



ROYAL BERKSHIRE FIRE AUTHORITY'S STANDARDS COMMITTEE MINUTES WEDNESDAY 30 NOVEMBER 2005

HELD AT BRIGADE TRAINING CENTRE WHITLEY WOOD COMMENCING AT 9.00AM AND
CONCLUDING AT 10.05AM

Present:

Fire Authority Members: Councillors Mrs Christine Bateson; Miss Christine Borgars;
James Mole [Vice-Chair of FA];

Independent Members: Peter Harris [Chairman]; Geoffrey B Mayes [Vice-Chair]; Paul
Sidwell; Ronald J Webb;

Officers: Iain Cox [Chief Fire Officer]; Rosemary Lansdowne [Clerk & MO]

Apologies: Councillor Mike Adams

2.12/05 ELECTION OF CHAIRMAN AND VICE-CHAIRMAN

Peter Harris was elected Chairman of the Committee and Geoffrey Mayes Vice-Chairman of the Committee. It was noted that they would hold these positions until the annual Fire Authority meeting on 28 June 2006.

2.13/05 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, it was noted that on this occasion there were no such declarations made.

2.14/05 MINUTES OF MEETING ON 15 JUNE 2005

The Minutes of the meeting held on Wednesday 15 June 2005, having been previously circulated were taken as read and signed by the Chairman as a correct record.

2.15/05 MATTERS ARISING FROM THE MINUTES

Minute No. 2.06/05 the CMO was asked to produce the explanatory flow chart as agreed in the minute.

Minute No.2.07/05. It was noted that the Indemnity policy for Elected Members and Officers did not currently cover the Independent Members of the Standards Committee. The CFO explained that the Fire Authority's insurers were being requested to cover the Independent Members under the existing policy.

2.16/05 INDEPENDENT MEMBERS' FORUM MINUTES

The Committee received a copy [not reproduced] of the minutes of the Independent Members Forum held on 21 October 2005 at West Oxfordshire District Council and **NOTED.**

2.17/05 MEETING WITH POLITICAL GROUP LEADERS

At the request of the Chairman of the Committee the CMO had invited the Group Leaders to attend the meeting for a discussion on the training needs of the Fire Authority Members and the general attendance at Fire Authority meetings.

The Chairman Peter Harris asked for it to be specifically recorded in the minutes that in his opinion, he had not asked the CMO to invite the Group Leaders to a formal meeting of the Committee, but rather that he wanted to hold an off the record discussion with the Group Leaders. Further he asked for it to be noted that he did not consider that there was sufficient time at the meeting to discuss the issue of Member training and Member attendance at meeting. The CMO and Councillor Mole stated it was perfectly proper to have an open discussion that could be minuted and then reported back to the Executive Committee.

Councillors Miss Borgars, Mrs Bateson and Mole considered that there was ample time to discuss the issues at the meeting, it being the only item on the agenda for discussion.

Councillor Miss Borgars indicated that Reading BC was holding a training day on Standards in the New year and sent an e-mail from her Blackberry to see if any places could be booked for the FA's Members. It was agreed that the CMO would progress this further and book relevant places at the Reading BC training event.

Councillor Miss Borgars stated that she had 12 years experience as an Elected Member and had already sat on a Local Hearing at Reading BC. She did not feel that additional training on how to conduct a Local Hearing as actually necessary at this time. It was noted that it was highly unlikely that the FA would have to conduct such a hearing, but in the event that one was necessary it was noted that a full report would be issued to the Members of the Committee and a briefing session held before the Committee held the hearing. Councillor Mrs Bateson explained that the Elected Members had sufficient training and experience of other hearings at their Unitary Authorities and she felt confident that they could deal with a Local hearing if and when necessary. The CMO reminded the Committee that the FA had adopted a fairly full and detailed procedure to be followed and a training event was to follow the Committee which she felt would cover most of the issues previously raised by the Independent Members.

The Chairman Peter Harris confirmed that he had written to Councillor Terry Mills the FA Chairman on the issue.

Mr Sidwell stated that he was concerned that some Elected Members did not attend meetings and he felt it was unreasonable that they were able to claim an allowance notwithstanding their non-attendance. He stated that he wanted a register of attendance kept. It was confirmed by the CMO that the Committee Manager already kept a record of Member attendance and that she would not be changing the FA's procedures in this regard. Councillor Mole explained that it was important for the

Independent Members to understand how a local authority worked and the time commitments and constraints placed upon Elected Members and that there were numerous meetings for Elected Members to attend.

2.18/05 DATE OF NEXT MEETING

It was noted that this would be the last meeting of the current Committee in that the term of office for the Independent Members Peter Harris, Paul Sidwell and Geoffrey Mayes would come to an end in June 2006. The CMO explained that she would be advertising for the positions of 3 new Independent Members in the New Year and that it was unlikely that another meeting of the Committee would be required before June 2006 when the new Independent Members would be appointed. No date was therefore set and it noted that a meeting would be held once the new Independent Members were appointed.

2.19/05 TRAINING EVENT

NB. The meeting was followed by a training event lead by Kris Malde of LGA in Practice [a private firm not related to the LGA] on Local Investigations and hearings.

Minutes signed by Chairman as a correct record:

Signature 

Print Name ALBERT GREGORY

Date signed: 31st October 2006

