

MINUTES OF THE MEETING OF THE ROYAL BERKSHIRE FIRE AUTHORITY



Held on Tuesday 18th April 2017 at 6.30pm

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

- Members:**
- * Councillor Malcolm Alexander
 - * Councillor Alistair Auty
 - * Councillor Christine Bateson
 - * Councillor Phillip Bicknell
 - * Councillor Paul Bryant
 - * Councillor Avtar Cheema (*from 6.38pm*)
 - * Councillor Colin Dudley
 - * Councillor Adrian Edwards
 - * Councillor John Ennis
 - * Councillor Paul Gittings
 - * Councillor Pauline Helliar-Symons
 - * Councillor Carol Jackson-Doerge
 - Councillor Chris Maskell
 - * Councillor Iain McCracken
 - * Councillor Tina McKenzie-Boyle
 - Councillor Phillip Mirfin
 - * Councillor Mohammed Rasib
 - * Councillor Angus Ross
 - Councillor Ishrat Shah
 - * Councillor Emma Webster

- In Attendance:**
- Graham Britten (Deputy Monitoring Officer, DMO)
 - Conor Byrne (Head of Finance and Procurement/Chief Financial Officer, HOF)
 - Trevor Ferguson (Deputy Chief Fire Officer, DCFO)
 - Andy Fry (Chief Fire Officer, CFO)
 - Mark Gaskarth (Area Manager (West))
 - Paul Jacques (Temporary Area Manager (East))
 - Becci Jefferies (Head of Human Resources, Learning and Development)
 - Simon Jefferies (Head of Risk and Performance, HORP)
 - Jacky Manning (HR Manager, HRM)
 - Katie Mills (Head of Corporate Services)
 - Dave Myers (Temporary Assistant Chief Fire Officer T/ACFO)
 - Jim Powell (Area Manager (Risk and Performance) AM(R&P))
 - Linda Pye (Committee Officer)
 - Jo Reeves (Committee Officer)
 - Nikki Richards (Interim Director of Support Services)
 - Fayth Rowe (Committee Officer)
 - Nikki Richards (Interim Director of Support Services)
 - Fayth Rowe (Committee Officer)
- Observers:**
- Officers, Royal Berkshire Fire and Rescue Service
 - Members of Representative Bodies

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95. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Apologies for inability to attend the meeting had been received from Councillors Chris Maskell and Phillip Mirfin.

96. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

In accordance with the provisions of the Fire Authority's Local Code of Conduct, Councillors Paul Bryant and Angus Ross stated that should the Thames Valley Fire Control Service (TVFCS) be discussed at the meeting they would declare a personal interest as they were members of the TVFCS Joint Committee. They would therefore not participate in any debate on the TVFCS should it materialise.

Simon Jeffries declared a personal interest in Item 14 by virtue of the fact that he was proposed for appointment as Assistant Chief Fire Officer.

97. MINUTES OF THE MEETING HELD ON 27 FEBRUARY 2017

RESOLVED that:

The Minutes of the meeting held on 27 February 2017 be approved as a true and correct record and signed by the Chairman.

98. PETITIONS AND QUESTIONS FROM THE PUBLIC UNDER STANDING ORDERS 19 AND 25

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

It was noted that the Fire Authority was in receipt of a petition from the residents of Wargrave opposing the closure of Wargrave Fire Station. The petition contained a total of 245 signatures, 92 of which had been verified as being from local government electors which thereby classified it as a petition in accordance with Standing Order 19 of the Constitution. The Chairman welcomed Mrs. Annetts who would be presenting the petition and confirmed that she would be allowed five minutes to do so during the consideration of Item 12 on the agenda - Service Redesign Consultation for the Response proposals.

99. RECEIPT OF ANNOUNCEMENTS

The Chairman made the following announcements:

No Fire Deaths in 2016/17:

The Chairman recognised the fact that in the last financial year, there were no fire deaths in Berkshire. This was a major success story for any fire and rescue authority but, unfortunately, it was quite a rare occurrence. According to records, this had never happened before in Berkshire. Whilst the Fire Authority did all it could to prevent fire deaths, tragically they could still occur. He thanked all those involved in helping to achieve this outcome, whether firefighters or prevention and protection staff. He also thanked partners – it was through working effectively with them that the Fire Authority could best protect the most vulnerable members of the community.

Chief Fire Officer

The Chairman announced that that evening's meeting was the last Fire Authority that would be attended by the Chief Fire Officer, Andy Fry.

It was noted that to mark the occasion, there would be a presentation later in the evening to thank Andy for his dedicated service to the people of Berkshire.

Appointment of Deputy Chief Fire Officer and Assistant Chief Fire Officer

The Chairman took this opportunity, on behalf of himself and the Fire Authority, to formally congratulate Steve Foye to the appointment of Deputy Chief Fire Officer and Simon Jefferies on the appointment to Assistant Chief Fire Officer. He wished them every success on taking up their new posts on 8 May 2017. This item would be confirmed later on in the agenda.

100. ISSUES ARISING FROM AUDIT AND GOVERNANCE COMMITTEE

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

101. QUESTIONS FROM MEMBERS UNDER STANDING ORDER 30

There were no questions from Members under Standing Order 30.

102. NOTICES OF MOTION UNDER STANDING ORDER 43

There were no Notices of Motion under Standing Order 43.

103. RECOMMENDATIONS OF COMMITTEES

The Fire Authority noted that the following agenda items had been recommended from:

- Items 10, 11 and 12 from Management Committee on 3rd April 2017.

104. SUMMARY REPORT OF RESPONSES TO THE SERVICE REDESIGN CONSULTATION – PREVENTION PROPOSALS

Jim Powell, Temporary Area Manager, provided Fire Authority Members with a full and final summary feedback report of the responses to the Service Redesign consultation for the Prevention proposals. Members were being asked to make a decision on those Prevention proposals following conscientious consideration of the consultation feedback.

The Service Redesign consultation opened on 12th December 2016 and closed on 13th March 2017 following a thirteen week consultation period.

The report provided with this paper gave Members a general overview of stakeholder activity, a breakdown of demographic profiles and a detailed analysis of responses from members of the public, staff and a variety of organisations.

The online questionnaire was the primary method of gaining feedback from stakeholders. It received a total of 1,003 entries and along with other collection methods such as post, email and telephone gave an overall total of 1,050 responses which showed an increased response rate of 222% from the previous highest, received during the Response Standards consultation in 2016.

The demographic and equality data broadly showed similar trends in responses to those of previous consultations:

- Although the majority of responses were from the same age group (40-49 years old) there was an increase in response rate from those aged 17 years or younger.

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- The overall trend in ethnicity data was broadly similar however there was a small increase in response from those identifying their ethnic origin as Chinese or other ethnic group (0.31%).
- Previously there had been an almost even split between those who said they worked for RBFRS and those who did not, which although broadly the same, there was a greater response rate for those who did not work for RBFRS on this occasion. This was probably due to the overall increase in response rate.
- New data was collected on which unitary authority area respondents resided in. The majority of respondents were from the Wokingham Borough Council area.

Prevention Proposals:

- A significant majority of respondents agreed with proposal 1, to reduce the number of vulnerable people dying in fires and proposal 2, to reduce the volume of fires occurring in homes and the injuries that resulted from them.
- A significant majority of respondents also agreed with proposal 3 – the provision of road and proposal 4 - water safety education in schools. However when asked if they agreed that this would be provided by reducing fire safety education the results were different. A narrow majority agreed with a reduction in fire safety education to enable road safety provision but did not agree in a reduction to enable water safety provision. It should also be noted that in both cases over 20% of respondents were neutral.
- The response profile for proposal 5 - supporting vulnerable people as part of a wider health and well being agenda, proposal 6 - supporting children and young people as part of a wider health and well being agenda, proposal 7 - pathways to employment and proposal 8 - adult fire setting counselling, were very similar with a majority of between 50 – 60% for each one. Again there was a relatively high neutral response of between 20 – 31% for each one.
- Qualitative data was provided by respondents for some proposals and this had been analysed and coded into themes within the report to provide further insight into the choices made.

Following the Fire Authority decision, implementation and delivery projects would be commissioned by Officers. This work would be managed by the Programme Office through the Programme Board which would oversee the work. Progress on implementation and delivery would be reported to IRMP Lead Member and through Strategic Performance Board to the Fire Authority's Audit and Governance Committee.

The Chairman invited representatives from representative bodies to address the Fire Authority. A representative speaking on behalf of members of the Fire Brigade Union (FBU) stated that the FBU recognised the value in the Royal Berkshire Fire and Rescue Service (RBFRS) taking a wider role in prevention but questioned whether the interventions were affordable given that they were not part of the service's statutory duty. Regarding proposals three and four, it was proposed to reduce the amount of fire safety education in schools in order to focus on road and water safety. The papers outlined that any impact would be mitigated by children visiting stations however the most vulnerable children would be least likely to attend. The FBU was of the view that road and water safety education should take place in addition to, not instead of, fire safety education and the government should be lobbied for additional funding. The FBU supported

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proposal five, with the caveat that these home visits should be done 'in addition to' and not 'instead of' visits by other partner organisations. Other organisations should receive training to reduce the risk of fires in the home. The FBU supported proposal eight and suggested that probation and restorative justice agencies be invited to commission a wider trial of the counselling pilot before it became business as usual.

Before inviting comments from Members, the Chairman asked that any Member who could not commit to the following declaration leave the meeting during the discussion of the item:

'Irrespective of any views I may have expressed in advance of today's meeting, I confirm that I shall come to a decision about each element of the Service Redesign Consultation arising from Officers' reports only after having considered the content of the reports, all feedback from consultees presented to the meeting, and all relevant matters brought to the attention of the meeting before a vote is taken.'

All Members remained in the Chamber.

Councillor Pauline Helliard-Symons raised a query regarding how RBFRS could ensure that Home Fire Safety checks could be delivered to the people who needed them most, stating that she had heard of out-of-date addresses being provided to staff in the past. Mark Gasgarth (Area Manager, West) advised that it was vital that resources were targeted effectively and there was work being done with the NHS and Local Authorities to ensure that data was up-to-date so that Berkshire residents aged over 65 and registered with a GP could be targeted.

Councillor Paul Gittings stated that he supported the eight prevention proposals in principle and that they concurred with RBFRS's 'Vision 2019'. He advised that he could not support proposals 3 and 4 in their current format as he was concerned about the potential impact of reducing fire safety education in schools, although he agreed that road and water safety should be part of the RBFRS's prevention activity. Mark Gasgarth advised that research had identified that Berkshire's residents were at greater risk from the roads and water in Berkshire. Although fire would always be important, the requirements of the Fire and Rescue National Framework for England were that all risks should be considered. Fire safety education in schools would not be stopped; the service would consider where its efforts could be most beneficial in supporting residents to live safe fulfilling lives. Councillor Gittings questioned whether RBFRS would be spreading out its resources too thinly as no additional staff would be recruited.

Councillor Emma Webster thanked the 1,050 residents, community groups, local councils, staff and representative bodies who responded to the consultation. She also thanked the officers who had been involved with the work of the IRMP and delivery of presentations throughout the consultation. £2.4million in savings were required to be found by 2020 and while £1million had been found from support services, a further £1.4million would be required from service redesign.

There were eight proposals for the RBFRS's prevention work. Prevention was best delivered in partnership with colleagues in the public and voluntary sectors to deliver meaningful outcomes for residents. Councillor Webster reported that she was pleased to see a response from the Chief Executive of the South Central Ambulance Service (SCAS) among the consultation responses. She also noted that there was little difference between the responses from staff and the public, however she also noted that many were concerned that RBFRS should not be

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duplicating work that was the responsibility of other organisations.

Proposals one and two related to fires in the home. While there were no accidental dwelling fire deaths between 1st April 2016 and 31st March 2017, RBFRS could not become complacent and focus was required to continue to prevent fires, deaths and injuries in Berkshire. Joint working with the NHS and local authorities would be key to protecting the most vulnerable from dying due to a fire in the home and information sharing with partners would be crucial.

Proposals three and four related to educating people of all ages about the risks of road and water deaths and injuries. Each death caused by an incident on the road or in the water was a tragedy, so RBFRS had to prioritise educating Berkshire's communities about the risks. SCAS were also willing to contribute to this work and Councillor Webster made a commitment to involve SCAS in discussions regarding the implementation of proposals three and four.

Proposal five related to home fire safety checks and expanding their remit to identify other vulnerabilities. Councillor Webster expressed the view that the trust held in the RBFRS by the community placed them in an ideal position to develop a 'safe and well' approach and support people to live independently in their homes for longer.

Proposals six and seven were to support children's health and wellbeing and progress pathways to employment and training. The interventions would be delivered on a cost recovery basis.

Proposal eight was to introduce counselling to reduce fire setting activity following a successful trial.

Councillor Webster concluded that the proposals should be approved and their implementation plans be monitored by the IRMP Working Party. The proposals could not be delivered in isolation and Councillor Webster requested that Fire Authority Members ask for their local authorities to support RBFRS where they could.

Councillor Paul Gittings thanked Councillor Webster for her diligent work over many months in overseeing the IRMP. The principles of the proposals were in accordance with Vision 2019 which was a good document and a credit to the CFO and the legacy he would leave behind. Councillor Gittings confirmed that he would be abstaining from voting on proposals three and four as, while he supported them in principle, he was not satisfied that there would be sufficient resources to deliver road and water safety education without a detrimental impact on fire safety education.

Councillor Pauline Helliard-Symons expressed the view that the aim underlying proposals three and four was creditable because RBFRS spent more time responding to road traffic collisions than fires and work to prevent further collisions was a high priority. Councillor Helliard-Symons stated that she supported all that Councillor Webster had said.

Councillor Angus Ross applauded the work of all who had contributed to the consultation and the development of the eight proposals. He suggested that volunteers be recruited to deliver the Home Safety Checks as there were 350,000 dwellings in Berkshire and those who knew their local areas would be of great help.

Councillor John Ennis stated that he supported proposal five and he had seen the

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excellent work with vulnerable adults that had been completed by RBFRS in Reading. He also particularly supported proposal eight and had seen through his work in the criminal justice system the benefit of the counselling. Councillor Ennis advised that he would not be supporting proposals three and four due to the resourcing issues as mentioned by the FBU.

The Chairman reported that he had seen first hand the improved confidence and self-esteem of young people who had attended RBFRS's programmes for young people. He also noted the trust that the community afforded to the RBFRS uniform and expressed the view that this trust should be used, whilst ensuring that the responsibilities of other organisations were not duplicated. The Chairman commended Councillor Webster for the report and advised he had enjoyed his participation on the task and finish group. He wanted to assure members of the public that no decisions would be taken lightly and were sometimes taken with a heavy heart.

Councillor Christine Bateson acknowledged that the vulnerable people who would benefit from the proposals would be elderly, disabled or those who had chaotic lives. The NHS and Local Authorities would be requested to support the work of the RBFRS to support people to live longer and safer.

The Chairman invited Members to vote on each of the proposals in turn, as moved by Councillor Webster and seconded by Councillor Bateson. At the vote, proposals one, two, five, six, seven and eight were passed unanimously. Proposals three and four were passed by a majority with two abstentions.

RESOLVED that:

- The outcomes of consultation in the full summary report of consultation responses in relation to the Prevention proposals be considered;
- The Fire Authority agreed to proposal 1 - To reduce the number of vulnerable people dying due to accidental fires in the home and proposal 2 – To reduce the volume of fires occurring in homes and the injuries that resulted from them.
- The Fire Authority agreed to proposal 3 – To work with partners to reduce road deaths and injuries by 20% in Royal Berkshire over the next five years. Councillors Avtar Cheema, John Ennis and Paul Gittings abstained from voting on this item.
- The Fire Authority agreed to proposal 4 – To align to the UK Drowning Prevention Strategy 2016-26, with the stated aim of a reduction in the number of drowning incidents by 50% by 2026. Councillors Avtar Cheema, John Ennis and Paul Gittings abstained from voting on this item.
- The Fire Authority agreed to proposal 5 – That Fire and Rescue staff would complete comprehensive home fire safety checks expanding the scope of the visit to look out for other vulnerabilities to the resident.
- The Fire Authority agreed to proposal 6 – To continue to expand schemes to deliver a range of services to support children's health and wellbeing
- The Fire Authority agreed to proposal 7 – To develop relationships with county-wide organisations to progress pathways to employment and apprenticeships for young people.

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- The Fire Authority agreed to proposal 8 – To introduce counselling to reduce fire setting activity amongst adults as a mainstream activity.

105. SUMMARY REPORT OF RESPONSES TO THE SERVICE REDESIGN CONSULTATION – PROTECTION PROPOSALS

Jim Powell, Temporary Area Manager, provided Fire Authority Members with a full and final summary feedback report of the responses to the Service Redesign consultation for the Protection proposals. Members were being asked to make a decision on those Protection proposals following conscientious consideration of the consultation feedback.

Protection Proposals:

- A significant majority of respondents agreed with both Protection proposals; proposal 1 - reducing fire safety audits from 1800 to 1400 but focusing on those premises where people are most at risk and standards are not being met and proposal 2 - consideration of major developments within Royal Berkshire to ensure we can meet additional demand.
- Qualitative data was provided by respondents and this has been analysed and coded into themes in the report to provide further insight into the choices made.

Following the Fire Authority decision, implementation and delivery projects would be commissioned by Officers. This work would be managed by the Programme Office through the Programme Board which would oversee the work. Progress on implementation and delivery would be reported to IRMP Lead Member and through Strategic Performance Board to the Fire Authority's Audit and Governance Committee.

The Chairman invited representatives from representative bodies to address the Fire Authority. A representative speaking on behalf of members of the Fire Brigade Union (FBU) stated that the FBU recognised the valuable contribution that protection work played in the safety of firefighters at incidents. Proposal 1 sought to reduce fire safety audits from 1800 to 1400 and Tregear Thomas stated that the Fire Authority always aimed to follow the Regulator's Code. Where it was not able to deal with any contraventions on the spot then formal action would be taken. With the focus being on high risk premises then the volume of formal action would be likely to increase which would therefore need to be resourced. The FBU recognised the rapid rate of existing and proposed development within Berkshire and the significant increase in fire safety work that would be needed to support that. They were therefore supportive of the proposal to consider major infrastructure projects and the fire safety resources that they would require. However, the Service was currently consulting internally as part of the Service Delivery and Risk & Performance Re-structure on a 16% reduction in the number of Fire Safety Inspecting Officers and therefore proposal 2 was not congruent with the reduction in staffing resources.

Councillor Paul Bryant noted that it was proposed to reduce the number of fire safety audits from 1800 to 1400. He asked how many of the 1800 audits had not been necessary and what the percentage would be for 1400. Mark Gaskarth, Area Manager (West), confirmed that of the target of 1800 in the previous year approximately 1600 (80%) had been deemed satisfactory and this figure had remained roughly the same over the last two years. Based on that the figure for

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1400 would drop to 60%.

Councillor Emma Webster moved that the two proposals in the Protection Strand should be approved and this was seconded by Councillor Alistair Auty. She stated that the proposal involved a much more focused approach to the targeting of risk in the built environment. Whilst the proposed reduction in the number of full audits undertaken (from 1800 to 1400) might look as though work was being reduced in this area, this was not the case. The proposal focused on those premises where people were most at risk and where currently standards were not being met. However, that did not mean that those who performed well would be allowed to become complacent and let standards slip. It was about making sure that those with greater risk and vulnerability received the greatest attention.

Some respondents spoke about the need for fairness in relation to audits and in particular why some taxpayers should receive a different service to others. As described in the evidence base document underpinning these proposals, the direction from Government was clear in that enforcement work should be targeted at those premises and responsible persons that did not comply rather than imposing a burden on those that did. Through targeting work more effectively it was felt that more of a level playing field could be created for businesses in Berkshire. The concerns raised by the FBU around the achievability of the target were noted but she believed that it could be met.

Understanding and considering the implications of major infrastructure development affecting Berkshire over the next five years would enable the Fire Authority to ensure that it was able to meet the demands placed on the service. Work was already being undertaken to understand proposed development across each local authority area. The Fire and Rescue Service were also mandatory consultees for planning applications.

76% of all respondents agreed with the proposals and what was of particular interest was the qualitative responses received. Many residents saw large scale developments as a potential area where the Fire and Rescue Service could charge consultancy fees for advice. Three very successful primary authority schemes supporting businesses were already operated and there were strict controls as to which services could and could not be charged for. It might be possible for the expertise of Officers to be used to work in support of the largest scale development proposals to help ensure the proposals were mindful of the fire safety provision within the development from the earliest stages. She urged Officers to engage with the County's Growth Partnership to see what opportunities might be available for the Fire Authority to provide that support and to see what funding sources might be available to support it.

Councillor Webster concluded that the implementation plans attached to each of the proposals should be considered and regularly reviewed by the IRMP Task and Finish Group and brought back to the Fire Authority at regular intervals to update all Members on progress.

Councillor Paul Bryant referred to a recent fire at a care home in Cheshunt where two elderly residents had died. There had been no sprinklers installed in the building and he stated that there had been no loss of life due to fire in those buildings where sprinklers had been installed. He therefore aimed to ensure that they were installed in all building such as care homes, schools etc. He would like to see a more aggressive attitude to this approach as developers were reluctant to install sprinklers unless forced to do so as there would be an additional cost

involved.

Councillor Colin Dudley echoed Councillor Bryant's comments and he advised that in 80% of serious fires in commercial properties the business would not re-open. The more modern buildings were built to a higher standard and therefore less likely to catch fire. However, it was important to remember that fire safety audits were not carried out just for the safety of the public but also for the safety of Fire Officers. He welcomed a more targeted inspection regime and he felt that it made sense for these to be focused on places where there were problems.

Councillor Pauline Helliar-Symons also supported the comments made by Councillor Bryant. She stated that it was relatively cheap to install sprinklers in a new build but that the cost rose to around £2k to install them in an existing building.

Councillor Philip Bicknell referred to the fire safety audits and felt that it was important to deal with the complacency of people who owned buildings.

Councillor Alistair Auty felt that in relation to proposal 1 focusing audits was the right approach and in particular where standards had not been met. Proposal 2 was just common sense. He thanked Councillor Emma Webster for the diligent work undertaken in relation to the Service Redesign.

RESOLVED that:

- The outcomes of consultation in the full summary report of consultation responses in relation to the Protection proposals be considered;
- The Fire Authority agreed to proposal 1 – to carry out 1,400 full fire safety audits per year with the aim to get to the places where people were most at risk and where necessary standards were not being met;
- The Fire Authority agreed to proposal 2 – to consider the major infrastructure projects and developments affecting Royal Berkshire over the next five years to ensure that the Fire Authority was able to meet the additional demands placed on its Service.

106. SUMMARY REPORT OF RESPONSES TO THE SERVICE REDESIGN CONSULTATION – RESPONSE PROPOSALS

Jim Powell, Temporary Area Manager, provided Fire Authority Members with a full and final summary feedback report of the responses to the Service Redesign consultation for the Response proposals. Members were being asked to make a decision on those Response proposals following conscientious consideration of the consultation feedback.

Response Options:

- Option 1 was the highest ranked with 42.91% ranking it as their 'most preferred option'.
- Option 7 was the second highest ranked with 22.47%.
- Option 4 was third highest ranked with 17.93%
- Option 2 was fourth highest ranked with 7.48%
- Option 3 was fifth highest ranked with 6.68%

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- Option 5 was sixth highest ranked with 4.66%
- Option 6 was seventh highest ranked with 3.14%
- Respondents were then asked to explain why they had chosen their most and least preferred options. These responses were analysed and coded into themes, expressing a wide range of opinions around all aspects of the seven Response options.
- The consultation feedback report also gave focus to the specific scenarios which formed the component parts of the seven Response options such as fire engine removal at Pangbourne, Wargrave and Windsor (at night) and removal of the Retained Support Unit and various other types of crewing arrangements.

Following the Fire Authority decision, implementation and delivery projects would be commissioned by Officers. This work would be managed by the Programme Office through the Programme Board which would oversee the work. Progress on implementation and delivery would be reported to IRMP Lead Member and through Strategic Performance Board to the Fire Authority's Audit and Governance Committee.

The Chairman invited representatives from representative bodies to address the Fire Authority. A representative speaking on behalf of members of the Fire Brigade Union (FBU) summarised their response to the consultation found in Appendix A to the summary report and concluded that Option 1 was the only viable option. They expressed the view that all options would represent real cuts to frontline services and would have an inevitably disproportionate impact on the most vulnerable people in Berkshire's communities.

The Chairman noted that the Fire Authority had been notified of a petition in respect of the Response proposals and invited the petitioner to address the Fire Authority.

Mrs Annett presented a petition of 361 signatures which opposed the closure of the Wargrave fire station. There had been an issue with recruitment and retention at the station but this was improving as the station now had seven staff and three potential recruits. Over the past ten years there had been many changes made to RBFRS and while there were fewer fires, the fires that did occur burned hotter and faster. A delay in responding to a fire could cost lives and a timely response was critical. Knowledge of the local topography was essential to navigate the farms, manor houses, rivers and lanes in Wargrave. The next nearest stations would take 17 minutes to respond to a call in Wargrave, so long as there was a pump in the station at the time of the call. A recent call out had taken 22 minutes to respond to and the Wargrave appliance had been available but was not used. The Wargrave station cost £69k to run as it was always under budget and the staffing situation was due to improve when the three potential recruits completed their training. She implored the Fire Authority not to focus on the figures and instead reflect on the risk the unique village would be subject to if they had to wait 17 minutes for a response.

Councillor Bryant asked whether the Pangbourne station would be closed before or after the opening of the new Theale station. The DCFO explained that Pangbourne would only close after Theale opened. Councillor Bryant asked what the run time would be from Theale to Pangbourne. The Temporary Area Manager replied that it would be six to seven minutes including turn out time.

Councillor Helliars-Symons asked how long a retained fire station had to turn out an appliance. The Temporary Area Manager responded that previously it would have been five minutes but the time had been revised and now Pangbourne station's

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usual turn out time was six minutes. Councillor Helliar-Symons further asked whether it was possible that an appliance at the Theale full time station could arrive at an incident in Pangbourne sooner than an appliance at Pangbourne station could be turned out. The Temporary Area Manager responded that Pangbourne's availability was at 33.5% so it would depend on availability.

Councillor Angus Ross asked whether the information regarding the availability of Wargrave station was consistent with the current performance. The Head of Risk and Performance (HORP) advised that based on five years of data Wargrave's availability was 2.4%. The key issue was staffing as four were needed to crew an engine. There had recently been improvements and availability had increased to 16.4%. RBFRS needed to ensure that training could be completed more quickly and more flexibly.

Councillor Webster thanked the petitioner for addressing the Committee. She proposed that the Fire Authority accept the recommendation to proceed with Option 1 with one amendment. She proposed that the implementation of the proposal relating to Wargrave be deferred for twelve months, subject to the fulfilment of the following criteria:

- (1) The required savings be found elsewhere within the RBFRS budget;
- (2) Wargrave to demonstrate an increase in availability to 60% within that twelve month period.

The proposal was seconded by Councillor Phillip Bicknell.

Councillor Webster reported that this report had been one of the hardest to consider in her time on the Fire Authority because it was not easy to contemplate closing fire stations. However £1.4m savings had to be found. She was committed to working with staff and local communities in implementing the proposals.

Three stations would be remotely managed but the public would not see much change as crews and fire appliances would still be based at those stations. There would however be an impact on staff and implementation of the proposals would have to be mindful of that impact.

Councillor Webster noted the challenges of the availability of on-call firefighters as people were increasingly less likely to work in their local community. She urged on-call firefighters at Pangbourne to continue to provide cover until the Theale station became operational.

Councillor Webster stated that the residents of Wargrave had been listened to and promised to try to find the savings required from other areas of the RBFRS budget. She appealed to the community to do everything they could to increase the availability of the station to 60%.

Thanks were given to the Retained Firefighters Union (RFU) and Fire Brigade's Union (FBU) for their responses despite not always agreeing, Councillor Webster hoped that they could continue to work together in a positive way.

Finally regarding shift patterns, Councillor Webster stated that she understood that changes to shift patterns had consequences and thanked those staff who had spoken to her about these proposals.

Councillor Paul Gittings thanked Councillor Webster for the detailed presentation and expressed the view that all other options were unacceptable. Option 1 was the 'least worst' in an era of Conservative government led cuts to public services.

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He hoped that the election on 8 June 2017 would see the end of austerity policies which were diminishing services and ineffective at dealing with the problems they aimed to resolve. Councillor Gittings welcomed the amendment to the proposal in relation to Wargrave. He announced that he would be voting against the proposal to support option 1 as he believed there were alternative ways to generate the savings required, for example, by generating income.

The Chairman expressed the view that it was inappropriate to bring electioneering to the debate when the Fire Authority was discussing matters of public safety.

Regarding the amendment to option 1, the Chairman thanked the petitioner for her eloquent presentation, noting that desperate attempts to staff the station were being made. The proposal as amended would pass the baton back to the local community to demonstrate the usefulness of the station. It was not useful to have an equipped appliance available only one in every 19 days.

Over 1,050 staff and residents had responded to the consultation and as a Fire Authority they had listened and reacted to the concerns raised. RBFRS was one of the lowest precepting Fire Authority and the Chairman expressed the view that there was no need to increase taxes for the sake of it as they could still deliver a fantastic service. Option 1 would ensure RBFRS could continue to deliver a good service. The Chairman supported option 1, as amended.

Councillor Helliard-Symons noted that in an ideal world, everyone would choose Option 7 – to do nothing, however RBFRS did not have the finance to continue delivering services without making some changes. She was also sorry that Councillor Gittings had made political points and expressed the view that the reasons cuts were necessary was due to the previous Labour government. Councillor Helliard-Symons noted that 18% of respondents to the consultation supported option 3 which did not propose the closure of Pangbourne station. It was likely that Pangbourne residents would receive a better service from the Theale station than they currently enjoyed. Regarding the petition against the closure of the Wargrave station, Councillor Helliard-Symons noted that of the 245 signatories, 53 lived out of the area and 32 lived outside of the UK so their understanding of the local area was questionable. She accepted the strong feeling of the local residents and was happy to give Wargrave station another chance. She was happy that under option 1 there would be no changes to shift patterns as changes would have a detrimental impact on family life.

Councillor Paul Bryant advised that he had attended a passing out parade at the Pangbourne station and was disappointed that it would be closing. However he understood the problems and accepted that Theale was nearby. Councillor Bryant reluctantly supported Option 1.

Councillor Phillip Bicknell echoed the comments made by Councillors Dudley and Helliard-Symons in respect of Councillor Gittings' remarks and expressed the view that residents could depend on the Conservatives to take a balanced decision and balance the country's books.

Councillor John Ennis welcomed the deferment of the closure of Wargrave station and raised the point that some unanswered questions remained in respect of how the savings would be made. He echoed comments made by the FBU that Option 1 was the 'least worse'. In the context of central government cuts to public services, it would be reasonable to lobby for more funding and Surrey had done so successfully. The government had made a choice not to shift taxes to the

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wealthy. Councillor Ennis expressed the view that austerity was unnecessary and stated that he would be voting against the proposal.

Councillor Webster concluded that the Fire Authority must take a decision and she expressed her disappointment with the comments raised by Councillors Gittings and Ennis as they had been involved throughout the IRMP process. She stated that Members and Officers would work with staff and communities to implement the proposals.

RESOLVED that:

- The outcomes of consultation in the full summary report of consultation responses in relation to the Response proposals be considered;
- The Fire Authority considered and determined that Option 1 of the Response options, as set out in Appendix A, should be adopted subject to the amendment that the implementation of the proposal relating to Wargrave be deferred for twelve months, subject to the fulfilment of the following criteria:
 - (1) The required savings be found elsewhere within the RBFRS budget;
 - (2) Wargrave to demonstrate an increase in availability to 60% within that twelve month period.

107. ADJOURNMENT AND RECOMMENCEMENT OF MEETING

RESOLVED that:

- It was noted that the meeting was adjourned at 9.13pm and recommenced at 9.36pm.

108. APPOINTMENT OF DEPUTY CHIEF FIRE OFFICER AND ASSISTANT CHIEF FIRE OFFICER

Trevor Ferguson, Deputy Chief Fire Officer, sought ratification of the Management Committee's decision to appoint the new Deputy Chief Fire Officer (DCFO) and Assistant Chief Fire Officer (ACFO) onto the existing pay scales for these posts as set out in Appendix A.

Following the retirement of ACFO, Paul Southern, and the appointment of DCFO, Trevor Ferguson into the post of CFO, Royal Berkshire Fire and Rescue Service (RBFRS) required an appointments process to fill the subsequent vacancies.

In line with the Fire Authority's Standing Orders the Management Committee agreed an Appointments Panel for the selection process.

The closing date for applications was 20 February 2017. A very strong field of candidates from across the Thames Valley and beyond applied for the various positions. Short listing was undertaken on the 21 February 2017 by the Fire Authority Appointments Panel.

Over the course of two days candidates were tested through an extensive range of exercises culminating in a Member Panel Interview on the 23rd March. The assessments covered report writing, presentation skills, working with the media, operational skills, leadership and strategy.

The panel had been very impressed with the level of interest and expertise across all five applicants. The comments of the panel in relation to both

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appointments were set out below:

“DCFO scores indicated a clear high performer with Steve Foye achieving top marks across all sets. The panel was unanimous in wishing to offer the post of DCFO to Steve. The decision was echoed by Trevor Ferguson CFO Elect.”

“The decision to appoint the ACFO was not an easy one due to the high scoring of the candidates, extensive deliberation took place and the performance over both assessment days was considered resulting in a majority vote to appoint Simon Jefferies to the post of ACFO.”

On the 3rd April 2017 the Management Committee agreed the Appointments Panel’s recommendation to appoint Steven Foye to the post of DCFO and Simon Jefferies to the post of ACFO.

The salaries of both positions would be in line with the agreed Director pay scales (attached in Appendix A) as published in the Authority’s pay policy statement. The individual starting points and progression within the scales would be agreed with the Chief Fire Officer through the PDI process.

To provide further savings from the CMT budget, the CFO elect had decided that these posts would be offered without the existing Principal Officer car allowance of £9,151 but would be offered with the standard Flexible Duty Officer lease car allowance of £2,744. This would ensure equity across the Principal Officer team and it was noted that the CFO elect had also volunteered to give up his allowance of £9,151 and move to the standard lease allowance of £2,744.

The DCFO stressed the point that there had been a very high calibre of candidates and the appointments would mean that the Fire Authority had a strong team to take the organisation forward in the future.

Councillor Emma Webster also took the opportunity to echo her comments made at the Management Committee whereby she thanked all the applicants for both positions who went through the appointment process and also to members of staff at the Assessment Centre and within HR who had ensured that the process had run smoothly.

Councillor Colin Dudley agreed with the comments made by Councillor Webster. He also felt that the Fire Authority had a strong team in place which went down to Area Manager and Group Manager level.

RESOLVED that:

- It be agreed that Steven Foye be appointed onto the DCFO pay scale CO11 to CO15;
- It be agreed that Simon Jefferies be appointed onto the ACFO pay scale CO09 to CO11.

109. THE FIREFIGHTERS’ PENSION SCHEME (ENGLAND) REGULATIONS 2014 SCHEME MANAGER DISCRETIONS

Jacky Manning, HR Manager, advised the Fire Authority of the scheme manager discretions as contained in The Firefighters’ Pension Scheme (England) Regulations 2014, and sought agreement to the policy position on the remaining 49 discretions that required consideration following the introduction of the new pension scheme in April 2015. The report incorporated recommendations to the

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Fire Authority on the remaining 49 discretions and detailed the previous decisions made by the Fire Authority on three discretions which required immediate action.

On 5 March 2015 fire and rescue services were provided with a document from the Local Government Association (LGA) that listed the scheme manager discretions (including those attached to an obligation) as contained in The Firefighters' Pension Scheme (England) Regulations 2014. The scheme manager had been defined as the Fire and Rescue Authority (FRA) and was responsible for the administration of the scheme. There were 52 discretions listed in the document provided by the LGA.

RBFA had published a Firefighters' Pension Scheme (England) 2015 Scheme Manager Discretions Statement in 2015 containing the three discretions which required immediate policy decision (Regulations 5, 17 and 111) which were finalised by RBFA on 24 June 2015. RBFA now needed to publish a new Statement of Policy to bring together all of the discretionary elements of the Firefighters' Pension Scheme 2015.

The draft statement in Appendix B had been formulated using advice provided by RBFA pension administrators, West Yorkshire Pension Fund (WYPF). Following the joint procurement of WYPF as pension administrators, the recommendations within this report had additionally been constructed in collaboration with Buckinghamshire and Milton Keynes Fire and Rescue Service (B&MKFRS).

RBFA current policy had also been used as a basis for recommendations, as in some cases the practices outlined in the discretion statements were already carried out by RBFA. Consideration was also taken into account of the FPS 1992 scheme and the FPS 2006 scheme rules for consistency purposes.

The local Pensions Board had provided greater scrutiny and subsequent agreement to the recommendations within this report. Appendices B and C should now be considered and agreed by the Fire Authority in line with Section 2 of this report.

An annual review would be undertaken to ensure the statement remained current and in line with best practice. All recommended changes would be brought forward to the Fire Authority for ratification.

RESOLVED that:

- The scheme manager discretions contained in the Firefighters' Pension Scheme (England) Regulations, including the three discretions already determined at the Fire Authority meeting on the 24 June 2015 (Statement of Policy as outlined in Appendix A) be noted;
- The recommendations and comments in the Scheme Manager Discretions and Recommendations Statement (Appendix B) and the table of recommendations and additional comments (Appendix C) were considered;
- The suitable option for each discretion be determined and be built into the final Statement of Policy;
- The draft Statement of Policy (Appendix B) regarding the scheme manager discretions be agreed.

110. 2017/18 CORPORATE CALENDAR – FIRE AUTHORITY MEETINGS AND COMMITTEES

Katie Mills, Head of Corporate Services, presented a report which set out the schedule of Fire Authority, committee meetings and Member events for the 2017/18 Municipal Year. The purpose of this report was to seek Fire Authority approval of the committee meeting dates and events in 2017/18. Dates would be published on the RBFRS website following Member approval.

It had been almost one year (25 April 2016) since the Fire Authority approved its streamlined governance arrangements reducing the size of its membership from 25 to 20, and the reduction of the number of committees to Audit and Governance and Management Committee.

The 2016/17 Municipal Year saw additional Fire Authority and Management Committee meetings scheduled to accommodate the decision making process for the Integrated Risk Management Plan (IRMP) consultation.

In 2017/18, the frequency of four Fire Authority and Audit and Governance Committee meetings per year had been as originally agreed.

Following a review of committee business in 2016/17, it was recommended that five meetings of the Management Committee be scheduled in 2017/18 with the option for a sixth meeting should it be required. At the current time, this was believed to be the optimum number to ensure an appropriate level of business at each meeting and aid effective agenda management.

In scheduling the Corporate Calendar, each of the six Unitary Authorities had been contacted and their schedule of committees in 2017/18 had been compared against the Fire Authority's in order to avoid meeting clashes with full Council and proposed Fire Authority meetings. At the time of writing this report, none of the dates in the draft Corporate Calendar clashed with any Unitary Authority full Council meeting, however, it had been impossible to avoid clashes with Unitary Authority smaller committee meetings.

RESOLVED that:

- The 2017/18 Corporate Calendar as set out in Appendix A be agreed.

111. FORWARD PLAN

RESOLVED that:

- The Forward Plan for the period 18th April 2017 to 27th July 2017 be noted.

112. MINUTES OF THE STANDING COMMITTEES

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

- Management Committee – 16th January 2017 (approved)
- Audit and Governance Committee – 6th December 2016 (approved)

113. DATE OF NEXT MEETING

The next meeting would be held on Wednesday 28th June 2017 at 6.30pm in the Lynda Kenyon Suite, RBFRS Headquarters, Newsham Court, Pincents Kiln, Calcot, Reading, Berkshire RG31 7SD.

The Chairman of the Fire Authority made a presentation to the Chief Fire Officer, Andy Fry, who was retiring after 30 years of service. Andy Fry had first joined the Fire Service in Chelmsford, Essex in 1987 and he had been with the Royal Berkshire Fire and Rescue Service for three years. Councillor Dudley recalled the first time he had met Andy Fry - at the recruitment process for the new Chief Fire Officer. This had been a long and arduous process with 10 candidates taking part. However, Andy Fry had stood out at interview and it was soon clear that he was head and shoulders above the other candidates. In his time with the RBFRS he had led the publication of the Strategic Commitments and the Corporate Plan. He also rightly deserved the honour of being Vice-President of the Chief Fire Officers Association. Councillor Dudley felt that the Fire Service would be a poorer place without Andy Fry but he had enjoyed working alongside him over the last three years and he wished him all the best for the future.

Andy Fry could not believe that he had been in the Fire Service for 30 years and he confirmed that he had particularly enjoyed his time with RBFRS. He had always stated that he would work with people to make changes and he had always made it clear that this would be his last job and therefore the legacy which he left behind would be important. As a young man he had tried his hand at banking and insurance for a short spell and had not really given a thought about becoming a firefighter until one day he had had a life changing conversation. He owed the Fire Service a debt of gratitude. Putting on the uniform gave one a huge sense of kudos and he had tried to pay that back to some extent over his 30 years of service. He therefore felt that he had contributed more to the service than he had taken from it. It had been important to him to plan and build a management team to deliver the Strategic Commitments and Corporate Plan. The Fire Authority had taken a number of important decisions that evening and he felt that the right team was in place to take those decisions forward. The team was as good as you would find anywhere within the Fire Service and it had been good to see them flourish. Andy Fry stated that he would not be retiring entirely – he would remain in the public service one way or another if only on a voluntary basis. He thanked all Officers and Members for their support and he also thanked the FBU for their constructive engagement over the years.

114. EXCLUSION OF THE PRESS AND 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 Item on the grounds that it involves the likely disclosure of exempt information, as defined in 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.

115. VOLUNTARY SCHEME PAYS – FIREFIGHTER PENSION SCHEME

The Fire Authority considered an exempt report in relation to the personal tax liability on pension savings for a member of the Firefighters' Pension Scheme 1992 who was due to retire.

RESOLVED that:

The recommendations as set out in the exempt report be agreed.

(The meeting concluded at 10.14pm)