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



**Held on Tuesday, 3 December 2019, at 6.30pm**

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

- Members:**
- \* Councillor Jeff Brooks
  - (\* *present*) \* Councillor David Cannon
  - \* Councillor Colin Dudley
  - \* Councillor Paul Gittings
  - Councillor Pauline Helliar-Symons
  - \* Councillor Graham Howe (Substitute for Councillor Helliar-Symons)
  - \* Councillor Jo Lovelock
  - \* Councillor Ted Plenty
  - \* Councillor Angus Ross
  - \* Councillor Rachelle Shepherd-DuBey
  - \* Councillor Garth Simpson
  - \* Councillor Dexter Smith

- In Attendance:**
- Mark Arkwell (Assistant Chief Fire Officer, ACFO)
  - Paul Binyon (Area Manager Response and Resilience, AM R&R)
  - Conor Byrne (Head of Finance and Procurement, HF&P)
  - Stephen Chard (Clerk)
  - Tony Deacon (Area Manager Prevention and Protection, AM P&P)
  - Trevor Ferguson (Chief Fire Officer, CFO)
  - Steve Foye (Deputy Chief Fire Officer, DCFO)
  - Andrew McLenahan (Head of Facilities, Fleet and Equipment, HFF&E)
  - Katie Mills (Head of Corporate Services, HCS)
  - Nikki Richards (Director of Support Services, DSS)
  - Fayth Rowe (Democratic Support Lead, DSL)
  - Hannah Sheehan (Democratic Support Assistant, DSA)
  - Tony Vincent (Head of Business and Information Systems, HBIS)

**33. REPRESENTATIVE BODIES**

The FBU confirmed that they did not wish to address the Management Committee on any of the items on the agenda.

**Action**

#### **34. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE**

An apology for inability to attend the meeting had been received from Councillor Pauline Helliar-Symons. Councillor Graham Howe was in attendance as her substitute.

#### **35. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST**

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

#### **36. MINUTES OF THE MEETING HELD ON 14 OCTOBER 2019 AND MATTERS ARISING**

That the Minutes of the meeting held on 14 October 2019, be approved as a true and correct record and signed by the Chairman.

#### **37. RECEIPT OF ANNOUNCEMENTS**

The Chairman made the following announcements:

##### **London Bridge Attack**

- Councillor Colin Dudley gave his condolences to the victims of the London Bridge attack on Friday evening.
- He took the opportunity to commend the actions of our blue light partners in London and members of the public, who responded bravely and swiftly to prevent further casualties in an extremely dangerous situation.
- This was a shocking attack in the heart of London and thoughts were with the families and friends of all those affected.

##### **Grenfell Inquiry – Phase 1 Report**

- On 30 October 2019, the Grenfell Tower Inquiry published the Phase 1 report following the tragic events that took place on 14 June 2017.
- Firstly, thoughts continued to be with the victims, survivors, families and communities affected by the Grenfell Tower tragedy.
- Following the publication, Officers were reviewing the report in detail and a presentation on the RBFRS response and how the Service would implement the learning from the report would be presented to the Fire Authority in due course.

##### **Protection Board**

- In September 2019, it was announced that a Protection Board would be established with the aim of supporting the Government's programme to accelerate the pace of inspection activity across high-rise residential buildings.
- In late November 2019, the Chair of that Board, Roy Wilshire, also Chair of the National Fire Chiefs Council, had written to all Fire and Rescue Services to gain assurance that building owners had mitigated the risks posed by high-rise buildings with ACM cladding.
- The letter was unusual in that it was sent to Fire and Rescue Services for response, and as Members would be aware, it was the Fire Authority that had statutory responsibility for such matters.

- The letter requested a response by 31 December 2019, which officers would facilitate. However, Councillor Dudley had asked that the matter be presented to Fire Authority in due course for oversight by Members.

### **Remembrance Sunday**

- Staff from across the Service and Fire Authority Members joined in acts of remembrance across Royal Berkshire on Sunday, 10 November 2019, and Monday, 11 November 2019.
- As a Nation, we paused to remember and honour all those who had made the ultimate sacrifice to secure and protect our freedom.
- Our Service was represented at a number of events, including in London, Sandhurst, Earley, Maidenhead, Windsor, Crowthorne, Bracknell, Slough and Hungerford.
- The National Service of Remembrance was held at the Cenotaph in Whitehall, London. This year, Firefighter Felicity Screen, from Caversham Road Fire Station, attended on behalf of the Service.
- Councillor Dudley reported that he was proud to attend the Royal British Legion parade and remembrance event at the Lexicon shopping centre in Bracknell, alongside our Armed Forces Liaison Officer, Che Scott.
- Steve Foye, Deputy Chief Fire Officer, attended a Remembrance Sunday service in Sandhurst Memorial Park, laying a wreath alongside representatives from other blue light partners, and our Service's Ceremonial Unit joined the parade in Newbury, proudly marching through the town centre, before also laying a wreath at the war memorial.
- On Monday, 11 November 2019, staff across the County observed the traditional two minute silence for Armistice Day. The silence was a chance to reflect on the sacrifice of all those men and women involved in the two World Wars and later conflicts.

### **Two Successful Prosecutions under the Fire Safety Order**

- In the last three weeks, Royal Berkshire Fire Authority had successfully brought two prosecutions under the Fire Safety Order.
- On 8 November 2019, Mr Sharhan Safie of Paya Restaurant, London Street in Reading, pleaded guilty to nine charges all relating to breaches of the Fire Safety Order at Reading Magistrates Court. This case had now been sent to Crown Court for sentencing.
- The second prosecution was on 2 December 2019. It was brought by Royal Berkshire Fire Authority against Mr Abid Hussain, who was a Franchisee of Papa John's, Hambridge Road in Newbury at the time of the offence. Mr Abid Hussain failed to comply with the Prohibition Notice, causing significant fire safety concerns. He was found guilty and fined a total of £13,785 with RBFA awarded full prosecution costs.
- Councillor Dudley hoped that these prosecutions would serve as a reminder to all businesses that they must comply with the Fire Safety Order. The RBFA would pursue prosecutions when necessary to ensure the safety of Berkshire's residents. Councillor Dudley congratulated the team for the successful prosecutions.

### **Update on New Appliances**

- New Volvo appliances were due to be deployed at Dee Road and

Whitley Wood Fire Stations this month. The appliances were currently on station for a period of familiarisation and training on the new vehicles before they become operational.

- Following this process, the changeover from old to new appliances was intended to happen in mid-December 2019, at which point the appliances would go out to serve the communities of Royal Berkshire.
- The Service would be having an official launch of the new appliances to which all Members would be invited to attend in due course.

### **Celebrating our staff**

- Congratulations go to several members of staff who had been nominated recently for Awards.
- Thames Valley Fire Control Service had recently been shortlisted for the Emergency Services Collaboration of the Year Award in the Excellence in Fire and Emergency Awards, which would be held on 6 December 2019. They facilitated better collaboration and more efficient over the border responses to incidents, helping ensure a value-for-money, efficient and effective service for the people of the Thames Valley.
- The Asian Fire Service Association (AFSA) Awards were also held on the 28 November 2019, at the AFSA Conference in Sheffield, and two members of staff were shortlisted for awards, with one member of staff winning an award.
- Tony Vincent had received the Champion of Equality and Diversity for his work with the Change100 programme, a paid internship programme for talented students and graduates with disabilities or long-term health conditions, 12 of whom have had placements with the Service so far.
- Michal Kosierb was also shortlisted for the award, thanks to his efforts to make the Service a more inclusive and open place, particularly for the LGBTQ+ community.
- Following their recognition at our annual Awards Ceremony, the staff involved in the incident in Longmoor Wood have been commended for their efforts at the Pride of Reading Awards.
- Representing all those at the incident, White Watch firefighters at Caversham Road and Whitley Wood won the 999 Award for their quick thinking to help a colleague, when attending a fire in the open during May 2019.
- Councillor Dudley congratulated the staff concerned and wished good luck to Thames Valley Fire Control Service for its award ceremony on 6 December 2019.

### **38. WARGRAVE FIRE STATION**

The Committee considered a report concerning the future of Wargrave Fire Station.

Councillor Colin Dudley proposed a change to the report's recommendation. Steve Foye (DCFO) had made contact with the staff at Wargrave Fire Station with regard to the recommendation made in the report to implement the closure. There was significant disappointment among staff that they had been unable to achieve the 60% target. The departure of two senior members of staff was a contributing factor. Wargrave staff had asked for a further twelve

month period to make the necessary improvements. However, this would require further financial support.

Officers in liaison with Wokingham Borough Council had found funding for a six month period. It was felt that the budget position would be clearer come April 2020.

He proposed that the implementation of the extant decision be deferred for a further six months to June 2020. This would be recommended to Fire Authority. The proposal was seconded by Councillor Dexter Smith.

Councillor Jeff Brooks welcomed this amended recommendation. He queried the level of public consultation and the response rate, including from the Parish Council on this matter. In response, Councillor Dudley explained that a complete review was conducted of the IRMP in 2016/17 which included a comprehensive twelve week consultation exercise with members of the public, local stakeholders blue light partners and members of staff. It was following the IRMP review that the decision was taken to close Wargrave Fire Station, but, after taking on board the views of staff and the communities of Berkshire, the decision was amended to include the deferral period of twelve months.

The agreement to defer the implementation of the decision showed that the Fire Authority had listened to local residents following the consultation. A petition had also been submitted from the local community.

In response to a subsequent question from Councillor Brooks, Trevor Ferguson (CFO) agreed to circulate the consultation response report and the minutes of the meeting when Wargrave residents submitted their petition.

Councillor Ted Plenty queried what arrangements were put in place if an appliance was not available at Wargrave Fire Station. The CFO explained that an aim of the IRMP was to most effectively deploy resources across Berkshire and across the Service. The alternative appliance deployed would be the closest available at that time rather than a specific station.

Councillor Dudley stated that he was proud of the response standard being achieved by the Service, with at least 75% of calls responded to within ten minutes. This time period was recorded from the receipt of the 999 call to arrival on the scene. He felt this was a fantastic record and was unaware of this standard being achieved elsewhere.

Councillor Jo Lovelock also welcomed the amended recommendation. However, she questioned how this would link with the feasibility study being proposed to look at future options for Wargrave Fire Station. Would this include the option of Wargrave Fire Station remaining open? Councillor Dudley confirmed it would.

Councillor Rachelle Shepherd-DuBey queried where alternative appliances had been deployed from in the past six months. Councillor Dudley agreed that a breakdown of this information would be circulated.

Councillor Paul Gittings was pleased with the amended proposal to extend the deferral period by a further six months. This would be welcomed by local residents. He wished the station the best of success in achieving this challenging target.

The CFO clarified that this report had been brought back to Members by officers after being instructed to do so by the Fire Authority after the previous nine month extension had ended.

It was unanimously

**TF**      **to**  
**Action**

**SF**      **to**  
**Action**

**Resolved that:**

- It be recommend to the Royal Berkshire Fire Authority that the deferral period be extended to June 2020, in order to allow a further feasibility study into the potential for a community safety hub at Wargrave Fire Station in collaboration with Wokingham Borough Council and Wargrave Parish Council, and to give the crew additional time to achieve the required availability levels as prescribed by the IRMP consultation.
- It be noted the deferral period has now concluded and that the key criteria set out in 1.1 have not been achieved.

**39. WARGRAVE FIRE STATION COLLABORATION AND COMMUNITY SAFETY**

Mark Arkwell (ACFO) presented the report which recommended that a feasibility study into the potential opportunities and benefits of a “Community Safety Hub” at the site of Wargrave Fire Station be undertaken with Wokingham Borough Council, Wargrave Parish Council and blue light partners.

Potential opportunities included a community education initiative, co-responding, neighbourhood policing and a tri-service approach. The study would be used to better understand the wider community benefits of a community safety hub.

The findings of the feasibility study would be presented to Management Committee in due course, likely the summer of 2020.

Councillor Ted Plenty queried if there was awareness of a similar initiative. Trevor Ferguson (CFO) explained that he was not aware and therefore this would be an innovative approach. The RBFRS could therefore become the first FRS to lead on an initiative of this type.

Councillor Colin Dudley stated that this approach aligned with the Strategic Commitment to make fire stations the heart of local communities. This would follow the shared community safety facilities in place in Hungerford and soon to be implemented in Crowthorne.

Councillor Paul Gittings felt there could be the potential to invest more widely in this type of service. However, this would require additional investment. The CFO agreed that financial support would be needed from partners before this and/or other community safety hubs could be taken forward. The feasibility study would help to explore the options.

**Resolved that:**

It be noted that a feasibility study into the potential for a “Community Safety Hub” at the site of Wargrave Fire Station would be undertaken with Wokingham Borough Council, Wargrave Parish Council and blue light partners.

**40. PRESENTATION ON THE REMOTELY MANAGED STATIONS AND FLEXI DUTY OFFICER PROJECT**

Councillor Dexter Smith introduced the item, as IRMP Lead Member, by explaining that the presentation would provide Members with an overview of

the implementation of the IRMP initiative to deliver Remotely Managed Stations (RMS) and the Flexi Duty Officer (FDO) Project. This was an important project which carried the aim of changing how Berkshire's fire stations were managed and services delivered alongside generating ongoing savings.

The project was nearing its completion and he was pleased that the time had come to present on its progress. Councillor Smith gave thanks to Nikki Richards, Katie Mills and the team for their work in producing this very good result. He also thanked all those who had responded to the consultation.

Nikki Richards (DSS) gave the presentation to Management Committee and had thanked the Fire Brigade Union (FBU) for its contribution to the co-design project.

The DSS then invited James Hunt, a Watch Based Station Manager based at Bracknell, to describe his experience of the process.

The DSS concluded by advising that the project won the Chairman's Award for Outstanding Team Achievement. This was a particularly notable achievement when considering that this work took place alongside the HMICFRS Inspection. This was a well done for the organisation.

Councillor Colin Dudley added his congratulations to Nikki and the team for all their work in delivering this project.

Councillor Jeff Brooks queried if the saving of £576k had included the loss of posts. The DSS explained that the majority of the savings had come from the reduction in flexi duty officers. A number of the posts had been reduced through natural wastage and not redundancies.

Councillor Dudley felt that a clear benefit from the project had been the ability to offer fire fighters a chance to develop their skills and become managers. Watch Based Station Managers had a challenging role to fulfil.

For a copy of the presentation contact Democratic Support on [committeeteam@rbfrs.co.uk](mailto:committeeteam@rbfrs.co.uk)

**Resolved that** the presentation be noted.

#### **41. 2019/20 BUDGET MONITORING – QUARTER 2**

Conor Byrne (HF&P) presented the report which informed Members of the estimated revenue outturn and provided an update on capital projects as at the end of Quarter 2 of 2019/20.

The forecast year-end outturn for the Revenue Budget of £34.1 million was an in year saving of £119k. When the 2019/20 budget was set, it was necessary to utilise £458k from the budget contingency reserve to balance the budget. Therefore, the in-year saving could reduce the reserve usage in 2019/20 to £339k.

The HF&P explained that the Royal Berkshire Fire and Rescue Service continued to undergo organisational change to deliver Efficiency Plan savings as well as meeting commitments to the public. The main focus for 2019/20 was the delivery of the Remotely Managed Stations/Flexible Duty Officer (RMS/FDO) Project being implemented in two phases (as described in the previous item).

Employee vacancies that had arisen had freed up resources to undertake additional training.

Appendix B to the report provided the Thames Valley Fire Control Service and the Transition Fund Summary.

Appendix C reported on the Capital Programme.

Councillor Paul Gittings queried whether the vacancies referred to helped make the £119k savings. The HF&P confirmed that the savings made by these vacancies did contribute to the Efficiency Plan savings.

Councillor Colin Dudley made the point that the training budget would need to increase, in particular to support the 24 new Watch Based Station Managers in their development. Councillor Dudley thanked the HF&P for the report.

**Resolved that the report be noted.**

## **42. APPLIANCE AVAILABILITY**

Steve Foye (DCFO) introduced the report regarding appliance availability in quarter two of 2019/20.

The Service operates 14 Wholetime Duty Service (WDS) appliances. In Q2 100% availability in WDS appliances had been achieved. The DCFO felt there might be a short term impact on WDS availability in Q3 due to the completion of the Retained Duty Service (RDS) project.

He outlined there were variations in the availability of Retained Duty Service appliances due to station establishment profiles. The average availability was 28.2%. Improvements had been limited due to staffing pressures in Q2, but higher availability was expected from Q3.

Councillor Jo Lovelock noted from the RDS table that availability in Lambourn (14%) was lower than in Wargrave (17.3%) and she queried therefore why Wargrave was at risk. In response, the DCFO explained that the decision of Fire Authority to close Wargrave, took into account the contributions made by all stations and those areas where the greatest resilience was needed. It was necessary to offset different profiles of risk in different areas.

Councillor Jeff Brooks queried whether a report was available on crewing levels. The DCFO explained that the reporting to Members concerned the availability of appliances.

Councillor Brooks followed this by querying if crewing was becoming an issue in some cases. Councillor Colin Dudley responded by stating that there was not an issue. An appliance would not respond to an incident without the required crew.

**Resolved that the report be noted.**

#### **43. FORWARD PLAN**

Councillor Paul Gittings queried whether it was still envisaged that the date proposed for Fire Authority to set the 2020/21 budget of 24 February 2020 would be met or could this be affected by the General Election of 12 December 2019. He questioned the potential impact of delaying this into March 2020, if this proved necessary, to set the Council Tax precept.

Trevor Ferguson (CFO) was hopeful that the budget could be set as planned in February 2020. However, that would depend upon input from the Berkshire local authorities with regard to the precept. The CFO reiterated that it was not the intention to delay this into March 2020, but if this became a necessity then the Fire Authority would still be able to meet its statutory requirements.

**Resolved that** the Forward Plan be noted.

#### **44. DATE OF THE NEXT MEETING**

Wednesday 5, February 2020, 6.30pm at RBFRS Headquarters, Pincents Kiln, Calcot, Reading, RG31 7SD.

#### **45. 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 Items on the grounds that they involve the likely disclosure of exempt information, as defined in Paragraph 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.

#### **46. CAPITAL PROJECTS BUSINESS CASE**

Management Committee considered an exempt report which outlined a capital project business case.

**Resolved that** the recommendations set out in the exempt report be approved.

*The meeting closed at 8.14pm*