



BEDFORDSHIRE AND LUTON COMBINED FIRE AUTHORITY

REPORT OF THE BEDFORDSHIRE AND LUTON COMBINED FIRE AUTHORITY FROM ITS MEETING ON 11 DECEMBER 2009 TO CENTRAL BEDFORDSHIRE COUNCIL

MEETINGS

Bedfordshire and Luton Combined Fire Authority (CFA) held a meeting on 11 December 2009 at Dunstable Community Fire Station. The major issues discussed at the meeting are summarised below:

1. FIRE AND RESCUE AUTHORITIES' MUTUAL LIMITED (FRAML)

As noted at the last meeting, FRAML had no directors, or power to appoint directors, and, as such, the company was to be closed down completely.

The recently enacted Local Democracy, Economic Development and Construction Act gave qualifying authorities (including fire and rescue authorities) clear and specific legal powers to establish or participate in an insurance mutual.

Members noted that a meeting was proposed in early January 2010 to 'assess the appetite, if any, to create FRAML Mark 2'.

2. ANNUAL AUDIT AND INSPECTION LETTER 2008/09

Ms Debbie Hanson and Ms Gillian Skillicorn of the Audit Commission attended the meeting to present the Annual Audit Letter 2008/09.

The Letter was circulated to Members, who expressed their disappointment that it highlighted substantial improvement which was not reflected in the scoring of the Authority as 'adequate'.

3. REGIONAL MANAGEMENT BOARD: 7 OCTOBER 2009

Members noted the draft Minutes of the meeting of the Regional Management Board held on 7 October 2009 and agreed proposed revisions to the quorum.

4. NAME OF AUTHORITY

It was agreed not to change the name of the Fire Authority or Fire and Rescue Service for the time being.

5. MOBILISING SYSTEM

Following a report on the robustness of the existing mobilising system, it was agreed that no action be taken at this stage to replace the system. However, a further report is to be made

to Members should the East of England Regional Control Centre project be delayed beyond May 2012.

6. REVENUE BUDGET AND CAPITAL PROGRAMME MONITORING – 2009/10

Members received their third budget monitoring report for 2009/10.

Members had previously agreed that £52,800 generated from the agreement of the APT&C Staff Pay Award, should be transferred to General Reserves.

Reference had been made elsewhere on the Agenda to the winding up of FRAML. As part of the distribution of Phase One, the Authority was to receive £143,983.91, which was the full reimbursement of its Capital Contribution (£106,506.51) to set up the Company, with the balance being a share of the Operating Surplus.

The Service had been advised in October that the suppliers of three Rescue Pumps were no longer able to undertake the work. With the help of Firebuy, a mini-tendering exercise had been undertaken and tenders received were currently being considered. It was anticipated that there would be an additional cost of circa £90,000 which, it was agreed, should be funded from Capital Receipts.

7. FRS CIRCULAR 59/2009: TRANSFER OF OWNERSHIP OF NEW DIMENSION ASSETS

The Fire Authority supported the transfer New Dimension vehicles and equipment to hosting services.

FRS Circular 59/2009 asked fire and rescue authorities to sign up to a Transfer of Ownership Agreement by the end of December 2009, after which the transfer of the Service's three New Dimension vehicles and equipment would take place in early 2010.

Communities and Local Government (CLG) was committed to paying the fixed costs of the contract relating to routine maintenance and servicing, to ensure that the equipment and vehicles were ready to respond to a national incident over the next sixteen years.

However, once the New Dimension assets were transferred to the fire and rescue authorities, the authorities themselves will be responsible for arranging the monthly payment directly, and CLG would fund fire and rescue authorities for this cost.

Members noted that the Chief Fire Officers' Association (CFOA) was exploring these concerns with CLG, and that the Service was in contact with both CFOA and other fire and rescue services in this regard. Any sign-up by the Authority would be subject to further advice from CFOA following their discussions with CLG.

8. MEMBERS' ALLOWANCES SCHEME 2010/11

All Members present declared a personal interest in this Item.

The Combined Fire Authority's Members' Allowances Scheme (the Scheme) was introduced on 1 January 2004 and had been fully reviewed in 2007.

It was agreed that the Members' Allowances Scheme for 2010/11 should remain as existing with a further 6 days added to the Chair and Vice Chair's Special Responsibility Allowances to reflect their work as Directors of the Local Authority Control Centre Limited.

9. APPOINTMENT OF DEPUTY CHIEF FIRE OFFICER AND TREASURER

Following the recent appointment of former Deputy Chief Fire Officer Graeme Smith as Chief Fire Officer of Warwickshire Fire and Rescue Service, a vacancy existed in the Service for a Deputy Chief Fire Officer.

Mr Vic Logan, who had held the position of Treasurer to the Combined Fire Authority since its creation in 1997, had notified the Authority of his wish to retire on 31 March 2010, although he was flexible in his actual retirement date.

Members agreed arrangements for the appointment of a Deputy Chief Fire Officer and replacement Treasurer to the Combined Fire Authority.

10. INFORMATION BULLETIN

The Combined Fire Authority received a Bulletin containing information on various matters relating to the Fire and Rescue Service.

Members noted forthcoming Member development sessions, including planned visits to Stations by Members, and the Celebration of Christmas to be held at Woburn Parish Church on 15 December 2009.

The Chair wished Members and Service personnel a Merry Christmas and a Happy New Year.

Amongst the items reported were:

A father of a casualty trapped in her car in a road traffic collision in Luton thanked crews from Luton and Stopsley Red Watch. He asked that the Chief Fire Officer be made aware of his gratitude for the professionalism of all crews attending, especially their calm manner and the reassurance they gave his daughter during the extrication. He advised that at all times his daughter knew exactly what was going on, which made the traumatic time so much easier for her to deal with. His daughter was admitted to hospital but was expected to make a full recovery.

Classes 2CB and 2CF at Sacred Heart School sent thanks to Stopsley Blue Watch:

.....'Thank you very much for coming to talk to us today about what you do and how you keep us all safe. We learnt lots and we enjoyed seeing the special clothes that you have to wear when you go to a fire and we loved seeing the fire engine and getting to try out the hose.'.....

The Deputy Community Leader at Emmaus Village Carlton expressed thanks to the crew from Harrod:

.....'On behalf of all at Emmaus Village Carlton just a brief note to thank you for your wonderful support relating to our recent Music and Arts Festival on Saturday 26 September. We were delighted with the all round support from the local community generally which made such a contribution to the overall success of the day. Once again many thanks and we hope to meet again soon.'.....

The Group Co-ordinator for Balliol Family Group and Queens Park Neighbourhood Centre Group sent the following letters of thanks to Green Watch at Kempston and Bedford:

.....'Thank you for attending our Balliol group to talk to our members about fire safety. The ladies found the talk on fire safety to be really informative and useful. Members commented that the Fire Fighters were very friendly and helpful. Both the women and children enjoyed having a tour of the fire engine.

We appreciate you giving up your time to come out to talk to the group.'.....

.....'Thank you for attending our Queens Park Neighbourhood Centre Group to talk to our members about fire safety. The ladies found the talk on fire safety to be really informative and useful. Members commented that the Fire Fighters were very friendly and helpful and they appreciated being able to ask questions during the informal talk.

The children from our crèche and the children from the Westbourne day nursery were very excited to meet the Fire Fighters and enjoyed having a tour of the fire engine.

We appreciate you giving up your time to come out to talk to the group.'.....

FUTURE REPORTS

Commencing in 2010, the Authority proposes to publish an occasional series of Thematic Briefing Notes on work being undertaken by Bedfordshire and Luton Fire and Rescue Service.

**COUNCILLOR J STREET
EXECUTIVE MEMBER OF THE COMBINED FIRE AUTHORITY**