

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



Held on Tuesday 20 January 2009

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) (Vice-Chairman)
Councillor Mrs Prue Bray (Member, Fire Authority)
Councillor Geoff Findlay (Member, Fire Authority) (*part meeting*)
Councillor John Lenton (Member, Fire Authority)

In attendance: Lynda Kenyon (Committee Manager)
Andrew Mancey (Area Manager, Response) (*Item 01.04.09*)
Nicholas Oxborough (Group Manager, Performance Review)
Caroline Redzikowska (Clerk and Monitoring Officer)
Paul Southern (Assistant Chief Fire Officer)
Mark Stollery (Fire Brigades Union representative) (*Item 01.07.09*)
Andrew Vallance (Authority Treasurer)

Action

01.01.09 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Apologies for absence were received from the Chairman, Councillor Alan Ward, and Councillor Paul Gittings (Member, Fire Authority). In the absence of the Chairman, Councillor Chris Bowring, as Vice-Chairman, took the Chair for the meeting.

01.02.09 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

It was **Noted** that there were no Declarations of Interest made.

01.03.09 MINUTES OF THE MEETING HELD ON 18 NOVEMBER 2008

The Part I Minutes of the meeting held on 18 November 2008 were received and **Approved** for signing by the Vice-Chairman as a correct record.

Agenda Item 7 (Development of national approach in terms of tolerable levels of risk for firefighters) was taken next.

01.07.09 DEVELOPMENT OF NATIONAL APPROACH IN TERMS OF TOLERABLE LEVELS OF RISK FOR FIREFIGHTERS

The Group Manager (Performance Review) provided a general overview of the 11 documents that form the Royal Berkshire Fire and Rescue Service's policies and procedures, including Health and Safety policies, for dealing with water rescues and acceptable levels of risk. He referred to the framework for operation within the policies which provided for dynamic risk assessment, 'safe person' concept and guidance on the approach to certain incident scenarios, and to the factors relating to rescue or body recovery, use of specialist crews and sub-surface rescues allowed.

At the invitation of the Vice-Chairman, Mark Stollery (Fire Brigades Union (FBU) representative) addressed the Committee. Mark Stollery advised that the FBU supported the views presented in the Group Manager's (Performance Review) previous report to the Committee ("*The risk to personal safety that firefighters will consider taking*"). The Area Manager (Response) recognised the partnership approach taken with the FBU to ensure that safe levels of risk were realised. Mark Stollery then referred to a water rescue incident that he, personally, had been involved in when a balanced judgement had had to be taken to facilitate a rescue, however he emphasised that such actions were only taken when the judgements made could be justified and levels of risk had been considered.

Mark Stollery stated that the FBU welcomed the provision of more water rescue equipment to be provided on fire appliances, particularly in response to the recent flooding incidents. In response to Members' questions, he confirmed that, following any water rescue incident, de-briefs were always held, and that he, personally, had received appropriate and necessary training. The Area Manager (Response) confirmed that perception of risk training was also provided to firefighters. The Vice-Chairman conveyed his thanks to Mark Stollery, and he left the meeting.

The Area Manager (Response) stated that a budget bid for 2009/10 would be presented to the Fire Authority in February 2009 for Water Rescue training and equipment.

Agenda Item 4 (Water Safety Group report) was taken next.

01.04.09 WATER SAFETY GROUP REPORT

The Area Manager (Response) reported that the Government's response to Sir Michael Pitt's Review, "The Pitt Review: Lessons learned from the 2007 floods", had now been published, however any Government funding to support the recommendations within the report were not yet known, although CFOA (Chief Fire Officers Association) was lobbying the Government to ascertain what financial support would be provided for Fire and Rescue Services. The Area Manager (Response) stated that he would now be able to complete the final Water Safety Group report, taking into account the Pitt Review's recommendations and the Government's response. He noted that the Fire Authority might incur financial costs should Government funding not be forthcoming to support the implementation by Fire and Rescue Services of the report's recommendations.

In response to the Vice-Chairman, the Area Manager (Response) confirmed that the Government had not yet determined the Lead Agency in any future incidents of flooding.

01.05.09 SINGLE TENDER ACTIONS OVER LAST 12 MONTHS

The Overview and Scrutiny Committee was advised of the Single Tender Actions taken within the last 12 months, including the reasons and how they may have been precluded.

The Assistant Chief Fire Officer took the Committee through each of the Single Tender Actions, as detailed in the presented report, and the Committee was provided with further explanations in response to points of clarity sought.

Councillor Geoff Findlay felt that it would have been helpful if the costs of the contracts could have been included within the report. The Assistant Chief Fire Officer stated that these details were contained within the background reports, and he reminded Members of the costs involved for each Single Tender Action taken.

a) Uniform (17 March 2008)

The Committee was satisfied with the explanations provided regarding anticipating contract delays and contract extensions.

b) Diesel Tank Repairs (21 July 2008)

Councillor Mrs Prue Bray felt that the frequency of property inspections might wish to be re-considered as this might ensure that required repairs were identified in a timelier manner which, in turn, might alleviate the need for urgent repairs to be carried out and the need for Single Tender Actions to be brought.

c) House Refurbishment Works (21 July 2008)

The Committee accepted the explanations provided regarding the timing, and carrying out, of the required refurbishment works, however Councillor Mrs Prue Bray did feel that the required works should have actioned earlier following the resolution of the dispute regarding the ownership of the properties.

d) Staircase Refurbishment/Repair (21 July 2008)

In response to the Vice-Chairman, the Assistant Chief Fire Officer confirmed that any resulting required works resulting from changes to Building Regulations and Standards were identified through property inspections. He confirmed that a regime was also in place whereby Royal Berkshire Fire and Rescue Service personnel were able to notify the Facilities Department of any works required.

e) ORH Services (22 September 2008)

The Committee accepted and understood the principles undertaken in seeking a Single Tender Action.

f) Electrical Repairs (24 November 2008)

The Committee accepted and understood the principles undertaken in seeking a Single Tender Action.

After due consideration of the Single Tender Actions taken within the last 12 months, **the Overview and Scrutiny Committee:**

- **Noted** the presented report.
- **Recommended** that a review of the existing financial thresholds within the Fire Authority's Standing Orders be undertaken, however **Accepted** the Authority Treasurer's recommendation that this be considered once the

AT / CMO

Procurement Review had been concluded and robust internal procurement issues had been secured. Councillor Mrs Prue Bray suggested that consideration might then wish to be given to establishing a Working Group, led by Members, with Officers' support, to look at these financial thresholds.

- **Supported** an amendment to Standing Orders to enable the Authority to have a list of previously appointed approved contractors, as this would negate the need for a number of Single Tender Actions being taken.

CMO

The Assistant Chief Fire Officer then gave a presentational overview (*copy available from the Committee Manager*) of the procurement processes and how contracts were monitored. The Assistant Chief Fire Officer and the Authority Treasurer also made reference to the Waivers to Standing Orders over the last 12 months.

The Overview and Scrutiny Committee Resolved that under Section 100(A)(4) of the Local Government Act 1972 (as amended) (*Paragraphs 1 and 2*), **the public be excluded from the meeting** to enable the Assistant Chief Fire Officer to advise the Committee of the background relating to the proposed changes to the current Royal Berkshire Fire and Rescue Service procurement structure on the grounds that it would 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. The Assistant Chief Fire Officer then provided the Committee with an overview of the proposed aforementioned changes.

The Committee then resumed the meeting in Part I.

Councillor Geoff Findlay conveyed his apologies and he left the meeting during the early considerations of the following item.

01.06.09 OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE TERMS OF REFERENCE

The Overview and Scrutiny Committee was reminded of its areas of responsibility within the Committee's Terms of Reference, and was invited to identify any areas where it considered additional information and/or training would be of benefit to the Committee. In addition, the Committee was also advised of the policies of the Authority that were currently under review or development. The Clerk and Monitoring Officer referred Members to the latter 4 policies listed in the presented report under Service Delivery, namely Child Protection, Safeguarding, Partnership Strategy, and Partnership Policy and procedures, as advised by the Deputy Chief Fire Officer, which the Committee might wish to offer guidance as to their respective direction.

The Committee considered its Terms of Reference, which presented policies due for review in 2009/10 it wished to review, and what training needs the Committee required.

The Overview and Scrutiny Committee:

- **Noted** the presented report.

- **Recommended** that CO42 (Terms of Reference) be amended to now read “To review the Integrated Risk Management Plan”. CMO
- **Recommended** that CO42 (Terms of Reference) be amended to reflect a better use of language. CMO
- **Agreed** to review the Service Delivery policies relating to Retained Cover, Child Protection, Safeguarding, Partnership Strategy, and Partnership Policy and procedures, prior to their respective presentation to the Fire Authority for approval, and that the Clerk and Monitoring Officer should seek clarification from Officers as to when the latter four policies were expected to be reviewed and to advise Members accordingly. CMO / Gp Mgr (Perf Review)
CMO
- **Agreed** that the Clerk and Monitoring Officer should advise the Executive Committee at its meeting on 26 January 2009 of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee’s interest in working with Officers in respect to the Retained cover policy issues. CMO
- **Agreed** that a development update, at a future meeting, should be provided on the policy relating to the provision of defibrillators on appliances. CMO / Gp Mgr (Perf Review)
- **Agreed** that the Clerk and Monitoring Officer should further consider training for Committee Members in operational issues, ie spending time at a Fire Station, and that she should advise them of how this might be facilitated. CMO

The Overview and Scrutiny Committee considered Agenda Item 8 (Executive Committee - Monday 26 January 2009) and Agenda Item 10 (Monthly Budget Update), and Agreed that the Monthly Budget Update (Standing Agenda Item) should be taken under the ‘Executive Committee Agenda’ Standing Agenda Item at future meetings.

Committee Manager

01.08.09 EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE - MONDAY 26 JANUARY 2009
01.10.09 MONTHLY BUDGET UPDATE

The Overview and Scrutiny Committee considered the forthcoming Executive Committee (*meeting on 26 January 2009*) Agenda, items for resolution and noting:

- **Agenda Item 6 (2009/10 Budget)** - there were no comments made following the overview of the report provided by the Authority Treasurer. The Authority Treasurer noted that the taxbase and collection fund figures, at the current time, were provisional as the Authority was still awaiting figures from 2 Unitary Authorities. He also referred to the work conducted by the 2009/10 Budget Sub Committee.

The Authority Treasurer then took the Members through the 2008/09 Budget Monitoring report (Executive Committee Agenda - 26 January 2009). In response to Members’ questions, the Authority Treasurer anticipated that there would be a £500k underspend at year-end and that he anticipated a slippage in the capital programme of approximately £1m. **The Overview and Scrutiny Committee Noted** the report, **Supported** the need for Officers to effectively manage any anticipated capital slippage in future years, and **Recommended** that, within the ‘Notes’ column, references should be made to specific timeframes/duration for completion of capital schemes.

AT

- **Agenda Item 8 (Retained availability and the impact on the viability of providing a Retained Service) - the Overview and Scrutiny Committee Accepted** that this issue needed further consideration by the Fire Authority.
- **Agenda Item 9 (Resilience options being considered for the current Control) -** there were no comments made.
- **Agenda Item 10 (South East Fire and Rescue Service Control Centre Ltd) -** there were no comments made.
- **Agenda Item 11 (Equality and Diversity recruitment targets - options for spending anticipated capital grant) -** Councillor Mrs Prue Bray felt that the report steered Members to Option 1, that Option 2 was not well explained, and that she had concerns regarding Option 4. She also felt that a further Option might wish to be explored for the supply of recruiting materials in schools and colleges. **The Overview and Scrutiny Committee Supported** Councillor Mrs Prue Bray's suggestion that a further Option report be presented to the next Community Engagement and Equality Group (CEEG) meeting for consideration.
- **Agenda Item 13 (Crewing Level Monitoring) -** there were no comments made.
- **Agenda Item 14 (Freedom of Information update) -** there were no comments made.

Director of HR
(CEEG
Agenda
25.02.09)

01.09.09 PERFORMANCE INDICATOR REPORTS

The Overview and Scrutiny Committee was provided with an overview and review of performance against independently selected performance indicators (BV206 suite - Deliberate Primary and Secondary Fire per 10,000 population, LP11 - Road Traffic Collision Attendance Percentage in 11 Minutes, LP15 - Percentage of Performance Development Interviews completed within 12 months).

In particular response to the Committee's previous concerns regarding the percentage of Performance Development Interviews (PDIs) completed within 12 months, the Group Manager (Performance Review) confirmed that an analysis of this performance indicator had found a fault between when the information was inputted into one computer software system and automatically transferred to PbViews (*performance reporting system*), and that this was now being rectified. He was pleased to report that the actual percentage of PDIs that have been undertaken within the last 12 months was approximately 80%.

In response to Councillor John Lenton, the Group Manager (Performance Review) confirmed that the data to support LP11 (Road Traffic Collision Attendance Percentage in 11 Minutes) could be broken down further into more detailed time frames, if required.

The Overview and Scrutiny Committee Agreed that, due to time constraints, the demonstration of intranet's capabilities in respect to performance data availability should be deferred to the next meeting.

Gp Mgr (Perf
Review)
Agenda
17.03.09

The Overview and Scrutiny Committee Noted the report presented.

01.11.09 DATE OF NEXT MEETING

The Overview and Scrutiny Committee Noted that its next meeting would take place on Tuesday 17 March 2009 at 10am in the Strategic Command Centre, Headquarters, Royal Berkshire Fire and Rescue Service.

01.12.09 EXCLUSION OF THE PUBLIC FROM THE MEETING

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:

- Part II Minutes of the meeting held on 18 November 2008 (*Paragraphs 1 and 3*)

01.13.09 PART II MINUTES OF THE MEETING HELD ON 18 NOVEMBER 2008

The Part II Minutes of the meeting held on 18 November 2008 were received and **Agreed** for signing by the Vice-Chairman as a correct record.