

AGENDA ITEM 1 MINUTES

MINUTES OF A MEETING OF THE ROYAL BERKSHIRE FIRE AUTHORITY URGENCY COMMITTEE HELD AT BRIGADE HEADQUARTERS, DEE ROAD, TILEHURST, READING, BERKSHIRE ON WEDNESDAY 14 APRIL 1999 COMMENCING AT 5.25PM AND CONCLUDED AT 5.45PM.

Present: J C G Brooks (Chairman), J J Connolly, B J S Patman

2.01/99 MINUTES: 1 MARCH 1999

The Minutes of the meeting held on Monday 1 March 1999, having been previously circulated, were taken as read and signed by the Chairman as a correct record.

2.02/99 FIREHOUSE REFURBISHMENT

The Urgency Committee's approval was sought (Agenda item 2 - not reproduced) to include within the 1999/2000 capital project the installation of a gas tactical firefighting facility on the 2nd floor of the Firehouse. An urgent decision was required to enable the installation to take place as part of the refurbishment project during the already planned close down of the Firehouse in July and August.

Members were reminded that as part of the Brigade's 1999/2000 Capital Programme a £176,000 refurbishment of the Firehouse at Whitley Wood was approved.

The feasibility study established that a gas tactical firefighting facility could be installed on the second floor of the Firehouse. In addition, the Contracts and Facilities Manager had identified a spray-on alternative to the existing fire tiles that would significantly reduce the cost of the planned refurbishment. As a result, it is anticipated that the installation of a gas facility on the second floor can be achieved in addition to the refurbishment within the approved project budget of £176,000. These developments provided the Authority with the opportunity to both undertake the planned refurbishment and to extend the Firehouse facilities to provide realistic firefighting technique training.

With regard to the gas firefighting facility only two potential suppliers have been identified. However, problems had arisen with a system installed in another Brigade by one of the suppliers following an accident investigation. The Brigade Training Officer had therefore visited an installation carried out by the other preferred supplier and has confirmed that this was a more satisfactory option.

On the basis of this information, Members were invited to approve single tender action for this project under paragraph 10 of the Authority's Standing Orders Relating to Contracts.

RESOLVED: That, on the grounds of urgency, the Firehouse Refurbishment project is amended to include the installation of a gas-burn facility on the second floor and that in accordance with the Standing Orders Relating to Contracts single tender action for this project as set out in paragraph 4 of the report (not reproduced) be approved..

**2.03/99 SINGLE TENDER ACTION: BREATHING APPARATUS
 MAINTENANCE**

The Urgency Committee's approval was sought (Agenda item 3 - not reproduced) to a single tender action to enter into a contract for the provision of service and maintenance of the Brigade's breathing apparatus and resuscitation equipment. An urgent decision was required to ensure that the essential programme for the maintenance of this equipment could be continued, despite the unforeseen unavailability of the established internal provision of these services.

A review of the Brigade's existing arrangements for the maintenance of breathing apparatus and resuscitation equipment had shown that commercially available alternatives were more cost effective and efficient than the current in-house arrangements. For a number of years the Brigade had maintained a Breathing Apparatus Support Team (BAST) consisting of two uniformed servicing and maintenance technicians. One technician was due to leave the service in July 1999 and the other could be readily returned to operational duties. As both technicians were currently on long term sick leave there was an urgent need to secure a maintenance contract.

The estimated cost for the provision of this service was £12,600 per annum subject to RPI increases. Expenditure would be within existing budget provision and could be met from the savings accrued through the discontinuation of existing internal provision of these services. The Company chosen to provide this service had an extensive field force of service engineers and were able to provide "disaster" cover in times of extreme emergency.

RESOLVED: That, on the grounds of urgency, and in accordance with Standing Orders Relating to Contracts, single tender action be approved for the Chief Fire Officer to enter into a three year contract for the provision of servicing and maintenance of the Brigade's breathing apparatus and resuscitation equipment.

**2.04/99 SINGLE TENDER ACTION: UPGRADE OF BREATHING
 APPARATUS EQUIPMENT**

The Urgency Committee's approval was sought (Agenda item 4 - not reproduced) to a single tender action for the upgrade of the Brigade's entire complement of breathing



apparatus. An urgent decision was required because it had recently been identified that over 90% of the Brigade's breathing apparatus backplates had become vulnerable to material failure.

Although the exact cause of the failure had not yet been fully identified the sets had been in operational use for eight years and subjected to the stresses and strains of operational use. The existing breathing apparatus set was highly respected and a technically reliable item of personal respiratory protection but the replacement of the backplates, a major component, would cost an estimated £24,000.

The newer Sabre Contour model had been developed through a philosophy of continuous improvements incorporating better materials, technologies and ergonomics. As several components found in the Centurion set were also used in the Contour model it would be possible for the existing equipment to be upgraded to the new specification at an estimated cost of £7,000 more than the cost of replacing the defective backplates.

The upgrade programme would effectively provide a new breathing apparatus set with a life expectancy of at least five years thereby deferring a replacement programme by a minimum of three years. The proposal was in line with the Authority's philosophy of continuous improvement and the principles of Best Value.

The cost of the upgrade was an estimated £31,000 and could be met from the savings accrued through the discontinuation of the existing BAST.

RESOLVED: That, on the grounds of urgency, and in accordance with Standing Orders Relating to Contracts, single tender action be approved for the upgrading of the Brigade's breathing apparatus equipment.

Signed.....

Chairman

Date: Monday 17 May 1999

