

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



Held on Wednesday 26 June 2013 at 6.30 pm

**Council Chamber, Bracknell Forest Council, Easthampstead House,
Town Square, Bracknell, Berkshire RG12 1AQ**

- 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 (Deputy Chief Fire Officer, DCFO)
Iain Cox (Chief Fire Officer, CFO)
Caroline Redzikowska (Director Corporate Services, DCS)
Carolyn Rowe (Committee Manager)
Fayth Rowe (Committee Officer)
Paul Southern (Assistant Chief Fire Officer, ACFO)
Andrew Vallance (Director Resources, DR)

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

Action

387. ELECTION OF CHAIRMAN FOR THE 2013/14 MUNICIPAL YEAR

The Director Corporate Services (DCS) opened the meeting and called for the nomination of Chairman for the 2013/14 municipal year. Councillor Pauline Helliar-Symons nominated Councillor Colin Dudley as Chairman. This was seconded by Councillor Emma Webster. There being no other nominations it was

Resolved:

That Councillor Colin Dudley be elected as Chairman of the Fire Authority for the 2013/14 municipal year.

388. CHAIRMAN TO MAKE DECLARATION OF ACCEPTANCE OF OFFICE

The Chairman accepted his appointment, and thanked Members for their

confidence in him. He stated that there was a lot to do in the coming year. The Comprehensive Spending Review announcement had confirmed that Royal Berkshire Fire Authority (RBFA) would have hard work to do on the Budget. The excellent staff of Royal Berkshire Fire and Rescue Service (RBFRS) would support the Members of RBFA in this. The Chairman added that the appointment of a new Chief Fire Officer would be one of the duties of the Fire Authority in the coming year.

389. ELECTION OF VICE-CHAIRMAN FOR THE 2013/14 MUNICIPAL YEAR

The Chairman nominated Councillor Pauline Helliar-Symons for the position of Vice-Chairman for the 2013/14 municipal year. This was seconded by Councillor Phillip Bicknell. There being no other nominations it was

Resolved:

That Councillor Pauline Helliar-Symons be elected Vice-Chairman of the Fire Authority for the 2013/14 municipal year.

390. VICE-CHAIRMAN TO MAKE DECLARATION OF ACCEPTANCE OF OFFICE

The Vice-Chairman in accepting said that she would reiterate the challenges mentioned by the Chairman in the year ahead. She thanked Members for their support.

391. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Apologies for absence were received from Councillors Christine Bateson, Chris Bowring, Chris Maskell and Iain McCracken.

392. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

There were no Declarations of Interest received from Members and Officers.

393. RECEIPT OF ANNOUNCEMENTS

- a) The Chairman paid tribute to Councillor David Holtby who sadly passed away on 10 June 2013. He reported that Councillor Holtby had a military career and had been elected as Councillor in 1998. The Chairman stated that his thoughts were with Councillor Holtby's wife, son and daughter. The Chairman stated that Councillor Holtby had supported the work of RBFA and that he had attended the RBFA Awards Ceremony at Bearwood College on 31 May 2013. The Chairman requested that RBFA pay their respects to the late Councillor David Holtby with a minute's silence.
- b) The Chairman welcomed the newly appointed Fire Authority Member Councillor Tom McCann and presented him with his badge of office, name badges and an access fob key which provides access to the RBFRS Fire Stations across the county.
- c) The Chairman wished to record the thanks of Members to Councillor Prue Bray for her service on the RBFA. He stated that she had been a valued and respected Member of the Fire Authority, and he wished her well in her

ongoing work in the Unitary Authority.

- d) The Chairman announced that the RBFA Awards Ceremony on 31 May 2013 had been attended by the Lord Lieutenant, Mary Bayliss, and Berkshire's High Sheriff, Dr Rose, who had presented long service awards to RBFRS uniformed and non-uniformed staff. It had been a pleasure to give recognition to staff across a range of different roles such as a cleaner who had completed 20 years service and a Firefighter who had completed 40 years service. Awards had also been presented to the team that had been involved in a dangerous extrication on the M4 and the competition Extrication Team who were current World Champions. The Chairman stated that it had been a wonderful evening and he had received very positive feedback. He gave his personal thanks to all the RBFRS staff who had arranged what was an exceptionally well organised event.
- e) The Chairman announced that on the 2 June 2013, he had attended a thanksgiving service at Reading Minster in honour of Her Majesty's Coronation.
- f) The Chairman reported that a passing out parade for the Firefighter cadets would be held on 10 July 2013 at Whitley Wood Fire Station (Station 20). He encouraged RBFA Members to attend the event.
- g) The Chairman announced the forthcoming National Extrication Championships being held in Liverpool.
- h) The Chairman announced that this RBFA meeting would be the last one attended by the Chief Fire Officer, Iain Cox as he was retiring at the end of June 2013. Iain Cox had been born in Gibraltar and had graduated from Reading University in 1979. The Chairman highlighted Iain Cox's achievements including a Long Service and good Conduct Medal in 2000 and the award of Queen's Fire Service Medal in 2009. Iain Cox had been appointed Chief Fire Officer in 2003 and would retire after 33 years of service. The Chairman stated that Iain Cox had been an asset to the people of Berkshire.

The Chairman stated that he would miss his advice and his sense of duty and he wished him many happy years in a well earned retirement with his wife, Jane.

The Chairman commented that the process for replacing the Chief Fire Officer had commenced, but he recognised that it would be impossible to replace Iain Cox as an individual. The RBFA stood and showed their appreciation with a round of applause.
- i) The Chief Fire Officer, Iain Cox thanked RBFA and spoke of the new BHQ where RBFA meetings would be held next year. He presented an engraved chairman's gavel to the Fire Authority.

394. MINUTES OF THE MEETING HELD ON 27 MARCH 2013

Resolved:

That the Minutes of the Meeting held on 27 March 2013 be Approved for signing by the Chairman.

395. 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.

396. QUESTIONS FROM MEMBERS UNDER STANDING ORDER 30

There were no questions from Members under Standing Order 30.

397. NOTICES OF MOTION UNDER STANDING ORDER 44

There were no notices of motion under Standing Order 44.

398. MEMBERSHIP AND STRUCTURE OF THE FIRE AUTHORITY ANNUAL UPDATE

The DCS introduced the annual update to the RBFA. She referred to paragraphs 3.5 and 3.6 and advised that as a result of the changes in the electoral roll last year, the numbers on RBFA had decreased to 25, with West Berkshire having a reduction from five to four members. The DCS advised that West Berkshire, Bracknell and Royal Borough of Windsor and Maidenhead continued to appoint Members on a four year basis and Reading, Slough and Wokingham Council held elections in thirds, and so appointed to the RBFA on an annual basis.

The DCS highlighted that a number of additional meetings had been held during the year and reported that any increase may present resource pressures. The review of the Scheme of Allowances had commenced and there would be a report back to RBFA in the autumn.

DCS referred to the second recommendation in her report which recommended that the Fire Authority review the size of their membership during the current municipal year. In response to a question from Cllr Brooks, she advised that it was good practise to undertake a periodic review of the numbers on the Authority.

Councillor Jeff Brooks stated that he thought that the RBFA committee structure was working well and did not need to be reviewed, and moved the proposal **that RBFA maintain its numbers at 25**. Councillor Alan Ward seconded Councillor Jeff Brooks motion.

The Chairman put the recommendation **as amended** that the review of the size of the Fire Authority is not held during the current municipal year **and that RBFA maintain its numbers at 25**. In being put to the vote, it was unanimously

Resolved:

- a) That the report be noted.
- b) That a review of the size of the membership is not held during the current municipal year **and that RBFA maintain its numbers at 25**.

399. APPOINTMENT OF COMMITTEES AND WORKING PARTIES

The DCS introduced the report and outlined that the report included the option to agree seats on a non-proportional basis. This would require there to be no vote against, and would enable the seats to be allocated, if Members wished, as last year. Alternatively, the report included the option for Members to decide to allocate seats on a politically proportionate basis.

The DCS also outlined the second recommendation on the agenda which was to approve the Strategic Asset Management Committee's revised Terms of Reference as recommended by the Strategic Asset Management Committee and included at Appendix A.

Councillor Angus Ross, as Chairman of the 2012/13 Strategic Asset Management Committee (SAMC), spoke to this recommendation and stated that the proposed Terms of Reference would provide the Committee with realistic financial powers to make decisions on buildings, I.T. and Fleet. He added that it would make the Committee more effective, and minimise the need to refer to the Management Committee.

The Chairman moved the motion that **the rules on political proportionality shall not apply to the allocation of places**. This was seconded by Councillor Jeff Brooks.

Councillor Angus Ross moved the motion that SAMC's Terms of Reference be approved by the Fire Authority. This was seconded by the Chairman. On being put to the vote, it was unanimously

Resolved:

- a) That with no votes against, that the rules on political proportionality shall not apply to the allocation of Committee places be Agreed; and
- b) That the Committees and Working Parties indicated in paragraph 3.2 of the report be appointed, as Standing Committees;
- c) That the number of seats on the Appointed Standing Committees be determined;
- d) That seats on those Committees be allocated and is accepted, in accordance with Table 1.
- e) That Members be appointed to each of the Committees in accordance with the wishes of the political groups;
- f) That in accordance with, and subject to the exceptions in, SO113 of the Fire Authority's Standing Orders, all Members of each political group not appointed to a committee or sub-committee be named as alternate members for the member or members of that group who have been appointed to that committee or sub-committee;
- g) That the Integrated Risk Management Working Party be re-appointed to consist of 8 Members appointed on a politically balanced basis, in accordance with the wishes of the political groups.
- h) That the amended Strategic Asset Management Committee's (SAMC) Terms of Reference at Appendix A, as recommended by SAMC on 30 April 2013, be agreed.

400. ELECTION OF CHAIRMAN OF THE FIRE AUTHORITY AS CHAIRMAN PRO-TEM OF COMMITTEES AND WORKING PARTY

Resolved:

That the Chairman of the Fire Authority be elected as Chairman pro-tem of the Committees and Working Party.

401. ADJOURNMENT OF MEETING

Resolved:

That the meeting be adjourned to enable the Committees and Working Party appointed by the Fire Authority to meet for the purposes of appointing their respective Chairman and Vice-Chairman for the Municipal Year 2013/14 and to conduct the business as outlined on the Agenda.

402. RECOMMENCEMENT OF MEETING

The meeting of the Fire Authority was recommenced following the conclusion of the meeting of the Integrated Risk Management Plan Working Party.

403. APPOINTMENT OF CHAMPIONS

Resolved:

- a) That Councillor Phillip Bicknell be appointed as the Communications Champion;
- b) That Councillor Emma Webster be appointed as the Community Safety Champion;
- c) That Councillor Tom McCann be appointed as the Environmental Champion;
- d) That Councillor Alan Ward be appointed as the Equality and Diversity Champion (who will act as Chairman of Community, Engagement and Equality Group) (CEEG).
- e) That Councillor Alistair Auty be appointed as the Member Development Champion;
- f) That Councillor Alan Ward be appointed as the Health and Safety Champion.

404. APPOINTMENT OF REPRESENTATIVES TO OUTSIDE BODIES FOR THE 2013/14 MUNICIPAL YEAR

The Chairman reported that on the advice of the Leader of Royal Borough of Windsor and Maidenhead (RBWM) it had been decided not to appoint a Fire Authority Member onto the RBWM Local Strategic Partnership for the 2013/14 municipal year.

Resolved:

- a) That the Chairman of the Fire Authority be appointed as the Fire Authority's representative on the South East Fire Improvement Partnership (SEFIP). In the event of the Chairman of the Fire Authority not being able to attend, then the Chairman will nominate another Member of the Management Committee to attend as his substitute.
- b) That Councillor Iain McCracken be appointed as the Fire Authority's representative on the Local Government Association and that Councillor Paul Bryant be appointed as the Fire Authority's representative on the Local Government Association as a balancing Member;
- c) That the Chairman and Councillor Phillip Bicknell be appointed as Directors on the Board of the Royal Berkshire Fire and Rescue (Training) Limited.

405. ROYAL BERKSHIRE FIRE AUTHORITY CORPORATE PLAN 2013/14 AND ANNUAL REPORT 2012/13

The Assistant Chief Fire Officer (ACFO) introduced the report and advised that the Action Plan was forward looking and the Annual Report reflected last year's targets. He added that the targets would be submitted to the Audit and Governance Committee. He reported that the Corporate Plan and Annual Report had been seen by the Management Committee and he invited any further amendments from Members on the document. He advised that the document would be published electronically - not only to save printing costs but also to be able to update any changes following the Comprehensive Spending Review.

Councillor David Burbage commented on the significant improvement over the last 12 months in response times as outlined on page 51 of the Action Plan. He asked what had contributed to the welcomed improvement in response times.

The Deputy Chief Fire Officer (DCFO) advised that an electronic recording system had replaced the manual system. The manual system had included a very robust audit system which had validated the performance and corrected any errors. This validation had now been reintroduced alongside the electronic system. He stated that performance that was now reported was actual, and it was not an improvement, but corrected reporting.

The Chief Fire Officer explained that a mantronic check was carried out whenever the system showed that an appliance had failed to arrive within 10 or 12 minute target, and that any system errors identified had been corrected.

Resolved:

- a) That the Corporate Plan 2013/14 and Annual Report 2012/13 be Agreed.

406. ANNUAL REPORT ON GOVERNANCE

The DCS reported that last year the Audit and Governance Committee became responsible for the code of conduct and she was pleased to report that once again no complaints had been made against RBFA Members. She advised that the RBFA was required to appoint an Independent Person. It was recommended that the remuneration of the Independent Person be part of the review of the Scheme of Allowances. It was also recommended that the two Deputy Independent Members continued to be available, if required and that their remuneration also be examined as part of the review.

In referring to 2012/13 Members' Attendance, the DCS reported that there had been a number of date changes and additional meetings during the year. She stated that quoracy had been close run on occasion. The report requested that Members notify any apology for absence in good time, and that they nominate a substitute to attend the meeting in their place.

Resolved:

- a) That the recommendations from the Audit and Governance Committee be Noted;
- b) That it be agreed to invite the two deputy Independent Members to continue in that role for a further year; and
- c) That the remuneration of the Independent Person/s be reviewed as part of the review of allowances agreed by the Fire Authority on 27 March 2013 be Agreed; and
- d) That the 2012-13 attendance record of Royal Berkshire Fire Authority Members be Noted.

407. CODE OF CONDUCT: DISPENSATIONS GOVERNANCE

The DCS introduced the report which proposed that RBFA resolve to grant a general dispensation to cover areas identified under paragraph 3.6. She highlighted that this included in particular setting the precept and determining member allowances. She stated that the report recommended that the dispensation be granted annually, and be brought to the annual meeting each year, thereby addressing any annual change of RBFA membership.

The Chairman moved the recommendations as set out in the report. This was seconded by Councillor Jeff Brooks and it was unanimously,

Resolved:

- a) That the dispensations under 3.2 granted by the DCS during the 2012/13 municipal year be Noted; and
- b) That the general dispensations be granted to all councillors, under Section 33 (2) of the Localism Act 2011 in respect of the circumstances given in paragraph 3.6 of the report for the municipal year 2013/14 from the date of this meeting be Agreed.

408. ROYAL BERKSHIRE FIRE AND RESCUE (TRAINING) LTD ANNUAL REPORT

Councillor Phillip Bicknell introduced the report and outlined that the turnover had been lower in the 2012/13 financial year. He reported that the Training company had made a contribution to RBFA of £54,000 and stated that Royal Berkshire Fire and Rescue (Training) Ltd was an arm's length company.

Councillor Phillip Bicknell stated that trading conditions were picking up and he reported a £3,000 profit. He asked for his appreciation and thanks for the contribution of the team and in particular Gene Ashe, Tina Lynch, Caroline Redzikowska, Conor Byrne, Iain Cox, and Director, Councillor Colin Dudley to be recorded.

It was unanimously

Resolved:

That the report be Noted.

409. ANNUAL REPORTS FROM COMMITTEE CHAIRMAN, CHAMPIONS AND REPRESENTATIVES

The Chairman proposed that the reports a)-h) be taken together and this was agreed. He stated that following this there would be a presentation from Cllr Webster for i) Community Safety.

With regard to c) Member Development, the Chairman requested that RBFA Members participate in the Member Development process by completing the form dated 18 June 2013, that had been enclosed with the agenda papers.

RBFA

Resolved:

- i) That the reports a) to h) as follows be noted.
- 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 Chris Bowring – Environmental Champion Report;
 - 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 Ian McCracken – Local Government Association (Fire Forum)
(Report by Councillor Paul Bryant);
 - i) Councillor Emma Webster - Community Safety Champion - Presentation

Councillor Emma Webster, Community Safety Champion, delivered the Community Safety annual report as a presentation. She outlined that Community Safety covered the Prevention Strategy which consisted of the following areas;

- Home Fire Safety
- Volunteering
- Risk Reduction
- Safer Communities

Councillor Emma Webster highlighted the work in each area. She described the Home Fire Safety Checks and the number of smoke detectors that were installed last year. In addition she outlined activities conducted by volunteers, e.g. the number of volunteer hours given to work within the community, which contributed to the reduction in the number of accidental and deliberate fires. In referring to the Young Firefighters programme and the interesting activities covered as part of the programme, she said that she hoped that members of RBFA would attend the Young Firefighters passing out parade in July.

Councillor Emma Webster closed her presentation by thanking the Community Safety teams for the work that they do and the time she had spent with them.

The Chairman echoed Councillor Emma Webster thanks and appreciation for the work of the Community Safety Team and he also thanked Councillor Emma Webster for her presentation.

Resolved:

That the presentation on Community Safety be noted.

410. 2012/13 PROVISIONAL OUTTURN

The Director of Resources (DR) introduced the report and outlined the context for the recommendations. Councillor David Burbage stated that it was a pity that the budget for retained was not being spent on this. He said that he would like this to be looked at to include a review on the long term direction for the retained service (RDS).

The Chairman commented that RDS was an issue. He said that it had been highlighted by the Department for Communities and Local Government (DCLG), who wish to see Fire Authorities use RDS more. He referred to the recruitment campaign held earlier in the year, and said that unfortunately this Authority could not seem to recruit the required numbers of RDS staff. He stated that the Retained Support Unit (RSU) was the only reason Ascot Fire Station could be mobilised. He commented that Westminster needed to understand the challenges in recruiting and retaining RDS staff.

With regard to the underspend on the RDS budget, Councillor Paul Bryant stated that in his view RBFA would move to a professional (wholetime) Fire Service.

Councillor Emma Webster stated that she welcomed the government support for the RDS and added that the work of the Retained Support Unit was to be commended. She added that RDS staff was professional.

Councillor Paul Gittings stated that the underspend was an important point, and he felt that it needed a close look in the coming year. He stated that Westminster had a fundamental lack of understanding and suggested that a reminder was sent to the Minister. He added that if there were a wholetime Fire Service that the out turn budget would hopefully be on the button.

Councillor Alan Ward stated that he agreed with Councillor Paul Gittings and that overspends and underspends were not to be desired, but these were difficult and uncertain times. He referred to the CSR which had said nothing and, as such it was right to adopt a cautious approach which resulted in an underspend. This then allowed decisions to be made in a considered manner when budgets were reduced, and he concluded that he was in support of there being underspends at this time.

The DCFO reminded RBFA that an IRMP review of the RDS and RSU was programmed for the forthcoming year. He added that RBFRS was not in any way near to being a wholetime service. He reported that there was no question regarding the retained Fire Stations in Hungerford, Crowthorne and Maidenhead. However, Ascot had been mentioned and there was a need to take proactive action to make sure there was emergency cover in that part of the county.

The Chairman reported that he had looked at other Fire Authority websites and had found one which had 29 Fire Stations of which four were wholetime, and they were able to crew 25 RDS Fire Stations. He stated this as an example of the need to have the kind of service that was right for the area / county which residents lived.

The Chairman moved the recommendations as set out in the report. This was seconded by Councillor Alan Ward and it was unanimously

Resolved:

- a) That the report be Noted;
- b) That £50,000 added to the Joint Control Reserve be Approved;
- c) That the placing of £681,000 of the corporate underspend into the Development Fund be Approved.

411. MINUTES OF THE STANDING COMMITTEES, WORKING PARTIES AND OTHER GROUPS

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

- a) Strategic Asset Management Committee – 13 March 2013, 30 April 2013 (not yet approved)
- b) Audit and Governance Committee – 14 March 2013, 9 May 2013 (not yet approved),
- c) Management Committee – 25 March 2013, 20 May 2013 (not yet approved)

412. FORWARD PLAN

Resolved:

That the Forward Plan be Noted.

413. DATE OF NEXT MEETING

- Wednesday 25 September 2013 at 6.30 pm, Wokingham Council in the Council Chamber, Civic Offices, Shute End, Wokingham, Berkshire RG40 1BN.

Note:

An Extraordinary Meeting of the Fire Authority for the appointment of the new Chief Fire Officer will be held at 6.30 pm, Wokingham Council in the Council Chamber, Civic Offices, Shute End, Wokingham, Berkshire RG40 1BN. Members were asked to hold both 31 July 2013 and 7 August 2013 as possible dates for the above meeting until further notice.

The meeting closed at 8.00 pm