

MINUTES OF THE MEETING OF THE ROYAL BERKSHIRE FIRE AUTHORITY



Held on Wednesday 22 April 2015 at 6.30pm

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

Members:

(* present)

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

In Attendance:

Conor Byrne (Senior Accountant, SA)
Jan Chadaj (Interim Head of IT, IHIT)
Trevor Ferguson (Deputy Chief Fire Officer, DCFO)
Moira Fraser (Democratic Services Manager, DSM)
Andy Fry (Chief Fire Officer, CFO)
Becci Jefferies (Head of HR, HHR)
Simon Jefferies (Temporary Area Manager, Risk Mgt)
Paul Maynard (Area Manager, Response, AMR)
Dave Newton (Watch Manager, Caversham Fire Station)
Linda Pye (Principal Policy Officer, PPO)
Fayth Rowe (Committee Officer, CO)
Anne-Marie Scott (Director of People and Organisational Development, DP&OP)
Paul Southern (Assistant Chief Fire Officer, ACFO)
Nicole Targett (Head of Corporate Communications)

Observers:

Officers, Royal Berkshire Fire and Rescue Service
Members of Representative Bodies
Members of the Public
Chief Fire Officer Jason Thelwell from Buckinghamshire FRS

95. APOLOGIES OF ABSENCE

Apologies for inability to attend the meeting were received from Councillors Alistair Auty, Joginder Bal, Phillip Bicknell, Adrian Edwards, John Lenton, Chris Maskell and Richard Willis.

Action

96. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

In accordance with the provisions of the Fire Authority's Local Code of Conduct there were no declarations of interest received from Members.

There were no Declarations of Interest received from Officers.

97. MINUTES OF THE MEETINGS HELD ON 23 FEBRUARY 2015

Resolved that:

The Minutes of the meeting held on 23rd February 2015 be approved as a true and correct record and signed by the Chairman.

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

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

99. RECEIPT OF ANNOUNCEMENTS

The Chairman made the following announcements:

- **Attendance of Chief Fire Officer Jason Thelwell – Buckinghamshire Fire and Rescue Service**

The Chairman announced that Chief Fire Officer Jason Thelwell from Buckinghamshire FRS was attending the meeting as the Thames Valley Fire Control Service would be going live that evening. He thanked CFO Thelwell for taking the time to attend the meeting.

- **Councillor Alan Ward**

The Chairman advised that this would be Councillor Alan Ward's final Fire Authority meeting. Therefore, on behalf of the Fire Authority, he expressed his sincere thanks and appreciation to Councillor Ward for the commitment he had shown during his time on the Authority, in his capacity as Health, Safety, Fitness and Wellbeing Champion; Vice Chairman of Audit and Governance Committee; and last, but not least, as Chairman of the Budget Working Party. The Fire Authority would not be in the financial position it was in today without the help of Councillor Ward.

Councillor Ward was appointed to the Fire Authority in June 2006; however his 36-year-long political career started way before then. In fact, he joined the Council on the same day that Margaret Thatcher became Prime Minister in May 1979, and he had represented the Sandhurst area ever since. Councillor Ward had also been Leader and Mayor of Bracknell Forest, in his time on the Council.

The Chairman asked all Members to join him in acknowledging the contribution made by Councillor Ward. He would certainly be missed by the Fire Authority for his experience, expertise, forthright opinions and persuasive oratory skills – not to mention his sense of humour and extensive knowledge of debating rules! Very best wishes for the future.

Councillor Alan Ward thanked the Chairman for his comments but stated that he

had actually been with the Fire Authority for a relatively short period of time.

- **Fire Authority**

The Chairman took this opportunity to thank all Members of the Fire Authority for their efforts in guiding the important work of Royal Berkshire's Fire and Rescue Service during the last Municipal Year. It had certainly been a busy year, and one that could be looked back on with a degree of pride. During the last 12 months the Fire Authority had reviewed and reset its policy direction; seen the fruits of investment in developing a new administrative headquarters with the opening of Newsham Court; a new fire station had opened in Windsor; and earlier that day, Newsham Court had become home to the Thames Valley Fire Control Service. The new fire control facility was an important example of what could be achieved when public sector organisations collaborated effectively, and he was sure that it would be a precursor to even more collaborative working in the future.

The achievements mentioned above had not come without their challenges but, thanks to the drive, determination and commitment to the people of Berkshire - and that of Officer colleagues - it had certainly been a year in which good progress had been made. As a result of the commitment of Members and Officers the Fire Authority was now stronger, fitter and more robust than it had ever been.

For Members who were re-appointed to the Fire Authority in June, the Chairman was sure that 2015/16 would be no less challenging but he was equally sure that it would be a year in which the county's fire and rescue service would go from strength to strength.

- **TVFCS – Go-live**

The Chairman was delighted to confirm that the Thames Valley Fire Control Service had gone partially live on 21st April 2015. By the evening of 23rd April 2015 the facility here at Newsham Court would be providing a full fire control service to all three Thames Valley Fire and Rescue Services.

Earlier that day a number of colleagues from the fire controls in Buckinghamshire and Oxfordshire had transferred into the employment of this Fire Authority to join the TVFCS team and he asked all Members to join him in welcoming them.

Whilst there would clearly be a settling in period for the new Fire Control Service, its opening represented a really important milestone in a project that had involved a large and committed team doing a huge amount of work over several years, and the Chairman placed on record the thanks of the Fire Authority for all that they had done. He particularly thanked Councillors Angus Ross and Paul Bryant for their support.

Delivering the project had not been without its challenges and a few tensions had emerged over the last few days in connection with concerns expressed by the Fire Brigades Union. Having said that the Chairman understood from senior officer colleagues that local FBU officials had worked through these concerns in a very constructive and highly professional way, and that they had been addressed without the need for formal action on either side. He thanked the FBU colleagues for that and felt that it would bode well for the future.

The opening of the Thames Valley Fire Control Service provided very tangible evidence of the commitment by this Authority to collaborate effectively – a commitment to share resources with other public bodies, as a means of reducing

cost to taxpayers whilst delivering the best possible services to communities in the county.

- **Statutory Requirement for Smoke and CO Detection in the Private Property Rental Sector**

New regulations, which would require all landlords to fit smoke alarms and carbon monoxide detectors in all private rented homes would come into force in October 2015. The campaign to make it a legal requirement for all landlords to have working smoke alarms in their properties was one of the key objectives within CFOA's Home Safety Strategy. The CFO confirmed that this was something that RBFRRS had been lobbying hard for over a long period of time.

In anticipation of a one-off spike in demand from landlords seeking to comply with the Smoke and Carbon Monoxide Alarm (England) Regulations before they came into force on 1 October 2015, ring fenced grant funding had been made available by the government to allow all fire authorities in England to be provided with smoke and carbon monoxide alarms. The alarms provided were intended for provision to private landlords, on request and at nil cost. Royal Berkshire Fire Authority would receive 7,092 smoke alarms and 637 carbon monoxide detectors.

Fire Authorities would have discretion to determine their own criteria for distribution, and to consider in what circumstances, if any, they might be prepared to offer free installation. It was anticipated that Fire Authorities would consider helping landlords who might struggle to comply with the regulatory requirements. It was the expectation that the provision of detectors from the funding being made available was to be additional to any provision that fire authorities planned to make as part of their existing fire prevention work.

Currently Royal Berkshire Fire and Rescue Service personnel were discussing proposals for delivering this initiative with representatives of other fire and rescue services in the South East as part of the CFOA South East Prevention forum. In addition housing departments in each of Berkshire's unitary authorities were being contacted to discuss the initiative.

- **Drowning Prevention and Water Safety Week – 13-19 April 2015**

Do you think more people die nationally in fire or water?

The Chairman reported that there had been 669 water-related fatalities nationally in 2013 – which was two-and-a-half times the number of people that died in dwelling fires in 2012/13.

As part of the CFOA Water Safety Week, RBFRRS undertook a week of prevention awareness initiatives. The event was launched on Monday 13th April with a large scale exercise, which took many months of planning by Caversham Road Fire Station Commander Jess James, who was supported by his crews at the station, Training Centre and also the Prevention Team from HQ.

A road show was held across Berkshire with events in; Alexandra Gardens Windsor, High Street Maidenhead, Northbrook Street Newbury, Broad Street Reading, Dinton Pastures Wokingham.

The exercise had been filmed by TVP helicopter and also local TV. A 5 minute video was shown with Watch Manager Dave Newton giving the highlights of the

exercise.

Councillor Emma Webster thanked all those Officers who had taken part in the exercise and the events held in Drowning Prevention and Water Safety week as making people aware of the dangers was important. She referred to the new communications equipment and asked what it had been like to use them in the water. Dave Newton confirmed that the new equipment had worked well. The communications whilst in the water had been clear and constant and would assist in making rescue situations safer.

Councillor Tom McCann referred to the communities which lived by the river and he asked what we could do to improve safety there. Dave Newton confirmed that Caversham Fire Station trained every weekend and would visit Marinas to give specific advice to boat owners.

Councillor Pauline Helliar-Symons also thanked all involved as this was the first time that anything on this scale had been organised and it was good to make the public aware of the dangers of water. She felt that it had been a successful week.

Councillor Angus Ross informed the Fire Authority that the governance of the Fire Control Service would be through a joint committee with two Members from each of the three Counties standing on the committee. He would ensure that reports were brought through RBFRS as appropriate.

- **Signing In/ Councillors Lanyards**

For security purposes, Members and visitors to this building were being asked to sign in at Reception. This was in addition to the Attendance Sheet, Members were required to sign. Members had also received Councillor lanyards and they were reminded that they should be handed back to Reception on signing out.

100. ISSUES ARISING FROM THE AUDIT AND GOVERNANCE COMMITTEE

There were no issues arising from 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 44

There were no Notices of Motion under Standing Order 44.

103. RECOMMENDATIONS OF COMMITTEES

It be noted that agenda item 15 had been recommended from the Audit and Governance Committee on 30th March 2015 and items 12 and 13 had been recommended from the Management Committee on 13th April 2015.

104. FIRE AND RESCUE COLLABORATION IN THE THAMES VALLEY – MEMORANUM OF UNDERSTANDING

Andy Fry, the Chief Fire Officer (CFO), informed the Fire Authority of the Memorandum of Understanding to be signed by the three Thames Valley Fire

Authorities on collaboration.

Chief Fire Officer Jason Thelwell from Buckinghamshire FRS was in attendance at the meeting and it was noted that the lines had now been switched over to Thames Valley Fire Control from Buckinghamshire and a test call had been taken.

Chief Fire Officers and political leaders of the three Thames Valley Fire Authorities – Royal Berkshire, Buckinghamshire & Milton Keynes and Oxfordshire County Council – had met to explore opportunities to collaborate together to improve service delivery and value for money. The three authorities had drawn up a Memorandum of Understanding to establish a clear commitment to work together for these purposes and this was set out in Appendix A to the report. The CFO reported that there was a clear commitment to reduce costs and the Memorandum of Understanding was an important platform to make the necessary changes on the ground.

It was recommended that the Fire Authority Chairman should sign the document. The Memorandum of Understanding would become 'live' once it had been signed by political representatives of all three of the Thames Valley authorities. It was anticipated that the other authorities would approve the Memorandum of Understanding in June 2015. Following that Officers would develop a programme of work to translate the commitments set out in the Memorandum of Understanding into change on the ground in order to achieve value for money.

Councillor Paul Bryant referred to Guiding Principle No.4 in respect of governance arrangements. He asked when those arrangements would be in place and how they would be progressed. The CFO confirmed that following the election in May 2015 there would be a number of arrangements which would need to be established as soon as possible. Preliminary work in this area was already taking place.

Councillor David Burbage was pleased to see the Memorandum of Understanding in place. However, he felt that arrangements should also be sought with other neighbouring Fire Authorities such as Hampshire or Surrey. Every opportunity for collaborative working should be sought.

Councillor Paul Gittings congratulated all involved with the Fire Control project and said that it was good to see that it was now fully operational. At the last Fire Authority meeting he had urged the Fire Service to go further in relation to collaborative working and it was good to see that this had been stepped up. He noted that Thames Valley Police were also looking to work in the same way and there might be opportunities for sharing there as well.

Resolved that:

- The Fire Authority agreed to the signing of the Memorandum of Understanding.

105. THAMES VALLEY FIRE CONTROL – 2014/15 BUDGET

Conor Byrne, Senior Accountant (SA) presented the 2015/16 Thames Valley Fire Control (TVFCS) budget to be approved by the three Thames Valley Fire Authorities – Royal Berkshire, Buckinghamshire and Milton Keynes and Oxfordshire County Council. At its meeting on 23 February 2015, the Programme Sponsoring Group (PSG) approved the 2015/16 TVFCS Budget as set out in Appendix A of the report. The governance arrangements of TVFCS required the budget to be approved by the

three Fire Authorities.

Members were asked to note ongoing savings of £623,000 per annum to the Royal Berkshire Fire Authority through the establishment of the TVFCS and were asked to approve contribution of £811,524 towards the revenue costs of TVFCS.

Approval was also requested for a £50,000 contribution to the TVFCS Capital Renewals Fund. An additional contribution of £800,000 from Buckinghamshire Fire and Rescue Service would be included as part of the start up arrangements. Councillor Iain McCracken queried whether the £50,000 contribution would be a one off payment. Officers confirmed that this was an annual payment. It was noted that the fund would be managed by Oxford County Council as they had a large treasury operation and appeared to receive good returns on their investments.

Ian Pittock noted that Northallerton Fire and Rescue Service would be providing a remote 'buddying' service. The CFO explained that as part of the business continuity procedures the service would be able to decant to Kidlington but that Northallerton would provide cover in the interim period. Officers confirmed that at this point in time the RBFRS was not a 'buddy' to any other fire authorities.

Councillor Paul Bryant noted that the TVFCS Revenue Budget included a sum of £150,000 for contingency. Officers stated that this was a reasonable figure given that this was the first year of the scheme and that it could be adjusted over time.

Members queried the process for agreeing the budget in future years. Officers explained that the TVFCS budget setting process would link into that of the RBFRS as well as the other two fire authorities. The TVFCS PSG would draw up a budget in October which would then be submitted to the three Fire Authorities for approval at the February Fire Authority budget meeting. It was envisaged that any disagreements would be dealt with in advance of the Fire Authority's budget setting meeting.

Resolved that:

- The 2015/16 TVFCS Budget as set out in Appendix A be approved;
- The Royal Berkshire Fire Authority's contribution of £811,524 towards the revenue costs of TVFCS be approved;
- The on-going savings of £623,000 per annum to this Authority through the establishment of TVFCS be noted;
- The Fire Authority's contribution of £50,000 to the TVFCS Capital Renewals Fund be approved.

106. RETROSPECTIVE WAIVER OF STANDING ORDERS SUPPORT AND MAINTENANCE OF CRITICAL RBFRS SYSTEMS

Jan Chadaj, the Interim Head of IT (IHIT), informed Members of the need to place a number of orders to develop and maintain essential RBFRS systems. The IHIT stated that Officers had hoped to avoid the need to request a waiver this year.

A comprehensive review and challenge of the existing contracts had commenced in the financial year 2014/15 but unfortunately the review had not been completed due to competing priorities and significant major projects such as Tinkers Lane, HQ

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relocation, Data centre relocation and Thames Valley Control Project. Although demand, price and need had been challenged in the current year, it had not been possible to go to the market for all contracts. It was recognised that there was a need to review all contracts that were either complete or due to expire and to put appropriate governance arrangements in place to ensure that RBFRS was achieving value for money in all its contracts. All new contracts had been let in accordance with procurement regulation and standing orders.

Appendix A provided a programme of planned contract reviews to be undertaken over the next two years. The reviews would include a full user challenge to justify need and where appropriate would provide full tender documents to go to market. These reviews would require additional specialist resource within Procurement to enable delivery and that resource was currently being bid for under Business Transformation funding.

The IHIT confirmed that a piece of work had commenced to clearly identify and delegate responsibility to relevant line of business owners and the attached contract programme of works included a list of proposed business owners.

The Director of Resources, in his capacity as Treasurer, had considered the matter and stated that it would be appropriate to waive Contract Standing Orders on the grounds contained in CSO 24 (b), (c), (d) and (f).

Councillor Jeff Brooks understood that the installation of a number of systems and upgrades had amounted to a number of savings and he asked the IHIT to quantify those savings. The IHIT confirmed that a review of a number of contracts had achieved savings of £63.5k. Councillor Paul Gittings asked what level of savings could be expected in the forthcoming year. The IHIT confirmed that the level of savings would increase in 2015/16 and it was hoped that a further £100k of savings could be achieved.

Councillor Paul Bryant asked if there was any way that retrospective waivers could be prevented in the future, for instance by changing Standing Orders. The Chairman recognised that the 2014/15 financial year had been particularly challenging and he could see no need to change the Standing Orders at this stage. The DCFO confirmed that the internal auditors (Baker Tilly) had been engaged to look at this area and he was confident that the authority would not be in the same position the following year.

Councillor Ian Pittock referred to paragraph 3.6 of the report which stated that there was no common convention for naming projects and he asked how that would be addressed. The IHIT responded that the best way of naming contracts was in relation to the type of contract and this would be undertaken going forward. Councillor Pittock also noted that Appendix A included a considerable amount of software and he would have liked to have seen a topology in order to clarify the relationship. The IHIT confirmed that there was a document which was fairly complex one but he would let Councillor Pittock have a copy.

Councillor Angus Ross supported the recommendation and advised that SAMC would be undertaking a review of the IT Strategy.

Resolved that:

In accordance with grounds (b), (c), (d) and (f) of CSO 24 the Fire Authority agreed

IHIT

to retrospectively waive Contract Standing Orders 20 and 21 in order to place orders for the support and maintenance of essential Fire Authority IT systems as set out in Appendix A labelled STA and repeated in paragraphs 3.7 to 3.16 of the report.

107. REVIEW OF THE STRUCTURE OF THE FIRE AUTHORITY, WEB BROADCASTING AND USE OF ELECTRONIC FACILITIES IN THE PRODUCTION OF AGENDA PAPERS

Trevor Ferguson, the Deputy Chief Fire Officer (DCFO), presented a range of options for consideration in relation to the size of the Fire Authority, Committee Structure, Web Broadcasting and the potential use of electronic facilities for the Fire Authority papers. He noted that the report had been considered by the Management Committee at their meeting on the 13 April 2015 and the recommendations in this report had been devised by that Committee.

Fire Authority Size

The DCFO explained that the options set out in the report included retaining the current level of Membership at 25 or reducing the membership to 22 or 16 seats. He noted that if Members were minded to retain the current level of Membership, Reading BC would lose a seat and West Berkshire Council would gain a seat.

Committee Structure

The DCFO outlined the two recommendations set out in the paper. The first was to retain the status quo and the second was to set up a Task and Finish Group to look at the governance structure of the authority.

Electronic Facilities

Members were asked to note that the Management Committee had recommended that the use of paper based systems for circulating agendas should be retained at the present time.

Web Broadcasting

The Committee recommended that Officers should make arrangements for future Fire Authority meetings to be broadcast via the internet. Many Local Authorities were broadcasting their meetings via the internet, including some within Berkshire. By making full Fire Authority meetings available online the Fire Authority would increase their reach into the communities they served. The necessary technology would be readily available and low cost. If the Fire Authority were minded to broadcast future Fire Authority meetings, Officers would research a suitable technology based solution to support the change.

Councillor Paul Gittings commented that a useful discussion had taken place at the Management Committee on these issues and he welcomed the introduction of web broadcasting and the creation of the cross party Task and Finish Group. He hoped that the Public Relations Team would promote the webcasting once it was in operation. However, he could not support the reduction in the number of Reading Members on the Fire Authority. He argued that the status quo should be retained. Table 1 highlighted the fluctuations in the number of electors on the voter's role in Reading. This was a quirk resulting from the implementation of Individual Electoral Registration. Reading had a large student population and large number of flats that often housed a transient population which had affected their figures (a reduction from

118,000 in February 2014 to 105,000 in February 2015).

Councillor Gittings therefore proposed the following amendment to recommendation 2.1 "Note the report and that the composition of the Fire Authority, for the Municipal Year 2015/16 will remain as per the 2014/15 allocation."

The amendment was seconded by Councillor Ted Plenty. Councillor Plenty stated that the Electoral Role was not accurate and was therefore not a satisfactory way to calculate the membership. There were examples of fire authorities that used population data to establish their membership. This information was garnered from the 2011 Census and the annual update information that was provided. The 2011 census data showed that in 2011 Reading had the highest population of the six Berkshire Unitary Authorities. This was also true for the 2014 data. It was therefore illogical to remove a Reading Council representative from the Fire Authority. He therefore supported retaining the status quo until the findings of the Task and Finish Group emerged.

Councillor Emma Webster noted that West Berkshire Council had had its membership reduced on a previous occasion based on the current methodology. She reminded Members that they were tasked with representing the residents of Berkshire as a whole and not just the residents of their own authority areas. She could therefore not support the amendment.

Councillor David Burbage noted that Windsor and Maidenhead had also recently lost a representative based on the current methodology. He accepted that Individual Electoral Registration had impacted on the Electoral Role but stated that the agreed methodology should be applied until such time as the Task and Finish Group had completed its review of the methodology.

Councillor Frank Abe stated that the methodology needed to be based on fact and not on qualitative speculation. He noted that paragraph 3.7 of the report made reference to the ability to undertake a periodic assessment if circumstances changed.

Councillor Gittings reiterated that this was a statistical quirk and that using population data would be a fairer methodology and he urged Members to support the amendment.

The Amendment was put to the vote and declared **LOST**.

Discussion returned to the substantive motion.

Councillor Pauline Helliard-Symons noted that the issues raised by Councillors Gittings and Plenty had been discussed at length at the Management Committee meeting. As a consequence of that discussion the Committee had asked for the inclusion of recommendation 2.2.3 which required a task and finish group to be set up to look at, amongst other things, the methodology for allocating seats on the Fire Authority. She stated that she hoped that all Members would have the opportunity to feed their comments into the task group in order to devise an equitable solution.

The Chairman stated that the Management Committee had agreed to the creation of the task and finish group to look at the size of the Fire Authority, allocation of seats, and future committee structures including the role of champions. On that basis he proposed that the allocation of seats as set out in recommendation 2.1 should be adopted for 2015/16.

The Motion was put to the meeting and duly **RESOLVED**.

Resolved that:

- The report be noted and that the composition of the Fire Authority, for the municipal year 2015/16 would change with Reading losing a seat and West Berkshire gaining a seat;
- The recommendations of the Management Committee be agreed as follows:

Fire Authority Size and Committee Structures:

- The Fire Authority size should remain at 25 and that the seats on the Authority should be allocated as per table 1 of the report for the municipal year 2015/16;
- The present Committee Structure should be maintained for the Municipal Year 2015/2016;
- That a cross party task and finish group would be established to make recommendations on; the future size of the Fire Authority, how seats were allocated on the Authority, and the future Committee Structures of the Authority including the role and number of Member Champions. The group should make recommendations for April 2016;

Electronic Facilities:

- The use of electronic facilities should not be adopted at this point in time and that the Monitoring Officer should keep this under review;

Web Broadcasting:

- Officers should make arrangements for future full Fire Authority meetings to be broadcast via the internet

108. SCHEME MANAGERS DISCRETIONS – THE FIREFIGHTERS’ PENSION SCHEME

Anne-Marie Scott, Director of People and Organisational Development (DP&OD), advised the Fire Authority of the scheme manager discretions (including those attached to an obligation) as contained in The Firefighters’ Pension Scheme (England) Regulations 2014 and sought agreement to the policy position on three discretions that required immediate consideration following the introduction of the new pension scheme effective from April 2015.

Statutory Instrument (SI 2014/2848) which had been laid before Parliament on 28th October 2014 introduced a new Fire Pension Scheme which was effective from 1st April 2015. On 5th March 2015 Fire and Rescue Services had been provided with a document which listed the scheme manager discretions (including those attached to an obligation) as contained in The Firefighters’ Pension Scheme (England) Regulations 2014 set out in Appendix 1 to the report. The scheme manager was defined as the Fire and Rescue Authority (FRA) and who was responsible for the administration of the scheme.

The DP&OD advised that there were 52 discretions listed in the document and that three discretions required immediate policy decision. The remaining discretions would be examined accordingly and recommendations would be made to the Fire

Authority in due course.

Delegation (Regulation 5)

Regulation 5(2) stated that the scheme manager had to ensure that delegated powers were appropriate and current. The current scheme of delegation to officers approved by the Authority stated that the Chief Fire Officer was fully empowered to exercise the powers of the Authority under the Firefighters' Pension Schemes. Specific reference to acting on behalf of the Fire Authority in relation to ill health retirements was also contained at ASD12 within the scheme of delegation. It was therefore recommended that the powers delegated to the Chief Fire Officer should remain but that the term 'firemen's pension scheme' included in the current version of the scheme of delegation to officers, should be considered to relate to the four firefighter pension schemes that would be in operation and that they would be referred to as the 1992, 2006, modified 2006 and 2015 schemes.

Pensionable Pay (Regulation 17)

Regulation 17(1)(d) stated that the scheme manager had discretion to determine if continual professional development payments should be treated as pensionable pay. The report set out the definitions of pensionable pay under the 1992, 2006 and 2015 schemes. For protected members of the 1992 and 2006 schemes continual professional development (CPD) payments would continue to be paid as separate additional pension benefit (APB) based on contributions. The 2015 scheme, however, provided discretion to the scheme manager for the amount paid to the member for CPD to be determined as pensionable.

Where the scheme manager determined that CPD payments should be treated as pensionable in the 2015 scheme it would be included in the calculation of pensionable pay. The 2015 scheme was a Career Average Revalued Earnings (CARE) scheme, effective from 1st April 2015. Benefits were built up using the accrual rate of 1/59.7th of the career average revalued earnings for each year of membership in the scheme. The 1992 and 2006 schemes were defined benefit final salary schemes. The authority was therefore invited to determine whether, in relation to the 2015 scheme, CPD payments should be treated as pensionable. Officers were recommending that CPD payments should be pensionable as it would ensure that a consistent and fair approach was established across all staff in all schemes regardless of the way individual pensions were calculated.

Contributions during absence from work due to illness, injury, trade dispute or authorised absence (Regulation 111)

Regulation 111 stated that where an active member was absent from scheme employment because of illness or injury and not entitled to receive pensionable pay, or because of trade dispute or authorised unpaid absence, they might pay member contributions. If they did so, the scheme employer might require that they should also pay employer contributions.

Currently employees who took industrial action, and were members of the 1992 and 2006 schemes, who opted to buy back the service repaid both their pension contributions and those of the employer for the hours not worked. If an employee embarked on a career break the scheme member also had to pay the Authority the employer's contributions that would have been paid by the RBFPS for the period of absence had it not been unpaid. For those individuals taking unpaid maternity leave only an amount equal to the employee contributions that would have been paid had

salary been received, would need to be made. In relation to absence as a result of sickness, employees on unpaid leave did not currently have to pay employer contributions.

Officers recommended that the current position in each respect should be extended to the 2015 scheme with only staff absent on industrial action or career breaks paying both employer and employee contributions in the event that they wished to count this service as pensionable.

The Chairman queried what financial impact the changes would have. The DP&OD stated that the financial impact would be no different than the current arrangement. Councillor Alan Ward stated that he had discussed the paper with the Director of Resources who had confirmed that there would be no additional financial implications. However, he felt that it would be useful to provide Members with indicative costs. The SA agreed to provide Members with indicative costs.

The DP&OP explained that CPD payments were made to employees when they reached a level of competence and would continue to be paid to them until they were promoted again. Under the current arrangements these payments were considered to be an additional pensionable benefit. Under the revised scheme a decision would have to be made as to whether or not they were pensionable.

Councillor Jeff Brooks requested that Officers produce indicative costs for the previous two to three years in order to give Members a sense of the scale of the costs. The DP&OP agreed that Officers could look back at the additional costs associated with CPD payments that could be used to base an estimate on. Councillor Brooks recommended deferring a decision until this information was available.

Resolved that:

- The decision would be deferred to the June 2015 Fire Authority meeting to allow Officers time to include information relating to the costs associated with the discretionary elements of the scheme.

109. CORPORATE PLAN FRAMEWORK 2015-19

Trevor Ferguson, the Deputy Chief Fire Officer (DCFO), provided the Fire Authority with an outline structure for the new Corporate Plan 2015-19.

To enable RBFRS to take forward the Fire Authority's new policy direction as agreed at the Fire Authority meeting in June 2014, a new corporate plan was required. The new corporate plan would be aligned to the same time line as the next Comprehensive Spending Review period 2015-19. The new corporate plan framework would effectively be a suite of strategies, policies and plans which would cover the breadth of the organisation and would become a framework to inform decision making for the four year period. The plan would be developed based on the best information and knowledge available at the time of preparation but would have an annual refresh to ensure that it remained fit for purpose.

The framework was made up of nine sections as set out in Appendix A to the report. It had been recommended to the Fire Authority by the Audit & Governance Committee at their meeting on 30th March 2015. One of the plans included in the framework was a refreshed Integrated Risk Management Plan (IRMP) which was

currently in development. Appendix B set out the five step process which was being undertaken to develop the IRMP.

The DCFO confirmed that this was a detailed piece of work and he hoped that Members were fully engaged with the framework. However, he was happy to talk through the process in further detail individually with Members if that was necessary.

Councillor Paul Bryant queried what the timescale was. The DCFO advised that it was a framework for the next four years and was aligned to the Comprehensive Spending Review. A draft of the refreshed IRMP and the Corporate Plan and Action Plan would be brought to Members in September with final sign off in April 2016.

Councillor Ian Pittock noted that the IRMP included items such as fleet, people and assets but he felt that what was missing was services, processes and procedures and he asked how they would be picked up. The DCFO responded that they would be picked up in the second step.

Councillor David Burbage asked what would happen if the new framework was not put in place. The DCFO stated that how the Fire Authority undertook its business, the performance management and how success was measured was key and this framework would put those measures in place.

Councillor Tom McCann asked how the diagram would be translated so that it could be understood by members of the public. The check and balance was through the Elected Members and through engagement with the public. The DCFO confirmed that the process would be transparent.

Resolved that:

- The Corporate Plan Framework 2015-19 as summarised in Appendix A be agreed;
- The Integrated Risk Management Planning Process as set out in Appendix B be noted.

110. ANNUAL REPORTS FROM THE COMMITTEE CHAIRMEN, CHAMPIONS AND REPRESENTATIVES

Annual reports from Committee Chairmen, Champions and Representatives had been received and presented as follows:

- (a) Councillor Iain McCracken – Audit and Governance Committee
- (b) Councillor Angus Ross – Strategic Asset Management Committee
- (c) Councillor Emma Webster – Community Safety and Prevention Champion
- (d) Councillor Phillip Bicknell – Income Generation Member Champion
- (e) Councillor Frank Abe – Member Development Champion
- (f) Councillor Alan Ward – Safety, Health, Fitness and Wellbeing Champion
- (g) Councillor David Burbage – Shared Services Member Champion
- (h) Councillor Pauline Helliard-Symons – Organisational Development Champion
- (i) Councillor Iain McCracken – Local Government Association Fire Commission - Authority Representative

Resolved that:

That the annual reports be noted.

111. MINUTES OF THE STANDING COMMITTEES

Resolved that:

That the minutes of the Standing Committees be received.

112. TRAINING COMPANY UPDATE

Councillor Colin Dudley, the Chairman of the Fire Authority provided a verbal update on the Training Company. The Chairman reported that at the end of February 2015 the Trading Company was showing a net profit of £11,000 after the cross charging elements, totalling around £60,000, had been deducted. The SA explained that a profit of around £8,000 or £9,000 was being predicted for the year end.

Resolved that:

- The verbal report be noted.

113. BUDGET MONITORING

Conor Bryne, Senior Accountant (SA), informed Members of revenue and capital outturns against budgets up to the end of February 2015.

The revenue outturn was £186k below the profiled budget as at the end of February 2015. The main issues in relation to the revenue budget were as follows:

- Despite the additional costs of industrial action, the employee budgets remained below the profiled budget. Expenditure on retained firefighters remained below budget despite the work of the Retained Support Unit and wholetime firefighter numbers were also below budgeted establishment.
- £40k had been carried forward from the previous year for training which remained unspent due to ongoing action short of strike (ASOS). However, ASOS had now been called off and therefore training would recommence.
- Expenditure on the 'Other Employee Costs' line was above the profiled budget as a result of recruitment costs of senior employees and recruitment relating to industrial action.
- The Repairs and Maintenance budget was underspend as the Estates Team had had to focus on the delivery of strategic building projects.
- Expenditure on hydrant repairs was below budget as Thames Water had failed to deliver some repairs in line with its contractual obligations and had therefore had to provide its services free of charge.
- Strategic Miscellaneous costs were over budget due to the publicity costs of industrial action.
- Transport running costs were below budget due to the fall in fuel prices.

Capital expenditure to the end of February 2015 was £517k and the detail was set

out in Appendix D.

Resolved that:

- The report be noted.

114. FORWARD PLAN

Resolved that:

- The Royal Berkshire Fire Authority's Forward Plan be noted.

115. DATE OF THE NEXT MEETING

Wednesday 24th June 2015 at 6.30pm in the Lynda Kenyon Room, Brigade Headquarters, Pincents Kiln, Calcot, Reading, Berkshire, RG31 7SD

116. EXCLUSION OF THE PRESS AND PUBLIC

That under Section 100(A)(4) of the Local Government Act 1972 (as amended), the public be excluded from the meeting for the following Agenda Items on the grounds that they involve the likely disclosure of exempt information, as defined in Paragraphs 1, 2, 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.

117. PART II MINUTES OF THE MEETING HELD ON 23 FEBRUARY 2015

The Part II Minutes of the meeting held on 23rd February 2015 be approved as a true and correct record and signed by the Chairman

118. MANAGEMENT RESTRUCTURING

The Committee considered an exempt report.

Resolved that:

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

(The meeting commenced at 6.30pm and concluded at 8.46pm)