

MINUTES OF THE MEETING OF THE ROYAL BERKSHIRE FIRE AUTHORITY'S AUDIT AND GOVERNANCE COMMITTEE



Held on Wednesday 27 September 2017 at 6.30pm

RBFRS Headquarters, Newsham Court, Pincents Kiln, Calcot,
Reading, Berkshire RG31 7DS

Members: * Councillor Alistair Auty
(* present) * Councillor Christine Bateson
* Councillor Jason Brock
* Councillor Avtar Cheema
* Councillor Adrian Edwards
Councillor Carol Jackson-Doerge
* Councillor Iain McCracken
* Councillor Philip Mirfin
* Councillor Mohammed Rasib

In attendance: Conor Byrne (Head of Finance and Procurement, HOFPP)
Steve Foye (Deputy Chief Fire Officer, DCFO)
Trevor Ferguson (Chief Fire Officer, CFO)
Alison Kennet (External Auditor, Ernst & Young)
Preeti Malik (External Auditor, Ernst & Young)
Jacky Manning (HR Advisor)
Ryan Maslin (Finance Manager)
Katie Mills (Head of Corporate Services)
Dave Myers (Area Manager (East))
Linda Pye (Clerk)
Jim Powell (Area Manager (Risk & Performance))
Fayth Rowe (Committee Officer, CO)
Tony Vincent (Head of Business Information and Systems, HBIS)

15. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

There were no apologies for absence for inability to attend the meeting received.

17. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

In accordance with the provisions of the Fire Authority's Local Code of Conduct there were no declarations of interest received from Members.

There were no Declarations of Interest received from Officers.

18. MINUTES OF THE MEETING HELD ON 27 JULY 2017

RESOLVED that:

The Minutes of the meeting held on 27 July 2017 be approved as a true and

Action

correct record and signed by the Chairman.

19. CONSIDERATION OF ANY MATTERS PROPERLY REFERRED TO THE COMMITTEE FOR DECISION

There were no matters referred to this Committee for decision.

20. PEER REVIEW ACTION PLAN

Jim Powell (Area Manager (Risk and Performance)) reported that the Fire Peer Challenge was part of sector led improvement and was designed to meet the needs of Fire and Rescue Services. The process had evolved and reflected the sector priorities which had been identified by the Home Office Fire Reform Programme. The RBFRS Peer Challenge had taken place from 28th February 2017 to 3rd March 2017 and had consisted of a range of on-site activities including meetings, focus groups and fire station visits.

The team considered seven key assessment areas and six leadership questions that made up the Operational assessment toolkit within the context of themes identified by the host Service. The team had been asked to focus on the following key areas:

1. An assessment of the progress made by the Service since the last Fire Peer Challenge in 2014;
2. To what extent would delivering the RBFA Corporate Plan 2015-19 improve outcomes for communities across Royal Berkshire?
3. To what extent would delivering the RBFA Corporate Plan 2015-19 meet the requirements of the Home Office Fire Reform Programme?

The report highlighted some positive aspects of how RBFRS delivered the service and provided assurance to Members and Officers on organisational successes. The report also outlined some challenges that the Service faced based on the findings of the Peer Team. An action plan which was set out in Appendix A had been developed by Officers to address or enhance those areas where service improvement had been identified.

A presentation on the Peer Challenge report had been taken to the Management Committee meeting on 19th September 2017.

The challenge team noted that progress had been made since 2014 within the following areas:

- Culture and leadership – a positive change noted in behaviour, culture and leadership across the organisation. It was felt that targeted staff engagement would be beneficial to cement a one team ethos, particularly during time of significant sector and organisational change.
- Improved governance arrangements – with Member development of the national agenda noted as being of value. The Member/Officer Protocol would help define areas of responsibility and also communication protocols.
- Criticism in 2014 had been that service delivery was response centric, however it was now felt that the current Corporate Plan and IRMP demonstrated a far more balanced approach to service delivery.
- Learning and development – a high quality of training provision. While reviews

into NVQ and MOC had not been conducted they were planned.

- Health and wellbeing – notable practice was observed in relation to reducing sickness levels, mental health awareness and health and fitness provisions.

Turning to key findings and areas for exploration, specifically related to improved outcomes for communities, the challenge team noted that:

- Significant improvements had been made in performance monitoring. However, in some areas performance still needed evaluating and managing more effectively.
- There was greater organisational confidence in service delivery – a perception identified that IRMP was not owned at station level which could impact on the quality of interventions received by the public. However, the report acknowledged that the team visited during a period of significant change with the service redesign and restructure ongoing.
- Service delivery activities and opportunities – the service restructure would enable the RBFRS to deliver prevention, protection and response more effectively. It was noted that the need to use specific approaches in the different local authority areas within the county were understood and this targeted approach should deliver more effective outcomes than a single county-wide approach alongside balancing competing priorities.

In terms of the extent to which delivery of the Corporate Plan would meet the requirements of the Home Office Fire Reform Programme, the team noted good aspirations and plans to further the reform agenda, and good foundations on which to build. More specific comments were made against the reform programme's three themes:

- Efficiency and collaboration – good and improving partnerships at strategic and operational levels, and notable collaborative successes including Thames Valley Fire Control Service (TVFCS) and co-location with partners. The challenge team did however give the view that it was time to increase collaboration with neighbouring fire and rescue services and other partners. Management Committee were informed that the ACFO for **Collaboration, Change and Finance** had oversight of a number of collaboration projects.
- Transparency and accountability – the challenge team recognised the level of work the organisation had committed to in streamlining and improving governance arrangements. A need was identified for robust procurement processes and cost effective procurement options that would need to withstand external review. The RBFRS were confident that recent changes to procurement processes would mean they could withstand scrutiny.
- A key focus on workload reform – a positive change in behaviour, culture and leadership was praised in the report. It was felt that the RBFRS had moved some considerable distance towards an empowering culture and recognising the importance of investing in staff at all levels. A need to improve workforce diversity was highlighted and was an area being developed.

Key findings were also presented on improvements to the Retained Duty System (RDS) and 'on call' improvements. The challenge team strongly encouraged the RBFRS to explore further how other services had adapted the traditional retained/wholetime structures to become more agile. Since the peer review, a number of work streams had been pulled together as part of the RDS Programme

Board in order to address recruitment, retention and training issues, and the widening of opportunities for staff.

In conclusion, the Group Manager (Risk and Performance) stated that a number of successes had been identified that needed to be built upon and developed. An action plan was being formed to progress recommendations, many of which were already underway, and areas for further exploration. It was proposed that the action plan would be routinely monitored by the Audit and Governance Committee.

Councillor Adrian Edwards thanked the challenge team for such a detailed and positive report which had highlighted some good areas and some not so good. He referred to the governance arrangements and queried whether the reduction in the number of Members on the Fire Authority and the reduction in the number of meetings had realised any savings. The CFO confirmed that it was coming out at slightly above cost neutral. Councillor Edwards was pleased to see the comments in respect of health and safety and wellbeing for staff. However, in terms of fitness he thought that RBFA was the highest scoring fire authority in that area and he would have liked to have seen that highlighted in the report. Mental health awareness was an issue which had not been grasped particularly well in the past. Councillor Edwards stated that on the whole the report was positive.

Councillor Mohammed Rasib asked what was happening in relation to the Member/Officer protocol and it was confirmed that that would be coming to the Fire Authority in October.

Councillor Iain McCracken thanked Officers for their work around this and asked if in future a forecast date for completion could be included in the action plan.

RESOLVED that:

- The proposed action plan set out in Appendix A be agreed and progress monitored;
- The Peer Review report attached at Appendix B that had been submitted to Management Committee for Fire Authority approval be noted.

21. STATEMENT OF ACCOUNTS AND AUDIT LETTER

Conor Byrne, Head of Finance and Procurement (HOFP), presented the 2016/17 Statement of Accounts for approval.

The HOFP referred to page 131 of the report which set out the Movement in Reserves Statement where it was noted that Earmarked Reserves had fallen by £1.237m in 2016/17. Page 134 of the agenda included the Balance Sheet and the HOFP highlighted a couple of specific areas. There had been a £10m fall in value of Property, Plant and Equipment which was mainly due to a change in the valuation methodology. However, this would have a zero impact on the Unusable Reserves. The other area which was mentioned was around the Pension Liability. The deficit had increased to £385m due to a fall in the discount rate. This would not have an impact on the General Fund as the Government had stated that it would meet any liability. Councillor Iain McCracken asked how many years this figure had increased and the HOFP replied that some years it increased but there had been years when the deficit had decreased. A top up grant from Government would be received in each financial year.

The HOFP thanked Ryan Maslin who had made a huge contribution to the work on

the Statement of Accounts.

Alison Kennet, External Auditor, introduced the Audit Results Report and Annual Audit Letter for the year ended 31st March 2017 which was a statutory requirement.

Preeti Malik, External Auditor, confirmed that Ernst & Young would be issuing an unqualified audit opinion on the financial statements which were set out in section 3. There were also no matters to report on the Fire Authority's arrangements to secure economy, efficiency and effectiveness in the use of resources and it was also expected that an unqualified value for money conclusion would be issued.

Preeti Malik referred to page 59 of the agenda and in particular the issue in respect of Barnet Waddingham, the actuary. This was a national issue. The Fire Authority had also changed its valuers in 2016/17 which had led to the need to make compensating adjustments in the Statement of Accounts.

On page 61 of the agenda it was noted that one risk identified was that management was in a unique position to perpetrate fraud because of its ability to manipulate accounting records directly or indirectly and to prepare fraudulent financial statements by overriding controls that otherwise seemed to be operating effectively. ***However, following fieldwork the auditors concluded that there were no material weaknesses in controls or evidence of material management override.***

The Annual Audit Letter summarised the Audit Results Report.

Councillor Iain McCracken referred to the audit fees and he asked whether these would increase in the future. Alison Kennet responded that as the Fire Authority had changed valuers then it had been necessary to bring in experts to ensure that the accounts were correct and reasonable. There would therefore be an additional fee which would need to be justified with the Head of Finance and Procurement and which would then need to go to the PFA for verification.

The CFO stated that it was reassuring to have an unqualified opinion and he thanked Conor Byrne and his team for their work on the accounts. This was endorsed by Councillor Iain McCracken and the External Auditors.

RESOLVED that:

- The Audit Results Report as set out in Appendix A be noted;
- The Annual Audit Letter as set out in Appendix B be noted;
- The letter of representation as set out in Appendix C be approved;
- The Statement of Accounts 2016/17 as set out in Appendix D be approved.

22. DRAFT 2016/17 STATEMENT OF ASSURANCE

Steve Foye, Deputy Chief Fire Officer, presented a report on the Annual Statement of Assurance 2016/17. A Statement of Assurance was a backward look at the adequacy of arrangements within the previous financial year.

As part of the Fire and Rescue National Framework for England, 'all Fire and Rescue Services were required to provide assurance to their communities and to Government, on financial, governance and operational matters and on national resilience capability.' The purpose of this Statement of Assurance was for Royal Berkshire Fire Authority to formally confirm the adequacy of arrangements for the

effective management of financial, governance and operational matters in Royal Berkshire Fire and Rescue Service (RBFRS).

This was the fifth annual Statement of Assurance that RBFA had issued and the general approach for the production of the Statement had remained the same. However, in light of RBFRS being subject to a Peer Review earlier this year, it was deemed unnecessary to have further external assessment for this process.

The internal assessment that was conducted by RBFRS Officers against the Framework criteria produced the following summary judgements:

Financial – requirements associated with the appropriate management of financial matters	Fully met
Governance – requirements associated with appropriate business practice, high standards of conduct and sound governance	Fully met
Operational – requirements associated with operational matters	Fully met
National Framework – requirements associated with the Fire and Rescue National Framework for England (July 2012)	Fully met

Evidence to support the judgements had been set out in the Appendices to the report.

The DCFO stated that this Statement of Assurance had been finalised in the months immediately following the Grenfell Tower fire and the judgements did not take account of the impacts of the incident. The Grenfell Tower incident had had, and would continue to present, very significant implications and the results of this work would be reflected in the next Statement of Assurance.

RESOLVED that:

- The summary judgements within the Statement of Assurance for each of the four key areas of Finance, Governance, Operations and delivering the National Framework be noted;
- It be agreed that the RBFA Statement of Assurance 2016/17 be approved for signature by the Chairman of the Authority and the Chairman of Audit and Governance Committee for publication.

23. EMERGENCY SERVICES MOBILE COMMUNICATIONS PROGRAMME

Steve Foye, Deputy Chief Fire Officer (DCFO), provided an update and assessment of the progress of the Emergency Services Mobile Communications Project (ESMCP) and delivery of the Emergency Services Network (ESN) that would replace the current Airwave provision.

Updates were provided on programme governance and time lines and progress within the key work streams of Control, Devices, Training and Fleet together with a summary of how the programme funding was operating.

The DCFO confirmed that a piece of work was taking place nationally to review the programme timelines for transition and implementation which were likely to be

reset. The DCFO as reassured by the effort which was being put into this and it was hoped that a more realistic timeline would be forthcoming in November/December 2017.

Councillor Iain McCracken expressed his concerns that the timetable had currently taken so long and RBFA was in Tranche 2. He had concerns around the financial implications and whether the funding set aside for this project would be sufficient. The DCFO confirmed that funding to date had enabled the necessary works to be undertaken to ensure that the Fire Authority was in the best place it could be at this stage. When a more realistic programme was available it might be necessary to revisit the funding arrangements.

Councillor Iain McCracken referred to the collaboration initiative and asked if the other two authorities were in the same position as RBFA. The DCFO confirmed that he chaired the South Central Programme Board and he therefore had close contact with the other fire authorities in the region. There was a good close working relationship and the potential to register joint concerns. It was essential that the Programme Board continued to influence the programme along with the other blue light services.

Councillor Iain McCracken asked who would sign the letter to the National Programme and the DCFO responded that the Chairman of the Fire Authority would be best placed to sign the letter.

RESOLVED that:

- The contents of the report be noted;
- The Service's ongoing approach to supporting the ESMCP and delivering the ESN in collaboration with regional partners be agreed;
- It be recommended to the Fire Authority that they write to the National Programme to register their concerns as to the delay of transition and implementation planners.

24. QUARTER 1 PERFORMANCE REPORT

Jim Powell, Area Manager (Risk and Performance) provided Audit and Governance Committee with an overview of the RBFRS First Quarter (April – June 2017) performance for the 2017/18 financial year. The report also detailed the impact of the Grenfell Tower fire on the operational and strategic functions of RBFRS.

This was the first quarterly performance report to present information against measures and targets agreed by the Fire Authority for 2017/18. It reported performance in four key areas. The key highlights from each quadrant were as follows:

Quadrant One – Service Provision:

- Five residents had been injured in dwelling fires in Q1 which was a small improvement on the same period last year (six). Home Safety Fire Checks were being directed at groups known to be at greater risk of being injured in an accidental dwelling fire.
- The Fire Authority had a statutory obligation to report safeguarding issues to the local authority and all of the 47 children and vulnerable adults identified as

facing safeguarding issues this quarter were reported within 24 hours.

- The new Response Standard was to arrive at a minimum of 75% of emergency incidents within 10 minutes of the call being answered. Whilst the target was not currently being met performance had improved compared to the same period in the previous year.
- Category One Home Fire Safety Checks, referred from Thames Valley Police for those residents at increased risk of arson, should be carried out within three working days. 85.7% of those checks were achieved within the timescale and although this was below target it was recognised as a significant improvement compared to previous reporting periods.
- 233 Commercial Audits had been completed which did not meet the target of 350. However, following the Grenfell Tower fire the focus had been around ensuring that all high rise residences had been identified and **inspected**. Whilst the target had not been met there had been an increase in completed unsatisfactory audits which showed that the authority was targeting the correct properties to remedy and/or prosecute. There were also a further 144 completed, but not yet closed audits in the system.
- There had been two confirmed and one unconfirmed fire dwelling fire deaths in Q1 all within the high risk group. The Fire Authority would continue to identify the most at risk residents through the Audit Referral Programme and Home Fire Safety Checks to reduce vulnerability and future likelihood of dying in a fire.
- The target for 50% availability of retained appliances was not achieved in Q1 at 35.6%. Projects were being run in conjunction with HR in order to improve recruitment, assessment pass rate and retention of retained firefighters as a priority for 2017/18 which would hopefully increase RDS crews.

Councillor Iain McCracken referred to page 10 of the report item 6 – 23 (22%) had a smoke alarm present which had not activated. He asked if the supplier had been the same in all these instances. The DCFO stated that he was unable to answer that question at present. However, the point made was valid – there could be a number of reasons why an alarm would not activate but he would investigate and report back.

SF to action

Quadrant Two – Corporate Health:

- Fitness levels amongst eligible staff had improved compared to both the previous quarter and the previous year as a whole at 99.8%.
- In terms of Spend Compliance the Fire Authority had exceeded the target of 70% of its spend being subject to competition at 88.35% in Q1. Whilst the authority was just under 100% compliant spend target (99.4%) early identification and resolution to non-compliant spend was in place with it being subject to competition during Q2.
- Capital spend against budget continued to remain on track with no overspend in Q1. The two most significant capital budgets were allocated to the Theale Fire Station build (£7.2m) which was due for completion in Q3 2019/20 and the procurement of new fire appliances by Q4 2019/20 with a budget of £2.9m.
- It was noted that no requests had been referred to the Information Commissioner in Q1 but a request for an internal review was undertaken and

upheld. Since the Grenfell Tower incident on 14th June 2017 the number of FOI requests had increased with six of the 11 requests in June being related to the incident.

- The transition spend summary provided an update on spend and associated delivery. Of particular note was the Apprenticeship Project, key courses such as Coaching and Mentoring and the resourcing of Benenden Healthcare to provide discretionary private healthcare to staff which would have a positive impact on staff sickness levels.
- There had been a slight downturn in performance against sickness targets since the previous quarter, rising from 3.04% to 4.59%. The most significant cause for this increase was longer term sick leave, specifically related to mental health and muscular skeletal problems. A dedicated Mental Health Adviser post had been appointed in September and would be employed for a fixed term with the specific focus of furthering mental health support in conjunction with the health, safety and wellbeing action plan.

Councillor Philip Mirfin referred to the increase in the number of FOI requests and he asked if there had been any impact on staffing and whether the authority had considered charging more. The DCFO confirmed that there had been a spike as a result of the Grenfell Tower incident and all requests had been dealt with by existing staffing levels in the set timescales. He expected that levels would drop back now. The Fire Authority had an Information and Governance lead to ensure that it was **compliant** in this respect. The authority was not allowed to ask whether a request was from a private individual or from the media although sometimes this was obvious and trends could easily be spotted.

Councillor Iain McCracken referred to the increase in sickness levels which was specifically related to mental health and muscular skeletal issues. During this quarter there had been 31 episodes of long term sickness absence compared to 13 in the last quarter of 2016/17 and he asked if a pattern was emerging. Jacky Manning confirmed that the amount of long term sickness (over 28 days) had increased but that it was harder to control. A number of staff had now left the service and therefore some of that tended to end in a natural way. However, the authority had put in place planned investment in a Mental Health Adviser which would give staff an opportunity to talk and receive expert advice. This was a fixed term appointment which would enable that person to ensure that a strategy was developed. Councillor Alistair Auty stated that a 33% increase in sickness levels in one quarter was significant and he hoped that that figure would decrease in the next quarter. Jacky Manning replied that research had indicated that nationally there would be an upward trend as there was a possibility of a flu epidemic and the usual increase in ailments during the Winter months. The authority was currently offering flu jabs to staff in the Control Room.

Councillor Iain McCracken referred to page 30 of the report and asked if an Estimated End Date could be included for all capital schemes. He also asked that where end dates were coming up he would like some indication as to whether that timescale had been achieved or not. He asked if that approach could be adopted for the next quarterly performance report.

Councillor Adrian Edwards referred to the procurement of new fire appliances and asked if the Fire Authority was looking at electric or hybrid vehicles. Dave Myers responded that the prices at present meant that an electric or hybrid vehicle was not financially viable but that should not preclude the authority looking at those

vehicles. One Officer had actually taken up a hybrid option and therefore the uptake of these vehicles might increase in the future. In terms of refuelling or charging points this would need greater investment and the authority would need to see a greater take up before considering such an option. Government funding had now dried up and therefore there would be significant infrastructure costs in developing this option. The end of life value of electric vehicles would also be considerably diminished in comparison to a normal appliance.

Quadrant Three - Priority Programmes:

- RBFRS had historically faced difficulties in recruiting to and retaining Retained Firefighters which had a detrimental impact on Retained crew availability. A project was under way to review training, assessments and turnover of RDS staff. Councillor Iain McCracken asked what the timescale would be for the review of training. It was confirmed that the Project Board was looking to run this over the next year.
- The Organisational Development Programme helped to develop a workforce that continuously professionalised, supported and nurtured its staff, including the recruitment in May of an Apprenticeship Scheme Co-ordinator. The Leadership Development Programme for Middle Managers continued to be developed and evaluated with the pilot scheme held in early 2017 now evaluated and a proposal and Project Initiation Document (PID) being prepared for approval.
- The Emergency Services Mobile Communications Programme dominated the Priority Programme Risk Register due to the nature of the programme with key risks being high costs, lack of ESN capacity and the cost of the programme across its lifetime.
- Over the next few years, the look and locations of the fire stations in Berkshire would change and adapt to ensure delivery of the highest possible service for residents and value for money. The Service Redesign Project (IRMP) was on track to be delivered within the required timeframes. Work around implementing the proposals from the recent consultation exercise would continue.
- The Hungerford Station Refurbishment Project had been completed on time and had been re-opened in late June 2017. The Theale Fire Station Project was underway but there had been some slippage on this project's RAG status due to delays outside the control of RBFRS. The next steps of the project would be to complete the negotiations for the site, and if successful, review the outcome of the planning application and complete a review of the remit of the Dee Road site. In response to a query the CFO confirmed that the site was being purchased from another Arms Length Organisation. Once planning permission had been received then the final purchase price would be agreed. He advised that a maximum figure had been set for the purchase of the site and once the site had been secured then the authority could look at a strategy for disposal of the Dee Road site.

Councillor Iain McCracken asked what the target number was for the level of retained firefighters. The DCFO responded that the way the retained crew operated was similar to ordinary firefighters but it was less defined in terms of a fixed number. Recruitment/training was being driven at present to try to get the authority over the 50% availability level. It was queried whether an FTE equivalent

could be set. The DCFO advised that the FTE equivalent was 13.

Councillor Christine Bateson asked if the rules could be changed in respect of retained firefighters i.e. the distance from the station. The DCFO confirmed that the Fire Authority did have a set of standards, however, it was necessary to ensure that people were aware of what was required of them from the outset. The locality of individual stations would dictate how far the authority could look for retained firefighters and therefore there was an element of flexibility. The key time where cover was required was during the day. The CFO stated that the availability of appliances would be key in determining if the Fire Authority was being successful rather than the staffing numbers.

Councillor Philip Mirfin asked if the Fire Authority had looked at local companies to see whether they would be prepared to sponsor a retained officer? It might be worthwhile looking into how the RNLI operated as they managed to recruit volunteers. Dave Myers confirmed that at a recent meeting consideration had been given to distributing leaflets to local companies. Managers would also be prepared to visit companies to give a presentation. Councillor Bateson suggested that the Fire Authority should also seek volunteers from local authorities.

Quadrant Four - Corporate Risk:

The Committee went through each risk in detail as set out on pages 61 to 75 of the report. Particular mention was made of the following risks:

- **Payroll** – Further issues might arise if the provider of the service (Dataplan) failed to provide payroll services in line with the contract standard and work was not accurate. It was becoming increasingly more likely that they might no longer be able to fulfil the contract as there appeared to be insufficient resilience in their provision and a reliance on RBFRS to check the accuracy of their work. It was confirmed that it had taken longer than anticipated to put actions in place to mitigate this risk but progress had now been made. A monitoring system was in place to ensure that the provider was complying with requests and also to check the accuracy of the work.
- **Emerging risks and implications of Grenfell Tower** – RBFRS had ensured that the risks associated with **residential buildings** in Berkshire were visible and prioritised on the Corporate Risk Register with appropriate treatments around identifying and **inspecting** relevant buildings. It had been necessary to ensure that staffing models were flexible, that current policies were revised/updated and additional funding/resources put in place where appropriate. This risk scored quite highly as the authority was in the early stages of Phase 2 of a four phase plan which had been developed to incorporate multi-agency working. Outcomes of the national inquiry would be awaited. Councillor Iain McCracken asked how many buildings had been **inspected**. It was noted that 157 buildings had been audited, mainly in the commercial environment. The authority had learnt a lot about the built environment of the area over the last 10-15 years.
- **Collaboration, Partnership Working and Shared Service** – If this work was not delivered due to the complexity and volatility in the current political and financial landscape then this could impact on the effectiveness of service provision and on the authority's financial position. A number of measures had therefore been put in place to mitigate this risk. Councillor Iain McCracken asked when the Medium Term Financial Plan (MTFP) was due to come to

Committee. It was confirmed that the MTFP was due to come to Committee in December 2017. Councillor McCracken asked if the risks highlighted in this report could be fed into that together with any impact on the authority's financial position.

CB to action

- **Pension Liabilities** – If the Fire Authority did not comply with the various pension regulations and the calculations of pension contributions, entitlements and payments made were incorrect, which was increasingly likely due to changes to those regulations which were complex in nature, changes to pension and payroll administrators, the ability to accurately interrogate historic records (which did not sit with RBFRS) and limited pensions expertise and capacity within the HR department. Jacky Manning confirmed that the risk was high due to changes in pension legislation. Councillor Iain McCracken was concerned after reading this and asked if the authority needed to look at changing the provider. Jacky Manning advised that it was a data issue with the third party provider (Dataplan). The CFO said that this was a wider issue which was complex in nature. The RBFRS scheme was complex and therefore not many of the providers in the market would be willing to take it on.
- **Information Systems, Data and Analysis** – This information was important as it enabled the authority to report on performance, to respond to audit needs and to make informed decisions. The CFO confirmed that he had recently met with HMIC in regard to the new inspection programme. Councillor Iain McCracken asked if the Audit & Governance Committee could have sight of the template when it was available.
- **Firefighter Safety** – Whilst there had been no incident related deaths of firefighters nationally since 2013 there was an ongoing emphasis on the importance of delivering up to date and effective policies and training around firefighter safety to reduce the risk in the future. This therefore continued to be a high risk.
- **ESMCP** – This posed two risks – the RBFRS provision and what would happen if the national programme failed.
- **Operational Availability, Crewing and Capabilities** – Failure to maintain appropriate numbers of personnel and associated skills and knowledge requirements could affect the ability to provide an efficient and effective level of service delivery that matched the authority's commitments and stakeholder expectations. An RDS project had been put in place to create sustained recruitment and retention in order to deliver increased availability across all RDS stations.
- **Volatility of Funding** – Failure of RBFRS to achieve a balanced budget. The CFO confirmed that there were a number of risks around this and therefore it would be prudent to bring the MTFP to the December meeting in order to review it prior to budget setting.
- **Response Home Office Reform Programme** – This was a new risk and would bring a focus to the reform programme.
- **Capacity, Capability and Resilience** – If RBFRS failed to increase the capability, capacity and resilience of its workforce then it could be expected to fail to deliver against its statutory requirements and broader organisational development objectives. Katie Mills stressed the importance of ensuring that the workforce had the necessary skills in place and the People Strategy would

TF to action

be key to that as it looked at issues such as succession planning, the recruitment process and policies and the recognition/rewarding of staff.

- **Management of Corporate Data, Information and Knowledge** – If RBFRS failed to control the sharing and management of corporate data, information and knowledge this could lead to significant financial and reputational damage and/or legal challenge. It was noted that one of the treatments stated that ‘Establish a programme of in-house IT penetration test using the Nessus software ...’. It was queried what the Nessus software was and the CFO confirmed that Officers would find out and report back to Committee.
- **Management of Assets** – Failure to manage ICT, facilities and operational assets from acquisition to disposal would mean that the Fire Authority would be unable to effectively track assets for maintenance and financial management purposes. Katie Mills stressed the need to ensure that robust arrangements were in place and further work would be required to drive this forward.

TV to action

It was noted that in Q1 11 accidents had required investigation. Councillor Adrian Edwards asked if these figures included near misses. The DCFO confirmed that he would check.

SF to action

Councillor Iain McCracken noted that a number of the risks were linked and it would be useful if they could be located one after the other. He also asked for an explanation of the treatment date. The DCFO confirmed that the treatment date should list the date in which the update had been put in place for the treatment. Jim Powell added that when the review date was reached then this would be flagged up with the owner of the risk. The risk register would be reviewed on a fortnightly basis as part of the Senior Leadership Team meetings.

Councillor Christine Bateson said that it would also be useful if an arrow could be included to indicate the direction of travel of the risk score. It was noted that the current score could not be higher than the inherent score but the DCFO stated that Officers were looking as to how this could be presented in a more accessible format and that consideration could also be given as to how the direction of travel could be indicated.

JP to action

Councillor Iain McCracken stated that he was impressed with the performance pack as it gave clear information and enabled the authority to have a better understanding of the issues within each of the quadrants and he thanked the Officers involved in producing the pack. He reiterated the fact that he would like all linked risks to be brought together and he would also like to see the risks ranked in order of the highest to lowest where possible.

JP to action

RESOLVED that:

- The performance against Service Provision and Corporate Health measures for the targets agreed by the Fire Authority for 2017/18 be noted;
- The progress made on the two priority programmes be noted;
- The position of corporate risk be noted.

25. DATE OF NEXT MEETING

Tuesday 19th December 2017 at 6.30pm, RBFRS Headquarters, Newsham Court, Pincents Kiln, Calcot, Reading, Berkshire RG31 7SD.

The meeting concluded at 8.15 pm