**

The Authority received a report (Agenda Item 5D - not reproduced) proposing the adoption of interim standing orders as to contracts and financial regulations.

Members of the Authority were advised that the proposed standing orders and financial regulations would provide a satisfactory basis for contractual and financial matters until March 1998. This would provide time for the Authority's Treasurer (when appointed) to consider their suitability for the future. The County Solicitor affirmed that in his view the standing orders and financial regulations could be satisfactorily adapted to meet the requirements of the Authority.

#### **RESOLVED:**

- 1 That, pending the formulation of its own standing orders as to contracts, the standing orders as to contracts of Berkshire County Council be adopted.
- 2 That, pending the formulation of its own financial regulations and insofar that any are required at this time, the financial regulations of Berkshire County Council be adopted.

#### **1.10/97 PROVISION OF SUPPORT SERVICES**

The Fire Authority received a report (Agenda Item 5E - not reproduced) containing proposals for the provision of support services to the Fire Authority.

Arising from consideration and discussion a number of points were noted including:

- a The modest financial increase for the provision of support services compared to existing corporate costs.
- b That the appointments proposed would be for an initial period of 2 years.

- c A declaration of interest made by Mr Egan (Bracknell Forest Council) in relation to contract cleaning of fire stations. Mr Egan took no part in the consideration of, or the decision making, of the proposals before the Fire Authority.
- d Clarification that reference to external providers included constituent councils.
- e The proposal to give further consideration, by the Management Structures Working Party to the establishment of a post of Press and Public Relations Officer and part-time Committee Secretary.
- f Affirmation that contracts would be sought for services in accord with the Authority's Standing Orders.
- g The desirability of constituent councils providing help with support services and the economic advantage of such arrangements provided legal requirements of competitive tendering were met.

**RESOLVED:**

- 1 That a post of Contracts and Facilities Manager be created, with effect from 1 January 1998, to manage contracts for services provided to the Fire Authority.
- 2 That the Building Surveyor and Estates Management Services be provided by Reading Borough Council.
- 3 That the legal services be provided by Reading Borough Council.
- 4 That the following services be provided by external suppliers or by constituent councils:
  - information technology support
  - grounds maintenance
  - premises cleaning
- 5 That the following services continue to be provided by external providers, where appropriate:
  - inspection of fire fighting equipment
  - testing of portable electrical equipment
  - Brigade Headquarters catering
  - window cleaning
  - refuse collection
  - hygiene and sanitation services
- 6 That consideration of the establishment of posts of Press and Public Relations Officer and part-time Committee Secretary be deferred, for further consideration by the Management Structures Working Party.

### **1.11/97 APPOINTMENT OF EXTERNAL AUDITORS**

The Authority received a report (Agenda Item 6 - not reproduced) with a proposal for the appointment of the District Auditor as the Fire Authority's Auditor for a period of 5 years with effect from 1 April 1998.

The Authority were advised that the costs would be based on the District Audit standard rate of charge for service. The sum of £12,000 had been provisionally included in the Authority's budget.

**RESOLVED:** That the appointment of the District Auditor as the Authority's Auditor, for a period of 5 years with effect from 1 April 1998, be approved.

### **1.12/97 PROPERTY ASSETS**

The Authority received a report (Agenda Item 7 - not reproduced) seeking formal agreement of the Authority to the disaggregation of Berkshire County Council's property assets.

In response to a number of questions it was explained that a number of properties had been sold to sitting tenants, Sonning Fire Station was held on leasehold from a Trust, and that some of the non-operational premises were let to serving or ex-serving officers as tenants.

**RESOLVED:** That, subject to the formal agreement of the Borough and District Councils, the properties listed in Appendix 2 be vested in the Authority on 1 April 1998.

### **1.13/97 PROPOSED MANAGEMENT STRUCTURE FOR THE FIRE AND RESCUE SERVICE**

The Authority received a report (Agenda Item 8 - not reproduced) concerning the reappointment of the Fire and Rescue Service Management Structure Working Party.

The Authority was advised that whilst one meeting of the Working Party had already been held a further meeting was required. It was therefore proposed that a report be made to the next meeting of the Authority on the proposed management structure. It was also reported that Dr Silverman would replace J Morris as a representative on the Working Party.

The issue of joint officer working and liaison was discussed. The issue was raised in the context of the view that adequate mechanisms should exist for liaison/communication between lead officers of the district and borough councils with officers of the Fire Authority, given amongst other matters, the difficult financial decisions that would be necessary. The Chief Fire Officer, whilst wishing to avoid establishing resource intensive meeting arrangements, accepted the need for ongoing briefing mechanisms with district/borough council officer colleagues. A suggestion was made for each district and borough council to identify a link officer. It was agreed that the issue would be further considered by the Working Party in considering the management structure.

**RESOLVED:**

- 1 That the Fire and Rescue Management Structure Working Party, originally established by the Berkshire Authorities' Fire Joint Committee be reappointed, with a view to reporting on the proposed management structure at the next meeting of the Fire Authority.
- 2 That Dr Silverman replace J Morris as a member of the Working Party.
- 3 That the issue and mechanism for briefing of lead officers of district and borough councils be considered by the Working Party.

**1.14/97 EXCLUSION OF THE PUBLIC**

**RESOLVED:** That under Section 100A(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:

<b>Agenda Item</b>	<b>Paragraph</b>
5F Roles and Responsibilities of Clerk/ Monitoring Officer	9
5G Role and Responsibilities of Treasurer	9
5H Provision of Financial Services	9

The following is a summary of the items considered in Part II of the Fire Authorities' Agenda.

**1.15/97 ROLES AND RESPONSIBILITIES OF CLERK/MONITORING OFFICER**

The Authority received a report with proposals covering the roles and responsibilities of a Clerk/Monitoring Officer for the Authority which included detail of salary and the number of working days required of the post per year. The proposals submitted to the Authority were agreed.

**1.16/97 ROLE AND RESPONSIBILITIES OF TREASURER**

The Authority received a report with proposals of the role and responsibilities of Treasurer to the Authority including details of the proposed salary and number of days per year required to be worked. The Authority agreed the proposals put to them.

**1.17/97      PROVISION OF FINANCIAL SERVICES**

The Authority received a report with proposals for the extension of Berkshire County Council's contract with CSL Managed Services for the ongoing provision of financial services to the Authority. The Authority agreed to the extension of the contract for a period of two years for the provision of financial services to the Authority.