

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



Held on Wednesday, 28th March 2018 at 6.30pm

Brigade 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 Pauline Helliar-Symons (*Item 12 only*)
* Councillor Carol Jackson-Doerge (*from 6.40pm*)
* Councillor Iain McCracken
Councillor Philip Mirfin
Councillor Mohammed Rasib

In Attendance: Richard Battley (Head of Facilities and Assets, HFA)
Steve Brown (Service Liaison Lead, HMICFRS)
Conor Byrne (Head of Finance and Procurement, HOFPP)
Becca Chapman (Data and Performance Analysis Manager)
Nick Carter (West Hub Manager)
Trevor Ferguson (Chief Fire Officer, CFO)
Steve Foye (Deputy Chief Fire Officer, DCFO)
Daniel Harris (Internal Auditor, RSM)
Becci Jefferies (Head of HR and Learning and Development, HHRLD)
Simon Jefferies (Assistant Chief Fire Officer, ACFO))
Alison Kennett (External Auditor, Ernst & Young)
Katie Mills (Head of Corporate Services, HOCS)
Jim Powell (Area Manager (Service Delivery))
Nikki Richards (Director of Support Services, DSS)
Linda Pye (Clerk)
Fayth Rowe (Committee Officer)
Tregear Thomas (Chair of Pension Board)

Action

39. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Apologies for inability to attend the meeting had been received from Councillors Alistair Auty, Avtar Cheema, Philip Mirfin and Mohammed Rasib.

40. 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.

41. MINUTES OF THE MEETING HELD ON 19 DECEMBER 2017

Resolved:

That the Minutes of the meeting held on 19 December 2017 be approved as a true and correct record and signed by the Chairman.

The HHRLD referred to page 10 Item 31 Royal Berkshire Fire Authority – Pay Policy Statement. The table in the report had contained an error and following discussions with the Monitoring Officer an amendment had been made, however, it would not have impacted on the substantive item.

42. INTERNAL AUDIT UPDATE

Conor Byrne, Head of Finance and Procurement (HOFP), presented Members with the findings from audits carried out against the 2017/18 Audit Plan.

It was noted that two audits had been completed since the last Committee meeting – timesheets and timekeeping and key financial controls. The detailed audit reports had been attached to the report as appendices.

The assignment on the Capital Investment Strategy had been postponed until the 2018/19 Audit Plan. Fieldwork had been completed on the Firefighter Pension Administration and a debrief was scheduled for 20th March 2018. Management had requested an additional review which involved testing the payroll provider's (Dataplan) resilience. The scope for this review had been created and agreed with management at RBFRS and it was anticipated that fieldwork would commence on 14th May 2018.

The Audit and Governance Committee noted that the assurances given in audit assignments were included within the Annual Assurance report. In particular it was noted that any negative assurance opinions would need to be noted in the Annual report and might result in a qualified or negative annual opinion. Dan Harris confirmed that no negative opinions had been issued to date and therefore it was anticipated that an unqualified year end opinion would be issued.

Timesheets and Timekeeping Audit – This had been undertaken as an advisory piece of work in addition to the 2017/18 internal audit plan and therefore no formal opinion had been provided. Some weaknesses had, however, been noted in the control framework which related to the levels of timesheet monitoring being undertaken. Additionally it was noted that the current system was limited in its capabilities as a time recording system and ten actions had been agreed with management to further improve and enhance the current system in place which included additional training and the mandatory use of additional functionality of the existing system.

Key Financial Controls Audit – The consistent application of key controls across RBFRS's main financial systems provided on-going assurance over the financial management of the organisation. A broad selection of these key controls were tested on an annual basis and for the 2017/18 review areas covered included General Ledger; Cash, Bank and Treasury Management and Income and Debtors. The assurance rating was the same as the previous year's review in this area, which continued to be a positive

assurance rating. Whilst the same assurance rating had been provided RBFRS had made good progress in implementing previously agreed actions, with four fully implemented and one superseded. Eight low priority actions for implementation had been agreed with management in respect of this audit.

Councillor Adrian Edwards welcomed the report on Timesheets and Timekeeping as without it these issues would have taken some time to resolve and it was good to see that a number of the actions had already been completed.

Councillor Iain McCracken referred to page 46 of the agenda – item 2.1 – Bank reconciliations are completed on a monthly basis for each of RBFRS's four bank accounts. He noted that the implementation date was March 2018 and he queried whether this had been completed. Conor Byrne stated that following the previous year's audit it had been recommended that reconciliations should be as timely as they could be. In the current year there had been a number of unrepresented cheques which had not been cancelled. Reconciliations were now being undertaken on a monthly basis and all would be completed at year end.

RESOLVED THAT:

- The 2017/18 progress report be noted.

43. INTERNAL AUDIT PLAN 2018/19

Conor Byrne, Head of Finance and Procurement (HOFP), presented the draft 2018/19 Audit Plan to the Committee for review and approval.

The scope of the plan was broader than in previous years as it aimed to not only address the main risks facing the Fire Authority but to measure progress in improving organisational efficiency and effectiveness as the Service implemented Vision 2019.

Dan Harris confirmed that the Internal Audit Plan was always linked to the Fire Authority's Strategic Objectives. The Senior Leadership Team had considered the Audit Plan and had prioritised the audits as set out on pages 65 to 69 of the report. Three of the audits had been driven by the risk register – Capital Investment Strategy; Facilities and Follow Up of Review of Payroll Provider.

It was noted that internal audit was only one source of assurance and through the delivery of the Internal Audit Plan it would not seek to cover all risks and processes within the organisation. However, Internal Audit would work closely with other assurance providers, such as External Audit, to ensure that duplication was minimised and that a suitable breadth of assurance was obtained.

Councillor Iain McCracken referred to section 2.2 on page 61 of the agenda and specifically Risk Management. He assumed that mitigation and cost would be provided over time. Dan Harris advised that that would be incorporated and included in the scope of the review. Councillor McCracken confirmed that he would like to see a complete picture. There were occasions where risks had been re-evaluated due to costs. He asked if there was any inter linking of risks i.e. critical path impacts. Dan Harris

stated that this could be included in the review challenge to Senior Officers. The DSS advised that due to the fact that mitigations were reviewed regularly then this provided an insight on assurance around secondary factors. Measures of assurance would be looked at and project risks reviewed as there were a number of inter links.

Councillor Iain McCracken asked if actions and completions could be reviewed and in particular in relation to Timesheets and Key Financial Controls. The DSS confirmed that this would be reported in the quarterly performance report.

Councillor Adrian Edwards referred to page 71 of the report in respect of Sickness Absence Monitoring. He was surprised that this was showing a yellow (Reasonable Assurance) opinion as a lot of time and resources had been put in to improve performance around sickness absence. He felt that this should be 'green'. Dan Harris advised that this was a backward looking historical review and could be in respect of performance 18-24 months ago. The performance report would indicate whether actions had been implemented and performance had improved. The DSS confirmed that if the audit had been undertaken now then it would be reporting as 'green'.

RESOLVED THAT:

- The 2018/19 Audit Plan be approved.

44. EXTERNAL AUDIT UPDATE

Conor Byrne, Head of Finance and Procurement (HOFP), presented an update on audit fees and planning around the audit of the 2017/18 Statement of Accounts.

The purpose of the report was to provide the Audit and Governance Committee with a basis to review the proposed audit approach. The report summarised Ernst & Young's initial assessment of the key risks driving the development of an effective audit for the Authority and outlined the planned audit strategy in response to those risks. From 2017/18 the timetable for the preparation and approval of accounts had been brought forward with draft accounts needing to be prepared by 31st May 2018 and the publication of the audited accounts by 31st July 2018.

Alison Kennett from Ernst & Young referred to page 85 of the agenda which set out the overview of the 2017/18 audit strategy which had been based on risk. Areas of focus included:

- Risk of management override (fraud risk)
- Risk of fraud in revenue and expenditure recognition (fraud risk)
- Valuation of PPE (inherent risk)
- Pension Liability (inherent risk)

Page 103 of the agenda referred to the significant change in statutory deadlines from the 2017/18 financial year whereby accounts needed to be published by the end of July. Alison Kennett confirmed that planning, interim audit and testing had taken place and she therefore felt that the Fire Authority was ahead of the game in this respect. Councillor Iain McCracken

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asked what would happen if the deadline was not met. Alison Kennett confirmed that the deadline would be met as additional resources had been put in place and the Fire Authority was fully engaged with the process.

Page 105 of the report set out the required communications around the integrity, objectivity and independence of the Fire Authority's auditors.

Councillor Adrian Edwards noted the fact that the auditor's had not increased their fees.

Councillor Iain McCracken noted that the risk around valuation of PPE had decreased from the previous year. He also queried the risk around the Pension Liability. Alison Kennett confirmed that the risk was around the level of values involved. Councillor McCracken referred to pages 88 and 89 and noted that Management override and Risk of fraud in revenue and expenditure recognition had been shaded in yellow and he would have felt that this should be shaded green as they were not significant risks but more an area of focus. It was explained that this was just the colour layout of the report and was highlighting changes to the previous year.

Councillor McCracken queried what the acronym REFCUS referred to and he asked if in future this could be set out in full first followed by the acronym in brackets. It was advised that REFCUS referred to Revenue Expenditure Funded from Capital under Statute.

Councillor McCracken referred to page 94 of the agenda and the section on Materiality. Performance materiality had been set at 75% and he queried whether that would change over time. It was confirmed that the higher the audit risk, the lower the materiality would be set and the lower the audit risk, the higher the materiality would be set.

Councillor McCracken noted that on page 105 of the agenda (Independence) it stated that in order to assess the integrity, objectivity and independence of the firm and each covered person a written disclosure of relationships would be required. He queried who the written disclosure would be addressed to. It was confirmed that it would be provided to the Audit and Governance Committee.

Councillor Adrian Edwards referred to page 97 of the agenda which stated that from the initial assessment of the key processes across the Authority, the auditors would not seek to test controls. He queried what this meant. It was clarified that testing controls was a less detailed approach whereas the fully substantive approach was more detailed.

RESOLVED THAT:

- The Audit Planning Report from the External Auditor be noted.

45. HMICFRS UPDATE

Steve Brown, Service Liaison Lead from HMICFRS, thanked the Chief Fire Officer for the overwhelming hospitality and welcome that he had received. The Inspection process had mostly been lifted from the Peel process with 15 Lead Inspectors having been recruited. His role was not simple but he would provide a single point of contact for each fire service within his remit and his aim was to build a comprehensive understanding of RBFRS. This

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would be undertaken through a review of data and documents, discovery work, checking assumptions followed by a key line of inquiry meeting where gaps could be identified. The RBFRS Inspection was in Tranche 2 out of 3 and it would be likely to commence in the Autumn/Winter of 2018. He would be aiming to build relationships with Officers in order to understand how RBFRS worked. This meeting provided an opportunity to introduce himself and to meet and get to know people.

The Inspection would be based around three core themes – ‘Effectiveness’, ‘Efficiency’ & ‘People’. It would be an inspection of RBFRS not RBFA (although there remained provision for such an inspection). A graded judgement would be issued for each core theme - Inadequate, Requires Improvement, Good or Outstanding. With judgements would come required actions and follow ups – even if deemed ‘Good’. The starting assumption would be that local residents should expect a ‘good’ service from their Fire Service. Inspection reports and a national report on fire and rescue services generally would be published which might impact on the direction of travel. The Inspection report would only be published following a factual accuracy check. He felt that the inspection process would be something that evolved over next few years and that the good relationships that had been built up would continue once the inspection had been completed.

Councillor Adrian Edwards queried whether the Inspection report would take into account the size of the service and would the same criteria apply to all. Steve Brown confirmed that it was an individual inspection of RBFRS in its own right and the methodology had been designed to test assumptions within financial arrangements. It was not proposed to compare one authority against another.

Councillor Christine Bateson asked what would happen if the authority received a bad judgement. She noted that it appeared to be a similar process to that used by Ofsted. Steve Brown confirmed that he would provide recommendations for consideration on areas for improvement and he would continue to support the authority in tracking improvements. Councillor Iain McCracken asked what the mechanism would be should the authority receive an ‘Inadequate’ judgement. What would the fix be? Steve Brown advised that the ‘fix’ would lie with the Senior Management Team. The Inspection report would make recommendations and it would be up to RBFRS whether those recommendations for improvement were taken forward or not. The report was a way of providing guidance but it was up to the authority to choose the direction. This was a journey for both himself and RBFRS and he would do anything he could to support that process.

Councillor Iain McCracken asked whether this Inspection was joined up with the audit process. The CFO responded that the authority was on a journey and that some of the work undertaken over the last couple of years would assist with that. The areas that audit worked on might not be the same as the HMIC inspection but in any event all recommendations would be monitored by the Audit and Governance Committee.

Councillor Christine Bateson noted that some Fire Authorities were combined and some were County Council led and she asked whether local authorities would take part in the inspection in those instances. Steve Brown stated that in terms of governance consideration would not be given to the make-up of the Fire Authority. However, it could be an option if it was found

that the governance arrangements impacted on a specific issue. Councillor Bateson felt that it was harder for Members in combined authorities to attend meetings.

Councillor Adrian Edwards asked if it was intended to give regular updates on how the Inspection was going and whether any major problems had been encountered. Steve Brown confirmed that this would only be provided at the end of the inspection process. Consideration was still being given as to how a hot debrief session would be provided and this was something that was being tested in the pilot. The debrief session would be verbal as changes might need to be made following analysis of information. There would still be a dialogue but nothing solid would be produced until the factual accuracy check.

The CFO thanked Steve Brown for attending the meeting and he welcomed the re-introduction of the Inspectorate as it would help support the direction of improvement of the authority particularly around transparency and information.

RESOLVED THAT:

- The report be noted.

46. ANNUAL PLAN 2018/19

Becca Chapman, Data and Performance Analysis Manager, provided an overview of the draft Annual Plan 2018/19. The Annual Plan would provide direction for the organisation for the next year within the context of the Corporate Plan and Integrated Risk Management Plan (IRMP) 2015-2019.

A number of minor changes had been proposed to the Strategic Objectives contained within the Annual Plan for 2018/19. However, the Strategic Commitments of the Fire Authority remained unchanged. The changes to Strategic Objectives seven to ten were intended to offer greater clarity rather than materially change the purpose and took into account the developing national context in which fire and rescue services were operating. This Annual Plan would form the final year of the Corporate Plan and IRMP 2015-2019.

The People Strategy 2018-2021 had recently been developed and was an evolution of the Organisational Development programme. It sought to provide a direction for the next three years. It had been approved by the Senior Leadership Team but was subject to consultation with staff which closed on 9th April 2018 and therefore it might still be subject to change.

The Corporate Measures for 2018/19 had been thoroughly reviewed by Officers to ensure that they remained fit for purpose and added value in monitoring performance in service provision for the people of Berkshire. Where appropriate targets had been set for 2018/19, however, it was proposed that a small number would be monitored in 2018/19 to allow the establishment of a base line of performance information against which meaningful targets could be set in the future.

Councillor Adrian Edwards asked if anything had been included in the Annual Plan in relation to the Members Strategy. The DSS responded that part of the People Strategy would include that and would be reported back

through the general performance report.

Councillor Iain McCracken referred to page 126 of the agenda and he asked what the membership of the Programme Board was. It was confirmed that this included Members, Senior Leadership Team and Project Leaders. Councillor McCracken asked if this could be clarified in the document. He also referred to page 137 and asked if linkages to Internal and External Audit Plans could be included.

RESOLVED THAT:

- The Annual Plan 2018/19 be noted and recommended to the Fire Authority for approval subject to the amendments noted above.

47. ANNUAL REPORT ON GOVERNANCE

Katie Mills, Head of Corporate Services (HOCS), presented the annual report on Member Attendance and Allowances in 2017/18 for submission to the Fire Authority.

The papers included a report from the Chair of the Audit and Governance Committee.

The Committee with its remit was responsible for Governance, which embraced complaints against Members, the Members' Code of Conduct, Fire Authority Constitution and the monitoring of Members' Allowance and Attendance. In addition to the Members/Officers Protocol, the Committee recommended Fire Authority approval of the revised Contract and Financial Regulations to take into account changes to the Senior Leadership Team as well as improving clarity in the regulations. The Committee would continue to scrutinise the above documents and would make recommendations to the Fire Authority as and when required.

It was noted that there had been no formal complaints received against Members in the current year. This year the Fire Authority approved and extended the appointments for a period of four years of the Independent Persons, David Comben and Roger Penfold. Roger Penfold's role had also been re-designated from Deputy Independent Person to Independent Person. On behalf of the Fire Authority, the Committee thanked them for their availability and support during the year.

Member Allowances for the period of June 2017 to February 2018 were shown in Appendix A and an update on these figures would be provided to the Fire Authority annual meeting in June 2018.

Attendance of RBFA Members for the Municipal Year 2017/18 was set out in Appendix B of the report. Again these figures would be updated for the Fire Authority meeting. Attendance in the current Municipal Year had been good with no meetings being inquorate and all business had been able to be conducted.

Councillor Iain McCracken noted that a lot of meetings attended by Members were not formal meetings and were therefore not included in the attendance figures. He particularly made reference to Councillor Tina McKenzie-Boyle whose attendance rate was only 14%. However, she was Mayor of Bracknell Forest in the current year and had attended a large

number of functions in that capacity and consequently this was the reason why her attendance at Fire Authority meetings had been limited.

The HOCS confirmed that the table had been amended to include a note as to when apologies had been given due to Council business.

RESOLVED THAT:

- The report be noted;
- It be recommended that the Fire Authority note the Members' Allowances received for the period of June 2017 to February 2018 and also note the 2017/18 attendance record of Royal Berkshire Fire Authority Members (paragraphs 2.2.1 and 2.2.2 would be updated to the end of May 2018).

48. PENSION BOARD ANNUAL REPORT

Tregear Thomas, Chair of the Pension Board, updated the Audit and Governance Committee in respect of the activities of the Local Pension Board (for all firefighter schemes).

The Local Pension Board had been set up under the auspices of The Public Service Pensions Act 2013. It existed to assist the Fire Authority in its role as Scheme Manager for the various Firefighter Pension Schemes and it consisted of four members.

The Board had met on three occasions since the last Pension Board update and for transparency the action and decisions log for Pension Board meetings were published internally.

The Fire Authority was required to approve the appointment of the employer representative on the Pension Board at its annual meeting in June each year. At the meeting in June 2017 the Authority approved the appointment of Group Manager Doug Buchanan to the Board and the continuation of Lucy Greenway in her employer representation role. Tregear Thomas would continue as the Chair of the Pension Board and Lucy Greenway was elected as the Vice-Chair at the Pension Board meeting on 23rd January 2018.

It was noted that Board members continued to attend training provided in the main through the Local Government Association (LGA) and a system was in place for recording the training and development work that members of the Board had undertaken. The Board were updated as required with information provided by the LGA and other pension groups.

The Pension Board reviewed the monthly performance information provided by West Yorkshire Pension Fund who were the current administrators for Berkshire firefighter pension schemes. This included an update on regulations and activities as they related to these schemes.

A risk register had been produced by the Pension Board and was reviewed at each meeting as a standing item with issues being raised accordingly.

No breaches of material significance had been identified and reported to The Pensions Regulator by the Board over the past twelve months. The Pension Board continued to work closely with managers within Human

Resources to identify a range of performance measures relating to the services provided by West Yorkshire Pension Fund which was used to assist in securing compliance with Regulations and the effective administration of the schemes.

An internal firefighter pensions audit had commenced on 7th and 8th March 2018, the results of which would be communicated to the Pensions Board for consideration and would also be presented to the Audit and Governance Committee.

Councillor Iain McCracken asked whether West Yorkshire Pension Fund representatives attended meetings here or whether meetings were held in West Yorkshire. Tregear Thomas confirmed that they would come here to meetings but telephone conferences were used wherever possible.

Councillor Iain McCracken stated that there did not appear to be much succession planning taking place. Tregear Thomas referred to paragraph 3.5 where it stated that to aid succession planning replacement members should be staggered to enable the retention of sufficient knowledge and understanding on the Board. This had not been possible on the employer side but the aim was to identify other representatives and was something which was in hand.

The CFO thanked all those that undertook this work and in particular Simon Jefferies who had recently stepped down from this role. Recommendation 2.2 referred to challenges and complexities as a result of regulation changes and he stated that as the risk around this was significant additional audits would be planned. Councillor McCracken also recorded his thanks.

RESOLVED THAT:

- The contents of the report be noted including activities undertaken by the Local Pension Board since the last report;
- It be agreed that additional audits would be planned as required to take account of the challenges and complexities relating to pension administration resulting from regulation changes and guidance provided.

49. QUARTERLY PERFORMANCE REPORT 2017/18 – QUARTER 3 PERFORMANCE REPORT (OCTOBER-DECEMBER 2017)

Katie Mills, Head of Corporate Services (HOCS), provided the Committee with an overview of the Royal Berkshire Fire and Rescue Service third quarter (October to December 2017) performance for the 2017/18 financial year.

Within the key highlights a summary table had been provided which set out the number of emergency incidents responded to during this period to provide further context for the circumstances in which the service had been operating. In overall terms, a slight reduction had been seen in the number of emergency incidents responded to in quarter three when compared with the previous year. It was noted that on that table the second column should read '2017/18' and not '2016/17'.

In this quarter the Fire Authority had met targets or were improving in 23 of the 36 corporate measures. Examples of these improvements included:

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- Increased numbers of Home Fire Safety Checks delivered to those at heightened risk of dying;
- The percentage of eligible staff in qualification at its highest level this year – 99%;
- An increase in the RDS establishment leading to greater availability;
- 89% of spend being subject to competition against a target of 70%;
- Importantly, additional resources had been put in place to support the developing project resulting from the Grenfell Tower incident to reduce the associated corporate risk.

It was recognised that performance in some areas had been below target as follows:

- The number of Fire Safety Audits closed. The Service had been focusing more attention on higher risk premises and this translated into a larger volume of work per completed audit. The number of Fire Safety Inspecting Officers had increased in quarter four which would start to have an impact on future performance in due course following appropriate training and development;
- The percentage of time lost to sickness this quarter was higher than the 3% target at 4.9%. Long term sickness had reduced but this had been counterbalanced by an increase in short term absence. This remained a key area of work and work was already underway to address issues associated with this including the development of a mental health strategy and action plan.

It was also noted that two risks had been added to the Corporate Risk Register in relation to the services provided to RBFRS by Capita following the recent profit warnings. The risks focus on communications and control solutions (risk 480) and Fire Service College training (risk 479), for which Capita provided services to RBFRS. Mitigations were being identified and assessed and these risks could be viewed in Quadrant Four Corporate Risk.

The Committee had previously asked for further improvements to the presentation of the Risk Register information and contained within the report was a new format designed to make the key information more accessible. Feedback on the new format was welcomed.

Councillor Iain McCracken referred to page 5 of the report and noted that there had been delays in obtaining planning permission for Theale which had delayed the project by 8-12 weeks. The CFO confirmed that Officers continued to work with colleagues in West Berkshire. Objections had been raised by the Environment Agency.

The Committee went through the Performance Report in detail and the following comments were made:

Quadrant 1: Councillor Iain McCracken felt that the layout was much clearer but he asked if numbers could be included instead of percentages as sometimes a percentage was misleading.

Councillor McCracken referred to item 9 and he shared the concern around Houses of Multiple Occupation (HMO's) as this was also an issue for local authorities. He also queried why item 10 was showing as 'red' when it was

above the target of 50%. It was confirmed that the 50% target was the maximum and therefore the Q3 figure of 62.5% was over that amount and was therefore reported as 'red'.

Quadrant 2: Councillor McCracken was pleased to note on page 17 that RBFRS had achieved second place in the Thames Valley Business Magazine Awards.

Councillor McCracken referred to page 29 Transition Bids Spend Summary. Spend on Core Skills Training Programme at the end of Q3 was £78.3k against a budget of £104k and he asked for clarity around whether the budget would be spent by year end. Also on page 30 HR Advisor Support – there was still £82k to be spent on that budget. The HHRLD confirmed that two members of staff were in post but the remaining budget would be carried forward into the following year and the report at Q4 would indicate that. The Temporary Accounts Officer on page 32 had a budget allocation of £74k which seemed particularly high. The HOFPP confirmed that this post was funded over a two year period and would be looking at how payments were processed. The post would disappear from March 2019. Councillor Carol Jackson-Doerge also highlighted the Temporary Procurement Officer post on page 33. Only £14.6k of a £90k budget had been spent. The HOFPP advised that the authority had had difficulty recruiting at the salary level being offered but the post had now been recruited to. Councillor Iain McCracken stated that it would be useful if a start and end date could be included.

Councillor Christine Bateson referred to page 37 of the report. The text indicated that the Council had an ageing workforce profile but this was not borne out by the figures in the table. The HHRLD said that there were special circumstances around firefighter age, related to the increase in pension age.

Quadrant 3: Councillor Iain McCracken referred to the Whitley Wood project and noted that there were issues with the scope of the project but that the end project would meet the needs of all the stakeholders. He queried who the stakeholders were. The CFO confirmed that this referred to Thames Valley Police and RBFRS. He was meeting with Thames Valley Police the following day.

Page 42 – Crowthorne refurbishment. Councillor Iain McCracken asked whether the Fire Authority were stepping away from this. The DCFO confirmed that it was a rebuild and he would change the terminology. He advised that the pre-application had been turned round quickly by Bracknell Forest.

Quadrant 4: Councillor Iain McCracken confirmed that the new format of the risk section was much improved and he liked the fact that the direction of travel was now being shown.

No further actions were raised.

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;
- Any further actions be discussed and agreed.

50. ANNUAL REPORT ON MEMBER DEVELOPMENT

Katie Mills, Head of Corporate Services (HOCS), presented an annual update on Member Development activities in 2017/18.

Management Committee approved the Member Development Strategy 2017-19 at its meeting on 3rd April 2017 and more recently the Member Development Action Plan at its meeting on 27th February 2018 which outlined the learning and development activities to commence at the beginning of the 2018/19 municipal year.

Councillor Pauline Helliar-Symons as Lead Member reported that the programme had two origins – the Member/Officer protocol which reflected the good relationship that existed between Members and Officers and she felt that this element was getting stronger. Members were keen to support Officers as much as they could. The second element was developing and increasing knowledge. Councillor Helliar-Symons hoped that the Member Development Strategy for 2017-2019 was tidier and more robust and she stressed the need to ensure that it was up to date and relevant as it was something that was constantly changing. Members were also encouraged to meet front line firefighters by visiting at least one retained and wholetime station per year.

Councillor Helliar-Symons confirmed that each Member would have one to one sessions with their group leader and that it would be necessary to complete the skills sheet and record their experience. She encouraged all Members to complete the form and to book a time for the one to one session with Fayth Rowe who was co-ordinating this as this would help to develop the Member Development Plan for the following year.

Page 167 of the report set out the Member Development activities attended in 2017/18 which included the following:

- New Member Induction – 10th July 2017
- Pre Audit and Governance Committee training/update for new Members – 15th July 2017
- Fire Station visits
- E-learning – Protecting Information – 31st July 2017
- Members Workshop – 11th September 2017 and 6th March 2018
- Conferences
- Working with Members Course – 5th and 18th September 2017
- Modern.gov RBFA User Logon
- Member Briefings/Lead Member and Champion meetings

Councillor Helliar-Symons specifically highlighted the Fire Station visits and

the Member workshops and she urged Members to attend at least two of the workshops per year as they were invaluable.

Councillor Iain McCracken endorsed paragraph 3.10 Modern.gov RBFA User Logon. Modern.gov was easy to navigate and it could be used just the same as a piece of paper as annotations could be made to documents as required. He thanked Councillor Pauline Helliard-Symons for attending the meeting to update the Committee on Member Development.

RESOLVED THAT:

- The report be noted.

51. EMERGENCY SERVICES MOBILE COMMUNICATIONS PROGRAMME

Steve Foye, Deputy Chief Fire Officer, provided an update and assessment of the progress of the Emergency Services Mobile Communication Project (ESMCP) and delivery of the Emergency Services Network (ESN) that would replace the current Airwave provision. Updates were also provided on the national programme and its governance and time lines. Progress within the key work streams of Control, Devices, Training and Fleet was detailed with a summary of how the programme funding was operating.

It was noted that the National Programme had appeared at the Public Accounts Committee for a progress update on 21st February 2018 and at a headline level it was not expected that transition would commence in 2018. The National Programme continued to review the transition and implementation plan and it was expected that a reset plan would be available in July 2018 and a reviewed business case in the Autumn of 2018. This meant that ESN in its entirety would not be available until later than originally envisaged and therefore the transition from Airwave onto a complete ESN solution would be later too. However, work continued across work-streams towards the position of being service ready for ESN. Some aspects of the ESN service were proving more difficult to develop but at the same time it was being intimated that other aspects of ESN were more advanced and could be available to emergency services sooner. Consequently, the National Programme were working closely with services and suppliers to explore options. Further detail was awaited on new options and their implications before forming a view or position on the associated benefits, risks and costs.

Though there was uncertainty around timelines and the extent of provision, assurances were being made through the NFFC team that Emergency Services would decide, following stringent testing, when ESN met the requirements they had set. The Government had robust contingency plans in place, having extended all Airwave contracts to 31st December 2019 and having reached further agreement between Vodafone and Motorola to ensure the existing Airwave system could continue beyond March 2020. The extended use of Airwave would incur ongoing costs and clarity was being sought through the Fire Customer Group as to how those costs would be met.

RBFRS had internal arrangements in place for managing its commitment to

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ESMCP work streams. The project sponsor was the Head of ICT and an internal project group met regularly and provided a highlight report to the RBFRS Programme Board. A South Central Region Programme Board was in place to support all the services in the region and align work stream activity across the services.

The infographic in Appendix B had been provided by the National Programme and showed the progress against key areas of work. The DNSP connection was now in place and this had been fully funded by the National Programme. Work continued on control room development and this was expected to be completed in the Autumn of 2018.

Samsung had been selected as the single provider of the Handheld ESN Device and work continued in the procurement of a vehicle device. Fire services would have a priority for vehicle devices in contrast to other services that had a higher priority for handheld devices. Whilst the timelines for vehicle device provision was behind handheld devices, given the likelihood of revised programme timelines this was not seen as a risk at this time. Work stream leads from the region were involved in workshops run by the National Programme such as requirements gathering or product testing.

Councillor Iain McCracken asked if the national programme started to be brought forward in increments whether that would have an impact regionally. The DCFO confirmed that it would be a challenge and the intent was for some regions to go one after the other. For some services it might be an opportunity to take services on but it would be necessary to have sight of a reset plan in order to understand the implications and whether the regional set up would remain in place. If it was proposed to move in increments it would be necessary to look at budget preparation. Councillor McCracken stated that it would be useful to get to a point when there was clarity. The DCFO responded that that remained a key area for discussion.

Councillor Iain McCracken referred to Appendix A and in particular the example of progress since the November hearing where the first live demonstration of the ESN capability had taken place. The DCFO confirmed that this was a positive sign but it had been tested in a controlled environment rather than a national model. Device replacement was making good progress and would shortly be available for purchase. RBFRS's dependency was more vehicle borne and therefore it might not be possible to take that option as early as some services. Assurance would be required in any move to a more incremental approach as there would be increased pressure in dealing with snagging issues. It would be necessary to understand what the increments would be and if they would be of value to RBFRS.

Councillor McCracken referred to collaboration and queried whether stakeholders were going in the same direction. The DCFO said broadly. The Police seemed to have a clear view about the direction and speed and had consequently put in additional resource at a Chief Officer level due to concerns around speed of delivery.

Councillor McCracken asked if RBFRS had attended the Major Projects Review Group (MPRG) meeting on 13th March 2018. The DCFO replied that RBFRS had not attended as a service. A Home Office based team had attended but it was essential that the RBFRS voice was heard at that level.

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Councillor McCracken queried about the issue with Airwave/Vodafone masts. It was initially understood that these masts would not be appropriate for ESN but in Appendix A it stated that over 100 genuine 999 calls had been received through masts in place due to ESN where there had previously been no coverage. The DCFO said that there was an existing network which gave some coverage but there was still a gap and it might be necessary to move to a different background that was EE based (4G environment). Councillor McCracken asked if the DCFO could find out if the footprint within Berkshire was adequate. His understanding that nothing would be directly required in this area and therefore there would be no concerns in respect of planning being required for new masts.

RESOLVED THAT:

- The report be noted.

52. DATE OF NEXT MEETING

Thursday 26 July 2018 at 6.30pm, Brigade Headquarters, Newsham Court, Pincents Kiln, Calcot, Reading, Berkshire RG31 7SD.

53. EXCLUSION OF THE PUBLIC

RESOLVED THAT:

Under Section 100(A)(4) of the Local Government Act 1972 (as amended), the public be excluded from the meeting for the following Agenda Item on the grounds that it involves the likely disclosure of exempt information, as defined in Paragraphs 1, 2, 3 and 4 of Part I of Schedule 12A of the said Act indicated and is exempt information if, and so long as, in all the circumstances of the case, the public interest in maintaining the exemption outweighs the public interest in disclosing the information.

54. PART II MINUTES OF THE MEETING HELD ON 19 DECEMBER 2017

RESOLVED THAT:

The Part II minutes of the meeting held on 19th December 2017 be confirmed as a correct record and signed by the Chairman.

(The meeting concluded at 8.40 pm)