

ROYAL BERKSHIRE FIRE AUTHORITY MEETING OF THE OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE - PART I

Held on Monday 10 July 2006

Strategic Command Centre, Brigade Headquarters
103 Dee Road, Tilehurst, Reading, Berkshire, RG30 4FS



Those present: Councillor Mrs Prue Bray (Member, Fire Authority)
Councillor John Green (Member, Fire Authority)
Councillor Jagjit Grewal (Member, Fire Authority)
Councillor David Howes (Member, Fire Authority)

In attendance: Jonathan Ball (Information Systems Manager) (*item 02.08.06*)
Christopher Gill (Senior Divisional Officer, Performance Review)
Becci Jefferies (Brigade Personnel Officer) (*item 02.08.06*)
Lynda Kenyon (Committee Manager)
Andrew Vallance (Authority Treasurer)
David Wallace (Director of Human Resources)

Action

02.01.06 ELECTION OF CHAIRMAN

The Committee Manager asked Members for nominations for the position of Chairman of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee.

Councillor Mrs Prue Bray proposed Councillor John Green, and this was seconded by Councillor Jagjit Grewal.

The Overview and Scrutiny Committee resolved:

- **That Councillor John Green be elected Chairman** of the Royal Berkshire Fire Authority's Overview and Scrutiny Committee for the ensuing year (until the Fire Authority's Annual Meeting on 27 June 2007).

Councillor John Green took the Chair.

02.03.06 ELECTION OF VICE-CHAIRMAN

The Chairman nominated Councillor Mrs Prue Bray for the position of Vice-Chairman of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee, and this was seconded by Councillor Jagjit Grewal.

The Overview and Scrutiny Committee resolved:

- **That Councillor Mrs Prue Bray be elected Vice-Chairman** of the Royal Berkshire Fire Authority's Overview and Scrutiny Committee for the ensuing year (until the Fire Authority's Annual Meeting on 27 June 2007).

02.04.06 COMMITTEE MEMBERSHIP

The Overview and Scrutiny Committee:

- **Noted** the appointment by the Fire Authority to the Overview and Scrutiny Committee of Councillor Geoff Findlay.
- **Noted** the Membership of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee, as follows:

Councillor Mrs Prue Bray
Councillor Tom Crisp
Councillor Geoff Findlay
Councillor John Green
Councillor Jagjit Grewal
Councillor David Howes

02.05.06 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Apologies for absence were received from Councillor Tom Crisp and Councillor Geoff Findlay.

Apologies were received and noted from the Clerk and Monitoring Officer, due to annual leave.

02.06.06 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 to be made.

02.07.06 MINUTES OF MEETING HELD ON 7 MARCH 2006

The Minutes of the last meeting held on 7 March 2006, having been previously circulated, were taken as read and signed by the Chairman as a correct record.

The Chairman noted that the presentation entitled 'The implications and consequences of arson and large building fires' was not presented to the Fire Authority at its meeting on 28 June 2006, as recommended by the Overview and Scrutiny Committee at its last meeting. Christopher Gill stated that this presentation had been deferred to the Fire Authority's meeting in October 2006, as the Agenda for the Fire Authority's meeting on 28 June 2006 had been too extensive to accommodate this presentation.

(Fire
Authority
Agenda -
October 06)

Councillor David Howes joined the meeting.

02.08.06 ITEM FOR CONSIDERATION FROM LIST OF PRIORITY ISSUES

a) Retention of Staff

David Wallace introduced Becci Jefferies and Jonathan Ball.

David Wallace provided a summary of the key issues contained within the report presented for each of the 4 employee groups (Firefighters working other than the Retained Duty System, Firefighters working the Retained Duty System, staff working in Fire Control, and non-uniformed staff). He referred to the key issues pertaining to the Joint Recruitment and Retention Working Group's respective report and its Terms of Reference.

Becci Jefferies provided supporting information, and a summary of the report in respect to the Firefighters working the Retained Duty System. She also referred to the recommendations contained within the Integrated Risk Management Plan's Retained Report, the key recommendations being the introduction of a Retained Liaison Officer, the targeting of recruitment campaigns and the scope for remuneration packages. She made reference to the leavers' statistics presented.

Jonathan Ball provided statistical information from the PB Views and Firewatch systems, and referred to the comprehensive systems for monitoring staffing levels, and how these also assisted in predicting the establishment recruitment requirements.

In terms of recruitment and retention processes, David Wallace stated that further consideration would need to be given to any changes made to the Duty Systems.

David Wallace referred to the Disability Discrimination Act (DDA) and the legal implications associated with this Act. Councillor Mrs Prue Bray asked what types of roles were undertaken within the Royal Berkshire Fire and Rescue Service (RBFRS) for those people with a disability. David Wallace stated that this was dependent on the disability, however provisions were in place to accommodate any special requirements to enable a person with a disability to work, or to continue to work, for the RBFRS, and that advances were being made in a number of areas. Becci Jefferies confirmed that a risk assessment would also be carried out to support the process.

Councillor David Howes asked, in terms of an operational employee with, for example, diabetes, how they would be monitored, particularly as they got older. David Wallace reported that 3-yearly, or annual, medical reviews would be conducted, as appropriate.

Councillor James Mole asked how the RBFRS was utilising the benefits of keyworker housing. David Wallace reported that the RBFRS was working in partnership with the Unitary Authorities, and that the keyworker housing had benefited a small number of operational staff, however work was being done to highlight this further.

Councillor James Mole asked if re-location allowances were paid. David Wallace confirmed that a recommendation of the Retention and Recruitment Working Party had been to extend this to Firefighters transferring into the RBFRS, however this had not yet been implemented.

David Wallace noted the corporate risks associated with the retention of those staff working within Fire Control, particularly in respect to the introduction of Regional Control Centres, and referred to the planning contingencies to retain the existing Control staff. He also noted the corporate risks associated with the future depreciation of the Control equipment.

David Wallace stressed the importance of conducting annual staff appraisal reviews, and that these also enabled consistency in terms of staff management.

David Howes asked what systems were in place to ensure that effective colleague working relationships were maintained. David Wallace noted the changes to the working culture, and confirmed that this was managed effectively through appropriate staff management processes.

Councillor Mrs Prue Bray asked how the remuneration package scheme was progressing for those on the Retained Duty System. Becci Jefferies confirmed that further work was still required which would be presented to the Directors Strategy Group, and that a Working Group would be established to develop the package, as appropriate.

The Chairman felt that, pertaining to the Fire Authority's considerations in respect to the Integrated Risk Management Plan, additional recruitment and retention issues might need to be considered. David Wallace confirmed that this had not yet been presented to any decision-making body, but would be reflected upon by the Directors' Strategy Group.

The Chairman felt that the Joint Recruitment and Retention Working Party's remit and 'report back' arrangements, as outlined in its Terms of Reference, were comprehensive and effective, and were being managed appropriately, and, as such, did not feel there were any areas of concern that needed to be raised with the Executive Committee. This was **supported** by the Members present.

The Chairman recommended that the Executive Committee, whose membership had recently changed, receive an update report, to include respective background information and the recruitment and retention issues still to be addressed. David Wallace supported this.

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(EC Agenda
Sept 2006)

The Chairman thanked David Wallace, Jonathan Ball and Becci Jefferies for their presentation.

02.09.06 EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE AGENDA OF MEETING TO BE HELD ON MONDAY 17 JULY 2006

a) Quality of Executive Committee reports

The Overview and Scrutiny Committee, and Councillor James Mole, were pleased to note that the quality of the information contained within the reports to the Executive Committee had significantly improved since its last meeting, and that these improvements should enable the Executive Committee to make informed judgements when considering the recommendations presented.

The Chairman asked Councillor James Mole if the Executive Committee had considered the recommendations and comments made by the Overview and Scrutiny Committee at its last meeting in respect to the quality of some of the reports presented. Councillor James Mole confirmed this.

The Chairman felt that respective cost benefits' analyses should be considered by the Executive Committee whilst deliberating report recommendations.

Andrew Vallance was pleased to report that processes had been put in place for him, as Authority Treasurer, to consider each report presented prior to it being presented to the Executive Committee, and to comment as appropriate. He also confirmed that, if required, reports were returned to the author for amendment prior to presentation to the Executive Committee or any Member Committee.

The Overview and Scrutiny Committee still had concerns that the timescales for submission of reports needed to be improved.

b) Executive Committee Agenda item for consideration

The Overview and Scrutiny Committee agreed to consider Agenda Item 19 (Vehicle and Equipment Maintenance Contract) being presented to the next Executive Committee, and to whether the levels of supporting detail, the quality of information provided and whether sufficient clarity in respect to financial implications provided would enable the Executive Committee to make informed judgements and appropriate decisions.

The Committee Manager advised the Overview and Scrutiny Committee that Agenda Item 19 would be presented to the Executive Committee under Part II of the meeting, and, as such, should be considered under Part II of this Committee. The Chairman agreed, and Members voted 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 item 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:
- Vehicle and Equipment Maintenance Contract (*Paragraph 3*).

Note: The following is a summary of the item considered in the Part II meeting of the Royal Berkshire Fire Authority’s Overview and Scrutiny Committee held on Monday 19 July 2006:

The Overview and Scrutiny Committee considered that further details in respect to the financial risk element should have been included within the report, and that the Executive Committee should take this into account when considering the recommendations.

02.10.06 BUDGETS

Andrew Vallance took Agenda item 9 (Monthly budget update) and Agenda Item 10 (Quarterly budgets) together.

Andrew Vallance explained that quarterly monitoring reports had now been replaced with monthly monitoring reports, and, as such, there was no need to have quarterly budgets as a Standing Agenda Item. He confirmed that all Fire Authority Members were in receipt of the full monthly budget monitoring reports.

Future Agendas

Andrew Vallance confirmed that, at the current time, there were no updated figures available to those that were reported to the Fire Authority at its meeting on 28 June 2006. He reported that the budget monitoring figures for the end of June 2006 would be circulated to Members shortly, for consideration by the Executive Committee at its meeting on 17 July 2006.

a) Consideration of 2007/08 budget and update on establishment of an Executive Committee Sub Committee to consider zero based budget

Andrew Vallance was pleased to report that the Executive Committee had progressed the Overview and Scrutiny Committee's recommendation to establish a Sub Committee to undertake a zero based budget exercise as part of the 2007/08 budget process, and that the Executive Committee would be asked to approve the Sub Committee's membership and to set a date for the first meeting at the forthcoming meeting.

Councillor James Mole supported the appointment of such a Sub Committee.

Andrew Vallance confirmed that the reserves would also be considered by this Sub Committee.

02.11.06 ANY OTHER BUSINESS

a) Attendance at Overview and Scrutiny Committee meetings

Councillor James Mole stated that it was hoped that either he or the Fire Authority Chairman, Councillor Dr Paul Bryant, would attend future Overview and Scrutiny Committee meetings as an observer, which would enable effective communication channels to be sustained between the 2 Committees.

b) Future Agenda Items

The Chairman proposed that a Standing Agenda Item should include the opportunity for the Overview and Scrutiny Committee to review and scrutinise the performance of the Authority, its Committees, Sub Committees and Working Groups in relation to its policy objectives, performance targets, and/or particular service areas, and to participate in, and make recommendations on the development of Authority policy. This was **supported**.

Standing
Agenda
Item

Councillor James Mole stated that there was also a need to work with the Standards Committee, and in particular with its newly appointed Independent Members.

02.11.06 ITEM FOR INFORMATION

The next meeting will take place on:

- **Monday 20 November 2006 at 10am**
Strategic Command Centre Brigade, Headquarters, 103 Dee Road, Tilehurst, Reading, Berkshire, RG30 4FS.