

AGENDA ITEM 4 MINUTES

MINUTES OF A MEETING OF THE ROYAL BERKSHIRE FIRE AUTHORITY'S PERSONNEL COMMITTEE HELD AT BRIGADE HEADQUARTERS ON TUESDAY 19 FEBRUARY 2002 COMMENCING AT 7.00PM AND CONCLUDED AT 8.00PM

Present: D Morgan, B J S Patman, D J Wilson

Apologies: P Hingley, O E Jeffery, C Maskell

1.01/02 ELECTION OF CHAIRMAN

RESOLVED: That Councillor B J S Patman be elected Chairman of the Personnel Committee for the duration of the meeting.

1.02/02 ELECTION OF VICE-CHAIRMAN

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

1.03/02 MINUTES: 9 OCTOBER 2001

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

1.04/02 DRAFT EQUALITY AND DIVERSITY STRATEGY AND ACTION PLAN

The Committee's views and endorsement was sought (Agenda item 5 – not reproduced) to the Brigade's Draft Equality and Diversity Strategy and Action Plan for recommendation to the Fire Authority at its meeting on Wednesday 13 March 2002.

Members were advised that the Fire Authority, at its meeting in September 1999, had approved an Equal Opportunities Policy Statement and framework Strategic Plan and since that time there had been a number of developments in the area of equality and diversity as summarised in paragraph 2 of the report (not reproduced).

In December 2001 the DTLR published Toward Diversity II – Commitment to Cultural Change – The Second Fire Service Equal Opportunities Action Plan produced by the Equal Opportunities Task Group, a copy of which was presented as Appendix A (not reproduced).

In response to Towards Diversity II a draft updated Equality and Diversity Strategy and Action Plan for 2002/2003 for the Brigade had been developed. The Chief Fire Officer indicated that he would be seeking views from Representative Bodies and the Reading Council for Racial Equality and would therefore welcome Members comments before finalising the document and presenting it to the Fire Authority meeting in March for approval.

A copy of the Strategy and Action Plan was therefore presented to Members as Appendices B and C and the following is a bullet point summary of the comments made:

- The Action Plan had been designed to support the Strategy over the coming twelve month period and would be reviewed and updated on an annual basis.
- In response to a question the Chief Fire Officer reported that at the present time the Brigade workforce includes ten people from ethnic minorities and twenty-four women in its operational workforce including Control.
- The Chief Fire Officer gave an assurance that no attempt would be made to move away from national wholetime recruitment criteria in order to make the recruitment targets for women and people from ethnic minorities more achievable.

In supporting the document as presented, Members were of the opinion that the Strategy appeared to be a perfectly adequate document including many areas where its content is important and should be drawn to the attention of others at national level. In response to a further question the Chief Fire Officer confirmed that a progress report and updated Action Plan would be presented to a future Personnel Committee meeting.

RESOLVED: That the Draft Equality and Diversity Strategy and Action Plan 2002/2003 be endorsed and referred to the Fire Authority at its meeting on Wednesday 13 March 2002 with a recommendation that it be approved.

1.05/02 REQUEST FOR RECOGNITION FOR CONSULTATION PURPOSES BY THE RETAINED FIRE-FIGHTERS UNION

The Committee was requested (Agenda item 6 – not reproduced) to determine a request from the Retained Fire-Fighters' Union (RFU) for recognition for consultation purposes.

The RFU is a registered Trade Union with a claimed national membership of approximately 4,800, of which 35 are in the Royal Berkshire Fire and Rescue Service, representing 20% of the current retained workforce. Enquiries have established that a number of Brigades with significant numbers of Retained personnel have given recognition for consultation purposes to the RFU.

The Fire Brigades' Union national policy is to oppose recognition of the RFU and local officials are not permitted to sit on any committees with the RFU. A copy of a letter received from the Berkshire FBU setting out some additional comments for Members to consider was presented (not reproduced).

Members were reminded that the Brigade is pursuing a partnership initiative with the FBU and that both partners are committed to the "Partnership for Common Sense" initiative, which aims to fundamentally change the way in which the RBFRS operates.

Recognition of the RFU for consultation purposes does involve the risk of an adverse impact on relationships with the FBU. However if Members are minded to approve the RFU's request, the arrangements for consulting the RFU would be kept separate from the existing consultation arrangements unless there was agreement from all parties, including the FBU, to change.

The Chairman reflected on his attendance at a recent LGA Fire Forum when this matter had been discussed. Whilst they had recognised the potential difficulties with collective bargaining it became quite clear that the mood of the meeting was that the RFU should be recognised for consultation purposes.

Whilst acknowledging the FBU's comments, Members supported the proposal set out in the report that the RFU should be recognised for consultation purposes in the spirit of partnership.

RESOLVED: That the Retained Fire-Fighters' Union is recognised for consultation purposes.

1.06/02 DATE OF NEXT MEETING

RESOLVED: That a further meeting of the Personnel Committee be arranged for Wednesday 10 April 2002 at Brigade Headquarters commencing at 7.00pm.

1.07/02 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
9	Part II Minutes – Tuesday 9 October 2001	1
10	Clerk and Monitoring Officer's and Authority Treasurer's Review of Contracts	1

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| 11 | Firemen's Pension Scheme – Appeal to the Board
of Medical Referees | 1 |
| 12 | Doyle –v – RBFA | 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 19 February 2002)

1.08/02 PART II MINUTES 9 OCTOBER 2001

The Part II Minutes of the last meeting held on Tuesday 9 October 2001 were received and approved as a correct record.

**1.09/02 FIREMEN'S PENSION SCHEME – APPEAL TO BOARD OF
MEDICAL REFEREES**

The Committee was advised of the outcome of a recent appeal by a former Fire-Fighter to the Firemen's Pension Scheme Board of Medical Referees.

1.10/02 DOYLE – v – RBFA

The Committee was advised of the terms and grounds for settlement of this case.

**1.11/02 CLERK AND MONITORING OFFICER'S AND AUTHORITY
TREASURER'S REVIEW OF CONTRACTS**

The Committee determined the way forward in the provision of Clerk and Treasurer services to 31 March 2003.

Signed: 
Chairman

Date: 24 July 2002

