

MERSEYSIDE FIRE AND RESCUE AUTHORITY

17TH JANUARY 2006

PRESENT: Councillor Jimmy Mahon; Vice-Chairman
in the Chair;
Councillors Vera Best, Jack Colbert,
Kevin Firth, John George, Ted Grannell,
Dave Hanratty, Peter Johnson, Jimmy
Kendrick, Tommy Mann, Isabel Moon, Don
Prout and Albert Smith.

**Apologies for absence were received from
Councillors Tony Newman, Les Byrom, Eddie Clein,
Linda Maloney and Sharon Sullivan.**

69. Preliminary Matters

The Authority considered if there were any declarations of interest, matters of urgency or items that may require the exclusion of the press and public because of the possibility of the disclosure of exempt information.

Resolved that -

- (A) the declaration of a personal interest by Councillor Firth in relation to the item relating to an Absence and Attendance Policy, arising from his membership of UNISON, and the determination that on the basis of the exemptions specified in paragraph 10 (2) of the Members' Code of Conduct the interest does not constitute a prejudicial interest, was noted;
- (B) one additional item of urgency relating to an application to capitalise exceptional costs of firefighter pensions be considered as a delay would not be in the interests of the efficient operation of the Service;
- (C) (i) the press and public be excluded from the meeting during consideration of the item relating to the provision of emergency cover for Lancashire Fire and Rescue Service because of the possibility that exempt information by virtue of paragraph 11 of Part 1 of Schedule 12A to the Local Government Act 1972 may be disclosed; and
(ii) the "exempt information" status initially accorded to the report on absence and attendance policy be lifted;

- (D) the congratulations of the Authority be extended to the Chief Fire Officer upon the award to him of the Queen's Fire Service Medal and also to Councillors Johnson and Mann who will serve as Mayors of their respective boroughs in the forthcoming municipal year; and
- (E) the comments of the Chair of Buckinghamshire Fire Authority crediting this Authority for the excellence of its Members' Handbook and Community Safety Committee arrangements, be noted.

70. Minutes of the Previous Meeting

Resolved that the proceedings of the meeting of the Authority held on 22nd November, 2005 be approved as a correct record and be signed accordingly by the Vice-Chairman subject to noting the verbal update provided by the Chief Fire Officer on the progress made with regard to the relocation of the Secondary Control Room and creation of an Incident Support Room.

71. Annual Audit Letter

The Authority received a presentation by Judith Tench, Relationship Manager at the Audit Commission, supported by Kay Greenhalgh, concerning the Annual Audit letter for 2004/05 for the Authority. The letter sets out the conclusions and key issues arising from the recent audit of the Authority by the Commission and these findings were discussed with Members of the Authority.

The Relationship Manager emphasised the overall positive outcomes of the audit. The Authority was congratulated on its achievement of an "excellent" categorisation in the 2005 Comprehensive Performance Assessment and the letter highlighted how the Authority had demonstrated strengths in key areas including leadership, financial management, governance arrangements and community safety. The principal action needed by the Authority was to build on the CPA result and ensure that excellence is fully embedded throughout the Service.

Resolved that the contents of the letter be noted and Judith Tench and Kay Greenhalgh be thanked for their attendance at this meeting.

72. Use of Part-Time Contracts to Deliver Water Rescue and Incident Command Training
(CFO/05/06)

The Authority considered Report CFO/05/06 of the Chief Fire Officer concerning the use of part-time contracts to deliver Water Rescue and Incident Command training utilising personnel from the Search and Rescue Team, the Training and Development Academy and the Incident Management Team.

Resolved that: -

- (A) the issuing of part-time contracts to personnel from the Search and Rescue Team to deliver Water Rescue training on rota days be approved;

- (B) the issuing of part-time contracts to personnel from the Training and Development Academy to deliver Operational Incident Command training at weekends be approved;
- (C) the recruitment of an additional Member of the Training and Development Academy support staff on a 12-month temporary contract be approved;
- (D) the financial issues arising from the implementation of this initiative be considered as a part of the budget process; and
- (E) the outcome of the initiative be reported back to the Authority at the appropriate time.

73. Senior Officer Provision for Incident Command
(CFO/06/06)

The Authority considered Report CFO/06/06 of the Chief Fire Officer concerning the outcome of consultation with the Representative Bodies regarding Senior Officer provision for Incident Command.

Resolved that: -

- (A) the implementation on the proposed level of Senior Officer cover provision contained within Report CFO/219/05 of the Chief Fire Officer (as appended to Report CFO/06/06) be approved and the Authority Staffing Model be amended accordingly; and
- (B) the extension of the lease car scheme to Group Managers be approved in principle and be included within budgeting plans.

74. Rank to Role Implementation/Crew Level Maintenance Team Pilot Scheme
(CFO/07/06)

The Authority considered and noted the contents of Report CFO/07/06 of the Chief Fire Officer concerning implementation of the Rank to Role Process and Crew Level Maintenance Team Pilot.

75. Part-Time Contracts Update
(CFO/08/06)

The Authority considered and noted the contents of Report CFO/08/06 of the Chief Fire Officer concerning the ongoing dispute with the Fire Brigades Union over issuing further part-time contracts.

76. Time Off Arrangements for Trade Union Representatives
(CFO/09/06)

The Authority considered Report CFO/09/06 of the Chief Fire Officer concerning the outcome of consultation regarding arrangements for all recognised Trade Unions and other representatives within the Service.

With the permission of the Authority, Les Skarratts of the Fire Brigades Union addressed the meeting on this issue and set out concerns of his Union.

Resolved that consideration of this matter be deferred to the meeting of the Authority to be held on 9th February, 2006 in order to allow for documentation from the Fire Brigades Union and any response to such documentation from the Chief Fire Officer, to be circulated to all Members.

77. Low Level of Activity and Risk Stations – Heswall Fire Station
(CFO/10/06)

The Authority considered Report CFO/10/06 of the Chief Fire Officer concerning the outcome of the consultation process on Low Level of Activity and Risk Stations.

Resolved that having considered the outcome of the consultation process on Low Level of Activity and Risk Stations (LLAR), the change in staffing at Heswall Community Fire Station to the LLAR staffing system, as set out in Report CFO/202/05, be approved with the result that the fire engine based at Heswall will continue to be staffed at all times and that the Authority will continue to meet its high response standards as set out in its Integrated Risk Management Plan.

78. Consultation Response – Fire Service Proposals for Non Fire Emergencies
(CFO/11/06)

The Committee considered and noted the contents of Report CFO/11/06 of the Chief Fire Officer concerning the response to the consultation recently issued by the Office of the Deputy Prime Minister concerning proposals for non-fire emergencies.

79. Draft Fire and Rescue Framework 2006/08
(CFO/12/06)

The Authority considered Report CFO/12/06 of the Chief Fire Officer concerning the Draft Fire and Rescue Framework 2006/08 issued by the Office of the Deputy Prime Minister.

Resolved that the Authority respond to the Office of the Deputy Prime Minister to the effect that it does not consider it appropriate for Fire and Rescue Authorities to act as guarantors to "Firebuy Ltd" and that any provisions to this effect in the framework document should be removed.

80. Review of Community Fire Safety District Staffing Model

(CFO/13/06)

The Authority considered Report CFO/13/06 of the Chief Fire Officer concerning the outcome of the consultation on the Community Fire Safety District Staffing Model.

Resolved that the implementation of the Community Fire Safety District Staffing Model as set out in paragraph 4 of Report CFO/13/06 be approved and that the Staffing Model of the Authority be amended accordingly.

81. Disability Discrimination (Public Authorities) (Statutory Duties)

Regulations 2005

(CFO/04/06)

The Authority considered Report CFO/04/06 of the Executive Director of Law and Human Resources concerning the Disability Discrimination (Public Authorities) (Statutory Duties) Regulations 2005 and their impact on the Authority.

Resolved that the contents of the report be noted and the Diversity Manager be requested to enable the participation of Councillor Jack Colbert in the Disability Forum.

82. Absence and Attendance Policy

(CFO/14/06)

The Authority considered Report CFO/14/06 of the Chief Fire Officer concerning a consultation process that has now concluded in relation to the introduction of a revised Absence and Attendance Procedure.

With the permission of the Authority, Les Skarratts of the Fire Brigades Union and Jon Riley of UNISON, addressed the meeting on the views of their respective trade unions on the proposals contained in the draft Absence and Attendance procedure.

Resolved that consideration of this matter be deferred to the meeting of the Authority to be held on 9th February, 2006 in order to allow for the submission of any further documentation by the Fire Brigades Union.

83. Application for Capitalisation of Exceptional Costs of Firefighter Pensions in 2005/2006

The Authority considered a letter from the Executive Director of Finance, ICT and Procurement to the Secretary of State, following the recent meeting held with him, making an application to capitalise exceptional costs of firefighter pensions in 2005/06.

Resolved that: -

- (A) the contents of the letter and the approach within it be noted and endorsed;
- (B) the issues which will arise from the response received by the Secretary of State be discussed in detail at the Members Awayday; and
- (C) all Members be requested to note at this stage that it may be necessary to re-convene the Budget Authority meeting due to be held on 9th February in the light of the serious issues being considered and that the date of such a re-convened meeting, if required, would be 1.00 p.m. on 28th February, 2006.

84. Provision of Emergency Cover for Lancashire

The Authority considered a verbal report of the Chief Fire Officer concerning a request from Lancashire Fire and Rescue Service for assistance in the provision of emergency cover in that Service area in the event that industrial action arises from a ballot for such action being held in Lancashire.

Resolved that the Chief Fire Officer be requested to write to the Chief Fire Officer of Lancashire to request more detailed information on the nature and level of support that they are requesting in the event of industrial action.
