



BEDFORDSHIRE AND LUTON COMBINED FIRE AUTHORITY

REPORT OF THE BEDFORDSHIRE AND LUTON COMBINED FIRE AUTHORITY FROM ITS MEETING ON 30 APRIL 2010 TO CENTRAL BEDFORDSHIRE COUNCIL

MEETINGS

Bedfordshire and Luton Combined Fire Authority (CFA) held its Annual General Meeting on 30 June 2010 at Fire and Rescue Service Headquarters. The major issues discussed at the meeting are summarised below:

1. MEMBERSHIP

Councillor J Burnett was welcomed to her first meeting of the Combined Fire Authority.

2. ELECTION OF CHAIR

Councillor S Timoney was elected as Chair of the Fire Authority for the ensuing year.

3. ELECTION OF VICE CHAIR

Councillor R Davies was elected as Vice Chair of the Fire Authority for the ensuing year.

4. CFA TREASURER

The Chair advised the meeting that this was to be the last meeting attended by Mr V Logan, who was about to retire as CFA Treasurer. Mr Logan had held the post of CFA Treasurer since the CFA was established in 1997.

5. STANDARDS REGIME

The Secretary/Monitoring Officer advised that the Government had announced in the Queen's Speech that the proposed Decentralisation and Localism Bill would include proposals to 'abolish the Standards Board regime'.

The precise scope of the proposals was currently not known and, until legislation had been enacted, the Standards Committee would continue to perform its statutory roles of promoting high standards of ethical conduct and dealing with complaints that the Code of Conduct had been breached.

6. DRAFT COMMUNITY RISK MANAGEMENT PLAN 2010-13

Members considered a draft Community Risk Management Plan (CRMP) for 2010-13 together with summaries of the associated public and staff consultations exercises.

It was agreed that Officers should consider how best to reflect and communicate any changes in the CRMP resulting from the consultation exercises, with any further changes to

the CRMP being agreed by the Combined Fire Authority at its next meeting on 9 September 2010.

7. TREASURY MANAGEMENT – ANNUAL REPORT FOR 2009/10

The Treasurer presented the Authority's Annual Report for Treasury Management for 2009/10, which noted the Borrowing/Investment Strategy, Interest Rate Movements, Investment/Borrowing Operations, and Prudential Indicators and Performance Measurement.

8. INTERNAL AUDIT ANNUAL REPORT 2009/10 AND AUDIT PROGRAMME FOR 2010/11

Stephen Lake, Audit Manager of Tribal Business Assurance, the Authority's Internal Auditors, presented the 2009/10 Annual Report on the Authority's Internal Control Environment and the Audit Programme for 2010/11.

Of the eight areas reviewed, three had been assessed as providing substantial assurance and four areas were assessed as providing reasonable assurance.

One area, ICT – Back-up and Recovery, had been assessed as providing 'limited assurance' and recommendations had been made to further strengthen the control environment in these areas.

9. COMPREHENSIVE AREA ASSESSMENT (CAA)

Members had earlier noted that CAA had been abolished and all work updating the Area and Organisation Assessments had ceased.

However, the Audit Commission was to continue to deliver the audit in line with the statutory Code of Audit under which they were required to give a value for money conclusion alongside their opinion on the financial statements. The Audit Commission was also to report any significant findings in the Annual Audit Letter but would not be reporting a score for the Use of Resources.

As the Audit Commission had not identified any risks from their data quality checks last year and the management arrangements review for data quality were found to be adequate, they had confirmed that they would not be conducting a data quality assessment for the Service this year.

In 2009/10 the Service's overall assessment was scored as performing adequately. The Service had improved substantially in this area of audit since the last assessment and had been expecting a score of 3 (Performing Well) for the Managing Performance Assessment. Whilst this matter would not now be verified by the Audit Commission, it was considered that this work would have achieved an overall assessment of 'Performing Well' in 2010/11 for the Authority.

10. PERFORMANCE REPORT 2009/10 QUARTER 4 AND YEAR END

Members noted a report detailing and comparing the Service's performance against its performance indicators for the period 1 April 2009 to 31 March 2010 against the same period in 2008, as well as the progress on projects contained in the 2009-10 Community Risk Management Plan (CRMP).

11. STATEMENT OF ACCOUNTS 2009/10

Members adopted a Statement of Accounts for 2009/10, subject to audit.

The District Auditor was, before 30 September 2010, to carry out a formal audit of the accounts and issue an Audit Certificate. The Statement would then be made available for public inspection.

Members noted that the Auditor would be starting the formal audit on 12 July 2010.

12. REVENUE BUDGET AND CAPITAL PROGRAMME MONITORING – 2010/11

On 5 February 2010 the Authority approved its 2010/11 Revenue Budget of £28,498,725. It had previously endorsed the proposal that a regular monitoring report should be submitted to each of its meetings, and Members received the first report for 2010/11.

13. REVENUE BUDGET STRATEGY

Members agreed a Strategy for formulating the 2011/12 Revenue Budget.

14. EQUALITY AND DIVERSITY REPORT 2010

Members received a report on the Fire and Rescue Service's Equality and Diversity Report 2010 Questionnaire Submission covering 1 January to 31 December 2009 and the subsequent National Equality and Diversity Report 2010.

15. PUBLICATION OF EXPENDITURE AND OTHER INFORMATION

Communities and Local Government (CLG) had released a press notice urging all councils to publish details of all spending over £500 in full and online as part of wider scheme to improve openness and accountability.

In September 2010, draft Codes of Practice on payments over £500 and contracts / invitations to tender over £500 were to be published for formal consultation, with final codes of practice expected in November 2010 to enable authorities to publish in January 2011.

16. INFORMATION BULLETIN

The Combined Fire Authority received a Bulletin containing information on various matters relating to the Fire and Rescue Service, including incidents of note and compliments.

Amongst the items reported were:

A resident from Sandy expressed thanks to the crews from Woburn, Ampthill and Kempston Blue Watch following her involvement in a road traffic collision:

.....'On 23 January 2010 I was involved in a serious traffic accident near junction 13 of the M1 on the way to Milton Keynes. It was 8.30 am and I was taking my Mum out for the day shopping and was waiting at the lights when a car came off the slip road and struck me on the driver's door.

My Mum and I were trapped in the car and I am told that your crew helped cut us both free. I do not remember their names or faces just voices trying to keep us calm and help me breathe.

Will you please identify those people and pass on my sincere gratitude for their help which no doubt saved our lives.

My beloved Mum is almost 77 and was badly bruised, shocked and broke her elbow. I broke 5 ribs and badly damaged my right arm. After 6 days in intensive care and a further 10 days in the ward I am recovering at home and now almost 6 weeks after the event I am pleased to say we are both doing well.

Thank you so much, I really don't know what else to say.'.....

A member of the public sent a message of thanks via the Service website:

.....'This message is to the crews from Shefford and Stopsley Fire Stations that came out to the rescue of my horse ... on 12 March 2010. I would just like to say a huge thank you to everyone for the speedy response to my call and the efficient and caring way they dealt with my problem.'.....

A resident from Willington expressed thanks to Bedford Red Watch following a Home Fire Safety Check:

.....'I would like to say thank you for the service we received after our smoke alarm was faulty.

The service was very good from the first phone call to Watch Commander Tai and Firefighter Brewer's response.

Both were friendly and helpful. .

Thank you again.'.....

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