

MINUTES OF THE MEETING OF THE ROYAL BERKSHIRE FIRE AUTHORITY



Held on Wednesday, 24 October 2019, at 6.30pm

RBFRS Headquarters, Lynda Kenyon Suite, Newsham Court, Pincents Lane, Calcot, Reading RG31 7SD

Members: (* present)	*	Councillor Christine Bateson	*	Councillor Jo Lovelock
	*	Councillor Dennis Benneyworth	*	Councillor Tina McKenzie-Boyle
	*	Councillor Jeff Brooks	*	Councillor Satpal Parmar
	*	Councillor Tricia Brown	*	Councillor Ted Plenty
	*	Councillor David Cannon		Councillor Angus Ross
	*	Councillor Colin Dudley	*	Councillor Rachelle Shepherd- DuBey
	*	Councillor Paul Gittings	*	Councillor Garth Simpson
	*	Councillor Pauline Helliar-Symons	*	Councillor Dexter Smith
	*	Councillor Graham Howe	*	Councillor Jane Stanford-Beale
	*	Councillor Tony Linden	*	Councillor Simon Werner

In Attendance: Mark Arkwell (Assistant Chief Fire Officer, ACFO)
Paul Binyon (Area Manager Response and Resilience, AMR&R)
Graham Britten (Monitoring Officer, MO)
Conor Byrne (Head of Finance and Procurement, HF&P)
Stephen Chard (Committee Officer)
Tony Deacon (Area Manager Prevention and Protection, AMP&P)
Trevor Ferguson (Chief Fire Officer, CFO)
Steve Foye (Deputy Chief Fire Officer, DCFO)
Moirra Fraser (Committee Officer)
Andrew McLenahan (Head of Facilities, Fleet and Equipment, HFF&E)
Katie Mills (Head of Corporate Services, HCS)
Jim Powell (Area Manager Collaboration and Policy, AMC&P)
Nikki Richards (Director of Support Services, DSS)
Fayth Rowe (Democratic Support Lead, DSL)
Hannah Sheehan (Democratic Support Assistant, DSA)
Tony Vincent (Head of Business and Information Systems, HBIS)

16. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Apologies for inability to attend the meeting had been received from Councillors Dennis Benneyworth, Graham Howe and Angus Ross.

17. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

There were no declarations of interest received.

Action

18. MINUTES OF THE MEETING HELD ON 26 JUNE 2019

RESOLVED that the minutes of the meeting held on 26 June 2019 be approved as a true and correct record and signed by the Chairman.

19. PETITIONS AND QUESTIONS FROM THE PUBLIC UNDER STANDING ORDERS 19 AND 25

There were no petitions or questions from members of the public under Standing Orders 19 and 25.

20. RECEIPT OF ANNOUNCEMENTS

The Chairman made the following announcements:

Awards Ceremony

- The Annual Awards Ceremony, which recognised those who had gone above and beyond to deliver a truly outstanding service to the people of Berkshire was held on Friday 27 September 2019.
- The event offered time to reflect on two significant and challenging incidents during the past year – the actions taken following a fatal collision on the M4 and the rapid lifesaving care that was given to one of our firefighters during a fire on Mortimer Common. It was very moving to see those connected in attendance, in particular the young adults from Prior's Court School.
- The evening brought together Fire and Rescue Service staff, volunteers, Fire Authority Members and partners from blue light services. In addition, the Lord Lieutenant of Royal Berkshire, Mr James Puxley, the High Sheriff of the Royal County of Berkshire, Mrs Lucy Zeal and Her Majesty's Inspector of Constabulary and Fire & Rescue Services, Mr Matt Parr, were also in attendance.
- The Chairman thanked Angus Fire, FireHawk, Bristol Uniforms, Reliance Medical, Knights Brown, Pegasus Group, Ridge and HLM Architects who had sponsored the event and supported Royal Berkshire Fire and Rescue Service (RBFRS) in putting on this special occasion for all nominees, winners and recipients of awards.

Grey Book Pay Award 2019

- The National Joint Council (NJC) for Local Authority Fire and Rescue Services had agreed the 2019 pay award for staff conditioned to the Grey Book terms and conditions of employment. This would result in a 2% increase effective from 1 July 2019.

Tri-Service Insight Day

- The RBFRS hosted the second tri-service Careers Insight Day, aimed at those leaving the Armed Forces, on the 10 September 2019. During the event, attendees watched presentations from each of the three Services, finding out about career options and the ways in which each emergency service could benefit them in the future. This demonstrated RBFRS's ongoing commitment to supporting employment pathways for members of the Armed Forces as set out in the Armed Forces Covenant.

Biker Down Workshops

- The service hosted its first Biker Down workshop in Berkshire, at Wokingham Fire Station on the 5 October 2019. The workshop was designed to help attendees learn the practical skills of what to do at a crash involving a motorcyclist. The courses were delivered by Fire and Rescue Service staff from across the Thames Valley, at local fire stations. The next course would be held at Newbury Fire Station on 26 October 2019.

Laptop Donation

- RBFRS handed over 20 laptops to Ridgeway Primary School in Whitley, Reading, to assist the learning experience of young pupils on the 26 September 2019. The laptops were replaced as part of the Service's equipment replacement process which was planned to take place every three to four years. In donating the equipment the Service had minimised harm to the environment by extending the usable life of the equipment and avoided costly recycling processes.

Maidenhead Staff complete 200km Charity Bike Ride

- Staff based at Maidenhead Fire Station raised almost £3,000 for two worthy charities after completing a bike ride that began in Maidenhead and ended in Ypres, in Belgium, a journey totalling 200 kilometres. The bike ride took place between the 14 and 17 October, with donations and sponsorship received going towards Alexander Devine Children's Hospice Service, a local charity that supported children with life-limiting and life-threatening conditions, as well as The Fire Fighters Charity. The Chairman congratulated all those that had taken part in the event.

21. QUESTIONS FROM MEMBERS UNDER STANDING ORDER 30

There were no questions from Members under Standing Order 30.

22. NOTICES OF MOTION UNDER STANDING ORDER 44

There were no Notices of Motion under Standing Order 44.

23. PRESENTATION ON HMICFRS

Trevor Ferguson (CFO) gave a presentation to Fire Authority which provided an update on the inspection regime of HMICFRS (Her Majesty's Inspectorate of Constabulary and Fire & Rescue Services). He highlighted the following points in his presentation:

- RBFRS was inspected in Tranche 2 and the report was published in the Summer of 2019. The Service was rated Good in all three main pillars – Effectiveness, Efficiency and People. Fire and Rescue Services were graded as either Inadequate, Requires Improvement, Good or Outstanding.
- HMICFRS highlighted no Causes for Concern for RBFRS.
- RBFRS would continue to drive further improvements whilst still seeking to achieve the necessary savings to balance the budget.
- Inspection fieldwork for Tranche 3 had been completed and draft reports would be forwarded to those Services over the next week prior to being

published in December. The first “State of Fire” annual assessment of all Fire & Rescue Services in England would be published alongside Tranche 3 reports.

- HMICFRS had today begun formal consultation on proposals for round 2 inspections. The expectation was that the round 2 inspection for the RBFRS would be held in the autumn/winter of 2020/21.
- Assuming an autumn/winter inspection then the fieldwork/data collection process for RBFRS would be held with the HMICFRS over the spring/summer of 2020.
- RBFRS would retain its present HMI - Matt Parr, but the Service would be allocated a new Service Liaison Lead. Katie Mills (HCS) would continue as the RBFRS internal Service Liaison Officer.
- The round 2 inspection would clearly place an additional burden on RBFRS. It is a lean organisation which will also be delivering a number of complex projects in 2020. These include the embedding of the new service delivery model; phases 3 and 4 of the RBFRS Grenfell Plan; an extensive range of collaboration projects; new ways of working processes; and system improvement projects.

Councillor Paul Gittings was concerned that there was to be such a swift return by HMICFRS. He queried the impact of this on resources – could additional resources be deployed? What costs were anticipated?

The CFO reiterated that this would place additional demand upon officers. It would likely result in a delay to some areas of work/improvements being planned.

Councillor Jo Lovelock queried if this would become an annual inspection as this would be of concern. The CFO explained that the purpose of the round 2 inspections was for the HMICFRS to gain additional confidence in the performance of Fire and Rescue Services. Assuming this additional confidence was achieved then it was the expectation that the inspection regime would be less frequent.

Councillor Colin Dudley referred to a presentation given by the HMICFRS at a recent combined Fire Authority Conference. This suggested a greater focus on governance in round 2 and he asked whether further information was available on that. The CFO explained that this was referenced in the consultation document which stated that governance might need to be specifically focussed on if concerns were identified from the inspection process.

RESOLVED that the presentation be noted.

24. INDEPENDENT REVIEW OF MEMBERS’ ALLOWANCES AND SCHEME OF ALLOWANCES 2020/21

The Chairman explained that there was a statutory requirement for the allowances to be reviewed at least every four years by an independent panel. As in previous years the Service had appointed South East Employers (SEE) to undertake the review.

Graham Britten (MO) introduced the report. He thanked Katie Mills and Fayth Rowe for all the work they had done to manage the review and he also thanked

those Members that participated in it.

SEE had not recommended many changes to the scheme. The most significant changes were:

- a recommendation to recalibrate the Basic Allowance. This had resulted in a small increase from £2,311 to £2,484 to reflect the average gross daily salary of full time employees residing in Berkshire which was £138 per day.
- Members' allowances should be indexed to the annual local government salary increase. It was noted that the recommendation was that implementation date be the Annual meeting date. Officers were recommending that this be amended to be effective from the start of the financial year.

The Monitoring Officer noted that there was an error on page 45 of the agenda. The Chairman's Allowance should state £12,420 and not £12,240 as listed in the table.

Councillor Simon Werner expressed concerns about increasing the Basic Allowance. Councillor Werner stated that austerity was still a factor and he was concerned about the message that the increase would send to staff. Councillor Jeff Brooks stated that Members could determine if they wished to accept or reject the recommendations. Councillor Paul Gittings thanked Officers and SEE for the work undertaken on the review. He stated that he had felt uneasy about the increase when staff were only being awarded a 2% increase. He felt that it was iniquitous that Members were obliged to set their own rate of pay. Councillor Rachelle Shepherd-DuBey felt that the increase should be aligned to the increase received by the fire fighters.

Members were reminded that, as individuals, they could forego the increase. Councillor Pauline Helliar-Symons reiterated that the proposal was based on the advice of an independent panel. Councillor David Cannon stated that the Fire Authority had invested money in order to receive the advice. He questioned why the Fire Authority had invested in the process if it did not want to accept the recommendations. Councillor Dexter Smith commented that because of the low base the percentage increase looked bigger. The recommendation was aligned to the average full time daily rate for employees resident in Berkshire. Comparative data from other Fire Authorities had also been factored in.

The Chairman commented that he understood Members' reticence to look at their own allowances. He did, however, feel that overturning the recommendations of the independent panel would set a dangerous precedent. They had taken a lot of information into account in coming to their decision and he therefore urged Members to accept the recommendations

RESOLVED that:

1. The findings of the Independent Review of the Royal Berkshire Fire Authority Scheme of Allowances be noted.
2. The recommendations of the Independent Review be agreed, with the exception that the indexation references in paragraphs 78 and 79 be effective from the start of the financial year.
3. The Scheme of Allowances, as amended in respect of the Chairman's Allowance, as set out in Appendix B be approved.

25. MEMBER DEVELOPMENT UPDATE 2014/19 AND MEMBER DEVELOPMENT STRATEGY 2020/23

Councillor Pauline Helliard-Symons, Lead Member, introduced the report which provided an update on Member development activities for the Strategy period 2017 to 2019, and which sought agreement of the Member Development Strategy for the period covering 2020 to 2023.

The Member Development Strategy was very important in keeping Members up to date on all aspects of the Authority's work and in ensuring there was a full understanding of the issues being faced by the Service.

Councillor Helliard-Symons turned to the covering report and highlighted the following points:

- She gave thanks to Group Leaders for conducting 1:1s with their Members.
- The inductions held for new Members earlier in the year were well received and went very well.
- She encouraged new Members to make use of their Officer Buddy to help support their understanding of the Authority.
- She thanked the Member Development Task and Finish Group for their work in reviewing the 2017-2019 Member Development Strategy and in developing the new Strategy.
- Finally, Councillor Helliard-Symons gave particular thanks to Katie Mills and Fayth Rowe for all her hard work in this area.

Councillor Helliard-Symons proposed that the Member Development Strategy be adopted for 2020-2023 and subject to Member approval of the Strategy the Action Plan will be updated. This was seconded by Councillor Colin Dudley.

Councillor Jo Lovelock praised the induction process which had been very useful.

Councillor Jeff Brooks found the Member Strategy Workshops very helpful, in particular their interactive nature. This was an important adjunct to the Member Development Strategy.

Councillor Dudley highlighted the importance of Member development. This was necessary to ensure that strong governance was in place.

Councillor Helliard-Symons concluded the item by thanking those Members who completed the Member Development Survey. The points made would be taken on board as part of the roll out of the Member Development Strategy 2020-2023.

RESOLVED that the Fire Authority:

1. Adopts the Member Development Strategy for 2020 to 2023.
2. Notes the activities undertaken as a result of the Member development Strategy 2017 to 2019 and Action Plan.

26. ANNUAL TREASURY MANAGEMENT REVIEW

Conor Byrne (HF&P) introduced the report which set out the Annual Treasury Report for 2018/19 and also set out the mid-year position for 2019/20.

The Authority is not in position to invest over the medium / long term due to the need to fund the capital programme from reserves. He noted that interest of £102k had been received in 2018/19. This was £22k higher than had been budgeted for. This was primarily due to the better than expected bank rate and also the additional investment made during 2018/19. The estimated income from interest for 2019/20 was £125k.

Councillor Paul Gittings was concerned what impact the 1% increase to the Public Loans Work Board interest rates would have on future borrowing. The H&FP stated that this was a significant increase and was not good news. However, it might be a short term measure and the rates might have lowered again when the Authority needed to borrow money again. The impact of the increase on the capital programme would be monitored and a report would be taken to the January 2020 Audit and Governance Committee meeting. The Chairman commented there was a degree of volatility in this area and because the RBFRS was a lower quartile precepting authority this could affect it disproportionately.

RESOLVED that the Fire Authority:

1. Notes the Annual Treasury Report for 2018/19
2. Notes the Mid-Year Treasury Management Update for 2019/20

27. LEAD MEMBER REPORTS – SIX MONTH UPDATE

RESOLVED that the six month update reports from the Lead Members be noted.

28. FORWARD PLAN

RESOLVED that the Royal Berkshire Fire Authority's Forward Plan for the period 4 November 2019 to 29 April 2020 be noted.

29. MINUTES OF THE STANDING COMMITTEES

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

30. DATE OF THE NEXT MEETING

Monday, 24 February 2020, 6.30pm in the Lynda Kenyon Suite, RBFRS Headquarters, Newsham Court, Pincents Kiln, Calcot, Reading, Berkshire RG31 7SD.

Officers noted that a special meeting would also be required and it was proposed that this takes place on the 20 January 2020, 6.30pm in the Lynda Kenyon Suite, RBFRS Headquarters, Newsham Court, Pincents Kiln, Calcot, Reading, Berkshire RG31 7SD.

(The meeting concluded at 7.30pm)