

MEETING OF THE ROYAL BERKSHIRE FIRE AUTHORITY'S STANDARDS COMMITTEE

Held on Thursday 15 September 2011

Strategic Command Centre, Headquarters, Royal Berkshire Fire and Rescue Service, Dee Road, Tilehurst, Reading, Berkshire, RG30 4FS



Those

present: Professor Christopher Guy (Independent Member, Fire Authority) (*Chairman*)
Councillor Prue Bray (Member, Fire Authority)
Councillor Adrian Edwards (Member, Fire Authority)
Mr John Giles (Independent Member, Fire Authority)
Councillor Peter Jones (Member, Fire Authority)
Mr Baldev Sian (Deputy Independent Member, Fire Authority)
Mr Jonathan Taylor (Independent Member, Fire Authority)
Mr Ronald Webb (Independent Member, Fire Authority)

In

Attendance: Peter Driver (Committee Manager)
Caroline Redzikowska (Clerk and Monitoring Officer)
Dave Phillips (Group Manager, Performance Review)
Diana Hindle (Senior Assessment Centre Adviser)

Action

55. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Apologies for absence were received from Mr Philip King and Councillor Andrew Bradley.

56. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

There were no Declarations of Interest received from Councillors or Independent Members relating to items to be considered at the meeting, in accordance with the provisions of the Fire Authority's Local Code of Conduct. There were no Declarations of Interest received from Officers.

57. MINUTES OF THE MEETING HELD ON 4 APRIL 2011

Resolved:

- a) That the Minutes of the meeting held on 4 April 2011 be Approved for signing by the Chairman, subject to an amendment in minute 49 to change 'effected' to read 'affected'.

58. MINUTES OF THE MEETING HELD ON 29 JUNE 2011

Resolved:

- a) That the Minutes of the meeting held on 29 June 2011 be Approved for signing by the Chairman.

59. RECEIPT OF ANNOUNCEMENTS

The Chairman agreed to take agenda item 7 before item 6.

60. FEEDBACK ON MEMBER INDUCTION DAY - PRESENTATION

The Committee received a presentation from Group Manager, (Performance Review) and Senior Assessment Adviser on feedback from the Member Induction and Information Day held on 29 June 2011. Feedback had been gathered from the eighteen Fire Authority Members who had completed an evaluation sheet and also from the staff who had participated in the demonstration sessions.

Members had commented on the enthusiasm and professionalism of the crews giving the demonstrations. They had found the Incident Command Training and Firehouse demonstrations particularly useful and had rated the presentations from senior staff consistently highly.

Participating staff had commented on their sense of pride in displaying the resources and equipment and were encouraged by the large turnout of Fire Authority Members taking an interest in the front-line operation. They had suggested that more could be done to expand the displays, perhaps including a demonstration of working at height; a physical or DVD demonstration of waterborne response; and involving Members more fully in an Incident Command exercise. It had also been suggested that Members might be given first-hand experience of using breathing apparatus in the firehouse, under controlled conditions.

Committee Members discussed how the Induction and Information Day might be improved for the future. It was suggested that the presentations by senior officers could be targeted for newer Members and made optional for longer-serving members. Similarly, it was suggested that Members could be given a choice of which demonstrations to see, enabling Members to observe demonstrations in greater depth rather than feeling rushed into seeing all of them and not giving each one sufficient time. One option could be to do more demonstrations spread throughout the year, using the light summer evenings. The Strategic Asset Management Committee's programme of visits to all the stations could be opened up to other Members to attend and see the stations for themselves.

The Clerk and Monitoring Officer advised that the comments of staff and Members would be taken on board in developing the future programme. It was planned to repeat a full Induction and Information Day every four years, when the majority of all-out elections took place in the County and the Fire Authority was likely to see higher turnover in its membership. A programme of demonstrations and information sessions could be deployed throughout the intervening years. Giving demonstrations to a large number of Members had been a morale booster for staff and therefore if demonstrations were to be held more frequently, the attendance of Members would be key to their success.

Resolved:

- a) That the contents of the report be Noted.

61. SOUTH EAST CHARTER FOR FIRE AUTHORITY MEMBER DEVELOPMENT

The Clerk and Monitoring Officer reported on progress with the development of a framework for the induction of Members and the production of a draft Member self-assessment which could inform the introduction of generic and individual learning and development plans.

Three versions of a Members' Self Assessment Questionnaire were tabled for discussion. Committee Members agreed that self-assessment would be important but would not provide a full picture of training needs as Members would not necessarily be aware of the things they didn't know. Members favoured the third version of the questionnaire and asked that further work be done to refine it and to add further categories of information, such as the role of members in disciplinary and grievance procedures. Members asked to receive the draft by email and were invited to submit further comments on the draft by the end of September 2011.

CMO

The report included an example of an induction programme developed by the Chief Fire Officers' Association, South West region, which Members agreed should be used as a basis for a programme tailored to the needs of the Royal Berkshire Fire Authority. The programme showed how elements of training and induction could be delivered over a number of sessions throughout the year. Members felt that it should be possible to create a menu of modules tailored to meet each Member's needs and recognising previous experience and training. Some of the modules would need to be mandatory for all Members, or for members of specific committees, while others might be optional, with alternative ways of satisfying the requirements of the Member Development Charter. If elements were to be treated as mandatory this would need to be enforced by the Members themselves deciding the consequences for non-attendance.

Members noted that the programme should include more on human resources issues, including Members' role in disciplinary procedures. The section on Equality and Diversity should include some mandatory elements to recognise the Authority's statutory duties in these matters.

The inclusion of a fire safety inspection visit to Members' homes was felt to be inappropriate as this could give the impression to the public that Members were receiving special treatment.

The Group Manager (Performance Review) tabled a draft form which could be used by Members to capture and record their own training and development activities.

Resolved:

- a) That the contents of the report be Noted;
- b) That any further comments on the self assessment questionnaire and the model training programme be submitted to the Clerk and Monitoring Officer by Friday 30 September; and
- c) That the Clerk and Monitoring Officer prepare a further draft for discussion at the next meeting of the Standards Committee, reflecting the views received from Members and including an indication of mandatory and optional elements, the requirements of committee specialisation, and a outline of Members' roles and requirements.

Agenda
24.11.10

62. DATE OF THE NEXT MEETING

Thursday 24 November 2011 at 5.30 pm in the Strategic Command Centre, Headquarters, Royal Berkshire Fire and Rescue Service.

Post meeting note: The above meeting was cancelled due to lack of business. The Standards Committee scheduled to be held on 2 February 2012 was subsequently postponed to Thursday 1 March 2012, 5.30 pm in the Strategic Command Centre, Headquarters, Royal Berkshire Fire and Rescue Centre.

SIGNED COPY

Minutes signed by Chairman as a correct record:

Chairman's initials. CDH

Signature [Handwritten Signature]

Print Name CHRIS GUY

Date signed: 1/3/2012