

MINUTES OF THE MEETING OF THE ROYAL BERKSHIRE FIRE AUTHORITY



Held on Monday 25 February 2019 at 6.30pm

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

- Members:**
- * Councillor Malcolm Alexander
 - * Councillor Alistair Auty
 - * Councillor Christine Bateson
 - * Councillor Phillip Bicknell
 - * Councillor Jason Brock
 - * Councillor Jeff Brooks
 - * Councillor Paul Bryant
 - * Councillor Colin Dudley
 - * Councillor Adrian Edwards
 - * Councillor Jan Gavin
 - * Councillor Paul Gittings
 - * Councillor Pauline Helliard-Symons
 - Councillor Iain McCracken
 - Councillor Tina McKenzie-Boyle
 - * Councillor Satpal Parmar
 - Councillor Ted Plenty
 - * Councillor Dexter Smith
 - * Councillor Angus Ross
 - * Councillor Rachelle Shepherd-DuBey
 - * Councillor Emma Webster
 - Councillor Simon Werner

- In Attendance:**
- Graham Britten (Monitoring Officer, MO)
 - Conor Byrne (Head of Finance and Procurement, HF&P)
 - Tony Deacon (Temporary Area Manager Service Delivery, T/AM SD)
 - Trevor Ferguson (Chief Fire Officer, CFO)
 - Steve Foye (Deputy Chief Fire Officer, DCFO)
 - Becci Jefferies (Head of Human Resources, Learning and Development, HHRLD)
 - Simon Jefferies (Assistant Chief Fire Officer, ACFO)
 - Katie Mills (Head of Corporate Services, HCS)
 - Jim Powell (Area Manager Response Operational Assurance and Resilience, AM ROAR)
 - Linda Pye (Committee Officer)
 - Nikki Richards (Director of Support Services, DSS)
 - Fayth Rowe (Democratic Support Lead, DSL)
 - Tony Vincent (Head of Business and Information Systems, HBIS)

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

Action

53. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Apologies for inability to attend the meeting had been received from Councillors Jan Gavin, Iain McCracken, Tina McKenzie-Boyle and Ted Plenty.

54. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

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

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

There were no Declarations of Interest received from Officers.

55. MINUTES OF THE MEETING HELD ON 19 NOVEMBER 2018

RESOLVED that the Minutes of the meeting held on 19 November 2018 be approved as a true and correct record and signed by the Chairman.

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

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

57. RECEIPT OF ANNOUNCEMENTS

The Chairman made the following announcements:

Councillor Bicknell

- The Fire Authority would be looking at agenda Item 12 – Appointment of Committees later in the meeting, however, after 12 years as a Fire Authority Member, sadly, Councillor Bicknell would be standing down from the Fire Authority on 28 February 2019. He would be irreplaceable!
- He had been the Fire Authority's Lead Member for Budget and Income Generation for three years and one of the Directors of the Training Company for a number of years.
- The Chairman took the opportunity to officially thank him for all his hard work, particularly in his role as Lead Member for Budget and Income Generation and wished him every success in the future. Councillor Bicknell had seen the authority through some rocky times and the people of Berkshire should be grateful for that. He hoped that Councillor Bicknell would return to the Fire Authority at some stage in the future.
- Royal Borough of Windsor and Maidenhead had appointed a new Member onto the Fire Authority. Councillor Simon Werner was no stranger to the Authority as he had previously served as a Member between 2003 and 2006. Councillor Werner would take up his position on

1 March 2019 and the Fire Authority looked forward to meeting him on arrival.

HMICFRS Inspection completed

- The Fire Authority welcomed 10 HMICFRS inspectors into the Service on the week beginning 28 January 2019.
- The inspectors visited, or spoke to, someone from almost every Team, Station or Department in the Service. It was clear from the feedback so far that staff went to great lengths to extend a warm and professional welcome. Keith Carruthers, the Service's HMICFRS Service Liaison, also wanted to pass on the thanks of the inspectors, for the warm welcome they had received.
- The hot debrief did not indicate any cause for concern, although the official outcome was not yet known, but it was anticipated that the full report would be received in June 2019. The Chairman recognised the amount of work which had been undertaken leading up to the inspection which had often involved working late nights. He thanked everyone who helped with the Inspection and who had made the Inspectors feel so welcome.

Assistant Chief Fire Officer and Area Manager Interviews

- The selection process for the Assistant Chief Fire Officer (ACFO) and Area Manager positions was now well underway, with interviews concluding on 12 March 2019.
- Current ACFO Simon Jefferies would be retiring after 30 years of service at the end of June, and therefore the Fire Authority would be saying farewell to him at the next Fire Authority meeting on 29 April 2019.

Awards Ceremony Nominations

- The Nominations for the next Awards Ceremony were now open. Nominations were very important to staff, even if they did not win it was still important to them to have been nominated.
- The Chairman urged all Members to consider submitting a nomination for an individual or a team that they felt had gone the extra mile to serve the people of Berkshire. This was a difficult task as so many members of staff went the extra mile.
- It was very straight forward to do, nomination forms were available at the back of the room. Completed forms should be returned to a member of staff. Alternatively, please email the events team at events@rbfrs.co.uk
- It only takes about five minutes to complete a nomination, but doing so could really mean a lot to the recipient, helping them to feel valued for the work they had done. The deadline for nominations was still yet to be determined, but he urged Members to give it some thought and to return nomination forms as soon as possible (within the next couple of weeks).

Road Traffic Collision on A322

- On Wednesday 20 February 2019 crews from Bracknell and Ascot had attended an incident on the A322 Bagshot Road in Bracknell involving an LGV that had collided with a motorcycle. On attendance they were

confronted by the dual challenge of the motorcycle being stuck under the van and being on fire as well as a severely injured motorcyclist needing immediate medical attention.

- The teams quickly stabilised the incident and importantly were able to make use of some of their Immediate Emergency Care (IEC) skills to give the rider the best possible immediate care. For a protracted period the teams continued to work in support of and alongside the subsequently attending ambulance crews and HEMS doctor.
- Both the Paramedics and Thames Valley Police team in attendance made a point of passing on their thanks to the crews for their assistance.
- The Chairman highlighted this incident as it showed how the new IEC skills, that teams were being trained in and that the Fire Authority had supported investment in, were adding real value to the response capability, improving the service offered to the public and developing how we worked alongside and in support of colleagues in the ambulance and police services.
- The Chairman was sure that Members would join him in registering thanks to the teams for their work at this particular incident, alongside the many other incidents the teams responded to across the County. They had done an heroic job on the evening but the Chairman stated that he had not received any details on the outcome as yet.

Part II Urgent Item

- It was noted that as Chairman, he had agreed to accept a Part II urgent item on Pension Administration as part of the agenda that evening by virtue of section 100A (4) Paragraphs 3 and 5 of Schedule 12A and 100B (4) (b) of the Local Government Act 1972.

58. QUESTIONS FROM MEMBERS UNDER STANDING ORDER 30

There were no questions from Members under Standing Order 30.

59. NOTICES OF MOTION UNDER STANDING ORDER 44

There were no Notices of Motion under Standing Order 44.

60. RECOMMENDATIONS OF COMMITTEES

The Fire Authority noted that the following agenda items had been recommended by the Audit and Governance Committee on 11th December 2018:

Item 10 – Pay Policy Statement

Item 11 – Statement of Assurance

The Fire Authority noted that the following agenda item had been recommended by the Management Committee on 5th February 2019:

Item 13 – 2019/20 Member Scheme of Allowances Review

61. PAY POLICY STATEMENT

Becci Jefferies, Head of HR and Learning and Development, (HHRLD), presented a report which set out that Section 38(1) of the Localism Act 2011 required Royal Berkshire Fire Authority to prepare and publish a Pay Policy Statement each financial year. The statement included information on remuneration for all staff as defined by the Act.

The draft Pay Policy Statement for the Royal Berkshire Fire Authority for 2019/20 was set out in Appendix A of the report. The draft statement had been presented to the Audit and Governance Committee on 11th December 2018 for consideration. The Committee made no recommendations for amendments to the contents and agreed to recommend to the full Fire Authority its approval. Whilst it had not been necessary to amend the format of the Pay Policy Statement for 2019/20 a number of updates had been included and were detailed in the report.

The NJC had issued a Pay Agreement for 2018/19 that introduced a two percent pay increase for staff on Local Government Service conditions effective from 1st April 2018. This included the introduction of new Spinal Column Points effective from 1st April 2019 to address the impact on local government employers of the National Living Wage.

Details of the apprenticeship pay scales had been included in the 2019/20 Pay Policy Statement.

Following a decision by the Management Committee in October 2018, a consultation exercise on reducing the redundancy provisions available to those with access to the Local Government Pension Scheme was being undertaken. Subject to the outcome of this consultation, the Pay Policy Statement would be altered to reflect the change from two times statutory weeks based on actual pay to one and a half times statutory weeks based on actual pay.

Employer contribution rates for the Firefighter pension schemes for 2019 were currently unknown but indications suggested there would be a significant increase which would be updated in the Pay Policy Statement to reflect the situation at the time of publication.

Approval of the Pay Policy Statement was proposed by Councillor Colin Dudley and seconded by Councillor Pauline Helliard-Symons and was agreed unanimously.

RESOLVED that:

- The Pay Policy Statement for 2019/20, subject to any further amendments considered appropriate and the required updates as detailed in section 3.7 and 3.8 be approved.

62. STATEMENT OF ASSURANCE

Katie Mills, Head of Corporate Services (HCS), presented a report which set out the Statement of Assurance which formally confirmed the adequacy of arrangements for the effective management of financial, governance and operational matters in Royal Berkshire Fire and Rescue Service.

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This was the sixth annual Statement of Assurance that the RBFA had issued. In the current year the preparation of the Statement of Assurance had been aligned to the self-assessment process for Her Majesty's Inspection of Fire and Rescue Services, to ensure consistency of approach.

The internal assessment which was conducted by the Fire Authority against the Framework criteria produced the following summary judgements:

- Financial – requirements associated with the appropriate management of financial matters were **fully met**. Evidence to support this was set out in Appendix B.
- Governance - requirements associated with appropriate business practice, high standards of conduct and sound governance were **fully met**. Evidence to support this judgement and information on identified areas for improvement were set out in Appendix C.
- Operational - requirements associated with operational matters were **fully met**. Evidence to support this judgement and information on identified areas for improvement were set out in Appendix D.
- National Framework – requirements associated with the Fire and Rescue National Framework for England (July 2012) had been **fully met** as set out in Appendix E. This assessment was based on the judgements set out in Appendices B to D.

Further assurance was provided via audit activities and these were completed by an external company. Appendix F set out a list of audits carried out in 2017/18.

Councillor Colin Dudley noted that once a year it was necessary to produce the Annual Statement of Assurance which provided some scrutiny on how the Fire Authority spent taxpayers' money. He proposed approval of the Statement of Assurance for 2017/18 and this was seconded by Councillor Pauline Helliari-Symons.

Councillor Paul Bryant stated that he was pleased to note that all areas had been 'fully met' and that there was nothing negative in the Statement.

Councillor Jeff Brooks agreed that the outcomes were reassuring. However, he felt that it would have been useful to have indicated in the report who the auditors were. He referred to page 48 of the agenda Item 1 in the table which referred to individual development plans for Members. This would take up a lot of time and cost and he felt that sometimes this was an area which was often 'over cooked'. When he became a Member of the Fire Authority no-one had told him what his duties were but understood that he was a representative of members of the public and he had a responsibility to take part in the decision-making of the Fire Authority. He agreed that the Statement of Assurance was reassuring in that all aspects had been fully met. Councillor Colin Dudley referred to the comments around Member development and the fact that some authorities paid lip service to this but the Fire Service had signed up to the Member Development Strategy and Action Plan. All Members had received a one to one and an assessment of their development needs. It was not necessary to replicate what local authorities were doing in terms of Member development but the Fire Authority was slightly different and feedback received from Members was that it had been extremely valuable. Councillor Pauline Helliari-Symons

confirmed that the induction for all new Members would concentrate on the role of the Fire Authority. She was also pleased with the consistency evidenced in the report.

RESOLVED that:

- The summary judgements within the Statement of Assurance for each of the four key areas of Finance, Governance, Operations and delivering the National Framework were noted;
- The RBFA Statement of Assurance 2017/18 be approved for signature by the Chairman of the Fire Authority and the Chairman of the Audit and Governance Committee for publication.

63. APPOINTMENT OF COMMITTEES AND LEAD MEMBERS

Graham Britten, Monitoring Officer (MO), presented a report which noted the new Member nomination of Councillor Simon Werner by the Royal Borough of Windsor & Maidenhead on to Royal Berkshire Fire Authority. The Fire Authority made appointments to Committees in accordance to the rules relating to political balance; and to appoint a Budget and Income Generation Lead Member.

A completed table 4 had been circulated at the meeting which indicated that Councillor Simon Werner would sit on the Audit and Governance Committee. However, at present it was proposed to keep the post of Budget and Income Generation Lead Member vacant for the time being.

The report was proposed by Councillor Colin Dudley and seconded by Councillor Phillip Bicknell.

RESOLVED that:

- The appointment of Councillor Werner onto the Authority with effect from and including 1 March 2019 was noted;
- It was noted that Councillor Bicknell would step down from the Authority and his membership would terminate at midnight on 28 February 2019;
- The political balance of the Authority with effect from and including 1 March 2019 as set out in Table 1 be noted;
- The allocation of seats amongst the political groups on the Management Committee and the Audit and Governance Committee (Tables 2 and 3) with effect from and including 1 March 2019 was noted;
- The appointment, with effect from and including 1 March 2019, of nominations received for the seats on the Audit and Governance and Management Committees (Table 4) be approved;
- The role of Budget and Income Generation Lead Member would remain vacant at present and would be appointed to at a later date.

64. MEMBERS' SCHEME OF ALLOWANCES ANNUAL REVIEW

Graham Britten, Monitoring Officer (MO), presented a report which set out the 2019/20 Member Scheme of Allowances and which was presented to the Fire Authority for approval. The Fire Authority was also asked to note the recommendations of each of the six unitary authority Independent Remuneration Panels (IRPs) to their respective councils.

In July 2018 the National Joint Council (NJC) Government Services had reached a two year pay agreement for staff employed under the 'Green Book' terms and conditions to receive a 2% increase in April 2018 and April 2019. Members were also asked to note the recommendations of each IRP set out in the Scheme of Allowances. The basic allowance was indexed linked to staff pay and therefore Appendix A reflected the 2% increase in Members Scheme of Allowances which would be effective from 1st April 2019.

Councillor Jason Brock confirmed that Labour Members had abstained from the vote when this item was discussed at Management Committee and would vote against it at this meeting due to the methodology which had been used. An allowance was not a salary and he therefore could not see why they had to be index linked to staff salaries.

Councillor Colin Dudley appreciated the comments made by Councillor Brock but he stated that the Fire Authority had to undertake an independent assessment and South East Employers had been brought in to do that. The important thing to note was that a 2% increase would raise allowances by £300 in total which was not unacceptable. The allowances budget was often underspent due to the fact that some Members did not take all of their allowances and therefore he was minded to support the proposal.

The agreement to the recommendations set out in the report was proposed by Councillor Colin Dudley and seconded by Councillor Christine Bateson. The vote was carried on the vote – 11 Members voted for, 3 Members voted against and the two Liberal Democrat Members abstained from the vote.

RESOLVED that:

- The 2% increase to the 2019/20 Member Scheme of Allowances (appended as Appendix A) effective from 1 April 2019 be approved.

65. ANNUAL BUDGET 2019/2020 AND MEDIUM TERM FINANCIAL PLAN

Councillor Colin Dudley, Chairman gave a comprehensive introduction to the report covering the budget survey, capital investment programme and strategic asset investment framework.

Conor Byrne, Head of Finance and Procurement (HOF), said that building on the Chairman's opening remarks he would give some more detail around actual funding levels for 2019/20 and the assumptions for funding over the subsequent three years. Cost pressures and income generation would also be explored before looking at the overall impact on the revenue budget over the medium term. He would then give an overview of the updated SAIF and its funding implications in terms of reserves and borrowing, both of which

were captured in the Reserves and Treasury Strategies.

Funding: In terms of Council Tax the previous year's MTFP assumed that there would be growth in the council tax base of 2% for 2019/20. In fact, the average rate across Berkshire was only 1.4%. That said, growth varied between unitary authorities with the lowest growth rate being 0.2% and the highest being 2.6%. The effect of this reduced growth rate was that precept income would be £140,000 lower than that forecast in last year's plan. Furthermore, in 2018/19 the council tax collection fund surplus was £110,000 whereas for 2019/20 there would be an overall deficit of £88,000.

The business rates surplus for 2019/20 was £885,000 which was below the previous year's surplus of £955,000. This was due to a collection fund deficit on business rates of £125,000. In addition, as noted above, there was variability in terms of business rates growth amongst the six unitary authorities. This general uncertainty and the possible impacts from Brexit made it difficult to build in projections for business rates surpluses going forward.

He referred to page 21 of the budget pack, and in particular the table at the bottom of the page, which showed actual funding for 2019/20 and projected funding for the three subsequent years. The projections were based on a balanced collection fund for council tax across Berkshire unitaries, council tax growth of 1.5% rather than the previously assumed 2% and a fall in the business rates surplus to £400,000. The latter was based on the resetting of the business rates baseline from 2020/21.

The changes in assumptions compared to the previous year's MTFP highlight the volatility between the Authority's different income streams as well as the variation amongst unitary authorities.

Cost Pressures: Turning to the expenditure side of the revenue budget there continued to be significant cost pressures. Over the last few years, budget reports to the Fire Authority had stressed that pay awards of 1% were becoming increasingly difficult to sustain. The last couple of years had seen significant developments in terms of negotiations around pay awards for both uniformed and non-uniformed staff. One of the catalysts for this change had been the uplift in inflation. At present, there was an ongoing national dispute with the FBU in relation to pay, with a proposal from the trade union to increase pay by 17%. Any such pay increase without significantly increased funding would be unaffordable for this Authority. Ultimately the level of pay would be determined by the NJC but RBFPS had been clear to the NJC, Trade Unions and the Minister that this level of pay increase was unaffordable at present. Building in pay increases of 2% into the MTFP had had a significant impact: each additional 1% increase in pay added over £250,000 to the base budget.

A significant development over the last year was that from 2019/20 the Authority faced a very steep increase in employer contributions in relation to the Firefighter pension schemes. This was because the Government had made two changes to the discount rate used to estimate pension liabilities but also because there had been a breach in the cost cap in relation to the 2015 Scheme. The first change to the discount rate, costing £404,000, had already been built into the MTFP as it had been known about since 2016. The second change in the discount rate and the cost cap breach would cost

the Authority £1.47 million annually. For 2019/20, the Government had said it would reimburse this additional cost but from 2020/21 any funding for increased pension costs would be considered as part of the new Fire Funding Formula and local government settlement.

The third major cost pressure related to the four-phase plan to deal with the additional workload post Grenfell. Recruitment of additional resources had taken place and specialist training programmes had been established to ensure staff development and competence. The recurring costs had been built into the MTFP: £200,000 had been built into the budget for 2018/19, which would rise to £400,000 in 2019/20 and £600,000 in 2020/21.

Income/Savings: Offsetting these cost pressures were the £2.4m of savings being generated from the Efficiency Plan. £1.1m of savings had already been delivered from the service redesign. Savings from the disestablishment of the RSU and the remotely managed stations project would be delivered during 2019/20. Pangbourne fire station would close once the new fire station at Theale was operational whilst the decision to close Wargrave had been deferred until later in 2019. In addition to the Efficiency Plan savings, Officers had identified further savings and income. The re-introduction of cross-border charging should deliver an additional £80k in income whilst costs should fall by £80k as a result of business rates appeals in relation to the authority's fire stations.

Overall Impact on Revenue Budget: As the Chairman stated at the start there would be a deficit in the revenue budget for 2019/20 of £458,000 which would need to be funded from the Budget Contingency Reserve. This was based on a precept increase of 2.99% for 2019/20. Further savings of £422,000 would need to be found during the coming year if the budget was to be balanced by 2020/21. However, it should be noted that there was a great deal of uncertainty regarding funding levels for 2020/21 due to a new Comprehensive Spending Review, a new fire funding formula and changes to business rates.

SAIF: Turning to capital, the updated SAIF was shown in appendix C. It was split into four phases over 15 years. Phase 1 of the capital framework showed provision for Theale fire station as well as the rebuilding of Caversham Road fire station. There was also provision for the refurbishment of the training centre at Whitley Wood and the re-build of Crowthorne fire station. The Fire Authority was also being asked to approve the purchase of another four fire appliances on top of the eleven that had already been approved. This would mean that all wholtime appliances would have been renewed.

Based on the costs set out in this document and the assumptions set out in the MTFP, the Phase 1 building projects together with continuing investment in fleet and ICT could be delivered through the use of earmarked reserves, capital receipts and additional borrowing. The revenue costs of financing the additional borrowing had been factored into the MTFP but it should be remembered that if MTFP assumptions proved too optimistic or the capital costs of projects were more than anticipated then the quantum of capital works might have to be revisited. Furthermore, without additional funding streams, the ability of the Fire Authority to continue to invest beyond 2023/24 in its fire stations would be severely restricted, as earmarked

reserves and capital receipts would have been expended.

Treasury Strategy: The Authority's Treasury Strategy was set out in Appendix E and was linked to the provisional expenditure in the SAIF. It showed that the Authority would be reliant on borrowing from 2020/21 with the financing costs of that borrowing hitting the revenue account from 2021/22. Financing costs were made up of interest payments and provision to repay loans which was governed by the MRP policy statement on page 78 of the budget pack. Given that the Authority would be reducing its reserves by £7.8m during 2019/20, the Authority's investment priorities would be security first, portfolio liquidity second and only then would yield be considered.

Reserves: The Authority's Reserves Policy was set out in Appendix D. The General Reserve was projected to be £2.3m at the start of 2019/20. The risks of unbudgeted expenditure that might have to be funded from the General Reserve were set out on page 53 of the budget pack. The major risks revolved around pensions, pay and industrial action as well as cost increases due to Brexit.

As previously mentioned, earmarked reserves were forecast to fall by over £7.8m during 2019/20 mainly due to the funding of the capital programme. Movements in reserves up until March 2023 were shown in the table on page 57.

Other Appendices: In terms of other appendices, Fees and Charges for 2019/20 were shown in Appendix F whilst the TVFCS Budget was shown in Appendix G. The Authority's share of the TVFCS Revenue Budget for 2019/20 amounted to £856,000 plus a £50,000 contribution to the Renewals Fund. The Renewals Fund currently stood at just over £1.4m.

Finally, Appendix A contained the Budget Resolution to increase the precept by 2.99% which would make the Band D precept £66.28 per annum in 2019/20. As the Chairman stated earlier, 89.87% of respondents to the Fire Authority's consultation were supportive of this increase.

Councillor Jeff Brooks asked if the Chairman would be taking recommendations one by one or as a whole. The Chairman responded that he was not intending to take them individually. Councillor Brooks suggested that recommendations 2.1 and 2.2 should be taken individually with the rest being taken on block. Councillor Angus Ross also felt that recommendation 2.7 should be voted on separately. The Chairman agreed that four separate votes would be taken but stated that there would one debate for all of the recommendations.

Councillor Paul Gittings thanked Conor Byrne for his detailed analysis and briefing which had been helpful. Overall he supported the thrust of the recommendations as the Fire Authority owed it to the people of Berkshire to have a properly funded service. He too agreed that it was excellent value for money and he equated it to the charge for the green waste collection which had been introduced by some local authorities as it was a useful comparison. The increase in precept would help to fund better pay for staff which had stood still for years and he felt that 2% was the least they deserved. It was good to see that no more station closures were proposed but Wargrave would be a budget pressure. Cuts to fire services across the country amounted to £155m which would have a significant impact and

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should not be allowed to continue as it would result in increased risks to life and property. He felt that austerity had gone on too long and was impacting on local services which included Fire, Police and local authorities. Brexit would also have an impact with businesses leaving the area which would affect the level of business rates collected. Perhaps the Fire Authority should have planned more effectively in relation to local government funding as reserves could only be used once.

Councillor Gittings said that it was great news that it was proposed that the wholetime fleet would be replaced but he had concerns that the investment programme subsequent to Phase 1 was currently unfunded and was therefore in doubt. It was noted that on evidence of the business case, Members decided not to move forwards with the proposed collaborative project at Whitley Wood, as it did not provide best value and he felt that this was the precursor of things to come. He noted the need for the £5 for fire and he confirmed that he would lobby the Labour MPs as he recognised that there needed to be a change in direction from Government to stop cuts in public services.

Councillor Jeff Brooks felt uncomfortable with a 2.99% increase but he felt that overall the budget was sensible and he would be supporting recommendation 2.1. However, he was not so happy with the Strategic Asset Investment Framework in 2.2. Borrowing had increased considerably which was not sustainable and he therefore confirmed that he would be abstaining from the vote on recommendation 2.2. In terms of General Reserves this currently sat at 7%. He noted that local authority levels were around 5% and there was a tolerance of around £500k so he confirmed that he would support a slight reduction in reserves.

Councillor Angus Ross referred to the Strategic Asset Investment Framework and stated that having a long term vision was sound but all shared the concerns about the ability to meet the programme long term. The Government needed to recognise that fire authorities needed capital investment especially with the focus around collaborative work. He admitted that Whitley Wood proved not to be viable but it was not possible to define funding at this stage.

Councillor Jason Brock confirmed that he would be supporting the Strategic Asset Investment Framework. Using the Council Tax model as a basis of funding would mean that the fire authority would be perpetually stuck in this situation based on population as there was a significant amount of the area was rural in nature. It was therefore necessary to consider how investment in assets etc. could be funded in future. He did commend the lobbying which had already been undertaken but he felt that fundamental changes needed to be made as to how the service was funded going forward.

Councillor Phillip Bicknell said that it had been his privilege to have served the people of the Royal Borough of Windsor and Maidenhead and the wider communities of Royal Berkshire on the Fire Authority. He would look back with pride on the progress that had been made in delivering a more effective and efficient Fire Service for the residents, or as he like to call them, Mr and Mrs Miggins.

He was delighted to be leaving the authority on a budget of investment. A budget which continued to invest in critical front line services and the vital

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capital assets needed to do the job. During his time as Budget Lead Member, through the investment in the Authority, it had recruited 29 new Wholetime firefighters to ensure that there would always be 14 Wholetime pumping appliances available. It had also maintained its On Call/Retained budget to ensure that it had been able to recruit a further 38 Retained/On Call firefighters.

Following the tragic fire at Grenfell Tower Officers had been quickly supported following their request for additional resources. Consequently the number of highly skilled fire safety inspecting Officers had increased from 13 to 23. The Fire Authority had also secured access to additional technical and legal specialists to ensure the buildings of Berkshire were safe for everyone who lived and worked in Berkshire.

On the capital side the authority had moved from the second oldest pumping appliance fleet in the UK to a new, collaboratively procured, state of the art fleet. A new Aerial ladder Platform had been ordered and the authority was replacing and refurbishing its stations at a quicker rate than ever before.

As the Chairman had stated, all of this for just over £60 per year, or the same price that many residents paid to have their green waste bin collected.

In his opinion the prudent management of this authority had resulted in an incredibly efficient service, delivering more services for local communities, with better equipment than ever before. He believed that Mr and Mrs Miggins would have approved.

Councillor Colin Dudley referred to future funding and stated that it was necessary to deal with what the authority had to date. In terms of Council Tax, Business Rates and local authority funding the Fire Authority would continue to lobby Central Government and local MPs. If there was a change to the way Fire Authorities were funded then it could end up costing Mr. & Mrs. Miggins more. No-one wanted to pay tax but the fire service share was as low as it could be and he reiterated that £60 was a bargain and Members would need to make a decision whether they wanted to give firefighters the best fleet, equipment and training possible by supporting all of the recommendations.

MOTION: Proposed by Councillor Colin Dudley and seconded by Councillor Phillip Bicknell:

That the Fire Authority:

‘2.1 Approve an increase in the Council Tax precept of 2.99% by adopting the formal resolution in Appendix A and the Medium Term Financial Plan in Appendix B.’

FOR the Motion:

Councillors Malcolm Alexander, Alistair Auty, Christine Bateson, Phillip Bicknell, Jason Brock, Jeff Brooks, Paul Bryant, Colin Dudley, Adrian Edwards, Paul Gittings, Pauline Helliard-Symons, Satpal Parmar, Angus Ross, Rachelle Shepherd-DuBey, Dexter Smith and Emma Webster.

AGAINST the Motion:

None.

ABSTAINED:

None.

MOTION: Proposed by Councillor Colin Dudley and seconded by Councillor Phillip Bicknell:

That the Fire Authority:

‘2.2 Approve the Strategic Asset Investment Framework as set out in Appendix C.’

FOR the Motion:

Councillors Malcolm Alexander, Alistair Auty, Christine Bateson, Phillip Bicknell, Jason Brock, Paul Bryant, Colin Dudley, Adrian Edwards, Paul Gittings, Pauline Helliard-Symons, Satpal Parmar, Angus Ross, Dexter Smith and Emma Webster.

AGAINST the Motion:

None.

ABSTAINED:

Jeff Brooks, Rachelle Shepherd-DuBey.

MOTION: Proposed by Councillor Colin Dudley and seconded by Councillor Phillip Bicknell:

That the Fire Authority:

‘2.3 Agree the purchase of an additional four fire appliances in addition to the 11 that had already been approved;

2.4 Approve the Reserves Policy in Appendix D;

2.5 Approve the Prudential Indicators, Treasury Strategy and Investment Strategy set out in Appendix E;

2.6 Approve the fees and charges set out in Appendix F.’

FOR the Motion:

Councillors Malcolm Alexander, Alistair Auty, Christine Bateson, Phillip Bicknell, Jason Brock, Jeff Brooks, Paul Bryant, Colin Dudley, Adrian Edwards, Paul Gittings, Pauline Helliard-Symons, Satpal Parmar, Angus Ross, Rachelle Shepherd-DuBey, Dexter Smith and Emma Webster.

AGAINST the Motion:

None.

ABSTAINED:

None.

MOTION: Proposed by Councillor Colin Dudley and seconded by Councillor Phillip Bicknell:

That the Fire Authority:

‘2.7 Approve the TVFCS budget for 2019/20 as set out in Appendix G, including the contribution to the Renewals Fund of £50,000.’

FOR the Motion:

Councillors Malcolm Alexander, Alistair Auty, Christine Bateson, Phillip Bicknell, Jason Brock, Jeff Brooks, Paul Bryant, Colin Dudley, Adrian

Edwards, Paul Gittings, Pauline Helliard-Symons, Satpal Parmar, Angus Ross, Rachelle Shepherd-DuBey, Dexter Smith and Emma Webster.

AGAINST the Motion:

None.

ABSTAINED:

None.

RESOLVED that:

- An increase in the Council Tax precept of 2.99% by adopting the formal resolution in Appendix A and the Medium Term Financial Plan in Appendix B be approved;
- The Strategic Asset Investment Framework set out in Appendix C be approved;
- The purchase of an additional four fire appliances in addition to the 11 that had already been approved be agreed;
- The Reserves Policy in Appendix D be approved;
- The Prudential Indicators, Treasury Strategy and Investment Strategy set out in Appendix E be approved;
- The fees and charges set out in Appendix F be approved;
- The TVFCS budget for 2019/20 as set out in Appendix G, including the contribution to the Renewals Fund of £50,000 be approved.

66. FORWARD PLAN

RESOLVED that the Forward Plan for the period 11 March 2019 to 29 April 2019 be noted.

67. MINUTES OF THE STANDING COMMITTEES

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

68. DATE OF THE NEXT MEETING

Monday 29 April 2019, 6.30pm in the Lynda Kenyon Suite, RBFRS Headquarters, Newsham Court, Pincents Kiln, Calcot, Reading, Berkshire RG31 7SD.

69. EXCLUSION OF THE PRESS AND PUBLIC

RESOLVED 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 Item on the grounds that it involves the likely disclosure of exempt information, as defined in Paragraphs 1, 2, 3 and 4 of Part I of Schedule 12A of the said Act indicated and is exempt information if, and so long as, in all the circumstances of the case, the public interest in

maintaining the exemption outweighs the public interest in disclosing the information.

70. PENSION ADMINISTRATION UPDATE

Conor Byrne, Head of Finance and Procurement (HOFP), presented a confidential report.

RESOLVED that:

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

(The meeting concluded at 8.50pm)