

MINUTES OF THE MEETING OF THE ROYAL BERKSHIRE FIRE AUTHORITY



Held on Wednesday 28 June 2017 at 6.30pm

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

- Members:**
- * Councillor Malcolm Alexander
 - * Councillor Alistair Auty
 - * Councillor Christine Bateson
 - * Councillor Phillip Bicknell
 - * Councillor Jason Brock
 - * Councillor Paul Bryant
 - * Councillor Avtar Cheema
 - * Councillor Colin Dudley
 - * Councillor Adrian Edwards
 - * Councillor Paul Gittings
 - * Councillor Pauline Helliar-Symons
 - * Councillor Carol Jackson-Doerge
 - * Councillor Chris Maskell
 - * Councillor Iain McCracken
 - * Councillor Tina McKenzie-Boyle
 - * Councillor Phillip Mirfin
 - * Councillor Mohammed Rasib
 - * Councillor Angus Ross
 - * Councillor Atiq Sandhu
 - * Councillor Emma Webster

- In Attendance:**
- Graham Britten (Monitoring Officer)
 - Conor Byrne (Head of Finance and Procurement, HOF)
 - Stephen Chard (Committee Officer)
 - Trevor Ferguson (Chief Fire Officer, CFO)
 - Steve Foye (Deputy Chief Fire Officer, DCFO)
 - Mark Gaskarth (Area Manager West)
 - Becci Jefferies (Head of Human Resources, Learning and Development)
 - Simon Jefferies (Assistant Chief Fire Officer, ACFO)
 - Katie Mills (Head of Corporate Services)
 - Dave Myers (Area Manager East)
 - James Pinchin (Committee Officer)
 - Jo Reeves (Committee Officer)
 - Nikki Richards (Director of Support Services)
 - Fayth Rowe (Committee Officer)

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

1. ELECTION OF CHAIRMAN FOR THE 2017/18 MUNICIPAL YEAR

Action

The Monitoring Officer opened the meeting by requesting nominations for the position of Chairman of the Fire Authority for the Municipal Year 2017/18.

RESOLVED that Councillor Colin Dudley be elected as Chairman of the Fire Authority for the Municipal Year 2017/18.

2. CHAIRMAN TO MAKE DECLARATION OF ACCEPTANCE OF OFFICE

The new Chairman read and signed the Declaration of Acceptance of Office and thanked Members of the Fire Authority for electing him as Chairman. He stated that it was a great honour and a privilege to serve the people of Berkshire as Chairman of the Fire Authority alongside other Members and Officers of the Fire Authority. He

stated his firm belief that Royal Berkshire was amongst the best fire and rescue services in the country with immensely dedicated fire fighters, staff and senior leadership team. There would continue to be challenges to face as a Service, but the focus would remain on ensuring the people of Berkshire lead safe and fulfilling lives and he looked forward to contributing towards that goal over the coming year.

3. ELECTION OF VICE-CHAIRMAN FOR THE 2017/18 MUNICIPAL YEAR

The Chairman requested nominations for the position of Vice-Chairman of the Fire Authority for the Municipal Year 2017/18.

RESOLVED that Councillor Pauline Helliar-Symons be elected as Vice-Chairman of the Fire Authority for the Municipal Year 2017/18.

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

The Vice-Chairman read and signed the Declaration of Acceptance of Office and thanked Members of the Fire Authority for electing her as Vice-Chairman. Councillor Helliar-Symons thanked Members for their confidence in her. She reiterated the points made by the Chairman and added that the Fire Service consisted of an amazing group of brave and dedicated people and she was proud to be associated with them. She expressed her commitment to the service and to working closely with the senior management team.

5. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Apologies for inability to attend the meeting had been received from Councillors Christine Bateson, Paul Bryant, Adrian Edwards and Phillip Mirfin.

6. CHAIRMAN'S ANNOUNCEMENTS

The Chairman made the following announcements:

Welcome to new Members: The Chairman welcomed two new Members to the Fire Authority. Councillor Jason Brock had been appointed to represent Reading Borough Council with Councillor Atiq Sandhu appointed to represent Slough Borough Council. The Chairman also took the opportunity to bid farewell to outgoing Members, Councillor John Ennis and Councillor Ishrat Shah. The Chairman read out the following statement on behalf of Councillor Shah:

"I would like to thank you for making this a journey to be remembered and for having me as part of the team making a difference in the Fire Authority and people's lives. I'm sure my contribution was helpful and would be appreciated. I would also like to thank the crews for doing such a fantastic job whilst carrying out their duties. Special thanks to Mark Gaskarth and the rest of the team for supporting the work I wanted to do around prevention".

The Chairman placed on record his thanks for their contributions. They had served the Fire Authority well.

Terrorism Incidents and Grenfell Tower: At this point in the meeting the Chairman put on record his horror at the recent tragic events that had struck the

country, a feeling shared by all Members. Thoughts were with those that had been impacted by the attacks in London and Manchester and the Grenfell Tower fire. Whilst the overriding emotion was, of course, sadness, there was also tremendous pride in the response of the emergency services to all of these incidents.

A one minute silence was then observed in remembrance of those who lost their lives and all of those affected by these horrendous events.

The Chairman reminded Members that after the Fire Authority meeting there would be a briefing on Grenfell Tower.

The Chairman then added that in support of the victims, Berkshire crews had been raising money for the Grenfell Tower Emergency Appeal and had raised an absolutely fantastic £25,551. He congratulated all those who contributed to raising this money and representing the very best of Royal Berkshire. He also gave thanks to the public of Berkshire for their generosity.

Appointment of Fire Minister: On 12 June 2017, Nick Hurd was appointed as the Minister of State for Policing and the Fire Service. The new Minister was MP for Ruislip, Northwood and Pinner and replaced Brandon Lewis in the role. The Chairman gave thanks to Brandon Lewis for his service in the role. He added that the new Minister was familiar with Royal Berkshire having previously attended Sunningdale School and looked forward to working with him in due course.

Hungerford reopening: The first of Royal Berkshire's tri-service Community Fire Stations was now complete following a major refurbishment. The refurbishment, which started in November 2016, had delivered Royal Berkshire a modern, fit-for-purpose fire station in the heart of the community and provided a shared premises for colleagues in Thames Valley Police and South Central Ambulance Service. All members of the Fire Authority had been invited to the official opening ceremony on Monday 3 July and the Chairman hoped that Members could attend to celebrate this momentous occasion. A community open day was also planned on Saturday 8 July, between 10am and 4pm.

Arrival of new Fire Appliances: The next generation of fire appliances had arrived into the Royal Berkshire Fire and Rescue Service. There were four new fire engines that had been sent to four fire stations that frequently attended over the border incidents, and would shortly be put on the run. These stations were: Caversham Road, Slough, Langley and Maidenhead. The new engines were very valued by staff and would enable greater collaboration across the Thames Valley and in London, as well as internally. The new engines had been developed and procured in partnership with Buckinghamshire and Oxfordshire Fire and Rescue Services.

The fire engines were designed to improve interoperability between the services, with the stowage and equipment being similar on each vehicle, making it easier for the fire services of the Thames Valley to respond to their communities in their time of need. This was why the fire engines had been strategically placed near the border so the appliances could be utilised in working with Thames Valley colleagues. He praised the work undertaken in getting these new fire engines into Berkshire.

Sickness Performance: The Chairman reported that nationally, the RBFRS was the best performing service in terms of duty days lost to sickness absence for 2016/17. There had been a 1.22 percent reduction in duty days lost due to sickness absence over the last year and the service was well below the four percent target for 2016/17. This was a result of a long-term drive to tackle absence and had been achieved with the support of the managers, senior management, HR and health and fitness team. He gave thanks to everyone who had committed to improving performance in this area and added that it was important to understand what could be done to support staff to prevent work related sickness absence.

Passing out Parade: The RBFRS would shortly be welcoming eight new wholetime firefighters after they successfully completed their 14-week course at the RBFRS Training Centre in Whitley Wood, Reading. The new recruits would soon be posted to stations and would set about working to enable the people of Berkshire to lead safe and fulfilling lives. To mark the conclusion of the course, a celebratory 'passing out' parade will be held at the Training Centre on Wednesday 12 July. The Chairman added that it was always a pleasure to recruit new firefighters. This was important for themselves, their families and to the service. It was a significant achievement to pass this gold standard training and the new recruits deserved congratulations.

Annual Members' Workshop: The Annual Member Workshop had been postponed until 11 September 2017.

Urgent Late Item: The Chairman reported that he had agreed to accept an urgent late item as part of the agenda this evening by virtue of section 100B (4) (b) of the Local Government Act 1972. The urgent item related to the Pension Board Appointment and will be taken after Agenda Item 12.

Senior Leadership Team: The Chairman pointed out to Members that this meeting was particularly noteworthy as being the first for our new Chief Fire Officer, Trevor Ferguson. Alongside Trevor, this meeting also marked the first Fire Authority for our new Deputy Chief Officer, Steve Foye and Assistant Chief Fire Officer, Simon Jefferies.

The Chairman also took the opportunity to formally congratulate Nikki Richards on her appointment to the post of Director of Support Services in her first meeting since being appointed and congratulated Jim Powell who was appointed as Area Manager in Service Delivery from 1 June 2017.

These appointments followed a rigorous recruitment process in which all candidates showed great commitment, hard work and professionalism in their approach.

Finally, Graham Britten was welcomed to the Fire Authority as the new Monitoring Officer. Graham's full time role was as Buckinghamshire's Director of Legal and Governance and brought with him a wealth of experience. This role was previously undertaken by Trevor Ferguson, prior to his appointment as CFO.

7. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

In accordance with the provisions of the Fire Authority's Local Code of Conduct, Councillor Angus Ross stated that should the Thames Valley Fire Control Service (TVFCS) be discussed at the meeting he would need to declare a personal interest

as he was the Chairman of the TVFCS Joint Committee. He would therefore not participate in any debate on the TVFCS should it materialise.

There were no Declarations of Interest received from Officers.

8. MINUTES OF THE MEETING HELD ON 18 APRIL 2017

RESOLVED that:

The Minutes of the meeting held on 18 April 2017 be approved as a true and correct record and signed by the Chairman, subject to the following amendment:

Item 104 – SUMMARY REPORT OF RESPONSES TO THE SERVICE REDESIGN CONSULTATION – PREVENTION PROPOSALS – final paragraph, final sentence:

Proposals three and four were passed by a majority with **three** abstentions.

9. PARTICIPATION OF THE PUBLIC UNDER STANDING ORDERS 19 AND 25

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

10. RECEIPT OF ANNOUNCEMENTS

The CFO, Trevor Ferguson, explained that he, like many others, had witnessed the tragedy at Grenfell Tower on 14 June 2017. As a professional firefighter for many years he felt this tragedy was unprecedented. His thoughts and prayers were with the victims, the survivors, and their families and friends. He stated that it was impossible to comprehend what this must be like for those involved.

He then praised the bravery and professionalism of all those who responded to the fire and who had provided an inspirational response.

There were still questions to be answered and a complete review would take time, but the CFO assured Members that the Service would work hard in collaboration with Central Government, local authorities and other relevant bodies to do all possible to protect, serve and reassure communities.

11. QUESTIONS FROM MEMBERS UNDER STANDING ORDER 30

There were no questions from Members under Standing Order 30.

12. NOTICES OF MOTION UNDER STANDING ORDER 44

There were no Notices of Motion under Standing Order 44.

13. RECOMMENDATIONS OF COMMITTEES

It was noted that there were no recommendations from Committees.

14. APPOINTMENT OF COMMITTEES, LEAD MEMBERS AND MEMBER CHAMPIONS

Graham Britten, Monitoring Officer (MO), presented a report which set out the Member nominations, role descriptions and appointment to Committees of the Fire Authority in accordance with the Constitution and the rules relating to political balance.

It was noted that based on proportionality, the Fire Authority would have 20 Members in 2017/18 and would comprise 14 Conservative Members and 6 Labour Members. The total number of seats available on the Management Committee was 11 and for the Audit and Governance Committee the seats available were 9. The membership of the Management Committee, Audit and Governance Committee, Lead Members, Member Champions and appointments to Outside Bodies were proposed as follows:

Management Committee	(Con) Councillor Colin Dudley
	(Con) Councillor Pauline Helliard-Symons
	(Con) Councillor Angus Ross
	(Con) Councillor Malcolm Alexander
	(Con) Councillor Tina McKenzie-Boyle
	(Con) Councillor Paul Bryant
	(Con) Councillor Emma Webster
	(Con) Councillor Phillip Bicknell
	(Lab) Councillor Paul Gittings
	(Lab) Councillor Chris Maskell
	(Lab) Councillor Atiq Sandhu
Audit and Governance Committee	(Con) Councillor Iain McCracken
	(Con) Councillor Philip Mirfin
	(Con) Councillor Carol Jackson-Doerge
	(Con) Councillor Adrian Edwards
	(Con) Councillor Christine Bateson
	(Con) Councillor Alistair Auty
	(Lab) Councillor Jason Brock
	(Lab) Councillor Avtar Cheema
(Lab) Councillor Mohammed Rasib	

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Outside Bodies	(TVFCS Joint Committee) Councillor Angus Ross
	(TVFCS Joint Committee) Councillor Malcolm Alexander
	(LGA) Councillor Iain McCracken
	(LGA) Councillor Paul Bryant
Lead Members	(Budget) Councillor Phillip Bicknell
	(IRMP) Councillor Emma Webster
	(Strategic Asset Management) Councillor Angus Ross
	(Collaboration) Councillor Malcolm Alexander
Member Champions	(Community Safety) Councillor Christine Bateson
	(Organisational Development) Councillor Pauline Helliars-Symons
	(Income Generation) Vacant
	(Health, Safety and Wellbeing) Councillor Adrian Edwards

RESOLVED that:

- The Member Role Descriptions as set out in Appendix A be noted;
- It be noted that the number of seats allocated to the Management Committee in 2017/18, based on political proportionality, was 11;
- It be noted that the number of seats allocated to the Audit and Governance Committee in 2017/18, based on political proportionality, was 9;
- The nominations received from the Conservative and Labour Group Leaders as set out in Table 4 at paragraph 1.6 be approved which included the following:
 - Appointments to the Management Committee
 - Appointments to the Audit and Governance Committee
 - Appointments to the Lead Member roles
 - Appointments to the Member Champion roles
 - Appointments to Outside Bodies

14a. APPOINTMENT TO PENSION BOARD (URGENT ITEM)

Becci Jeffries, Head of HR and Learning and Development, presented a report which sought approval for the appointment of two employer representatives to the Local Pension Board.

Councillor Emma Webster enquired whether the regulations stipulated the required rank of the employer representative. Becci Jeffries responded that while the regulations did refer to senior positions, it did not detail the role required.

RESOLVED that:

The Fire Authority approved the appointment of Doug Buchanan and Lucy Greenway to the Pension Board as employer representatives to the Local Pension Board.

15. ANNUAL REPORT ON GOVERNANCE

Nikki Richards, Director of Support Services, presented the Annual Report on Governance and in doing so referred Members to the revised versions of Appendices A and B. She outlined the recommendations of the Audit and Governance Committee which were unanimously agreed by all Members.

RESOLVED that:

- It be noted that the Monitoring Officer had granted dispensations to all Fire Authority Members in the 2017/18 Municipal Year to allow Member debate and decision making on the budget and precept;
- It be noted that the 1% pay increase agreed by the NJC for Local Government Services took effect from 1st April 2017.
- The Members' allowances received for the period of June 2016 to May 2017 be noted;
- The 2016/17 attendance record of Royal Berkshire Fire Authority Members be noted.

16. SCHEME OF DELEGATION AND CONSTITUTION UPDATES

Graham Britten, Monitoring Officer (MO), presented a report which sought approval for updates and amendments made to the Fire Authority's Scheme of Delegation, Constitution, Standing Orders, Fire Authority and Management Committee Terms of Reference. Changes were required following changes in senior officer appointments and to provide greater clarity.

RESOLVED that:

- The changes made to Appendices A – E were approved.

17. LEAD MEMBER, MEMBER CHAMPIONS AND THAMES VALLEY FIRE CONTROL ANNUAL REPORTS

The Annual Reports from Lead Members, Member Champions and the TVFCS Joint Committee were presented to the Fire Authority.

Councillor Pauline Helliard-Symons, Organisational Development Champion, described work undertaken on Member development. This was taken forward by a Member task and finish group, and she thanked Councillors Malcolm Alexander and Paul Bryant for their involvement in this work as well as giving thanks to the Officers involved. She asked all Members to consider ways to further improve the Member Development Programme and suggest additions as they saw fit.

Councillor Paul Gittings took the opportunity at this stage of the meeting to support the comments made by the Chairman and CFO on the terrible Grenfell Tower

tragedy. He hoped that lessons could be learnt to avoid any such occurrences in future.

Councillor Gittings then made comments on the budget lead member report. He noted that £1m worth of savings had been made to date and a station had been closed. Wargrave Fire Station was to be kept open at least in the short term and he hoped it would be possible to keep this station open beyond that timeframe.

He agreed these were challenging times for the Fire Authority with savings of £2.4m needing to be made by 2019/20. This would be difficult to achieve when considering the Authority's relatively small budget.

Councillor Gittings referred to comments made at the last meeting with regard to austerity. This was a political choice and Labour Members believed this to be the wrong choice. He felt that austerity measures should be lightened from public services, in particular emergency services which should be adequately funded to give residents the right level of service. Councillor Gittings added the view that the 1% public sector pay freeze should be removed.

Councillor Emma Webster responded to the points made in relation to Wargrave Fire Station by describing meetings that she had attended at the station with the CFO. She was very grateful for the attendance and engagement of officers at these meetings. Savings needed to be found and targets needed to be met to keep Wargrave Fire Station open and this work was ongoing, however progress was being made and there had been an increase in the availability of crews. A retained service was an option and local people had expressed an interest in joining such a service. Councillor Webster was hopeful that targets would be met and the station could stay open.

The Chairman thanked Members for undertaking these roles and continuing to do so in 2017/18. He expressed his disappointment at the political points raised which he did not feel was appropriate at this meeting.

RESOLVED that:

- Annual Reports from Lead Members, Member Champions and the TVFCS Joint Committee be noted.

18. FORWARD PLAN

RESOLVED that:

The Royal Berkshire Fire Authority's Forward Plan for the period 28 June 2017 to 19 December 2017 be noted.

19. DATE OF THE NEXT MEETING

Wednesday 10 October 2017, 6.30pm in the Lynda Kenyon Suite, Brigade Headquarters, Newsham Court, Pincents Kiln, Calcot, Reading, Berkshire RG31 7SD.

20. 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

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defined in Paragraphs 1, 2 and 3 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.

21. PART II MINUTES OF THE MEETING HELD ON 18 APRIL 2017

RESOLVED that:

The Part II Minutes of the meeting held on 18 April 2017 were confirmed as a true and correct record and signed by the Chairman.

(The meeting concluded at 7.24pm)