AGENDA ITEM 2   **MINUTES**

MINUTES OF A MEETING OF THE ROYAL BERKSHIRE FIRE AUTHORITY'S OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE HELD AT BRIGADE HEADQUARTERS, DEE ROAD, TILEHURST, READING ON TUESDAY 30 NOVEMBER 2004 COMMENCING AT 10.30AM AND CONCLUDED AT 12.25PM

Present: Mrs Christine Bateson (Chairman),
                  Jagit S Grewal (Vice-Chairman),
                  Paul Bryant, Owen E Jeffery

Apologies: Tom Crisp, Simon Werner

5.01/04   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 to be made.

5.02/04   MINUTES: 20 SEPTEMBER 2004

The Minutes of the last meeting held on Monday 20 September 2004, having been previously circulated, were taken as read and signed by the Chairman as a correct.

5.03/04   MATTERS ARISING FROM THE MINUTES

Members were advised that a report setting out the Committee's concerns over the establishment of Regional Management Boards (RMB) had been presented to the Executive Committee at its meeting on Monday 29 November 2004. In response to a request from the Chairman the Committee received a verbal report from Officers on the outcome of the Executive Committee's deliberations.

The Executive Committee had noted the report and were sympathetic with the concerns being expressed and were mindful of the fact that this Authority had not yet made its position clear on whether it supports the establishment of a RMB for the South-East. One particular problem is that details on the possible locations and associated costs of Regional Control Rooms will not be released by the ODPM until January which in itself creates difficulties not only for this Authority but for many others who will be setting their Budgets and Precepts in February.

Members were advised that Regional Control Rooms would be the subject of a detailed report and/or presentation, including an input from the FBU, at the Fire Authority Meeting in February. 2005. In view of this it was agreed that the three

Political Groups, at their Briefing Meetings prior to the December Authority meeting, would be asked to consider and decide whether they wished to table a Motion on the establishment of Regional Control Rooms to the February Fire Authority meeting.

In accordance with Standing Order 12(a) a Motion must be given in writing to the Clerk and Monitoring Officer at least seven clear days before the Authority Meeting, and be signed by the Member(s) giving the notice. The Clerk suggested that if a Political Group were minded to table a Motion then it would be more appropriate if it were sent direct to the Committee Administrator to action on her behalf.

As the situation is changing on a daily basis the ACFO (Service Delivery) then provided the Committee with a brief update on the current position in relation to the concerns expressed by the Committee at its last meeting and included in the report presented to the Executive Committee and the following is a summary of the comments made:

1. It is understood, albeit not yet confirmed, that with the lack of support for the proposed Regional Assemblies in the North-East of England there is unlikely to be any Regional Fire Authorities established. However the Secretary of State does have the power to implement a Regional Fire Authority but in doing so has to justify that the existing Service is failing and the imposed improvements will be beneficial to the area in question.

2. The concerns over the extremely ambitious timescales will be re-emphasised to the Fire Authority at its meeting in February 2005.

3. The costs of set-up and retention/redundancy packages will be dealt with by the Fire Authority at its meeting in February 2005, assuming that the ODPM have released them by that time.

4. Although the funding issues will also be the subject of debate in February there is also serious concerns being expressed by Fire Authorities over the funding element of RMB's in that many Authorities have not identified a specific Budget allocation for this purpose. Whilst the administration and associated costs of the South-East RMB have been picked up by Surrey for this financial year this particular area is on a rolling programme and will be taken over by another Authority for the 2005/2006 financial year.

   As there is no additional funding from the ODPM to establish RMB's this and some other Authorities in the South-East will have to find the additional funding required from within their existing approved Budgets. The South-East RMB may consider making representations to the ODPM that funding should be provided by Central Government.

5. No further information.

6. The potential introduction of "Firebuy" is part of a current consultation on Procurement and a copy of the Brigade's response had been tabled at the Executive Committee meeting last night and a copy is available on request from the Committee Administrator (0118) 932 2288 or at wellerd@rbfrs.co.uk

7. The concerns expressed over the lack of clarity as to the exact requirement of each of the key workstreams need to be factored back to the RMB and the question asked as to how Fire Authorities can absorb these on a rational basis. The best possible route to funnel any concerns back to the RMB is through the Authority's representative Councillor Terry Mills.

NOTED

5.04/04   DATES FOR MEETINGS OF THE OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE IN 2005

Members approval was sought (Agenda item 4 – not reproduced to a list of proposed dates for meetings of the Committee in 2005. Having considered the list presented and agreed that the meeting proposed for October 2005 should remain unchanged, Members were of the opinion that it would be prudent to change the dates of the February and June meetings. The change from February to January would ensure that the Committee were able to consider the information received from the ODPM on the proposed location of Regional Control Rooms referred to in Minute 5.03/04. In addition it was also agreed to change the time of the meetings from 10.30am to 10.00am.

RESOLVED: That meetings of the Royal Berkshire Fire Authority's Overview and Scrutiny Committee be held on the following dates in 2005, at Brigade Headquarters, and if possible in Meeting Room 3, commencing at 10.00am:

Tuesday 25 January, Tuesday 21 June and Tuesday 25 October 2005

(Post Meeting Note: All meetings in 2005 will be held in Meeting Room 3)

5.05/04   REGIONAL CONTROL ROOMS – POTENTIAL IMPACT

The Committee was advised (Agenda item 5 – not reproduced) of the potential impacts that Regional Control Rooms may have on the Fire Authority.

Members will be aware that the ODPM has given direction that under the modernisation agenda for the Fire Service existing Brigade Control Rooms for England are to be amalgamated into nine Regional Control Rooms. At this stage in the process there is limited detailed information available to determine the exact impact to the Authority as the procurement and consultation documents are still being finalised.

The Brigade has undertaken an impact assessment using the Risk Management methodology to assess potential risk to the organisation. Some of the risk areas have not yet been completed as these are deemed as low potential at this stage, but will be completed as information becomes available.
The risk assessment was presented to the Committee, and a copy is attached to these **Minutes as Appendix A** for ease of reference. It was stressed however that, at this

stage, it has only been possible to identify risk and not specific control measures due to the limited information that is available.

On the invitation of the Chairman the ACFO (Service Delivery) took the Committee through the Appendix and provided Members with a precise of its contents based on the following column headings which covered:

> Risk (Threat to achievement of business objective)
> Assessment of Risk (Assume No controls in place) with sub-headings, Impact Severity, Likelihood Probability and Risk Rating.
> Risk Control Measures
> Assessment of Residual Risk (with control measures implemented) with sub-headings, Impact Severity, Likelihood Probability and Risk Rating.

The ACFO confirmed that the FBU had been consulted and their comments included in the text of the Appendix where appropriate. In noting the information presented in the Appendix the following is a bullet point summary of the comments made based on the various heading as identified:

Professional: Not completed as not risk critical at this stage.

Financial:

- The ACFO confirmed that whilst facts are based on pure speculation at this time the infrastructure costs and technology problems could result in the whole project being reviewed, as it may not be possible to achieve what is actually required. In response to a question the ACFO confirmed that he could, if required, produce a detailed breakdown of the staffing and technical support costs associated with the running of Berkshire's Control Room.

- Members indicated that it will be useful to have an idea of the costs associated with the introduction of Regional Control Rooms, especially when the business case is presented by the ODPM. It costs an estimated £1m per annum to run the RBFRS Control Room, however Under Regional Control Rooms there will be a need to determine all costs including such matters as contributions to Employment Tribunals and similar unscheduled costs.

- Some of the issues currently dealt with by existing Control Rooms such as sickness/accident reports and out of office hour's cover etc will not be dealt with by Regional Control Rooms. Councillor Jeffery indicated that whilst he is not against the establishment of Regional Control Rooms he is extremely concerned about the financial and technical implications associated with their introduction and the fact that the number has been reduced from over forty to only nine.

- Councillor Jeffery also asked if realistically there are any other positions within the Brigade that Control Staff could be transferred to. The ACFO replied that there are three possible solutions as follows:

    o Redundancy where there is no alternative employment

- o Relocation in to the new Control Room
- o Redeployment within the Brigade itself

- Currently there has not been any regional or national guidance produced on how to deal with any potential problems that may arise. It is likely that decisions of this nature will have to be determined at local level. It is difficult at this stage to anticipate the impact to control personnel as the location of the new regional control room is not known and also how many staff will relocate etc. In any event this issue will create potential difficulties for the Fire Authority in terms of redeployment and/or redundancy costs.

- In response to a further question the ACFO confirmed that whilst all the information received is shared with existing Control Room personnel, such information is very sparse at the moment.

Legal: As in attached appendices.

Physical: Not completed as not risk critical at this stage.

Contractual:

- Details and conditions of contract are not known at present which could be unacceptable in the first instance and varied once any initial contract has expired. It will therefore be necessary to obtain assurances that contracts will be fully negotiated at any variation.

- Further comments are in the attached appendices

Technological:

- The Clerk and Monitoring Officer indicated that it would be necessary to establish a Legal Agreement between all Regional Control Rooms to ensure that they would take over the calls in the event that any single or number of Control Rooms are unable to operate. Whilst there is no reason to believe that they would not take over calls there is a need to have such an Agreement in place for this and other eventualities

- Further comments are in the attached appendices

Environmental: Not completed as not risk critical at this stage.

Stakeholder: As in attached appendices.

Workforce:

- In noting that the redeployment opportunities in a Combined Fire Authority are limited when compared with County Council Brigades, Members supported the suggestion that consideration should be given to establishing agreements with the Unitary Authorities to advertise vacancies in the respective areas, throughout the brigade, before going to the Local and/or National Press.

- Additional issues are in the attached appendices.

In thanking the ACFO for his very full and detailed report the Chairman, with the approval of Members, invited the representative of the Fire Brigades' Union (FBU) to address the Committee.

In thanking the Chairman the FBU representative tabled a paper (not reproduced) produced by the Berkshire FBU which summarised the opposition being expressed by other Authorities to regionalisation. He indicated that as even more Authorities, politicians and professionals become aware of the danger that regionalisation poses to their Brigades the FBU in Berkshire are disappointed that the Fire Authority has not, as yet, made their position clear.

Whilst Berkshire FBU wishes to work alongside the Fire Authority they request that the Authority publicly make their position clear as to where they stand on the issue of Regional Control Rooms. A few years ago the recommendation was for twenty-eight Regional Control Rooms but this is now down to nine which is understood to be in relation to Regional Assemblies.

Following a similar exercise in both the Police and Ambulance services there are currently ninety-nine and forty-four Police and Ambulance Control Rooms respectively and in some instances the Police are looking to re-open some of its former Control Rooms.

The FBU are of the opinion that the ongoing situation is having a profound effect on fire-fighters and could perhaps affect the provision of a reliable service to the people of Berkshire. They feel that there should be Thames Valley Regional Control Room. Whatever the outcome there must be a safe and reliable IT system in place as Fire and Rescue Services across the Country do not only deal with 999 emergency calls.

They do not believe that nine Regional Control Rooms will be the final figure and are of the opinion that in the future there is the possibility that the Royal Berkshire Fire Authority will cease to exist.

The representative confirmed that the FBU would be making a further presentation to the Fire Authority at its meeting in February 2005. The Chairman thanked the FBU for their input.

The Clerk and Monitoring Officer suggested that the Fire Authority's view on whether the proposals will be to Berkshire's detriment whilst being beneficial to others is a matter to be considered in the Political Groups.

NOTED

5.06/04   DATE OF NEXT MEETING

It was noted that in accordance with the decision made under Minute No. 5.04/04 the next meeting of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee is scheduled to take place on Tuesday 25 January 2005 at Brigade Headquarters commencing at 10.00am.
(Post Meeting Note: The meeting will be held in Meeting Room 3)

ROYAL BERKSHIRE FIRE AUTHORITY

OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

TUESDAY 30 NOVEMBER 2004

MINUTE 5.05/04 REFERS – FIRST PARAGRAPH – PAGE 4

No.	Risk	Assessment of Risk [Assume NO controls in place]			Risk Control Measures	Assessment of Residual Risk [With control measures implemented]		
	(Threat to achievement of business objective)	Impact (Severity)	Likelihood (Probability)	Risk Rating		Impact (Severity)	Likelihood (Probability)	Residual Risk Rating
	Professional							
	Financial The cost elements of moving to a regional control room could be more expensive than current costs to run existing control				Need to assess business case from ODPM when it is made available			
	Costs to rewrite brigade whole IT systems to account for new control systems £250,000				Assess if other brigades in the region are in similar position and if so get issue resolved through RMB			
	Costs of retention package for control staff who remain with brigade until closure of brigade control				Need to establish if ODPM are contributing. If not then need to plan into budget cycle. Details are also required now in order to establish if one off payment or escalating			

				package			
Need higher allocation of pre arranged overtime to cover shortfalls in control				Plan into budget cycle or establish if available through ODPM under new burdens			
Costs of overtime to cover absence of staff during training for new control				Reclaim from ODPM			
Existing system suppliers withdraw from maintenance/support, as future is limited with 9 regional controls operating under 1 system coming				Costs: 3 elements 1 MIA (ICS 15K), Remsdaque (250K) ORIS costs 3 to 4 years 101K in 3 year plan			
Legal If the system fails who assumes legal and morale responsibility if resulting events are detrimental or fatal etc				Needs to be specified in any contract			
The brigade has a legal obligation to maintain the health safety and welfare of its staff. It could be				Ensure that staff are kept informed of issues as they arise and listen to their concerns and try to address them. Also see workforce section of this			

argued that the regionalisation of control rooms would have an adverse affect on this requirement. Limited information is currently available to determine further legal implications. Authority at risk/liable if specific risk info is not available on new system and accident/loss of property arises				document. Confirm if brigade is legally accountable for this issue or if liability rests with ODPM Brigade solicitor to determine impacts and consider assessment with other brigade legal advisors to ensure all aspects are accounted for. Need legal determination of where risk liability rests			
Physical							
Contractual Details and conditions of contract are not known at present which could be unacceptable in the first instance and varied once any initial contract has expired				Obtain assurances that contract will be fully negotiated at any variation			

Technological **New System** Failure of system adds to societal risk				Too early to assess as specification is not available, but theory is to default to next regional control room. This is assuming that more than 1 is available at time of failure			
Failure of system, creating additional work to surrounding regional control rooms (capacity for them to cope)				Needs to be in specification for new control rooms			
Not tried and tested new IT system which is risk critical as being put to emergency use. Previous large scale IT projects have been questionable e.g. Passports, Inland Revenue, Air Traffic Control, NHS etc				Spec may identify solution, however not available as yet to brigade.			
Viruses/deliberate action external or internal affecting Business				Left to national spec. and not yet confirmed to brigade			

continuity							
Compatibility of moving old information systems to new could put the brigade back 5 years in IT development plan. May need to rewrite whole IT systems if not in spec.				Meeting has taken place to get issues identified, however need to confirm with other brigades if same position. Depends on user groups views being taken on board by national group. Use political weight from RMB to ensure points are included in new control room Duplication of licences, systems, development time 500K PA possibly (if not allowed on secure network)			
Access to internet and other systems possibly restricted				Possibly in national Spec. Needs to be confirmed to brigade			
If new system is built from scratch how does the brigade confirm all brigade risk data in system (potential risk to Ff)				Need assurances from new spec that issue is addressed. Also run random sampling to ensure risk is addressed.			
If there is a time delay between risk population of new system and go live date, risk data could be missed if collected				Issue needs to be confirmed as part of spec/roll out for new system .			

during delay.							
Inaccurate Hydrant data/water locations causing risk to Ff, risk to finance e.g. loss of property/life				New system needs to account for risk and also clarification of liability is needed. Brigade Water officer needs access to system			
Existing systems life could fail before new comes on line.				Regular maintenance and monitoring of system. Procure spares from control rooms as they are absorbed into regional process before brigade. Ensure ODPM are made aware of potential risk of failure in existing system			
Existing system suppliers withdraw from maintenance/support, as future is limited with 9 regional controls operating under 1 system coming				Acquire spare parts as other controls are decommissioned. Replace with interim system, Revisit upgrade proposal, Pass risk to RMB level for determination across Region and possibly get regional control moved up priority list.			
Confusion of control staff if undertaking new system training and compatibility/familiarity with existing.				Depends on GAP between new and old system and intensity of training			

	Risk to Ff when using new risk data system if not able to get info. in time				Depends on complexity of new systems Phased approached with ORIS still on appliance as back up			
	ORIS maintenance until new system is live				Depends on spec outcome, and phased approach			
	ORIS change over to new systems on fire appliances (how to physically have 2 systems on vehicle)				As above			
	Withdrawal of ORIS and roll over to new system, risk to Ff.				Need to be assured that new system is adequate. Brigade need to make decision			
	Using new and old systems at the same time could cause confusion				Depends on differences between systems. Regular training and updates. Specific trained staff on individual system			
	Loss of secondary control (Hampshire) if roll out in SE is phased				Need confirmation from Regional/National team of fall back systems			
	Brigade IT plan is				Recoup costs from ODPM, pull back			

currently behind due to staff members being involved in Regional project e.g. Voice over IP not progressing due to demand from project. IS strategy is also not being administered				from involvement, tell project team to get assistance from elsewhere, recruit extra staff to deal with work not being undertaken.			
Environmental							
Stakeholder **Public** may not get same service as currently in place **Other blue light services** may not get same level of service as current system **Unitary Authorities** may receive lower standard of service to residents in area and may also have to absorb				Need to establish performance before regionalisation and compare results Need to establish performance before regionalisation and compare results Need to establish performance and costs before regionalisation and compare afterwards			

additional costs through precepting with political impacts							
Workforce Other activities e.g. booking fit/sick				Alternative systems will need to be put in place, however this will necessitate some form of call handling Centre for out of hours contact			
County capability/picture to best serve Berkshire may be lost in bigger regional demands				Believed to be in spec. as overview but will need to monitor before and after regionalisation			
Retained cover for brigade lost in bigger picture				Believed to be in spec. as overview but will need to monitor before and after regionalisation			
Critical systems, ORIS etc may not be able to access new system due to security thus impacting to other IT systems and users in brigade				Access has been requested in consultation but not yet confirmed.			
Ryder's utilise brigade control for defects of appliances and location of spare ladders,				Need to ensure that systems are transferred across to new control room or absorb into some form of call handling Centre for out of hours			

equipment and appliances etc				contact			
H&S dept currently use control to communicate urgent messages to brigade personnel				Need to ensure that this provision is available in new control room			
Contractors out of hours access to brigade premises e.g. mitie, BT, other services				Alternative provision from on site security (costs) or flexi officer (working time regs impact) or utilise out of hours call handling Centre			
New employers impact of our activities on their plans/expectations				Formal agreement necessary to cover all eventualities e.g. Brigade wishes to undertake Community Safety in an area but regional control dictate otherwise.			
IRMP integration the brigades in the region will have differing risks and initiatives under IRMP which could be conflicting				Need close liaison with other brigades and regional control. Also control will need to accept needs of brigade when planning resource moves etc			
Community Safety and other users of systems linked to mobilisation system e.g. PB views etc				Need to ensure that existing systems are linked to new control systems to maintain all other brigade business. Needs to be established through			

				RMB's as little notice taken to date			
BSO/ senior officers attending control for large incidents in brigade may be difficult if new control is long distance away				Officers from host brigade to attend new control room, however may not have best interest of brigade due to lack of brigade knowledge			
Workforce Low Morale (not just control but others e.g. managers and friends)				Regular communication flow of information. Allocate owner/s for issues. Timeliness (plan in advance to pass information) of flow needs to be quick and credible. Public stance by CFA and Brigade is needed to show support even if little effect on outcome			
Retention of staff will become more difficult as time progresses				Regional package is being worked on. Ref. finance (who pays?) If brigade then need to know how much for planning budget, timing of planning and release of info. Redeployment of staff and training for future posts in brigade e.g. redeployment to Ops and assist with training also apply to non uniformed roles. Treat control members with			

				respect and with value. Have tolerance with mistakes as under pressure. Once known location sit down with staff and go through options etc for future Finance needed to cover prearranged overtime, recruit more staff. Some staff may be needed to undertake residual duties not taken up by new control room			
Increase in sickness creating crewing shortfalls				Regional package may reference that sickness is detrimental to final package sum. Alternatively consider boost above regional package depending on loss rate and also details of regional package			
Working time regs may be compromised with existing staff being trained for new control room duties as they are needed 9 months before opening of new control. Also if control staff are needed to cover absences they also may exceed the maximum hours				Train alternative brigade staff both uniformed and non-uniformed in control room functions to cover shortfalls. Take on additional staff			

If retention package is inadequate may lead to staff leaving brigade sooner than expected				Brigade may need to considered additional local retention strategy to retain staff			
Dealing with redundancy issues as limited experience in brigade.				Train both Human Resource personnel and managers in this area			
Regional variations in packages could lead to disgruntled staff and attraction to leave this brigade and join others for better deal				SE packages need to be agreed as the same at RMB. Clause in package needed to dissuade staff from leaving one brigade and joining another			
Redeployment opportunities in CFA Brigade are limited when compared with (county council brigades.				Establish regional agreement to advertise vacancies outside brigade area. (possibly unlikely as will look after own staff first) Consider establishing agreement with unitary authorities to advertise vacancies in brigade before going to local press.			
Ability of HR and managers to support control staff and plan for future				Train those affected in area of concern			
Stress for managers and				Training for staff and managers			

control staff							
Maintaining enough staff to do job				Pre-plan for losses and create a buffer			
Will control staff be blocked from putting in for job vacancies arising in brigade before new control opens.				Legal view needed to confirm if contrary to law. Also need to consider holding position until after control closes if control applicant is successful. If not able to keep post vacant then fill with temporary contract until control closes.			
Minimum crewing creating additional workloads				Need to maintain establishment figure in control and monitor situation and take managerial action to remedy			
Inclination to do overtime may vary, as supports introduction of new control rooms				Train other staff to undertake role Recruit more staff on temporary contracts			
Reluctance to cover low crewing in control by other staff (competency, inclination, friction, capacity, working time regs)				Reassurances and team building sessions. Close management of issue and if necessary strong management of situation if becomes intolerable			

Competency of varied crews on different watches				Change crews to suit competency levels. Additional training may be necessary to enhance skill sets			
Dispute situation				Depends if local/regional/national. However as issue created at national level they should deal with situation. Reality is that ODPM have stated that responsibility to manage existing controls is local problem and not theirs			
Sickness patterns/increases				Link to retention package ie if high sick then low financial end deal			
Conflict between new/temporary staff and existing members as could be seen as supporting end of control rooms				Close supervision of watches and manage issues in timely manner. Managers may need training depending on issue arising			
Possible loss of Ff if partnered with Control staff				Case by case consideration of matter			