



## BEDFORDSHIRE AND LUTON COMBINED FIRE AUTHORITY

---

### **REPORT OF THE BEDFORDSHIRE AND LUTON COMBINED FIRE AUTHORITY FROM ITS MEETING ON 12 DECEMBER 2008 TO LUTON BOROUGH COUNCIL**

#### **MEETINGS**

A meeting of the Bedfordshire and Luton Combined Fire Authority (CFA) was held on 12 December 2008 at Dunstable Community Fire Station. The major issues discussed at the meeting are summarised below:

#### **1. LOCAL GOVERNMENT REORGANISATION**

The Secretary reported on amendments to The Bedfordshire Fire Services (Combination Scheme) Order 1996 (the CSO) and consequential changes arising from local government reorganisation (LGR).

The Local Government (Structural Changes) (Areas and Membership of Public Bodies in Bedfordshire and Cheshire) Order 2008 was currently in draft form and subject to approval by both Houses. It was anticipated that the Order would be finalised in early 2009.

The draft Order amended the CSO to provide that, from 1 April 2009, the area of the CFA should be Luton Borough Council, Bedford Borough Council, and Central Bedfordshire Council. It did not make any other changes to the CSO, but contained transitional provision for the appointment of representatives who would become Members of the CFA from 1 April 2009.

Following the date of the final Order, the transitional provision would enable representatives of Bedford Borough Council and the shadow council for Central Bedfordshire to attend meetings of the CFA, but not to vote (prior to 1 April 2009). Also, under the draft Order, the CFA was to have regard to the representatives' views on the budget requirement and precept at its budget meeting, which was to be held on 6 February 2009.

The CFA had been notified of the representatives (and Members from 1 April 2009) appointed by Bedford Borough Council (3) and Central Bedfordshire (5), some of whom were in attendance

## **2. STANDARDS COMMITTEE: 10 NOVEMBER 2008**

Members of the Standards Committee had considered the consultation document *Communities in Control: Real People, Real Power – Codes of Conduct for Local Authority Members and Employees: October 2008* which sought comments on proposals to clarify the Members' Code in its application to Members' conduct when acting in a non-official capacity and the proposed introduction of a Model Code of Conduct for Local Government Employees, which would become part of the employees' terms and conditions of employment.

Comments on twenty two questions had been invited by 24 December 2008 and Members agreed a detailed response based on the observations of the Standards Committee.

## **3. PUBLIC ENGAGEMENT AND CONSULTATION**

Members considered the range of public engagement activities undertaken to ensure meaningful consultation on the delivery of Bedfordshire and Luton Fire and Rescue Service.

To involve stakeholders and consult with local communities effectively the Authority was to:

- hold consultations at different times of the day;
- use different methods of engagement, e.g. internet, group meetings, visits to community centres and newspaper advertisements etc.;
- provide relevant information which is of appropriate quality and presented in a way that is easily understood; and
- engage with the whole community including those whose circumstances might make them vulnerable, e.g. elderly, new communities, low income, families in rural areas, and minority groups.

## **4. DRAFT COMMUNITY RISK MANAGEMENT PLAN 2009 - 2012**

The original Integrated Risk Management Plan (IRMP) had been designed to cover the period 2004 until 2009 and include annual Action Plans as part of the process. The proposed draft Community Risk Management Plan (CRMP) 2009 – 2012 had been designed and developed using the *Fire and Rescue Service National Framework 2008 - 11* and subsequent CLG guidance as the overall framework.

Within this overall national framework context, local 'strategic' issues had been developed to help deliver Community Risk Reduction initiatives and service improvement at a local level. Six key areas of service delivery had been proposed to form the basis of the new three year plan:

1. adopt New Incident Attendance Standards
2. fit our Resources to Identified Risks
3. review our Fleet of Specialist Vehicles
4. boost our Community Safety Activity
5. enhance the Enforcement of Fire Safety law
6. enhance Training to Increase Safety of Firefighters at Emergency Incidents

The draft Community Risk Management Plan 2009 - 2012 was purposely designed to be in a fresh, engaging tabloid format which would include two distinct versions of the same overall document:

- a brief 'Summary' version complete with a questionnaire enclosed, and

- a more in depth 'Consultation Document'

Members noted proposals to consult with the internal and external stakeholders during the consultation process which had commenced on Monday 1 December 2008 and was to conclude on Monday 23 February 2009.

The final Community Risk Management Plan 2009 - 2012 was to be presented to the Authority with consultation comments in March 2009 ready for a possible 1 April 2009 implementation.

## **5. UPGRADING THE SERVICE'S COMMUNICATIONS CONTROL SYSTEM**

Members noted that this work had been deferred pending the establishment of the Regional Control Centre, as the full range of equipment would not be required following change over. Unfortunately, as the FiReControl project had further slipped, it was now necessary to take action. Provision had earlier been identified in financial reserves for this work.

It was agreed that, due to the urgency and importance of this matter, the release of £123,000 from financial reserves be approved to allow a full upgrade of the Service's Integrated Communications Control System to take place and reimbursement be sought from CLG due to the slippage of the FiReControl project.

## **6. REVENUE BUDGET AND CAPITAL PROGRAMME MONITORING – 2008/09**

Members considered the third 2008/09 monitoring report of the year and agreed that an additional £288,000 arising from investment interest and an underspend on firefighters' pay and associated costs in the sum of £200,000 be earmarked and carried forward to support the 2009/10 revenue budget process.

## **7. TREASURY MANAGEMENT – OPERATIONS REPORT APRIL – OCTOBER 2008**

This report summarised the treasury management operations that had taken place in the current financial year to 31 October 2008, dealing with interest rate movements, investment/borrowing operations, performance measurement and Prudential Indicators.

For the year to date, the average interest rate achieved from temporary investments was 6.08%, higher than the average Local Authority Seven Day Rate over the same period of 5.23%. No Prudential Indicators had been breached

## **8. INFORMATION BULLETIN**

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

It was noted that, in the quarter year reported, about 200 years of experience had been lost due to retirements.

Members also noted operational statistics for the quarter period and received presentations from B-Live and Local-News TV, and local media coverage of the Service

Amongst the items reported were:

**A resident of Bromham** telephoned the Service to pass on her thanks to Kempston Blue Watch who attended her car fire on the A428. Unsurprisingly, she was a little shocked at the time but said the crew were wonderful.

**John Harwood, Chief Inspector, Operations, Bedfordshire Police** sent thanks to Paul Masters at Training Centre after the Service took part in Fast Roads Training:

*.....'I refer to recent partnership and joint training at Chicksands for Police, Fire and Rescue, Ambulance and HATO.*

*Over a 5 week period, the services joined training in response to emergency situations likely to occur on the fast roads of the County, within J Division.*

*This gave the opportunity to share thoughts and gain greater appreciation of each others' roles, equipment and staff and how we can complement each other in achieving our aims, safely.*

*It was apparent that as the training progressed, a greater amount of knowledge and understanding was being passed and that this has, on the whole, made our partnerships stronger.*

*On behalf of the Training Co-ordinator for J Division, member of my Divisional team, I thank you very much for your assistance and those of your staff which attended each training date, providing support contributing to this partnership training.*

*I feel sure that we have made a significant improvement into providing a better informed and safer environment in which to assist the public.'.....*

**Sadiq Khan MP** wrote in about the National Schools' Fire Safety Day:

*.....'I am writing to thank you and your colleagues for hosting the launch event for the first ever National Schools' Fire Safety Day. Your assistance was greatly appreciated and helped make the launch a success.*

*The facilities at Luton Fire Station were excellent and provided a great setting for the event, which was very well organised. I was grateful for the opportunity this provided to convey our key fire safety messages to the children and to a wider audience through the media.'.....*

**COUNCILLOR S TIMONEY**  
**VICE CHAIR OF THE COMBINED FIRE AUTHORITY**