

AGENDA ITEM 2: MINUTES

MINUTES OF A MEETING OF THE ROYAL BERKSHIRE FIRE AUTHORITY'S URGENCY COMMITTEE HELD AT BRIGADE HEADQUARTERS ON TUESDAY 6 AUGUST 2002 COMMENCING AT 6.00PM AND CONCLUDED AT 6.45PM.

Present: B J S Patman (Vice-Chairman in the Chair), E L Glasson, Owen E Jeffery (Substitute for J C G Brooks)

Apologies: J C G Brooks (Chairman)

3.01/01 MINUTES 16 JULY 2002

The Part I Minutes of the last meeting held on Tuesday 16 July 2002, having been previously circulated, were taken as read and signed by the Chairman as a correct record.

3.02/02 PREMISES EXPENDITURE FROM EQUALITY AND DIVERSITY SUPPLEMENTARY CREDIT APPROVAL-DISABILITY DISCRIMINATION ACT (DDA)

The Urgency Committee's approval was sought (Agenda item 3 – not reproduced) to the award of a Contract under single tender action to enable urgent works to provide additional washing/changing facilities for female staff and external students at the Brigade Training Centre, in support of Equal Opportunities and Diversity at Work. An urgent decision is required to allow the works to be completed by 31 August 2002.

In speaking to the report the Chief Fire Officer reminded Members that the changing and showering facilities provided with the original Training Centre building at Whitley Wood excluded separate facilities for female members of staff and female students attending commercial training courses. In noting the existing arrangements as set out in paragraph 1 of the report (not reproduced), Members were advised that the provision of the new wing at the Training Centre created an ideal opportunity to rectify this earlier omission. Ideally the work should be completed by the end of August, having regard to the return to the Training Centre of 22 trainee Fire-Fighters from Reigate for completion of their pre-station training, one of which will be a female Fire-Fighter.

The cost of the required alterations is estimated to be £32,829 including Fees and funding for this work will be met entirely by borrowing covered by the DDA Supplementary Credit Approval awarded to the Authority by the former DTLR now known as the Office of the Deputy Prime Minister (ODPM).

Members were asked to approve the award of a single action tender to JCT Contract to Morris and Blunt to undertake the alterations as detailed in paragraph 4 of the

report (not reproduced). Morris and Blunt have confirmed that they can and will undertake these works by 31 August 2002. They have already undertaken DDA work at Station 2 and the Chief Fire Officer is pleased with the quality of the works undertaken.

As with the works to the Training Centre, West London Estates, acting within the Premises Strategy, will validate that the costs are reasonable and conform to the National Standard of Rates.

RESOLVED: That, on the grounds of urgency and in accordance with the Fire Authority's Standing Order 10, sub-paragraph d, the JCT Contract for the additional works at the Training Centre, be awarded to Morris and Blunt, in the sum of £32, 829 (including Fees), without the need for a full tendering process.

3.03/02 PROVISION OF BROADBAND TELEPHONY AND DATA SERVICES

The Urgency Committee's approval was sought (Agenda item 4 – not reproduced) to the award of a Contract under single tender action to provide Broadband Internet connections to support a Voice Over Internet Protocol network. An urgent decision was required to allow the initial works to the Training Centre and the Central 'Core' to be completed by the end of November 2002.

The proposal seeks to make use of an opportunity, following the completion of the extension at the Training Centre, to bring forward the installation of Voice Over Internet Protocol (VOIP) and the necessary DSL data links that was originally scheduled for 2002/2003.

In noting the background to the proposal as set out in paragraphs 2 and 3 of the report (not reproduced), Members were advised that whilst other Companies would be able to provide the necessary connections in the future, Easynet are the only Company that can satisfy the Brigade's requirements now. The Chief Fire Officer explained the type of service that Easynet could provide together with the advantages and capability of the system on offer. Rather than extend the existing telephony system, the provision of a Broadband Datalink and VOIP system will provide improved capability at less cost.

The annual running costs of using the Easynet package will be approximately £76,000, compared to the Brigade's current annual costs of £105,000 (Wholtime Station sites only). Whilst Easynet's installation costs are marginally more expensive than BT's the service they are offering has operating costs that are between two and three times less expensive. The funding for this work will be met entirely from within the approved Communications Budget for this year.

The eventual provision of an improved Broadband Communications Network across the whole Brigade will have a budgetary outcome that is cost neutral in year two, as well as providing a vastly improved data and telephony network.

Members were advised that the main risk of adopting this approach is the potential for the non-provision of the agreed service by the supplier but that risk would be controlled by the arrangements detailed in paragraph 6 of the report (not reproduced).

RESOLVED: That, on the grounds of urgency and in accordance with the Fire Authority's Standing Order 10, sub-paragraphs c, d and f, the Contract to provide Broadband Internet connections to support a Voice Over Internet Protocol network, be awarded without a full tendering process.

3.04/02 CHANGE IN THE FIRE SERVICE NATIONAL RADIO STRATEGY

The Urgency Committee's approval was sought (Agenda item 5 – not reproduced) to abandon the current radio replacement project in favour of new strategy following a recent change to the Fire Service National Radio Replacement Strategy.

In speaking to the report the Chief Fire Officer advised Members that in 1999 a national strategy was agreed for the replacement of Fire Service wide area communications systems. This Authority is currently following the strategy set out in 1999 and is a key member of the collaboration of nine Brigades making up the CACFOA South East Region. Whilst the procurement project is being managed by a board of Principal Officers drawn from each of the nine Brigade, a technical project management contract was let to Mott MacDonald by Royal Berkshire, acting as the lead Authority.

In recognition of the significant events of September 11 2001 and as part of a series of national reviews, the Fire Service Radio Replacement Strategy was evaluated against the lessons learnt from September 11. As a result a new Strategy has been drawn up and outlined in Fire Service Circular 7/2002, a copy of which was presented as Appendix C (not reproduced).

In noting the principles of the new strategy as set out in paragraph 4 of the report (not reproduced), Members were advised that the revenue implications of adopting the new strategy are at this time unknown and will be considered by Central Government in the context of future Local Government settlements.

The overall contract value was approximately £80,000. In response to a question regarding the abortive costs the Chief Fire Officer advised that the cost of withdrawing from the contract would be £27,000 which would however be apportioned amongst the nine Brigades involved. In addition there would also be a project close down cost of £4,000 which would also be apportioned. It was anticipated that Mott MacDonald will invoice the Brigade for everything except the close down costs. It was considered prudent not to close down the contract but to leave it open in case they were required to work on another project. Mott MacDonald have indicated that they may use the South East Region as a model in the event of them being invited to undertake a study on the resilience of the system across the whole Country which is likely to be approved by HM Fire Service Inspectorate. The

total cost to this Brigade would be less than £6,000. It was noted that the ODPM is prepared to consider claims for compensation in respect of abortive costs.

A suggestion that the Authority's involvement in the Southeast Region Radio Replacement Project is put on hold rather than abandoned was not supported.

RESOLVED: That, on the grounds of urgency the:

1. **Authority's involvement in the Southeast Region Radio Replacement Procurement Project is abandoned.**
2. **Chief Fire Officer be authorised to give written notification to HM Fire Service Inspectorate Firelink Project that this Authority wish to support the new national radio replacement strategy, subject to the financial implications of doing so being made clear before any financial commitment is made.**

3.05/02 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
6 Part II Minutes – Tuesday 16 July 2002	1, 7 & 8

Note: The following is a summary of the items considered in the Part II Agenda of the Urgency Committee meeting held on Monday 31 January 2000.

3.06/02 PART II MINUTES: 16 JULY 2002

The Part II Minutes of the last meeting held on Tuesday 16 July 2002, having been previously circulated, were taken as read and signed by the Chairman as a correct record.

(Note: At the conclusion of the meeting and in response to a request from the Chairman, the Chief Fire Officer updated Members on the current situation regarding the Fire-Fighters 2002 pay award and the implications of any future industrial action).

Signed: 
Chairman

Date: 14 October 2002

