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AGENDA ITEM 2: MINUTES

MINUTES OF A MEETING OF THE ROYAL BERKSHIRE FIRE AUTHORITY'S PERSONNEL COMMITTEE HELD AT BRIGADE HEADQUARTERS ON TUESDAY 9 OCTOBER 2001 COMMENCING AT 7.00PM AND CONCLUDED AT 8.33PM

Present: P Hingley, C Maskell, D Wilson

Apologies: O E Jeffery, D Morgan, B J S Patman

4.01/01 ELECTION OF CHAIRMAN

RESOLVED: That Councillor C Maskell be elected as Chairman of the Personnel Committee for the duration of the meeting.

4.02/01 MEMBERSHIP OF THE PERSONNEL COMMITTEE

It was reported that the Conservative Group had appointed Councillors B J S Patman and D Wilson as Members of the Personnel Committee.

NOTED

4.03/01 ELECTION OF VICE-CHAIRMAN

RESOLVED: That the election of a Vice-Chairman of the Personnel Committee be deferred until the next meeting.

4.04/01 MINUTES: APRIL 9 2001

The Part I Minutes of the last meeting held on Monday 9 April 2001, having been previously circulated, were taken as read and signed by the Chairman as a correct record.

4.05/01 PARTNERSHIP FOR COMMON SENSE

The Committee received a progress report (Agenda item 6 – not reproduced), produced by the Independent Consultants and tabled at the meeting, on the Partnership for Common Sense process in the Brigade and were requested to consider the release of further funds allocated in the budget.

On the invitation of the Chairman the Consultants took members through their report which detailed the background to the Partnership in Common Sense initiative together

with a summary of the work undertaken to date which included the establishment of Sponsorship and Design Teams.

Members attention was also drawn to paragraph 8 of the report (not reproduced) which set out the Consultants proposals for measures of performance to be completed by 30 March 2002. In noting the list of measures, Members were advised by the Chief Fire Officer that as some of the proposals had budgetary implications it would be necessary for a "growth item" bid to be put forward for consideration in the 2002/2003 budget process. In the event of the growth item bid not being successful it would be appropriate within the Partnership for all staff to receive an explanation of the reasons why the funding had not received Member support.

The total cost of the Consultants' time, exclusive of expenses, was £75,000 and was contained within the approved 2001/2002 Budget. The Urgency Committee at its meeting in February 2001 had authorised the Chief Fire Officer to release the sum of £15,000 until such time as the Personnel Committee could meet to consider progress and review proposed measures of success. The release of the remaining budgetary allocation would involve the sum of £60,000, or such part that the Committee considered appropriate.

In response to a question regarding the production of short, medium and long term Action Plans it was agreed that a copy of the Plans would be circulated to all Members of the Committee for information. In addition Members were invited to attend any of the meetings convened by the Consultants such as the meeting with Party Leaders and their Deputies on Friday 19 October 2001.

RESOLVED: That:

- 1 The progress to date be noted.**
- 2 The outstanding balance of £60,000 allocated in the 2001/2002 approved Budget for the payment of the Consultants' time and expenses be released.**

4.06/01 BEST VALUE REVIEW OF PERSONNEL FUNCTION

The Committee was advised (Agenda item 7 – not reproduced) of the Best Value Review of the Brigades' Personnel function currently taking place and were requested to consider whether they wished to directly participate in the ongoing Review. A copy of the Terms of Reference for the Review, approved by the Brigade's Management Team, was tabled at the meeting as an Appendix (not reproduced).

In noting the background to the Review, Members were advised that following discussions with the District Auditor and Her Majesty's Fire Service Inspectorate, the structure of the Brigade's Best Value Review programme is likely to be rationalised

into fewer more strategic Reviews. However, those Reviews currently underway, including that of Personnel, will be completed as planned and then incorporated into the rationalised Review structure that emerges in the 2002/2003 Best Value Performance Plan.

In considering whether the Personnel Committee could make a direct contribution to the Review itself, Members were of the opinion that the following three options were available:

- To become a member of the Review Team
- To receive copies of all reports before recommendations are made
- A preliminary report of the Review Teams deliberations including initial conclusions be presented to future Personnel Committee meetings.

Members were advised that in accordance with the established practice, the completed Review would be presented to the Performance Review and Audit Panel for consideration and recommendation to the Fire Authority.

RESOLVED: That a preliminary report of the Review Teams deliberations be presented to the Personnel Committee for consideration and determination of the recommendations for future action, prior to the Review being submitted to the Performance Review and Audit Panel.

4.07/01 RATIONALISATION OF DIVISIONAL OFFICER GRADES

The Committee's approval was sought (Agenda item 8 – not reproduced) to proposals to rationalise the Brigade's use of Divisional Officer grades in order to simplify and create more stability in the Brigade's management structure and to improve the recruitment and retention of Divisional Officers.

The current grading level of Divisional Officer posts together with proposals for the revised structure was presented in Appendix 1 (not reproduced).

In noting the background to and reasons why it had been decided to rationalise the Brigade's use of Divisional Officer grades as set out in paragraphs 2-5 of the report (not reproduced), Members were advised that the changes, if approved, would have a positive impact on the recruitment and retention of Senior Officers.

Although consultation on these proposals had been opened with the Fire Brigades' Union (FBU) they had not yet been concluded and any Member decision would therefore be subject to the FBU's views. However, informal feedback had indicated that the Union would be unlikely to oppose the proposal.

The Authority Treasurer reported that ongoing costs were estimated to be £11,300 per annum and would have to be presented to the Budget Working Party as a growth bid, unless the Chief Fire Officer could show how these might be contained within existing

Budgets. Discussions between the Chief Fire Officer and Authority Treasurer were currently taking place on this matter.

RESOLVED: That, subject to no adverse comments being received from the Fire Brigades' Union, and subject to the ability to contain this within existing Budgets, the Brigade's revised grading structure for its Divisional Officer posts, utilising the two grades of Senior Divisional Officer and Divisional Officer II, as indicated in the report be approved and adopted.

4.08/01 DATE OF NEXT MEETING

RESOLVED: That a further meeting of the Personnel Committee be arranged for Tuesday 19 February 2002 at Brigade Headquarters commencing at 7.00pm.

4.09/01 EXCLUSION OF THE PUBLIC

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:

	Agenda item	Paragraph
11	Part II Minutes: Monday 9 April 2001	1
12	Transfer of Fire-Fighter JR: Implementation of Authority's Bonding Policy	1
13	Employment Tribunal Up-Date	1
14	Firemen's Pension Scheme – Appeals to Board of Medical Referees	1

(Note: The following is a summary of the items considered in the Part II Agenda of the Fire Authority's Personnel Committee meeting held on Tuesday 9 October 2001)

4.10/01 PART II MINUTES: 9 APRIL 2001

The Part II Minutes of the last meeting were received and approved as a correct record.

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**4.11/01 TRANSFER OF FIRE-FIGHTER JR: IMPLEMENTATION OF
AUTHORITY'S BONDING POLICY**

The Committee approved the without prejudice offer of payment from the Chief Fire Officer of Buckinghamshire and Milton Keynes Fire Authority in full and final settlement of Fire-Fighters JR's transfer.

4.12/01 EMPLOYMENT TRIBUNAL UPDATE

The Committee was advised of the current situation regarding Employment Tribunal Applications involving the Fire Authority.

**4.13/01 FIREMEN'S PENSION SCHEME -- APPEALS TO BOARD OF
MEDICAL REFEREES**

The Committee was advised of the outcomes of recent appeals by the Brigade's former staff to the Firemen's Pension Scheme Board of Medical referees.

Signed: 
Chairman

Date: 19 February 2002

