

Approved 19.02.14

**MINUTES OF THE MEETING OF THE ROYAL BERKSHIRE FIRE
AUTHORITY**



Held on Wednesday 11 December 2013 at 7.30 pm

**Council Chamber, Bracknell Forest Council, Easthamsptead House,
Town Square, Bracknell RG12 1AQ.**

Members:

*Councillor Alistair Auty	Councillor Christine Bateson
*Councillor Phillip Bicknell	Councillor Chris Bowring
*Councillor Jeff Brooks	Councillor Paul Bryant
Councillor David Burbage	Councillor Diana Coad
*Councillor Andrew Cumpsty	*Councillor Haqeeq Dar
*Councillor Colin Dudley	Councillor Adrian Edwards
*Councillor Paul Gittings	*Councillor Pauline Helliard-Symons
*Councillor Peter Jones	*Councillor John Lenton
*Councillor Chris Maskell	*Councillor Tom McCann
*Councillor Iain McCracken	*Councillor Edward Plenty
*Councillor Mohammed Rasib	*Councillor Angus Ross
*Councillor Rebecca Rye	*Councillor Alan Ward
*Councillor Emma Webster	
<i>*present</i>	

In Attendance: Andy Fry (Chief Fire Officer, CFO)
Andy Mancey (Acting Assistant Chief Fire Officer, A/ACFO)
Nick Oxborough (Group Manager, Performance Review, GMPR)
Caroline Redzikowska (Director Corporate Services, DCS)
Carolyn Rowe (Interim Head of Corporate Services, IHCS)
Fayth Rowe (Committee Officer, CO)
Paul Southern (Assistant Chief Fire Officer, ACFO)
Steve Sprason (Interim Head of Estates, IHE)
Andrew Vallance (Director Resources, DR)

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

446. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Apologies for absence were received from Councillors Christine Bateson, Chris Bowring, Paul Bryant, David Burbage, Diana Coad and Adrian Edwards.

447. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

Cllr Phillip Bicknell and Cllr John Lenton each declared a personal interest in relation to Item 19 on the agenda (Part II – Tinkers Lane New Fire Station, Windsor). There were no Declarations of Interest received from Officers.

Action

448. MINUTES OF THE MEETING HELD ON 25 SEPTEMBER 2013

In answer to a query from Cllr McCracken, the DCS confirmed that an item on the Handbook had been included in the Forward Plan for June 2014.

Resolved:

That the Minutes of the meeting held on 25 September 2013 be approved as a correct record for signing by the Chairman.

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

There were no items received under standing orders 19 and 25, participation of the public.

450. RECEIPT OF ANNOUNCEMENTS

- a) The Chairman announced that the assessment for the Charter for Member Development would be held on Tuesday 17 December 2013.
- b) The Chairman announced that a Planning Workshop would be held on Wednesday 29th January 2014 at the Rivers Ibis Health Club and referred to the flyer that had been tabled. He asked Members to confirm their attendance at this important event.
- c) The Chairman stated that there had been a revised agenda dispatched to FA Members with the inclusion of a late part II report for this meeting.
- d) The Chairman announced that a private briefing for all Members would be held after the RBFA meeting.
- e) The Chairman congratulated the Extrication Team who had recently become the World Champions. He stated that the competition had been held in Florida, USA, and added that RBFA would formally mark their achievement. The RBFRS Extrication Team had now won the World Championship for three years in a row. The Chairman invited Paul Maynard (Group Manager, Response GM (R)) to say a few words.

RBFA

The GM (R) reported that the competition had been challenging and said that it had been a fantastic achievement by the Team and individual members. He thanked RBFA for their continued support.

The Chairman stated that he would write to the Chief Fire Officers Association (CFOA) and the Prime Minister to inform them of the Extrication Team's terrific achievement.

Chairman

- f) The Chairman stated that the FBU had announced strike action on the 13th and 14th December 2013 between 6.00pm – 10.00pm. He urged RBFA to remind residents of the importance of Fire Safety at this time and to check their fire alarms.

451. ISSUES ARISING FROM THE AUDIT AND GOVERNANCE COMMITTEE

There were no issues arising from the Audit and Governance Committee.

452. QUESTIONS FROM MEMBERS UNDER STANDING ORDER 30

There were no questions from Members under Standing Order 30.

453. NOTICES OF MOTION UNDER STANDING ORDER 44

There were no notices of motion under Standing Order 44.

454. RECOMMENDATIONS OF COMMITTEES

It was noted that the following item on Alternative or Complementary Wholetime Duty Systems had been recommended by the IRMP Working Party and the Management Committee.

455. IRMP WORKING PARTY – ALTERNATIVE OR COMPLEMENTARY WHOLETIME DUTY SYSTEMS

The Acting Assistant Chief Fire Officer (A/ACFO) informed RBFA that the presentation they were about to receive, had been to the IRMP Working Party on 13th November 2013 and Management Committee on 25th November 2013. The report and the presentation built on a previous report to Members.

A/ACFO outlined the different rota systems that had been researched. He reported that a staff survey had been held across all watches and there had been 211 responses. He reported that the feedback from the survey indicated that some staff felt that morale would be affected and some had indicated that they would resign if a change to the rota system was implemented. On a positive note, he advised that a number of the workforce had indicated they would work extra shifts for payment and others indicated they were willing to work overtime.

A/ACFO advised that the survey had identified that 74% of staff felt that it was unacceptable to use retained (RDS) personnel, and it was believed this was mainly due to the difference in training, competencies and level of experience, but more work would be done to understand this.

In response to the vice-Chairman, A/ACFO advised that RDS staff may not have as much training or experience as wholetime staff, but he did not share the view indicated in the survey. He added that RBFRS had a robust debrief process following incidents and there was little or no evidence to support this aspect of the survey.

In addition, A/ACFO advised that the 2011 Swinley Forest Fire had been an example of where wholetime and RDS staff had successfully worked together.

The Chief Fire Officer (CFO) commented that there was a need to examine the reason why 74% of those who responded to the survey expressed this view, and added that, on the whole, firefighters have a high level of respect for RDS staff.

On the option of covering shortfalls by the use of casual overtime or extra shifts, the Chairman commented that the FBU had recently voted to 'work to rule', which could possibly stop FBU members from working overtime or taking additional shifts. The Chairman asked whether RBFA could examine a local contract outside the Grey Book.

A/ACFO reported that Kent FRS had developed a local contract and advised that the baseline salary had been increased. He added that although signing up to the contract was voluntary, once the firefighter had signed and moved to this, it

became contractual.

In response to the Chairman regarding whether a 'work to rule' would affect the option of a localised flexible roster, A/ACFO reported that this option could be introduced as a pilot scheme on a voluntary basis. The localised flexible roster contract would provide annualised hours, which would become the responsibility of the station commander to manage, and it was unlikely to be affected by industrial action.

The Chairman thanked A/ACFO for presenting the report. He also thanked RBFA Members and officers who had participated in the Challenge day and said that these days were important.

Cllr Brooks stated that he was pleased to support the report and also thanked A/ACFO for his presentation. He stated that for the future he was keen for RBFA to look at the establishment number and the current recruitment freeze. It was agreed that this would form part of the work of the IRMP Working Party, including the crewing strategy.

ACFO

The vice-Chairman reinforced the importance of driving down the absence levels and recognised that it should be the responsibility of middle managers to achieve this.

The Chairman moved the recommendations as outlined in the report, which was seconded by Cllr Webster.

Resolved:

- a) That the review be noted, and
- b) That the additional recommendation from the IRMP Working Party be noted, and
- c) That it be agreed that:
 - i) The current arrangements for recall to duty, use of other available on duty staff and standbys from other stations should continue as part of backup or resilience arrangements.
 - ii) RBFRS should negotiate greater clarity outside of the Grey Book over the definition of overtime and when and how overtime can be used.
 - iii) RBFRS should negotiate a staff bank pool arrangement to include Retained and Wholetime that should include consideration of the rate of pay (including consideration of flat rate).
 - iv) RBFRS should negotiate a Local Roster Reserve (Berkshire) shift system which is outside of the Grey Book. (This may be voluntary or mandatory)
 - v) RBFRS should continue to monitor and manage leave arrangements, to ensure that the impact of seasonal variations is reduced.
 - vi) RBFRS should continue to drive down absence levels.
 - vii) **RBFRS should investigate a flexible rostering system operating at station level.**

456. MEMBER DEVELOPMENT AND THE SOUTH EAST EMPLOYERS CHARTER - PRESENTATION

The Group Manager, Performance Review (GMPR) reported that the assessment by South East Employers for the Charter for Member Development had been scheduled for Tuesday 17th December 2013. He thanked those Members who would be participating in the assessment by telephone interview or in person on 17th December 2013.

The GMPR reported that 16 RBFA Members had signed up to the Charter and 13 of those had completed a self assessment which had led to an action plan. He assured Members who had not yet signed up to the Charter that the assessment was not time consuming or onerous.

He said that a common theme from members' action plans had been a request for presentations on topics that would impact on the RBFA and future decisions. His presentation to RBFA was therefore based on the themes from the Sir Ken Knight report 'Facing the Future' and took Members through what the findings from that report might mean for RBFA.

The CFO advised that a formal response to the Sir Ken Knight report would be made by the Fire Minister, Brandon Lewis MP. The CFO said that with this in mind, it would be important for RBFA to consider a response, and the Planning Workshop on 29th January 2014 would be an opportunity to address some of the issues.

Cllr Ross stated that the Strategic Asset Management Committee (SAMC) had been looking at the development of shared services with Thames Valley Police and South Central Ambulance Service.

Cllr McCracken highlighted the potential benefits of sharing services and referred to the partnership work between Hampshire FRS and Thames Valley Police.

Cllr Webster queried whether RBFA could address some of the issues identified in the presentation now, in order to submit a response from RBFA to Brendon Lewis MP.

In response, the Chairman suggested that the issues raised in the Sir Ken Knight report could be considered in greater depth by the IRMP Working Party. He added that there would also be an opportunity for RBFA at the Planning Workshop on 29th January 2014.

The vice-Chairman thanked Cllr Auty, Member Development Champion and GMPR for the work and time they had committed to the Member Development Charter. She urged all Members who had not yet signed up to the Charter, to do so, stating the importance for all RBFA Members as representatives of the people of Berkshire.

457. 2013/14 BUDGET MONITORING

The Director of Resources (DR) reported that there was an underspend in the recruitment of wholtime firefighters due to the on-going recruitment freeze. He added that the issue of the retained underspend would be brought to the Planning Workshop on 29th January 2014.

DR advised that the capital expenditure reported the position at the end of October, and that the figure was now £1million.

Resolved:

That the report be noted.

458. VERBAL UPDATE ON NEW BHQ

The Interim Head of Estates (IHE), Steve Sprason gave a verbal update on the progress of the new BHQ at Theale Cross. He reported that the building work was making good progress and outlined the following:

- the demolition and strip out of the building took place three months ago;
- the internal wall structure, glazing windows and doors had been fitted;
- the building was wind and water tight; and
- works to the footpath had been completed.

The IHE advised that the external rendering was behind schedule. He reported that RBFRS had a resident clerk of works on site. He added that at present there was a four week delay to the project, and that a revised programme of works would be ready in January 2014. He stated that at present the delay in the project brought the project completion date to mid May 2014.

Cllr Ross stated that he and the SAMC vice-Chairman, Cllr Edwards had visited Theale Cross recently. He confirmed that the building was wind and water tight. He added that to date, there had been no further increases to the cost of the project. He suggested, and it was agreed that RBFA Members be invited to visit the site early in the new Year.

IHE

IHE advised that the main concern remained the mechanical and engineering design. A May 2014 completion indicated that staff would start to move in during June 2014.

In response to a query from Cllr Cumpsty, the ACFO reported that engagement had been held with RBFRS staff and their comments had been incorporated. The ACFO stated that additional staff engagement would be held one year after the move into the new premises.

459. MINUTES OF THE STANDING COMMITTEES

The Fire Authority received the Minutes of the following meetings of the Fire Authority's Committees:

- a) Management Committee – 16 September 2013 (approved)
- b) Strategic Asset Management Committee – 15 October 2013 (not yet approved)
- c) Management Committee – 25 November 2013 (not yet approved)

460. FORWARD PLAN

Resolved:

That the Forward Plan be noted.

461. DATE OF NEXT MEETING

- Wednesday 19 February 2014 at 6.30 pm, Wokingham Borough Council, Civic Offices, Shute End, Wokingham, Berkshire RG40 1BN.

The Chairman took the opportunity to wish RBFA, members of the public, Fire Brigades Union and RBFRS Officers a Merry Christmas and a Happy New Year

462. 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 Items on the grounds that they involve the likely disclosure of exempt information, as defined in the 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.

463. PART II MINUTES OF THE MEETING HELD ON 25 SEPTEMBER 2013

Resolved:

That the Part II minutes of the Meeting held on 25 September 2013 be approved for signing by the Chairman.

464. TINKERS LANE NEW FIRE STATION, WINDSOR

The IHE introduced the report and provided a brief update on the progress of the new Fire Station at Tinkers Lane, Windsor.

The Chairman moved an amendment to the recommendations, which was seconded by Cllr Webster.

Resolved:

That the recommendations, as amended, be approved.

The meeting closed at 9.10pm