

**MINUTES OF THE MEETING OF THE ROYAL BERKSHIRE FIRE  
AUTHORITY**



**Held on Wednesday 25 September 2013 at 7.30 pm**

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

**Members:**

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

**In Attendance:** Olaf Baars (Acting Chief Fire Officer, A/CFO) (Part meeting)  
Andy Haste (Head of Transport and Engineering, HTE)  
Andy Mancey (Acting Assistant Chief Fire Officer, A/CFO)  
Jacky Manning (Senior HR Adviser (Organisational Support (SHRA OS))  
Tracey Mitchell (Head of Health and Safety, HHS)  
Caroline Redzikowska (Director Corporate Services, DCS)  
Carolyn Rowe (Head of Corporate Services, HCS)  
Fayth Rowe (Committee Officer, CO)  
Paul Southern (Acting Deputy Chief Fire Officer, A/DCFO)  
Andrew Vallance (Director Resources, DR)

**Observers:** Officers, Royal Berkshire Fire and Rescue Service  
Representative Bodies

**425. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE**

Apologies for absence were received from Councillors Alistair Auty, Jeff Brooks, Diana Coad, Paul Gittings, John Lenton and Peter Jones.

**426. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST**

There were no Declarations of Interest received from Members and Officers. The DCS advised that the Fire Authority had granted a dispensation on Council Tax and Members Allowances at the annual meeting on 26 June 2013.

**Action**

**427. MINUTES OF THE MEETING HELD ON 31 JULY 2013**

**Resolved:**

That the Minutes of the meeting held on 31 July 2013 be Approved for signing by the Chairman.

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

There were no items received under standing orders 19 and 25, participation of the public.

**429. RECEIPT OF ANNOUNCEMENTS**

- a) The Chairman announced that the newly appointed Chief Fire Officer, Andy Fry was due to take up his post on 7 October 2013.
- b) The Chairman announced that it had been proposed that the next RBFA on 11 December 2013 start at 7.30 pm and that Party Group rooms would be available from 5.30 pm. He stated that the two hour party group meetings would provide an opportunity for members to consider the first draft of next year's (2014/15) budget.
- c) The Chairman invited the Acting Chief Fire Officer (A/CFO), Olaf Baars to update RBFA on the industrial strike action held earlier in the day. The A/CFO reported that since the FBU had announced the pension dispute, both uniformed and non-uniformed staff had worked hard towards achieving resilience. At 9.30 am on 25 September 2013 there had been 13 pumps on the run and there had been 10 pumps on the run during the industrial action, and RBFA had been able to deliver a service.

The A/CFO reported that the service had been delivered from secure remote premises. He advised that there had been difficulties in negotiating a local agreement with the FBU on life and limb cover, and it had been agreed yesterday (24 September 2013). A joint statement on conduct had not materialised.

The A/CFO reported that all Stations locally went on strike but there had been good resilience cover. He added that the resilience cover had been made up of the following:

- Resilience contracts
- Firefighters that were not on resilience contracts
- Emergency Fire Crew (who were trained members of the public that had responded to adverts in the local press)

The A/CFO paid tribute to all staff that had worked hard and provided good capability, and he also highlighted the success of the prevention message. A total of five calls had been received during the four hours of industrial action, but pumps had not been required to respond to any of these calls.

There had been one call from Thames Valley Police, two automatic fire alarms, one routine notification of a controlled burning, and a lift failure. A pump had been sent out to the person stuck in the lift after the strike action, and it was found that the person had already been released.

He stated that it had been a good dry run. He reported that the dispute between the Government and FBU had not been resolved.

The vice-Chairman, Cllr Pauline Helliard-Symons identified three groups of people who she wished to thank:

first, the Acting CFO -who had worked long and hard to put together the resilience arrangements which were a great credit to his organisation skills, and his colleagues who had pulled together and worked with him including on recruiting, training and preparing the safety awareness campaign;

second, all those who had volunteered to provide cover, including members of the public who had volunteered to be emergency fire crew; and

third, the public, who had by and large responded to the campaign and been consciously careful.

The vice-Chairman added that she hoped the level of care would be maintained, and concluded by paying tribute first and foremost to the Acting CFO and his colleagues.

Members showed their appreciation.

The A/CFO reported that both uniformed and non-uniformed staff had gone above and beyond the call of duty. He added that the initial number of the emergency fire crew had been low, however, as a result of a lengthier campaign; 72 applications had now been received and training would commence on 7 October 2013.

*The A/CFO left the meeting at this point.*

- d) Cllr Emma Webster announced that RBFRS officers attendance at the Royal County of Berkshire Show on 21<sup>st</sup> and 22<sup>nd</sup> September 2013 had been very successful. She wished to thank those officers who had shared a stand with the Firefighters' Charity, including Station Commander John Platt, Station 4 (Newbury Fire Station).

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

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

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

There were no questions from Members under Standing Order 30.

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

There were no notices of motion under Standing Order 44.

#### **433. RECOMMENDATIONS OF COMMITTEES**

##### **a) The new CFO package**

The Chairman announced that the Management Committee had received a report at their meeting on 16 September 2013 on the remuneration package for the Chief Fire Officer, Andy Fry.

He confirmed the new CFO package was as follows

Terms	Agreed terms	Notes
Salary -	£121,891	Range £104,600 - £127,840. The range has not been changed since 1 April 2009.
PO Rota Allowance	£8,069	This sum is the same for all 3 POs and has not been altered.
Car Allowance	£8,849	This sum is the same for all POs and for the CMO and Treasurer. Officers may opt for the money or take a lease car subject to the rules of the scheme which Members considered last year and earlier this year. The scheme and the scheme for all other officers is due to be reviewed next year. Neither the policy or the amount has altered from that existing prior to the commencement of the CFO recruitment process.
Fuel Card		Available to all POs.
Pension, Sickness and Annual Leave		These will be in accordance with existing RBFA policies.
Relocation Allowance	Up to £17,637	CFO Fry will be able to apply for the current RBFRS Relocation Allowance as his current normal place of residence is more than 50 miles away. The Allowance is paid in accordance with the existing policy and NJC circulars which set out what can and cannot be claimed (on production of receipts) and is subject to certain financial limits. Any payment maybe subject to HMRC tax rules.

**b) Management Committee 7 August 2013: Fleet Maintenance Arrangements**

Members noted that there was a part II item on the agenda (minute reference 445 refers).

**c) Audit and Governance 12 September 2013: Member Scheme of Allowances**

The Chairman introduced the item and referred to the South East Employers (SEE) recommendations, which included not to increase the RBFA Member allowances. He added that SEE also recommended reducing the vice-Chairman's and Champions' allowances and he **moved an amendment** regarding the vice-Chairman and Champions' allowances. He added that he accepted the recommendations of the Audit and Government Committee (outlined in the report) with these minor, cost neutral changes, as follows: **that the SRA for the posts of vice Chairman and Member Champion remain as before at £4,500 and £900 per annum respectively, and the removal of the proposed SRA for the DAG Chairman.** This was seconded by Cllr David Burbage.

Cllr Andrew Cumpsty highlighted that the independent SEE report stated that RBFA remained a low paying scheme, and stated that he was happy to support the recommendations as amended.

In answer to a question from Cllr Edward Plenty, the Chairman reported that the proposed amendment was cost neutral. The Chairman handed Cllr Plenty a copy of the tabled amendment. (*Table is attached as Appendix 1*)

Cllr David Burbage stated that the RBFA Chairman allowances were one of the lowest in the South East.

Cllr Tom McCann asked whether RBFA would consider the use of an Independent Remunerations Panel similar to Westminster. He stated that he had raised this with his own unitary and that the value would be that it remained completely separate.

Cllr Iain McCracken reported that this review had been undertaken because the Independent RBFA Scheme of Allowances review in 2009, had recommended that it be reviewed again after four years.

Cllr Paul Bryant stated that if an Independent Remuneration Panel doubled allowances, he would be very concerned that Members could not stop that.

Cllr Alan Ward stated that the amendments were adjustments to the figures in SEE's review, and if the RBFA had approved all the recommendations from the 2009 review, then RBFA allowances would have been twice the amount. He added that he did not believe the current Parliamentary regulations allowed an Independent Remuneration Panel to be appointed to review the allowances of Fire Authorities, and as such RBFA did not have the power to delegate this decision to an Independent Remuneration Panel.

On being put to the vote, it was

**Resolved:**

- a) That the Independent report from South East Employers be noted; and
- b) That the recommendations from Audit and Governance Committee be approved, **subject to the following amendments:**
  - the allowance for the vice-Chairman remaining at its present level (£4,500);
  - the three Champions' allowances, that are paid separately, remaining at £900 as at present;
  - the removal of the proposed SRA for the position of Chairman of the DAG; and
- c) That the Authority considers the position of the Training Board Chairman at the next opportunity; and
- d) That all the adjustments and changes recommended in this motion be implemented from 26 June 2013 (i.e. the date of the last annual meeting of the Authority).

HCS

**434. ANNUAL TREASURY REPORT**

The Director of Resources (DR) introduced the report. In answer to Cllr David Burbage, DR advised that the authorised borrowing limit of £9.452m had been set by RBFA with current borrowing at £8.842m. Were the limit to be reset it would be a decision of the RBFA, and for the last 10 years the government has had the power to limit borrowing, but to date this had not been exercised.

**Resolved:**

- a) That the Annual Treasury report be noted; and
- b) That the 2012/13 actual prudential indicators be approved.

#### **435. STATEMENT OF ACCOUNTS AND ANNUAL GOVERNANCE STATEMENT 2012/13**

DR presented the report. He advised that at the Audit and Governance Committee meeting held on 12 September 2013 the external auditors Ernst and Young had stated that they were going to issue an unqualified audit statement. The 2012/13 Annual Governance Statement had been to the Audit and Governance Committee on 9 May 2013.

The Chairman stated that he had attended the Audit and Governance Committee on 12 September 2013, and the external auditors had confirmed that they had not identified any issues, major or minor.

Cllr David Burbage asked whether the £256.9 million liability stated for the firefighters' pension scheme would be an obligation on taxpayers in Berkshire.

The DR advised that the obligation would be on all taxpayers in Britain, and added that there would be changes to the scheme in 2015 including the requirement for a Pension Board. The government had drawn a line whereby from April 2012 any impact on the pension would be met by RBFA.

In referring to the Draft Annual Governance Statement, Cllr David Burbage queried the self assessment score of 5 alongside the mention of the Member Handbook which had been delayed.

The DCS reported that the RBFA Members Handbook was in the process of being updated and apologised for the delay. She reported that the whole handbook had become out of date and advised that it would be brought to RBFA as soon as possible.

The Chairman said the query was not about the delay to the handbook, but about the inclusion of this leading to a self assessment score of 5. The Acting Deputy Chief Fire Officer (A/DCFO) Paul Southern explained that the first column of the table was the rationale for the score of 5.

In addition the Chairman agreed that the target date for the Member Handbook would be June 2014, that it would be an e-publication on the website, and that hard copies would be available on request.

In answer to Cllr Emma Webster's query of whether the self assessment would impact the charter for Member Development, the DR reported that there were no consequences from the self assessment.

In answer to a query from Cllr Phillip Bicknell, the A/DCFO reported that the 'partnership for common sense' had been implemented following RBFA appointing consultants 10 years ago to improve relationships. He added that he would suggest that it be reviewed.

A/  
DCFO

On being put to the vote, it was unanimously **resolved**

- a) That the Statement of Accounts for the year ended 31 March 2013 be approved;
- b) That the Annual Governance Statement for the year ended 31 March 2013 be approved.

#### 436. ANNUAL EQUALITY REPORT

The Senior HR Adviser (Organisational Support) SHRA OS)) Jacky Manning introduced the report and outlined the salient points including:

- Equality Framework – Had been deferred. RBFA had been compliant and was working towards the objectives of making Berkshire safer.
- There had been delays in the review of the complaints process.
- There had been delays in the improvement of the website due to resource issues. She highlighted the use of the social media and reported that the RBFA had set up a Twitter account.
- Equality statistics had been hampered by the recruitment freeze.

In response to a question from Cllr Rebecca Rye, the SHRA OS advised that the disabilities of operational and control staff indentified in the data were; dyslexia, epilepsy and diabetes.

In moving the recommendations as laid out in the report, Cllr Alan Ward thanked SHRA OS for her work. In seconding the recommendations, Cllr Emma Webster also thanked SHRA OS.

The SHRA OS provided the following answers to Member questions:

- The target for the recruitment of female firefighters was 4%. The actual figure was 3.4%. The 4% target would be achieved by the recruitment of five female firefighters, but currently the recruitment freeze remained in place.
- The Ethnic minority target was 5% and RBFRS had achieved 4.9%.

SHRA OS advised that exit interviews had been held with leavers and reported that no BME had left the organisation during this period.

In response to Cllr McCann, it was agreed that interviews with those who dropped out during the recruitment process could be introduced.

SHRA  
OS

It was unanimously **resolved**:

- a) That the current Equality Strategy and ongoing Action Plan 2012-2015 be agreed as fit for purpose;
- b) That the current position on the 2012-2015 Action Plan be noted; and
- c) That the annual statistical data for 2012-2013 be noted.

#### 437. ANNUAL HEALTH AND SAFETY REVIEW

The Head of Health and Safety (HHS), Tracey Mitchell presented the report. She reported the following:

- There had been a decrease in the number of injury related accidents (80) and seven of those were reported to the Health and Safety Executive.
- There had been three reported dangerous occurrences;
- Slips and trips had been the most popular type of accidents;
- The number of manual handling accidents had been reduced;
- There was little benchmarking data and currently the DCLG national statistics had been used. Eight Fire and Rescue Services in the South East had been working on the development of comparable data.
- ROSPA Peer Review Audit led by Kent FRS had been held in January 2013. RBFRS had achieved the rating of 91 compared to 78 in 2006.

- The number of near misses increased to 31%, due to the introduction of a new electronic recording system.

In response to Cllr Paul Bryant, the HHS reported that the eight incidents that had been recorded as 'not fit' were due to accidents held during fitness tests.

In answer to Cllr Adrian Edwards, the A/DCFO reported that RBFRS was working with other FRSs in the South East to develop benchmark figures.

In response to a query from Cllr Christine Bateson, the HHS reported that a reason for the increased number of near misses was due to the change to the RIDDOR (Reporting of Injuries, Diseases and Occurrences Regulations) reporting system. She reported that staff had been encouraged to report all accidents.

Cllr Alan Ward, as the Health and Safety Member Champion, stated that a high score for near misses was good, as if the figure was low, it meant that people were not reporting and lessons could not be learnt.

The A/DCFO confirmed that the increase in the figure of near misses reported had been approved by RBFA. It had been found that station based personnel had not been reporting, but this had now changed with the introduction of an electronic system. He advised that all incidents were looked into by the Health and Safety Team.

In response to Cllr Phillip Bicknell, the A/DCFO reported that the incomplete target in the 2012-13 Objectives, "to complete the annual check of Institute of Directors Health and Safety Checklist", had been scheduled for the new CFO.. He added that an assessment had been completed and the Corporate Management Team (CMT) was fit for purpose.

The Chairman moved the recommendation as laid out in the report. This was seconded by Cllr Iain McCracken.

**Resolved:**

That the report be noted.

**438. 2013/14 BUDGET MONITORING**

The DR introduced the report and advised that the revenue underspend was £330,000. He reported that the first invoices for the refurbishment works of the new BHQ had now been received and would be reflected in the next report.

**Resolved:**

That the report be noted.

**439. VERBAL UPDATE ON NEW BHQ**

The A/DCFO reported that the demolition phase had been completed and the external panels had been removed. The next phase was the installation of new windows, walls and fencing. He advised that Natural England had made a request for deposits of soil to be left next to the holes of the fencing due to old historic sea beds found on the site.

The Strategic Asset Management Committee (SAMC) would continue to monitor the progress. He stated that he would circulate images of the project to Members. He added that the project was on budget and the quality was as specified.

Cllr Angus Ross as Chairman of SAMC reported that SAMC had the powers to deal with minor changes and he stated that depending on the weather, the project would be completed on time. He advised RBFA that the clerk of works was now on site.

A/DCFO  
Southern

In response to Cllr Andrew Cumpsty, the A/DCFO reported that progress reports on the new BHQ were provided at SAMC, Management Committee and the Fire Authority and the indicative completion date was 2 May 2014. The Chairman stated that the new BHQ would be a cost effective building. He took the opportunity to pay tribute to A/DCFO and thanked him for his work.

#### **440. MINUTES OF THE STANDING COMMITTEES**

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

- a) Strategic Asset Management Committee – 9 July 2013 (not yet approved)
- b) Management Committee – 7 August 2013 (not yet approved)
- c) Audit and Governance Committee – 12 September 2013 (not yet approved)

#### **441. FORWARD PLAN**

In answer to a query from Cllr David Burbage, the Chairman confirmed that as a working party, the Budget Working Party was a private meeting.

Cllr Angus Ross requested that an item be added for the formal agreement of the name of the new BHQ.. The Chairman confirmed that the name of the new BHQ would be a decision of RBFA.

Cllr Iain McCracken requested that the Handbook be included in the Forward Plan. The Chairman stated that the target date for the Handbook to be completed was June 2014 for the Annual Meeting.

#### **Resolved:**

That the Forward Plan be noted.

#### **442. DATE OF NEXT MEETING**

- Wednesday 11 December 2013 at **7.30 pm**, Bracknell Forest Council, Easthampstead House, Town Square, Bracknell RG12 1AQ.

#### **443. EXCLUSION OF THE 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 Items on the grounds that they involve the likely disclosure of exempt information, as defined in the 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.

CO

DCS

**444. PART II MINUTES OF THE MEETING HELD ON 31 JULY 2013**

**Resolved:**

That the Part II minutes of the Meeting held on 31 July 2013 be approved for signing by the Chairman.

**445. RECOMMENDATIONS FROM COMMITTEES: FLEET MAINTENANCE ARRANGEMENTS**

The A/DCFO introduced the report and invited the Head of Transport and Engineering (HTE) to answer specific member questions on Fleet Maintenance arrangements.

The Chairman moved the recommendations as laid out in the report and this was seconded by Cllr Emma Webster.

**Resolved:**

That the recommendations as agreed by the Management Committee at their meeting on 7 August 2013 be accepted.

The meeting closed at 9.15 pm

Approved 11.12.13

## DRAFT

**Tabled Amendment to the Independent Report and Recommendations on  
Member Allowances**

<b>Post</b>	<b>Numbers Payable</b>	<b>Level Payable</b>	<b>Total Per Post holder</b>	<b>Total SRAs Payable</b>
Ordinary Members	25	£1,800		
Chairman	1	£9,000	£10,800	£9,000
Vice Chairman	1	<b>£4,500</b>	£6,300	£4,500
Chairman SAMC	1	£2,700	£4,500	£2,700
Chairman Audit & Governance	1	£2,700	£4,500	£2,700
Chairman IRMP	1	£1,800	£3,600	£1,800
Chairman Budget WP	1	£1,800	£3,600	£1,800
Member Champions	3	<b>£900</b>	£2,700	£2,700
Labour Opposition Group Leader	1	£1,800	£3,600	£1,800
Lib Dem Opposition Group Leader	1	£1,800	£3,600	£1,800
Chairman DAG	<b>0</b>	<b>£0</b>		<b>£0</b>
<b>Totals</b>				
<b>BA</b>	<b>25</b>	<b>£45,000</b>		
<b>SRAs</b>	<b>11</b>			<b>£28,800</b>
<b>Maximum Payable 2013/14</b>				<b>£73,800</b>