

EXTRAORDINARY MINUTES OF THE MEETING OF THE ROYAL BERKSHIRE FIRE AUTHORITY



Held on Tuesday 6 December 2016 at 5.00pm

RBFRS Headquarters, Lynda Kenyon Suite, Newsham Court, Pincents Lane, Calcot, Reading RG31 7SD

- Members:**
- * Councillor Malcolm Alexander
 - * Councillor Alistair Auty
 - * Councillor Christine Bateson
 - * Councillor Phillip Bicknell
 - * Councillor Paul Bryant
 - * Councillor Avtar Cheema
 - * Councillor Colin Dudley
 - * Councillor Adrian Edwards
 - * Councillor John Ennis
 - * Councillor Paul Gittings
 - * Councillor Pauline Helliar-Symons
 - * Councillor Carol Jackson-Doerge
 - * Councillor Chris Maskell
 - * Councillor Iain McCracken
 - * Councillor Tina McKenzie-Boyle
 - * Councillor Phillip Mirfin
 - * Councillor Mohammed Rasib
 - * Councillor Angus Ross
 - * Councillor Ishrat Shah
 - * Councillor Emma Webster

In Attendance: Conor Byrne (Head of Finance and Procurement, HOFPP)
Trevor Ferguson (Deputy Chief Fire Officer, DCFO)
Moira Fraser (Committee Officer)
Andy Fry (Chief Fire Officer, CFO)
Mark Gaskarth (Temporary ACFO, Service Delivery)
Becci Jefferies (Head of Human Resources, Learning and Development)
Simon Jefferies (Head of Risk and Performance, HORP)
Dave Myers (Area Manager East)
Nikki Richards (Interim Director of Support Services)
Fayth Rowe (Committee Officer)

Observers: Officers, Royal Berkshire Fire and Rescue Service
Members of Representative Bodies

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65. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Apologies for inability to attend the meeting had been received from Councillors Angus Ross, Philip Bicknell, Chris Maskell and Mohammed Rasib.

66. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

In accordance with the provisions of the Fire Authority's Local Code of Conduct, Councillor Paul Bryant stated that should the Thames Valley Fire Control Service (TVFCS) be discussed at the meeting he declared a personal interest as he was a member of the TVFCS Joint Committee. He would therefore not participate in any debate on the TVFCS should it materialise.

There were no Declarations of Interest received from Officers.

67. MINUTES OF THE MEETINGS HELD ON 17 AUGUST AND 19 OCTOBER 2016

RESOLVED that:

The Minutes of the meetings held on 17 August 2016 and 19 October 2016 be approved as a true and correct record and signed by the Chairman.

Matters Arising:

Item 31, New Financial Regulations - The DCFO would provide Councillors Christine Bateson and Paul Bryant with information about how much discretionary budget the CFO held.

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68. QUESTIONS FROM THE PUBLIC UNDER STANDING ORDERS 19 AND 25

There were no questions from members of the public under Standing Orders 19 and 25.

69. RECEIPT OF ANNOUNCEMENTS

The Chairman made the following announcements:

Following the recent wholetime recruitment campaign, 550 application packs were requested and a total of 373 candidates returned their completed forms. Of those completed forms, 102 candidates were shortlisted and 80 candidates passed the written test or recently sat the test with another Fire and Rescue Service. The Chairman explained that over the next few months physical tests would be undertaken, together with interviews. He thanked the HR and L&D Team for the huge amount of work they had put into the campaign. The Chairman commented that he had been pleased to be involved in a number of passing out parades and the training that was delivered to recruits was of a gold standard and resulted in the training of very capable fire fighters.

The Chairman announced that two events were held in November to celebrate the groundbreaking of Hungerford Community Fire Station before refurbishment work commenced. On Tuesday, 8 November, Fire Authority Members visited the station, together with a number of other guests including colleagues from Thames Valley Police and South Central Ambulance Service, the Police Crime Commission, Anthony Stansfeld, a number of Hungerford Town Councillors including the Mayor and Deputy Mayor of Hungerford. Guests got a chance to hear about the plans and what they meant for the local community. It also provided a chance to meet some of the people responsible for developing the plans.

An engagement event was also held for members of the public on Saturday, 12 November. Around 70 people visited the station over the course of the day. The Chairman reported that work began on Monday, 28 November, and was expected to be completed by June 2017. An operational response would be maintained from an alternative location on the Hungerford Trading Estate, which had been generously provided by a local business, Compressor Products International.

The Chairman highlighted that the long-awaited report of the independent review

of conditions of service for fire and rescue staff in England, conducted by Adrian Thomas, had now been published. The review, which concluded in February 2015, looked at workforce reform and findings cover a range of areas and make recommendations in relation to:

- The working environment;
- Conditions of service;
- Industrial relations;
- The retained duty system; and
- Management of fire and rescue services as a whole.

Councillor Dudley explained that work to analyse the Authority's position against specific recommendations in the report had been commissioned and the outcome would be reported to Management Committee in due course.

The Chairman reported that he had recently attended a meeting with other blue light services and Members of other Fire and Rescue Authorities. It had proved to be a very worthwhile exercise and a report outlining the outcomes would be produced in due course. He noted that a lot of positive feedback had been received in respect the Vision 2019 document.

Councillor Tina McKenzie-Boyle reported that she had been privileged to attend the illuminations of the fire fighters memorial at St Paul's Cathedral in London. The event was attended by Her Royal Highness, The Princess Royal. It was a very moving event and it was gratifying to note that HRH had spoken with the CFO.

Councillor McKenzie-Boyle also reported that she had recently attended a Good Neighbour Scheme event in her capacity as a Bracknell Forest Councillor. The scheme provided drivers to get residents to medical appointments. Fire Fighter Jim Clarke was invited to address the group and he provided them with a very engaging presentation which was very well received.

70. ISSUES ARISING FROM AUDIT AND GOVERNANCE COMMITTEE

It was noted that no reports had been referred to the Fire Authority by the Audit and Governance Committee.

71. QUESTIONS FROM MEMBERS UNDER STANDING ORDER 30

There were no questions from Members under Standing Order 30.

72. NOTICES OF MOTION UNDER STANDING ORDER 43

There were no Notices of Motion under Standing Order 43.

73. RECOMMENDATIONS OF COMMITTEES

The Fire Authority noted that the following agenda item had been recommended by the Management Committee on the 21 November 2016:

Item 10 – Integrated Risk Management Plan – Service Redesign Consultation Options

74. INTEGRATED RISK MANAGEMENT PLAN – SERVICE REDESIGN CONSULTATION OPTIONS

The Chairman commented that it was unusual for him to agree to a special meeting where only one substantive item would be discussed. Due to the importance of this consultation he had however felt that it was necessary to do so. Members would be presented with a range of options that would be consulted on. He reminded them that they were not being asked to make a decision on any of the options at this stage in the process. That would only happen once the consultation had been concluded. Members would then be asked to conscientiously consider all the consultation responses before deciding which of the changes would be implemented.

He cautioned that Members would be required to make difficult and tough decisions in these challenging times. He stressed that comments from staff and stakeholders would be listened to and he therefore encouraged as many people as possible to respond so that a range of views could be considered.

The Chairman thanked Councillor Emma Webster, staff, officers and members of the representative bodies for their contributions to IRMP process. He felt that this was an excellent piece of work which would help to inform Members so that they would be able to make the best possible decisions for the residents of Berkshire whilst being mindful of the Authority's financial position.

The CFO stated that at the end of the process Members would be in a position to make a well informed decision on reshaping the service. The process was trying to achieve the following:

1. To ensure that the RBFRS remained financially viable and that Members were able to set a balanced budget.
2. Changes needed to be aligned with the aspirations of staff wherever possible.
3. The Service would be redesigned to deliver the best possible service to residents.

The consultation set out clusters of options all of which went some way to achieving these three aims. Stakeholders were being invited to take a view on which of the options was optimal.

The DCFO explained that the Corporate Plan had been published in 2015. Members then directed Officers to refresh the IRMP process. The refresh was based on three principles:

1. A fully integrated document encompassing prevention, protection and response.
2. The plan to be based on robust evidence which could be used to aid decision making.
3. The plan to be developed in collaboration with officers, staff, Members, residents and representative bodies.

The consultation would be built on these guiding principles and would allow all stakeholders to voice their views on the seven options. Members could then make an informed decision based on these views.

The DCFO passed on his personal thanks to Councillor Emma Webster, for her

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support and guidance, the IRMP Team led by Simon Jefferies for their hard work, members of the representative bodies for their input and staff for their commitment to collaboration.

Simon Jefferies, Area Manager Risk and Performance (AMRP) introduced the report which set out proposed options for the service redesign consultation, planned to commence on 12 December 2016 and finish on the 13 March 2017. Members were being asked to agree the proposed options for the service redesign consultation. A final decision on the preferred option would be taken in May 2017 once the consultation had been concluded and Members had the opportunity to conscientiously consider the outcomes of that consultation.

Prior to introducing the report Members were invited to watch a video which would be published alongside the consultation documents.

The AMRP thanked, Councillor Webster, Members of IRMP Task and Finish Group and Officers that had supported the process, for their contribution in producing the consultation document and supporting evidence.

The Integrated Risk Management Plan (IRMP) 2015-19 had been approved by the Fire Authority in April 2016 following a twelve week consultation and had consisted of four priority projects:

- Project 1 - Response standards, station locations and crewing arrangements
- Project 2 - The use of technology and special appliances
- Project 3 - Prevention and the wider health and wellbeing agenda
- Project 4 - Protection and risk based inspections

Project 2 had resulted in the specification for new pumping appliances developed with Thames Valley partners and the first of these would be delivered in April 2017.

As part of Project 1, the Fire Authority's attendance standards had been reviewed and redefined by the IRMP Working Party, working with officers and the Fire Brigades Union, and new transparent response standards had been introduced on 17 August 2016 following a twelve week consultation. Following the introduction of the new response standards, work had commenced with the IRMP Lead Member through a series of workshops and presentations to develop a range of options for Service Redesign. The aim was to consider how the Fire Authority could continue to manage all foreseeable fire and rescue service risks and continue to deliver the best possible service to the public whilst at the same time delivering approximately £1.4m of savings. The approximate £1.4m of savings from this project were part of the overall planned year on year savings of £2.4m which needed to be achieved by April 2020.

The IRMP Lead Member together with the IRMP Task and Finish Group had developed a range of seven options which had been approved by Management Committee for consideration and recommendation to the Fire Authority.

The service redesign consultation document also contained the proposals for the necessary changes to the prevention and protection activities and these proposals restructured existing resources to drive down community risk, deliver the wider health agenda and supported the key themes of the Authority's Vision 2019 and the strategic commitments.

Councillor Emma Webster thanked the working party and those that had taken

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part in the IRMP process for their input. She also wished to thank Simon Jefferies and Jim Powell who had worked tirelessly to gather information in order to produce the consultation document. She commented that the document was very clear and readable. She also thanked Mark Gaskarth for his input in respect of the prevention and protection elements of the document. She was very pleased that these areas had been incorporated and that the document did not purely reflect on response. She also thanked the FBU for their correspondence and attention to detail and she was very grateful for the contribution they had made.

She highlighted the importance of talking proposals through with staff and residents. She encouraged Members to go into their community and discuss the proposals with their residents, town and parish councils, local authorities, community groups etc. Members needed to explain the various options to these stakeholders and encourage them to respond to the consultation. These views were needed in order to make the best possible decision.

Councillor Iain McCracken queried whether, following the Chancellor's Autumn Statement, the £1.4m savings target was still a realistic assumption. The DCFO explained that the assumption was underpinned by a four year settlement plan and that this work would have to be revisited. He was undertaking work with the Head of Finance to work through budget pressures around inflation.

Councillor Alistair Auty queried whether options one to six would generate one off or ongoing savings. Officers confirmed that the savings would be ongoing.

Councillor Paul Bryant queried the governance arrangements that would be in place post the consultation. The AMRP explained that the IRMP Lead Member would instruct Officers to commission projects in order to implement the agreed option. Any changes to staff terms and conditions would be worked through by HR following a formal consultation with staff.

Councillor Bryant asked if the options were mutually exclusive or if members would be able to adopt a composite option. The AMRP explained that the consultation had been designed in consultation with the Consultation Institute and they advised that a 'pick and mix' approach could not be used.

Councillor Paul Gittings commented that he too understood that elements of options could be grouped together as residents might find elements within each to be more acceptable. The DCFO explained that if a mix and match approach was adopted it would make analysis of the options too difficult and would not allow Members to make a conscientious decision. The CFO explained that it was very important that options were considered individually. In drafting the options Officers had attempted to create a balanced approach in terms of prevention, protection and response as well as a geographical balance. A mix and match approach could result in an unbalanced option being selected which would not deliver the desired outcomes.

Councillor Christine Bateson commented that the different options for consulting were set out on page 43 but she felt that the list should also include local authorities (LA). Simon Jefferies explained that representatives from the LAs would be invited to attend focus groups and the consultation documents would also be sent to colleagues in the LAs for comment.

Councillor Malcolm Alexander noted that the consultation document would be available on the website but he queried if hard copies would also be available for residents to peruse. Officers explained that residents would be able to download

the document and that hard copies would be available on request. Hard copies would also be made available at stakeholder events. Councillor Bateson requested that copies be made available in libraries.

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Councillor John Ennis queried how staff and the unions would be consulted. The Chairman commented that staff and the unions would be encouraged to respond to the consultation, he also noted that the representative bodies had been involved in the process from the outset. Councillor Webster also highlighted that as set out on page 55 of the paperwork staff had been involved in pre-consultation activity.

Councillor Ennis commented that retention of staff morale could be a major issue during these periods of change and he queried what be done to maintain it. The Chairman explained that numerous focus groups had already been held. He felt that the best way to maintain staff morale was to engage them in the change process and to be as transparent as possible. The CFO commented that staff engagement in the process had been started in mid 2014. There had been three phases to the process starting with a communications exercised setting out why the RBFRS had to review and reset its policy agenda. During the next phase staff were asked to come forward with their own ideas as to how services could be changed. Around 300 ideas had been submitted and an ideas panel (comprising a cross section of staff) had been set up to evaluate the ideas. Staff therefore felt that they had an opportunity to influence the options. The third phase was the 'so what' phase where it would be established what the service would look like in 2019.

The AMRP explained that Jim Powell had provided all middle managers with a presentation outlining the process to them so that they could disseminate the information to colleagues as appropriate. Councillor Emma Webster commented that she had also previously, as part of the IRMP process, visited all the fire stations so that she could speak with staff directly.

The Chairman commented that he too had visited some fire stations the previous week to explain to the shifts what the consultation was about and that no decision would be taken until the consultation had been concluded and that Members had had the opportunity to conscientiously consider all the responses. He encouraged all Members to visit the fire stations too.

Mark Gaskarth commented that the document also made reference to prevention proposals. Some elements were a statutory requirement and that using the evidence officers would be able to adopt a more targeted approach. They would be able to target vulnerable residents that were more likely to die in a dwelling fire and those that were more likely to be injured or result in property damage. The document also made reference to water and road safety as evidence suggested that these were key risk areas although he accepted that they were not core functions of the fire service. Views were therefore being sought as to whether it was appropriate to make use of resources to undertake preventative activity.

Councillor Ennis queried if this could lead to a change in focus for the Prevention team. Officers explained that changes to the team would be encompassed in a staff consultation about the way the authority was organised. This was a live consultation being run in parallel with the Future of the Service consultation to ensure that the appropriate arrangements were in place.

Councillor Philip Mirfin requested that the video be disseminated to the local authorities as well as town and parish and lamented that they had not been

involved earlier in the process so that the information could have been fed into their newsletters which were circulated to residents.

The Chairman felt that it was useful to have the discussion at this meeting and that it was important for Members to raise the issues that their residents would be asking. He noted that the RBFRS was one of the lowest precepting authorities in the country and that a band D property only paid £61 per annum to the RBFRS.

Councillor Pauline Helliar-Symons asked that the consultation documents make reference to the fact that hard copies would be available on request.

**AMRP to
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The Chairman reiterated his thanks to all those involved in the process and urged members to get their residents and community groups and local authorities to respond to the consultation.

RESOLVED that:

- The information presented in the report be noted;
- The proposed service redesign options for consultation with the public, staff and other stakeholders be agreed.

75. FORWARD PLAN

RESOLVED that:

The Royal Berkshire Fire Authority's Forward Plan for the period 6th December 2016 to 3rd April 2017 be noted.

76. MINUTES OF THE STANDING COMMITTEES

It was noted that the minutes of the following meetings were published on the RBFRS website:

- Management Committee – 19 September 2016

77. DATE OF NEXT MEETING

The next meeting would be held on Monday 27 February 2017 at 6.30pm in the Lynda Kenyon Suite, RBFRS Headquarters, Newsham Court, Pincents Kiln, Calcot, Reading, Berkshire RG31 7SD.

(The meeting concluded at 6.15 pm)