



BEDFORDSHIRE AND LUTON COMBINED FIRE AUTHORITY

REPORT OF THE BEDFORDSHIRE AND LUTON COMBINED FIRE AUTHORITY FROM ITS MEETING ON 10 DECEMBER 2010 TO CENTRAL BEDFORDSHIRE COUNCIL

MEETINGS

Bedfordshire and Luton Combined Fire Authority (CFA) held a meeting on 10 December 2010 at Dunstable Community Fire Station. The major issues discussed at the meeting are summarised below:

1. COMMUNICATIONS

Donation of Fire Engines

Members noted a letter of thanks from the Onset Trust following the donation of Fire Engines to Kenya.

2. COMMUNITY RISK MANAGEMENT PLAN PROJECT - REVIEW OF OPERATIONAL RESOURCES TO MEET RISK

At its meeting on 9 September 2010, the Fire Authority had endorsed the publication of the Community Risk Management Plan 2010-2013 which detailed the projects to be undertaken over the period of the plan to deliver a number of benefits and outcomes for the community.

Service Delivery Project SD/10 - Review of Operational Resources to Meet Risk – included twelve specific work streams to be reported to and endorsed by the Fire Authority.

CFO Fuller gave an update on two linked work streams to review the crewing arrangements and duty system at all wholtime Stations, and the provision of wholtime crewing arrangements and related appliances at Toddington Fire Station, and outlined an alternative shift duty system which would provide a number of benefits for the Fire Authority, its employees and the community.

Subject to Members' agreement, formal consultation with the representative bodies on the alternative shift duty system would commence.

An assessment of risk for the geographical area covered by the Day Crewed Toddington had shown that the workload and activity of the fire engines based at the station were broadly similar to those fire stations currently crewed by firefighters conditioned to the 'retained' duty system (RDS).

It was envisaged that with comprehensive engagement with both representative bodies and staff, the benefits to the Fire Authority, its employees and the community would be recognised and the system implemented by way of a collective agreement.

Members agreed that the Chief Fire Officer should continue consultation on the development and implementation of an alternative shift duty system and the review of the crewing arrangements and appliances at Toddington Fire Station.

3. REGIONAL MANAGEMENT BOARD

Members concurred with a suggestion made at the 13 October 2010 meeting of the Regional Management Board (RMB) that the RMB be dismantled by 31 January 2011 and the existing membership meet informally as the East of England Fire Forum, when required, to exchange information on Service impacts and identify areas where collaboration or co-operation had the potential to provide efficiencies to one or more Service.

All matters relating to the Regional Control Centre would be dealt with by the Local Authority Control Company (LACC) and the Regional Control Project Board, and discussed at the East of England Fire Forum.

4. STANDARDS COMMITTEE

The Localism Bill was expected to include proposals to 'abolish the Standards Board regime' although it was unlikely to be enacted before late 2011. On 5 November 2010, the Standards Committee considered that, pending further guidance from the Government, it should:

- Continue in its current role
- Continue to meet on the dates scheduled in the 2010/11 calendar of meetings
- Undertake only in-house training
- Monitor possible amalgamations of fire authorities (Comprehensive Spending Review)
- Keep an open mind on possible joint working arrangements with other authorities

Members requested the Secretary/Monitoring Officer to consult with the existing Independent (Co-opted) Members to ascertain whether they would be prepared to extend their membership of the Fire Authority's Standards Committee from May 2011 until the enactment of the Localism Bill or when further guidance was available from the Government.

5. AUDIT COMMITTEE AND POLICY AND CHALLENGE GROUPS

Members received and considered the Minutes of the Audit Committee and the three Policy and Challenge Groups held in November 2010.

6. CALENDAR OF MEETINGS: MAY 2011

Due to the local elections to be held on 5 May 2011, it was agreed that no meetings of the Policy and Challenge Groups would be held in May 2011. Instead, for 2011 only, one meeting was to be held in July 2011 to cover both the end of year reporting for 2010/11 and the half-year reporting for 2011/12.

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

The Head of Finance and Asset Management presented the budget monitoring position as at 31 October 2010.

It was agreed that six fire appliances which were due to come to the end of their lease at the end of December 2010 should be purchased as an addition to the 2010/11 capital

programme to be funded from existing capital programme funding from the Public Works Loan Board (PWLB) loan.

Further, in the light of recent unauthorised visits and thefts from the rear of Kempston Headquarters, workshops and fire station, security fencing and gates be provided, to be funded from capital receipts.

8. TREASURY MANAGEMENT

The Head of Finance and Asset Management presented an update on the Fire Authority's Treasury Management to 30 September 2010.

9. ANNUAL REVIEW OF THE AUTHORITY'S EFFECTIVENESS

A Form of Review was agreed to be completed by all Members prior to a facilitated meeting.

The outcome of the Review, including any identified areas for improvement and agreed performance objectives for the coming year, together with a record of Members' attendance at meetings, would be considered by the Audit Committee on 8 February 2011 for approval by the Fire Authority on 12 April 2011, and feeding into the Fire Authority's Annual Governance Statement, which was published in June each year.

10. MEMBERS' ALLOWANCES SCHEME 2011/12

All Members present declared a personal interest in this Item.

Members agreed that the Members' Allowances Scheme for 2011/12 should remain as the 2010/11 Scheme, subject to any revision in the 2011 daily rate of mean weekly earnings when it is advised by the Local Government Association.

11. APPOINTMENT OF ASSISTANT CHIEF FIRE OFFICER

Assistant Chief Fire Officer Robert Hull had formally advised of his intention to retire in February 2011.

It was proposed that the selection process for a replacement would take place in early 2011 and an Appointment Panel comprising the Executive Members was constituted.

12. 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:

DC Lee Chennell, Bedfordshire Police expressed thanks to the Service:

.....'Please accept my gratitude for the time and resources provided by Bedfordshire and Luton Fire and Rescue Service in assisting Bedfordshire Police, it was a perfect example of the two services working together. The outcome of the assistance he provided was the successful prosecution of an offender at Luton Crown Court.'.....

A resident from Bedford expressed thanks:

.....'I had occasion to call on the help of a crew from Barkers Lane Station as I had inadvertently locked my granddaughter in the car along with the keys to the car and my house keys. Within minutes a crew of Bedford's 'finest' arrived and quickly resolved my

problems by accessing the upper storey of my house so that I could get the spare keys. They were courteous, professional and swiftly dispelled my distress.'.....

The Service received thanks from **King's Arms**, a homeless charity in Bedford:

.....'This is to say thanks for your involvement in the past three 'Pre Tenancy Courses' we have run through the King's Arms Project with the Council. The way you deliver the training sessions are fun and interesting and your warm style makes it very approachable for the clients and ourselves. Look forward to seeing you again soon.'.....

A resident from Milton Ernest wrote to CFO Fuller:

.....'I am writing to thank officers from your force for their tremendous work in dealing with a fire at my home.

I don't think I have ever come across a more efficient operation in any walk of life than that carried out by the crew that arrived here within minutes of my 999 call. Everyone knew exactly what they were supposed to do and within no time they had the situation under control. They worked like a highly trained unit throughout.

What also struck me was their customer care expertise. Each one of them hit exactly the right note under the circumstances when dealing with my wife and myself and with neighbours who came to see if they could help.

I can offer no higher praise with regards to the quality of the operation and of the people on the team than to say they were absolutely fantastic. The incident commander, I'm sure, has a great future ahead of him.'.....

The Headteacher, Putteridge Junior School, Luton wrote to express thanks:

.....'I am writing to thank two of your colleagues who arranged a very special day for our children during National Fire Safety Week.

They should be commended for their enthusiasm and commitment to a local project (Operation Torch) that I thought of to link with the Safety Week. Both Officers were extremely helpful and under took extra work to help arrange further activities for my Year 6 children.

Operation Torch was a great success, with over six hundred children and staff watching a pretend fire in 4H's classroom. Our children and the Infants were enthralled by the pretend drill including the special effects of the smoke and the two rescued 'dummy electricians'. Lots of creative writing and safety discussions were undertaken in light of the exercise. The Borough Health and Safety Inspector attended and was very impressed by this community initiative. Both of your officers should be praised for their efforts in planning these events...

COUNCILLOR JOHN STREET
EXECUTIVE MEMBER OF BEDFORDSHIRE AND LUTON COMBINED FIRE AUTHORITY