

MINUTES OF THE MEETING OF THE ROYAL BERKSHIRE FIRE AUTHORITY



Held on Tuesday 10th October 2017 at 6.30pm

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

Members:	Councillor Malcolm Alexander	* Councillor Pauline Helliard-Symons
(* present)	Councillor Alistair Auty	* Councillor Carol Jackson-Doerge
*	Councillor Christine Bateson	* Councillor Chris Maskell
*	Councillor Phillip Bicknell	Councillor Iain McCracken
*	Councillor Jason Brock	Councillor Tina McKenzie-Boyle
*	Councillor Paul Bryant	Councillor Phillip Mirfin
*	Councillor Avtar Cheema	* Councillor Mohammed Rasib
*	Councillor Colin Dudley	* Councillor Angus Ross
*	Councillor Adrian Edwards	Councillor Atiq Sandhu
*	Councillor Paul Gittings	* Councillor Emma Webster

In Attendance: Graham Britten (Monitoring Officer)
Conor Byrne (Head of Finance and Procurement, HOF)
Stephen Chard (Committee Officer)
Trevor Ferguson (Chief Fire Officer, CFO)
Steve Foye (Deputy Chief Fire Officer, DCFO)
Mark Gaskarth (Area Manager, Collaboration and Policy)
Becci Jefferies (Head of Human Resources, Learning and Development)
Simon Jefferies (Assistant Chief Fire Officer, ACFO)
Katie Mills (Head of Corporate Services)
Dave Myers (Area Manager East)
James Pinchin (Committee Officer)
Jim Powell (Area Manager (Risk and Performance))
Jo Reeves (Committee Officer)
Nikki Richards (Director of Support Services)
Fayth Rowe (Committee Officer)
Trig Thomas (FBU Representative)
Tony Vincent (Head of Business and Information Systems)

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

22. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Apologies for inability to attend the meeting had been received from Councillors Malcolm Alexander, Alistair Auty, Ian McCracken, Tina McKenzie-Boyle, Phillip Mirfin and Atiq Sandhu, and Independent Persons David Comben and Roger Penfold.

23. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

In accordance with the provisions of the Fire Authority's Local Code of Conduct,

Councillor Emma Webster stated that she would need to declare a personal interest if the Thames Valley Police and Crime Panel was discussed as part of any debate on collaboration as she was a Member of this Panel. She would therefore not participate in any such debate should it materialise.

Councillor Angus Ross stated that should the Thames Valley Fire Control Service (TVFCS) be discussed at the meeting he would need to declare 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.

24. MINUTES OF THE MEETING HELD ON 28 JUNE 2017

RESOLVED that:

The Minutes of the meeting held on 28 June 2017 be approved as a true and correct record and signed by the Chairman.

25. PARTICIPATION OF THE PUBLIC UNDER STANDING ORDERS 19 AND 25

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

26. RECEIPT OF ANNOUNCEMENTS

The Chairman made the following announcements:

Pay Award

- As Members would be aware, the Employers' Side of the National Joint Council (NJC) made an offer at the start of July to increase firefighter pay by 2% from 1 July 2017, and a further 3% from April 2018, subject to Central Government funding and other conditions.
- Following discussions and clarification on the offer, on 23 August 2017 the RBFRS was notified by the NJC that the FBU would be consulting its members with a recommendation to accept the pay offer.
- On 13 September 2017, the RBFRS was notified that the outcome of the consultation was to reject the pay offer. In addition to which, the FBU would be communicating to its members that any work undertaken through the NJC approved trials on co-responding should stop with immediate effect from Monday, 18 September 2017.
- As a consequence the current trial in Wokingham had been suspended from the 18 September 2017. However, co-responding continued to operate from Wargrave and Hungerford as they were retained fire stations.
- Any further updates on discussions between the FBU and the NJC would be provided to Members in due course.

Annual Memorial and Wreath Laying

- On 10 September 2017, Councillor Dudley attended the Annual Memorial Service and Wreath Laying for Firefighters in London on behalf of Royal

Berkshire Fire Authority.

- Simon Jefferies who represented RBFRS and the Colour Party was also in attendance.
- This was an important event, made all the more poignant this year on the 40th anniversary of the fire at Elgar Road in which David 'Barney' Barnes and Neil Goldsmith lost their lives. This anniversary was marked by the holding of a one minute silence at the last Management Committee.
- This annual service was an opportunity to remember and pay tribute to them and all those members of fire and rescue services who have died in the course of their duties. This was a very poignant service, hundreds of attendees were present and many wreaths were laid.

Her Majesty's Inspectorate of Constabulary and Fire and Rescue Services (HMICFRS)

- Included on the agenda for this evening was an update on plans for Her Majesty's Inspectorate of Constabulary to extend its remit to include fire and rescue services.
- By way of an update on this report, Councillor Dudley explained that he and the Chief Fire Officer met with Matt Parr, Her Majesty's Inspector for Fire and Rescue for the London and South Central Region, on 27 September 2017. This meeting was a useful introductory session in which discussions were held around the likely approach to the inspection regime including expectations around lead in times and an assurance had been given that the approach would be reasonable.
- Item 17 would cover this in more detail.

Independent Persons

- Also on tonight's agenda, Members had the opportunity to consider a report related to the term of office of our Independent Persons.
- Prior to considering the report, Councillor Dudley placed on record his thanks on behalf of the Fire Authority to David Comben and Roger Penfold for undertaking the roles since being appointed in February 2015.
- As Members would be aware, the role of 'Independent Person' was a legal requirement under the Localism Act 2011 to advise in relation to allegations of breaches of the Code of Conduct by Members.
- Mr Penfold and Mr Comben were invited to attend this evening but, unfortunately, due to other engagements, were unable to attend and had sent their apologies to the meeting. However, Councillor Dudley, on behalf of all Members, expressed his gratitude for their work on behalf of the Fire Authority.

Wellbeing Adviser – Mental Health

- This announcement was timely as today was World Mental Health Awareness Day. Councillor Dudley announced that Anthea Bailey had joined the RBFRS health and wellbeing team as a Wellbeing Adviser – Mental Health as of 30 August 2017.
- The purpose of this new role was intended to progress the mental health aspect

of the Health, Safety and Wellbeing Strategy, challenge stigma and make positive changes to improve mental health in the workplace.

- Anthea was a qualified Occupational Therapist who would work closely with Occupational Health to help individuals experiencing mental health difficulties remain in or return to their professional vocation.
- Councillor Dudley welcomed Anthea to the organisation. Her recruitment would help to support both Officers and Members.

New Head of Business and Information Systems

- Councillor Dudley welcomed Tony Vincent to his first Fire Authority meeting and stated that he, and all Members, looked forward to working with him.
- Tony joined RBFRS in August 2017 as the new Head of Business and Information Systems and brought a wealth of experience to the role.

Bob Foley

- As Members were already aware, it was with great sadness that Councillor Dudley shared the news that Bob Foley, Senior Driving Instructor, had passed away suddenly. Bob's funeral was being held tomorrow (11 October 2017) with representation from across the Service. Details of the funeral arrangements had been sent to all Members of the Fire Authority. Councillor Emma Webster would be attending with Officers, but other Members were also able to attend Bob's funeral if they wished.
- In honour of the family's wishes, RBFRS staff would be acting as pallbearers with the duty watches from both Dee Road and Caversham Road Stations standing to attention as the funeral cortege passed.
- Councillor Dudley stated that thoughts were of course with Bob's family and friends at this difficult time.

Emergency Services Fun Day – 26 October 2017

Councillor Dudley drew Members attention to this event which was taking place at the Arborfield Garrison Community Centre with representatives from Thames Valley FRS, the Police, Community Responders, Search and Rescue, the RNLI, the Army and Mounted Police in attendance. Councillor Dudley encouraged Members, their family and friends to attend.

Public Sector Communications Awards 2017

Councillor Emma Webster reported that the RBFRS had been shortlisted at this event for the best consultation and engagement campaign for the work undertaken on the IRMP consultation and service redesign. While the award went to NHS England for mental health services, Councillor Webster placed on record her thanks for the hard work that went into this consultation and thanked those who responded to the consultation.

Chief Fire Officer (CFO) Announcements

Councillor Dudley then invited the CFO to make any further announcements. Trevor Ferguson, CFO, provided an update on post Grenfell work conducted with Slough Borough Council for the Nova House building in Slough. This would be detailed by

Mark Gasgarth (Area Manager, Collaboration and Policy) but the CFO advised that this work was setting a path nationally to address issues of this type.

Mark Gasgarth (Area Manager, Collaboration and Policy) added that Nova House was a former six storey office building that was built in the 1980's that had been converted to residential apartments in 2015. In June 2017, Nova House failed fire safety tests and follow up tests in August 2017 also failed.

Since that time, the RBFRS had worked closely with Slough Borough Council, the freeholder of the building and the National Fire Chiefs Council to resolve issues and improve safety levels.

The latest update was that Slough Borough Council had confirmed its intention to take control of the privately owned apartment block and had agreed to acquire the business that operated Nova House. The details of these arrangements were being finalised with some urgency. Slough Borough Council and the RBFRS would continue to work together to ensure the safety of residents in both the immediate and longer term.

Councillor Dudley thanked Officers for this update.

27. ISSUES ARISING FROM THE AUDIT AND GOVERNANCE COMMITTEE

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

28. QUESTIONS FROM MEMBERS UNDER STANDING ORDER 30

There were no questions from Members under Standing Order 30.

29. NOTICES OF MOTION UNDER STANDING ORDER 43

There were no Notices of Motion under Standing Order 43

30. RECOMMENDATIONS OF COMMITTEES

It was noted that the following items had been recommended from Audit and Governance Committee on 27th July 2017 and 27th September 2017, and Management Committee on 19th September 2017:

- Item 12 – Peer Review Report
- Item 13 – Annual Statement of Assurance 2016/17
- Item 14 – Amendments to Contract and Financial Regulations
- Item 15 – Protocol on Member and Officer Relations
- Item 16 – Annual Treasury Management Review 2016/17

31. LEAD MEMBER SIX MONTHLY UPDATE AND PRESENTATION

A six month update was received from Lead Members for Budget, Collaboration, Integrated Risk Management Plan (IRMP) and Strategic Asset Management.

Councillor Phillip Bicknell, Lead Member for Finance, made the following points:

- The Statement of Accounts had been audited during July and August. The auditors issued an unqualified opinion and the accounts were signed off by

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the Audit and Governance Committee on 27 September 2017.

- The Fire and Rescue Indemnity Company (FRIC) had been set up in 2015 by nine Fire and Rescue Services to improve standards and reduce the cost of insurance arrangements. The FRIC had recorded a surplus of nearly £500k after its first year of operation.
- The Service Delivery restructure took effect from 1 September 2017, which accounted for almost 70% of the revenue budget. A substantial piece of work had begun to realign cost centre budgets with the new structure and train staff.
- The Fire Brigade Union (FBU) had rejected a pay offer.
- The Public Inquiry into the Grenfell Tower tragedy might produce new laws and new unfunded costs.
- The increased terrorist threat had led to the introduction of further measures to deter hostile vehicles in Windsor.

Fire Authority noted the update report that was tabled on Collaboration as the Lead Member (Councillor Malcolm Alexander) had given his apologies to the meeting.

Councillor Emma Webster, Lead Member for IRMP, made the following points:

- In April 2017 the Fire Authority had taken a decision to pursue option one as laid out in the public consultation, with the exception of keeping Wargrave open for a further 12 months subject to an improvement in the availability of the station to 60%.
- The closure of Pangbourne Station would be aligned to the opening of Theale Station.
- A post had been recruited jointly with Oxfordshire Fire and Rescue Service (OFRS). OFRS were the primary employer however the post holder divided their labour equally.
- Royal Berkshire Fire and Rescue Services (RBFRS) would be collaborating with OFRS to acquire a new aerial appliance.
- There would be a full review of the Incident Command Unit in 2018/19.

Councillor Angus Ross, Lead Member for Strategic Asset Management, made the following points:

- This area of activity included Property Capital Build and Redevelopment, Facilities Management, ICT Assets and Fleet Provision.
- Good progress had been made by a Member/Officer Working Group on developing a range of capital projects. These included Hungerford Community Fire Station, the Whitley Wood/Three Mile Cross site, feasibility studies for the phase 2 projects for Crowthorne and Caversham Road Fire Stations and the sale of the Windsor site. Councillor Ross added that the RBFRS had received an award for its work on the Hungerford Community Fire Station which had now been opened and was operating successfully, this included utilisation of the community room. The focus of these projects was to place fire stations at the heart of communities and community use was an important factor of this.
- He highlighted the impressive list of projects implemented for ICT. This

included the purchase of a new helpdesk system, improved flexible working through the issue of Surface Pro 4's to Officers as well as work to improve the system support network for the TVFCS.

- Facility based projects had been well established under the management of Katie Mills, Head of Corporate Services. These included plans to lease accommodation within Headquarters to Thames Valley Police from April 2018.
- Good progress had been made with fleet rationalisation. Four new collaboratively procured fire appliances were delivered at the end of May 2017, Aerial Ladder Platform replacement was underway and a Fleet Partnership with Hampshire FRS was being finalised.
- Councillor Ross also made reference to the collaboration update paper by stating that the RBFRS was reaping the benefits of collaboration projects in the purchase of new fire appliances. Councillors Ross and Alexander had attended a launch event for the new appliances and both Members enjoyed the opportunity of driving one of the new vehicles.

RESOLVED that:

- (1) The update reports be noted.

32. INDEPENDENT PERSONS TO THE FIRE AUTHORITY

Graham Britten, Monitoring Officer, presented a report which recommended that the appointments of the Fire Authority's incumbent Independent Persons should be extended for a period of four years commencing 22nd February 2018 to expire on the day prior to the AGM in 2022.

The Monitoring Officer had met with both Mr. Comben and Mr. Penfold and both had been agreeable for their terms of office to be extended. Under the Local Government Act 2011 the Fire Authority was required to appoint an Independent Person to advise in relation to allegations of breaches of the Code of Conduct by Members.

It was recommended that the Fire Authority retained two Independent Persons in order to avoid a conflict situation arising during a complaints process. The role of a Deputy Independent Person was not recognised by the Localism Act 2011.

The Chairman noted that the Independent Persons were an asset to the Fire Authority due to their impeccable characters.

RESOLVED that:

- (1) The following persons' terms of office as Independent Persons be extended for a period of four years commencing 22nd February 2018 to expire on the day prior to the AGM in 2022:
 - David Comben
 - Roger Penfold
- (2) Roger Penfold's role to be re-designated from Deputy Independent Person to that of Independent Person.

33. FIRE PEER CHALLENGE 2017 – SUMMARY REPORT AND 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 the RBFRS delivered its services 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. Audit and Governance Committee had agreed the draft action plan and would monitor progress against the plan moving forward.

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

The challenge team noted that progress had been made since 2014, most notably in relation to improved governance arrangements, decision making processes and accountability. They noted good aspirations and plans to further the fire reform agenda and good foundations on which to build. Furthermore, the team described the Service's Vision as Member led, but involving staff at all levels of the organisation.

The Peer Team's findings identified key challenges and areas to further improve. The Senior Leadership Team had considered and developed an action plan in response to the Peer Team's recommendations. This action plan, which as explained was agreed by the Audit and Governance Committee on 27th September 2017, built on progress already being made in certain areas and, in some cases, progress was already underway at the time of the visit.

Councillor Emma Webster was pleased to note that many areas identified within the action plan were already in train.

RESOLVED that:

- The Fire Peer Challenge Summary Report was noted;

- The publication of the Summary Report was agreed;
- The Action Plan was noted.

34. ANNUAL STATEMENT OF ASSURANCE 2016/17

Steve Foye, Deputy Chief Fire Officer (DCFO), 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.

The Chairman offered congratulations to the officers for achieving ‘fully met’ status for all four areas of the audit.

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.

35. AMENDMENTS TO CONTRACT AND FINANCIAL REGULATIONS

Conor Byrne, Head of Finance and Procurement (HOFP), presented for Member approval proposed changes to the Contract and Financial Regulations. The proposed updates included compliance with legislative changes and sound governance in line with best practice.

The current Contract and Financial Regulations had been approved by the Fire Authority in August 2016 following a number of recommendations by the Authority's internal auditors. The regulations were now reviewed annually. The regulations had been updated to take into account senior management changes and to improve clarity. In addition, substantive changes were proposed as explained below.

Contract Regulations

Since the last update two legislative changes placed new requirements on the Authority in relation to the design and management of suppliers and new contracts. The new legislative requirements were already being enacted by the Procurement Team and were now documented within the proposed RBFA Contract Regulations.

The Modern Slavery Act 2015 placed a responsibility on all contracting organisations to take action in the award and monitoring of all contracts to mitigate against human trafficking and compulsory labour being operated by any supplier or within their supply chain. In addition, the mandatory government standard questionnaire used for all large contracts required a tenderer to confirm that they complied with the requirements of the Modern Slavery Act. The Authority had updated its standard contract terms and these changes were reflected in the update at Appendix A.

The Police and Crime Act 2017 placed a statutory duty on the emergency services to collaborate. The Contract Regulations had been updated to reflect the requirement of the legislation in relation to procurement activity and the work in support of the fire reform programme.

Financial Regulations

Following a recommendation from an internal audit report, all vehicles and any other assets with a value over £7,000 would be capitalised and entered onto a fixed asset register. This change was just a formal recognition of current practice and did not represent a change in the Authority's accounting practices.

Assets with a value over £3,000 being disposed of by competitive quotations or by auction, could now be disposed of by land swaps, subject to the approval of the Chief Finance Officer and the Monitoring Officer as long as value for money could be demonstrated.

The Audit and Governance Committee had recommended approval of the updated Contract and Financial Regulations.

Councillor Paul Bryant questioned the acceptance of verbal quotations for contracts with a total value of between £5k and £10k. The HOFP clarified that this was purely for quotations, contractual discussions would require communication in writing.

Councillor Bryant felt it would be useful to have this clarified within the document.

Councillor Bryant also felt that an amendment was needed to one of the standard contract clauses in section CR16 of the Contract Regulations – ‘the requirement to adhere to all relevant Fire Authority policies’. He felt this should be extended to say ‘in place at the time when the contract was signed’. The HOFPP noted this and would make the amendment.

Councillor Angus Ross sought clarification around how issues arising from joint procurement in collaboration with other Fire and Rescue Services and other bodies could be resolved and asked whether the RBFRS procurement rules would be adhered to. The HOFPP explained that the lead authority’s procurement rules would need to be followed and a dispensation would need to be obtained from partners to allow this. This was the approach taken with a TVFCS project when Oxfordshire’s FRS was the lead authority.

Councillor Colin Dudley turned to section CR28 of the Contract Regulations – use of an approved provider list. This list could be used for low value spend categories and Councillor Dudley queried what was considered as low value spend and queried the upper limit. In response, the HOFPP referred Members to bullet point four of CR28, i.e. that no single supplier should be awarded more than £5k in any year. He went on to explain that the purpose of the approved provider list was to avoid full procurement exercises in cases where it was considered inefficient to do so, i.e. for minor works.

RESOLVED that:

- The updated Contract and Financial Regulations as set out in Appendices A and B be approved.

36. PROTOCOL ON MEMBER AND OFFICER RELATIONS

Councillor Pauline Helliard-Symons, Organisational Development Champion, presented a proposed Protocol on Member and Officer Relations.

The recommendation that local authorities had in place a Member/Officer Protocol was derived from the Third Report of the Committee on Standards of Conduct in Public Life: “Standards of Conduct in Local government in England, Scotland and Wales” 1997. Royal Berkshire Fire Authority was committed to ensuring there was a strong, constructive and trusting relationship between Members and officers. The policy aimed to provide a formal protocol for the working relationship between Members and officers to ensure that current good practice continued.

The Protocol provided guidance on the behaviour, roles and responsibilities of both Members and officers, and put in place a mechanism should any issues arise surrounding this subject.

The recommendation to have a formal protocol in place was supported by the recent Fire Peer Challenge which identified that recent positive changes to the Fire Authority’s governance arrangements would be further supported by a Member/Officer Protocol.

The Member/Officer Protocol had been considered by the Audit and Governance Committee and was recommended to the Fire Authority for approval.

RESOLVED that:

- The new Protocol on Member/Officer Relations be approved.

37. ANNUAL TREASURY MANAGEMENT REVIEW 2016/17

Conor Byrne, Head of Finance and Procurement (HOFP), presented the Annual Treasury Report for 2016/17, as set out in Appendix A of the report, in accordance with the CIPFA Code of Practice on Treasury Management in Public Services.

It was noted that interest received during the year totalled £23,000 as interest rates had remained at exceptionally low levels throughout the year (the Bank Rate was cut from 0.5% to 0.25% in August 2016).

No further borrowing had been undertaken as capital expenditure had been financed by grant and revenue contributions, and total debt therefore remained at £8.8m. The revenue costs of borrowing amounted to 2.2% of the net revenue budget.

RESOLVED that:

- The Annual Treasury Report for 2016/17 be noted.

38. HMIC REMIT EXTENSION TO FIRE & RESCUE SERVICES

As referred to in the Chairman's announcements, Jim Powell, (Area Manager (Risk and Performance)), informed the Fire Authority on HMIC extending its remit to inspect Fire and Rescue Services across England in addition to Policing.

The Policing and Crime Act 2017 received Royal Assent in January 2017 and enabled the transformation of local fire governance and greater collaboration between emergency services. A main provision of the Act was the introduction of a new inspection regime for Fire and Rescue Services. Attached at Appendix A of the report was a letter from Sir Thomas Winsor, Her Majesty's Chief Inspector of Constabulary, informing Fire and Rescue Authorities of the announcement that HMIC, in addition to Policing, would inspect Fire and Rescue Services across England.

All 45 Fire and Rescue Services would be inspected over a two year period to examine efficiency, effectiveness and leadership of each service. The new inspection regime would need to be laid before Parliament by March 2018 in order to allow inspections by the end of next year. It was noted that Matt Parr had been appointed as Her Majesty's Inspector for Fire and Rescue for the London and South Central Region.

Councillor Paul Bryant enquired how the inspection regime would fit in with Peer Reviews. The CFO advised that he had attended a meeting with the HMIC that day which had suggested that Peer Reviews would still have a role in supporting Fire and Rescue Services to move forward.

Councillor Paul Gittings stated that he hoped the new inspection regime would be more rigorous and focussed than the Peer Review process and produce a clear public report.

Councillor Adrian Edwards noted the inspection timetable and expressed the view that it was ambitious. He hoped that the inspection would be detailed.

RESOLVED that:

- The report be noted.

39. IRMP SERVICE REDESIGN UPDATE

Jim Powell, (Area Manager (Risk and Performance)), presented a report which stated that in April 2017 the Fire Authority had made a number of decisions in relation to its Integrated Risk Management Plan (IRMP), which set out how it would manage risk within the county in light of the need to make £2.4m of savings to balance its budget.

As explained in Councillor Emma Webster's earlier presentation, option one was being progressed as laid out in the public consultation, with the following exception:

Following the extensive public consultation, one of the significant decisions, to close Wargrave Fire Station, was deferred for twelve months based on two key criteria – that the financial savings linked to the closure could be found elsewhere and that the stations availability (the actual time it was available to attend incidents) was increased to 60%.

An IRMP Task and Finish Group, chaired by Councillor Webster, had considered arrangements for supporting and assessing progress of the station during the period of deferment and these had been recommended to and agreed by Management Committee in September 2017. Officers had been working to ensure suitable arrangements were in place to support retained colleagues and the local community by enabling and facilitating effective recruitment, training and retention processes. These were the key factors that would be needed to increase the number of retained staff at Wargrave which was necessary to improve availability, working towards the 60% target. Now that these processes were in place and also to align to future budget setting cycles, the twelve month period, over which the increase in availability would be monitored, had formally commenced on 1st October 2017.

As the station progressed through this twelve month period, Officers would continually support whilst monitoring progress on increasing availability. To ensure that opportunity was provided to meet the target and to enable reasonable evaluation of the sustainability of any improvement, Wargrave personnel would need to achieve an average of 60% availability in any rolling 28 day period over the course of the twelve month period.

It was not expected that this target would be achieved in the early months of this project as it took time to recruit and train retained firefighters in order that they could provide the necessary cover and positively impact on increasing the overall appliance availability. Therefore the ongoing performance monitoring would consider the pace, trajectory and sustainability of improvement being achieved by the station during the 12 month period, forecasting how this might continue which would ensure that any future decisions were based on a reasonable assessment of the likely progress towards the target.

Councillor Webster stated that subject to the Fire Authority noting this report, it was important to engage with the local media, local authorities, parishes etc to ensure there was public awareness of the outcome of this consultation, in particular the plans for Wargrave Fire Station.

RESOLVED that:

- The report be noted.

40. FORWARD PLAN

RESOLVED that:

The Royal Berkshire Fire Authority's Forward Plan for the period 1st November 2017 to 30th July 2018 be noted.

41. MINUTES OF THE STANDING COMMITTEES

RESOLVED that:

It be noted that the minutes of the following meetings had been published on the RBFRS website:

- Management Committee – 17th July 2017
- Audit & Governance Committee – 27th July 2017

Councillor Angus Ross wished to record his thanks and congratulations to Officers for the high quality of the reports provided and therefore the efficiency with which the business of this meeting had been conducted. Councillor Colin Dudley agreed with this point and added his thanks to the Lead Members for their contributions to these reports, i.e. through task and finish groups.

42. DATE OF THE NEXT MEETING

Tuesday 27th February 2018, 6.30pm in the Lynda Kenyon Suite, Headquarters, Newsham Court, Pincents Kiln, Calcot, Reading, Berkshire RG31 7SD.

(The meeting concluded at 7.35pm)