

MINUTES OF THE MEETING OF THE ROYAL BERKSHIRE FIRE AUTHORITY



Held on Monday 22 September 2014 at 6.30pm

Brigade Headquarters, Newsham Court, Pincents Kiln, Calcot,
Reading, Berkshire Rg31 7DS

- Members:**
- * Councillor Frank Abe
 - * Councillor Debs Absolom
 - * Councillor Alistair Auty
 - * Councillor Joginder Bal
 - * Councillor Christine Bateson
 - * Councillor Phillip Bicknell
 - * Councillor Jeff Brooks (from 7.25pm)
 - * Councillor Paul Bryant
 - * Councillor David Burbage
 - * Councillor Colin Dudley
 - * Councillor Adrian Edwards
 - * Councillor Paul Gittings
 - * Councillor Pauline Helliar-Symons
 - * Councillor John Lenton
 - * Councillor Chris Maskell
 - * Councillor Tom McCann
 - * Councillor Iain McCracken
 - * Councillor Eileen McElligott
 - * Councillor Edward Plenty
 - * Councillor Ian Pittock
 - * Councillor Angus Ross
 - * Councillor Ishrat Shah
 - * Councillor Alan Ward
 - * Councillor Emma Webster
 - * Councillor Richard Willis

- In Attendance:**
- Gene Ashe (Head of Learning and Development)
 - Conor Byrne (Senior Accountant)
 - Moira Fraser (Democratic Services Manager, DSM)
 - Andy Fry (Chief Fire Officer, CFO)
 - Andy Mancey (Acting Assistant Chief Fire Officer, A/ACFO)
 - Jacky Manning (Senior HR Advisor (Organisational Support), SHRA)
 - Paul Maynard (Acting Area Manager – Response)
 - Tracey Mitchell (Head of Health & Safety, HHS)
 - Andy Parsons (Interim Head of Estates, IHE)
 - Dave Phillips (Area Manager – Prevention and Protection)
 - Linda Pye (Principal Policy Officer, PPO)
 - Caroline Redzikowska (Director Corporate Services, DCS)
 - Fayth Rowe (Committee Officer, CO)
 - Paul Southern (Temporary Deputy Chief Fire Officer, T/DCFO)
 - Nicole Targett (Head of Corporate Communications)
 - Andrew Vallance (Director of Resources, DR)

- Observers:**
- Officers, Royal Berkshire Fire and Rescue Service
 - Members of Representative Bodies
 - Members of the Public

29. APOLOGIES OF ABSENCE

Apologies for inability to attend the meeting were received from Councillors Debs Absolom, Christine Bateson, Phillip Bicknell, David Burbage, Eileen McElligott, Ishrat Shah, Emma Webster and Richard Willis.

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30. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

In accordance with the provisions of the Fire Authority's Local Code of Conduct, Councillors Angus Ross and Paul Bryant each declared a non-pecuniary interest due to the fact that they were members of the Programme Sponsoring Group for the Joint Thames Valley Control Project.

Councillors Adrian Edwards, Paul Bryant and Jeff Brooks all declared a non-pecuniary interest in agenda item 27 as discussions on this item related to West Berkshire Council.

Caroline Redzikowska, Director, Corporate Services, declared a personal interest in agenda item 27 and took no part in the discussion of the item.

Moira Fraser and Linda Pye declared a non-pecuniary interest in agenda item 27 as they were currently providing Committee Service support for the Fire Authority on an informal basis.

Caroline Redzikowska, Director, Corporate Services, confirmed that she had granted a dispensation to all Members in relation to Council Tax precept when attending Budget Setting meetings under delegated authority.

31. MINUTES OF THE MEETINGS HELD ON 25 JUNE 2014

That the Minutes of the meeting held on 25th June 2014 be approved as a true and correct record and signed by the Chairman.

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

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

33. RECEIPT OF ANNOUNCEMENTS

The Chairman made the following announcements:

- New HQ – the Chairman acknowledged that the Fire Authority had now achieved practical completion of the new HQ building which was good news. This had been a long and difficult process but he felt that it would be worthwhile as the new HQ would lead the Fire Authority forward for the next 25-30 years. He specifically thanked the Property Team for all their hard work and in particular Paul Southern, the Temporary Deputy Chief Fire Officer, who had put in a tremendous effort to ensure that the work was eventually completed to a high standard. The Chairman also thanked the Strategic Asset Management Committee for their work in supporting the project and seeing it through to fruition.
- It was noted that Trevor Ferguson from Northern Ireland had been appointed as the new Deputy Chief Fire Officer and would be taking up his post on 6th October 2014. The Chairman wished him well in his new role and hoped that he would enjoy his time at the Royal Berkshire Fire Authority. He thanked Paul Southern and Andy Mancey for covering this role on a temporary basis.
- Community Safety Volunteers - A barbeque was held for Community Safety Volunteers on Monday 8th September 2014, at (Station 3), Dee Road as a 'thank you' in recognition of the efforts of keeping the public safe during the

past year especially during the flooding incident. The event was attended by Councillor Emma Webster, the Chief Fire Officer, Volunteers and the Community Safety Team. CFO Fry presented five-year service awards to David Jarvis, of Maidenhead, Steve Crawford, of Reading, and Tom Mountford, of Highworth (Wiltshire), and he also welcomed many new faces to the organisation's volunteering scheme. The RBFRS and RBFA appreciated the hours of volunteer time carried out on its behalf free of charge. Councillor Dudley also thanked Volunteer Co-ordinator, Matt Taylor for all his work in co-ordinating the scheme.

- Fob keys – It was reported that Members had not been given access to Newsham Court due to snagging works which were still in progress. Full access would be given to all Members when the site was fully occupied by staff which would take place over the period 17th-20th October 2014.
- Wi-Fi access - Members should have received an e-mail from RBFRS providing them with their own unique password to access the RBFRS Guest Wi-Fi. Members were asked to contact Fayth Rowe, if they had not received their password to date.
- Councillor Paul Bryant made reference to the attendance of the Fire Authority at the Royal Berkshire Show. A fire engine had been on site and there were a number of exhibits. He thanked all those staff who had attended over the weekend as they had given their time to get the fire safety message out to the public.
- Councillor Angus Ross informed the meeting that he had attended the Annual National Fire Remembrance Service on 14th September 2014. Bryan Morgan had represented the Chief Fire Officer and Councillor Ross had represented the Chairman of the Fire Authority. Wreaths had been laid at the Fire Service memorial.
- The Chairman advised Members that the meeting room being used that evening had been named the Lynda Kenyon Room. Lynda had been the Committee Manager but had sadly died a couple of years ago. This was a way of remembering her and he advised that a plaque would also be placed on the wall in her honour.

34. ISSUES ARISING FROM THE AUDIT AND GOVERNANCE COMMITTEE

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

35. QUESTIONS FROM MEMBERS UNDER STANDING ORDER 30

There were no questions from Members under Standing Order 30.

36. NOTICES OF MOTION UNDER STANDING ORDER 44

There were no Notices of Motion under Standing Order 44.

37. RECOMMENDATIONS OF COMMITTEES

It be noted that agenda items 11, 13 and 14 had been recommended from the Audit and Governance Committee on 9th September 2014, and item 16 had been recommended from the IRMP Working Party on 15th September 2014.

38. PRIMARY AUTHORITY SCHEME

Dave Phillips, Area Manager (Prevention and Protection) (AMPP), provided Members with an overview of the Primary Authority Scheme (PAS) and the impact on how Royal Berkshire Fire Authority (RBFA) regulated and resourced the Regulatory Reform (Fire Safety) Order 2005 in a wide variety of business sectors and premises. The report sought approval for RBFA to participate in the Scheme as a Primary Authority Partner and to secure cost recovery in line with guidance provided by HM Treasury.

The PAS was a statutory scheme available to businesses with a presence in more than one local authority area and worked by allowing businesses with premises in different areas around the country to enter into a primary authority scheme with one authority. The 'Primary Authority' would provide regulatory advice for all of their premises regardless of which authority the premises were located in. The rationale behind the scheme was to promote greater confidence in the consistency of decisions given by regulators to businesses and to streamline management of compliance by regulators across a business organisation, which might have many sites and, therefore, many different regulators applying the same regulations. The Government had recently demonstrated its commitment to PAS by extending the scheme to new areas of regulation, and thus enabling smaller businesses to participate.

The scheme would provide three tools to the partnered business:

- Primary advice – advice provided by the primary authority regulator to the business which was accepted on a national basis by other fire services;
- Inspection plans – a plan agreed by the regulator and the business, which might contain frequency of inspections and what should be inspected;
- Enforcement referral – provided the ability for a regulator to block enforcement action being proposed by another Fire Authority, including prosecution.

Every fire authority in the country was legally bound to comply with the terms and condition of the PAS. This would either be as a primary authority partner (active participation), or as an enforcing authority (non-active participation) should it choose not to commit resources to supporting the development of a partnership arrangement.

In anticipation of PAS being extended to include fire safety regulation, Officers had been exploring the practicalities of establishing active participation in such a partnership. A number of businesses were showing interest in partnering RBFA in a partnership scheme and Officers at Reading Borough Council were keen to support that arrangement. In addition to initial discussions with RBC a number of other fire and rescue authorities had been visited to ascertain their approaches.

The main costs to establishing a Primary Authority Partnership (PAP) would be the staff costs required to develop the partnership, provide guidance and advice, and review enforcement action proposed by other Fire and Rescue Authorities. Workload would vary dependent on the scope of the partnership and scale of its activities. Discussions with other fire and rescue authorities suggested that active participation in the partnership scheme could be managed initially by one fire safety inspecting officer on a part-time basis with support from line managers.

Should the Fire Authority decide to pursue cost recovery for the services that it

provided as a Primary Authority, it should publish clear and transparent information explaining these charges and the basis on which they had been calculated. Officers had calculated the cost recovery requirements for RBFA at £60 per hour. The number of hours could be agreed and there was a recommended minimum.

Active participation in the PAS would ensure that RBFA was meeting the expectations of Government in supporting local economic sustainability and also sought to create business investment in growth. Businesses having premises in various counties had concerns over differing advice given by Fire Authorities dependent on their location. The PAS was designed to address this by having one regulator dealing with the businesses portfolio across county borders. Fire Safety Officers from RBFA carried out over 2,620 fire safety inspections in the last financial year and were targeted through the risk inspection programme based on the level of risk. The introduction of PAS was unlikely to reduce the need in RBFA for these inspections but over time it was expected that the scheme would improve RBFA's ability to target a higher percentage of premises which were less likely to comply with the Regulatory Reform Order.

Risks identified included:

- Demands on staff time and resources.
- Conflict of interest – RBFA was the enforcing authority in Berkshire for ensuring compliance with the Fire Safety Order and for providing general fire safety advice to businesses. A conflict of interest might arise if RBFA staff provided Primary Authority Advice (fire safety advice) to a partner business through the PAS which was challenged by the enforcing authority outside the Berkshire area. The BRDO determination process was in place for resolving these areas of difference.
- Reputational risk – this might arise if a business decision made as a result of advice received by RBFA resulted in loss of business to the partner. The level of competency required to undertake the role of a partnerships officer would be assessed against the principals of the CFOA fire safety regulator competency framework which would ensure the quality of advice and limit the reputational risk.

Councillor Paul Bryant queried how many hours was it anticipated would be required. The AMPP advised that most local authorities had gone into this process gradually and he had seen examples ranging from 10 to 100 hours. It was really dependent on what the business required.

Councillor Pauline Helliar-Symons stated that it seemed to be a good scheme and there was a lot of benefit in working with local partners. She queried whether any work had been undertaken to bring in other local authorities apart from Reading. The AMPP confirmed that Reading had been proactive but the Fire Authority had been cautious to commit until a decision had been made. However, he envisaged that the Fire Authority would also be looking to work with other authorities.

Councillor Iain McCracken noted that it was proposed to charge £60 per hour and he queried what the review frequency was in relation to that amount. The AMPP said that this would be reviewed on an annual basis and there might be a need to initially review it after six months. However, it was essential to remain competitive. Councillor McCracken asked where the review would take place. The DCS confirmed that it would be reviewed by Officers and would come through the Fire Authority as part of the annual charging schedule.

Councillor Colin Dudley asked if this would conflict with the need for a Fire Risk Assessment. It was confirmed that this scheme would ensure that a Fire Risk Assessment took place and the aim was to reduce risk collectively and it would be possible to concentrate on properties where there was a particular need.

Councillor Tom McCann asked who would undertake this role? The AMPP confirmed that there would be a need to ensure that qualified staff were used and it was proposed that Fire Inspection Officers would take on the role as they were qualified. This might take them away from concentrating on other areas and if that was the case then there was a possibility that the Fire Authority could back fill if necessary.

Resolved:

- That the report be noted;
- That the extension of the PAS to the Regulatory Reform (Fire Safety) Order 2005 and the requirement to abide by the terms and conditions of the Scheme when undertaking its regulatory activities be noted;
- That the Fire Authority undertake active participation in the PAS be approved; and
- That it be approved that costs associated with active participation in the PAS be recovered at the rate of £60 per hour.

39. STATEMENT OF ACCOUNTS 2013/14

Andrew Vallance, Director of Resources & Authority Treasurer (DR), sought approval of the Statement of Accounts for the year ended 31st March 2014.

The 2013/14 Statement of Accounts was attached as Appendix A. Ernst & Young had undertaken an audit of the Accounts during August 2014 and based on this work the Audit Director would issue an unqualified opinion on the 2013/14 financial statements. Ernst & Young's Audit Results Report was presented to the Audit & Governance Committee at its meeting on 9th September 2014 and based on the findings within this report the Committee recommended that the Fire Authority approve the 2013/14 Statement of Accounts.

The Fire Authority now had a healthy level of reserves that should help protect it against financial risks in the years ahead.

The DR referred to page 8 of the report and the summary of revenue budgets and expenditure for 2013/14. He noted that, as was historically the case, there was an underspend of £727k on uniformed employee costs. This was mainly due to issues around recruiting retained fire fighters (see note 1). The overspend of £96k on non-uniformed staff (see note 2) was largely due to that year's flooding events. The underspend on insurance (note 5) related to the reversing of a provision that had been made in 2012/13 relating to the shared costs of winding up the Fire and Rescue Authorities; Mutual Limited (FRAMIL). As a result of agreements reached by members of FRAMIL in 2013/14 the provision was no longer needed. The overspend of £92k on equipment (note 6) was largely due to equipment bought to respond to the flooding incident and industrial action in the previous financial year. The overspend of £1,713m on flooding support from other Fire and Rescue Services (note 7) was offset by other income (Bellwin funding – see note 12). The DR explained that all but the first £68k of costs associated with the flooding had

been met by Central Government through the Bellwin scheme.

The DR explained that the overspend on 'other' supplies costs was largely on advertising for the industrial action that had taken place. Officers noted that the overspend of £157k (note 9) on legal contracts was as a result of the large number of projects (Control Project, new HQ, Airwave, the new Wokingham Fire Station etc) that had been dealt with during the 2013/14 financial year. It was noted that a significant amount of the overspend was associated with an ongoing legal matter and it was hoped that if successful the authority would be able to recoup a significant part of the overspend on this budget.

The other contracts overspend of £54k was as a result of remedial works at Wokingham Fire Station. The surplus of £34k associated with pensions (note 13) was due to a lower number of ill health retirements. The DR explained that historically an appropriation of £138k was made to fund maintenance expenditure for Personal Protective Equipment (PPE). This was not done in 2013/14 as it would have added to the corporate underspend. In future years this would be funded from the base budget and as a consequence the PPE Reserve would no longer be required and would be transferred to the Development Fund. The authority was therefore reporting an overall underspend of £563k at year end.

Councillor Paul Bryant referred to the line in the table which set out the Appropriation to/(from) Reserves and he asked whether there was a level which needed to be kept to. The DR confirmed that the General Reserve was kept to 5% as a rule but that there were a number of other one-off reserve funds. This line showed the movement between revenue account and reserves and was simply money going in and coming out.

Resolved:

That the Statement of Accounts for the year ended 31 March 2014 be approved.

40. ANNUAL TREASURY REPORT 2013/14

Andrew Vallance, Director of Resources (DR), in accordance with the CIPFA Code of Practice on Treasury Management in the Public Services, submitted the Annual Treasury report, which set out the actual Treasury operations for the last financial year.

The main requirements of the Code were that the Authority formulated and approved:

- A Treasury Policy Statement which set out an agreed structure for the operation of the treasury function on an ongoing basis;
- An Annual Treasury Strategy Statement which set out the expected Treasury operation within the forthcoming financial year;
- An Annual Treasury Report which set out the actual Treasury operations for the previous financial year.

The Treasury Policy Statement and the Annual Strategy Statement for 2013/14 were approved by the Authority on 20th February 2013 and the Annual Treasury Report for 2013/14 was appended to the report.

Interest received in the year totalled £32,000 compared with the original budget estimate of £23,000, as interest rates were expected to remain at exceptionally low

levels throughout the year. No borrowing had been undertaken as capital expenditure had been financed by grant and revenue contributions. Councillor Paul Bryant referred to this statement and queried why the figure had gone up if interest levels were low. The DR confirmed that the Authority operated a low risk strategy and maintained an average balance of £8.2m of internally managed funds. The internally managed funds earned an average rate of return of 0.39%. This compared to a budget assumption of £7.5m investment balances earning an average rate of 0.31%.

Councillor Tom McCann noted that there was a healthy balance in reserves and he queried whether the Authority had considered paying back some of the debt. The DR responded that it was all PWB debt and the Authority would have to pay a penalty if it was paid back early. The Authority had Treasury consultants who looked at this on a regular basis but he confirmed that at present it was not an attractive option.

Resolved:

- That the Annual Treasury Report be noted; and
- That the 2013/14 actual prudential indicators be approved.

41. ANNUAL GOVERNANCE STATEMENT

Caroline Redzikowska, Director Corporate Services, presented a report which received the recommendation of the Audit and Governance Committee and to approve the Annual Governance Statement.

The Fire Authority was responsible for ensuring that its business was conducted in accordance with the law and proper standards, and that public money was safeguarded and properly accounted for, and used economically, efficiently and effectively. Good corporate governance required local authorities, including fire authorities to carry out their functions in a way that demonstrated accountability, transparency, effectiveness, integrity, impartiality and inclusivity. Corporate governance was also the structure through which strategic objectives were set and performance monitored. In discharging this overall responsibility the Fire Authority was responsible for putting in place proper arrangements for the governance of its affairs, facilitating the effective exercise of its functions, which included arrangements for the management of risks.

The Fire Authority had a duty to produce and publish an Annual Governance Statement (AGS) which had to be scrutinised by an Audit Committee prior to presentation with the annual Statement of Accounts. A final draft Statement had been presented to the Audit and Governance Committee at its meeting on 9th September 2014 for approval and recommendation to the Fire Authority. The Committee agreed the draft statements un-amended and recommended it to this meeting for approval. The AGS assured Members that controls were in good order.

Approval and ownership of the AGS would be reflected at corporate level by CMT and the Statement would be signed on behalf of the Fire Authority by the Chief Fire Officer and the Chairman of the Fire Authority.

Significant governance issues were set out on pages 40 and 41 of the report and actions required to achieve full compliance were largely covered off by existing improvement plans.

Councillor Frank Abe noted that the paragraph numbers on pages 37 and 38 of the agenda were incorrect. It was also noted that an annual report analysing complaints received and their resolution was normally presented to the Fire Authority at the same time as the Annual Governance Statement. However, due to the large number of items considered at the Audit and Governance Committee it would now be presented to the October meeting. The DCS confirmed that she would amend the report to reflect that fact.

Resolved:

- That the recommendation of the Audit and Governance Committee be accepted and the Annual Governance Statement be approved amended; and
- That it be noted that an updated Local Code of Corporate Governance for 2014/15 will be submitted to the next Fire Authority meeting for approval.

42. GOVERNANCE UPDATE

Caroline Redzikowska, Director Corporate Services, presented a report which set out the recommendation of the Audit and Governance Committee and to approve the draft Protocols annexed to the report.

In recent years there had been an increasing emphasis on making local government more open and transparent to the public at large. The latest amendment to current practice was in the form of the Openness of Local Government Bodies Regulations 2014 and the Guidance issued by the DCLG in August 2014 which required local authorities to permit the taking of photographs, use of film, audio recording or social media at their public meetings. In the case of the Fire Authority this would relate to meetings of the Fire Authority, Management Committee, Strategic Asset Management Committee and Audit and Governance Committee. The new rules would only apply to meetings or those parts of meetings that were held in public. The rules would not apply to Part II or confidential items or to Working Parties as these were internal, non-decision making meetings.

As a result the Fire Authority's Standing Orders required amendment and in order to assist and provide guidance a protocol (pages 46 to 47 of the report) had been drafted which had been considered and approved by the Audit and Governance Committee at its meeting on 9th September 2014 and was recommended for approval by the Fire Authority.

Also, in order to provide guidance to Members in dealing with the various aspects of Social Media, a protocol had been drafted to assist Members to ensure that they made effective use of social media whilst avoiding potential accusations that they might be breaching the Fire Authority's Code of Conduct. This protocol had also been considered by the Audit and Governance Committee at its meeting on 9th September 2014 and was recommended for approval by the Fire Authority.

Councillor Colin Dudley queried whether the Fire Authority had any control over how anyone published or edited a recording once it had been made. The DCS confirmed that once a recording had been made the usual rules would apply. Sometimes quotes could be taken out of context and although representations could be made to the press unless the individual had been misquoted it was often difficult to get it changed. Nicole Targett (Head of Corporate Communications) felt that the Authority should embrace the new protocol as it would encourage a more proactive relationship. The use of the recorded material would be subject to the

same legal framework i.e. data protection, misrepresentation etc. She felt that provided the process was managed in a positive way then potential problems could be avoided.

Councillor Adrian Edwards queried whether an individual could object to being filmed. The DCS confirmed that a Member or member of the public could indicate that they did not wish to be filmed and could either leave the meeting or speak to the person filming the meeting to make them aware that they did not wish to be filmed.

Councillor Tom McCann stated that there were lots of protocols in place and it was confusing as to whose rules applied and whose did not. The DCS advised that when a Member was acting on behalf of the Fire Authority then the FA rules would be paramount. Councillor Colin Dudley stated that he would be surprised if there was much difference between the protocol used by the local authority and that used by the Fire Authority. Councillor McCann confirmed that the protocol used by Wokingham was far more restrictive than the Fire Authority protocol. The DCS said that the adoption of the draft protocol was simply to provide guidance to Members on how to make effective use of social media and avoid potential accusations and/or breaches of the Fire Authority's Code of Conduct. However, if Members were in any doubt they should always seek advice.

RESOLVED:

- That the report be noted; and
- That the following draft Protocols be approved:
 - (a) Protocol Relating on the use of Film Audio Recording or Social Media at Meetings.
 - (b) Social Media Protocol for Members.

43. APPOINTMENT OF THAMES VALLEY FIRE CONTROL JOINT COMMITTEE

Caroline Redzikowska, Director Corporate Services, presented a report to agree the establishment of the Thames Valley Fire Control Joint Committee and to appoint two members of the Fire Authority to serve on the Committee from the first meeting of the Committee for the remainder of the current municipal year.

At its meeting in July 2013 the Fire Authority received and approved a report from the Deputy Chief Fire Officer regarding final proposals to establish a joint Thames Valley Fire Control Service (TVFCS) with Oxfordshire County Council Fire and Rescue Service and approval was sought to proceed with the implementation of the proposals. At a subsequent meeting of the Management Committee in November 2012 a further report was received seeking to extend the partnership to include Buckinghamshire and Milton Keynes Fire Authority in the Joint Control project. The Fire Authority had received update reports on the progress of the project.

Through the Programme Sponsoring Group (PSG) it had been agreed in principle that the TVFCS would be overseen and receives strategic oversight and direction by means of a Joint Committee established by the three Fire Authorities comprising of two elected Members from each Authority. Officers from each of the partners had worked together to provide Terms of Reference for the Joint Committee and Standing Orders under which the Joint Committee would operate

and these were appended to the report. The Fire Authority were being asked to agree both the Terms of Reference and the Standing Orders as drafted, and to delegate authority to the Monitoring Officer (Director Corporate Services) to make minor amendments as required to finalise these between the Partner Fire Authorities.

As set out in the report, the two seats allocated to the Fire Authority are not required to be allocated on a politically balanced basis and would not affect the composition of the Fire Authority's existing committees. It was therefore for the Fire Authority to determine which of its Members (from any Political Group) it wished to appoint to serve on the TVFCS Joint Committee. In appointing Members to the Joint Committee, the Scheme of Member Allowances stated that a Special Responsibility Allowance (SRA) should be payable in the sum of £1,800, subject to the overriding principle that not more than 12 SRAs are in payment at any one time. It had been agreed between the Partner Authorities that the Chairmanship of the Joint Committee would be rotated between the Authorities with the initial Chairmanship falling to one of the two Members to be appointed by this Fire Authority. The initial term of office would be until July 2016 (subject to reappointment at the Fire Authority's AGM in June 2015).

Councillor Tom McCann asked if it would not be sensible to allow Members to attend the Joint Committee meetings even if only as an observer. Councillor Colin Dudley confirmed that it was a public meeting and therefore anyone could attend the Part I element of the meeting. He confirmed that he was going to propose that the two Councillors who had been involved with the Programme Sponsorship Group (Councillors Paul Bryant and Angus Ross) should be nominated as the RBFMS Members as they had been involved and see the process through. It therefore made sense to allow them to continue until May 2015 when membership could be reviewed at the annual Fire Authority meeting. The other two authorities involved were taking the same approach.

Councillor Jeff Brooks noted that Members would be allowed to attend and observe but he asked if they would be able to make a comment. Councillor Dudley confirmed that he could not speak on behalf of the Chairman of the Joint Committee as that person had yet to be appointed. Councillor Brooks felt that it would be useful to have a protocol in place so that if a Member wanted to make a comment on a particular item then he could make the Chair aware prior to the start of the meeting. Councillor Angus Ross stated that a meeting of the Programme Sponsorship Group was due to take place shortly and he would raise the question as to how that might work.

Councillor Paul Bryant informed the meeting that the Programme Sponsorship Group had been harmonious in the way it worked and the aim had been to get the Control Room up and working and he hoped that this way of working would continue.

Councillor Angus Ross confirmed that the Chair of the Joint Committee would be one of the Members from RBFMS and a decision on that would be made in December 2014.

RESOLVED:

- That the establishment of a Thames Valley Fire Control Joint Committee with the Terms of Reference and subject to the Standing Orders set out in Appendix 1 be approved;

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- That two Members of the Fire Authority be appointed to serve on the Thames Valley Fire Control Joint Committee from the first meeting of the Committee for the remainder of the current municipal year.
- That the Monitoring Officer be authorised to make minor amendments to the Terms of Reference and Standing Orders in Appendix 1 as required to finalise them between the Partner Authorities.

44. IRMP WORKING PARTY: RECOMMENDATIONS TO FIRE AUTHORITY TO RESOLVE EMERGENCY COVER IN THE ASCOT AREA

Andy Mancey, Acting Assistant Chief Fire Officer (A/ACFO), presented a to follow report which set out the recommendations from the Integrated Risk Management Plan Working Party (IRMP WP) at their meeting on 15th September 2014 in order to resolve emergency cover in the Ascot area.

The IRMP WP agreed that the report and its recommendations should be recommended to the Fire Authority for approval. The IRMP report was attached to the Fire Authority report as an appendix.

After considering all the options Officers had concluded that the best interim measure for providing fire cover in the Ascot area involved the redeployment of existing resources to crew a satellite pump from Bracknell at Ascot. This was based on the successful Windsor/ Slough model.

The A/ACFO noted that the Multi Role Vehicle (MRV) was currently based at Dee Road and had a primary crew comprising 12 posts. The MRV could be moved to Ascot and switch crewed with a Bracknell satellite pump. Twenty four posts and one fire engine would then remain at Dee Road.

Bracknell had an existing establishment of 28 posts (24 were occupied) and this would therefore be increased to 40 posts if Members were minded to agree the recommendations set out in the report.

There was currently only one member of staff in the Ascot retained section. If Members accepted the proposal redeployment would be sought for the individual. If accepted this proposal would release £90k in annual savings. The A/ACFO explained that if Members supported this proposal up to 10 posts would be recruited to which would mean that the recruitment freeze would have to be lifted.

It was being proposed that if Members agreed that the posts could be recruited to recruitment would be from a mixture of existing RBFRS retained staff, especially individuals at risk of redundancy, wider afield via a national advert for existing competent fire fighters and trainee fire fighters.

The Chairman noted that Officers had stressed that this was an interim measure and as such he was concerned about the level of capital investment that was being proposed (£250k) to bring the Ascot Fire Station up to standard. The A/ACFO explained that this issue had arisen at the IRMP meeting too. He confirmed that although £250k had been set aside in the budget there were lower cost models that could be used and the works would be carried out for a substantially lower sum. Officers were proposing using temporary buildings; similar to the Tinkers Lane model, but that these proposals would of course be subject to planning approval. Members were reassured that any expenditure would be reported back to the Strategic Asset Management Committee. In addition any expenditure over £100k had to be reported to the Management Committee.

Councillor Iain McCracken queried what the likely timescales for implementation were. The A/ACFO explained that the first step would be to consult with the individuals affected by the proposals. This work was likely to be undertaken in the next couple of weeks. It was anticipated that the work would be completed by June 2015 at the latest (subject to the planning process) and by February 2015 at the earliest.

Councillor Jeff Brooks felt that this solution would provide a good outcome for the residents of Ascot. He was however of the opinion that further work was required on making the role of a retained fire fighter more attractive. He felt that it would assist Members greatly if Officers could provide them with information on how many applications there had been for these roles and how many of those applicants had been successful. Councillor Paul Bryant noted that there were historical issues associated with the recruitment of retained fire fighters and this needed to be addressed.

The Chairman also stated that he felt that this proposal was good news for residents of Ascot and Bracknell. This proposal would result in an additional whole time fire appliance and he therefore asked members to support the proposal.

Resolved:

- That the report be noted;
- It be approved that:
 - (a) a second wholetime pump, based at Bracknell fire station, be established which would be used to provide satellite cover at Ascot fire station;
 - (b) The Multi Role Vehicle (MRV) be moved from Dee Road fire station to Ascot fire station and the crew switched with the Bracknell appliance;
 - (c) 12 posts be redeployed from Dee Road to Bracknell fire station;
 - (d) Interim establishment be set at 24 posts for Dee Road fire station and 40 posts for Bracknell fire station;
 - (e) A recruitment exercise to be undertaken to support any shortfall in staffing required to achieve the changes, by using a combination of existing RBFRS retained staff, competent fire fighters from other fire services and trainee fire fighters as necessary;
 - (f) Internal consultation to be carried out for those directly involved and a public communication exercise to be carried out to make residents aware of the changes, and
 - (g) The Ascot retained section to be reconfigured to release savings of £90k per year.

45. LOCAL GOVERNMENT INJURY ALLOWANCES EMPLOYER DISCRETIONS – STATMENT OF POLICY

Caroline Redzikowska, Director Corporate Services, presented a report which outlined the requirements of the Local Government (Discretionary Payments) (Injury Allowances) Regulations 2011. The Fire Authority was required to publish and keep under review statements of policy in relation to its exercise of discretion under the Regulations. This report incorporated recommendations to the Fire Authority in respect of the Regulations which came into effect on 16th January

2012.

The Fire Authority had not previously published a Statement of Policy in respect of the above Regulations, but this action had now been prompted following the recent publication of the policy statement agreed by the Fire Authority in respect of the LGPS Regulations 2013. To date, there had been no cases falling within the scope of the 2011 Regulations that would have required the Fire Authority to make any decisions on injury allowances. A draft statement had been formulated using guidance from the LGPS, however, it should be noted that the injury allowance scheme was operated by employers rather than the pension fund and ran independently from the LGPS. The Regulations were clear that granting of an injury award was discretionary.

The report set out the key considerations for the Fire Authority in its exercise of discretionary powers in respect of the Regulations and also the current provisions of RBFA in relation to allowances and lump sums payable to employees covered under these Regulations.

A request had also been made to each of the six unitary authorities in Berkshire to advise the Fire Authority of the position they had taken in respect of these Regulations but to date only two full responses had been received.

Having regard to all the factors set out in the report and the responses received from other LGPS employing authorities, it was recommended that the Fire Authority's written Statements of Policy should be that no payments would be made under the 2011 Regulations, as it could not be satisfied that such a policy would be workable, affordable and reasonable having regard to the foreseeable costs. As such the draft statement in Appendix 1 had been prepared to that effect.

In response to a query Officers explained that only Regulation 3, 4, 6 and 7 were being considered as they were the only areas where the authority could exercise its discretion. If the authority adopted these Regulations they would supersede the current arrangements.

Councillor Ted Plenty queried what would happen to employees that died or suffered disablement. Officers explained that these situations were already covered by other schemes such as the LGPS or personal accident cover and there was therefore no need to adopt these discretionary powers.

Councillor Tom McCann noted that the authority was one of the first to adopt this scheme and he requested that it be reviewed in a year's time to ensure that best practice was being met. Councillor Pauline Helliar-Symons requested that the next time the report was presented to Members it articulated clearly that Regulations 1, 2 and 5 were not discretionary and the authority therefore had no option but to adopt them. In addition she also stated that it would be useful if the report included examples of costs that the authority was likely to incur.

Resolved:

That the Statements of Policy about Exercise of Discretionary Functions as set out in Appendix 1 be approved.

46. NAME OF NEW SERVICE HEADQUARTERS

Andy Fry, the Chief Fire Officer, advised the Fire Authority of the name that had been selected for the new Royal Berkshire Fire and Rescue Service Headquarters

and of the process which had been used to select it.

The Headteacher of Calcot School (the nearest to the new headquarters site) had agreed for pupils and teaching staff to work with RBFRS representatives on developing suggested names for the new Service Headquarters building. Members of the Service's Community Safety Team, supported by staff from nearby fire stations, had made several visits to the school with a variety of operational equipment, to work with teaching staff and pupils to put together a programme which would give the children a good insight into the Fire Service. The programme considered the Service's history, range of prevention, protection and response work it undertook and the personal qualities that firefighters possessed. Children were then asked to use the insight with which they had been provided to suggest names for the new headquarters and also to confirm the basis on which they were making the suggestion. A short-listing process was then undertaken and the following names taken forward:

Suggested Name	Rationale
Endeavour House	This name reflected the commitment that was required of firefighters to rise above adversity in the service of others. A dictionary definition: a purposeful or industrious undertaking (especially one that required effort or boldness).
Newsham Court	After Richard Newsham. The English inventor of a manual fire pump that significantly improved firefighting capability. Newsham patented his invention in 1725 and supplied the first working example to the Parish of Bray in Berkshire.
Prince George House	This name reflected the 'Royal' in Royal Berkshire FRS and also the link to the Duchess of Cambridge, on the basis that she was brought up in Berkshire as a member of the Middleton family.

Staff working at the existing Headquarters site had then been invited to vote on the shortlist with Newsham Court emerging as the favoured option. The CFO noted that a small display would be erected in the foyer explaining how and why the name had been chosen. In addition there would be an opportunity for some of the pupils from the school to attend the official opening event which would take place the following Spring. Officers would also be seeking assistance from the Lord Lieutenant's Office to try and secure a royal visit to open the building. Councillor Pauline Helliar-Symons felt that it was important that the person who had selected the name be invited to the opening ceremony.

Councillor Frank Abe supported the name changed but requested that the signage directing visitors to the HQ be improved.

RESOLVED:

- It be noted that the name selected for the new RBFRS Headquarters was Newsham Court.
- That the details of the process that was used to select the name be noted.

47. ANNUAL HEALTH AND SAFETY REVIEW

Paul Southern, Temporary Deputy Chief Fire Officer (T/DCFO), provided the Fire Authority with an overview of Royal Berkshire Fire and Rescue Service (RBFRS) accident statistics for the period 1st April 2013 to 31st March 2014 as set out in Appendix A and the overall health and safety performance against the set targets for 21013-14 (Appendix B).

RBFRS had a safety management system in place which was based upon the British Standard BS8800. The model used was one of best practice and one of the key elements was measuring performance. By using methods such as accident and near miss analysis, workplace inspections etc. RBFRS would be able to identify trends and underlying causes, which would be used when reviewing and improving safe systems of work.

Progress on the health and safety targets and performance was regularly reported to the various Committees and the Fire Authority. RBFRS set health and safety targets for a period of one year but some objectives might extend over a longer period or be repeated in a subsequent year to ensure continued improvement and to provide a baseline for reporting purposes. CMT had adopted the Institute of Directors (IOD) 'Leading health and safety at work' model as best practice and this included the safety checklist as a method of monitoring health and safety performance at board level.

The T/DCFO noted that previously Members would only have seen progress against targets as part of the Annual Report. Information was now shared with Councillor Alan Ward (the Member Champion) and was also presented to the Audit and Governance Committee, the Health and Safety Welfare Committee, the Strategic Performance Board and the Corporate Management Team as part of the performance framework.

It was noted that there had been an increase in the number of accidents (117), albeit that the proportion of accidents had remained largely the same. Due to the low numbers it was difficult to identify trends. Officers provided members with a summary of the statistics set out in the report.

The T/DCFO explained that benchmarking information had been difficult to come by and the authority that had been leading on this had experienced staffing issues and were no longer able to provide the lead. He was pleased to announce that RBFRS had now assumed the lead role and was in the process of collecting data from other services.

Councillor Paul Bryant stated that the 48% increase in the number of accidents was a concern. Officers noted that their employees had been encouraged to report incidents which could account for some of the increase. The majority of the incidents were however classed as minor. Councillor Bryant noted that there had also been an increase in the number of moderate incidents. Officers accepted that there had been a spike in the number of incidents during the previous year but were pleased to report that there had been a decrease again this year. Officers stated that benchmarking information would be a useful tool to assist with

establishing trends and therefore possibly reducing the number of incidents.

Councillor Adrian Edwards welcomed the increase in reporting of near misses which meant that awareness had been raised which should help to reduce the number of accidents.

Councillor Tom McCann queried whether benchmarking information could be obtained from local authorities or other blue light services. Councillor Angus Ross queried whether statistics from other fire services supporting the RBFRS in its area would be reported through their processes or this authority. Officers explained that they would be reported to both. Councillor Ross therefore queried whether the flooding had therefore impacted on the number of incidents reported. Officers confirmed that only two minor accidents had been reported during that period.

Councillor Iain McCracken thanked Officers for the report but queried if there was any scope to reclassify the incidents to ensure that the more serious issues could be focussed on. Officers explained that they did not want to discourage reporting but that the classification would be revisited.

In response to a query from Councillor John Lenton (about the incident referred to in paragraph 6.5 where a car in a road traffic collision had a magnesium component) Officers confirmed that the Health and Safety Executive were aware of the issues associated with the materials used in the construction of motor vehicles.

Councillor Pauline Helliard-Symons was concerned about the number of incidents which were exacerbated by insufficient fitness levels of some of the fire fighters.

The Chairman welcomed the level of interest in health and safety shown by Members. He thanked the Health and Safety Team for all the work they put into reporting and preventing accidents and he congratulated them on their endeavours.

Resolved:

That the report be noted.

48. ANNUAL EQUALITY REPORT

Caroline Redzikowska, Director Corporate Services (DCS) and Jacky Manning (Senior HR Advisor (Organisational Support), SHRA), provided the Fire Authority with the results of the equality and diversity monitoring undertaken in 2013/14, provided an update on progress against the Equality Action Plan; and asked for agreement that the current Equality and Diversity Strategy would be reviewed in line with Royal Berkshire Fire Authorities New Policy Direction. The current Strategy had been in place for three years and although it was due for renewal it was proposed that it be renewed in line with the new policy direction. The document was still fit for purpose. The Fire Authority was therefore asked to retain the current Strategy and ongoing Action Plan 2012-2015 to enable the full review to be undertaken.

An essential element of the Equality Strategy was the action plan through which it was implemented and this plan was updated annually and reviewed by the Fire Authority. The report gave an update on the actions identified in last year's report and all actions for future years would be reviewed when the new strategy was formulated. RBFRS continued to ensure that equality was embedded within departments as day to day activity rather than a specialist stand alone function, as

well as meeting the legal and moral obligations of the authority.

Officers explained that it had not been possible to extend the mentoring scheme to the RDS section due to the recent industrial action. It has also been agreed that the production of Easy Read documents would be delayed until all the revised corporate documents were in place. The changes to the website were also being delayed.

It had been difficult to obtain data to benchmark the authority's statistics against. It was hoped that this issue could be addressed in the future. Officers highlighted a number of key statistics including a threefold increase in the number of disciplinary cases, eight requests for flexible working and that despite a recruitment freeze the proportion of employees from BME groups had remained relatively stable. In fact the number of non uniformed employees from BME groups had exceeded the 14% target.

Ways of attracting applicants from hard to reach groups continued to be focussed on including selective attendance at recruitment events. It was noted that the authority lost two female fire fighters, one for personal reasons and the other had taken up a wholetime appointment at another authority.

One of the areas that remained a concern was the proportionally low number of women seeking promotion opportunities and it was felt that positive action was needed to redress this.

It was noted that with the removal of the Equality and Diversity Champion position, the Chief Fire Officer would now take over the responsibility for chairing the Community Engagement and Equality Group.

Councillor Iain McCracken queried when the authority would be undertaking its next employee survey. The CFO noted that this process would be aligned with the Investors in People process. A meeting with the assessors would be taking place shortly and a discussion would take place with them as to how baseline information could be gathered. Councillor Paul Gittings stated that a staff satisfaction survey was a good barometer of staff morale and he therefore requested that this work be undertaken as soon as possible.

Councillor McCracken noted that the target date for changes to the website had been passed. He requested that the target date be amended to reflect the revised position. Nicole Target confirmed that the review of the content was ongoing but that she anticipated that the new website would go live by the end of the financial year.

Councillor Tom McCann queried whether the authority had undertaken any work to ensure that there was parity in the remuneration of uniformed and non-uniformed employees undertaking similar roles or roles that required similar skill levels. Officers explained that some of this work had been done but that it would be a large piece of work to do it across the board.

(Councillor Paul Gittings left the meeting)

Councillor McCann queried whether the profile of the workforce reflected that of the community. The Chairman reminded Councillor McCann that the job of a fire fighter was subject to restrictions that would not be in place in other occupations. An example of this was that fire fighters could not have facial hair which might lead to the exclusion of certain religious groups. This did not however mean that the authority did not try and attract applicants from all parts of the community.

Councillor Jeff Brooks, while accepting the explanation, still felt that this was an issue that Members should revisit perhaps through the IRMP Working Party.

Councillor Frank Abe, as Member Development Champion, explained that he had held discussions with the CFO on ways of engaging BME groups in the fire service. He noted that making use of cadets had worked well for other organisations such as the air force, army and police force in London and that this was an area that he would therefore like to explore. This might help to embed the fire service in the community which might lead to an increase in applications from BME members of the community.

The Chairman accepted the explanation about delaying the Easy Read documents until the new suite of plans were adopted as this was an expensive process. Officers explained that they would be developing the documents in house using pictures and key phrases but that they did not employ a specialist in that area. This had exacerbated the delay.

The Chairman stated that this was an area of great importance to the authority and it was therefore important that it was an intrinsic part of its activities. He therefore welcomed the report.

Councillor Pauline Helliar-Symons commented that this was an excellent, detailed report. She would however like the issue of equality and diversity to be broadened out. She noted that communities were best placed to identify where vulnerable people lived, what knowledge gaps existed and what partner organisations the authority should be working with. She therefore felt that the strategy needed to be considered in that context i.e. it should not just focus on employees but should consider residents as well and how the authority communicated with them.

Councillor Tom McCann informed Members that he was contemplating proposing an amendment to the motion in which he would request that the HR Team prepare a report following an evaluation of equity of pay amongst uniformed and non-uniformed staff. He suggested that consideration be given to setting up a task group to see if there was a bias to either of the two groups. The CFO noted that Officers were in the process of putting together an Organisational Development Programme which would be tasked with setting a new policy direction. There would be ten components to this work, one of which would focus on reward in its widest sense. This would include levels of pay and market forces amongst other issues. Councillor McCann stated that on this basis he would not be putting forward an amendment.

Resolved:

- That the retention of the current Equality Strategy and ongoing Action Plan 2012-2015 as set out in Appendix 1 be approved;
- That the current position on the 2012-2015 Action Plan as set out in Appendix 2 be noted; and
- That the annual statistical data for 2013/14 as set out in Appendix 3 be noted.

49. 2014/15 BUDGET MONITORING

Andrew Vallance, Director of Resources (DR), informed Members of revenue and capital outturns against budgets up to the end of August 2014.

Expenditure on retained firefighters remained below budget despite the work of the

Retained Support Unit and the effects of industrial action. However, the costs of industrial action had resulted in an overall overspend against profiled employee budgets. 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. Strategic Miscellaneous costs were over budget due to the publicity costs of the industrial action. The revenue outturn was £198,000 above profiled budget at the end of August 2014.

Capital expenditure to the end of August 2014 was £374,000 and was set out in Appendix D.

Councillor Tom McCann queried what had happened to the 2013/14 underspend. Officers confirmed that it had been transferred to the Development Fund.

Councillor Jeff Brooks queried what steps were being taken to address the underspend. Officers stated that there was likely to be an underspend at year end due to retained fire fighter vacancies provided that no further industrial action was called.

Resolved:

That the report be noted.

50. MINUTES OF THE STANDING COMMITTEES

The Fire Authority received the Minutes of the following meetings of the Fire Authority's Committees:

- Strategic Asset Management Committee – 22nd July 2014

51. FORWARD PLAN

Councillor Iain McCracken noted that the next two agenda of the Audit and Governance Committee were heavily subscribed and he therefore urged members to ensure that they attended the meetings or found a substitute if they were not able to attend.

Resolved:

That the Forward Plan be noted.

52. DATE OF THE NEXT MEETING

Wednesday 14th January 2015 at 7.30pm at Brigade Headquarters, Pincents Kiln, Calcot, Reading, Berkshire, RG31 7SD.

53. BHQ UPDATE

Andrew Vallance, Director of Resources (DR), introduced the report. Following detailed consideration by the Committee the recommendation in the exempt report was agreed.

Resolved:

That the report be noted.

54. CORPORATE MANAGEMENT TEAM RESTRUCTURE

Andy Fry, the Chief Fire Officer (CFO), introduced the report. Following detailed consideration by the Committee the recommendation in the exempt report was agreed.

Resolved:

That the report be noted.

(The meeting commenced at 6.30pm and concluded at 21.50pm)