

ROYAL BERKSHIRE FIRE AUTHORITY ANNUAL MEETING - PART I

Held on Wednesday 27 June 2007

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



Those present:

Councillor Mrs Christine Bateson	Councillor Mrs Sue Evans
Councillor Mrs Prue Bray	Councillor Geoff Findlay
Councillor Jeff Brooks	Councillor Chris Harris
Councillor Dr Paul Bryant	Councillor John Lenton
Councillor Tom Crisp	Councillor Fred Pugh
Councillor Colin Dudley	Councillor Angus Ross
Councillor Adrian Edwards	Councillor Miss Emma Webster

In attendance:

- Iain Cox (Chief Fire Officer)
- Mr Albert Gregory (Chairman, Standards Committee) (*Item 02.32.07*)
- Lynda Kenyon (Committee Manager)
- Rosemary Lansdowne (Clerk and Monitoring Officer)
- Jacky Manning (Senior Personnel Adviser, Equality & Diversity) (*Item 02.06.07*)
- Des Tidbury (Brigade Manager, Support Services)
- Andrew Vallance (Authority Treasurer)
- David Wallace (Director of Human Resources)

02.01.07 ELECTION OF CHAIRMAN 2007/2008

The Clerk and Monitoring Officer invited nominations for the position of Chairman of the Royal Berkshire Fire Authority for the ensuing year (2007/2008).

Councillor Angus Ross proposed Councillor Dr Paul Bryant, and this was seconded by Councillor Mrs Christine Bateson.

There were no further nominations received.

The Fire Authority:

- **Resolved** that Councillor Dr Paul Bryant be elected Chairman of the Royal Berkshire Fire Authority for the ensuing year (2007/2008).

Councillor Dr Paul Bryant in the Chair.

Councillor Jeff Brooks, as the inaugural Chairman of the Fire Authority and at the invitation of the Chief Fire Officer, presented the Chairman with the Royal Berkshire Fire Authority's Chairman's Chain of Office.

The Chairman welcomed the newly appointed Members to the Fire Authority and encouraged them to visit their local fire station.

02.02.07 VICE-CHAIRMAN AND EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE REPRESENTATION

The Fire Authority was asked to consider the Recommendations of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee that the Chairman and Vice-Chairman of the Fire

Action

Authority should not be from the same Unitary Authority and that all six Unitary Authorities be represented on the Fire Authority's Executive Committee, ie there should be six Members on the Executive Committee, one from each Unitary Authority. The Clerk and Monitoring Officer referred Members to the view of the Executive Committee as detailed in Paragraph 4 of the report presented.

Councillor Mrs Prue Bray stated that, as the Vice-Chairman of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee in 2006/07, she did not believe that these Recommendations were a practical option, and this was supported by Councillor Miss Emma Webster. Councillor Miss Emma Webster believed that Members should be appointed to the Executive Committee who were both interested in the position and who had the ability to carry out the role's responsibilities.

Councillor Geoff Findlay proposed that the first Recommendation presented, that being that the Chairman and Vice-Chairman of the Fire Authority should not be from the same Unitary Authority, should not be adopted, and this was seconded by Councillor Mrs Prue Bray.

Councillor Miss Emma Webster proposed that the second Recommendation presented, that being that all six Unitary Authorities be represented on the Fire Authority's Executive Committee, ie there should be six Members on the Executive Committee, one from each Unitary, be Resolved, with the caveat that, should this not be practicable, there should be no more than two Members from any one Unitary Authority on the Executive Committee, as recommended by the Executive Committee. This proposal was seconded by Councillor Mrs Prue Bray.

The Fire Authority:

- **Resolved, unanimously**, that the Recommendation that the Chairman and Vice-Chairman of the Fire Authority should not be from the same Unitary Authority **should not be adopted**.
- **Resolved, unanimously**, that all six Unitary Authorities be represented on the Fire Authority's Executive Committee, ie there should be six Members on the Executive Committee, one from each Unitary, and that, should this not be practicable, there should be no more than two Members from any one Unitary Authority on the Executive Committee, as recommended by the Executive Committee.

02.03.07 ELECTION OF VICE-CHAIRMAN 2007/2008

The Chairman invited nominations for the position of Vice-Chairman of the Royal Berkshire Fire Authority for the ensuing year (2007/2008).

The Chairman proposed Councillor Jeff Brooks, and this was seconded by Councillor Mrs Prue Bray.

There were no further nominations received.

The Fire Authority:

- **Resolved that** Councillor Jeff Brooks be elected Vice-Chairman of the Royal Berkshire Fire Authority for the ensuing year (2007/2008).

02.04.07 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Apologies for absence were received from Councillor Phillip Bicknell, Councillor Chris Bowring, Councillor Andrew Bradley, Councillor Mrs Pauline Helliar-Symons, Councillor Peter Jones, Councillor Iain McCracken, Councillor Mrs Patricia O'Connor, Councillor Dexter Smith, Councillor Alan Ward and Councillor Sean Wright.

02.05.07 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.

02.06.07 MEMBERSHIP OF FIRE AUTHORITY / MEMBERS' BADGES

The Fire Authority was advised of the District/Borough Council appointments to the Fire Authority. The Clerk and Monitoring Officer reported that The Royal Borough of Windsor and Maidenhead had now confirmed its respective appointments, as follows:

- Councillor Mrs Christine Bateson (Conservative)
- Councillor Phillip Bicknell (Conservative)
- Councillor Mrs Sue Evans (Conservative)
- Councillor Mrs Vicky Howes (Liberal Democrat)
- Councillor John Lenton (Conservative)

The Clerk and Monitoring Officer advised that Councillor Derek Wilson (The Royal Borough of Windsor and Maidenhead) was no longer a Member of the Fire Authority, as detailed in the report presented.

The Chief Fire Officer presented each Member with a Fire Authority's Members' Badge to be worn whilst carrying out their Fire Authority responsibilities.

The Fire Authority:

- **Noted** the Membership of the Fire Authority.

02.07.07 PART I MINUTES OF THE MEETING HELD ON 7 FEBRUARY 2007

The Part I Minutes of the last meeting held on Wednesday 7 February 2007 were received and **Approved** as a correct record, and signed by the Chairman.

02.08.07 PART I MINUTES OF STANDING COMMITTEES, WORKING PARTIES AND OTHER GROUPS

The Authority was advised of the meetings of the Fire Authority's Standing Committees, Working Parties and other Groups held since last reported at the Fire Authority meeting on 7 February 2007.

The Fire Authority:

- **Noted** the Part I Minutes of the Standing Committees, Working Parties and other Groups.

02.09.07 PETITIONS AND QUESTIONS UNDER STANDING ORDERS 8 AND 9

Councillor Mrs Christine Bateson delivered a Petition conducted by the Slough and Windsor Express entitled "Yes! 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". The Chief Fire Officer advised that the Petition would be verified to ensure that it was in accordance with Standing Order 8a, and that one person would then be able to speak to the Petition. He advised that the Petition would be best heard at the Extraordinary meeting of the Fire Authority on 25 July 2007 as it pertained to the issues for consideration at this meeting. Councillor Mrs Christine Bateson supported this.

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The Fire Authority Noted that one Petition had been received under Standing Order 8.

The Fire Authority Noted that no Questions had been received under Standing Order 9.

02.10.07 CHAIRMAN'S COMMUNICATIONS

- a) The Chairman referred to a recent extrication competition held at Whitley Wood fire station where teams from all over the country had competed. He reported that the Extrication Team from the Royal Berkshire Fire and Rescue Service had come third in the competition, and he congratulated them on this notable achievement. He recommended that Members attend a similar event.
- b) The Chairman reported that, together with the Chief Fire Officer, he had attended the Fire and Rescue Conference and Exhibition held from 22-24 May 2007 at the National Exhibition Centre, where he had:
 - Had the opportunity of viewing the proposed new firefighters' uniforms. (The Chief Fire Officer tabled some photographs of the proposed uniforms).
 - Had the opportunity to view the FireLink equipment which had been fitted to a newly acquired Royal Berkshire Fire and Rescue Service fire appliance.
 - Seen a demonstration of the testing equipment for firefighter selection tests given by Crew Manager Ruth Douglas, who was representing the Royal Berkshire Fire and Rescue Service and was representative of the Networking for Women. He conveyed his thanks to Ruth Douglas.

02.11.07 QUESTIONS FROM MEMBERS UNDER STANDING ORDER 10

The Fire Authority Noted that no Questions had been received from the Fire Authority Members under Standing Order 10.

02.12.07 NOTICES OF MOTION UNDER STANDING ORDER 12

The Fire Authority Noted that no Notices of Motion had been received under Standing Order 12.

02.13.07 ESTABLISHMENT OF AN AUDIT COMMITTEE

The Fire Authority was invited to consider the establishment of an Audit Committee and to determine its Terms of Reference, following a review of internal controls by Bentley Jennison, the Fire Authority's internal auditors, and its subsequent Recommendation that the Authority should set up an Audit Committee to comply with best practice and strengthen internal control.

The Authority Treasurer noted the Executive Committee's Recommendations that an Audit Committee should be established, and that, best practice would be to appoint six Members to the Audit Committee who were not Members of the Executive Committee or Overview and Scrutiny Committee, and that membership should be politically proportional. He stated that the Executive Committee felt that this might be difficult to achieve. The Authority Treasurer also reported that the Executive Committee had recommended that the Audit Committee's membership should exclude the Chairman and Vice-Chairman, and that it had been suggested that the Committee meet twice-yearly.

Councillor Miss Emma Webster proposed that the Recommendations be resolved, and this was seconded by Councillor Angus Ross.

The Fire Authority:

- **Agreed, unanimously**, that an Audit Committee be established, and that its Terms of Reference be as detailed in Appendix A of the report presented.

02.14.07 APPOINTMENT OF STANDING COMMITTEES - POLITICAL PROPORTIONALITY

The Fire Authority was invited to consider the Fire Authority's Committee structure in the light of the recent appointments to the Fire Authority from the 6 Unitary Authorities, and to consider the total number of Committee places, the size of each Committee, and the allocation of Committee places between political groups.

The Clerk and Monitoring Officer took Members through the report presented, and noted that on Page 3 of the report, the tables were based on a total of 27 Committee places, not on 15 Committee places as reported in paragraphs 5 and 6 of the text.

The Clerk and Monitoring Officer recommended to the Fire Authority that it might wish to adopt the allocation of Committee places as detailed within the first column of Table 2 (6 - Executive Committee, 6 - Overview and Scrutiny Committee, 3 - Disciplinary, Appeals and Grievance Committee, 6 - Audit Committee, 6 - Property and Resources Committee). She noted that, as the Fire Authority had agreed, at its meeting in February 2007, that the membership of the Property and Resources Committee be 6 Members, one from each Unitary Authority, the Fire Authority would not be compliant with the rules on political proportionality, however it did have the power to establish Committees that did not comply with the rules, subject to certain conditions, as referred to in Paragraph 3.4 of the report.

The Chairman proposed, on behalf of the Conservative Group, that:

- The Fire Authority adopt the political proportional total number of Committee places for the Executive Committee, Overview and Scrutiny Committee and Audit Committee (4 - Conservative, 1 - Liberal Democrat, 1 - Labour).

- The Disciplinary, Appeals and Grievance Committee be one Member from each Political Group.
- The Property and Resources Committee be non-proportional and its membership be one Member from each Unitary Authority.

The above proposal was seconded by the Vice-Chairman.

The Fire Authority:

- **Resolved, unanimously**, that the total number of Committee places be set at 27.
- **Resolved, unanimously**, that the size of each Committee be as follows:
 - Executive Committee - 6 Members
 - Overview and Scrutiny Committee - 6 Members
 - Disciplinary, Appeals and Grievance Committee - 3 Members
 - Audit Committee - 6 Members
 - Property and Resources Committee - 6 Members
- **Resolved and Adopted, unanimously**, that the rules on political proportionality would not apply and that the allocation of 27 Committee places between Political Groups for the municipal year 2007/08 be as follows:

Committee	Conservative	Liberal Democrat	Labour	Total
Executive	4	1	1	6
Overview and Scrutiny	4	1	1	6
DAG	1	1	1	3
Audit	4	1	1	6
Property and Resources	One Member from each Unitary Authority			6

- **Agreed, unanimously**, that the political Group allocation for the Disciplinary, Appeals and Grievance Committee might need to be waived subject to Member availability.

The Chairman agreed to discuss with Councillor Sean Wright how best he, as the Independent Member, could be accommodated on a Committee or Working Party.

Chairman

02.15.07 RE-APPOINTMENT OF STANDING COMMITTEES, STANDARDS COMMITTEE, COMMUNITY SAFETY FORUM AND INTEGRATED RISK MANAGEMENT PLAN WORKING PARTY

In accordance with the decision made at the previous item, the Fire Authority was invited to re-appoint its Standing Committees (Executive Committee, Overview and Scrutiny Committee, Disciplinary, Appeals and Grievance Committee (in name only)), Property and Resources Committee, Community Safety Forum, and the Integrated Risk Management Plan Working Party. In addition, the Fire Authority was invited to appoint Members to the Audit Committee and the Standards Committee, and a Fire Authority representative on The Royal Borough of Windsor and Maidenhead Local Strategic Partnership.

The Fire Authority:

- **Resolved, unanimously**, that the Executive Committee be re-appointed for the ensuing year, with the following membership:

Councillor Mrs Christine Bateson	Councillor Tom Crisp
Councillor Jeff Brooks	Councillor Iain McCracken
Councillor Dr Paul Bryant	Councillor Angus Ross

- **Resolved, unanimously**, that the Overview and Scrutiny Committee be re-appointed for the ensuing year, with the following membership:

Councillor Chris Bowring	Councillor Geoff Findlay
Councillor Mrs Prue Bray	Councillor John Lenton
Councillor Mrs Patricia O'Connor	Councillor Alan Ward

- **Resolved, unanimously**, that the Disciplinary, Appeals and Grievance Committee (DAG) be re-established for the ensuing year, and that the appointment of Members to the DAG be dealt with as and when required, and be dependent on Members' availability.

- **Resolved, unanimously**, that the Community Safety Forum be re-appointed for the ensuing year with the following membership:

Councillor Mrs Prue Bray	Councillor Fred Pugh
Councillor Colin Dudley	Councillor x (to be confirmed) Conservative)
Councillor Mrs Sue Evans	Councillor x (to be confirmed) Labour)

**Chairman
Cllr T Crisp**

Councillor Mrs Christine Bateson proposed that Councillor Fred Pugh be appointed as **Chairman of the Community Safety Forum**, and this was seconded by Councillor Angus Ross, and **unanimously carried**. Councillor Fred Pugh was appointed as Chairman of the Community Safety Forum.

- **Resolved, unanimously**, that the Integrated Risk Management Plan Working Party be re-appointed for the ensuing year, with the following membership:

Councillor Andrew Bradley	Councillor Mrs Sue Evans
Councillor Jeff Brooks	Councillor Peter Jones
Councillor Colin Dudley	Councillor Miss Emma Webster

- **Resolved, unanimously**, that the following 3 Members, one from each political Party, be appointed as the Fire Authority Member representatives on the Standards Committee:

Councillor Andrew Bradley
Councillor Chris Harris
Councillor Peter Jones

- **Resolved, unanimously**, that the following 6 Members be appointed to the Audit Committee for the ensuing year:

Councillor Phillip Bicknell	Councillor Dexter Smith
Councillor Chris Harris	Councillor Alan Ward
Councillor Mrs Patricia O'Connor	Councillor Miss Emma Webster

- **Resolved unanimously**, that the following 6 Members, one from each Unitary Authority, be appointed to the Property and Resources Committee for the ensuing year:

Councillor Phillip Bicknell
Councillor Colin Dudley
Councillor Adrian Edwards

Councillor Chris Harris
Councillor Mrs Pauline Helliar-Symons
Councillor Mrs Patricia O'Connor

The Director of Human Resources advised that the Fire Authority's previous practice had been to appoint a Member not from The Royal Borough of Windsor and Maidenhead. The Vice-Chairman felt that it would be beneficial to have the Member representative from The Royal Borough of Windsor and Maidenhead. The Vice-Chairman proposed that Councillor Mrs Vicky Howes be appointed as the **Fire Authority's representative on The Royal Borough of Windsor and Maidenhead Local Strategic Partnership**, and this was seconded by Councillor Mrs Prue Bray, and **unanimously carried**.

02.16.07 APPOINTMENT OF FIRE AUTHORITY MEMBERS TO THE SOUTH EAST REGIONAL MANAGEMENT BOARD (2007/2008)

The Fire Authority's approval was sought to the re-appointment of the Fire Authority's representative to the South East Regional Management Board for 2007/08, and it was also invited to appoint substitute Members to the South East Regional Management Board for 2007/08.

The Vice-Chairman proposed that the Recommendations be resolved, and this was seconded by Councillor Geoff Findlay.

The Fire Authority:

- **Agreed, unanimously**, that the Chairman of the Fire Authority be appointed as the Fire Authority's representative on the South East Regional Management Board for 2007/08.
- **Agreed, unanimously**, that, in the event of the Chairman of the Fire Authority not being able to attend, then the Chairman would nominate another Member of the Executive Committee to attend the South-East Regional Management Board as his substitute, and, in line with the Constitution, the Clerk and Monitoring Officer would notify the Clerk to the Regional Management Board accordingly.

02.17.07 APPOINTMENT OF FIRE AUTHORITY MEMBER REPRESENTATIVE TO THE LOCAL GOVERNMENT ASSOCIATION (LGA) (2007/2008)

The Fire Authority was invited to appoint the Fire Authority's representative on the Local Government Association for 2007/2008. The Chairman advised that Fire Authority Members were also able to attend, informally, the meetings of the Local Government Association, subject to notification of attendance to the Local Government Association.

The Vice-Chairman proposed that the Chairman be appointed as the Fire Authority representative to the Local Government Association for 2007/08 and this was seconded by Councillor Mrs Christine Bateson.

The Fire Authority:

- **Resolved, unanimously**, that the Chairman be appointed to represent the Fire Authority on the Local Government Association for the ensuing year (2007/08).

02.18.07 APPOINTMENT OF FIRE AUTHORITY MEMBER REPRESENTATIVE TO THE ASSOCIATION OF COUNCILS FOR THE THAMES VALLEY REGION (ACTVaR) (2007/2008)

The Fire Authority's approval was sought to the appointment of its representative and its Standing Deputy on the Association of Councils for the Thames Valley Region (ACTVaR) for 2007/2008.

The Chairman advised that Councillor Andrew Bradley had expressed an interest in continuing as the Fire Authority's representative on the ACTVaR for the ensuing year.

Councillor Miss Emma Webster proposed that the Councillor Andrew Bradley be appointed as the Fire Authority's representative on the ACTVaR, and this was seconded by Councillor Mrs Christine Bateson.

The Chairman proposed that the Councillor Geoff Findlay be appointed as the Fire Authority's Standing Deputy representative on the ACTVaR, and this was seconded by Councillor Miss Emma Webster.

The Fire Authority:

- **Resolved, unanimously**, that Councillor Andrew Bradley be appointed as the Fire Authority's representative on the ACTVaR, and that Councillor Geoff Findlay be appointed as the Fire Authority's Standing Deputy Representative on the ACTVaR for the ensuing year.

02.19.07 NEW MODEL CODE OF CONDUCT FOR FIRE AUTHORITY MEMBERS

The Fire Authority was invited to consider the New Code of Conduct for the Fire Authority as presented, and was asked to formally adopt it, to be operative from 27 June 2007. The Clerk and Monitoring Officer advised that the presented New Code included clauses 11 and 12(2), and she referred to the Recommendations of the Standards Committee.

The Clerk and Monitoring Officer reminded Members of their respective requirement regarding Registration of Members' Interests, as detailed in Section 13 of the Code of Conduct, and confirmed that Members would be required to register their respective Interests within 28 days of the adoption of the Code of Conduct.

Councillor Angus Ross asked that Members be furnished with a copy of their current Declarations of Interests, and the Clerk and Monitoring Officer (CMO) agreed to provide these.

Councillor Miss Emma Webster proposed that the Recommendations be resolved, and this was seconded by Councillor Angus Ross.

CMO

The Fire Authority:

- **Adopted, unanimously**, the Fire Authority's New Code of Conduct, to include clauses 11 and 12(2), to be operative from 27 June 2007.

02.20.07 MEMBERS HANDBOOK AND REVISION OF STANDING ORDERS

The Fire Authority was invited to receive and approve the new Member's Handbook, and to consider and approve the amendments and additions to Contract Standing Orders. Each Member present was provided with the new Member's Handbook.

The Clerk and Monitoring Officer confirmed that, subject to the approval of the Contract Standing Orders at Appendix A of the report presented, all the previously approved revisions to, and new protocols for, inclusion to the Members' Handbook, had been collated within the new Members' Handbook. She stated that these had now been re-produced in a standard format, re-numbered, and, where necessary, punctuation and spelling errors corrected and/or removed.

Councillor Angus Ross suggested that Members be allowed a further 3 weeks to consider and comment on the Members' Handbook, and this was supported by Councillor Colin Dudley. The Chairman proposed that the new Members' Handbook be approved, subject to any further revisions and review at the next meeting of the Fire Authority, and this was seconded by Councillor Angus Ross.

Councillor Miss Emma Webster proposed that the Recommendation that the Fire Authority approve the amendments to the Authority's Contract Standing Orders as set out in Appendix A of the report presented be approved, and this was seconded by Councillor Colin Dudley.

The Fire Authority:

- **Received** the new Members' Handbook.
- **Approved, unanimously**, the amendments to the Authority's Contract Standing Orders as set out at Appendix A of the report presented.
- **Approved, carried by a vote 13 votes for with one abstention**, the new Members' Handbook, subject to any further revisions and review at the next meeting of the Fire Authority. Councillor Colin Dudley abstained from voting.

Agenda
25.07.07

02.21.07 SOUTH EAST REGIONAL CONTROL CENTRE - BOARD ATTENDANCE

The Fire Authority's approval was sought to the continuation of the appointment of Councillor Angus Ross as Elected Member for the ensuing year to attend the Local Authority Controlled Company's Board of Director meetings required to be established by the South East Regional Management Board under the provisions of the Fire and Rescue National Framework 2006-08.

Councillor Mrs Christine Bateson proposed that the Recommendations be resolved, and this was seconded by Councillor Miss Emma Webster.

The Fire Authority:

- **Approved, unanimously**, that Councillor Angus Ross be re-confirmed in his appointment as the Elected Member to attend the Local Authority Controlled Company's Board of Director meetings for the ensuing year (2007/08).

02.22.07 STATEMENT OF ACCOUNTS 2006/07

The Fire Authority's approval was sought to the Statement of Accounts for the year ended 31 March 2007, as submitted, and to the Statement on Internal Control.

The Authority Treasurer referred to Section 4.3 (Revenue Spending) of the Statement of Accounts 2006/07 and took Members through the explanation of the major variances. He also referred to Section 11.10 (Appropriations to Earmarked Reserves) of the Statement of Accounts 2006/07, noting the small increase in Reserves.

Councillor Adrian Edwards referred to the recent loss of nine fire appliances from East Sussex Fire and Rescue Service during a fire incident, and asked what insurance provision the Fire Authority had in place to cover such a similar incident. The Authority Treasurer assured Members that uninsured loss provision was provided for within the Fire Authority's Reserves and that this provision was based on an estimate.

Councillor Angus Ross asked whether the Capital Expenditures for 2006/07 which were to be carried forward to 2007/08 would be expended. The Authority Treasurer stated that the expectation was that these would be, and advised that a meeting of the Budget Working Party would be convened to consider and monitor the budget for 2007/08. The Chief Fire Officer reported that any slippages were reported to both the Chairman and the Executive Committee.

Councillor Miss Emma Webster proposed that the Recommendations be resolved, and this was seconded by Councillor Chris Harris.

The Fire Authority:

- **Approved, unanimously**, the Statement of Accounts for the year ended 31 March 2007 as submitted.
- **Approved, unanimously**, the Statement of Internal Control included within the Accounts.

The Chairman signed the Statement of Accounts for 2006/07.

02.23.07 ANNUAL TREASURY REPORT 2006/07

The Fire Authority was presented with the Annual Treasury Report, as submitted in accordance with the CIPFA Code of Practice: Treasury Management in the Public Services (2002), which sets out the actual Treasury operations for the last financial year, and the 2006/07 Actual Prudential Indicators.

The Authority Treasurer took Members through the report presented, and referred specifically to the interest received in the year which totalled £175,000 compared with

the original budget estimate of £132,000, and which had been as a result of the interest rate increases during the year and average balances being higher than estimated. He also noted that a Public Works Loan Board loan of £800,000 had been taken up for 25 years at an interest rate of 4.65%, which compared with the Public Works Loan Board average for the year of 4.56% and a high of 4.80% for a similar period. The Authority Treasurer reported that the Actual Prudential Indicators were within limits.

Councillor Geoff Findlay proposed that the Recommendations be resolved, and this was seconded by Councillor Mrs Prue Bray.

The Fire Authority:

- **Noted** the Annual Treasury Report.
- **Approved, unanimously**, the 2006/07 Actual Prudential Indicators.

02.24.07 MUTUAL INSURANCE COMPANY

The Authority Treasurer declared an Interest as the proposed nominated Fire Authority's representative to the Fire And Rescue Authorities' Mutual Limited (FRAML).

The Fire Authority was advised of the latest developments in the creation of the Mutual Insurance Company and was invited to place most of the Authority's insurance policies with it. The Authority Treasurer took Members through the report presented. He reported that the Financial Services Authority (FSA) now required at least 3 Independent Directors from the insurance industry, rather than the 2 reported. He also reported that the Royal Berkshire Fire Authority's total share, which would likely to be around £140,000, might reduce as a further Fire Authority might become a full Member of Fire and Rescue Authorities' Mutual Limited (FRAML) in September 2007. The Authority Treasurer noted that, should the Authority become a full Member of FRAML, potential large savings in premia could be made, as well as future distributions of any surpluses, however he noted that there was also a small risk of losses, but that the actuarial analysis as part of the feasibility study showed this to be unlikely. The Authority Treasurer referred to the legality of setting up a Mutual Insurance Company, and advised that there was a risk of a legal challenge to the Mutual from an insurance company losing its business. He was confident that any such challenge would be vigorously defended.

Councillor Miss Emma Webster proposed that the Recommendations be resolved, and this was seconded by Councillor Mrs Prue Bray.

The Fire Authority:

- **Ratified, unanimously**, that the Authority becomes a full member of Fire and Rescue Authorities' Mutual Limited (FRAML).
- **Ratified, unanimously**, that its liability, property, motor and other miscellaneous insurance covers be purchased from FRAML for an initial period of three years from 1 July 2007 or the first practicable date thereafter.
- **Ratified, unanimously**, that the Authority Treasurer be nominated as the Authority's representative to FRAML and be empowered to represent and vote on behalf of the Authority at general meetings of FRAML.

- **Ratified, unanimously**, that the Authority should participate in capitalising the Company, and authorised the Authority Treasurer to finance the final cash contribution and guarantees agreed with the Financial Services Authority.
- **Ratified, unanimously**, that Standing Orders be waived relating to Contracts as procurement was being undertaken by Firebuy.

The Chairman congratulated the Authority Treasurer for executing such good arrangements for the Fire Authority.

02.25.07 CORPORATE PLAN 2007/2008

The Fire Authority was advised of the publication of the Authority's Corporate Plan for 2007/08, comprising the Strategic Plan, Best Value Performance Plan and Community Safety Plan. The Chief Fire Officer reported that the Corporate Plan would be published electronically in house on the Royal Berkshire Fire and Rescue Service website (www.rbfrs.co.uk) by 30 June 2007.

Councillor Colin Dudley proposed that the Corporate Plan 2006/07 be endorsed, and this was seconded by Councillor Miss Emma Webster.

The Fire Authority:

- **Endorsed, unanimously**, the Corporate Plan 2006/07.

02.26.07 GENDER EQUALITY SCHEME

The Fire Authority's approval was sought for the introduction of a Gender Equality Scheme and the resultant changes to the Diversity and Equality Action Plan for 2007-2010.

The Director of Human Resources introduced Jacky Manning (Senior Personnel Adviser, Equality and Diversity) who took Members through the salient points within the report presented, noting the Equality Impact Assessments and flexible working practices, and the long-term strategy for the establishment of links with careers' advisers within schools. She reported that the Equal Pay Audit would commence this year. Jacky Manning advised the Fire Authority that the target to increase the percentage of women amongst uniformed operational staff to 15% by 2009 was unlikely to be achieved, but reported the Royal Berkshire Fire and Rescue Service's commitment to promoting opportunities to enable applications from females. She stated that the Positive Active Campaigns were still in their infancy, and that the results had not yet come to fruition, however the feedback received would help with recruitment campaigns.

Councillor Adrian Edwards asked if the Gender Equality Scheme had been market tested against other Authorities' schemes, including Police Authorities. Jacky Manning confirmed that a benchmarking exercise had been conducted with other Authorities and a number of organisations within Berkshire, but not with Police Authorities.

Following a question by Councillor Colin Dudley, Jacky Manning confirmed that the reported number of female staff employed (106) included both full and part-time female personnel.

Councillor Mrs Prue Bray asked if the Fire Brigades Union had yet provided a

response to the full consultation exercise. Jacky Manning reported that no response had been received to date.

Councillor Miss Emma Webster proposed that the Recommendation be resolved, and this was seconded by Councillor Tom Crisp.

The Fire Authority:

- **Approved, unanimously**, the Gender Equality Scheme and the consequent amendments to the Diversity and Equality Action Plan for 2007-10.

02.27.07 CLERK AND MONITORING OFFICER - RELINQUISHMENT OF POSITION

The Fire Authority was advised that, after over 8 years association with Royal Berkshire Fire Authority, Rosemary Lansdowne, the Clerk and Monitoring Officer, would be relinquishing her position with effect from 30 June 2007.

The Chairman and Chief Fire Officer both conveyed their respective thanks to the Clerk and Monitoring Officer. The Chairman presented her with a token of appreciation on behalf of the Fire Authority. The Clerk and Monitoring Officer stated that she had enjoyed her time with the Fire Authority and conveyed her thanks to her Personal Assistant, Sylvia Simmonds.

The Fire Authority:

- **Noted** that the Clerk and Monitoring Officer would be standing down from her position as of 30 June 2007.

02.28.07 2007/2008 BUDGET MONITORING

The Fire Authority was informed of the revenue and capital expenditure against budgets up to the end of May 2007.

Councillor Angus Ross asked why the contract cleaning was showing an overspend of £4,000 at May 2007. The Chief Fire Officer reported that more deep cleans to date had been required to be carried out.

The Fire Authority:

- **Noted** the 2007/2008 budget monitoring report.

02.29.07 CHAIRMAN'S REPORT ON REGIONAL MANAGEMENT BOARD

The Fire Authority:

- **Noted** the Chairman's Report on Extraordinary Regional Management Board.

02.30.07 LOCAL GOVERNMENT ASSOCIATION (LGA) (2006/2007) - ANNUAL REPORT

The Fire Authority:

- **Noted** the Chairman's annual report on the Local Government Association (2006/2007).

02.31.07 ASSOCIATION OF COUNCILS FOR THE THAMES VALLEY REGION (ACTVaR) - REPORT FROM MEETINGS HELD ON 9 MARCH 2007 AND 8 JUNE 2007

The Fire Authority:

- **Noted** the report from the ACTVaR meetings held on 9 March 2007 and 8 June 2007.

02.32.07 ANNUAL REPORT OF THE STANDARDS COMMITTEE

The Chairman invited Mr Albert Gregory, Chairman of the Royal Berkshire Fire Authority's Standards Committee, to present the Standards Committee annual report.

Mr Albert Gregory reported that the Standards Committee had reviewed the Fire Authority's Register of Declaration of Interests, and was pleased to report that, since the last meeting of the Standards Committee, the Register had now been completed in full. He asked the Fire Authority to consider whether it would wish Members' Interests to be published on the Royal Berkshire Fire and Rescue Service website, as is the case with some other Unitary Authorities. He asked those Members who wished to receive any training on the Code of Conduct to liaise with the Clerk and Monitoring Officer. Mr Albert Gregory noted the concern of the Standards Committee that non-attendance by Members at Fire Authority and Committee meetings could affect the effective working of the Fire Authority and its Committees. The Chairman thanked Mr Albert Gregory for his report.

The Chairman stated that all Members receive mandatory Code of Conduct training through their respective Authority. Mr Albert Gregory noted the differences between the Fire Authority's Code of Conduct and Local Authority Codes where, for example, there was a conflict of interests. Councillor Angus Ross proposed that a brief presentation be given to the next full Fire Authority on Declaration of Interests to highlight any differences, and this was **unanimously Supported**.

The Fire Authority considered the publication of Members' Interests on the website, and it was recognised that such Declarations were publicly available. The Clerk and Monitoring Officer noted, however, that within the new Code of Conduct, dispensation could be given to the publication of specific interests. Councillor Miss Emma Webster proposed that the Register of Interests be made available on request. This was seconded by Councillor Colin Dudley and **unanimously Supported**.

The Fire Authority:

- **Noted** the annual report of the Standards Committee.

02.33.07 ANNUAL REPORT OF THE OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

The Fire Authority was provided with an overview of the performance of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee since it re-configured in March 2006.

Councillor Mrs Prue Bray, the Overview and Scrutiny Committee's Vice-Chairman for 2006/07, noted the Recommendation of the Committee that the Executive Committee should have a formal Forward Action Plan which could then be the subject of

scrutiny. The Chairman proposed that the Executive Committee consider this at their next meeting, and this was seconded by the Vice-Chairman and **unanimously Supported**.

The Fire Authority:

- **Noted** the annual report of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee.

02.34.07 ANNUAL REVIEW OF HEALTH, SAFETY AND WELFARE

The Fire Authority was provided with a review of the Royal Berkshire Fire and Rescue Service health and safety performance for the period 1 April 2006 - 31 March 2007 against the set objectives for that period.

The Director of Human Resources introduced Tracey Mitchell (Health and Safety Manager) who took Members through each Health and Safety Objective, the respective planned actions and the progress to date for the above period.

Councillor Adrian Edwards asked whether any financial membership subsidies to fitness centres were available to the Royal Berkshire Fire and Rescue Service firefighters. The Chief Fire Officer stated that membership of gyms had been costed, but that it had proved difficult to obtain any preferential rates as staff worked, and lived, across the whole of Berkshire. Tracey Mitchell confirmed that the Royal Berkshire Fire and Rescue Service employs a Health and Fitness Adviser who carries out fitness tests for all uniformed personnel to ensure that they attain an acceptable level of fitness, and that a fitness programme would be put in place should any firefighter not achieve the required level of fitness. The Director of Human Resources confirmed that the Health and Fitness Adviser was fully qualified, and the Chief Fire Officer confirmed that each Watch had a qualified Physical Fitness Supervisor. The Director of Human Resources advised that a NVQ for Fitness Promotion had been introduced for those personnel wishing to work towards this qualification, and that new fitness equipment was being provided in the fire station gyms.

Councillor Adrian Edwards asked if any measures were in place to support staff to give up smoking. Tracey Mitchell confirmed that help and advice was available through the Occupational Health Department for all personnel who wished to give up smoking, and the Director of Human Resources confirmed that staff, if they wished, could be directed to multiple NHS resources. The Director of Human Resources noted that the Smoking Policy had been updated following the introduction of the new smoking regulations on 1 July 2007. He advised that, although staff were actively being discouraged from smoking, the Royal Berkshire Fire and Rescue Service had recognised that, as uniformed staff on duty at fire stations were not permitted to leave their respective workplaces, the revised policy did not ban smoking by Royal Berkshire Fire and Rescue Service staff on Royal Berkshire Fire and Rescue Service premises.

Councillor Colin Dudley asked if there had been a tangible decrease in the number of firefighter accidents since the introduction of The Regulatory Reform (Fire Safety) Order 2005. The Chief Fire Officer stated that, to date, there had been no reduction.

Councillor Mrs Prue Bray asked if there had been any untoward incidents since the introduction of the new Working at Heights regulations. Tracey Mitchell confirmed that there had not and that all operational firefighters had now completed their respective Working at Heights' training.

The Fire Authority acknowledged the work being conducted for each Health and Safety Objective, and conveyed its thanks to Tracey Mitchell for the well-informed report presented.

The Fire Authority:

- **Noted** the health and safety performance for the period 1 April 2006 - 31 March 2007 against the set objectives for that period, and the proposed health, safety and welfare objectives for 2006-2008.

02.35.07 DATES OF NEXT FIRE AUTHORITY MEETINGS

The Fire Authority will be holding an Extraordinary Fire Authority meeting on:

- **Wednesday 25 July 2007 at 6.30pm at the Council Chamber, Reading Borough Council**

The subsequent Fire Authority meeting will take place on:

- **Wednesday 10 October 2007 at 6.30pm at the Council Chamber, The Royal Borough of Windsor and Maidenhead.**

02.36.07 EXCLUSION OF PUBLIC

The Fire Authority:

- **Resolved, unanimously**, 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, and is exempt information if, and so long as, in all the circumstances of the case, the public interest in maintaining the exemption outweighs the public interest in disclosing the information:
 - Part II Minutes - Wednesday 7 February 2007 (*Paragraphs 1, 2, 3, 4 and 5*)
 - Part II Minutes of Committees, Working Parties and other Groups (*Paragraphs 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, and 7*).
 - Mutual Insurance Company - interim Insurance arrangements (*Paragraphs 1, 2 and 3*).
 - Mutual Insurance Company - support for the Director (*Paragraphs 1, 2 and 3*).
 - Clerk and Monitoring Officer - interim appointment arrangements (*Paragraphs 1, 2 and 3*).

Note: The following is a summary of the items considered in the Part II Agenda:

02.37.07 PART II MINUTES OF THE MEETING HELD ON 7 FEBRUARY 2007

The Part II Minutes of the last meeting held on Wednesday 7 February 2007 were received and **Approved** as a correct record, following a minor amendment, for signing by the Chairman.

02.38.07 PART II MINUTES OF STANDING COMMITTEES, WORKING PARTIES AND OTHER GROUPS

The Fire Authority was advised of the meetings of the Executive Committee that have taken place since last reported to the Fire Authority on 7 February 2007. It was noted that there had been no other Part II meetings of the other Standing Committees, Working Parties and other Groups since the last meeting of the Fire Authority on 7 February 2007. The report was **Noted**.

02.39.07 MUTUAL INSURANCE COMPANY - INTERIM INSURANCE ARRANGEMENTS

The Fire Authority **Agreed** the Recommendation presented regarding interim insurance arrangements.

02.40.07 MUTUAL INSURANCE COMPANY - SUPPORT FOR THE DIRECTOR

The Fire Authority **Agreed** the Recommendation presented regarding support of a nominated representative Director.

02.41.07 CLERK AND MONITORING OFFICER - INTERIM APPOINTMENT ARRANGEMENTS

The Fire Authority **Supported** the interim appointment arrangements for the position of Clerk and Monitoring Officer.