

Approved on 23.04.14

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



Held on Wednesday 19 February 2014 at 6.30 pm

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

- Members:**
- | | |
|------------------------------|-------------------------------------|
| Councillor Alistair Auty | *Councillor Christine Bateson |
| *Councillor Phillip Bicknell | *Councillor Chris Bowring |
| *Councillor Jeff Brooks | *Councillor Paul Bryant |
| Councillor David Burbage | *Councillor Diana Coad |
| *Councillor Andrew Cumpsty | *Councillor Haqeeq Dar |
| *Councillor Colin Dudley | *Councillor Adrian Edwards |
| *Councillor Paul Gittings | *Councillor Pauline Helliard-Symons |
| *Councillor Peter Jones | Councillor John Lenton |
| *Councillor Chris Maskell | *Councillor Tom McCann |
| *Councillor Iain McCracken | *Councillor Edward Plenty |
| *Councillor Mohammed Rasib | *Councillor Angus Ross |
| *Councillor Rebecca Rye | *Councillor Alan Ward |
| *Councillor Emma Webster | |
| <i>*present</i> | |
- In Attendance:**
- Andy Fry (Chief Fire Officer, CFO)
 - Andy Mancey (Acting Assistant Chief Fire Officer, A/ACFO)
 - Caroline Redzikowska (Director Corporate Services, DCS)
 - Carolyn Rowe (Interim Head of Corporate Services, IHCS)
 - Fayth Rowe (Committee Officer, CO)
 - Paul Southern (Assistant Chief Fire Officer, ACFO)
 - Steve Sprason (Interim Head of Estates, IHE)
 - Andrew Vallance (Director Resources, DR)
- Petition**
- Tregear Thomas, (Station Manager, and FBU representative)
- Speakers:**
- Eduardo Cardoso (Station Manager, and FBU representative)
- Observers:**
- Officers, Royal Berkshire Fire and Rescue Service
 - Members of Representative Bodies
 - Members of the Public

465. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Apologies for absence were received from Cllr Auty, Cllr Burbage and Cllr Lenton.

466. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

In accordance with the provisions of the Fire Authority's Local Code of Conduct, Cllr Bryant and Cllr Ross each declared a non-pecuniary interest being members of the Programme Sponsoring Group (PSG) for the Thames Valley Control Project (TVCP), in relation to items 14 and 17 regarding the new Headquarters at Pincents Lane. There were no Declarations of Interest received from Officers.

Action

467. MINUTES OF THE MEETING HELD ON 11 DECEMBER 2013

Cllr McCracken advised that under minute 456, the shared service working was between Hampshire **Police** and Thames Valley Police.

Resolved:

That the Minutes of the meeting held on 11 December 2013, **as amended**, be approved as a correct record for signing by the Chairman.

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

Under Standing Order 19 two petitions had been received.

The Chairman invited SM Tregear Thomas to speak to the first petition regarding the budget saving to remove three station commander posts.

SM Thomas thanked the Chairman and FA for the opportunity to speak. He asked that the Members, in setting the budget, take the opportunity afforded by the unexpected additional revenue to re-engage in a process of open consultation with staff and the FBU and take more time and undertake a review.

The Chairman formally received the first petition.

The Chairman invited SM Eduardo Cardoso to speak to the second petition regarding the budget saving to reduce by three the number of grade 4 posts and remove one grade 3 post in the non operational community safety coordinators & analyst roles.

SM Cardoso thanked the Chairman and FA for the opportunity to speak, and stated that the need to adapt was accepted. There was an opportunity to work with the recently appointed new CFO in delivering the vision of the FA, and the FBU wanted to work in partnership. He urged members to take the opportunity provided by the recently identified additional revenue to do this.

The Chairman formally received the second petition.

469. RECEIPT OF ANNOUNCEMENTS**a) Flooding:**

The Chairman announced that he had agreed with the CFO that a detailed presentation would be brought to the Fire Authority in future on the flooding, but he asked the CFO to provide the FA with some headline information.

The CFO advised Members that the operation had been the largest since the second world war, and at its peak had involved 260 officers and firefighters from 33 other F&RSs. The logistical challenge had been both the geographic spread and the numbers deployed - all of whom had been undertaking a full range of duties requiring coordination.

The operational focus had been in three areas:

The emergency effort - over 160 people had been rescued across Berkshire , and infrastructure such as the Pingewood electricity power station had been protected; and

Practical assistance - including getting medicine and provisions and providing a water taxi in the flooded communities; and

At a psychological level- flooding caused huge anxiety, and officers and

firefighters had been knocking on doors offering help and providing reassurance.

The CFO thanked FA Members who had shown interest and support, and had provided very valuable community intelligence whilst leaving the service to manage.

The CFO said that part of the recovery phase would include looking at the lessons – both locally and nationally. There was no statutory duty to respond to floods, albeit all FRSs used their powers in this respect, and he highlighted the importance of the FA decision in making that choice.

The national support arrangements enabling deployment had been invaluable. The Fire Minister was shortly due to respond to the Ken Knight report, and the importance of the management of risk was key when looking the reducing number of incidents, and this included working in an area and staying there until the job was done. Some of Ken Knight's proposals would challenge that capacity.

The CFO finished by saying that he could not emphasis enough how grateful he was to the team RBFRS who had worked tirelessly to stop a disaster becoming catastrophic.

The Chairman added his immense gratitude for the outstanding work. He added that in due course with the agreement of the FA he would write to the CFO of each of the FRSs who had provided fantastic help which had included providing fire response which enabled RBFRS to continue their flood work. First and foremost his sincere thanks for the enormous positive difference they made went to the rescue and control staff.

Cllr Bicknell read out a letter of thanks from Cllr Burbage (Leader of Windsor and Maidenhead Council) on behalf of the Council and the residents of the Borough.

The Chairman stated that Cllr Lenton had asked that his thanks be recorded, including for the rescue of over 100 residents. Cllr Lenton had said that firefighters would always be welcome in Wraysbury.

The Vice Chairman, Cllr Helliard-Symons praised the operational support team whom she had visited. She thanked those on the ground and those who had been organising operations at headquarters.

Cllr Brooks thanked the Service on behalf of the people of West Berkshire saying the operations had been a testament to the need for capacity when needed.

Cllr Coad said that she had been asked by Cllr Dexter Smith at Slough to thank the service for not only its professionalism but also its compassion and kindness.

Cllr Gittings expressed his thanks for the tremendous team effort including working with other agencies. Reading had fortunately not been affected so badly, and he extended sympathy to those areas. People had been working very professionally for many extra hours - and would be for weeks to come. The FA should be very proud.

The Chairman said that each group and unitary authority had spoken and whilst recognising that many members wished to add their thanks asked the Members' forbearance for moving on.

- b) The Chairman announced with regret the sad death of two firefighters: Nial Hamilton of Lurgan fire station in Northern Ireland, and Firefighter Cliff Cox, who was based at Staines fire station in Surrey. A minute's silence was held.

- c) The Chairman advised Members that following the Member Planning Workshop on the 6 February 2014, the outputs would be translated into a refreshed policy direction which would be brought to the next meeting on 23 April 2014.
- d) The Chairman reminded Members that there was an opportunity to visit the new headquarters at Pincents Lane on either the 20 or 22 February at 1pm.
- e) The Chairman announced that he was delighted to confirm that the FA had been awarded the South East Employers Charter for Member Development - he showed Members the framed certificate which had been received.
- f) The Chairman, on behalf of the FA made a presentation to Cllr Jeff Brooks in recognition of this being his 20th year of service to the Fire Authority. . Commencing on the Public Protection Committee of the County Council, Cllr Brook's service had included being Chairman.
- g) The Chairman presented flowers on behalf of Members, and thanked the Interim Head of Corporate Services, it being her last meeting.
- h) The Chairman announced that a very successful quiz night had been held raising in excess of £900 for charity in memory of Lynda Kenyon.
- i) At the invitation of the Chairman, Cllr Cumpsty extended the thanks of the landlady of the Griffin pub in Caversham for the excellent service and the outstanding quality and care of the team who had responded to her fire. As a result she had recently been able to reopen.

470. ISSUES ARISING FROM THE AUDIT AND GOVERNANCE COMMITTEE

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

QUESTIONS FROM MEMBERS UNDER STANDING ORDER 30

471.

There were no questions from Members under Standing Order 30.

472. NOTICES OF MOTION UNDER STANDING ORDER 44

There were no notices of motion under Standing Order 44.

473. RECOMMENDATIONS OF COMMITTEES

It was noted that the following item on the 2014/15 budget had been recommended from the Management Committee on the 3 February 2014.

474. ANNUAL BUDGET 2014/15

DR introduced the item and advised Members that the new finance system had included the localisation of business rates which had introduced more volatility, which this year had worked in favour of RBFA. He detailed the figures for 14/15 in Appendix A. The figures included a line for Industrial Action Contingency as requested by the Management Committee. DR advised that in 2013/14 and for 2014/15 the £5 rise

approved last year was being used for capital. In 2015/16 this sum would be released back into the revenue budget. From 2016/17 onwards it was projected that approximately £1million additional savings would be required each year.

With regard to the capital budget (Appendix D) the capital grant would be replaced from 2015/16 and bidding would be against criteria reflecting the Ken Knight report.

Cllr Ward, as Chairman of the Budget Working Party (BWP) formally moved the budget as set out under paras 2.1 – 2.6, (pages 1-3,) and all the appendices (A-G). This was seconded by Cllr McCracken.

The Chairman moved an amendment and tabled an amended appendix A which put £257,000 back into the budget from the Development Fund.

This was seconded by Cllr McCracken.

The Chairman said that the Chairman of the BWP had provided high quality chairmanship in drawing up the proposals, but now there was an opportunity to take more time to review these. He said that for one year this funding would enable the Authority to look further at the posts that had been the subject of the two petitions received (savings 3 and 6 in Appendix C). He added that he was moving **that this be for one year** so that the FBU and staff have the opportunity to undertake as described the work with the FA to find a lower cost staffing budget.

Cllr Ward accepted the amendment.

Cllr Ward said that RBFA was accepting the 1% tax freeze, but had resisted a reduction within the context of ever decreasing government grants. A £3.6million cut was expected over 3 years which equated to a reduction of 24% , or over 10% of the current spend. Of the savings required for 14/15 he had reluctantly accepted the spending of £257,000, reducing the development fund from £351,000 to £94,000. He stated that the underspend had been eroded by the strike action and that a provision had been put in place for 2014/15.

Cllr Ward added that he was encouraged by the promise to find alternative savings for the £257,000, but feared that this may be other people's jobs.

The capital requirements (Appendix D) included provision for a new fire station at Theale. Capital funding sources were not secure.

In concluding Cllr Ward said that the funding volatility which had been in RBFA's favour this year, would be ending in 2020 when a rebase was due.

Cllr Gittings said that the amended budget would be supported - this was democracy, and he was glad to see sense had prevailed. In the light of recent events it would have been sending the wrong message. The cuts could still be on the table - he supported efficiencies - but this provided a pause for reflection. By working together he hoped the service could be provided in which there had been such pride over recent weeks. The first eye should always be on resilience.

Cllr Brooks thanked the majority group for the amendment which was the right thing to do. It provided the CFO more time in the context of the wider review and direction. He was grateful to be able to support the amended, well crafted budget.

Cllr Webster said she was very happy to support, having as community safety champion seen first hand their work throughout the year.

In summing up Cllr Ward said that it was a reasonable budget which could be afforded but added a note of caution over the savings needed for 2016/17. He agreed that resilience was important given the ongoing likelihood of major events with which

firefighters would be dealing.

On being put to the vote the Fire Authority unanimously **agreed**

1. That the Fire Authority RESOLVE, in accordance with the Local Government Finance Act 1992 as amended (“the Act”), that the following amounts be now calculated for the year 2014/15:
 - 1.1 The aggregate council taxbase of the six Berkshire unitary authorities has been notified as 315,471.14; and
 - 1.2
 - a) £35,003,053.32 being the aggregate of the amounts which the Fire Authority estimates for the items set out in Section 42A (2)(a) to (d) of the Act; and
 - b) £618,625 being the aggregate of the amounts which the Fire Authority estimates for the items set out in Section 42A (3) (a) to (b) of the Act; and
 - c) £34,384,428.32 being the amount by which the aggregate at a) above exceeds the aggregate at b) above; and
 - d) £15,084,082 being the aggregate of the sums which the Fire Authority estimates will be payable for the year in respect of redistributed non-domestic rates and revenue support grant;
 - e) A surplus of £163,866.97 being the net aggregate of the surpluses and deficits on billing authorities’ Collection Funds to be received in 2014/15;
 - f) 19,136,479.35 being the amount at c) less the amount at d) above, less the amount at e) above, calculated by the Fire Authority in accordance with Section 42A (4) of the Act as its council tax requirement for the year;
 - g) £60.66, being the amount at f) above divided by the aggregate council taxbase at 1.above, calculated by the Fire Authority, in accordance with Section 42B(1) of the Act, as the basic amount of its Council Tax for the year.
 - h) The Fire Authority, in accordance with Section 40(2)(a) of the Act, hereby sets the following amounts of Council Tax for the year 2014/15 for each of the categories of dwellings shown below:

Valuation Band	£
A	40.44
B	47.18
C	53.92
D	60.66
E	74.14
F	87.62
G	101.10
H	121.32

Being the amounts given by multiplying the amount at (2.1.2g) by the number which, in the proportion set out in Section 5(1) of the Act, is applicable to dwellings listed in a particular valuation band divided by the number which in that proportion is applicable to dwellings listed in valuation band D, calculated by the Fire Authority, in accordance with Section 47(1) of the Act, as the amounts to be taken into account for the year in respect of categories of dwellings listed in different valuation bands.

- i) The Fire Authority, in accordance with Section 40(2)(b) of the Act, hereby sets the following amounts payable as precepts by the billing authorities for the year 2014/15:

Authority	Taxbase	Precept	Collection Fund Surplus/ (Deficit)	Net Yield from Council Tax
Bracknell Forest	41,998.00	2,547,598.68	31,246.00	2,578,844.68
Reading	48,628.00	2,949,774.48	65,360.00	3,015,134.48
Slough	37,376.20	2,267,240.29	35,813.97	2,303,054.26
West Berkshire	60,599.00	3,675,935.34	7,450.00	3,683,385.34
Windsor & Maidenhead	62,371.04	3,783,427.29	7,617.00	3,791,044.29
Wokingham	64,498.90	3,912,503.27	16,380.00	3,928,883.27
Total	315,471.14	19,136,479.35	163,866.97	19,300,346.32

- j) The Fire Authority determines that in accordance with the set of principles set by the Secretary of State for Communities and Local Government for the year, its relevant basic amount of Council Tax for 2014/15 is not excessive.
2. That the Fire Authority the Medium Term Financial Plan set out in **Appendix A** and the associated savings listed in **Appendix C as amended be approved**; and
 - 3 That the proposed Capital Programme set out in Appendix D be approved; and
 4. That the mid-year Treasury Management report in Appendix E be approved; and
 5. That the Prudential Indicators, Treasury Strategy and Investment Strategy set out in Appendix F be approved; and
 6. That the fees and charges set out in Appendix G be approved.

475 ROYAL BERKSHIRE PAY POLICY STATEMENT 2014/15

DCS introduced the 2014/15 Pay Policy Statement which had been considered by the Audit and Governance Committee. She advised it had been reformatted to take account of new guidance.

It was unanimously **resolved**:

that the Pay Policy Statement for 2014/15 be approved.

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

DCS introduced the paper which reported the achievement of the charter, and also asked the FA to determine arrangements for the future. She referred to the eight recommendations from the South East Employers (SEE).

In response to questions she confirmed that the proposed budget would be for external training, and whilst small was proposed as a starting sum for the first year. An amendment was noted in the SEE report to correct Cllr Watson to Cllr Webster.

Resolved:

- a) **That the Audit and Governance Committee be the lead Committee on Member Development; and**
- b) That the **Audit and Governance Committee** develop/amend the terms of reference for submission to the next fire Authority meeting; and
- c) That the establishment of a budget of £100 per annum per member (£2,500) be agreed; and
- d) That reports regarding Member Development activity be brought to the Audit and Governance Committee six monthly and to the Fire Authority annually at the Annual Meeting; and
- e) That the recommendations of South East Employers (the Charter Assessors) as set out in paragraph 3.5 of the report be noted and that responsibility for implementation be delegated to the **Audit and Governance Committee**; and
- f) That **the Audit and Governance Committee** be requested to determine the future of the Member Champion role; and
- g) **That the Charter for Member Development logo be displayed on RBFA and RBFRS paperwork and electronic media.**

DCS

DR

CO

CCM

477. STATEMENT OF ASSURANCE

The CFO introduced the Statement of Assurance which was linked to the requirement for chief fire officers to be held to account. With the removal of previous inspection standards and regimes, it was now the Fire Authority who set the standards through the IRMP process. It was therefore important that the Fire Authority was confident in the judgements that they made.

The statement had been substantially based on the report of the external auditors which had given a clean bill of health. The CFO referred to appendix B and the six areas for improvement.

The CFO advised of an amendment on the Statement which should refer to appendix C not B.

The CFO looked forward to developing links with the Chairman of the Audit and Governance Committee and members with regard to future statements.

In response to questions the Chairman suggested that this document could be conveyed to the public as confirming that the finance, governance and operational aspects of the Authority were all run well.

The CFO confirmed that whilst the statement was short, there were hyperlinks if the public wished to drill down into more detail. The statement of assurance would enable the Fire Minister to assess fire authorities periodically, and also, to aggregate the information to assess the state of national resilience.

GMPR

It was unanimously resolved

- a) That the content of a Royal Berkshire Fire Authority Statement of Assurance for 2012/13 be agreed; and
- b) that it be agreed that the Chairman of Royal Berkshire Fire Authority and the Chairman of the Authority's Audit & Governance Committee jointly sign the 2012/13 Statement of Assurance; and
- c) that it be agreed that the Statement of Assurance be published, in accordance with a requirement contained in the "National Framework for fire and rescue services in England".

GMPR

CO

478. ARRANGEMENTS TO NAME THE NEW HEADQUARTERS

The CFO advised Members that the proposal for naming was for there to be two stages. When the building was occupied it was proposed that the address be RBFRS, Pincents Lane, Reading. The second stage, after it had been occupied by Thames Valley Fire Control (TVFC), and probably in early 2015, would involve the local primary school being invited to name the building.

Cllr Bryant suggested that the name should recognise that TVFC was based in the building.

The Chairman confirmed that the name would be approved at a meeting of the Fire Authority.

Resolved:

That the verbal update be noted and the arrangements to name the new Headquarters at Pincents Lane be agreed.

479. PROGRAMME OF MEETINGS 2014/15

The Chairman requested that this item be deferred as there were some potential clashes.

CO

480. THERMAL IMAGE CAMERA PRESENTATION

Acting Assistant Chief Fire Officer Andy Mancey (A/ACFO) gave a presentation which showed the use of the thermal imaging cameras that had been funded by the FA. He advised that RBFRS training incorporated their use as standard, and the new equipment was light and portable.

Responses to Member questions included:

- the equipment had the sensitivity to detect a body outline against a range of different background temperatures;
- RBFA had initiated the purchase which was through a framework agreement and another FA had also purchased which had reduced the cost;
- non fire uses included water (but not sub surface), silos and collapsed buildings. For sub water surface detection a vibraphone may be used;
- the range of different thermal imaging equipment, including older equipment was used, for example for training instructors (not trainees). Donation of old equipment was restricted, but Operation Florian may be an option.

481. UPDATE ON BHQ

Cllr Ross, Chairman of the Strategic Asset Management Committee (SAM C) introduced the report, advising that officers would provide updates to the information in the report as the situation was ongoing. With regard to the opening of the building, there had been some problems with the floods and water ingress, and that practical completion would not be met. It was anticipated this would now be the end of May with the building operating by the end of June 2014. He said that it was in the best interests of RBFA not to rush the contractors and to acknowledge that there had been change requests. Cllr Ross advised that the final estimate figures had now been received in order to complete the building, and that he would be proposing an amendment. There may be an additional capital funding bid due to the upsizing of the generators, but it may be met by the Thames Valley Control project.

Steve Sprason, the Interim Head of Estates (IHE) advised that he had sought to balance the report - providing enough information with not providing floods of detail. With regard to how the build contract had been going, the 18 April 2014 would not be

met, and that the aim was to focus on getting into the building and minimising disruption. He advised that there was a requirement for a back up generator for Control.

An enduring problem had been that until this week the building had not been watertight. He believed it now was, but there was evidence of water penetration, and some work would have to be redone. Seeking a programme from the contractor had been difficult, and because of the contract there had been no obligation to provide this. As set out in the report, the programme put forward in January 2014 had been unrealistic, and IHE advised that, as said by Cllr Ross, rushing would be to the detriment of all.

IHE also referred to the progress on the move from Dee Road as described in the report.

IHE advised that with regard to the contingency of £200,000, to date £155,000 had been spent. If the generator related work came to fruition the £200,000 would be exceeded.

Responses to Member questions included:

- the contractor process was robust,
- the design took longer – instead of the end of September 2013, this took until November/December – including the redesign of the mechanical and electrical;
- with a design and build contract there would be some evolution, and it was unusual not to have a contingency of between 5 and 7.5%;
- the issues had not been particularly due to the extreme weather although the water ingress was partly caused by that;
- the IHE expertise had been in place from Summer 2013, and should have been brought in two years earlier;
- the contractor had replaced most of their team two or three months ago;

The Chairman agreed with Cllr Brooks that a review should be done at the appropriate time but that was not at present.

Cllr McCann asked that the responsibility of the Fire Authority be included in the review.

The Chairman agreed that part of the consideration of this item be held after the meeting had moved into part II.

482. 2013/14 BUDGET MONITORING

Resolved

That the budget monitoring report be noted.

483. MINUTES OF THE STANDING COMMITTEES

Resolved:

That the minutes of the standing committees be received.

484. FORWARD PLAN

It was noted that Cllr McCracken would contact officers with an additional item to be added to the forward plan for Audit and Governance.

Resolved:

That the forward plan be noted.

485. DATE OF NEXT MEETING

Wednesday 23 April 2014 at 6.30pm at Wokingham Borough Council, Civic Offices, Shute End, Wokingham, Berkshire RG40 1BN

486. 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.

487. PART II MINUTES OF THE MEETING HELD ON 11 DECEMBER 2013

Resolved:

That the part II minutes of the meeting held on 11 December 2013 be confirmed as a correct record and signed by the Chairman.

488. PART II STATEMENT FROM THE CHAIRMAN ON THE RECENT INDUSTRIAL ACTION

Resolved:

That the verbal update on the recent industrial action be noted.

489. PART II UPDATE ON BHQ

Under part II members gave further consideration to this item and it was

Resolved

that the recommendations **as amended be agreed.**

The meeting closed at 9.35pm