

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



Held on Tuesday 18 November 2008

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 John Lenton (Member, Fire Authority)
 Councillor Alan Ward (Member, Fire Authority) (*Chairman*)

In attendance: Councillor Dr Paul Bryant (Chairman, Fire Authority)
 Lynda Kenyon (Committee Manager)
 Andrew Mancey (Area Manager, Response, Service Delivery) (*Item 04.04.08*)
 Nicholas Oxborough (Group Manager, Performance)
 Andrew Vallance (Authority Treasurer)

04.01.08 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Apologies for absence were received from Councillor Paul Gittings (Member, Fire Authority).

04.02.08 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.

04.03.08 PART I MINUTES OF THE MEETING HELD ON 15 JULY 2008

The Part I Minutes of the meeting held on 15 July 2008 were received and **Agreed** for signing by the Chairman as a correct record.

Nicholas Oxborough advised that, since the last meeting, work was nearing completion to support Members' access to the intranet, and, as such, he felt it would be more beneficial to Members if he presented the intranet's capabilities in respect to performance data availability at the next meeting. This was supported by the Chairman.

04.04.08 WATER SAFETY GROUP REPORT

Andy Mancey reported that, as the Government's response to the public enquiry, headed by Sir Michael Pitt, was still awaited (*expected now in the New Year*), it had been felt prudent to await the Government's response before finalising the Water Safety Group's report as there were likely to be some significant implications for Fire and Rescue Services resulting from the Government's report and recommendations. He advised that there would be additional costs of approximately £95k resulting from the implications currently recommended within

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NO
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the Royal Berkshire Fire and Rescue Service work, not including any recommendations from the Pitt Report.

Andy Mancey assured Members that work was currently being conducted nationally and regionally, and that, locally, this was being progressed through sub-regional working with Royal Berkshire Fire and Rescue Service partners in Berkshire under the Local Resilience Forum.

The Overview and Scrutiny Committee Agreed that an update and monitoring report be provided to the next meeting in the event that the Government's response had not been received, and that the Water Safety Group's final report be presented as soon as was practicable after its receipt.

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The Chairman conveyed his thanks to Andy Mancey and he left the meeting.

04.05.08 THE RISK TO PERSONAL SAFETY THAT FIREFIGHTERS WILL CONSIDER TAKING

The Overview and Scrutiny Committee was advised of levels of risk that firefighters would consider taking at emergency incidents and of the factors that influence the decisions taken to actively carry out a rescue or extinguish a fire.

Nicholas Oxborough presented the report, and advised that Chief Police Officers, Chief Fire Officers and the Health and Safety Executive were currently considering what levels of risks were deemed acceptable and tolerable in terms of responses to incidents. The Clerk and Monitoring Officer reminded the Committee that the Fire Authority had a duty of care to protect firefighters in terms of acceptable levels of risk when responding to incidents. In considering this, and in particular relating to water rescue incidents, **the Overview and Scrutiny Committee agreed** that, at its next meeting, the following should be provided:

- An update on the development of national approach in terms of tolerable levels of risk, and that a Fire Brigades Union representative be invited to provide a Representative Body perspective.
- A general overview of the current policies, including Health and Safety policies, and procedural interpretation, for dealing with water rescues, including what room there was for flexibility in terms of acceptable levels of risk.

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04.06.08 OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE FUTURE TRAINING NEEDS

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The Clerk and Monitoring Officer invited Members to consider whether, as Members of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee, they had any specific training needs that would assist them to carry out their role. **The Overview and Scrutiny Committee Agreed** that:

- The Clerk and Monitoring Officer should provide, to the next meeting, a summary of the Committee's responsibilities, as determined within its Terms of Reference, and a summary of the Authority's policies currently being developed, to the next meeting.

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- When considering the Committee's future Work Programme, the Fire Authority's Forward Plan should be considered and that any identified timely training needs that arise be then addressed.
- Members should, in the interim, advise the Clerk and Monitoring Officer of any other identified training needs to enable the Clerk to facilitate a training programme for further consideration at the next meeting.

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Councillor Dr Paul Bryant advised that, following his discussions with the Chief Fire Officer, it had been agreed that the Fire Authority would receive a presentation at each of its meetings, Agenda permitting, on specific fire related issues to expand Members' knowledge of the Fire Service.

04.07.08 EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE - MONDAY 24 NOVEMBER 2008

The Overview and Scrutiny Committee considered the forthcoming Executive Committee (*meeting on 24 November 2008*) Agenda, items for resolution:

- **Agenda Item 5 (Refurbishment of Royal Berkshire Fire and Rescue Service Training Centre and Classrooms)** - there were no comments made.
- **Agenda Item 6 (Equality and Diversity Recruitment Targets)** - there were no comments made.
- **Agenda Item 7 (Single Tender Action - Remedial works required resulting from the 5-year electrical testing inspections)** - in response to the Committee's concerns regarding Single Tender Actions being presented to the Fire Authority, the Clerk and Monitoring Officer stated that, on this occasion, she felt that this Single Tender Action was justified, however she shared the Committee's observations that appropriate and timely contract planning should reduce the need to bring Single Tender Actions, and she agreed to the Committee's request that these concerns be advised to the Executive Committee when it considers this item.
- **Agenda Item 8 (Thames Valley Fire and Rescue Services' shared funding of Arson Reduction Officer)** - the Clerk and Monitoring Officer advised that the date within Recommendation 2c) should read "2009/2010" and not "2008/2009". The Overview and Scrutiny Committee felt that it was poor practice to seek funding for a post from any projected year-end underspend, and that such funding should have been sought from the 2009/2010 budget round, and it wished the Executive Committee to be advised of its concerns. The Committee urged the Executive Committee to seek clarification as to the exact period, ie from and to, as referred to within the last sentence of the first paragraph under Section 4 of the report ("*Sub-region Fire and Rescue Services have committed to support the post for a further 2 years, at which time an evaluation of permanence will be made*").

CMO

CMO

The Overview and Scrutiny Committee 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, 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:

- **Agenda Item 19 (Award of 5-year Cleaning Services Contract 2009-2014)** - the Overview and Scrutiny Committee Agreed that its concerns relating to the evaluation scores and tender prices submitted should be advised to the Executive Committee at its meeting on 24 November 2008.

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The Overview and Scrutiny Committee then resumed the meeting in Part I.

There was a general discussion regarding procurement and contract processes, and the **Overview and Scrutiny Committee requested** that Pat Arthur (Procurement and Facilities Manager) be invited to the next meeting to present an overview of the Single Tender Actions taken within the last 12 months, the reasons for these, and how they might have been precluded. The Committee also requested that, at its next meeting, they be provided with an outline of the procurement processes undertaken, how contracts were monitored and why it appeared that there were increasing numbers of waivers to Standing Orders relating to the award of contracts being presented.

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Procurement & Facilities Manager
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04.08.08 PERFORMANCE INDICATOR REPORTS (ASSESSMENT OF THE ROYAL BERKSHIRE FIRE AND RESCUE SERVICE'S PERFORMANCE AGAINST TARGETS)

Nicholas Oxborough provided a summary of the Royal Berkshire Fire and Rescue Service's Best Value (BV) Scorecards and measured targets for General Health, Operations, and Local Performance Indicators (LPI), and referred specifically to the significant target variances, as reported for October 2008.

In response to the poor performance recording for Personal Development Interviews (PDIs), **the Overview and Scrutiny Committee Agreed** that, at its next meeting, it should be provided with an accurate position to date and the reasons for the variances in the current reporting.

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The Overview and Scrutiny Committee was also provided with an overview and review of performance against independently selected performance indicators (BV2a - Level of Equality Standard for Local Government, BV2b - The Duty to Promote Race Equality, and LP06 - Number of Risk Premises Fire Safety Inspection jobs closed).

The Overview and Scrutiny Committee Supported Councillor Mrs Prue Bray's suggestion that the Community Engagement and Equality Group (CEEG) consider the ownership of "BV2b - The Duty to Promote Race Equality" in terms of the monitoring and management of the processes.

Cllr Mrs Bray
CEEG Agenda
12.12.08

The Overview and Scrutiny Committee Noted the report presented.

04.09.08 MONTHLY BUDGET UPDATE

The Authority Treasurer took the Members through the 2008/09 Budget Monitoring report (*Executive Committee Agenda - 24 November 2008*).

The Overview and Scrutiny Committee:

- **Noted** the 2008/09 Budget Monitoring report as detailed in the forthcoming Executive Committee's Agenda.
- **Supported** improved planning for capital expenditure to avoid any carry forward to the next financial year to ensure that budgetary revenue implications were kept to a minimum.

04.10.08 DATE OF NEXT MEETING / 2009 MEETINGS:

The date of the next meeting of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee was **Noted** as Tuesday 20 January 2009 at 10am, and that the subsequent meetings for 2009 would take place on:

- Tuesday 17 March 2009 at 10am
- Tuesday 21 July 2009 at 10am
- Tuesday 17 November 2009 at 10am

All the above meetings will be held in the Strategic Command Centre, Headquarters, Royal Berkshire Fire and Rescue Service.