

# MINUTES OF THE MEETING OF THE ROYAL BERKSHIRE FIRE AUTHORITY (RBFRS)



Held on Wednesday 14 January 2015 at 7.30pm

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

- Members:**
- \* Councillor Frank Abe
  - \* Councillor Debs Absolom
  - \* Councillor Alistair Auty
  - \* Councillor Joginder Bal
  - \* Councillor Christine Bateson
  - \* Councillor Phillip Bicknell
  - \* Councillor Jeff Brooks (from 7.25pm)
  - \* Councillor Paul Bryant
  - \* Councillor David Burbage
  - \* Councillor Colin Dudley
  - \* Councillor Adrian Edwards
  - \* Councillor Paul Gittings
  - \* Councillor Pauline Helliar-Symons
  - \* Councillor John Lenton
  - Councillor Chris Maskell
  - \* Councillor Tom McCann
  - Councillor Iain McCracken
  - \* Councillor Eileen McElligott
  - \* Councillor Edward Plenty
  - \* Councillor Ian Pittock
  - \* Councillor Angus Ross
  - \* Councillor Ishrat Shah
  - Councillor Alan Ward
  - \* Councillor Emma Webster
  - Councillor Richard Willis

- In Attendance:**
- Trevor Ferguson (Deputy Chief Fire Officer, DCFO)
  - Moira Fraser (Democratic Services Manager, DSM)
  - Andy Fry (Chief Fire Officer, CFO)
  - Linda Pye (Principal Policy Officer, PPO)
  - Caroline Redzikowska (Director Corporate Services, DCS)
  - Paul Southern (Assistant Chief Fire Officer, ACFO)
  - Nicole Targett (Head of Corporate Communications)
  - Andrew Vallance (Director of Resources, DR)

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

## 55. APOLOGIES OF ABSENCE

Apologies for inability to attend the meeting were received from Councillors Iain McCracken, Chris Maskell, Alan Ward and Richard Willis.

## 56. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

In accordance with the provisions of the Fire Authority's Local Code of Conduct, Councillors Angus Ross and Paul Bryant declared a non-pecuniary interest in any items relating to the Thames Valley Fire Control Service as they were Members of the Steering Group.

There were no Declarations of Interest received from Officers.

**Action**

## 57. MINUTES OF THE MEETINGS HELD ON 22 SEPTEMBER 2014

### Resolved that:

the Minutes of the meeting held on 22<sup>nd</sup> September 2014 be approved as a true and correct record and signed by the Chairman.

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

There was no participation of the public under Standing Orders 19 and 25.

## 59. RECEIPT OF ANNOUNCEMENTS

The Chairman made the following announcements:

- **Caroline Redzikowska** – The Chairman noted that Caroline had joined RBFRS on 1<sup>st</sup> August 2008 having transferred from West Oxfordshire District Council where she had been employed as Head of Legal and Estate Services. As the Clerk and Monitoring Officer for this Fire Authority she had been an extremely valuable source of support and advice in the conduct of the authority's business. On 1<sup>st</sup> April 2012 Caroline was appointed as a Director in the Service and assumed responsibility for Human Resources and Learning Development in addition to Legal Support and Committee Services. Aside from the 'day job' Caroline had been prepared to step forward to assist colleagues when dealing with a range of crises, the most recent of which involved her lending support to the Service's flood response effort in 2014. She had also been very supportive to Members and Officers following the death of Lynda Kenyon.

During the course of the previous year, an opportunity had arisen through a Corporate Management Team restructure for Caroline to leave the Service in order to pursue other professional challenges. She had chosen to take that opportunity and consequently this would be her last day with Royal Berkshire Fire and Rescue Service before heading off to pastures new. The Chairman, on behalf of Fire Authority Member colleagues and Officers of RBFRS, thanked Caroline for the contribution which she had made over the last 7 years and wished her every success in whatever she chose to do in the future.

- **Andy Mancey** – Andy had retired from the Royal Berkshire Fire and Rescue Service on 31<sup>st</sup> October 2014 after 22 years service and 32 years in total in the fire and rescue service. The period between Andy declaring his intention to retire and leaving the service had fallen between Fire Authority meetings and, as a result, there had not been a chance to say a proper farewell. He had therefore been invited to attend this meeting in order for formal thanks to be shown to him.

In the 22 years that Andy had worked for Royal Berkshire Fire and Rescue Service he had made an enormous contribution to keeping people safe across the county. He also acted up as Assistant Chief Officer and the Chairman congratulated him on doing an excellent job. On behalf of the Fire Authority colleagues, and the people in Royal Berkshire that the Fire Authority represented, the Chairman thanked Andy for all that he had done and he wished him all the best for the future and hoped that he had a long and happy

retirement.

- **BHQ Update** – A meeting had been held on 11<sup>th</sup> December 2014 with Directors from the main contractor and sub-contractors in order to seek resolution in a timely way to the most important outstanding issues at Newsham Court. The meeting had been productive and corrective action together with time frames had been agreed. Progress on correcting these defaults had been positive and, in particular, issues associated with the failure of the air conditioning to the IT server rooms had now been corrected. Work was still continuing to agree the budget and Final Account and a report would be presented to the Fire Authority when negotiations in this regard had been completed. The Chairman stated that the new building was far more efficient than Dee Road.
- **Members' Development** – The Chairman asked if Members participating in the structured Member Development programme could return copies of the Self Assessments and/or individual Approved Action Plans by the end of January 2015 to Nick Oxborough.
- **Substitutes** – This item was for the attention of Group Leaders. The Audit and Governance Committee had recently noted low attendance numbers by Members at some Committee meetings. It was acknowledged that Members did provide apologies for absence in advance of the meetings in question, however, it was considered that substitutes were not being nominated and/or attending frequently enough in place of standing Committee Members. On behalf of the Audit and Governance Committee the Chairman asked that Members took all reasonable steps to ensure that substitutes were nominated and attended Committee meetings in order to ensure that they were quorate. The Fire Authority tried to keep the number of Committees at a reasonable level as it was recognised that Members had busy lives.
- **Signing In** – For security purposes, Members and visitors to the Head Quarters were being asked to sign in at Reception. For those who had not signed in at Reception, a folder would be circulated in order for them to do so. This was in addition to the Attendance Sheet which Members were also required to sign.
- The Chairman referred to the Award Ceremony which would be taking place on 27<sup>th</sup> February 2015. All Members of the Fire Authority had received an invitation and the Chairman encouraged as many Members as possible to attend. If it was not possible to attend then Members should let the relevant people know.
- The Chairman also referred to a Joint Member/Officer Workshop which would be taking place on 28<sup>th</sup> January 2015 to look at the implementation of the policy direction. Again he encouraged as many Members as possible to come along.
- The Chairman report on a recent visit to Hampshire Fire and Rescue Service. This was the first anniversary of the arrangement for the sharing of vehicle maintenance and he stated that Hampshire had kept RBFRS vehicles running well during that period.

*(Councillor Emma Webster arrived at 7.47pm)*

**60. ISSUES ARISING FROM THE AUDIT AND GOVERNANCE COMMITTEE**

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

**61. QUESTIONS FROM MEMBERS UNDER STANDING ORDER 30**

There were no questions from Members under Standing Order 30.

**62. NOTICES OF MOTION UNDER STANDING ORDER 44**

There were no Notices of Motion under Standing Order 44.

**63. RECOMMENDATIONS OF COMMITTEES**

It be noted that agenda item 11 had been recommended from the Management Committee on 1<sup>st</sup> December 2014, and item 12 had been recommended from the Audit and Governance Committee on 10<sup>th</sup> December 2014.

**64. PROVISION OF COMMITTEE SERVICES AND APPOINTMENT OF THE CLERK AND MONITORING OFFICER**

Andy Fry, the Chief Fire Officer (CFO), presented a report which set out the co-operation arrangement with West Berkshire Council in respect of the provision of Committee Services and to designate a Monitoring Officer for Royal Berkshire Fire Authority.

At its meeting on 28<sup>th</sup> July 2014, the Management Committee had received a report regarding an opportunity to co-operate with West Berkshire Council for the provision of Committee Services. The Committee authorised officers to explore a shared service arrangement with West Berkshire Council for the provision of Committee Services as set out in the report, and to prepare a further report seeking formal approval for the provision of the service once details had been finalised. Since that time Officers from both authorities had been working to finalise the details in question and agreement had now been reached on how the co-operative arrangement would work. It had been agreed that the contract would commence on 15<sup>th</sup> January 2015 for a period of three years with the ability for the Fire Authority to terminate in advance, on 12 months' notice.

A temporary arrangement had been in place since April 2014 which had afforded an opportunity to see if the arrangements were workable. The arrangements appeared to have worked very well and the CFO expressed his gratitude to all concerned. The CFO was therefore happy to propose that the arrangement be continued on a more formal footing. The services that would be provided were set out in Appendix 1 to the report. The CFO explained that West Berkshire Council would be providing the service at a cost of £39k per annum (plus a small sum associated with incidental costs) and this would be funded from the £47k saving associated with the vacant Committee Services Manager post. He noted that this post had been vacant for some time despite a number of attempts to recruit to it. This option would provide good value for money and a significantly higher level of resilience for this area of work. In addition West Berkshire Council was a neighbouring local authority and therefore officers were well versed in this type of work and attending meetings should not present any difficulties.

He was also seeking approval from Members to waive the Authority's Standing

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orders to allow the contract to be entered into. The CFO noted that both the Director of Resources and the Director Corporate Services were satisfied that there was sufficient justification for departure from the Standing Orders.

Subject to Members approving the implementation of this contract for the provision of Committee Services, it was recommended that a formal review of the arrangement would be undertaken by the Audit and Governance Committee in 12 months' time. The purpose of the review would be to determine the extent to which the service was meeting the needs of the Fire Authority. The CFO had raised the need for the review with the Chairman of the Audit and Governance Committee who was content with this approach.

In regards to the Monitoring Officer role the Fire Authority meeting on 22<sup>nd</sup> September 2014 received a report regarding a proposed restructure of the Corporate Management Team which included the redundancy of the Director of Corporate Services. This officer was also the designated Monitoring Officer for the Fire Authority and therefore the intention was that a replacement Monitoring Officer would be appointed at this meeting of the Fire Authority. Since that meeting discussions had been ongoing with West Berkshire Council about the possibility of seconding one of their Officers to fulfil the Fire Authority's Monitoring Officer role. Although Heads of Terms had been agreed issues around decision making timescales had meant that it would not be possible for West Berkshire to provide one of its Officers in the Monitoring Officer role on the commencement of the Committee Services contract (15<sup>th</sup> January 2015). Therefore, alternative arrangements had had to be made to ensure that the Fire Authority had a duly designated Monitoring Officer from 15<sup>th</sup> January 2015.

To ensure statutory compliance it was therefore recommended that the Authority should designate the Deputy Chief Fire Officer/Director of Strategy and Performance to the role. Discussions would continue with Officers of West Berkshire Council to determine whether the Fire Authority would be better served in the longer term by one of their Officers replacing the Deputy Chief Fire Officer/Director of Strategy and Performance as Monitoring Officer. The CFO stressed that he viewed this as a short term solution. He also informed the Committee that although the DCFO was not legally trained there was no requirement for the Monitoring Officer to be. A budget was in place for him to access legal advice where it was required.

Councillor Tom McCann stated that he had concerns about appointing a senior officer into this role and he queried if there were any other fire authorities that had adopted this approach. The CFO explained that the authority was required to appoint one of its officers as a Monitoring Officer. Up until that evening the role had been covered by the Director of Corporate Services. He accepted that unlike the DCS the DCFO was not legally qualified. This was not a requirement but what was required was that the Monitoring Officer had to have access to technical advice and had to have access to decision making in the authority. The DCFO would meet these requirements and that there would be examples of this approach being adopted elsewhere.

Councillor Emma Webster sought assurance around the costs associated with the proposals. The CFO explained that as outlined previously the Committee Service would be funded from the £47k savings from the vacant Committee Services Manager post. The contract with West Berkshire Council was for £39k per annum plus incidental costs (primarily for travel and printing). The Audit and Governance Committee would review the revised arrangements in twelve months time. If the

£47k envelope was exceeded Members would be informed. Councillor Webster queried whether the review should be held sooner. The CFO reiterated that while it was hoped that the proposals might generate a small saving the primary driver was that it would provide additional resilience to this area of work that had historically been difficult to recruit to.

The DCS stated that she had worked with Officers from both authorities to put the agreement together and she was confident that the arrangement would be accommodated within the funding envelope. In terms of the Monitoring Officer function she explained that if required the DCFO would have access to legal advice. She reminded Members that no complaints about breaches of the Code of Conduct had been received during the previous year and she was confident that the number of complaints would remain low. Historically expenditure on probity and maladministration was not significant either.

Councillor Colin Dudley formally proposed the Officer's recommendation and this was seconded by Councillor Phillip Bicknell.

**Resolved that:**

- the co-operation arrangement with West Berkshire Council for the provision of Committee Services be approved;
- the Deputy Chief Fire Officer/Director of Strategy and Performance, Trevor Ferguson, be appointed as the Monitoring Officer for Royal Berkshire Fire Authority;
- the waiver of the Authority's Contract Standing Orders be approved to allow the necessary Committee Services contract to be entered into with West Berkshire Council; and
- the Audit and Governance Committee would undertake a formal review of the revised arrangements in 12 months' time.

**65. OUTCOME OF BRACKNELL IRMP CONSULTATION**

Paul Southern, the Assistant Chief Fire Officer (ACFO), informed Members of the outcome of the Bracknell IRMP consultation.

A full public consultation had been held for a period of 12 weeks (from 30<sup>th</sup> June 2014 to 22<sup>nd</sup> September 2014), including surveys (paper and online), and a number of stakeholder and public forums had been held. A list of consultees was set out on pages 27 to 29 of the report. The outcome of the consultation process had established that there was emphatic support for the proposal to disband the Bracknell Retained Unit and to remove the appliance from service. Both the IRMP Working Party and the Management Committee supported the recommendations within this report and had directed Officers to align the disbandment of the Bracknell RDS unit with the implementation of the interim Ascot emergency cover solution to ensure that staff, engineering and other related matters on both projects complimented each other.

In relation to the Ascot emergency cover solution there was a need to recruit up to 10 additional posts (at no additional revenue cost to the Fire Authority). As the total number of staff affected at Bracknell and Ascot was seven, it was unlikely that compulsory redundancies would arise from this process. However, as some staff had dual contracts, i.e. they had both whole-time and retained contracts, and other

members of staff might not wish to transfer to whole-time employment with RBFRS, there might be a number of voluntary redundancies.

The combination of the change to the provision of emergency cover in Wokingham in 2010 and the proposed changes in retained emergency cover in Bracknell and Ascot, would see an overall improvement in responding to emergencies across Berkshire.

Councillor Christine Bateson asked if a date was available for the commencement of the Ascot emergency cover solution. The ACFO confirmed that the intention was that it would commence on 1<sup>st</sup> April 2015.

Councillor Pauline Helliar-Symons stated that the result of the public consultation exercise showed that there was little concern in regard to the proposals as members of the public realised that the coverage would be good if not better than what was already in existence. The new arrangements would make better use of resources for better impact. Councillor Christine Bateson agreed that it would certainly improve cover in North Bracknell and Ascot.

Councillor Emma Webster advised that as the Chair of the IRMP Working Party she had made a commitment to visit Bracknell Fire Station during the time of the consultation. She had visited when the consultation had gone into the public domain and she took the opportunity to thank the Bracknell Retained Unit for the excellent service they had provided.

Councillor Colin Dudley stated that the Vice-Chair had commented on the fact that the service would not be affected and indeed it would be improved. The Fire Authority currently had two vehicles, one at Ascot and another wholetime appliance at Bracknell, as well as a retained appliance at Bracknell. He noted that it had proved to be difficult to recruit retained firefighters in that area. This proposal would improve the service and having a whole time appliance at Ascot would assist with this and would provide resilience in that area. He therefore supported the recommendations.

Councillor Pauline Helliar-Symons formally proposed the Officer's recommendation and this was seconded by Councillor Christine Bateson. All Members of the Committee agreed apart from one abstention.

**Resolved that:**

- the results of the consultation be noted;
- the disbandment of Bracknell RDS Unit and the removal of the appliance from operational service when the interim Ascot emergency cover solution was in place be agreed;
- the removal of the RDS establishment at Bracknell and Ascot be agreed;
- it be agreed that Officers would commence formal consultation with the affected staff at both Bracknell and Ascot Retained sections, and in the event that attempts to identify suitable alternative employment was unsuccessful, to pursue compulsory redundancies (6 at Bracknell and 1 at Ascot);
- it be agreed that Officers proceed with formal and statutory consultation with representative bodies and staff on the possible redundancies, in accordance with the Scheme of Delegation (ASD4(n)).

## 66. STATEMENT OF ASSURANCE (2013/14)

Trevor Ferguson, the Deputy Chief Fire Officer (DCFO), presented the Fire Authority with a copy of the Statement of Assurance for the financial year 2013/14 for approval.

The Statement had been prepared and published in accordance with a requirement set out in the Fire and Rescue National Framework for England (July 2012) and would be published on the Fire Authority website to provide an accessible way in which communities, Government, local authorities and other partners might make an assessment of RBFA's overall performance. The Statement of Assurance had been recommended for approval by the Audit and Governance Committee on the 10<sup>th</sup> December 2014.

The following summary judgements had been made for each of the key areas of focus and evidence to support those judgements were set out in the appendices to the report:

**Financial** – requirements associated with the appropriate management of financial matters had been fully met;

**Governance** – requirements associated with appropriate business practice, high standards of conduct and sound governance had been substantially met;

**Operational** – requirements associated with operational matters had been substantially met;

**National Framework** – requirements associated with the Fire and Rescue National Framework for England had been substantially met.

The CFO referred Members to page 45 of the agenda which mentioned the deaths of two fire-fighters. He noted that this was a reference to a high rise fire in Hampshire in which two of their fire-fighters had sadly died. The RBFRS had however acted on the lessons learned from their deaths.

The CFO also explained that while the financial and governance arrangements were considered by external auditors the operational assessment was made following a self assessment. Discussions were therefore taking place with Cambridgeshire to see if a reciprocal arrangement could be put in place to assess operational practices.

Councillor Ian Pittock noted that in Appendix C to the report (on page 40) it was noted that the RBFA was working towards ISO27001 in relation to data security and he queried whether this should be amended to ISO27002.

Councillor Paul Bryant was concerned about the time it had taken to bring this report to the Fire Authority. Officers noted that the report was reliant on a number of processes including information provided by the auditors and that due to the timing of meetings this was the first Fire Authority meeting post the Audit and Governance meeting that it could be brought to.

Councillor Angus Ross noted that the areas for improvement were set out on page 46 of the document and he sought confirmation of the timescales for undertaking the actions. The CFO noted that, following the February 2014 floods, a review had been undertaken and a number of learning points had been identified which were being developed into an action plan. A report had been drafted and would be brought to the Fire Authority. The CFO noted that the report might lead to a submission being made to Central Government. Any discussions around

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reconfiguration around flood arrangements would be referred to the IRMP for discussion.

Councillor Emma Webster queried whether the draft report included any recommendations which might incur expenditure. If this was the case then there was a need to expedite the report as the budget for 2015/16 would be agreed at the February 2015 Fire Authority meeting. The CFO noted that there was nothing significant in the report. He stated that ability to respond to this level of flooding was reliant on capability being spread around the country which had meant the RBFRS had been able to call on help from 30 other services. The Chairman welcomed the cross border assistance that was available. The Chairman asked the CFO to share the draft with the Councillor Webster in her capacity as Chairman of the IRMP.

CFO

Councillor David Burbage noted that the flooding had taken place almost a year ago and if it was to recur the authority would look foolish if all it had to offer was a draft report. Paul Southern explained that Officers were already acting on some of the recommendations set out in the draft report. He cited the following as an example. Capacity had been increased and the authority now had two sets of equipment and arrangements had been put in place for staff to come in and crew both thereby significantly increasing resilience.

Councillor John Lenton queried who determined the location of the high pressure pump. Paul Southern explained that it was a national resource which was provided by Central Government and it was allocated by them following a joint assessment process based on technical advice.

Councillor Ross sought clarity around the command structure in the event of a flood. The CFO explained that a cross agency Strategic Coordinating Group was set up. They outlined strategic objectives which were then relayed to the individual organisations that were responsible for making operational decisions. An upward link into COBRA was also in place and requests for resources from elsewhere were directed to them to consider competing demands for resources on the basis of expert advice received. The draft report had been structured around the Strategic Objectives and set out how well the authority had performed against each of the objectives.

Councillor Adrian Edwards queried whether the authority had been informed about the flood alleviation works that had been undertaken in West Berkshire. Paul Southern said that he was not personally aware of the works but that he would liaise with colleagues. If necessary a Member point of contact would be identified to ensure information was shared.

ACFO

The officer's recommendation was proposed by Councillor Colin Dudley and seconded by Councillor Phillip Bicknell.

**Resolved that:**

- the summary judgements for each of the four key areas of Finance, Governance, Operations and delivery of the National Framework be agreed;
- the RBFA Statement of Assurance for 2013/14 be approved.

## **67. SECRETARY OF STATE'S BIENNIAL REPORT AND RESPONSE TO THE KEN KNIGHT REVIEW**

Trevor Ferguson, the Deputy Chief Fire Officer (DCFO), presented the Secretary of State's biennial report on Fire and Rescue Authorities' compliance with the National Framework. It also set out the Secretary of State's response to Sir Ken Knight's independent review entitled 'Facing the Future'.

Section 25 of the Fire and Rescue Services Act 2004 required the Secretary of State to report to Parliament every two years on:

- The extent to which Fire and Rescue Authorities were acting in accordance with the Fire and Rescue National Framework for England;
- Any steps taken by the Secretary of State for the purpose of securing that Fire and Rescue Authorities acted in accordance with the Framework.

In accordance with the above requirements the Secretary of State had published the report which was set out in Appendix 1 which stated that he was satisfied that all Fire and Rescue Authorities had been acting in accordance with the Framework, and therefore he had not taken any formal steps to ensure compliance. Each Fire and Rescue Authority had:

- Complied with the publication of their annual statement of assurance element;
- Complied with the publication of their updated Integrated Risk Management Plan element;
- Complied with the national resilience assurance elements.

In December 2012 the Fire Minister, Brandon Lewis, had commissioned Sir Ken Knight to conduct an independent review of efficiency in the provision of Fire and Rescue Services in England. In May 2013 Sir Ken Knight had published his review 'Facing the Future' (Appendix 2) which identified ways in which Fire and Rescue Authorities could make improvements and savings up to almost £200m nationally. In July 2014 the Secretary of State, Eric Pickles, had provided a written statement to Parliament (Appendix 3) which welcomed 'Facing the Future' and expressed a desire to build on Sir Ken Knight's findings which focused on:

- Fire prevention and protection;
- A modern and flexible fire and rescue workforce;
- Greater collaboration between fire authorities and local authorities and between fire, police and ambulance services;
- Better and more sharing of services;
- A more joined up approach to procurement.

Since the review had been published the total number of fires and other incidents attended in England had continued to fall. Calls were now 46% lower than 10 years ago and the Government were of the opinion that fire and rescue authorities should seize this opportunity to transform in line with this changing environment. To support fire and rescue services in driving efficiencies and transformation the Government had provided a £75m Fire Transformation Fund for 2015/16 on a bid for basis.

Councillor Colin Dudley confirmed that he had read through the report twice and

although he agreed with some of the recommendations he did not agree with them all. He referred to recommendation (3) of the Officer's report and suggested that the Committee should consider whether it wanted to make a formal submission to Central Government.

Councillor David Burbage referred to page 88 of the report and in particular the Fire Transformation Fund and he queried whether the RBFRS was doing anything to bid for this funding. The CFO gave an assurance that the RBFA provided value for money and it was looking at sharing services and working collaboratively with the blue light services. Grants from the Fire Transformation Fund included a requirement of collaboration with other of blue light services. He had been in discussions with the Police to look at making accommodation available and had also spoken to the two other Chief Fire Officers in the Thames Valley to strike up a strategic alliance. This all formed part of the future direction of the Fire Authority and the Fire Transformation Fund was now the only route into capital funding from Central Government.

Councillor Tom McCann referred to page 38 of the report and in particular paragraph 14 which stated that there would be potential savings if all 46 authorities increased their use of retained firefighters. He asked if this Fire Authority had a strategy to find ways of making savings through the use of Retained Duty Staff (RDS). The CFO confirmed that the use of RDS was a cheaper way of providing cover and there was significant potential to make savings in some areas. In Berkshire it was not a case of working out how many more RDS were required but more a case of trying to hang on to what it had. It was very difficult to recruit RDS in such a rural and affluent area as the financial reward for being a retained firefighter was not an encouraging factor. The CFO felt that the way forward was for retained firefighters to co-respond to medical emergencies. The ability to make savings in Berkshire was not significant but he felt that the RBFA strategies broadly aligned with the review and he therefore welcomed the report.

Councillor Emma Webster confirmed that retained cover had been part of the work of the IRMP Working Party and a number of reviews had been undertaken on this subject. She felt that Sir Ken Knight's report highlighted the fact that there was not a 'one size fits all' solution. The CFO confirmed that co-responding was an important way to support RDS in Berkshire and would ensure that it remained resilient. Councillor Webster confirmed that she had found the report frustrating in that it showed how Fire Authority's differed. She supported the suggestion of putting in a submission to Central Government and the issue around retained firefighters should be a part of that. It was good to see that one of the findings focused on the strengthening of fire prevention and protection.

Councillor Jeff Brooks confirmed that some of the recommendations in the review made sense but others did not. In relation to RDS this was something that the Fire Authority would struggle with in affluent areas such as Ascot. He felt that the Fire Authority should challenge this through the IRMP process to evidence that it had done all it could in this area. The RBFA had had successes in the past and there was now an opportunity to improve using the IRMP as a vehicle and he felt that the authority should embrace change as much as it could. This review brought forward a number of good ideas and the authority should be open to change.

Councillor Paul Gittings recognised the fact that the author of the report had had a difficult job as he was presenting it to a number of audiences. He disagreed with the tone of the report and he felt that it would be a mistake to reduce fire cover as members of the public would still want a response in eight minutes. Councillor

Gittings also made the point that it was difficult to recruit RDS in such a wealthy area and he suggested this should be looked at separately and recommendations made. There were grounds to extend the current collaboration arrangements and this was an area that the Government was supporting and was something that the Fire Authority should expand on. The other area which the Fire Authority should consider further was the use of retained and whole time staff in co-responding as he felt that staff had more time due to a reduction in the number of calls received and incidents which they had to deal with. However, it would be difficult to bring staff along with that until the industrial dispute had been settled.

Councillor David Burbage referred to the South Central Ambulance Service and the fact that the increases in volume reflected in the NHS were also impacting on the Ambulance Service. It was necessary to ensure that the Fire Service were fully on board and he suggested that RBFRS might want to look at the Hampshire model. There had been a big increase in demand for Accident and Emergency services this year and he was pleased that the CFO was meeting counterparts. In relation to the recruitment of RDS he felt that the way to increase recruitment would be to 'up the offer' although this might be constrained by outside sources. He noted that pages 80-81 of the report set out the way forward and future operating models and this was something that the authority should bear in mind. Pages 61-62 of the report showed that co-responding was something that should be happening more across the country.

Councillor Paul Bryant stated that the RBFA might not be as efficient as it could be but it did a good job of putting out fires. Sir Ken Knight's report suggested things that fire authorities 'might' like to do rather than saying that they 'must' do this and that. This devolved powers to fire authorities to decide rather than being prescribed from Government and Councillor Bryant felt that local fire authorities were best placed to make those decisions. From that point of view it was a good report.

Councillor Tom McCann had one main concern with the report – what next? In looking at the strategic vision for the fire authority for the next 10 to 15 years it was not all about penny pinching but the quality of service provided. RBFA needed to find the best model locally which would provide a vision for the future and it would be essential to keep the hearts and minds of the public.

Councillor Colin Dudley welcomed some parts of the report and not others. Sir Ken Knight stated that some fire authorities spent to budget and did not take risks. But risk could be higher or lower than budget. RBFRS was the third lowest charging fire authority in the country and therefore in this case it did not apply to the RBFRS but there should be no complacency. Points had been made in relation to co-responding and Hampshire was the leading authority on that model. He advised that unions would not allow the use of whole time staff for co-responding. The Fire Authority's commitments and vision recognised the fact that the number of calls and incidents had decreased and therefore their vehicles, premises etc. should be better used to serve the public.

The Chairman asked the DCFO, the ACFO, the CFO, the two Group Leaders, the Chairman of the Fire Authority and the Chair and Vice-Chair of the IRMP Working Group to draft a submission response within six weeks.

The officer's recommendation was proposed by Councillor Colin Dudley and seconded by Councillor Ian Pittock.

**Resolved that:**

- the Secretary of State's Biennial review be noted;
- the Secretary of State's response to 'Facing the Future' be noted;
- In line with strategic commitment 6, the Fire Authority to make a formal submission to Central Government on both of these documents.
- the DCFO, the ACFO, the CFO, the two Group Leaders, the Chairman of the Fire Authority and the Chair and Vice-Chair of the IRMP Working Group would draft a submission response in the next six weeks.

## **68. TRAINING COMPANY UPDATE**

Councillor Phillip Bicknell, Chairman of the Training Company, provided a verbal update for the Fire Authority. He passed his thanks onto Gene Ashe for all his hard work on this initiative. The CFO, Councillor Bicknell, Gene Ashe and Andrew Vallance had visited the Humberside Fire Authority in December 2014 as part of the process of looking at good practice in other organisations. A number of key points had been gleaned:

- they had developed a range of services to support a well run fire authority;
- the training had also been tailored to meet the needs of the local economy;
- there was commercial value associated with being affiliated to a trusted brand which the RBFRS was;
- the trading arm was set up as a social enterprise company rather than as a limited company.

Councillor Bicknell noted that setting up the trading arm as a social enterprise had a number of advantages including the fact that these types of organisations were able to apply for grant funding. In addition large organisations often liked to trade with these organisations as it assisted with meeting their social enterprise responsibilities. Councillor Bicknell felt that the introduction of this model could potentially increase the profitability of the trading arm significantly. Humberside had an annual turnover of £3.5m. Work was therefore being undertaken to take this work forward and Councillor Bicknell would continue to update Members. In response to a query about profitability Councillor Bicknell explained that in addition to the £50k revenue for the training budget the trading arm was showing a profit of £6k to £7k.

In response to a query about the number of fire fighters employed by the trading arm Councillor Bicknell explained that the only permanent employees were Gene Ash and an administrator. Fire-fighters and other associates were used on an ad hoc basis when required to provide training. The fire fighters were usually whole time fire fighters who provided the training during their down time.

Councillor Colin Dudley stated that this was a good news story and he congratulated Councillor Bicknell for taking the trading arm into a situation where it was making a profit whilst contributing £50k to the authority's training budget which would otherwise need to be funded from the precept.

### **Resolved that:**

the update report be noted.

## **69. 2014/15 BUDGET MONITORING**

Andrew Vallance, the Director of Resources (DR), informed Members of revenue and capital outturns against budgets up to the end of November 2014.

Revenue expenditure to 30<sup>th</sup> November 2014 was set out in Appendices A to C. The revenue outturn was reporting £127k above profiled budget. Expenditure on retained firefighters remained below budget despite the work of the Retained Support Unit and the effects of industrial action. However, the costs of industrial action had resulted in an overall overspend against profiled employee budgets. £40k had been carried forward from the previous year for training which remained unspent due to ongoing action short of strike. Expenditure on the 'Other Employee Costs' line was above the profiled budget as a result of recruitment costs of senior employees and recruitment relating to industrial action. Income was running ahead of profiled budget due to additional mast income and reimbursement of court fees in relation to prosecution cases.

Capital expenditure to the end of November 2014 was £437k and was set out in Appendix D.

It was noted that if there was no more strike action then it might be possible to come in on budget or to show a slight underspend. It was queried what the cost of the industrial action had been to date. The DR responded that it was in the region of £700k to £800k.

Councillor David Burbage noted that savings would need to be made in the future and therefore he queried what equipment had been purchased for a total budget of £1,051k. This might be an area where savings could be made. Similarly he queried why the catering budget under 'Supplies – Other' was £90k as this appeared to be high. Councillor Christine Bateson also noted that spend on 'Other Misc' was £41k and she asked what this was used for. The Chairman asked if Officers could provide a breakdown of expenditure costs for those three budget lines.

### **Resolved that:**

- the report be noted.
- the DR to provide a breakdown of expenditure for the budget lines on Equipment, Catering and Other Misc and circulate to all Members of the Fire Authority.

DR

## **70. MINUTES OF THE STANDING COMMITTEES**

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

- Management Committee – 28<sup>th</sup> July 2014 (approved);
- Audit and Governance Committee – 9<sup>th</sup> September 2014 (approved);
- Strategic Asset Management Committee – 16<sup>th</sup> September 2014 (approved);
- Management Committee – 6<sup>th</sup> October 2014 (approved);
- Audit and Governance Committee – 22<sup>nd</sup> October 2014 (approved);
- Strategic Asset Management Committee – 18<sup>th</sup> November 2014 (not yet

approved);

- Management Committee – 1<sup>st</sup> December 2014 (not yet approved);
- Audit and Governance Committee – 10<sup>th</sup> December 2014 - (not yet approved).

Councillor Jeff Brooks noted that there was an error in the minutes of the Audit and Governance Committee meeting held on the 22 October 2014 (Item 226) which made reference to 'Annual Government Statement' in the resolutions which needed to be amended to read 'Annual Governance Statement'.

Councillor John Lenton noted that Minute 253 of the Audit and Governance Committee held on the 10<sup>th</sup> December 2014 made reference to the need for a Local Pension Board to be in place by the 01<sup>st</sup> April 2015 and queried who would be on the Board. Officers explained that a report would be brought to the February 2015 Fire Authority meeting setting out the detail. They cautioned however that guidance from Central Government was still awaited on this matter.

## **71. FORWARD PLAN**

### **Resolved that:**

the Forward Plan be noted.

## **72. DATE OF THE NEXT MEETING**

Monday 23<sup>rd</sup> February 2015 at 6.30pm in the Lynda Kenyon Room, Brigade Headquarters, Pincents Kiln, Calcot, Reading, Berkshire, RG31 7SD

## **73. EXCLUSION OF THE PRESS AND PUBLIC**

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 Paragraphs 1, 2 and 3 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.

## **74. PART II MINUTES OF THE MEETING HELD ON 22<sup>ND</sup> SEPTEMBER 2014**

That the Part II Minutes of the meeting held on 22<sup>nd</sup> September 2014 be approved as a true and correct record and signed by the Chairman.

*(The meeting commenced at 7.30pm and concluded at 9.22pm)*