

ROYAL BERKSHIRE FIRE AUTHORITY MINUTES WEDNESDAY 29 JUNE 2005

HELD IN THE COUNCIL CHAMBER, SLOUGH BOROUGH COUNCIL, TOWN HALL, BATH ROAD, SLOUGH, BERKSHIRE COMMENCING AT 6.30PM AND CONCLUDED AT 8.38PM

Present: Mike Adams, Christine Borgars (Leader of the Labour Group), Dr Paul Bryant, Tom Crisp, Geoff S Findlay, Jagit S Grewal, David Howes, Mrs Vicky Howes, James E R Mole, Terry Mills (Leader of the Conservative Group), Peter North, Barrie J S Patman, Dexter J Smith, Simon Werner, Emma Webster,
Derek J Wilson

Also in Attendance: Peter Harris (Chairman of the Standards Committee)

Apologies: Mrs Christine Bateson, Mrs Prue Bray, John P Green, Jeff C G Brooks (Leader of the Liberal/Democrat Group) David Maclsaac, Chris Maskell, Fred Pugh, Angus J Ross, Rob Stanton

2.01/05 ELECTION OF CHAIRMAN 2005/2006

RESOLVED: That Councillor Terry Mills be elected Chairman of the Royal Berkshire Fire Authority for the ensuing year.

(Councillor Terry Mills in the Chair)

2.02/05 ELECTION OF VICE-CHAIRMAN 2005/2006

RESOLVED: That Councillor James E R Mole be elected Vice-Chairman of the Royal Berkshire Fire Authority for the ensuing year.

2.03/05 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

Having been reminded that in accordance with the Fire Authority's Code of Conduct, Members are required to declare interests which are Personal or Personal and Prejudicial, where appropriate it was noted that on this occasion there were no such declarations made. Members were reminded that they were required to sign the statutory Declaration of Acceptance of Office in the presence of the Clerk and Monitoring Officer.

NOTED

2.04/05 MEMBERSHIP OF THE FIRE AUTHORITY

The Authority was advised (Agenda item 5 – not reproduced) of the District/Borough Council appointments to the Fire Authority. It was noted that with the exception of

West Berkshire Council where Councillor Emma Webster (Con) had replaced Councillor Owen Jeffery (Lib/Dem) no other changes had taken place.

The Chairman welcomed Councillor Emma Webster to the meeting.

NOTED

2.05/05 PART I MINUTES: 9 FEBRUARY 2005

The Part I Minutes of the last meeting held on Wednesday 9 February 2005, having been previously circulated, were taken as read and signed by the Chairman as a correct record.

2.06/05 PART I MINUTES OF COMMITTEES, WORKING PARTY'S AND OTHER GROUPS

The Authority was advised (Agenda item 7 – not reproduced) of the Fire Authority's Committees, Working Parties/Forums and other meetings that had taken place since the last meeting in February 2005. Copies of the Part I Minutes are available on request from the Committee Administrator (0118) 932 2288 or by e-mail on wellerd@rbfrs.co.uk.

NOTED

2.07/05 CHAIRMAN'S COMMUNICATIONS

The Chairman had nothing to report.

2.08/05 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.

2/09/05 QUESTIONS FROM FIRE AUTHORITY MEMBERS

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

2.10/05 NOTICES OF MOTION

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

2.11/05 PRESENTATION – RESIDENTIAL SPRINKLERS

Members were advised that the Presentation on the subject of residential sprinklers from Sir George Pigot, CEO of the Fire Sprinklers Association had been deferred

and would now be delivered at the Fire Authority meeting scheduled to take place on Wednesday 12 October 2005 at West Berkshire Council.

NOTED

2.12/05 APPOINTMENT OF FIRE AUTHORITY MEMBERS TO THE REGIONAL MANAGEMENT BOARD

The Authority's approval was sought (Agenda item 13 –not reproduced) to the re-appointment of the Fire Authority's representative and substitute Members to the South East Regional Management Board.

Members were reminded that as this is the Annual Meeting it would be necessary to re-appoint the Authority's representative and reaffirm the arrangements for the appointment of substitutes.

Prior to a decision being taken the following amendment to the resolution set out in Section B of the report was proposed:

Retain Resolution 1, Delete Resolution 2 and amend Resolution 3 to read:

"That in the event of the Fire Authority Chairman not being able to attend then the Chairman will 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 CMO to notify the Clerk to the RMB accordingly."

Following some further discussion the proposal having been seconded was put to the vote and carried on the Chairman's casting vote as the votes were equal with eight for and eight against. The Resolution, as amended, was then put to the vote and carried by eight votes for with eight abstentions.

RESOLVED: That:

- 1. 1. Councillor Terry Mills be appointed as the Fire Authority's representative on the South East Regional Management Board.**
- 2. 2. In the event of the Fire Authority Chairman not being able to attend then the Chairman will 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 CMO to notify the Clerk to the RMB accordingly.**

2.13/05 APPOINTMENT OF COMMITTEES – POLITICAL PROPORTIONALITY

The Authority was requested (Agenda item 14 – not reproduced) to give further consideration to the Fire Authority's Committee Structure in the light of the recent District and Borough Council Elections and decide on the total number of Committee places, the size of each Committee and the allocation of committee places between the political groups.

In noting the background to this matter as set out in paragraphs 1-6 of the report (not reproduced), Members were advised by the Clerk and Monitoring Officer (CMO) that the Authority currently has twenty-five Members, of whom thirteen are

Conservatives, six Liberal/Democrats, five Labour and one Independent. The allocation of seats to political groups will vary depending on the total number of Committee places as well as the size of each Committee.

In drawing Members attention to paragraph 8, which set out a Table (not reproduced) indicating the overall allocation of Committee places per Group, the CMO indicated that a total of between 16 and 21 Committee places did not give a clear proportional split between the political groups. At its Annual Meeting in June 2004 the Fire Authority in agreeing that the total number of Committee places would be fifteen had also agreed unanimously not to apply the rules on political proportionality.

Having considered the various options for the allocation of the fifteen Committee places as set out in Tables 1 to 6 (not reproduced), Councillor Peter North proposed that Table I be adopted but amended to provide the Conservative Group with three places on the Executive Committee with the Liberal/Democrats and Labour Groups having two and one respectively with the other allocations remaining unchanged. In response to a question the CMO confirmed that as the proposed allocation is not proportional then a unanimous vote is required.

The proposed amendment having been seconded was put to the vole and carried by twelve votes for to none against with four abstentions.

RESOLVED: That:

1. **1. The total number of Committee places be set at fifteen.**
2. **2. The size of each Committee be the same as that approved for 2004/2005 with six Members of the Executive Committee and Overview and Scrutiny Committee and three on the Disciplinary, Appeals and Grievance Committee (DAG).**
3. **3. The allocation of Committee places be as set out in Table 1 below:**

Committee	Conservative	Liberal/Democrat	Labour	Total
Executive	3	2	1	6
Overview and Scrutiny	2	2	2	6
DAG	1	1	1	3
	6	5	4	15

2.14/05 APPOINTMENT OF COMMITTEES, IRMP WORKING PARTY, COMMUNITY SAFETY FORUM AND STANDARDS COMMITTEE

In accordance with the decision made in the previous item the Authority was invited (Agenda item 15 – not reproduced), under Standing Order 27, to re-appoint its Committees, IRMP Working Party, Community Safety Forum and the three Elected members on the Standards Committee. It was noted that the appointment of the Disciplinary, Appeals and Grievance Committee is in name only as the appointment of its Members is usually dealt with as and when required and is dependent on Members availability.

RESOLVED: That

1. The following Committees. Working Party's/Forums and other Groups be re-appointed for the ensuing year with the Party Leaders being authorised to make the nominations in respect of the vacancies as identified to the Committee Administrator:

Executive Committee:

Conservative:	Terry Mills, Barrie J S Patman, Vacancy
Liberal/Democrat:	Jeff CG Brooks, James E R Mole
Labour:	Christine Borgars

Overview and Scrutiny Committee:

Conservative:	Mrs Christine Bateson, Dr Paul Bryant
Liberal/Democrat:	Simon Werner, Vacancy
Labour:	Tom Crisp, Jagit S Grewal

Integrated Risk Management Working Party:

Conservative:	Barrie J S Patman, Emma Webster
Liberal/Democrat:	Jeff CG Brooks, Vacancy
Labour:	Christine Borgars, Jagit S Grewal

plus the Chairman of the Community Safety Forum (currently Geoff Findlay)

Community Safety Forum:

Conservative:	Geoff Findlay, Peter North, Derek J Wilson
Liberal/Democrat:	Mrs Prue Bray
Labour:	Chris Maskell
Independent@	David Maclsaac

Standards Committee:

Conservative:	Mrs Christine Bateson
Liberal/Democrat:	Vacancy
Labour:	Mike Adams

2. The Disciplinary, Appeals and Grievance Committee be re-appointed for the ensuing year with its membership of three to be dependent on Members availability at the time of meetings being arranged and that the Committee Administrator be authorised to make the necessary appointments on a case by case basis.
3. The names of the Standing Deputies (excluding Executive Committee Members) on the Overview and Scrutiny Committee be forwarded to the Committee Administrator by the Party Leaders.

2.15/05 APPOINTMENT OF FIRE AUTHORITY'S REPRESENTATIVE – LOCAL GOVERNMENT ASSOCIATION

The Authority's approval was sought (Agenda item 16 – not reproduced) to the appointment of its representative on the Local Government Association, a post currently occupied by Councillor Barrie Patmen who has expressed an interest in remaining as the Fire Authority's representative.

RESOLVED: That Councillor Barrie J S Patman be appointed as the Fire Authority's representative on the Local Government Association for the ensuing year.

2.16/05 APPOINTMENT OF FIRE AUTHORITY'S REPRESENTATIVE ON THE ASSOCIATION OF COUNCILS FOR THE THAMES VALLEY REGION (ACTVAR)

The Authority's approval was sought (Agenda item 17 – not reproduced) to the appointment of its representative and Standing Deputy on the Association of Councils for the Thames Valley (ACTVaR), a post currently occupied by Councillor Mike Adams who expressed an interest in remaining as the Fire Authority's representative. Councillor Barrie Patman is the current Standing Deputy.

RESOLVED: That Councillors Mike Adams and Barrie Patman be appointed as the Fire Authority's representative and Standing Deputy respectively on the Association of Councils for the Thames Valley Region (ACTVaR).

2.17/05 APPOINTMENT OF NEW INDEPENDENT MEMBER TO THE STANDARDS COMMITTEE

The Authority's approval was sought (Agenda item 18 – not reproduced) to the appointment of Mr Ronald J Webb as a new Independent Member of the Standards Committee for a period of three years from 1 July 2005 as recommended by the Executive Committee at its meeting on Monday 16 May 2005.

Mr Webb is a former Fire Authority/Slough Borough Council Member and will be replacing the late David Distin JP who sadly passed away earlier in the year.

RESOLVED: That Mr Ronald J Webb be appointed as the New Independent member of the Standards Committee with effect from Friday 1 July 2005 for a period of three years.

2.18/05 REVIEW OF CO-OPTED MEMBER ALLOWANCES

The Authority's approval was sought (Agenda item 19 – not reproduced) to the level of

allowances to be paid to Co-opted Members as recommended by the Executive Committee at its meeting on Monday 16 May 2005.

The Executive Committee had considered a report prepared by the Clerk and Monitoring Officer and a summary of that report was presented in paragraph 2 of the report (not reproduced), which confirmed that the Chairman and other Independent Members of the Standards Committee are paid an allowance of £115.10 and £105.10 respectively per meeting and until the matter is resolved for attendance at training courses also. The Committee had considered whether the level and nature of allowances for Co-opted Members of the Standards Committee are both reasonable and appropriate and whether any changes should be made. Some concern was expressed by Executive Committee Members at the level of allowances currently payable to Co-opted Members and were of the opinion that it should be

capped at a more reasonable level and not more than the existing Elected Members basic allowance of £400 per annum.

The Executive Committee therefore Resolved that Co-opted Members receive a Basic Allowance of £300 per annum i.e. 75% of the Elected Members Basic Allowance, plus travelling/subsistence and annual increases for inflation. In supporting the recommendation of the Executive Committee Members considered and approved a proposal by Councillor James Mole that the Resolution be amended slightly to read, "that Co-opted Members receive a Basic Allowance being 75% of the Elected Members Basic Allowance per annum plus travelling and subsistence".

The Standards Committee at its meeting on Wednesday 15 June 2005 had been advised of the Executive Committee's decision and in recognising that the report that the report had only been presented for information resolved that the following statement be reported to the Fire Authority:

In noting the Executive Committee's decision the Independent Members are of the opinion that it may discourage other people from putting their names forward as Independent Members of the Standards Committee, which may have an adverse effect on the future of the Committee. It is also considered that the original allowances should be maintained for both Meetings and Training Courses etc."

Having noted the comments made by the Standards Committee it was **RESOLVED: That with effect from 1 July 2005, Co-opted Members receive a basic Allowance being 75% of the Elected Members Basic Allowance per annum plus travelling and subsistence.**

2.19/05 MEMBERS EXPENSES POLICY

The Authority's approval was sought (Agenda item 20 – not reproduced) to a proposed Members Expenses Policy as recommended by the Executive Committee at its meeting on Monday 14 March 2005.

Members of the Fire Authority are entitled to be reimbursed for expenses incurred when attending functions, meetings, events, courses etc, on behalf of the Authority. Whilst the Authority already operates an expenses policy it is slightly ad-hoc and is not in written format. The aim of the Draft Policy, a copy of which was presented as Appendix 1 (not reproduced), is to articulate the existing policy in written form with a view to the avoidance of any abuse of the scheme and/or disagreement between Officers and Authority Members as to what expenses may be claimed.

The Policy will also apply to any person working for the Fire Authority in his/her capacity as a Co-opted or Independent Member on any of its Committees and Working Parties etc. The expenses claimable are in addition to any Annual Basic or Special Responsibility Allowance payable to Members.

RESOLVED: That the proposed Members Expenses Policy, presented as Appendix 1, be approved and adopted.

2.20/05 LOCAL INVESTIGATION OF STANDARDS COMPLAINTS

The Authority's approval was sought (Agenda item 21 – not reproduced) to the new Regulations, which will enable the Standards Board for England to refer complaints to the Local Authority's Monitoring Officer for local investigation.

The Executive Committee and Standards Committee, at their meetings on Monday 16 May and Wednesday 15 June 2005 respectively had considered the New Regulations and a summary of the comments made by the Executive Committee was presented in paragraph 3 of the report (not reproduced). One particular comment, which is worthy of note, is their reference to the exceptional and perhaps unnecessary length of the New Regulations. Both Committees had received a copy of the New Regulations, presented as Appendix 2, but in view of its considerable length the Chairman agreed that it should not be reproduced again for the Authority Agenda. The Standards Committee in supporting the views of the Executive Committee and the proposed recommendations had no further comments to make.

The Executive Committee, in approving the recommendations, had also asked the Clerk and Monitoring Officer to produce an explanatory flow chart of the steps to be taken in accordance with the procedure and circulate to all Executive Committee and Standards Committee Members for information.

RESOLVED: That:

- 1. 1. Contingency provision be made for the cost of appointing external investigators and legal advisors for individual hearings in the current financial year, and that formal provision for such costs be made in the Standards Committee's Budget for future years.**
- 2. 2. An indemnity be provide for Investigating Officers against any claims for defamation, and that the Fire Authority insure such risk.**
- 3. 3. The Procedure for Local Investigations and Local Hearings be approved and adopted.**
- 4. 4. The same procedure for local investigation and local hearings be applied for the enforcement by the Standards Committee of complaints of breaches of local protocols.**

2.21/05 INDEMNITIES FOR ELECTED MEMBERS AND OFFICERS

The Authority's approval was sought (Agenda item 22 – not reproduced) to the process regarding indemnities for Elected Members and RBFRS Officers as recommended by the Executive Committee and Standards Committee at their meetings on Monday 16 May and Wednesday 15 June 2005 respectively. A copy of the report, prepared by the Clerk and Monitoring Officer on the actual process to be adopted was presented in Appendix 2 (not reproduced)

In noting the views expressed by both Committees as summarised in paragraphs 3 to 5 of the report, Members were advised that the Standards Committee had referred to the fact that no reference had been made to Independent Members of the Standards Committee and queried whether they would be covered by the same indemnity. The Clerk and Monitoring Officer had agreed to investigate this issue but was of the opinion that that they would be covered under the definition of "Member". If however a legal bar was in place it would be necessary for further enquiries to be

made regarding its possible removal or to seek information on the provision of specific cover for Independent Members.

RESOLVED: That:

- 1. 1. An indemnity is granted to Elected Members and Officers of the Royal Berkshire Fire Authority in accordance with the terms set out in Appendix 2 and that the Authority Treasurer be instructed to secure insurance to cover the Fire Authority's liability under this indemnity, in so far as he is of the opinion that such insurance would be financially prudent.**
- 2. 2. An appointment to a position with an external organisation, which comes within these indemnities shall be treated as an appointment as a representative of the Royal Berkshire Fire Authority for the purposes of the Code of Conduct for Members.**

2.22/05 MEMBERS HANDBOOK – NEW POLICIES

The Authority's approval was sought (Agenda item 23 – not reproduced) to two new policies for inclusion in a revised version of the Fire Authority's Members handbook currently being updated by the Clerk and Monitoring Officer, as part of the strengthening Corporate Governance, with a view to producing the revised version in Autumn 2005.

As part of this process two new Policies are proposed, namely, Gifts and Hospitality Protocol and Information Technology Protocol, copies of which were presented as Appendices A and B respectively (not reproduced). These draft policies had been considered and approved by the Executive Committee and Standards Committee at their meetings on Monday 16 May and Wednesday 16 June 2005 respectively.

In noting the views of both Committees as set out in paragraphs 4 to 6 of the report (not reproduced), Members were advised that the Local Protocols, if adopted, will form part of the standards of conduct expected of Fire Authority Members and a breach of a Protocol by a Member could then be the subject of a complaint against that Member to the Authority's Standards Committee.

A Training Policy and Programme for Members had also been presented to the Executive Committee but they had deferred a decision on the grounds that further detailed investigation was required on the extent of the training and the legal/financial implications.

In supporting both Protocols an additional Resolution suggesting that both Protocols be reviewed in twelve months was proposed and agreed.

RESOLVED: That:

- 1. 1. The Gifts and Hospitality Protocol and Information Technology Protocol presented as Appendices A and B respectively be approved and adopted as part of the revised Members Handbook.**
- 2. 2. The Gifts and Hospitality and Information Technology Protocols be reviewed in twelve months.**

2.23/05 2005 TERC INTERNATIONAL EXTRICATION COMPETITION

The Authority was advised (Agenda item 24 – not reproduced) of an invitation received for the Brigade's Extrication Team to attend the twenty-first International Extrication Competition scheduled to take place at the Fort Lauderdale Convention Centre, Florida USA, between 29 August-5 September 2005.

Members were reminded that the Team did not take part in any international competitions

last year owing to the fact that the Authority had hosted the United Kingdom Rescue Organisation, National Extrication Competition at the Madjeski Stadium. In previous years the Team has achieved significant success in the world competitions, and with the exception of last year, they have competed in the TERC competition for the last four years.

This is a highly competitive event, which attracts teams from around the world and has proved to be most beneficial in raising professional standards and has impacted in the methods employed throughout the Brigade at road traffic accidents.

In noting that the Slough Extrication Team are once again fund raising to allow them to travel to the competition, Members, in wishing them every success, approved a proposal that a contribution of £3,000 is made towards the Team's fundraising.

RESOLVED: That the Authority makes a contribution of £3,000 towards the Extrication Team's Fundraising.

2.24/05 FIRECONTROL PROJECT

The Authority was advised (Agenda item 25 – not reproduced) of the progress being made by the FiReControl Project. Members were reminded that there are currently forty-six Fire Control Rooms in England, one operated by each of the existing Fire and Rescue Authorities. The FiReControl Project is an ODPM project working to amalgamate all current Brigade Control Rooms into a resilient network of nine Regional Control Centres (RCC's), able to co-ordinate responses to local and national incidents.

The Chief Fire Officer, in introducing the report, advised Members that the Business Case and Regional Control Centre Locations were supposed to be available now but regrettably due to ongoing problems this would not now be the case. The Deputy Chief Fire Officer, being the author of the report presented, advised that highlights from the current timetable include, location announcements for eight Control Rooms to be made between the second week in July and the parliamentary summer recess on 21 July 2005. However due to contractual problems the announcement on the location of the South-East RCC has been delayed and will therefore not be made in July. It is however possible for the Minister responsible to approve the award of this contract during the summer recess.

Members also received a brief presentation from Paul Watts, Fire Brigades' Union, who spoke to a leaflet entitled "FBU Berkshire – Regionalisation – The Facts", a copy of which was tabled at the meeting (not reproduced) together with a copy of the FBU's national publication entitled "Out of Control" being the national FBU's response to the Mott MacDonald Report – the Future of the Fire and Rescue Service Control Rooms in England and Wales (not reproduced). The FBU representative, in making his presentation, urged Members to add their voice and that of the Fire Authority to the growing opposition to Regionalisation.

The Deputy Chief Fire Officer advised that he had produced a written response to some of the FBU's comments contained in the leaflet, which could be seen as unintentionally misleading, with a copy being circulated to Authority Members and the FBU.

It is recommended that Members support in principle the FiReControl Project as, necessary to provide resilience and being "the right thing to do". However the success of the Project is entirely dependent on its successful implementation and, to date, insufficient detail has been shared with Fire and Rescue Authorities to reassure Members that the Project will be implemented successfully and in a manner acceptable to this Authority. It was therefore suggested that answers should be sought to questions arising from the areas of concern highlighted in the report presented and any others that Members may wish to include.

Having provided Members with the opportunity to comment the Chairman then proposed a Resolution, based on the report presented and the decision of the Executive Committee at its meeting in March 2005, which having been amended slightly to reflect Members comments, was approved.

RESOLVED: That:

- 1. 1. The current position with regard to the FiReControl Project be noted as recorded in the Minutes of the Executive Committee meeting held on Monday 14 March 2005 and discussed at the Fire Authority meeting on Wednesday 29 June 2005.**
- 2. 2. The Chairman, in consultation with the Chief Fire Officer, be authorised to write to the Minister setting out and seeking answers to the Authority's concerns, whilst continuing the Authority's necessary participation in the Project, with a copy of the Chairman's response being circulated to all Fire Authority Members for information.**
- 3. 3. In respect of Resolution 2 above, a draft of the Chairman's draft submission be circulated to the**

2.25/05 CORPORATE PLAN 2005/2006

The Authority was advised (Agenda item 26 – not reproduced) of the Authority's Corporate Plan for 2005/2006. comprising the Strategic Plan, Best Value Performance Plan and Community Safety Plan, which, in accordance with the statutory requirements, is to be published electronically on the Brigade Website by 30 June 2005.

NOTED

2.26/05 ANNUAL REVIEW OF HEALTH, SAFETY AND WELFARE

The Authority received an update (Agenda item 27 – not reproduced) of RBFRS's Health and Safety performance for the period 2004 – 2005, together with a progress report of the RBFRS Health, Safety and Welfare Objectives and presented in Appendices A and B respectively (not reproduced).

It was noted that the objectives, as approved by the Brigade Management Team and Fire Authority, would continue to 31 March 2006. In addition the objectives have

been developed to assist RBFRS in reducing the number of accidents and incidents at work and in the past year, accidents have reduced by 35% when compared with the previous year's figures. It was noted that in particular slips and trips have reduced by 23% and manual handling accidents by 42% when compared with the previous reporting period.

NOTED

2.27/05 CORPORATE MANSLAUGHTER UPDATE

The Authority received (Agenda item 28 – not reproduced) an update to the Corporate Manslaughter Presentation given at the Authority meeting in February 2005 together with information relating to the Draft Corporate Manslaughter Bill, which has now been published for consultation. The Bill will update existing laws on corporate killing.

Members were reminded that the presentation had reflected on the prosecution of the Greater Manchester County Fire and Rescue Service (GMC), following a workplace fatality. Following their prosecution, GMC in conjunction with the Institute of Fire Engineers held a joint Seminar, which in addition to looking at the prosecution in more detail also identified and shared the lessons learnt.

To ensure that RBFRS address the issues arising from the Seminar, work is progressing on a risk assessment for corporate manslaughter, which will be included in the Risk Register, which will enable Officers to identify and prioritise any areas of concern and deal with them accordingly.

NOTED

2.28/05 HALF YEARLY REPORT FOR MEDICAL RETIREMENTS, WORKPLACE ACCIDENTS AND SICKNESS ABSENCES

The Authority received a report (Agenda item 29 – not reproduced) on the number of medical retirements, workplace accidents and sickness absences for the period 1 October 2004 to 31 March 2005.

During the period in question one Wholetime operational employee was medically retired from the Brigade after twenty-three years service whilst six personnel retired on normal grounds, being five Wholetime and one Retained. In noting the sickness absences, during the same period, as summarised in paragraph 3 of the report (not reproduced), Members were advised that this represented a total of 3,555 duty days, an increase of 655 when compared with the previous period.

The Stress Action Plan, reported at the Authority meeting in December 2004, is comprehensive and service wide, and a number of measures/training tools are being implemented to prevent and reduce any sickness absences due to stress anxiety whether work related or not. The newly appointed Fitness and Health Advisor has undertaken a full and comprehensive audit of fitness equipment on Stations to identify what is available and to ensure that its condition is suitable for use. Several initiatives have been introduced to help improve the health and fitness of office based personnel and in the longer term the Advisor will have greater involvement in assisting injured personnel to return to work with effective rehabilitation programmes.

NOTED

2.29/05 DONATION OF SURPLUS EQUIPMENT

The Authority was advised (Agenda item 30 – not reproduced) of the donation of surplus operational equipment to Albania.

Over recent years the Authority has replaced all handheld radios with more modern technology. The radios replaced are obsolete and include a large number donated to the Authority by Oxfordshire and Hampshire Fire and Rescue Services. They have a nominal value in the UK as the technology is obsolete and many of the radios are incapable of being re-programmed for other than fire and rescue use.

In August 2004, Fire-Fighter Paul Lowe, stationed at Wokingham Road Fire Station, spent a week in Albania on charity work and during that visit he made contact with the local Chief Fire Officer at Sarander and whilst the Fire Station was reasonably well equipped prior to the Kosovan War when much of what they had was looted, they are now desperate for equipment including radios.

Firefighter Lowe is returning to Albania later this year and has requested that the Authority donates the surplus radio equipment for him to take back to Sarander. In accordance with the Authority's Financial Regulations, and in consultation with the Clerk and Monitoring Officer, the DCFO, in the absence of the CFO, agreed to the donation of the surplus equipment. Members welcomed the offer from Fire-Fighter Lowe to give a short presentation on his charitable work in Albania to a future Fire Authority meeting.

NOTED

2.30/05 2005/2006 BUDGET MONITORING

The Authority was informed (Agenda item 31 – not reproduced) of the Revenue and Capital Expenditure against Budgets up to 31 May 2005 as presented in Appendices A and B respectively (not reproduced).

NOTED

2.31/05 ANNUAL TREASURY REPORT 2004/2005

In accordance with the CIPFA Code of Practice: Treasury Management in the Public Services 2002, the Authority received (Agenda item 32 – not reproduced), the Annual Treasury Report which sets out the actual Treasury operations for the last financial year, together with performance against Prudential Indicators presented in Appendices A and B respectively (not reproduced).

NOTED

2.32/05 DATE OF NEXT MEETING

It was noted that the next Fire Authority Meeting is scheduled to take place on Wednesday 12 October 2005 in the Council Chamber, West Berkshire Council, Market Street, Newbury, commencing at 6.30pm.

2.33/05 DAVID WELLER COMMITTEE ADMINISTRATOR

The Chairman in seeking Members approval to the inclusion of an additional Agenda item, referred, with regret, to the fact that this was David Weller's final Fire Authority meeting as he would be retiring as the Authority's Committee Administrator on Friday 2 September 2005. In presenting David with a card and gift the Chairman wished to place on record his thanks to him for all his hard work for and on behalf of the Fire Authority and wished him good health and every happiness in the future.

In thanking the Chairman for his very kind comments and for the gift David expressed his thanks to Members for their support, co-operation but above all their friendship over the last seven years and wished them all the very best for the future.

2.34/05 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	
35	Part II Minutes of Committee	1, 7 & 8
36	Ann Neylan v Royal Berkshire Fire Authority	1
37	Update on the Comprehensive Performance Assessment Process	1

(Note: The following is a summary of the items considered in the Part II Agenda of the Fire Authority meeting held on Wednesday 29 June 2005)

2.35/05 PART II MINUTES OF COMMITTEES

The Authority was advised of the Executive Committee meetings that have taken place since the last meeting of the Fire Authority in February 2005.

2.36/05 ANN NEYLAN V ROYAL BERKSHIRE FIRE AUTHORITY

The Authority received a report on the Employment Tribunals judgement in respect of Ms A Neylan's claim.

2.37/05 UPDATE ON THE COMPREHENSIVE PERFORMANCE ASSESSMENT PROCESS

The Authority was advised of its current position in the Comprehensive Performance Assessment process.