

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



Held on Wednesday 26 September 2012

**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 Prue Bray	Councillor Jeff Brooks
*Councillor Dr Paul Bryant	*Councillor David Burbage
*Councillor Diana Coad	Councillor Andrew Cumpsty
*Councillor Colin Dudley (<i>Chairman</i>)	*Councillor Haqeeq Dar
*Councillor Adrian Edwards	*Councillor Paul Gittings
Councillor David Holtby	*Councillor Mrs Pauline Helliard-Symons
*Councillor Peter Jones	*Councillor John Lenton
*Councillor Chris Maskell	*Councillor Iain McCracken
*Councillor Edward Plenty	*Councillor Mohammed Rasib
*Councillor Angus Ross	*Councillor Rebecca Rye
*Councillor Alan Ward	*Councillor Miss Emma Webster
<i>*present</i>	

In Attendance:

Gene Ashe (Area Manager Public Protection, AMPP)
Olaf Baars (Deputy Chief Fire Officer, DCFO)
Conor Byrne (Senior Accountant, SA)
Iain Cox (Chief Fire Officer, CFO)
Andy Mancey (Area Manager, Response, AM R)
Bryan Morgan (Area Manager Risk Management , AM RM)
Caroline Redzikowska (Director Corporate Services, DCS)
Carolyn Rowe (Committee Manager)
Fayth Rowe (Committee Officer)
Paul Southern (Assistant Chief Fire Officer, ACFO)
Kathie Summers (Human Resources, HR)
Nicole Target (Corporate Communications Manager)
Andrew Vallance (Director Resources, DR)

322. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Apologies for absence were received from Cllr Jeff Brooks, and Cllr David Holtby

323. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

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

324. MINUTES OF THE MEETING HELD ON 17 JULY 2012

Resolved:

That the Minutes of the Meeting held on 17 July 2012 be approved for signing by the Chairman.

Action

325. 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.

326 RECEIPT OF ANNOUNCEMENTS

The Chairman, Cllr Dudley, reported on the fire at H&M in Newbury and stated that the six sprinklers which had activated had significantly reduced the severity of the fire and its consequences for the shop, the precinct and fire fighters. The CFO advised that it was proposed to use this as a case study.

Cllr Webster projected slides of Newbury Show, and thanked the AM PP, the CFO and officers for their work to showcase some of the work of RBFA.

Cllr Ross announced that the new Brigade Headquarters (BHQ) was purchased on 6 September 2012, and work had been prompt to secure the site, and to commence work to occupy the site. Details of the refurbishment are to follow. The Chairman gave a vote of thanks to the Strategic Asset Management Committee (SAM C) for their work on this.

(Cllr Plenty joined the meeting at this point.)

The Chairman announced that he proposed to rescind the position of Communications Champion, and he proposed that Cllr Phillip Bicknell be his replacement for the remainder of the 2012/13 Municipal Year. This was seconded by Cllr Webster, and there being no other nominations, Cllr Bicknell was appointed.

Cllr Webster announced the recent success in North America of RBFRS Extrication Team, ahead of defending their title at the forthcoming World Championships.

327 ISSUES ARISING FROM THE AUDIT AND GOVERNANCE COMMITTEE

Cllr McCracken, Chairman of Audit and Governance Committee advised that there were no issues arising.

328 QUESTIONS FROM MEMBERS UNDER STANDING ORDER 30

There were no Questions received from the Fire Authority Members under Standing Order 30.

329 NOTICES OF MOTIONS UNDER STANDING ORDER 44

There were no notices of motion under Standing Order 44.

330 ANNUAL EQUALITY REPORT

The report was introduced by Kathie Summers, Senior HR adviser (HR), who advised that the document now combined both the Equality Strategy and the Scheme, as it was no longer required that the Scheme demonstrating how race, gender and disability equality would be promoted should be distinct.

There were fewer actions than previously as those embedded as normal working had been removed. Also, it reflected the need to be realistic about what could be achieved, with very limited resources for delivering equality training.

RBFRS was legally obliged to publish the data which would also go on the website. Because recruitment was so low, progress on the targets for staff in post was unlikely, and whilst the targets were reflected in the Corporate Plan they would be reviewed for the next Corporate Plan.

In reply to a number of questions, members were advised as follows:
RBFRS sought to be as flexible an employer as possible, but the 2:2:4 rota made it difficult.

Regarding the wearing of religious symbols, it was not a problem for non operational staff. Operational staff were not allowed any jewellery on show other than a taped wedding band. However, if worn under clothing the metal heat would not be unsafe at temperatures which were safe for the fire fighters.

Regarding the cost of collection of data and the production of the report, less information could be provided but the data was also used by HR for other purposes.

Under the heading of reporting grievances the types to include were not specified, and this category was recommended as good practice.

Under age equality any pay scales beyond five years had to be objectively justified.

The aim was to have a better understanding of the communities that we serve. For example, by getting fire messages to difference cultures.

Not reporting sexual orientation may send the wrong message that any issues were not important. It was recognized that people may lie.

The Chairman suggested that the Member Champion for Equalities would lead any future work on this, and that it would not need to be reworked for this year.

The Member Champion for Equalities, Cllr Alan Ward moved the report and stated that there had been a lot of points which he considered could be taken on board for next time, but that there was no need to redraft. Irrespective of any requirement, RBFRS was an Employer for whom good practices, and keeping track of the workforce was important. Regarding sexual orientation Cllr Ward sought clarification, as the FBU had suggested that this was not collected.

HR confirmed it was only collected for applicants, not existing staff. Cllr Ward stated that the cost had been reduced enormously already and that less time was spent on it. Cllr Ward advised that he would be happy to look at the pay scales. Cllr Bray seconded the report and it was

Resolved:

- a) that the updated Equality Strategy and proposed Action Plan for 2012-15 be approved;
- b) that the current position on the 2011-2014 Action Plan be noted; and
- c) that the annual statistical data for 2011-12 be noted.

HR

HR

331 ANNUAL HEALTH AND SAFETY PERFORMANCE REVIEW AND NEW HEALTH AND SAFETY OBJECTIVES 2012/13

The Assistant Chief Fire Officer (ACFO) introduced the report and advised Members that in future it would be brought to the April/May cycle in line with the Corporate Plan.

In response to member questions it was confirmed that some comparison data could be provided, and there were some national standards – e.g. RIDDOR, but that there was not consistent interpretation or measurement.

Cross border audits were performed where best practice could also be harnessed. It was agreed that information on these audits could be provided in future. Regarding differences and whether these were due to interpretation or actuality, the ACFO also offered to look at the comparison data available and come back to Members. Cllr Ward moved the report, which was seconded by Cllr McCracken and it was

ACFO

ACFO

Resolved:

- a) that the progress on Appendices A and B be Noted ; and
- b) that changing the bi-annual objectives in Appendices C and D to annual objectives be Agreed.

Before the next item the Chairman welcomed the Mayor of Bracknell Forest Cllr Mrs Jennie McCracken who had entered the Council Chamber, and also took the opportunity to welcome Mrs Bev Towner, PA Executive at RBFRS.

332 ANNUAL TREASURY REPORT

The Director of Resources (DR) introduced the report, and advised members that the low risk investment strategy and low interest rates had resulted in receipts £22,000 lower than estimated. He confirmed there had not been any borrowing. In answer to Member questions DR advised the following:

Whilst no “authorized limit” was set by government, they do hold reserve powers. Any effect from the purchase of BHQ will depend on, for example, the sale of current BHQ, and the outcome of the capital bid for the new fire station in December, and there may be some borrowing in the short term before selling. The Chairman moved the report which was seconded by Cllr Ross and it was

resolved:

- a) that the Annual Treasury Report be noted; and
- b) that the 2011/12 actual prudential indicators be approved.

333 STATEMENT OF ACCOUNTS, ANNUAL AUDIT LETTER, AND ANNUAL GOVERNANCE STATEMENT 2011/12

The report was introduced by DR, who advised that the uniformed employee underspend related to the retained service, and for non uniformed was as a result of keeping posts vacant in anticipation of the budget pressures next year. He advised that the Budget Working Party requested information on “smoothing” to be brought to their next meeting on 31 October 2012.

In answer to member questions DR advised of the following:

The cost of the audit was £85,000, and this had reduced to £45,000 for 2012/13. The 36.4% of funds in Spain were with the Bank Santander, which had British protection.

Any pension deficit was picked up by the taxpayer, but also employee contributions were going up, and the recovery period was 40 years.

Cllr McCracken moved the report and in so doing stated that this was the 15th year that the approval of the accounts had been unqualified. The vice chairman, Cllr Pauline Helliar- Symons, seconded the report, and it was

Resolved:

- a) that the Statement of Accounts for the year ended 31 March 2012 be Approved
- b) that the placing of the corporate underspend in a budget contingency reserve be Approved.
- c) that the Annual Audit Letter for the year ended 31 March 2012 be noted.
- d) that the Annual Governance Statement for the year ended 31 March 2012 be Approved

334 BUDGET MONITORING

The report was introduced by the DR who advised that the purchase of the new BHQ, had increased the capital expenditure figure by £1.8million to £2 million. The award of a 1% pay rise to fire fighters which was backdated to July 2012 had reduced the projected revenue underspend to £550,000.

In response to questions, DR advised that £400,000 of this saving was due to switch crewing. It was agreed that the figures would be provided quarterly in future. The Chairman proposed, Cllr Ward seconded, and it was

Resolved:

that the report be Noted.

335 THAMES VALLEY CONTROL PROJECT

The Deputy Chief Fire Officer (DCFO) introduced the report and updated Members on the progress and timelines for different aspects of the programme of work. The technical work to create a direct link between the two existing Control Rooms had been delayed beyond 31 October 2012, but did not affect the critical path. With regard to new pagers, there were some problems which it was hoped would be resolved quickly. He stated that the programme was within budget and that it was anticipated this would continue.

The DCFO confirmed that following completion on the new building in Calcot, a legally binding Programme Partnership Agreement (PPA) had now been signed.

Cllr Ross, moved the report stating that he welcomed how well the programme continued to be working, which was a tribute to the preparations undertaken. Cllr Bryant, in seconding the motion, added a record of thanks to the retiring Deputy Chief Fire Officer for Oxfordshire Colin Thompson for all the hard work he had done. He stated that he had every confidence it would be delivered on time and on budget.

Cllr Prue Bray was given confirmation that all the staff were being kept fully informed.

It was unanimously **resolved:**

that the Fire Authority note the report.

DR

336 ANNUAL ENVIRONMENTAL REPORT

The Area Manager Risk Management (AM RM) introduced the report and drew Members attention to the achievement of the Environmental Action Plan 2009 - 2012. He advised that, with the completion of the drainage at Caversham at the end of the month, all 27 actions had been achieved. He also advised that the carbon footprint data collection was being investigated, following inaccuracies that were highlighted by the closure of two Fire stations, and the opening of Wokingham.

AM(RM)

Environmental Champion, Cllr Bowring drew Members attention to the new Environmental Strategy 2012-2017 that went to the Steering Group meeting on 27th June 2012.

Following members questions AM (RM) advised that it was too early yet for figures to assess the cost effectiveness of the panels, and confirmed the figures would be reported when appropriate.

ACFO Paul Southern confirmed that with regard to the age of the new BHQ building, the environmental improvements would be balanced with cost.

ACFO

With regard to charity car washes, and the drainage at stations, it was agreed that stations where they could be undertaken would be emailed to all FA members.

AM (R)

Cllr Bowring moved the recommendations in the report thanking the Facilities Officer and Area Manager for their work. This was seconded by Cllr Emma Webster.

Resolved that the Fire Authority:

- a) Note the report; and
- b) Agree to receive annual reports with progress updates to the Audit and Governance Committee.

337 MINUTES OF THE STANDING COMMITTEES

On agreement that they be taken as one, the Chairman moved the reception of the minutes of the Standing Committees. This was seconded by Cllr Iain McCracken

Resolved:

That the minutes of the meetings of the Fire Authorities Standing Committees be received as follows:

- a) Strategic Asset Management Committee – 26 June 2012 (not yet approved)
- b) Management Committee – 5 July 2012 (approved)
- c) Audit & Governance Committee – 1 August 2012 (approved)

338 FORWARD PLAN

Resolved:

That the forward plan be noted, and that a duplicate entry on the Plan for Windsor be removed.

339 DATE OF NEXT MEETING

Wednesday 5 December 2012 at 6.30pm at Wokingham Borough Council, Civic Offices, Shute End, Wokingham, Berkshire RG40 1BN.

340 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.

342. PART II MINUTES OF THE MEETING HELD ON 17 JULY 2012

Resolved:

That the Part II Minutes of the Meeting held on 17 July 2012 be approved for signing by the Chairman.

The meeting closed at 7.55pm.