

**MINUTES OF THE MEETING OF ROYAL BERKSHIRE FIRE  
AUTHORITY'S MANAGEMENT COMMITTEE**



**Held on Monday 3 April 2017 at 6.30pm**

**Brigade Headquarters, Newsham Court, Pincents Kiln, Calcot,  
Reading, Berkshire RG31 7SD**

**Members:**  
*(\* present)*

- \* Councillor Avtar Cheema
- \* Councillor Phillip Bicknell
- \* Councillor Colin Dudley
- \* Councillor Paul Gittings
- \* Councillor Pauline Helliard-Symons
- Councillor Tina McKenzie-Boyle
- \* Councillor Angus Ross
- \* Councillor Malcolm Alexander
- \* Councillor Paul Bryant
- \* Councillor Emma Webster
- \* Councillor Chris Maskell

**In Attendance:**

- Bridget Aherne (Head of Communication & Consultation)
- Conor Byrne (Head of Finance and Procurement)
- Trevor Ferguson (Deputy Chief Fire Officer)
- Mark Gaskarth (Temporary ACFO, Service Delivery)
- Paul Jacques (Temporary Assistant Chief Fire Officer)
- Becci Jefferies (Head of Human Resources, Learning and Development)
- Simon Jefferies (Temporary Assistant Chief Fire Officer)
- Jim Powell (Area Manager (Risk and Performance))
- Linda Pye (Clerk)
- Nikki Richards (Interim Director of Support Services)
- Fayth Rowe (Committee Officer)
- FBU Representative

**Action**

**97. REPRESENTATIVE BODIES**

Eddie Cardoso (FBU Representative), referred to the minutes of the Management Committee meeting held on 14<sup>th</sup> February 2017 and in particular Minute No. 92, Page 9, 4<sup>th</sup> paragraph. Councillor Paul Gittings had queried why sickness was such an issue in Control when the role was not as physically demanding as some other service areas nor as stressful as those working in the operating room at South Central Ambulance Service. Eddie Cardoso stressed the fact that although the role in Control was not physically demanding it was mentally demanding. The Chairman noted the point that had been made and agreed that the roles in all of the control centres were equally important.

**98. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE**

Apologies for inability to attend the meeting had been received from Councillors Avtar Cheema and Tina McKenzie-Boyle. It was noted that Councillor Angus Ross would be late in arriving for the meeting.

## **99. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST**

In accordance with the provisions of the Fire Authority's Local Code of Conduct, Councillors Angus Ross and Paul Bryant stated that should the Thames Valley Fire Control Service (TVFCS) be discussed at the meeting they would declare an appropriate interest as they were members of the TVFCS Joint Committee. They would therefore not participate in any debate on the TVFCS should it materialise.

Simon Jefferies declared an interest in agenda item 8 – Appointment of Deputy Chief Fire Officer, Assistant Chief Fire Officer and Shared Monitoring Officer. He reported that, as his interest was a disclosable pecuniary interest or an other registrable interest, he would be leaving the meeting during the course of consideration of the matter.

## **100. MINUTES OF THE MEETING HELD ON 14 FEBRUARY 2017 AND MATTERS ARISING**

**Resolved that:** the minutes of the meeting held on 14 February 2017 be approved as a true and correct record and signed by the Chairman.

## **101. RECEIPT OF ANNOUNCEMENTS**

### **1000 Blood Donations now made at Berkshire Fire Stations**

- One thousand blood donations had now helped to save the lives of others, through NHS Blood and Transplant sessions held at Berkshire fire stations.
- Daniel Jani from Reading made the 1000th blood donation, during a visit to Caversham Road Fire Station on Monday 6 March.
- The Fire Authority had sent Daniel a thank you card in recognition of the milestone, and looked forward to opening up more fire stations to support the work of the NHSBT.

### **Third FireFit Course held at Newbury Fire Station**

- FireFit, the course that provided young people with a better understanding of healthy eating and physical activity, had been provided for the third time in Royal Berkshire.
- Five young people aged 11 to 16 years old from Trinity Secondary School in Newbury completed the 10-week course. Every week the young people took part in activities such as circuit training, fire service activities and learning about nutrition.
- The course was commissioned by West Berkshire's Public Health team, and was run at Newbury Fire Station by FireFit Instructors and the Risk Reduction Team. A passing out parade was held on Thursday 23 March 2017 to celebrate completion of the course.
- The Chairman stated that he had attended the passing out parade and it was interesting to see the reaction of the young people who had taken part in the course. He felt that this course had helped with team building and self esteem.

### **Busy Car Washes raised Thousands of Pounds for Charity**

- During March, crews from across the county had held car washes at several fire stations in an effort to raise much needed funding for The Fire

Fighters Charity and other important causes.

- Bracknell Green Watch were joined by Star Wars Costuming Group UK Garrison to help them raise funds for the John Radcliffe Hospital (Kamran's Ward) in Oxford and The Fire Fighters Charity. Kamran's Ward was chosen in particular to support children like Harry Balaam from Bracknell, who was diagnosed with a rare cancer. There was a fantastic turnout and £2,025 was raised on the day.
- Langley Blue Watch, Newbury White Watch, Slough White Watch and crews from Crowthorne and Wargrave washed a steady flow of cars and received a number of generous donations from the public. There was a fantastic turnout at all the events, which was highlighted by the enormous amount raised. A combined total of £11,871 was raised by the five stations.

### **Team conquered 24-hour Tower Challenge for Comic Relief**

- Six RBFRS staff recently took part in the 24-hour Challenge, which involved spending 24 hours in the drill tower at Crowthorne Fire Station to raise money for Comic Relief.
- On Saturday, there was also a car wash, a bake sale and The Fire Fighters Charity pop-up shop, all of which helped the team raise a combined total of £1,786.81 for Comic Relief and The Fire Fighters Charity.

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

No reports had been referred to the Management Committee by the Audit and Governance Committee.

## **103. SERVICE REDESIGN CONSULTATION PRESENTATION**

Prior to the presentation, Councillor Colin Dudley advised that the discussion on the Service Redesign consultation that evening was not to decide which option the Fire Authority might or might not take. He also advised Members that when they received a copy of the report for the Fire Authority meeting on 18<sup>th</sup> April 2017 they should not express any opinion in respect of their preference as this could be seen as pre-determination. If a Member wished to discuss any of the options with Officers, the Chair of the Fire Authority or the Chair of IRMP then they were welcome to do so but he stressed the importance of ensuring that the right decision was made for all the residents of Berkshire.

Jim Powell, (Area Manager (Risk and Performance)), provided Members with an overview of the service redesign consultation by looking at how the Fire Authority had consulted as one of the key Member concerns prior to the consultation had been about how people would be reached; the success of the response rate – a significant increase which in part was due to the nature of the content, and also because the Fire Authority had been better at successful engagement; and a brief look at demographics. He reiterated that the presentation would not look at any of the specific proposals as this would be dealt with at the Fire Authority meeting on 18<sup>th</sup> April 2017 as they were the decision making body.

Jim Powell confirmed that all social media and mainstream networks and connections had been used to ensure that the consultation reached a wide

audience. This had seen the response rate soar over the last year. A direct mail shot had also been sent to key stakeholders which included a letter, poster, main document and also a signpost to the website. Public events in key areas had also been arranged which had been supported by posters and flyers.

It was noted that 1,050 responses had been received to the consultation which could be broken down as follows:

- 1,003 via survey
- 37 via email
- 7 written responses i.e. FBU, RFU, SCAS
- 3 telephone responses

This was a 220% increase in the response rate compared to the Response Standards consultation. A high number of representative responses had been received from organisations such as local authorities or blue light partners. Jim Powell also presented a slide which showed the response rate per unitary authority. The respondent profile was similar to that in the previous Response Standards consultation as follows:

**AGE** - Data showed the **majority of respondents were aged 40-49 years old (29.05%)**, with the minority aged 17 years old or younger (0.74%). An increase in the response rate from those aged 17 years or younger was noted.

**GENDER** - Data showed the **majority of respondents were male (62.59%)** compared to females (32.50%). 4.91% preferred not to say.

**ETHNICITY** - Data showed that the **majority of respondents classed their ethnic origin as 'White' (88.92%)**. However, a **small increase in response from those identifying their ethnic origin as Chinese or other ethnic group (0.31%)** was noted. A reduced response rate overall from other ethnic groups (Asian/Asian British or Mixed) was seen in comparison to the last consultation.

In light of the above, it was concluded that the data in the report did have statistical significance. A review of the consultation would take place to ensure that methodologies and practices were fit for purpose. The Fire Authority would continue to endeavour to reach the full range of communities across Berkshire in any future consultation. It was noted that Agenda papers were due to be posted on 6<sup>th</sup> April 2017 and would be available online from 7<sup>th</sup> April 2017.

In response to a query from Councillor Paul Gittings it was noted that 385 responses to the consultation had been received from members of staff.

Councillor Chris Maskell thanked all those members of staff who had been involved in the consultation exercise as he knew from experience how difficult it could be to undertake a comprehensive consultation process. This was an exceptional piece of work. Councillor Colin Dudley echoed those comments as this had been an enormous undertaking. He had attended some of the open days where it was noted that a large number of people were passionate about Berkshire and it was good to see that level of interest.

Councillor Malcolm Alexander queried what the next step was. Councillor Colin Dudley confirmed that a report would be taken to the Fire Authority meeting on 18<sup>th</sup> April 2017 where a decision would be made on the preferred option. The Committee would need to conscientiously look at the responses from the consultation and decide which would be the best option for Berkshire. Councillor Alexander queried when the report would be in the public domain as he had a by-election in one of his Wards which could be interesting. Fayth

Rowe confirmed that the report would be published on the website on 7<sup>th</sup> April 2017. Councillor Dudley advised that the decision would be taken on 18<sup>th</sup> April 2017 in an open forum and the discussion thereon would be webcast and available to the public to view.

**Resolved that:**

- The presentation be noted.

**104. APPOINTMENT OF DEPUTY CHIEF FIRE OFFICER AND ASSISTANT CHIEF FIRE OFFICER**

*(Simon Jefferies declared a personal and prejudicial interest in Agenda item 8 by virtue of the fact that he was being recommended to the post of Assistant Chief Fire Officer. As his interest was personal and prejudicial he left the meeting and took no part in the debate on the matter).*

Eddie Cardoso (FBU Representative) welcomed the speedy appointment of the DCFO and the ACFO and stated that he looked forward to building a good working relationship with them in the future.

Trevor Ferguson, Deputy Chief Fire Officer, sought approval for the appointment of the new Deputy Chief Fire Officer (DCFO) and Assistant Chief Fire Officer (ACFO). He provided the Committee with a brief overview of the assessment process undertaken for the appointment to both of these roles. The report also sought agreement on the official starting date for the shared Monitoring Officer arrangements with Buckinghamshire and Milton Keynes Fire Authority.

Following the retirement of ACFO, Paul Southern, and the appointment of DCFO, Trevor Ferguson into the post of Chief Fire Officer, Royal Berkshire Fire and Rescue Service (RBFRS) required an appointments process to fill the subsequent vacancies. Oxfordshire Fire and Rescue Service (OFRS) were in a similar situation, also requiring appointment to their ACFO and DCFO positions and it was therefore agreed that a collaborative process would be undertaken. It was agreed that the DCFO positions would be advertised nationally and the ACFO positions would be advertised on a fixed term basis across the Thames Valley. The ACFO posts would lead the collaboration agenda and the fixed term nature would allow the Authorities to consider a shared post in the future, potentially realising a significant saving for both Authorities.

In line with the Fire Authority's Standing Orders the Management Committee agreed an Appointments Panel for the selection process. The closing date for applications was 20<sup>th</sup> February 2017. A very strong field of candidates from across the Thames Valley and beyond applied for the various positions. Short listing was undertaken on the 21<sup>st</sup> February 2017 by the Fire Authority Appointments Panel. Over the course of two days candidates were tested through an extensive range of exercises culminating in a Member Panel Interview on the 23<sup>rd</sup> March 2017.

The panel had been very impressed with the level of interest and expertise across all of the applicants. The comments of the panel in relation to both appointments were as follows.

*"DCFO scores indicated a clear high performer with Steve Foye achieving top marks across all sets. The panel was unanimous in wishing to offer the post of DCFO to Steve. The decision was echoed by Trevor Ferguson CFO Elect."*

*"The decision to appoint the ACFO was not an easy one due to the high*

*scoring of the candidates. Extensive deliberation took place and the performance over both assessment days was considered resulting in a majority vote to appoint Simon Jefferies to the post of ACFO.”*

When considering the desire for the ACFO post to be fixed term until April 2020 and to ensure the best candidate accepted the position, the post of ACFO had been offered to Simon Jefferies on standard substantive terms until his retirement date, projected as April 2020. The salaries of both positions would be in line with the agreed Director pay scales as published in the Authority’s pay policy statement. The individual starting points and progression within the scales would be agreed with the Chief Fire Officer through the PDI process.

It was noted that the Appointments Panel were very pleased with the overall standard of candidates but felt it particularly important to place on record their appreciation and recognition to the unsuccessful candidates. They were particularly impressed with the performances of the other internal candidates and concluded that the organisation had now assembled a very strong senior team to manage the many challenges which would present themselves both internally and externally.

Following previous agreement by the Management Committee the Chairman of the Fire Authority had also written to Buckinghamshire and Milton Keynes Fire Authority requesting agreement for Graham Britten to act as Monitoring Officer for Royal Berkshire Fire Authority. Buckinghamshire and Milton Keynes Fire Authority had now agreed to this arrangement so it was proposed that he would officially take up his position on the 23rd April 2017.

Councillor Paul Bryant asked if the cost of the salary for the Monitoring Officer post would be split 50:50 with Buckinghamshire and Milton Keynes. It was noted that the role of the Monitoring Officer would be to advise on Committee papers in the main and therefore he would be paid on an as and when basis.

Councillor Colin Dudley summarised that the applicants who had taken part in the recruitment process for both roles had an excellent level of knowledge and quality and it had been a difficult decision to make. He felt that the Fire Authority now had an excellent senior management team to take it forward and to overcome the many challenges ahead. He thanked all those who had applied for the roles and also to those who had been successful. He also thanked those Officers and Members who had been part of the Appointment Panel for their hard work throughout the process. Councillor Emma Webster also echoed her thanks. She had been part of the day at the Assessment Centre where candidates had been put through their paces. This had involved a huge amount of work from Officers and she particularly thanked Jackie and Michelle from HR and all the other members of staff who had given their time on the Assessment day. She asked if a letter could be written on behalf of the Committee expressing their thanks to all those involved.

**BJ to  
action**

In response to a query from Councillor Malcolm Alexander it was confirmed that feedback was given to all the unsuccessful candidates who had taken part in the interview process.

**Resolved that:**

- The appointment of Steven Foye to the role of Deputy Chief Fire Officer be agreed;
- The appointment of Simon Jefferies to the role of Assistant Chief Fire

Officer be agreed;

- It be agreed that Graham Britten would take up the post of Monitoring Officer from 23<sup>rd</sup> April 2017.

## **105. MEMBER DEVELOPMENT STRATEGY**

Nikki Richards, Interim Director of Support Services (IDSS), presented a report which considered the draft Member Development Strategy 2017-2019. The draft Strategy provided a framework which would ensure all Members had access to a high standard of support and information to facilitate their role on Royal Berkshire Fire Authority.

The draft Member Development Strategy had been developed in accordance with the Local Government Association led Charter for Member Development in recognition that this framework provided a well developed, best practice, approach to Member development. The Member Development Strategy was aligned to the delivery the Authority's policy agenda and learning and development outcomes would support the delivery of Vision 2019 and the Strategic Commitments.

The Strategy proposed three main categories for Member development activity as follows:

- (1) Need to know information about Royal Berkshire Fire and Rescue Service
- (2) Visits to local fire stations including Wholetime and Retained
- (3) Other information that Members would like to know

There were four Member development objectives as follows:

- Maintain a clear commitment to Member development and support
- Ensure a strategic approach was taken to Member development
- Ensure Member development was effective in building capacity
- Support Members in their roles on RBFA

An annual Member Development Programme would be published at the start of the Municipal Year and would remain a live document with additional opportunities for learning and development being added as identified. However, the Strategy also encouraged more informal opportunities e.g. station and team visits.

A key objective of the Member Development Strategy was to ensure that the Member Development Programme of Royal Berkshire Fire Authority complemented that of the Local Authorities. This would ensure that the Fire Authority were not duplicating efforts and costs unnecessarily, and a cohesive programme of learning and development opportunities could be developed. Discussions were already underway to pilot this model with Bracknell Forest Council in 2017/18, and approaches would also be made to the other unitary authorities to seek collaborative opportunities.

It was proposed that an Annual Report on Member Development would be presented to the Audit and Governance Committee at the end of each Municipal Year to monitor performance.

Councillor Pauline Helliard-Symons stated that it was essential that the Chief Officer team got the best support that it could from Members and also Members needed the knowledge to be able to make informed decisions. A structure was therefore required as the service was constantly changing and knowledge needed to be updated accordingly. There was a certain body of

core information which Members needed to know as this was a technical service. However, it was also important to make the local fire station the heart of the community and to this end it would be helpful to see Members visiting their local fire station in order that they could keep up to date with the functioning of the service. She also felt that it was important that there was no duplication of Member development activities that would be undertaken by the local authorities Councillor Helliar-Symons confirmed that she would be setting up a Task and Finish Group to map out a programme for Members and she asked if anyone would be interested in joining that group. Katie Mills would shortly be e-mailing all Members to see if they were interested in joining the group and also to ask if there were any areas they would like to see included in the programme.

**KM to  
action**

Councillor Paul Bryant confirmed that he was a Member on the Member Development Group at West Berkshire and he stated that the sessions at West Berkshire tended to be more of a discussion group which he found to be more useful and he would advocate that approach at the Fire Authority. He confirmed that he would like to be a Member of the Task and Finish Group.

Councillor Angus Ross asked what the protocol was in respect of visiting a local fire station and what would constitute a 'local' station. He also felt that glossy Member Handbooks were not necessary. He would welcome some help with access to Modern.gov as this was new to him. Councillor Colin Dudley confirmed that as far as the protocol was concerned the Fire Authority were owners in kind of all fire stations. Therefore any Member of the Fire Authority could visit a station whenever they wanted to. However, he stated that it was always good practice to let them know that you would be attending to ensure that someone was available. He also asked if all Members could wear their badges when visiting a station. The DCFO also confirmed that there was no set protocol and he encouraged as many Members as possible to visit their local stations as often as they could. Councillor Pauline Helliar-Symons stated that by giving them a warning it also allowed Fire Officers an opportunity to think about issues they might want to raise.

Councillor Angus Ross stated that it would be useful to have an up to date named structure chart down to Station Manager level as there had been a number of changes to personnel within the Fire Authority over the last few months.

**FR to  
action**

Councillor Colin Dudley summarised that the Member Development Strategy was an ongoing work in progress document which would need to be adaptable to the challenges facing the authority.

**Resolved that:**

- The Member Development Strategy 2017-2019 be agreed.

**106. FORWARD PLAN**

The RBFRS Forward Plan for the period 18<sup>th</sup> April 2017 to 27<sup>th</sup> July 2017 was noted.

**107. DATE OF THE NEXT MEETING**

**Resolved that** the next meeting of Management Committee would take place on Monday 17<sup>th</sup> July 2017 at 6.30pm in the Brigade Headquarters, Pincents Kiln, Calcot, Reading, RG31 7SP.

*The meeting closed at 7.25pm*

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