

# MINUTES OF THE MEETING OF THE ROYAL BERKSHIRE FIRE AUTHORITY



Held on Monday 19 November 2018 at 6.30pm

RBFRS 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 Jason Brock
  - Councillor Jeff Brooks
  - Councillor Paul Bryant
  - Councillor Colin Dudley
  - \* Councillor Adrian Edwards
  - \* Councillor Jan Gavin
  - \* Councillor Paul Gittings
  - \* Councillor Pauline Helliar-Symons
  - \* Councillor Iain McCracken
  - Councillor Tina McKenzie-Boyle
  - \* Councillor Satpal Parmar
  - \* Councillor Ted Plenty
  - \* Councillor Dexter Smith
  - \* Councillor Angus Ross
  - \* Councillor Rachelle Shepherd-DuBey
  - \* Councillor Emma Webster

**In Attendance:**

Graham Britten (Monitoring Officer)  
Doug Buchanan (Group Manager (Risk and Performance))  
Conor Byrne (Head of Finance and Procurement, HF&P)  
Stephen Chard (Committee Officer)  
Trevor Ferguson (Chief Fire Officer, CFO)  
Steve Foye (Deputy Chief Fire Officer, DCFO)  
Tamara Hack (Democratic Support Assistant)  
Paul Jacques (Area Manager (Protection and Prevention))  
Simon Jefferies (Assistant Chief Fire Officer, ACFO)  
Andrew McLenahan (Head of Facilities, Fleet and Equipment)  
Katie Mills (Head of Corporate Services)  
Jo Reeves (Committee Officer)  
Nikki Richards (Director of Support Services)  
Fayth Rowe (Democratic Support Lead)  
Tony Vincent (Head of Business and Information Systems)

**Observers:**

Officers, Royal Berkshire Fire and Rescue Service  
Members of Representative Bodies  
Members of the Public

## Action

### 38. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

*(Councillor Pauline Helliar-Symons, Vice-Chairman, in the Chair)*

Apologies for inability to attend the meeting had been received from Councillors Christine Bateson, Phillip Bicknell, Jeff Brooks, Paul Bryant, Colin Dudley and Tina McKenzie-Boyle.

### **39. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST**

In accordance with the provisions of the Fire Authority's Local Code of Conduct, Councillors Emma Webster and Iain McCracken stated that should the Thames Valley Police and Crime Panel be discussed at the meeting they declared a personal interest by virtue of the fact that they were Members of this Panel. They would therefore not participate in any debate on the Thames Valley Police and Crime Panel should it materialise.

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

There were no Declarations of Interest received from Officers.

### **40. MINUTES OF THE MEETING HELD ON 31 JULY 2018**

**RESOLVED that** the Minutes of the meeting held on 31 July 2018 be approved as a true and correct record and signed by the Vice-Chairman.

### **41. 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.

### **42. RECEIPT OF ANNOUNCEMENTS**

The Vice-Chairman made the following announcements:

#### **Remembrance Events**

- Sunday 11 November 2018 marked 100 years since the end of the First World War and both the Fire Authority and the Royal Berkshire Fire and Rescue Service (RBFRS) were well represented at numerous events to honour those who sacrificed themselves to secure and protect our freedom.
- Chief Fire Officer, Trevor Ferguson, represented the RBFRS at Menin Gate in Ypres, Belgium.
- Assistant Chief Fire Officer, Simon Jefferies, had the honour of representing the RBFRS as part of the Civil Service Contingent of the Guard of Honour at this year's Cenotaph commemorations on Remembrance Sunday.
- The Colour Party and Group Manager, Dom Manton, attended an event in Newbury and the Chairman of the Fire Authority, Councillor Colin Dudley, and Group Manager, Paul Thomas, attended Holy Trinity Church in Bracknell. Representatives from the RBFRS also attended events in Maidenhead, Windsor and Hungerford.
- Crews across the County and staff at Newsham Court also held a two-minute silence to honour the fallen.
- Councillor Helliars-Symons gave thanks to all those who took the time to represent the Fire Authority and the RBFRS at these important events so that the heroic efforts and sacrifices that had been made in past wars could be honoured.

## **Road traffic collision on the M4**

- As Members would have seen in the news, there had been several fatal incidents on roads in the Thames Valley since the last Fire Authority meeting, including one on the M4 in Berkshire.
- Just after midday on Thursday 11 October 2018, crews from Newbury and Dee Road joined with crews from Oxfordshire County Council Fire and Rescue Service to respond to a road traffic collision between Junction 14 at Hungerford and Junction 13 at Chieveley. The collision involved a heavy goods vehicle and a minibus with staff and young people on board from Priors Court Foundation in Thatcham. This tragic incident claimed the lives of three people, and thoughts and sympathies went out to the friends and families of those involved.

*(Councillor Rachelle Shepherd-DuBey joined the meeting at 6.33pm).*

- This incident could have been even worse were it not for the actions of firefighters, who showed immense courage at the scene and were able to rescue six people from the collision and transfer them to the care of South Central Ambulance Service.
- One off-duty firefighter from Newbury Fire Station was the first on the scene and gave first aid to the casualties prior to the crews from Newbury and Dee Road arriving.
- Councillor Helliar-Symons praised these actions and gave thanks to all those who not only responded to this tragic incident, but also helped to deal with the aftermath. It was a terrible incident and the Vice-Chairman added her thanks to the Control Room staff who took the very distressing calls.
- Red Watch from Newbury, who attended the incident, held a car wash on Sunday, 4 November, to raise money for Priors Court School. The car wash raised £1330.

## **New Starters in Senior Leadership Team**

- Two new members had recently been recruited to the RBFRS Senior Leadership Team (SLT). Tony Deacon had joined us as an additional Temporary Area Manager in Service Delivery. This position, funded from within existing resources, would add significant value to the Service Delivery team in driving forward our work, particularly in developing our Hub based Protection and Prevention delivery.
- Tony had joined us on a secondment from his role in Hampshire until 31 March 2019, and brought significant experience, knowledge, skills and qualifications in Protection, Prevention and Fire Engineering. He would be a member of the SLT and would work alongside Jim Powell in Service Delivery, whose focus would be on Operational Response, Resilience and Assurance.
- Andy McLenahan had joined the RBFRS as Head of Facilities, Fleet and Equipment. Andy joined us from a role in the private sector where he worked for a large agricultural business. He previously worked with Veolia and Vosa and brought wide ranging experience and qualifications in the professional areas of fleet and facilities management.
- Members joined the Vice-Chairman in extending a warm welcome to Andy and Tony.

### **Inspection Dates**

- The HMICFRS inspection timetable for the RBFRS had been published. Discovery Week would take place week commencing 10 December 2018. During this week, the HMICFRS team would visit the RBFRS to collect evidence prior to inspection week.
- During Inspection Week, a HMICFRS team of approximately eight to ten people would visit the RBFRS for the formal inspection. This would take place during the week commencing 28 January 2019.

### **Theale Planning Permission**

- Planning permission had been secured for a new tri-service Community Fire Station at Wigmore Lane in Theale. The shared location would offer Thames Valley Police a dedicated office on site for its Neighbourhood Policing Team and South Central Ambulance Service would have access to shared welfare facilities.
- There were a large number of comments and conditions accompanying the decision from the Local Planning Authority. The Capital Projects Team was currently working through these to assess the impact on the design and/or the cost of the plans.
- The next stage was to open a tender for the remediation of the site. This would be a separate process from the main construction tender. The remediation works were essential to prepare the site before any building work could begin as there was a degree of contamination from its current owner, Network Rail.
- Once the tender for the remediation works had completed, and the costs would indicate the viability of the scheme, it would then be possible to complete the purchase of the site from Network Rail.
- The RBFRS would also be re-running the main contractor tender as the previous tender process and associated quotes had expired due to the delays in obtaining planning permission.

### **Laptops Donated to Denefield School**

- On Thursday, 18 October 2018, the RBFRS handed over 12 laptops to Denefield School in Tilehurst.
- Councillor Angus Ross, Lead Member for Strategic Assets, and Lee Arslett, ICT Service Delivery Manager, visited the school to present the laptops. Each laptop was between six and seven years old, meaning that although they might not be suitable for the latest software, as required by the RBFRS, they should still have sufficient lifespan left to benefit pupils at the school.
- Through donating the equipment, the RBFRS minimised harm to the environment by extending the usable life of the equipment, while also avoiding costly recycling processes.

### **Firehouse Re-Opening**

- Following refurbishment work, the official re-opening of the Firehouse training facility at Whitley Wood was held on Friday, 16 November 2018.
- The work replaced the control systems and reconfigured the internal layout of the Firehouse, which had become familiar to firefighters, as it had not changed in approximately 15 years. The new specification also included additional firefighting areas, an improved Liquid Petroleum Gas kitchen, a

bedroom layout and access to the third-floor loft space to increase usability.

- The Firehouse was one of the key training facilities for the RBFRS, offering firefighters the opportunity to train in as realistic conditions as possible, including simulating fires in houses and commercial buildings.
- The work had provided staff with a greater range of training opportunities. This included practicing search techniques in domestic sized rooms, such as a bedroom, as well as larger commercial sized properties, such as offices.

### **Which? and the One Show**

- In the lead up to Halloween, the consumer group Which? published findings that showed some children's costumes failed to meet fire safety testing standards. Which? tested a selection of different children's dress up outfits from a range of online and high street retailers, which was then demonstrated at the Firehouse at Whitley Wood.
- Group Manager for Protection, Jess James, who was filmed by Which?, gave safety advice to the public on how to buy reputable clothing and prevent fires should they occur.
- BBC One's the One Show also covered the story with Jess representing the RBFRS to provide important safety advice. The piece ran with Dom Littlewood and was still available to view on the BBC iPlayer.

### **Charity Round-Up**

- Staff from across the county have gotten their buckets and sponges out to raise money for charity in the last month.
- At the end of September, the West Hub held a car wash at Newbury Fire Station. Firefighters from Blue Watch at Newbury and Hungerford Fire Station, together with staff from Newsham Court, all lent a helping hand on the day raising £1,198 for The Fire Fighters Charity and Cancer Research.
- The following day a car wash was held at Langley with the crew from Slough and off duty firefighters raising £1,555 for The Fire Fighters Charity, topped off by another £606 for the charity raised by crews at Crowthorne.
- Councillor Helliard-Symons praised all involved for the fantastic sum raised for these worthy causes.

### **Other News/Points**

- Councillor Helliard-Symons reported that the RBFRS had been awarded the Ministry of Defence Employer Recognition Scheme Silver Award. This award was as a result of the RBFRS' support to those that were part of the Armed Forces community, after signing the Armed Forces Covenant. Councillor Adrian Edwards and the Armed Forces liaison were present at the award ceremony held on board HMS Victory in September 2018.

Councillor Paul Gittings added that the thoughts of Labour Members were also with those effected by the tragic accident involving Priors Court School. Praise was also added for the work of the members of staff who responded to the accident.

Councillor Gittings then commented on concerns that had been highlighted in relation to disturbing incidents which occurred between Halloween and Fireworks Night when Police Officers were subjected to attacks. Councillor Gittings queried if there had been similar situations for Firefighters. The Deputy

Chief Fire Officer (DCFO) responded to this by giving his understanding that there had been no such incidents. He did however agree to confirm whether or not this was the case.

**SF to  
action**

The DCFO went on to state that the safety of staff remained of paramount importance. The potential for assaults on emergency workers was recognised nationally and mentioned the Assaults on Emergency Workers (Offences) Act 2018 enabled greater sanctions upon offenders.

#### **42. QUESTIONS FROM MEMBERS UNDER STANDING ORDER 30**

There were no questions from Members under Standing Order 30.

#### **43. NOTICES OF MOTION UNDER STANDING ORDER 44**

There were no Notices of Motion under Standing Order 44.

#### **44. RECOMMENDATIONS OF COMMITTEES**

The Fire Authority noted that the following agenda item had been recommended by the Management Committee at its meeting on the 22 October 2018:

Item 10 – Service Redesign: Response Option One, Wargrave Fire Station

#### **45. APPOINTMENT OF COMMUNITY SAFETY CHAMPION**

Councillor Pauline Helliard-Symons proposed that Councillor Christine Bateson be appointed as the Fire Authority's Community Safety Member Champion for 2018/19. This was seconded by Councillor Iain McCracken.

**RESOLVED that** Councillor Christine Bateson be appointed as the Fire Authority's Community Safety Member Champion for 2018/19.

#### **46. SERVICE REDESIGN: RESPONSE OPTION ONE, WARGRAVE FIRE STATION**

The DCFO introduced the report and advised that the closure of Wargrave Fire Station was part of option one of the service redesign consultation in order to save approximately £1.3 million from station services. The service redesign consultation ran from December 2016 to March 2017. At the meeting of the Fire Authority on 18 April 2017 Members conscientiously considered option one and made an amendment to defer the implementation of the closure for twelve months based on the fulfilment of two key criterias:

(1) The required saving be found elsewhere within the RBFRS budget:

(2) Wargrave to demonstrate an increase in availability to 60% within that twelve month period.

The twelve month period commenced on 1 October 2017 and the period had now elapsed.

Since October 2017 the overall establishment had increased from 8 to 15 persons. He explained in order for new RDS personnel to have an impact on fire cover they must complete a number of training modules to become Breathing Apparatus (BA) qualified. Which meant there was a training lag before new

recruits have an effect on availability.

In referring to figure 2 of the report the DCFO advised the graph demonstrated that against best case planning it could be possible that Wargrave would achieve the 60% target at the beginning of 2019.

The Medium Term Financial plan currently show budget deficits of £353,000 for 2018/19 and £293,000 for 2019/20. These deficits would be funded from reserves. Should Wargrave Fire Station meet the target set additional estimated savings of £656,000 would need to be found to balance the budget over the medium term. The current estimate of savings would need to be £488,000 if Wargrave closes.

DCFO reported Management Committee had considered the information and recommended that the decision regarding whether to close Wargrave Fire Station should be deferred for a further nine months from 19 November 2018.

Councillor Emma Webster proposed that the Fire Authority accept the recommendation at 2.1 of the report, subject to the inclusion of 'at midnight on 18 August 2019'. Councillor Iain McCracken seconded the motion.

Councillor Webster noted that despite a significant amount of work, neither criteria set by the Fire Authority regarding Wargrave Fire Station had been met. She wished to record her thanks to the crew and staff at the station, but also to the community in Wargrave who had been supportive of their local fire station. She further noted that it took time to train new starters so that they could achieve the necessary qualifications. As such, the Management Committee had recommended that the decision regarding the potential closure of Wargrave Fire Station be deferred for a further nine months to make sure the 60% target be met.

Councillor Angus Ross expressed his support for the proposal and advised that he had been heartened on Remembrance Day to meet the new starters who had been off duty and voluntarily attended the remembrance service in Wargrave. He hoped that the momentum of the progress made by the station could be upheld.

Councillor Paul Gittings recalled that the Labour Group had opposed the closure of Wargrave Fire Station and was pleased when the Fire Authority deferred the closure. The staff should be congratulated for their hard work and he hoped that the 60% target would be achieved in 9 months. He felt the original target was unrealistic.

Councillor Jason Brock advised that the Management Committee had compared the availability of all fire stations in the County. Should Wargrave reach the 60% target, it would be the second best performing station out of RDS stations and supported the deferment period. He asked the Fire Authority to be flexible in their expectations of the station. He was also concerned that the longevity of the station was dependent on the discovery of other savings from within the RBFRS budget and sought more assurance that Wargrave would remain open if performance reached satisfactory levels.

Councillor Helliard-Symons offered reassurance that senior officers were working hard to find the additional savings required to balance the budget. She paid tribute to the staff and community surrounding Wargrave and expressed her optimism that the station could reach the 60% target in 2019.

Councillor Webster thanked Members for their support of the proposal and

praised the passion of the community in Wargrave. She committed to continue working with the station to give it every chance of success.

**RESOLVED that:**

Fire Authority agreed the recommendation from the Management Committee of the 22 October 2018 that; the decision made by the Fire Authority in April 2017, to close Wargrave Station, should be deferred for a further 9 months until midnight on 18 August 2019 to see if the criteria in 1.1 (of the report) could be fulfilled.

**47. SUMMARY REPORT OF RESPONSES TO THE CORPORATE PLAN AND IRMP 2019-2023**

Councillor Emma Webster, IRMP Lead Member, introduced the report and was pleased to see the level of response to the consultation and the high level of interest from local communities. A large majority of respondents to the consultation were supportive of the Fire Authority having a degree of flexibility in relation to Council Tax increases in order to continue to deliver the extensive and valued services that helped keep the people of Berkshire safe. She had read all of the responses received and was pleased to see the number of positive comments, including from those who had been in receipt of a service. Comments also helped to identify lessons to learn for the future.

Councillor Webster was also pleased to note the many methods used to engage members of the public and encourage consultation responses. These included use of social media, the website and via parishes.

The Group Manager (Risk and Performance) presented to Fire Authority the key points arising from the consultation exercise on projects 1 (Risk Analysis), 2 (Prevention), 3 (Protection), 4 (Response Resource Deployment) and 5 (Response Safe Systems of Work Development). He started by explaining that 54% of the consultation responses came from Berkshire residents and there was overwhelming support for the project proposals. The remaining responses came from staff/staff representatives. The Fire Brigade Union (FBU) response was also largely supportive.

In referring to Project 1: Risk Analysis, Councillor Angus Ross queried whether risk areas included Houses in Multiple Occupation (HMOs). The DCFO responded on this point. The risk generated by HMOs and, more so, unlicensed HMOs was a focus particularly as part of the RBFRS work on Protection. Therefore, this was an area of focus for local teams and hubs in terms of risk profiling and activity undertaken on the ground. In summary, this would form part of the ongoing programme of managing risk.

The Group Manager (Risk and Performance) reiterated the points made by Councillor Webster that there was strong support 92.7% from respondents to the Fire Authority having flexibility around Council Tax increases and raising the annual charge by up to £5 in order to at the very least continue current service delivery into the future.

Councillor Pauline Helliard-Symons gave her thanks to all those who took the time to respond to the consultation. She was pleased to note the enhanced communication methods.

Councillor Webster proposed acceptance of the report's recommendations. A

huge amount of work had gone into the production of the Corporate Plan and IRMP for 2019-2023 and she commended the efforts of officers on the work undertaken. She again praised those residents who had taken the time to respond to the consultation. The qualitative feedback in particular was very useful. Councillor Alistair Auty seconded the proposal.

Councillor Helliar-Symons added her praise to the documentation and thanks for the work of officers in producing it. She also commented that the Corporate Plan and IRMP had continued to improve in her time on the Fire Authority and was now very informative and detailed.

**RESOLVED that:**

- The outcomes of the consultation contained in the full summary report had been considered.
- The consultation response on Financial Flexibility, as outlined in Appendix A, be noted.
- The content of the Corporate Plan and IRMP for 2019-2023 be agreed for publication.

**48. ANNUAL TREASURY MANAGEMENT REVIEW 2017/18 AND MID-YEAR TREASURY MANAGEMENT UPDATE 2018/19**

Conor Byrne, the Head of Finance and Procurement (HF&P), presented the two reports. In referring to the Annual Treasury Report for 2017/18 he reported there was no new borrowing and existing loans remained at £8.8 million. The investment income received was £28,000

Taking Members thorough the 2018/19 Mid-Year Treasury report he reported there was no new borrowing and the investment forecast was £93,000. All Treasury Management activity had been in line with the Treasury Management Strategy approved by the Fire Authority in February 2018.

Councillor Gittings thanked the HF&P for the report and stated that he had been interested in the 'Global Outlook' presented in appendix C of the report. He made reference to a potential 'loosening of monetary policy' which he stated should amount to 'an end of needless austerity'.

The HF&P noted that there was uncertainty in the political arena.

**RESOLVED that:**

- The Annual Treasury Report for 2017/18 be noted.
- The Mid-Year Treasury Management Update for 2018/19 be noted.

**49. LEAD MEMBER SIX-MONTHLY REPORTS**

The six-monthly reports received from the Lead Members for Integrated Risk Management Plan (Councillor Emma Webster), Strategic Asset (Councillor Angus Ross), Collaboration (Councillor Malcolm Alexander) and Budget and Income Generation (Councillor Phillip Bicknell) were presented to Fire Authority.

Councillor Ross referred to the Strategic Asset report, specifically the achievements highlighted on property which included the major refurbishment of

the Firehouse. He was aware that a video had been produced to promote this refurbishment and asked that it be circulated to all Members. Katie Mills (Head of Corporate Services) advised that this had been e-mailed and had been the subject of a press release.

Councillor Pauline Helliard-Symons proposed that the reports be noted. This was seconded by Councillor Alexander.

**RESOLVED that** the reports be noted.

**50. FORWARD PLAN**

**RESOLVED that** the Forward Plan be noted.

**51. MINUTES OF THE STANDING COMMITTEES**

**RESOLVED that** the minutes of the Audit and Governance Committee and Management Committee held in July 2018, which had been published on the RBFRS website, be noted.

**52. DATE OF THE NEXT MEETING**

Monday 25 February 2019, 6.30pm in the Lynda Kenyon Suite, RBFRS Headquarters, Newsham Court, Pincents Kiln, Calcot, Reading, Berkshire RG31 7SD.

As the next meeting of Fire Authority was not until the new year, Councillor Pauline Helliard-Symons took the opportunity to wish all present a Merry Christmas.

*(The meeting concluded at 7.28pm)*