

**AGENDA ITEM 1 : MINUTES - 19 MAY 1998****MINUTES OF A MEETING OF THE URGENCY COMMITTEE HELD AT BRIGADE HEADQUARTERS, DEE ROAD, TILEHURST ON TUESDAY 19 MAY 1998 COMMENCING AT 6.00 PM AND CONCLUDED AT 6.30 PM**

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

**2.01/98 MINUTES - 27 APRIL 1998**

The minutes of the meeting of the Committee held on 27 April 1998 were taken as read and signed by the Chairman as a correct record.

**2.02/98 GOVERNMENT CONSULTATION PAPERS ON LOCAL GOVERNMENT FINANCE**

The Committee considered a report (Agenda Item 2 - not reproduced) inviting it to consider the issues raised by the latest Government consultation papers on the future arrangements for local government finance with a view to formulating the Authority's response to the proposals.

In accepting the views which the Authority Treasurer suggested should be put in response to the papers, the Committee noted that a further consultation paper had been issued in relation to the Firemen's Pension Scheme. In view of this, it was agreed that a report on this issue should be put to the Authority's meeting on 9 June 1998.

**RESOLVED:**

1 That the suggested responses set out in the report to the following issues be approved:

- Business Rates (Appendix 1, Paragraph 1.3)
- Improving Local Financial Accountability (Appendix 1, Paragraph 2.3)
- Capital Finance (Appendix 1, Paragraph 3.3)

2 That a report on the Firemen's Pension Scheme consultation paper be presented to the Authority's meeting on 9 June 1998.

**2.03/98 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:

	<b>Agenda Item</b>	<b>Paragraph</b>
4	Part II Minutes - 27 April 1998	11
5	National Employers Negotiating Objectives	11

The following is a summary of the matters dealt with in part II of the meeting:

#### **2.04/98          PART II MINUTES - 27 APRIL 1998**

The part II minutes of the meeting held on 27 April 1998 were taken as read and signed by the Chairman as a correct record.

#### **2.05/98          NATIONAL EMPLOYERS OBJECTIVES**

The Committee discussed the Authority's response to the Fire Brigades' National Employers consultation paper on negotiating objectives, and agreed the following response:

"The Combined Fire Authority wishes to respond positively to the debate which has been initiated. There are many pressures facing authorities and more change can be anticipated in coming months with the Government's proposals on best value, local democracy and funding of services. However, it may be too simplistic to expect a simple yes or no to the questions posed.

A major concern in the debate locally is the impact any proposed changes might have on employee relations. As a service which prides itself on high standards which are achieved through the dedication and commitment of its staff and firefighters in particular, it is important that every effort is made to secure change through negotiation with employee representatives. There will be a major task in convincing employees and their representatives of the value of these proposals.

If the questions b to d are a continuum (radical change to minimal change) then this Authority is nearer to the radical change position on the spectrum. There is a recognition that change within the employment framework will need to be secured if future obligations are to be delivered. However, it is an aspiration that cannot be realised at any cost.

Turning now to the specific questions, our response would be:

- a      Yes, in principle. However, there needs to be much more consultation on the contents of the national framework and the elements which are open to variation locally. Also the mechanisms for achieving variation will need to be



clearly articulated. It is our belief that a framework which gives no safeguards to employees will prove unattainable and unworkable.

- b Whilst tending to this option, the authority is not in the position of agreeing an open ended commitment. The full implication of any proposed offer and the benefits which are being secured will need extensive consultation. However, in principle the Authority is willing to consider and embrace significant change.
- c No. This is operationally unworkable and can not achieve any positive outcome.
- d No. It is essential to have a clearer vision for the future and piecemeal incremental change will not be sufficient to meet the needs of the service.

It is essential that there is extensive consultation with employers and staff side over the shape that any future framework might take. This Authority looks forward to participating positively in the debate.”



CHAIRMAN  
20 JULY 1998

