

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



Held on Tuesday 11 September 2007

Strategic Command Centre, Headquarters, Royal Berkshire Fire and Rescue Service, 103 Dee Road, Tilehurst, Reading, Berkshire, RG30 4FS

Those present: Councillor Chris Bowring (Member, Fire Authority)
Councillor Mrs Prue Bray (Member, Fire Authority)
Councillor Mrs May Dodds (Member, Fire Authority)
Councillor Geoff Findlay (Member, Fire Authority)
Councillor John Lenton (Member, Fire Authority)
Councillor Alan Ward (Member, Fire Authority)

In attendance: Iain Cox (Chief Fire Officer)
Jacky Manning (Senior Personnel Advisor, Equality and Diversity)
Richard Taylor (Clerk and Monitoring Officer)
Andrew Vallance (Authority Treasurer)
David Wallace (Director of Human Resources)

Action

02.01.07 ELECTION OF CHAIRMAN

The Clerk and Monitoring Officer invited nominations for the position of Chairman of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee for the ensuing year (2007/08) until the Fire Authority's Annual meeting in June 2008. Councillor Chris Bowring nominated Councillor Alan Ward and this was seconded by Councillor Mrs May Dodds. There were no further nominations.

Councillor Alan Ward was duly elected Chairman of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee for the ensuing year (2007/08) until the Fire Authority's Annual meeting in June 2008.

Councillor Alan Ward in the Chair.

02.02.07 ELECTION OF VICE-CHAIRMAN

The Chairman invited nominations for the position of Vice-Chairman of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee for the ensuing year (2007/08) until the Fire Authority's Annual meeting in June 2008. The Chairman nominated Councillor Chris Bowring and this was seconded by Councillor Mrs May Dodds. There were no further nominations.

Councillor Chris Bowring was duly elected Vice-Chairman of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee for the ensuing year (2007/08) until the Fire Authority's Annual meeting in June 2008.

02.03.07 COMMITTEE MEMBERSHIP

The Overview and Scrutiny Committee **Noted** the Membership of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee, as resolved by the Fire Authority at its annual meeting

on 27 June 2007, and **Noted** that Councillor Mrs May Dodds had been appointed as a Member of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee in place of Councillor Mrs Patricia O'Connor (until the Fire Authority's Annual Meeting in June 2008).

02.04.07 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

There were no apologies for absence.

02.05.07 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.

02.06.07 PART I MINUTES OF MEETING HELD ON 13 MARCH 2007

The Minutes of the meeting held on 13 March 2007 were **Approved** by the Overview and Scrutiny Committee, and signed by the Chairman as a correct record.

02.07.07 EQUALITY AND ETHNIC MINORITY INVOLVEMENT

The Director of Human Resources presented a report to the Overview and Scrutiny Committee which described an overview of Equality and Diversity issues in Royal Berkshire Fire and Rescue Service (RBFRS), with particular reference to the recruitment and retention of staff from ethnic minorities. He expanded on various aspects of the information contained in Appendix A to the report and he and Jacky Manning answered a number of questions from Members.

Members considered the application and selection process in some detail and the tests (including physical exercises) which applicants had to pass in order to reach the interview stage. Information was also given about measures taken by other Fire Authorities to attract applicants from ethnic minorities. Whilst London Fire and Emergency Planning Authority had been successful in attracting recruits, many had left the service after a short period of time.

The Director of Human Resources assured the Committee that the Fire Brigades Union was consulted on all Human Resources' policy amendments.

The Overview and Scrutiny Committee **Noted** the report and **Agreed** with Councillor Mrs Dodds' request for information to be requested as to why recruits from ethnic minorities in London had left the service.

DHR

02.08.07 TO REVIEW THE DEVELOPMENT OF POLICY

The Chief Fire Officer suggested to Members of the Committee that they might wish to consider how the Fire Authority made its policies as well as what it actually does. This item was considered in conjunction with the list of priority issues included on the Agenda at item 9.

02.09.07 LIST OF PRIORITY ISSUES

In considering the list of priority issues, it was pointed out that item 1 (Implications and consequences of arson) had been dealt with previously under a different heading, and that item 2 (Equality and ethnic minority involvement) was on today's agenda. Whilst the Committee was entitled to look at all issues, items 3 and 4 (Financial implications of Precept on Band D properties and Regular report on Budget Monitoring) were now matters for the new Budget Sub-Committee. Item 10 (Retention of Staff) had also been dealt with.

The Chairman said that he thought the Committee should look at things that would be relevant to the general public, and raised the matter of how the Authority had dealt with the problems arising from the recent flooding. The Chief Fire Officer indicated that Officers were still gathering information, but that a report could be available in, say, three months.

It was also suggested that the Committee should look at the monitoring of the Integrated Risk Management Plan and its data, although it was acknowledged that this would be done by the Executive and the Full Authority. It was **Agreed** that Performance Indicators and Firebuy be added to the list.

C Gill

The Overview and Scrutiny Committee **Agreed that** Crewing Levels should be considered at the meeting in November 2007, and the report on the recent flooding at the meeting in March next year (2008).

C GillAgenda - 13.11.07
Agenda - 11.03.08**02.10.07 EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE - MONDAY 17 SEPTEMBER 2007**

The Committee considered the items on the Agenda for the Executive Committee at its meeting on the 17 September 2007. It was **Agreed** that the report on the Single Tender item should have stated that the reason for the report was that the de minimus level had been exceeded.

02.11.07 PERFORMANCE OF THE AUTHORITY IN RELATION TO ITS POLICY OBJECTIVES AND PERFORMANCE TARGETS

The Overview and Scrutiny Committee was provided with an overview of the performance of the Authority in relation to its policy objectives and performance targets.

Members reviewed the performance indicators included in the report and, in response to questions regarding sickness and ill-health, the Chief Fire Officer confirmed that firefighters have regular medicals.

The Overview and Scrutiny Committee **Noted** the report.

02.12.07 MONTHLY BUDGET UPDATE

The Authority Treasurer referred to the fact that the Fire Authority had agreed to the appointment of a Budget Sub Committee, to be appointed by the Executive at its next meeting on the 17 September 2007. The Sub Committee would be considering the Comprehensive Spending Review, a 3-year spending plan and indicative council tax levels.

The Overview and Scrutiny Committee **Noted** the situation.

02.13.07 REVISED NATIONAL PERFORMANCE INDICATORS

The Overview and Scrutiny Committee was provided with an overview of the performance of the Authority in relation to the revised set of national performance indicators which the Authority would be assessed on. The Chief Fire Officer explained the principles behind the indicators and the reasons for some of the performance indicators' assessment scores compared to the Fire Authority's performance against its own targets.

The Overview and Scrutiny Committee **Noted** the report.

02.14.07 PERFORMANCE OF THE ROYAL BERKSHIRE FIRE AND RESCUE SERVICE IN RELATION TO THE PUBLIC OPINION SURVEY

The Overview and Scrutiny Committee was provided with an overview of the performance of the Fire and Rescue Service in relation to the Public Opinion Survey for 2006. The Chief Fire Officer pointed out that where consultees had recorded "neither satisfied/unsatisfied", this had to be recorded as unsatisfied in accordance with government guidance.

The Overview and Scrutiny Committee **Noted** the report.

02.15.07 DATE OF NEXT MEETINGS

The date of the next meeting of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee was **Noted** as Tuesday 13 November 2007 at 10am in the Strategic Command Centre, Headquarters, Royal Berkshire Fire and Rescue Service.

The Overview and Scrutiny Committee **Agreed** that the 2008 meetings should be held at 10am on the following dates:

- Tuesday 11 March 2008 (venue to be advised)
- Tuesday 15 July 2008 (venue to be advised)
- Tuesday 18 November 2008 (venue to be advised)