



Minutes of Annual General Meeting of Bucks Branch held at Gerrards Cross Fire Station on Saturday 23rd April 2005

1/ Welcome/

The members were welcomed by the Chairman Frank Knowles; making mention of Mr Goddard recently retired Bucks CFO who was at his first NARF Meeting since joining us as a new member. In addition Frank welcomed Bill Atherton who now lives in Bedfordshire, and had come along to rejoin Bucks Branch now that we are more local to him than Cheshire Branch.

2/Address by CFO Representative

The meeting was immediately addressed by ACFO Des Williamson who had been asked to deputise for the CFO Damian Smith. Des introduced himself and outlined his function in the brigade, he went on to advise us that he was going to give us a talk on Integrated Risk Management. Referring to the Fire and Rescue Act that had come into force in 2004 he said that national standards of fire cover had as a result disappeared and fire services had to now raise its own standards taking into account fires, road traffic accidents, community safety and other emergencies. It was a question of determining the risks and then determining the resourcing. Part of his job was to put into effect a Risk Management Strategy for Buckinghamshire and Milton Keynes with a need to assess prevention of incidents such as fires, floods, terrorism with cognisance taken of such as smoke alarms, introduction of sprinkler protection in premises, road traffic accidents etc. All this would be working together with other agencies to produce the strategy that would be the first phase.

The second phase would be that of Protection:

There would be new statutory duties including that of fire prevention with its inclusion of what he would loosely refer to as the Who, Where and When aspects.

The fire service was indisputably the most efficient organisation to do all that and there was now a statutory duty to do it!

There would be the need to determine at some stage, the question of where does the responsibility of the fire service stop and other agencies take over. Des said that he had two colleagues looking at resources and things like role competence, structures etc. One was another uniformed officer and the other a non operational female colleague who had come into the county from Hertfordshire.

He went on to say that Bucks Fire Service had a good record on fire fighting and also in respect of fire protection issues but the radical changes would require a much more robust business structure. There were CP Audits now in force and Bucks Fire had been inspected about a month ago but the outcome was still under wraps with the formal report to Counties expected in the autumn. There was a little bit of concern about the final result of the Audit because the Assessment carried out bore little resemblance to the protection afforded to Buckinghamshire residents. Of the three remits of the Audit the two which fell within the fields of responsibility of himself and his colleague Andy were in his opinion acceptable but the third covered by Claire {the non operational officer mentioned above}, had all the material which fell within the purview of the national framework which gave direction to all fire and rescue services within it and had originated from the office of the Deputy Prime Minister.

Pressure on all the officers was quite high at this particular time and this was especially so with smaller authorities like Bucks who unlike the larger authorities who had some spare capacity, were finding it difficult to resource. An approach to the Fire Authority had been sympathetically received and a budgetary increase of 5% had been conceded.

Des said that a Civil Contingencies Act was now in force which would take account of Civil Resilience's in respect of issues like flooding, the fuel crisis, and air crashes the increased threat from terrorism among many others.

The fire authorities must be Category 1 Responders with obligations both locally and regionally, he said he was seeking to paint a picture for us, of the radical nature of the changes in concept that were intended. The national framework that came out with the Fire and Rescue Act was already into its second version. Historically there had been a lack of leadership at corporate level. On the one hand there was what purported to be guidance but on the other there was the giving of specific and mandatory obligations to follow which tended to make for conflict.

Des: I then got totally lost on writing down the 6 key areas that you mentioned but did get the bit about the set up regionally that would result in a boundary for the local authority under regional structure reaching from Milton Keynes to Isle of Wight and across to Margate which would incorporate nine fire authorities and a population of going on nine million people. Geographically????

There would be such changes dealing with

- Procurement
- Resilience
- Human Resources
- Training Structure
- Regional Control Rooms

In respect of the last of these, the suggestion is that by 2006 they will scrap 46 current control rooms and replace them with nine regional control facilities. He went on to say that Bucks Fire Authority was due to meet next Monday and they had previously expressed concern about the intention to regionalise control centres. However it would seem that any formal representations on this issue would likely be held off until after the General Election (or was it Council Elections????) There was concern that there is absolutely no proof of the effectiveness of regional fire controls and fire control staff was because of apprehension about this sort of future action, leaving the service in droves.

It appeared that the ACFO's lead on issues such as Ops and the CFO leads on the issues of Resilience.

There is also something that Des referred to as New Dimensions Strategy which is another Government inspired initiative. This has several themes among which are:

- Strategic Capability for Decontamination
- Urban Search and Rescue (for which Des gave us a small indication of progress already throughout the country.)

The Chairman thanked Mr Williamson for his very excellent outline of what had been a very comprehensive subject area to cover in such a short time and invited him to stay for the rest of the meeting if he was so inclined, which offer was declined because the ACFO had a prior engagement to attend.

3/ Attendance and Apologies

The following members attended the meeting:

J Goddard, J Housego, J W Southcott, John J Tubb, J Dunbar, R A Ellis, W Edwards, A Letteboer, J Plumridge, R Hodges, D Richards, J Maher, J Langford, M H Packer, P Robinson, F Knowles, T Price and P Reynolds. Apologies were submitted in respect of: R Potton, E Frost, N Razey, B Young, M Goss, R Goss, S Fuller, J Whitmore, J Hudson, G Bowles, S Dixon, Mike Haycock, E Braithwaite, P K Robinson, W Perry, D Palmer

4/ Minutes of Last Meeting

The Chairman, having ascertained that all had seen the Minutes asked for points of accuracy to be identified. John Tubb asked why the list of those attending at 2004 AGM had not been recorded, which transpired to be because the attendance sheet for that meeting had been mislaid before the opportunity to type up the Minutes had presented itself!

5/ Matters Arising

There were no matters arising from the 2004 Minutes.

6/ District Representatives Report

The report was presented to the meeting by Peter Robinson because Frank Knowles who had in November 2004 replaced Peter as District 6 Representative had been unable to attend either the District Meeting at Reigate, or, the Council and AGM Meetings held in March of this year. Copy of Peter's written Report is attached to these Minutes for those who were unable to obtain a copy at the Meeting.

7/ Benevolent Fund Representative's Report

Again, because Jim Dunbar had presented a detailed update of FSNBF matters in a written Report this is again attached for those who weren't able to pick up their copy at the Meeting.

8/ Branch Treasurer Report

Ernie Shankster explained how his financial statement had been produced and confirmed that the figure of £2915 –50 shown as Branch Balance did include some money from subscriptions held over from 2004, together with early subscriptions received for 2005 year that would be paid through the District Secretary to National Treasurer when the final income from subscriptions was in his possession. Ernie was most concerned that there was no firm indication inherited from Jack's paperwork of which members had not as yet paid for 2004 so he was going to rely on the honesty of members. He read out an amusing plea for co-operation from members in his crusade to get the subscription issue under control and the Secretary promised to include Ernie's plea in with the Minutes when he sent them out before end of April hopefully. It was proposed J Goddard and seconded by A Letteboer that Ernie's Report be accepted.

9/ Subscription Payments Initiative

The Chairman and Treasurer both spoke to outline progress on an intention to introduce Bank Standing Order Mandates for Branch Members. This had first been introduced to members by Peter Robinson at the 2003 AGM when he had talked about this system having been successfully introduced in the Kent Branch and again by him in 2004 when he had received approval from those present to go ahead with similar plans for Bucks Branch. Terry Price said that he still had to discuss such a Scheme with HSBC Bank High Wycombe (our bankers), but if they wouldn't accommodate the arrangement we would move to a Barclays Branch where it

is known such a Scheme is available. Terry said the next step after setting it up, would be to send out to individual members, an Application Form to sign up for the Mandate to deduct annual subscriptions from members bank accounts. All you have to do is to fill out the mandate and return it to Ernie in the envelope provided. On its receipt, he will activate the details and forward the mandate to your bank manager. He will then pay your subs on the first day of each year without you having to be reminded.

Peter reassured members that there would be no increases in subscriptions for many years to come for national level and it was doubtful that either Branch or District would need more income, so there should now be a long period of stability in the amount to be deducted each year. Terry stressed that it is important that members should return the form to Ernie Shankster when it does come out, and not the Bank, so that he can keep a record of those that have opted for such an arrangement which he hoped most members would do!

9/Election of Officers

The Chairman asked Peter Robinson to take the Chair whilst the first item was dealt with being, the election of Chairman for 2005. Before any action was taken, Terry Price suggested that the Meeting might like to consider the matter of appointing Jeff Goddard our CFO for many years until his retirement in October 2004 as President of the Branch, a position that hadn't been filled since Mr Ward, the previous holder of that position, had died. After ascertaining that Mr Goddard would be willing to accept such a role in our Branch, Peter advised members that this was an honorary role and not acknowledged officially by Council Constitution although it was permissible. He also suggested to laughter, that unlike Mr Ward who had erroneously thought that the position exempted him from paying subscriptions, he would expect Mr Goddard to continue to pay his although he reassured Mr Goddard that it wouldn't be due again until 2006. This appointment was endorsed by a unanimous vote in favour with Mr Robinson having seconded the Proposal by Terry Price.

- Chairman It was proposed by David Richards and seconded by Jack Langford that Frank Knowles be re-elected as Chairman and this was accepted unanimously. Frank said it had been unfortunate that because of previous commitments and illness, that he had been unable to attend meetings in 2004 and the earlier part of 2005 but future meetings were now in his diary and there should be no future problems. Mr Goddard suggested that in his new role, he would be happy to deputise for Frank if for any reason he could not manage to get to a meeting.
- Secretary Proposed John Tubb and seconded by Jack Plumridge, Peter Robinson was re-elected as Branch Secretary.
- Proposed also by John Tubb and again seconded by Jack Plumridge, Terry Price was re-elected as Assistant Secretary. Peter Robinson clarified that Terry's role would mainly be to produce the annual News Letter and to have joint responsibility for arranging meetings and social functions. For his part, he would this year produce the Minutes and deal with all correspondence issues and distribution of mailings to members. It had been unfortunate that two days after accepting the Secretary role from Jack Cracknell at the 2004 AGM, he had left for a five week period in Australia leaving most of the paperwork to Terry until almost the end of the year.
- Treasurer It was Proposed by Jack Plumridge and Seconded by Arthur Letteboer, that Ernie Shankster be re-elected and this was also unopposed.
- NFSBF Representative Proposed by Pat Reynolds and Seconded by Jack Plumridge , Jim Dunbar was again elected as Fund Representative for the Branch.

10/ Any Other Business.

Whilst acknowledging that AOB had no place on an AGM Agenda, Peter advised members that it was there mostly to allow him to introduce a Raffle that would be held after the Meeting to seek to fund the costs incurred in sending the ten ladies who had come to Gerrards Cross with their husbands, on a trip to Milton's Cottage at Chalfont St Giles and also to fund the refreshments that would be available courtesy of Mesdames Price, Shankster and Morling. It had been unexpected, but the brigade had requested £46 for the loan of a personnel carrier for the first time ever, so arrangements had needed to be made to hire a commercial taxi company to provide a "people carrier" which had reduced the cost to £36. Peter suggested that members gave maximum support to the raffle for which several members had donated prizes and the Branch would cover any shortfall on the refreshment costs which again for the first time that he could recall, the station had been unable to make provision for since they had no cook at Gerrards Cross. The new CFO had written and agreed that Bucks NARF Branch could have their meetings for the future years, at the New Headquarters Station in Stocklake Aylesbury but owing to having only been open since 18th April 2005, it had been unavailable as a venue this year.

Terry Price gave advance notice that our Branch Social Luncheon which in 2004 had been held for the first time "Off Station" and had proved to be a great success, would again be held at a restaurant venue in Aylesbury in late autumn. He said that he, Peter and Ernie had been to check out the venue and sample the cuisine at own expense and had not found it wanting! Terry refused to be drawn on exactly where it might be located preferring to announce the 2005 venue later in the year. He only wanted to give advance notice that due to popular demand, the Autumn Luncheon would not be on a fire station so that members, (or most likely their spouses) who didn't come because the environment wasn't conducive to full enjoyment when located at a fire station, might reconsider this year.

The Meeting concluded at 1230 hours.