

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



Held on Tuesday 17 July 2012

**Council Chamber, Wokingham Borough Council, Civic Offices, Shute
End, Wokingham, Berkshire RG40 1BN**

Members:

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| *Councillor Alistair Auty | *Councillor Christine Bateson |
| Councillor Phillip Bicknell | *Councillor Chris Bowring |
| *Councillor Prue Bray | *Councillor Jeff Brooks |
| *Councillor Dr Paul Bryant | Councillor David Burbage |
| *Councillor Diana Coad | *Councillor Andrew Cumpsty |
| *Councillor Colin Dudley (<i>Chairman</i>) | *Councillor Haqeeq Dar |
| *Councillor Adrian Edwards | *Councillor Paul Gittings |
| *Councillor David Holtby | *Councillor Mrs Pauline Helliar-Symons |
| *Councillor Peter Jones | *Councillor John Lenton |
| Councillor Chris Maskell | *Councillor Iain McCracken |
| *Councillor Edward Plenty | *Councillor Mohammed Rasib |
| *Councillor Angus Ross | *Councillor Rebecca Rye |
| *Councillor Alan Ward | *Councillor Miss Emma Webster |
| <i>*present</i> | |

In

Attendance: Olaf Baars (Deputy Chief Fire Officer, DCFO)
Iain Cox (Chief Fire Officer, CFO)
Mark Deacon (representative from Hub)
Caroline Redzikowska (Director Corporate Services, DCS)
Carolyn Rowe (Committee Manager)
Paul Southern (Assistant Chief Fire Officer, ACFO)
Nicole Target (Corporate Communications Manager)
Andrew Vallance (Director Resources, DR)

Observers Officers and members of the public

307. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Apologies for absence were received from Councillor Philip Bicknell, Councillor David Burbage and Councillor Chris Maskell.

308. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

There were no Declarations of Interest received from Members or Officers.

309. MINUTES OF THE MEETING HELD ON 28 JUNE 2012

Resolved:

Action

That the Minutes of the Meeting held on 28 June 2012 be approved for signing by the Chairman.

Cllr Emma Webster wished to emphasise that with regard to the Membership and Structure of the Fire Authority Annual Update, she was not in favour of a review of Allowances.

310. 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.

311 RECEIPT OF ANNOUNCEMENTS

The Chairman, Cllr Colin Dudley, formally welcomed the Cabinet Member for Safer and Stronger Communities from Oxfordshire County Council, Cllr Judith Heathcoat, and Oxfordshire County Council's Chief Fire Officer Dave Etheridge to the meeting.

Emma Webster announced she had attended the passing out parade of the Young Fire Fighters, and wished to express her thanks to all who had been involved.

312 RECOMMENDATIONS OF COMMITTEES

The Director, Corporate Services (DCS) introduced the report and advised Members that as one of the two items was subject to a separate report there was one item for decision. This was a recommendation from the IRMP Working Party regarding the Low Risk Incidents Policy.

The Chairman moved the recommendations from the IRMP Working Party, which were seconded by the vice Chairman, Cllr Pauline Helliard-Symons.

Cllr Emma Webster stated that she had requested this report and a number of retained staff had concerns about the trial. The trial had been evaluated to decide on the future policy, and the IRMP Working Party recommended reverting to the previous policy. Cllr Webster requested that a message should be given to Control to say the decision is effective from tomorrow morning.

Cllr Helliard-Symons supported the recommendations from IRMP working party stating that not only had the savings not been as high as anticipated, but also the fire fighters were not happy, and a balanced view had been taken.

Resolved

- a) That the trial be concluded and for Royal Berkshire Fire and Rescue Service to revert back to the policy that stood before the trial commenced; and
- b) That the development of community safety work by retained fire fighters be explored

313. ISSUES ARISING FROM THE AUDIT AND PERFORMANCE REVIEW COMMITTEE

It was noted that there had been no reports referred by the Audit and Performance Review Committee

314. QUESTIONS FROM MEMBERS UNDER STANDING ORDER 30

There were no Questions received from the Fire Authority Members under Standing Order 30.

315. NOTICES OF MOTIONS UNDER STANDING ORDER 44

There were no notices of motion under Standing Order 44.

316. FIRE CONTROL OPTIONS

The Deputy Chief Fire Officer introduced the report and advised the Authority that Oxfordshire County Council had agreed the same report that afternoon, and the future of Control now rested with the decision in front of Berkshire Fire Authority (F.A.). The work had commenced in September 2011, and the DCFO referred to the recommendations, their background in the report and appendices, and the role of the Programme Sponsor Group (PSG), which had included Councillors from both Oxfordshire and Berkshire.

The report was large for completeness, including a comprehensive equality impact assessment and risk register, and a number of the papers had previously been brought to Members. The potential savings were outlined: a £3.6million grant had been received, and a steady state projection showed savings of £430,000, with £280,000 for Berkshire FA. Total savings were projected conservatively at £659,000, of which £372,000 would accrue to Berkshire F.A. Cost apportionment of 58% for Berkshire FA and 42% for Oxfordshire was based on population, the tax base, and the number of incidents.

The creation of a joint committee under section 102 of the Local Government Act was the preferred option of the PSG - representing a partnership as opposed to a contractual model, and it was suggested there should be a small number of members.

The Chairman invited Cllr Paul Bryant to speak as a member of the PSG. Cllr Bryant commended the proposal as one that would provide the FA with a state of the art control provision in a sensible, phased approach. For resilience a back up fire service away from the Thames Valley, with compatible equipment was being sought. Cllr Bryant hoped it might still be possible for Buckinghamshire to reconsider as that would achieve greater savings and mean it was coterminous with Thames Valley Police. He praised the constructive relationship with Oxfordshire that had brought this about and looked forward to increased co-operation.

The Chairman invited Cllr Judith Heathcoat, Cabinet Member for Safer and Stronger Communities at Oxfordshire County Council to speak. Cllr Judith Heathcoat thanked the Chairman and spoke of the central importance of control rooms, their role in supporting the public at times of crisis, and the compelling case for change when coupled with the reduction in the number of calls. Collaboration wasn't new, and the Swinley Forest Fire was a clear example. There is an effective programme of governance, and a memorandum of understanding (MOU) has been put in place, providing for better working for our fire fighters. She wished them and this project success.

Cllr Prue Bray asked about the joint committee and if the arrangements would come back to this F.A. The Chairman commented that the wish is to use the same members as were on the PSG.

The Director, Corporate Services (DCS) added that if this was approved, it would be approving in principle, and the detail would need to come back to the F.A. In response to Cllr Christine Bateson, the DCFO confirmed that if another partner joined, the saving would be greater than the £10million currently projected over 15 years..

The Chairman moved the recommendations under paragraph 2, 2.1-2.9 inclusive, seconded by the vice Chairman, Cllr Pauline Helliard-Symons.

The Chairman said this was a demonstration of how we can work together for the benefit of the public by a providing state of the art control facility, following the ill fated regional control project.

Members raised a number of points including:

Cllr Peter Jones who agreed in principle, it being as local and saving as many jobs as possible, but asked if the delegation could include some involvement of members.

Cllr Jeff Brooks who recalled previous facilities and was delighted to support – stated it was good to see politicians coming together - and concurred with the disappointment regarding Buckinghamshire. Could a slightly broader Committee be considered going forward?

Cllr Angus Ross compared the great difference between the good working relations here and the ill fated regional project. He would support this as the best way going forward, noting the capacity for others to come on board too, and recognising there was much to do, he fully supported it.

Cllr Emma Webster raised the valuable work of the control teams, and the long period of uncertainty they have faced around this issue, hopefully now brought to an end. She asked that they continue to be involved going forward.

Cllr Diana Coad hoped it wasn't just cost cutting and did provide the efficiencies and benefits promised.

Cllr McCracken picked up on this point and his expectation that it would come into Audit and Governance Committee work programme, to watch progress on the targets we have set.

The vice Chairman commented that members had seen the details and were in favour, and that it had been discussed in a lot of forums over the months. She seconded Cllr Webster's comments about the wonderful work of the control room teams, endorsed the work and thanked Oxfordshire for their commitment. She was delighted to second the recommendations for this exciting venture.

The Chairman, picking up on Cllr Jones comments, stated that political back up would continue, it had been through Strategic Asset Management Committee, the Integrated Risk Management Plan Working Party, the Management Committee and now the Fire Authority. He agreed with Cllr McCracken regarding Audit and Governance looking at the papers from the joint committee, and at the savings. The Chairman stated that this is clearly a joint, high tech, state of the art control for Oxfordshire and Berkshire. On being put to the vote it was carried.

Resolved:

that the Fire Authority

- a) Approved the progression of the programme to establish a single joint control room with Oxfordshire County Council Fire and Rescue Service.
- b) Confirmed, subject to the final acquisition of the new HQ premises, the future location of the primary control room as Calcot, Berkshire.
- c) Confirmed the future location of the secondary control room as Kidlington, Oxfordshire.

- d) Approved the apportionment methodology
- e) Approved the creation of a Joint Committee and the underpinning legal arrangements
- f) Delegated to the Chief Fire Officer:
 - i)The authority to sign the legally binding programme partnership agreement which will include the decision of the lead authority for employment matters
 - ii)The authority to sign the legally binding steady state partnership agreement
 - iii)The identification of and arrangements with the remote buddy FRS.
- g) Required the Programme Sponsoring Group to ensure the human resources strategy maximises the opportunities to support control staff throughout the programme.
- h) Required the Chief Fire Officer to ensure business continuity plans are in place to maintain the continued effectiveness of the respective control room up to the point of transition into the single joint control.
- i) Required the Chief Fire Officer to support the appointed Members of the Thames Valley Fire Control Service Joint Committee to provide strategic direction and track benefit realisation.

Councillor Judith Heathcoat and Chief Fire Officer Dave Etheridge left the meeting at this point.

317. THE INTEGRATED RISK MANAGEMENT PLAN : THE 2013/14 ACTION PLAN

The Assistant Chief Fire Officer (ACFO) introduced this report, and advised that it was being brought to Members earlier this year, and if approved, would go out for consultation from the 23 July 2012. The ACFO stated that additional Member comments by Monday were welcome, and outlined some comments and amendments already received to be incorporated. The timeline would be completed as part of the document following the decision of Members.

The Chairman drew attention to the copy of his forward as tabled, and advised that he would be moving an amendment with regard to Day Crewing Plus.

Cllr Prue Bray asked about the wording and said she would prefer the description on page 18 to reflect we were considering the options, not saying whether or not we are going to implement this duty system.

The Chairman proposed that we should look at it, but that did not mean it would go forward. Permission is needed to consult and prepare interim measures including where appropriate with accommodation etc.

He confirmed this was a separate motion and gave the wording of as follows:

“Agree the draft Integrated Risk Management Annual Action Plan for 2013/14 for formal consultation **as amended, and that with regard to Day Crewing Plus, agree that permission be given to commence the preparatory work for all elements including negotiations on remunerations, and shifts, and including interim measures including where appropriate accommodation; and that with regard to crewing at Slough/Newbury, agree that permission be given to commence arrangements in principle to consult and identify best options for deploying personnel.**”

The Chairman stated that this provided the permission necessary to prepare if indeed we decide to go forward.

Cllr Emma Webster advised that a lot of work had been undertaken by the IRMP Working Party, and there had been interest from a number of members on Day Crewing Plus. She had been disappointed in the number of consultation responses, and encouraged feedback to this consultation, as it would be fully assessed, and was the best way for members to receive views.

Cllr Brooks stated that he was grateful for the amendment as there was a lot of disquiet. By all means undertake considered investigation and feed this back- it was not a done deal. If a considered approach means not achieving full year savings, then we should look at half year for example.

Cllr Bateson stated that she fully endorsed the IRMP, and was very pleased to do so. She was pleased that there was an arrangement for 24hr/7day a week engine for Windsor.

Cllr Gittings commented that these were challenging times. He was concerned about the protection of jobs, and, as had been seen with the Control options, consultation was essential. He was pleased we were amending the wording. The jury was out at present and Members would need to receive briefings to decide.

The Chairman summed up by commenting on the whole IRMP document and thanking the Working Party, saying that it encompassed all the work that Royal Berkshire Fire and Rescue Service did. He emphasised that looking at options did not mean a decision had been made, and that the F.A. would always seek to do things for the public and staff. The motion was carried with no one voting against.

Resolved that the Fire Authority:

- a) agreed the draft Integrated Risk Management Annual Action Plan for 2013/14 for formal consultation **as amended, and**
- b) **agreed that with regard to Day Crewing Plus, permission be given to commence the preparatory work for all elements including negotiations on remunerations, and shifts, and including interim measures including where appropriate accommodation; and**

- c) **agreed that with regard to crewing at Slough/Newbury, permission be given to commence arrangements in principle to consult and identify best options for deploying personnel.**

318. DATE OF NEXT MEETING

Wednesday 26 September 2012 at 6.30pm in the Council Chamber, Bracknell Forest Council, Easthampstead House, Town Square, Bracknell Berkshire RG12 1AQ.

319. 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.

The Chairman thanked the press and public for their attendance at the meeting. The representative from Hub, Mark Deacon was invited to remain.

320. RECOMMENDATIONS OF COMMITTEES

The Chairman moved and Cllr Pauline Helliard-Symons seconded the recommendations from the IRMP Working Party under item 1 of this report.

Resolved

That the recommendations under item 1 be agreed.

The Chairman noted that Item 2 under this report was the subject of a separate report under item 15 of the agenda.

321. BRIGADE HEADQUARTERS

The Assistant Chief Fire Officer outlined the report and the recommendations as agreed and recommended by the Strategic Asset Management Committee and the Management Committee.

Resolved

That the recommendations be agreed

The meeting closed at 7.55pm.