

# MINUTES OF THE MEETING OF THE ROYAL BERKSHIRE FIRE AUTHORITY



Held on Wednesday 23 April 2014 at 6.30pm

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

**Members:**

(\* present)

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|--------------------------------|-------------------------------------|
| * Councillor Alistair Auty     | * Councillor Pauline Helliar-Symons |
| * Councillor Christine Bateson | * Councillor Peter Jones            |
| Councillor Phillip Bicknell    | * Councillor John Lenton            |
| * Councillor Chris Bowring     | * Councillor Chris Maskell          |
| * Councillor Jeff Brooks       | * Councillor Tom McCann             |
| * Councillor Paul Bryant       | Councillor Iain McCracken           |
| * Councillor David Burbage     | * Councillor Edward Plenty          |
| Councillor Diana Coad          | Councillor Mohammed Rasib           |
| Councillor Andrew Cumpsty      | * Councillor Angus Ross             |
| * Councillor Haqeeq Dar        | * Councillor Rebecca Rye            |
| * Councillor Colin Dudley      | * Councillor Alan Ward              |
| Councillor Adrian Edwards      | * Councillor Emma Webster           |
| * Councillor Paul Gittings     |                                     |

**In Attendance:**

Gene Ashe (Head of Learning & Development, HLD)  
Jan Chadaj (Interim Head of IT, IHIT)  
Moira Fraser (Democratic Services Manager, DSM)  
Andy Fry (Chief Fire Officer, CFO)  
Andy Mancey (Acting Assistant Chief Fire Officer, A/ACFO)  
Andy Parsons (Interim Head of Estates, IHE)  
Linda Pye (Principal Policy Officer, PPO)  
Nikki Richards (Interim Head of Strategic Planning & Performance, IHSP)  
Fayth Rowe (Committee Officer, CO)  
Paul Southern (Assistant Chief Fire Officer)  
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

**Action**

**495. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE**

Apologies for inability to attend the meeting were received on behalf of Councillors Phillip Bicknell, Chris Bowring, Diana Coad, Andrew Cumpsty, Adrian Edwards, Iain McCracken and Mohammed Rasib.

Councillor Alan Ward announced that he would need to leave the meeting early in order to attend a Local Authority meeting.

#### **496. 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.

There were no Declarations of Interest received from Officers.

#### **497. MINUTES OF THE MEETING HELD ON 19 FEBRUARY 2014 AND THE EXTRAORDINARY MEETING HELD ON 12 MARCH 2014**

##### **Resolved:**

That the Minutes of the meeting held on 19 February 2014 and the Minutes of the Extraordinary meeting held on 12 March 2014, be approved as a true and correct record and signed by the Chairman.

#### **498. PARTICIPATION OF THE PUBLIC UNDER STANDING ORDERS 19 AND 25**

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

#### **499. RECEIPT OF ANNOUNCEMENTS**

The Chairman made the following announcements:

##### **Revised Tabled Agenda**

A revised tabled agenda had been circulated whereby Item 14 (Op A Peer Challenge Presentation) and Item 15 (Future Policy Direction of Royal Berkshire Fire Authority had become Items 9 and 10.

##### **Operational Assurance Peer Challenge**

On behalf of Royal Berkshire Fire Authority, the Chairman welcomed Councillor Rob Light from Kirlees Metropolitan Borough Council and Chief Fire Officer Darran Gunter from Dorset FRS to the meeting. They were two of the six Fire Peers that visited RBFRS in late February 2014 for the Operational Assurance Self Assessment and would be providing Members with a presentation on their high level findings at this meeting.

##### **Tinkers Lane**

Permission for the revised planning application for the new joint fire station at Tinkers Lane had been granted on the 31<sup>st</sup> March 2014. This therefore enabled the existing St Marks Road Fire Station site to be put to the market for disposal and advertisements for its sale had been placed. The St Marks Road Fire Station would not be vacated until the Tinkers Lane site became fully operational. A draft timetable had been prepared and it was anticipated that the new site would be fully operational by the end of 2014.

##### **Raffle Tickets**

Raffle tickets were available from Fayth Rowe to help raise funds for three British Cancer Charities: Breast Cancer Care; Jo's Cervical Cancer Trust and Ovarian Cancer Action in memory of the late Lynda Kenyon. Lynda's daughter Kelly was attempting a cycling challenge across China in September, cycling 450km, with all

monies raised going to the aforementioned Cancer Charities. The raffle and a Cake Sale at RBFRS Headquarters would be held on Thursday 1 May 2014. The Chairman encouraged all Members to purchase tickets for this very deserving cause.

### **National Car Wash Challenge**

The Firefighters Charity had held a National Car Wash Challenge in March 2014. The Chairman was proud to announce that the two top spots in the 'Highest Amounts Raised' category were awarded RBFRS crews. The winners were Slough Fire Station who raised a staggering £2, 450 and Maidenhead Fire Station took second spot by raising £1,717. The Chairman noted that Newbury Fire Station took fourth place.

### **Councillor Rebecca Rye**

The Chairman announced that Councillor Rye would be standing down in May 2014. The Chairman on behalf of Royal Berkshire Fire Authority thanked Councillor Rye for her hard work and wished her every success in the future.

### **Councillor Peter Jones**

The Chairman announced that Councillor Jones would also be standing down in May 2014. He had first been elected as County Borough Councillor in 1972. He had served on the Royal Berkshire Fire Authority since June 2006. Previous to that he had served some time on the Fire Committee that predated RBFA, namely Berkshire and Reading Fire Brigade and also on Berkshire County Council's Public Protection Committee.

The Chairman reported that Councillor Jones was noted for his sense of humour and that he would be missed. The Chairman thanked him for his time on the Fire Authority over the last eight years and wished him an enjoyable retirement and success in his future endeavours. Councillor Dudley presented him with a paperweight in recognition of his service.

Councillor Jones said that he had been involved with the fire service for a long time. He apologised if he had offended anyone over the years but explained that his comments were always made with a good heart and that he would still be happy to proof read any documents anyone wanted to run past him even though he had retired.

Councillor Jeff Brooks stated that he and Councillor Jones went back a long way. He had always proved to be a worthy adversary and had a wonderful sense of humour and wished him well in his retirement.

## **500. ISSUES ARISING FROM THE AUDIT AND GOVERNANCE COMMITTEE**

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

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

There were no questions from Members under Standing Order 30.

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

There were no Notices of Motion under Standing Order 44.

### **503. RECOMMENDATIONS OF COMMITTEES**

Members were asked to note that agenda items 12, 13, 14 and 15 had been recommended from the following Committees: Audit and Governance Committee at their meeting on the 12 March 2014, Strategic Asset Management Committee on 18 March 2014 and from the IRMP Working Party on the 27 March 2014.

#### **Resolved:**

That the recommendations be noted.

### **504. THEALE CROSS BRIGADE HEADQUARTERS (BHQ) – GENERATOR ISSUES**

Andrew Vallance, Director of Resources (DR), outlined to Members the reasons why there was a need to increase the capacity of the generators to be provided in relation to the new BHQ and to obtain agreement to the allocation of funding in that respect. The report had originally been presented to the Strategic Asset Management Committee at its meeting on 18<sup>th</sup> March 2014.

The original Design and Build proposal for Theale Cross had been tendered on the basis of the existing 135KA generator transferring from the Dee Road site to Theale Cross, and with a new mobile 80KVA generator being acquired as a backup to the primary generator. There would be a facility to plug in the mobile 80KVA generator if required and would only be used in the event of failure of the primary generator.

As the design had evolved and been completed it had become apparent that the generator specification contained within the building contract was not sufficient to support the new building and Control requirements and a generator with the capacity of at least 350KVA was required. The electrical infrastructure within the building would also need to be able to support this size of generator and the requisite infrastructure to support either a 350KVA or 500KVA had already been installed as this needed to progress as the build project proceeded. The estimated cost of a 500KVA generator was approximately £100,000. A 350KVA generator would support Control and critical systems but it would not run the whole of the new headquarters. If the capacity of the generator was increased to 500KVA then the authority would have a facility which would maintain the whole of the headquarters in the event of a mains failure.

As mentioned previously the overall budget estimate for the procurement of the generator and completion of associated works was a maximum of £100,000 but it was hoped that the final figure would be less. This would be dependent upon the final option adopted and whether it was possible to procure a reconditioned primary generator. It was proposed that the final decisions in that respect should be delegated to the CFO in consultation with the Chairman and Vice-Chairman of the Strategic Asset Management Committee.

#### **Resolved:**

- (a) That the report be noted;
- (b) Additional funding from the development fund be provided to accommodate the increased generator requirements as detailed within the report up to a

maximum of £100,000, with the decision on the final option to be adopted and the detailed spend delegated to the Chief Fire Officer in consultation with the Chairman and Vice-Chairman of the Strategic Asset Management Committee;

- (c) The capacity for the 500KVA generator be agreed.

*Councillor Alan Ward left the meeting at 8.25pm.*

## **505. CONTRACT STANDING ORDERS AND FINANCIAL REGULATIONS**

Andrew Vallance, Director of Resources (DR), recommended to the Fire Authority that the revised and updated Contract Standing Orders and Financial Regulations be approved.

The Fire Authority was required by law to have within its Constitution rules or standing orders setting out the requirements of the Fire Authority for the proper conduct of the affairs of the Authority in relation to various matters such as the proper conduct of Fire Authority and Committee meetings, the Terms of Reference of those Committees and the powers delegated to officers. It was also required to have specific rules in relation to the procurement of contracts and the conduct of its financial affairs.

The DCS in her capacity of Clerk and Monitoring Officer had undertaken a review of the Fire Authority's Contract Standing Orders (CSOs) and of the existing Financial Regulations (FRs) in consultation with the Director of Resources and the Head of Procurement. The review had taken some time to complete due to the complexity of the documents but it was hoped that they would be straightforward to implement.

The Audit and Governance Committee had considered the draft revised CSOs and FRs at its meeting on 12<sup>th</sup> March 2014 and had recommended that the draft Contract Standing orders and Financial Regulations be approved by the Fire Authority. The Committee had further recommended that the Director of Corporate Services in consultation with the Director of Resources and the Chairman of the Audit and Governance Committee be given delegated authority to make minor or required amendments to both Contract Standing Orders and the Financial Rules as a result of changes to legislation, EU thresholds, introduction of new equipment and systems or internal reorganisation within the Service.

The key changes were to the proposed contractual financial thresholds. Under the current arrangements procurement under £3k could be undertaken by a 'competent officer', expenditure between £3k and £10k required three quotes and any expenditure over £10k required a full tender exercise. Andrew Vallance explained that these thresholds had been set a very long time ago, were out of date, and they were now causing considerable delay and additional work for Officers.

The proposal was to increase the threshold for expenditure for 'competent officers' from £3k to £10k, three quotes would be required for expenditure between £10k and £50k and that a full tender exercise would be required for expenditure over £50k.

In order to reduce the number of requests for waiver of CSOs it was also proposed that the grounds and circumstances in which a waiver was required be updated. (For example the current criteria required that a waiver had to be requested where

the highest scorer on an evaluation matrix was not at the lowest cost.)

An additional proposal was to include financial delegations to Officers in the CSOs and the FRs. The report also sought authority to delegate authority to make minor amendments to the CSOs to the Director of Corporate Services in consultation with the Director of Resources and the Chairman of Audit and Governance Committee.

The Chairman queried at what level of expenditure Member input would be required. The DR explained that Members set the budget and that provided expenditure was within existing budgets and the thresholds were not being exceeded it was not being proposed that their input was required.

Councillor David Burbage was also concerned that no Member input was included in the process. He stated that Members needed to be engaged as potentially significant sums of money could be spent. He therefore proposed that a Member notification procedure was included in the CSOs. Councillor Burbage noted that the information under the heading 'Acceptance of Tenders' on page 24 of the agenda conflicted with paragraph 3.6.

Members agreed that this paragraph needed to be amended and that Officers needed to submit a revised version of the document to the Audit and Governance Committee. Members agreed to delegate authority to the Audit and Governance Committee to sign the amendment off. Members also requested that the Audit and Governance Committee consider the level at which the Chairman of that Committee would be alerted to expenditure.

**Resolved:**

- (a) That the report be noted;
- (b) The revised Contract Standing Orders and Financial Regulations set out in the Appendix to the report be approved and be effective from 1<sup>st</sup> June 2014, or such other date as the Chairman of Audit and Governance might agree, to allow for training and guidance to officers to take place;
- (c) The Director of Corporate Services in consultation with the Director of Resources and the Chairman of the Audit and Governance Committee be authorised to make minor or required amendments to both Contract Standing Orders and the Financial Regulations in order to keep them current.
- (d) That the section headed 'Acceptance of Tenders' (paragraph 3.7.2) be amended to align with paragraph 3.6 and that authority be delegated to the Audit and Governance Committee to agree this amendment.
- (e) The Audit and Governance Committee to agree the level at which the Chairman of the Committee would be alerted to expenditure and that this notification process be included in the CSO.

*Councillor Alistair Auty left the meeting at 8.45pm.*

**506. CORPORATE PLAN: ANNUAL REPORT (2013/14) AND ACTION PLAN (2014/15)**

Andy Fry, Chief Fire Officer (CFO), presented a report which set out performance against the Corporate Plan as contained in the Annual Report for 2013/14 and asked the Fire Authority to agree targets and actions for 2014/15 as contained in

the Action Plan 2014/15.

The CFO explained that this was a four year plan which was refreshed annually and this was its final iteration. There were no proposed changes to the themes, vision or aims of the Fire Authority's Core Strategy, however, the current document also included the Integrated Risk Management Plan (IRMP) and Annual Action Plan. This had been agreed at the IRMP Working Party in May 2013 and aimed to reduce duplication by bringing work plans together in a single document. This would not impact on the process of the IRMP and any proposed changes that would materially affect services would still be shaped by the IRMP Working Party and would be fully consulted upon.

Developing an Action Plan for the Corporate Plan allowed the Fire Authority to take stock of progress to date and to make an assessment on what it could achieve in the following year. The Action Plan contained in Appendix A set out targets and strategic activity for 2014/15.

The Corporate Plan 2011-2015 would expire this year and work was already under way to capture the policy direction from Members to enable Officers to develop a new plan. Following a review of the process it was anticipated that any future plans would be presented in a different format.

Councillor Paul Bryant noted that the Action Plan did not include a target for the installation of automatic fire suppression systems and this was disappointing particularly in relation to local authority premises which had a particularly poor record on this issue in his opinion.

Councillor Emma Webster suggested that where targets were not likely to be met due to reasons outside the Authority's control then they should be shaded 'grey' rather than 'red' e.g. recruitment of female firefighters. This target would not be met due to limited operational recruitment and shading that measure a different colour would differentiate between those targets in the control of the Fire Authority and those which were not. The CFO responded that the system worked well as it was but conceded that some further explanation might be required in associated text in some cases.

Councillor Tom McCann felt that this Annual Report was an improvement on the previous year but there were still some anomalies within it. He suggested that there ought to be a better way of presenting it which would be more user friendly to members of the public. The CFO confirmed that the format of the document had originated from when the Fire Authority had been inspected by the Audit Commission and that this was the last time a plan would be produced in that way. The Fire Authority would in the future look at how it could be presented in a way that was of more relevance to a wider audience. Councillor McCann asked what impact Members would have in that process. The CFO confirmed that the Audit and Governance Committee had already looked at a draft proposal for future Plans.

Councillor Jeff Brooks noted that there were a number of factors which fed into the Annual Report and he referred to page 7 of the document which set out the Vision for the Fire Service. He suggested amending the word "reducing" in the organisational mission to read "minimising". This amendment was agreed.

Councillor David Burbage asked what the CFO's top priority was. The CFO answered that it would be to have a clear policy direction in place across the Authority.

Councillor Pauline Helliard-Symons stated that there was strength in the Annual Report in that smart, clear targets had been set and that trend data was now available which had not been the case previously. She was, however, concerned about the number of “reds” and queried whether the target which had been set was correct or whether the Authority had not been efficient enough to achieve the targets. There did not seem to be alignment in this respect and she hoped that this would be addressed in the following year.

Councillor Angus Ross referred to page 28 of the Annual Report and in particular to measure No. 11 – the number of Automatic Fire Alarms attended. He queried whether this was a possible source of income in future if the Fire Authority charged for call outs. He also queried the figure quoted in measure No. 5 in relation to the number of deaths from fire. On page 26 it stated that there had been six whereas elsewhere in the report the figure quoted was seven. The CFO confirmed that the correct number was seven.

Councillor Peter Jones was surprised that there was no mention in the Annual Report in respect of the decision to deploy defibrillators in vehicles. The A/ACFO responded that this had not been mentioned in this year’s Annual Report as it had not yet been achieved. He reported that the defibrillators had been purchased and training was currently being undertaken and it was hoped that the equipment would be on the vehicles within the next four months.

Councillor Tom McCann noted that the Fire Authority had a number of Plans and Strategies in place and he urged caution as it could prove difficult to get everything in place, monitor and report back all within a one year period. There was a risk that the Authority might not achieve everything that it set out to do.

Councillor Emma Webster stated that she was pleased to see the photographs which had been used in the Annual Report which clearly showed the breadth of work which the Fire Authority undertook.

**Resolved:**

- (a) The organisational mission statement on page 7 of the Corporate Plan would be amended to read “To contribute to a safer society by **minimising** the incidence of death, injury and damage to property from fire and other emergencies”;
- (b) The outturn performance against the 2013/14 targets as referenced within the Annual Report 2013/14 be noted. Some data would be updated prior to formal publication;
- (c) The Corporate Plan targets and work programme for the 2014/15 Action Plan be agreed;
- (d) The Action Plan for 2014/15 be noted which would be the last for the current Corporate Plan 2011-2015.

**507. IRMP WORKING PARTY: UPDATE ON THE EAST EMERGENCY COVER REVIEW PROJECT**

Andy Mancey (A/ACFO), presented the East Cover Review Project update report as recommended by the IRMP Working Party at their meeting on 27<sup>th</sup> March 2014.

The A/ACFO noted that the proposals had been discussed at length at the IRMP Working Party. The Working Party was a cross party group and members of the

Fire Brigade Union also attended the meetings.

The Working Party had noted that:

- Incident activity had reduced significantly over the last ten years (A reduction of over 50% over the ten year period). Slough remained the busiest station.
- Retained Duty System (RDS) unavailability varied from station to station. The highest level of unavailability recorded to date was Bracknell at 92% in 2013 and the lowest was Hungerford at 7% in 2013. Availability at Ascot and Bracknell was expected to deteriorate even more over time.
- Neighbouring authorities were also experiencing similar issues in relation to recruitment and cover unavailability and as this was a national issue it would not provide a solution for Ascot.
- Wokingham's full time appliance was covering Bracknell as the second fire appliance in emergencies.
- Although Wokingham's wholetime appliance was taking over Bracknell retained activity this had not impacted negatively on operational performance, outcomes or resilience.
- Having a fire appliance providing full cover at Ascot was important in order to achieve response standards for dwelling fires and road traffic accidents. Current cover was extremely limited. Despite a substantial recruitment drive the historic shortfall in retained staff at Ascot could not be addressed.
- Innovative solutions to resolve the recruitment issues in Ascot would be needed.

The Working Party had therefore decided to make two recommendations to the Fire Authority; namely to consult on disbanding the Bracknell retained section (and the associated withdrawal of the retained appliance) and that further work should continue on the proposals to resolve the shortfall in emergency cover in Ascot (at no additional revenue cost to the Authority).

The Working Party was of the opinion that if the Bracknell unit was disbanded every effort should be made to redeploy staff in order to avoid any redundancies. The proposal should be consulted on both internally and externally.

The Chairman asked the ACFO to clarify the recruitment issues in Bracknell and Ascot. Andy Mancey explained that Officers had been unsuccessful in recruiting people in the Ascot Area that met the relevant criteria. While it was possible to recruit people that met the criteria in Bracknell the service provided by Wokingham was superior.

The Chairman reported that in his opinion it was not possible to consult on the first recommendation before options for Ascot had been developed. The ACFO stated that Members would need to make that decision but that the IRMP had recommended that a consultation on Bracknell took place. The results of that consultation would then be used as evidence for a decision to be based on. The Chairman asserted that the insertion of the word 'and' between the recommendations implied that they were intrinsically linked. The ACFO accepted the assertion but explained that no action would be taken on Bracknell until the Ascot options were in place. Both bits of work were being run simultaneously.

The Chairman was concerned that the consultees on the Bracknell proposals

would not have all the information in front of them to base their response on. The A/ACFO was of the opinion that these were two disparate pieces of work and that Bracknell would have little or no impact on Ascot.

Councillor Angus Ross was concerned that recommendation 2.2.2 was too restrictive. As an example he stated that if the solution to Ascot required new buildings there would be an associated revenue cost. Agreeing the recommendation in its current form could therefore negate some of the options. He stated that he thought the intention was that there should be no increase to the workforce and therefore the proposal should be amended.

Councillor Jeff Brooks therefore proposed the following **AMENDMENT**:

“2.2.1 - no change

2.2.2 – That further work should continue on proposals to resolve the shortfall in emergency cover in Ascot.”

The Amendment was seconded by Councillor Tom McCann.

Councillor Brooks opined that deleting the words ‘which must be at no additional financial cost to the Authority revenue budget’ would mean that all viable options could be looked at without fettering Members’ discretion.

Councillor Pauline Helliard-Symons queried who would be consulted on in respect of the Bracknell proposal. The A/ACFO explained that the consultation would be developed using an expert in consultation. Members of the focus group would be drawn from the Bracknell area although the consultation itself would be undertaken on a service wide level.

Councillor Tom McCann did not accept that the potential closure of Bracknell necessarily implied that redundancies were needed and that new ways of using spare capacity should be considered. He did not feel that it was necessary to threaten officers with redundancy while the review was being conducted.

Andy Fry (CFO) reported that it had been highlighted earlier in the meeting that fire stations needed to be located across the District in order to ensure that response times were met. Based on the experience in Bracknell it was being suggested that Bracknell no longer needed a retained fire crew. Arrangements in Wokingham meant that they were able to respond to incidents in Bracknell more quickly than the retained crew. As a consequence of this, the number of retained officers in Bracknell had diminished significantly. Bracknell was designated as a key station and would therefore have a whole time crew.

Councillor David Burbage requested a timeframe for delivering a full time appliance at Ascot. Officers stated that they were not able to provide this information at the present time.

The Chairman stated that retained fire fighters gave up a lot of their time and that they were attracted to the role because of the ability to respond to incidents. When the demand for their services reduced they naturally lost interest and as a consequence they left the brigade. Councillor Dudley was concerned that when Wokingham provided cover to Bracknell it would then leave Wokingham uncovered. He noted that a lot of new housing development was proposed for this area and this would require extra resources. He was of the opinion that the income from the new homes should be used to finance the resources required. He also noted that it was being proposed that fire fighters would be asked to do more in the future and he was concerned about the impact this could have if resources were

reduced. While he was happy to support consultation he would not be able to support any recommendations that required Bracknell retained section to be disbanded before cover was put in place in Ascot.

Councillor Emma Webster (Chairman of the Integrated Risk Management Plan Working Party) noted that Officers had undertaken extensive work to gather evidence in order to formulate the recommendations before the Authority that evening. Councillor Webster noted that the Working Party had recognised that a number of the projects could impact on each other and as a consequence the project had been titled the 'East Cover Review Project'.

The Working Party recognised the need to consult on the Bracknell proposal as it could potentially lead to the removal of a service or alternative provision. In terms of any ensuing potential redundancies, in the event that the closure of Bracknell retained service was agreed, the preferred option would be to transfer retained crew to whole time crew. However it was noted that this would not be possible for dual contracted officers.

Councillor Webster noted that while she was willing to support the amendment Members had to be mindful of the budget envelope. Funding was only likely to reduce over time and therefore any revenue implications would have to be met from within a diminishing budget. The level of funding required at Ascot under the current structure would not be readily available.

Councillor Webster thanked Andy Mancey for the huge amount of work that he had put into this project.

At the vote the **AMENDMENT** was carried.

**Resolved:**

- (a) That the update report be noted;
- (b) It be agreed that the Fire Authority should publically consult both internally and externally on disbanding the Bracknell retained section and withdrawal of the retained appliance from operational service; and
- (c) That further work should continue on proposals to resolve the short fall in emergency cover in Ascot.

**508. OP A PEER CHALLENGE – PRESENTATION**

The Fire Authority was presented with feedback from Darran Gunter (Chief Fire Officer Dorset FRS) and Councillor Rob Light, Kirkless Metropolitan Borough Council on the recent Op A Peer Challenge.

Darran Gunter thanked the authority for giving them the opportunity to provide feedback on the assessment. He also thanked the authority for making them so welcome during the assessment period especially given that it coincided with the February floods. He welcomed the honest and professional dialogue that the team had been afforded by both Members and Officers.

He noted that the peer review process was a voluntary process and that the role of the team was to act as a 'critical friend'. Prior to undertaking the assessment the authority had been asked which areas they wanted the team to focus on. The team were also provided with a self assessment and supporting documentation before the visit started.

Darran Gunter explained that the presentation and ensuing report had been drafted taking into account observations and the written and verbal information supplied by Members, Officers and partner organisations at focus groups and meetings.

The Team comprised:

- Darran Gunter – CFO, Dorset FRS
- Councillor Rob Light – Kirklees Metropolitan Borough Council
- James Belcher, – Norfolk FRS
- Trevor Ferguson – Northern Ireland FRS
- Richard Hall – Leicestershire FRS
- Becca Singh – Local Government Association
- Zoe Angove – Local Government Association

The team had focussed on four main areas: Leadership and Corporate Capacity; Risk Management (organisational and corporate); Operational Risk Management and Training and Development. Mr Gunter explained that some progress had already been made in addressing some of the issues identified during the review.

The team recognised that the appointment of a new CFO provided an opportunity to see matters from a new perspective. They appeared to be a real appetite for change within the organisation and a real desire from Officers to be included in new arrangements. There were already some good examples within the organisation of where staff engagement in change had already provided positive benefits.

There was a perception that RBFRS was too traditional, response centric and that overarching vision and priorities had been static for a number of years. It was felt that in the past change had been fragmented and that there was not a clear management plan in place. It was accepted that any change programme had to ensure that in addition to the RBFRS being a successful organisation it was also a solvent one. In order to achieve this both the structure and the capacity of the organisation had to be looked at.

Councillor Rob Light noted that the team felt that the calibre of Members on the Authority was very high. He felt however that Members' skills were not being put to best use and that they could contribute more to the strategic and community leadership of the RBFRS. He asked Officers to give some thought as to how they could best support Members to do this.

The assessment had highlighted the following areas to focus on:

- it appeared as if previous leadership styles might have been seen to be inhibiting and the arrival of a new CFO could address this.
- The need to attract and retain the core skills base.
- Organisational structure to be looked at as expensive managers appeared to be doing a lot of administrative work.
- The need to develop trust in the organisation and to reduce bureaucracy and enhance joined up working.
- Ensure that the organisation functioned as a single unit and did not act in a compartmentalised way. Associated with this was the need to ensure that

uniformed and non-uniformed staff worked as a single service and that there was not a feeling of 'us and them'.

- Performance management had to influence priorities and this was an area that Members could have a bigger role in.
- The arrival of a new CFO and the new headquarters provided a real opportunity for a fundamental review of what the service did and how it did things.
- The financial management of the organisation was good although budgets should be seen as facilitators and not inhibitors.
- The service needed to ensure that its priorities were driven by outcomes for the community and should not be embedded in bureaucracy.
- Proposals considered by RBFRA needed to be underpinned by accurate evidence and offer clear risk assessed options for Members to consider to ensure that they were not perceived to be 'rubber stamping' decisions.
- Corporate Performance Management was a weakness and needed to be addressed in order to drive performance.
- There was a lot of confidence in the organisation and a lot of enthusiasm to do the right thing and make a difference to the community.
- Internal communications could be improved and there was too much reliance on the voice of the Fire Brigade Union (FBU).
- There were encouraging early signs from joint procurement and emerging shared services with neighbouring FRS. The RBFRS appeared to have a good relationship with its constituent local authorities albeit that there was little collaboration with them.
- The CFO and Chairman needed to be present at appropriate pan Berkshire Chief and Chairman Forums.
- The service needed to contribute to the wider agenda of Berkshire

The assessment had highlighted the following strengths and key skills:

- There was an abundance of talent in the organisation some of which had previously been suppressed. Staff needed to be involved in and empowered by the change programme.
- Recent senior appointments were beginning to make a positive difference to capacity, outcomes and partnership working.
- Procurement was seen as a strength and there was a strong commitment to national procurement and the use of best fit procurement frameworks.
- There was a strong appetite for progression amongst middle managers and succession planning was good throughout the organisation.
- There was good role development in place for most staff although attracting and retaining specialist staff within current remuneration arrangements might be a challenge.
- The service had delivered excellent and highly regarded response during recent floods.

The peer review had identified the following opportunities:

- To remove some of the administrative burden on senior leaders.
- Officers were encouraged to be honest and voice their opinions.
- The previous hierarchy was seen as having an overly autocratic approach and leadership style had been seen by staff to be an issue.
- There were a number of single points of failure and ways of addressing resilience needed to be considered.
- For new joint fleet management protocols with Hampshire to deliver positives outcomes for the community.
- The work with Slough Council was a good model to take forward with other local authorities.
- The A34 action plan developed in conjunction with police could help to improve outcomes for community in relation to Road Traffic Collisions.
- To increase prevention and protection work in the community.
- To maximise interagency information sharing to target services to the most vulnerable within the community.

The Next Steps:

- The team's report would be finalised within the next four weeks
- Once completed it would be made available to all Members
- The report would be published
- An action plan would be developed.
- If Members were in agreement a light review would be undertaken in twelve to eighteen months time to ascertain progress with the action plan.

Darran Gunter concluded that although there appeared to be a lot of areas to focus on this was a good organisation, the direction of travel was good and that he thought there were exciting times ahead for it.

The Chairman thanked Messrs Gunter and Light again for attending the meeting and for presenting their high level findings to the Members. The Fire Authority welcomed a follow up visit in twelve to eighteen months to review progress.

Councillor Emma Webster enquired about the governance arrangements for the Action Plans. It was explained that they would be considered by the Management Committee and monitored by the Audit and Governance Committee.

Councillor David Burbage opined that it had been useful to garner an external view of the Service. He welcomed the focus on outcomes not processes. He noted however that the Corporate Change Programme was a process and he questioned what its key outcomes should be? He also noted the comments around performance management and asked if the team envisioned greater input from the Chairman or Members on this aspect of service delivery?

Darran Gunter replied that many change programmes contained a lot of esoteric vision statements. He stressed the need to focus on outcomes that could be achieved within the financial parameters of the organisation. He outlined the need for a purposeful, pragmatic change programme based on key measures which the

organisation needed to adopt. He also stressed the need for targeted performance measures and not to measure things just for the sake of it.

Councillor Tom McCann sought reassurance on how the RBFRS was performing in relation to its peer group. Darren Gunter explained that the RBFRS was a good organisation with fantastic opportunities. As no two authorities were identical nor did they measure the same outcomes it was not possible to compare them accurately. Councillor Light reminded Members that however good an organisation was there was always room for improvement.

Councillor Jeff Brooks noted the comments made by the presenters but was concerned that Members had not seen the evidence behind the comments. The Chairman noted that this was an interim presentation and that much of the data and evidence would be captured in the final report which would be circulated to all Members. Councillor Light reminded Members that a Peer Review was an assessment and not an inspection.

Councillor Peter Jones asked if there would be an opportunity to share best practice with other authorities. Darran Gunter explained that once the report was finalised the RBFRS could decide if it wanted to publish it or not. If it opted to publish the report it could be placed on the LGA website which identified notable or good practice and this could assist with sharing best practice.

Councillor Jones also queried if there was any financial benchmarking information available so that Members could determine whether or not the community was receiving value for money from the RBFRS. Darran Gunter stated that the team comprised peers and not auditors and he would therefore not be able to comment on whether or not value for money was being achieved.

Councillor Alan Ward was concerned about the apparent lack of performance management in the organisation. Councillor Light commented that although it had not been a priority in the past it had started to improve recently.

Members commented that they were looking forward to seeing the report and developing a robust action plan. Darran Gunter urged Members not to dwell too long on the negatives presented to them as they had purposefully been exaggerated to facilitate improvement.

Councillor Pauline Helliard-Symons thanked Messrs Gunter and Light and the rest of the team again on behalf of the authority for undertaking the review and for their thorough execution of their duties. The review had highlighted some key issues for the RBFRS to focus on. She confirmed that CFO would receive Members' support in implementing the action plan. She thanked Messrs Gunter and Light again for attending the meeting and presenting their findings to Members.

**Resolved:**

The presentation be noted.

**509. FUTURE POLICY DIRECTION OF ROYAL BERKSHIRE FIRE AUTHORITY**

Andy Fry, Chief Fire Officer (CFO), presented a report which summarised progress on the development of a refreshed policy direction for the Royal Berkshire Fire Authority (RBFA) following the Fire Authority Members' Planning Workshop held in February 2014. The report also:

- Informed a discussion on a proposed revised set of Fire Authority Strategic Commitments with supporting Policy Statements;
- Confirmed details of how ideas generated at the Workshop would be taken forward;
- Presented, for discussion, a proposal intended to ensure clear alignment between the Fire Authority's refreshed policy direction, and the political leadership necessary to deliver it;
- Advised Members that a stakeholder engagement exercise would be undertaken to communicate details of the Fire Authority's refreshed policy direction, and to start the process of translating the policy direction into a clear programme of work for securing its delivery.

The strategic policy position of the RBFA was currently set out in the following Strategic Commitments:

- Minimise the loss of life, injury and damage from fire, road traffic collisions and other hazards;
- Improve public and business safety and reduce risk, through targeted education and enforcement of fire safety legislation;
- Demonstrate continuous improvement and efficiencies, ensuring consultation and partnership working;
- Be an employer of choice, offering equality of opportunity and development to all;
- Provide resilient emergency response through risk management and planning;
- Conduct activities in an environmentally sustainable way.

Since the above policy position was established in 2008 the landscape on which all public sector bodies operated had changed substantially. In acknowledging the extent of this change and the strong likelihood that downward pressure on public sector finances would continue to intensify for the foreseeable future, the Chairman had decided that an opportunity should be provided for Members to review and reset the policy direction of the RBFA. Consequently the Planning Workshop had taken place on 6<sup>th</sup> February 2014 whereby Members and Officers were invited to jointly explore a number of questions in areas of policy that would influence the future success of the Royal Berkshire Fire and Rescue Service. Following the workshop the outputs had been analysed in order to consider whether changes to the Authority's Strategic Commitments was required.

Subsequent to the Planning Workshop, Officers comprising the RBFRS Corporate Management Team (CMT) had convened for a full day to commence the process of taking forward the next steps through the consideration of a number of questions. The outputs from the CMT Away day against each of the questions had then been summarised in a briefing paper (Appendix A) to support a Workshop for Members of the Fire Authority's Management Committee which had taken place on 7<sup>th</sup> April 2014. Management Committee Members were broadly supportive of the proposals but asked that the following points should be taken into consideration:

- The Service should remain focussed on core prevention, protection and response activities, whilst working to develop its contribution to a broader safety, health and wellbeing agenda;

- Decisions to engage in activities aimed at contributing to a broader safety, health and wellbeing agenda should be evidence based;
- Development of a work programme to deliver the Fire Authority's refreshed policy direction should be integrated with activity associated with the Service's response to the recent Operational Assurance Peer Challenge process;
- It would be important to align the focus of Fire Authority Champions to the new policy agenda, to ensure necessary political leadership;
- Sharing information effectively with other organisations would be essential, if resources were to be targeted at those most in need of the services the Authority provided.

The following Strategic Commitments were therefore presented for consideration by Members as a revised policy direction for the Authority and a number of Policy Statements sat underneath the Strategic Commitments as set out in the report.

**Commitment 1** – We will educate people on how to prevent fires and other emergencies, and what to do when they happen;

**Commitment 2** – We will ensure a swift and effective response when called to emergencies;

**Commitment 3** – We will ensure appropriate fire safety standards in buildings;

**Commitment 4** – We will seek opportunities to contribute to a broader safety, health and wellbeing agenda;

**Commitment 5** – We will ensure that Royal Berkshire Fire and Rescue Service provides good value for money;

**Commitment 6** – We will maximise opportunities to generate income;

**Commitment 7** – We will ensure that Council Tax is set at a reasonable level;

**Commitment 8** – We will work with Central Government to ensure a fair deal for Royal Berkshire.

It was proposed that prior to the Fire Authority AGM the Chairman would review the role of existing Member Champions to determine whether any changes were required to better align political leadership with the Fire Authority's refreshed policy direction.

Once the Fire Authority's strategic policy direction had been set it would need to be translated into a clear programme of work for implementation from the start of the 2015/16 financial year.

In order to achieve buy in from key stakeholders, a comprehensive stakeholder engagement exercise would be undertaken to explain the policy direction and why it had been set.

Councillor Tom McCann thanked the CFO for organising the workshop which he had found interesting and informative. However, he had concerns about the report which seemed to indicate that the decision to agree the future policy direction had already been made. Some Members would not agree with the report politically and no opportunity had been given to the various groups to have input into the process. Councillor Colin Dudley recognised the fact that Members had not an opportunity to consider the policy proposal within the context of what they had just heard about the Peer Review process, and therefore it was premature to agree the Strategic Commitments and supporting Policy Statements at this stage. He therefore

suggested that the recommendations should be amended to agree a revised **draft** set of Fire Authority Strategic Commitments and to agree **draft** Policy Statements to support the Strategic Commitments. This would give Members a further opportunity to look at the documentation alongside the key findings of the Peer Review and put forward comments and suggestions. The proposed amendments were agreed.

Councillor Emma Webster referred to Strategic Commitment No. 3 and stated that dialogue with other people would be critical and there was a lot of work undertaken by local authorities which would assist in identifying fire safety in buildings. One of the assets that local authorities had was community intelligence and this was something that the Fire Authority could access.

Councillor Jeff Brooks asked if the CFO could expand on the process. He was of the opinion that if the residents of Berkshire were asked to articulate what the purpose of the Fire Service was, then they would say that it was to provide a swift and effective response when called to emergencies. This was the key function of the Fire Service and he therefore felt that this should be the first Strategic Commitment. Councillor Emma Webster disagreed with that as if preventative work was put in place first then this would reduce the risk of a fire occurring.

Councillor Tom McCann said that he would like to see the service described as the Fire, Rescue and Prevention Service in future, as prevention was a key element of the work of the Fire Service. The RBFRS had a highly skilled workforce which should be maximised wherever possible.

Councillor Paul Bryant was concerned that if the Service was too successful in the preventative work and the number of fires reduced then there was a danger that the Government would reduce the funding even further. If a large fire incident subsequently occurred then it would be difficult for the Service to manage resources if numbers had been further reduced. He felt that it was therefore important to maximise income wherever possible.

Councillor Angus Ross agreed that it was a positive aspiration to have a smaller number of incidents. However, when required members of the public still expected to see a fire engine attend an incident within 8 to 10 minutes and therefore it would still be necessary to retain a front line force. It was essential that firefighters remained motivated and active at all times. The CFO agreed that there was an opportunity to create a virtuous circle with Fire Service assets (buildings, equipment, personnel and brand) being used to assist the other blue light services such as the Ambulance Service and, in doing so, making the firefighters' job more fulfilling – something that was particularly important for retained fighters who were, increasingly, giving up large amounts of time to be on stand-by but being called to fire and rescue emergencies less frequently. CFO Fry said that he felt that there was huge potential in offering firefighters the opportunity to save and improve lives.

Councillor Colin Dudley summarised that Members of the Fire Authority represented the public and were elected to do so. It was therefore not realistic to consult with residents on every decision which was made. Councillor Dudley agreed with the majority of the content of the report but he felt that the Peer Review was key and therefore Members needed to be given the opportunity to reflect on what they had heard about the Peer Review before signing-up to a revised set of commitments and Policy Statements. The Commitments etc would probably not need to change significantly as a result but it was considered that Members must not be rushed into making a decision on revising the Authority's

policy direction. Councillor Dudley therefore asked if information regarding the findings of the Peer Challenge could be circulated to Members of the Fire Authority, so that further consideration could be given to the proposed Commitments and Policy Statements. Any feedback received would be considered by Members of the Management Committee, prior to a final set of Commitments and Policy Statements being presented for ratification by the Fire Authority at its next meeting.

**Resolved:**

- That details of progress that had been made on developing a refreshed policy direction for Royal Berkshire Fire Authority be noted, since the Members' Planning Workshop held on 6<sup>th</sup> February 2014;
- A revised set of draft Fire Authority Strategic Commitments to external stakeholders be agreed;
- Draft Policy Statements to support the Strategic Commitments be agreed which would explain to stakeholders what they meant in practice;
- A copy of the Strategic Commitments, Policy Statements and findings of the Peer Review would be circulated to Members of the Fire Authority for further consideration, with a request that they provide feedback on the Strategic Commitments and Policy Statements. Any feedback received would be considered by members of the Management Committee prior to final ratification by the Fire Authority at its next meeting;
- It be noted that options appraisals would be undertaken to determine whether ideas generated at the Planning Workshop referred to in paragraph 2.1.1 of the report would be incorporated into a work programme for delivering the Fire Authority's refreshed policy direction;
- It was agreed that prior to the Fire Authority Annual General Meeting the Chairman would, in consultation with existing Member Champions, review their role and focus to determine whether changes were needed to better align political leadership with the Fire Authority's refreshed policy direction;
- The commitment to undertake a stakeholder engagement exercise be noted which was intended to communicate details of the Fire Authority's refreshed policy direction, and would start the process of translating it into a clear work programme for implementation from the start of the 2015/16 financial year.

**510. WAIVER OF STANDING ORDERS IT SUPPORT AND DEVELOPMENT CONTRACTS**

Andrew Vallance, Director of Resources (DR), sought a waiver of Contract Standing Orders to place a number of Information Technology (IT) orders to develop and maintain essential Brigade systems.

Royal Berkshire Fire and Rescue Service (RBFRS) had modified its systems and processes over the years to accommodate vast developments in IT which had necessitated developing a number of bespoke software programmes along with off the shelf programmes. RBFRS had over the years developed and modified its FireWatch IT system to add bespoke functionality to enable it to deliver its service. As a result, RBFRS had considerably more functionality due to these modifications than any of the other 23 Fire and Rescue Services which used FireWatch. A

project had commenced which was likely to last for 2 years to migrate from the bespoke environment to the standard product which aligned itself with the supplier road map. Thames Valley Control project required key aspects of the FireWatch application including a version upgrade to deliver for RBFRS and there was no other solution available which could be evaluated and implemented within a 2 to 3 year timescale.

The Thames Valley Fire Control Project planned to replace a number of existing systems and contracts and the contract end dates were aligned with the original delivery date of the project. However, this now needed to be extended to allow for the revised live date. The majority of the contracts had been due for renewal/extension in the current year.

Once systems had been installed the provision from the suppliers was one of maintenance only or where enhancements were needed to the systems a maintenance and development support arrangement would be required. Where further enhancement and development of systems had been required orders had been placed for each of the IT software programmes and in order to comply with Standing Orders, Member approval was required to maintain those orders.

The new Interim Head of Information Systems had been set a target of reviewing IT contracts in consultation with the Head of Procurement. That review had identified the need to seek Member approval to place the maintenance orders set out in the report at Appendix A whilst a longer term IT strategy was formulated. The procurement of all contracts had to comply with Contract Standing Orders although in exceptional circumstances a waiver could be sought from Members under the terms of Contract Standing Order 24. Officers were of the view that grounds (b), (c), (d) and (f) were applicable as follows:

- (b) the contract could only be undertaken by one contractor;
- (c) market conditions distorted competition;
- (d) genuine urgency;
- (f) there were demonstrable benefits.

The extension of the contracts would take the Authority up to and beyond the implementation date of Thames Valley Fire Control and it would also enable the Head of Information Systems to develop long-term IT strategies which would be reported to Strategic Asset Management Committee at its October 2014 meeting.

Councillor Colin Dudley queried what the total cost of the contracts would be. Andy Parsons, the Interim Head of Estates (IHE), confirmed that the total at present was £610,818.37 but that this figure would reduce as contracts would be renegotiated.

Councillor Tom McCann queried whether this was another example of where Standing Orders needed to be reviewed. The DR confirmed that the revised Standing Orders which had been agreed that evening would not be implemented until June following which they would take care of many of these issues which might arise.

**Resolved:**

- It be agreed that Standing Orders 20 and 21 be waived on the grounds set out in the Fire Authority's Contract Standing Orders CSO 24 (b), (c), (d) and (f) for the reasons set out in the report;

- It be agreed that orders be placed with the companies listed in Appendix A for the services listed therein.

#### **511. DRAFT PROGRAMME OF MEETINGS**

The draft Programme of Royal Berkshire Fire Authority meetings for 2014/15 was presented to the Authority for consideration. Councillor Angus Ross noted that it had previously been agreed in principle that the Strategic Asset Management Committee (SAMC) meetings should be held before Management Committee meetings and he therefore requested that the timetable be amended to reflect this. Members supported this proposal.

#### **Resolved:**

That the draft Programme of Royal Berkshire Fire Authority meetings for 2014/15 be agreed subject to the adjustment of the SAMC and Management Committee dates.

#### **512. ANNUAL REPORTS FROM 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 Alistair Auty – Member Development Champion
- (d) Councillor Phillip Bicknell – Communications Champion
- (e) Councillor Tom McCann – Environmental Champion
- (f) Councillor Alan Ward – Equality and Diversity Champion/Chairman of the Community, Engagement and Equality Group
- (g) Councillor Alan Ward – Health and Safety Champion
- (h) Councillor Emma Webster – Community Safety Champion
- (i) Councillor Iain McCracken – Local Government Association

#### **Resolved:**

That the annual reports be noted.

#### **513. FLOODING UPDATE**

Andy Fry (CFO) provided Members with a verbal update on the recent flooding in the County of Royal Berkshire. The CFO reminded Members that this had been the largest operation in the Thames Valley since the second world war. Since the last meeting Paul Jacques had been tasked with undertaking a fundamental review of the response in Berkshire. The review was expected to be completed by the 30 June 2014. Once the work had been completed a narrative report would be produced. The report would focus on the strategic objectives of the multi-agency group and the way the RBFRS had contributed to that work.

Several other strands of work would also ensue. Reports, accompanied by

presentations, would also be submitted to the Management Committee and the Fire Authority once the review had been completed. The Chairman would be asked to bring to the attention of the Fire Minister any action identified locally that Central Government needed to take to provide a more effective response in the future. A presentation would also be produced that could be delivered to fire professionals nationally and a separate presentation would be delivered to local key stakeholders.

Councillor John Lenton asked that his gratitude for all the work undertaken by the brigade in Wraysbury be re-iterated. He stressed that it was important that a review of the lessons learnt be undertaken, not as a form of criticism but to ensure an even better response in future. He requested that both the Parish Council and Local Authority be involved in the review. Councillor Angus Ross stated that all six Berkshire Unitaries should be approached as part of the review and that perhaps this could be done through the Berkshire Chief Executives and Leaders meetings to ensure that information was disseminated and shared across the District.

In response to a query from Councillor Paul Bryant about funding, Officers explained that the majority of the costs (circa £1,2m) would be met from a claim against the Government's Bellwin Fund.

**Resolved:**

That the update on the recent flooding in the County of Royal Berkshire be noted.

**514. UPDATE ON BHQ**

Andy Parsons, Interim Head of Estates (IHE), updated Members of the Fire Authority on progress in relation to the development of the new Brigade Headquarters at Theale Cross.

Progress with regard to the delivery of the various construction packages was progressing, but there was still concern in respect of the delivery of the overall programme. A number of work packages had not been commenced and/or were delayed and therefore the contractual completion date of 18<sup>th</sup> April 2014 would no longer be achieved. Detailed discussions had taken place with the Authority's professional advisors, the contractor and Officers, in order to agree a more realistic contractual completion date. A way forward had been reported to the Strategic Asset Management Committee (SAMC) on 18<sup>th</sup> March 2014 for consideration as follows:

- There were certain items of work which the Fire Authority would like included within the contract, that if instructed could be completed within a proposed extended completion date of 19<sup>th</sup> May 2014;
- There were concerns that this date proposed by the contractor was unrealistic and could only be achieved by a large increase in site labour which would be detrimental to the quality of the final project. A more realistic completion date would be the end of May 2014;
- It had therefore been proposed to offer the contractor a revised completion date of Friday 30<sup>th</sup> May 2014 to enable completion of the project whilst still achieving the required quality;
- The contractor had offered that the construction items identified by the Fire Authority would form the basis of the construction work and that the estimated

final account did not exceed the current funding level of £4,022,000;

- This proposal did not include the installation of a new generator which had also been reported to SAMC on 18<sup>th</sup> March 2014 and had also been considered at the full Fire Authority meeting on 23<sup>rd</sup> April 2014.

The Fire Authority's professional adviser was currently continuing negotiations in relation to the preparation of the documentation in order to issue a formal notice of an extension of time to the contract and to produce a formal agreement between the parties clearly setting out the reasons for such a settlement.

The IHE confirmed that he had attended a meeting that afternoon with the professional advisers and the contractor where it had been agreed that an extension of time claim and programme of works would be put forward by the following Wednesday. The professional advisers would work out what the contractual obligations were and once details had been agreed then a possible completion date of 2<sup>nd</sup> June 2014 could be worked towards. The IHE confirmed that he would continue to keep the Chair of SAMC updated on progress with this issue.

Councillor Emma Webster queried what the confidence levels were in respect of receiving the information by Wednesday of next week and if not, what actions would be taken. The IHE responded that provided the information was received then an agreed completion date would be set and it would protect the Fire Authority against liquidated damages. Councillor Webster assumed that the contractors were still continuing work during the negotiation period. The IHE confirmed that if the contractor stopped work or slowed down then they would be liable for liquidated damages and it was therefore in their best interest to continue. However, it would be necessary to ensure that the quality was maintained.

Councillor Angus Ross was disappointed that things had not progressed since the last SAMC meeting but he gave an assurance that once a clear position had been agreed he would update all Members of the Fire Authority.

**Resolved:**

- (a) That the report be noted;
- (b) Councillor Angus Ross to update all Members of the Fire Authority once a clear position had been agreed.

**515. 2013/14 BUDGET MONITORING**

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

The revenue expenditure to 28<sup>th</sup> February 2014 was shown in summary form in Appendix A and in more detail in Appendix B.

The ongoing policy of not recruiting firefighters partly explained the underspend on the uniformed employee budget and, as in previous years, the trend for expenditure on retained firefighters remained substantially below budget despite the work of the Retained Support Unit. Expenditure on the 'Other Employee Costs' line was higher than the profiled budget due to recruitment costs of filling senior positions within the organisation.

DR reported that the Valuation Office had reduced the assessments for Theale

Cross Headquarters to zero from 8<sup>th</sup> July 2013 whilst construction work took place and this had resulted in a saving of £97,000.

Expenditure on equipment was above the profiled budget as a result of measures taken in relation to industrial action and the Strategic Miscellaneous line was also over budget due to the publicity costs of industrial action.

Legal costs were running ahead of budget due to additional expenditure incurred in relation to the Authority's major projects and programmes.

Capital expenditure to the end of February 2014 was £1,942,000 and was set out in Appendix D.

The Fire Authority would be able to recover most of the costs relating to the major flooding incident via the Bellwin scheme and would only have to pay the first £69,000. Government had announced that 100% of qualifying expenditure above this threshold would be reimbursed. It was noted that the costs could be well in excess of £1.2m million. Invoices from 19 brigades were still outstanding.

Councillor David Burbage noted that even though the majority of the costs could be retrieved from Central Government this was still tax payers' money. While he welcomed the assistance provided by other brigades he sought reassurance that their resources were being managed to ensure that unnecessary costs were not incurred. Andy Mancey (ADSD) reassured Councillor Burbage that their input was closely managed by the onsite commander. He noted that once the initial emergency was under control in Wraysbury it had still been necessary to provide reassurance to residents, Officers had continued pumping activity, some Officers had been redeployed to other parts of the District and that a gradual reduction in numbers was also agreed as the most appropriate solution.

**Resolved:**

That the report be noted.

**516. MINUTES OF THE STANDING COMMITTEES**

**Resolved:**

That the minutes of the Standing Committees be received.

**517. FORWARD PLAN**

Members noted that Officers had indicated that a flooding report would be produced once the review was completed. The scheduled completion date was the 30 June 2014 and they therefore requested that the flooding report be added to the forward plan after that date.

**Resolved:**

That the Forward Plan be noted subject to the inclusion of the flooding report.

**518. DATE OF THE NEXT MEETING**

Wednesday 25<sup>th</sup> June 2014 at 6.30pm at Royal Borough of Windsor and Maidenhead, Desborough Hall, Town Hall, St. Ives Road, Maidenhead, Berkshire, SL6 1RF

**519. EXCLUSION OF THE 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 the Paragraph 1, 2 and 3 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.

**520. PART II MINUTES OF THE MEETING HELD ON 19 FEBRUARY 2014**

That the Part II Minutes of the meeting held on 19 February 2014 be approved as a true and correct record and signed by the Chairman.

*The meeting concluded at 10.10pm*