

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



Held on Thursday 11 August 2016 at 6.30pm

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

Members: * Councillor Avtar Cheema
(* *present*) Councillor Phillip Bicknell
* Councillor Colin Dudley
* Councillor Paul Gittings
Councillor Pauline Helliar-Symons
Councillor Tina McKenzie-Boyle
* Councillor Angus Ross
* Councillor Malcolm Alexander
* Councillor Paul Bryant
* Councillor Emma Webster
Councillor Chris Maskell

In Attendance: Conor Byrne (Head of Finance and Procurement, HoF)
Trevor Ferguson (Deputy Chief Fire Officer, DCFO)
Moirra Fraser (Clerk)
Becci Jefferies (Head of Human Resources, Learning and
Development)
Simon Jefferies (Area Manager Risk and Performance)
Katie Mills (Head of Corporate Services)
Dave Myers (Area Manager, East)
Nikki Richards (Head of Business Information Systems)
Fayth Rowe (Committee Officer, CO)
Paul Southern (Assistant Chief Fire Officer, ACFO)

FBU Representatives

Action

27. REPRESENTATIVE BODIES

The FBU confirmed that they wished to address the Management Committee on agenda items 7 (Response Standard Consultation) and 8 (Associated Four Year Efficiency Plan).

28. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Apologies for inability to attend the meeting had been received from Councillors Tina McKenzie-Boyle, Pauline Helliar-Symons, Chris Maskell and Phillip Bicknell.

29. 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 declared a personal

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

In accordance with the provisions of the Fire Authority's Local Code of Conduct, Councillor Paul Bryant stated that should the Thames Valley Fire Control Service (TVFCS) be discussed at the meeting he declared a personal interest as he was a member 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.

30. MINUTES OF THE MEETING HELD ON 25 JULY 2016 AND MATTERS ARISING

RESOLVED that the minutes of the meeting held on 25 July 2016 be approved as a true and correct record and signed by the Chairman.

Matters Arising:

Item 4 (Representative Bodies), Page 2 – The DCFO confirmed that the Forward plan had been amended to show that the IRMP Updates would not be confidential discussions.

Item 12 (Summary of Business Transfer from Strategic Asset Management Committee), Page 4 – Dave Myers confirmed that the indicative figures for further reductions in terms of the fleet would be taken to the SAMC Task Group looking at this work.

Item 16 (Workforce Information), Page 10 – Officers noted that in respect of Councillor Webster's query around the number of agency staff employed that Members would receive a more detailed response but in summary:

- 17 agency staff had been employed;
- 2 of these had been employed for more than 12 months;
- One of these employees had been employed in IT but had now been transferred to the Procurement Team;
- The other long term agency staff member had been employed to look after capital projects.

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31. RECEIPT OF ANNOUNCEMENTS

The Chairman reported that there had been a terrible accident on the A34 the previous evening in which four people (one adult and three young people) had lost their lives and another person had been seriously injured. He thanked Control Staff for the way they had handled the situation as it developed and crews both from Oxfordshire Fire and Rescue Service (Didcot, Kidlington and Wallingford Fire Station) and RBFRS (Newbury Fire Station) that attended the scene. He thanked them for their professionalism and bravery and for the assistance that they had provided to all those involved in the tragedy.

Councillor Emma Webster noted that at a later date it would be useful for the RBFRS to support efforts to reduce the speed limit to 50mph on this stretch of road. The Chairman stated that it would probably be appropriate to consider any response once the results of the investigation were known.

The Chairman announced that the position of Chief Fire Officer had now been advertised externally and would be open until 30 August 2016 with the selection process taking place during September. Following this process, the

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Appointments Panel would recommend a suitable candidate for appointment to a special meeting of the Fire Authority taking place on 28 September.

The Chairman also noted that on 6 September, a 'Getting to know Royal Berkshire Fire and Rescue Service' evening had been planned for Councillors as an opportunity to see in practice how officers were supporting the delivery of Vision 2019. There would be a number of demonstrations including animal and water rescue and road traffic collision extrication alongside the Incident Command Unit, co-responding and the Health and Well-being Team. Other guests invited to attend included the Lord Lieutenant and High Sherriff. The Chairman highly recommended that Members attend the event.

On Thursday, 4 August, Royal Berkshire Fire and Rescue Service were the star attraction on the Chris Evans Radio 2 Breakfast Show. The breakfast show, which had 9.73 million weekly listeners, learnt more about the Service and how it was supporting local communities through its work. The Chairman thanked Jock Wenn, Gary Yorke, Chris Baars and Rafer Joseph for appearing on the show and doing a great job representing the Service. The Chairman reassured Members that those staff that attended the show were from the Retained Duty System and that the Fire Engine used was not one that was used on the normal run and therefore attendance would not have resulted in a diminished service should they have been required.

The Chairman congratulated James Blake who has achieved a silver medal in the 500 metre mixed small boat race and a bronze medal in the 200 metre 20 man race at the European Dragon Boat Championship as part of Team GB.

The Chairman stated that it was with a heavy heart that he had to announce that Nick Jell had succumbed to cancer the previous week. He had been with the RBFRS since 1979 and had worked as a Retained Duty System (RDS Firefighter) and more recently had worked in Stores. He was a real character and would be sorely missed. He offered his condolences to Nick's friends and family.

The Chairman highlighted the following events which would take place over the following week:

- Dee Road Fire Station Open Day on Friday, 12 August, between 10.30am and 3pm
- Dee Road Car Boot Sale on Sunday, 14 August, between 9am and 2pm
- Wokingham Fire Station Open Day on Tuesday, 16 August, between 11am and 3pm.

32. ISSUES ARISING FROM THE AUDIT AND GOVERNANCE COMMITTEE

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

33. SUMMARY REPORT OF RESPONSES TO THE RESPONSE STANDARDS CONSULTATION

The Chairman explained that Members were being asked to consider the consultation responses and that they were not being asked to make a decision or to identify any recommendations at this stage. Recommendations would be made by Members at the Fire Authority meeting the following week. The Chairman reminded Members to be aware of the difference between response standards and attendance standard when considering the information

Eddie Cardoso stated the FBU welcomed the 12% increase in the number of responses to the consultation process and thanked members of the authority for giving FBU Officials the opportunity to engage and participate in the IRMP Working Party and advised of the FBU's wish for the current arrangements to continue in the foreseeable future.

The FBU were pleased to see that after years of pointing out inadequacies in what RBFRS were reporting that the Fire Authority were at long last exploring the introduction of a response standard which measured from when the member of the community called for help to when firefighters arrived. He added the FBU welcomed the setting of such a standard and just as importantly, welcomed the clarity and ease of understanding of what was being proposed.

The FBU noted question 5 from the consultation report that there was a 50/50 split on whether RBFRS should measure against a target or keep the current measure. Given that the majority of the responses captured in the report were from the public, the FBU would urge caution in changing from the current 100% to a percentage target.

Eddie Cardoso stated although the FBU had reservations on the introduction of a targeted response standard in % terms, they accept that this was widely used across UK FRSs and added they were willing to support such a target, however this should be set to challenge RBFRS and improve on what the authority already did.

In relation to the response standard of the 2nd appliance, Eddie Cardoso requested members consider a 2 minute lag between 1st and 2nd appliance.

Simon Jefferies, Area Manager (Risk and Performance), AM(RP), updated the Management Committee Members with a headline summary of the responses to the Response Standards stakeholder consultation.

The Response Standards consultation had sought the views of the public, staff and other stakeholders on the way the Fire Authority published and reported on its performance in respect of attendance at incidents. A report from a peer review had found that the Fire Authority's standards lacked clarity and were confusing. It was therefore proposed that a simpler more transparent method for reporting, which would also align to the Department of Communities and Local Government definition of a response standard, be developed.

The consultation process closed on 25th July 2016 and due to the complexity of interpreting the qualitative data it was not possible to bring the full report to this meeting.

The report provided the top line quantitative summaries of the online survey responses which would provide Members with an overview of the general

feedback concerning the four Response Standard proposals. The online survey was the primary method of gaining feedback from stakeholders and it was noted that 317 responses had been received (a 12% increase on the IRMP 2015-19 consultation). The responses were split equally between employees and members of the public.

Two public engagement sessions had also been held to directly engage and seek the views of members of the public. As part of the engagement process GM Jim Powell had carried out over twenty visits to fire stations. Presentations had also been given to staff at service headquarters. The full report would be presented to the full Fire Authority on 17th August 2016.

Responses to the questions gave the following information:

Question 1 – whether the respondent supported the existing ‘attendance time’ measure or the proposed ‘response time’ measure. 21.03% supported the measurement of attendance time whilst 78.97% supported a change to a measure of response time.

Question 2 – whether the respondent wished to measure performance to only dwelling fires and road traffic collisions (as currently happened) or move to the proposal that times to all emergency incidents should be measured. 10.14% stated that they supported the existing measure whereas 89.86% agreed that an all emergency measure should be introduced.

Question 3 – if the published standard should continue to report the measure of time for multiple fire engines or introduce a published standard that measured only times for the first fire engine to arrive at an incident. 41.26% supported a standard that continued reporting of times for multiple fire engines whilst 58.74% supported the move to a standard that reported the time of the first appliance to arrive.

The current published standard had no target attached to it and therefore Question 4 asked respondents if they supported the published standard as it was or if they wanted to change to a published standard that had a target to achieve. 49.82% supported the existing standard with no target whilst 50.18% supported a published standard with a target attached.

It was stressed that the consultation concentrated on the way the Fire Authority’s standards were published and reported to the public and was not about changing the current standards of performance.

Should Members support the changes, then the Fire Authority would need to choose the performance target i.e. to fill in the ‘X’ minutes on ‘Y’ percentage of occasions and five options had been developed by the IRMP Working Party and agreed at the Fire Authority meeting on 17th February 2016. These had been set out in paragraph 3.11 of the report.

The demographic and equality data from this consultation exercise had primarily showed similar trends in responses to those of the IRMP 2015-19 consultation but improvements in some areas had been achieved through more focused engagement.

Councillor Emma Webster thanked Simon Jefferies and his team, the FBU and Members that had spent a significant amount of time on this work. She also thanked all those residents and employees that had participated in the consultation. She was very pleased with the level of response which had been recognised in a recent independent audit. She reminded Members that they were not being asked to make any recommendations. Members would need to

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make a decision once they had all been in receipt of all the facts which would be presented to them the following week.

The Chairman also reiterated that Members were being asked to conscientiously consider the responses without making a decision as the Management Committee did not have delegated authority to do so.

Simon Jefferies responded to the queries raised by the FBU as follows:

- With regard to question 5 and a 100% target the authority did not have a published target and there was an assumption being made that the current target was 100%. In reality a target of 100% was impossible to achieve and no authorities opted to use 100% as a target;
- With regard to the 'stretch target' this had not formed part of the consultation. He reminded the FBU that the consultation was about how the RBFRS published data;
- In respect of second and subsequent appliances there was a great variance in the ways in which different authorities presented this information and there were therefore a range of metrics that could be included.

Councillor Paul Gittings asked if there was any comparator data available in respect of the stretch targets that this authority could set a benchmark against. The Chairman explained that there was still some confusion around attendance and response standards. Different authorities measured different things at different rates. The consultation had asked what the RBFRS should measure and the overwhelming preference was to measure response times from the time of the call to the attendance at the scene.

Councillor Webster commented that the IRMP WP had looked at the issue that Councillor Gittings had referred to. However each authority had its own unique set of circumstances and that it was therefore incumbent on the Fire Authority to consider its own specific situation. The DCFO assured Members that the RBFRS's performance would compare favourably with neighbouring authorities.

Councillor Paul Bryant queried whether Officers would be proposing any recommendations to Members at the Fire Authority meeting. The Chairman confirmed that they would not and that it would be up to Members to make a recommendation once they had been presented with all the facts. The DCFO explained that Members would be provided with a full report and that Officers would produce a presentation to guide Members through the information.

The Chairman stated that, in summation, at the Fire Authority meeting Members would be asked to:

1. Decide if they wished to report on response or attendance times;
2. What the response or attendance times should be;
3. Should the authority be reporting on all emergency calls or should it just report on dwelling fires and road traffic collisions.

Resolved that:

- The summary report be noted;
- It be agreed that the full Response Standard consultation feedback report would be considered by the Fire Authority at the meeting on 17 August

2016 and a decision made on the findings from the report.

34. ASSOCIATED FOUR YEAR EFFICIENCY PLAN

Eddie Cardoso, on behalf of the FBU, stated that they were pleased to see that the authority was planning ahead and that they hoped to participate fully in developing the plan.

Conor Byrne, Head of Finance and Procurement (HOFPP), presented the draft Efficiency Plan and asked the Management Committee to recommend it to the Fire Authority for approval.

At its meeting on 17th February 2016 the Fire Authority had agreed to accept in principle the Government's offer of a four year settlement. A workshop had been held on 4th July 2016 at which Members had confirmed that they wished to accept the four year settlement and had tasked Officers with developing an Efficiency Plan in line with Home Office guidance. The draft Efficiency Plan was attached as an appendix to the report.

The Home Office offered flexibility to fire and rescue authorities on the format of efficiency plans but the report highlighted those areas which the plan should include namely:

- Plans should be published on the website;
- They should cover a four year period;
- They should demonstrate cashable and non-cashable savings;
- They should set out an approach to collaboration;
- They should demonstrate how flexible working practices would be achieved;
- They should include a commitment to transparency;
- They should include a strategy for the use of reserves;
- They should be updated annually.

The HOFPP explained that the authority had already identified £5m of savings but that this still left a gap of £2.8m by 2019/20. To date further savings of £162k (arising from the senior management restructure), £120k (savings on operational equipment) and £87k (retendering of IT contracts) had also been identified which left a further £2.4m that still needed to be identified.

The Fire Authority had set its vision for the future of the service but the delivery of that vision would need to be delivered within the context of falling Government support and the need to balance the budget. The Fire Authority's Efficiency Plan explained how the required savings of £2.4m over the four year period 2015-19 would be delivered and provided a benchmark against which to measure progress.

The HOFPP commented that 2017/18 would be particularly difficult as it had a target of savings of £975k. In 2018/19 savings targets of £715k and 2019/20 £549k had been set. Two approaches would be adopted. Heads of Service would be tasked with identifying £1m of savings from their departmental budgets. The remaining £1.4m would have to be found from station locations.

The HOFPP stated that the authority was in a strong position in regards to the non cashable savings. In terms of the cashable savings there were significant risks including:

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1. Insufficient resources to re-engineered and embed the cultural changes. Members had recognised this risk and had set up a transition fund to deal with this issue.
2. Overall savings target would not be met fast enough. A budget contingency reserve of £483k had been set aside.
3. The budget would not be balanced by 2019/20. The MTFs would be updated on a quarterly basis so that it could be adjusted as required.

The HOFp noted that in respect of the use of reserves £4.3m of the £5.3m development fund would be used for the new fire stations. The remaining £1m would be used to fund any new initiatives that might arise over the coming years. It was anticipated that around £8.3m of capital receipts would be received following the sale of Dee Road and the Windsor Fire Station and this money would be used to fund the capital programme. The authority was also required to retain a separate minimum reserve of £2.3m.

Councillor Paul Gittings queried whether the remaining £1m in the development fund could be used to retain staff if the situation became dire. The Chairman stated that the Fire Authority would need to make any decisions about changes of use for earmarked reserves. The DCFO explained that this was the first time the authority would be producing an efficiency plan but that it would not compromise the annual budget setting process.

Councillor Malcolm Alexander queried whether the decision to decrease the bank rate to 0.25% would have any impact on the authority's finances. The HOFp stated that it would not have a material effect.

Councillor Angus Ross queried if all the reserves were ringfenced or if there was any flexibility in the way they could be used. The HOFp stated that they were generally ringfenced for a specific purpose. For example the budget carry forward funded the supply of goods and services not delivered by year end and the detectors reserve had been funded by various unitary authorities to undertake preventative work. It was possible to have some flexibility but in the main the authority had made commitments to spend the reserves in a specific way. In terms of the TVFCS Renewals Fund as Buckinghamshire had joined the project late there was some residual funding. It had been agreed that this money would be set aside to fund the renewal of the IT system in seven years time if it was required. The plan was to set aside £50k each year to fund this activity. If this funding was not needed the authority would get the funding back.

Councillor Angus Ross queried the 'salami slicing' approach being taken in respect of the departmental budgets. The DCFO explained that at CMT Heads of Service had been asked to identify a range of proposals. Each proposal would be considered on an individual basis and if they did not stack up they would not be taken. It had already been agreed that finance would not be able to deliver a 10% saving.

Councillor Emma Webster requested that the last sentence of the last bullet point on page 54 of the agenda (page 14 of the plan) be deleted as no other options were set out in the document. Members agreed that the line 'These options include the potential for better use of our Retained Duty System staff in supporting their Wholetime Duty System (24/7 firefighters) colleagues'. The HOFp commented that the comment had been included to address the Government requirement to demonstrate more effective utilisation of retained firefighters. Members stated that they felt that this issue had been sufficiently

covered off in others parts of the documentation.

Councillor Paul Bryant asked if Officers could provide an example of how bureaucracy slowed things down (in reference to page 47 of the agenda and page 7 of the document). The HOFP explained that currently the authority's payment processes were elongated and involved a lot of paperwork. It was hoped that by merging finance and procurement it would be possible to streamline that process.

Councillor Bryant noted that £149k was set aside for Control Transition Costs but that this would be spent in 2016/17. The HOFP stated that some transition funding had been set aside. There were still some outstanding issues in respect of Control and it was anticipated that this funding could be spent on addressing these outstanding issues.

Councillor Angus Ross noted the Strategic Capital Investment Programme set out on page 49 of the agenda (Page 9 of the document) and asked if he could infer that the Capital programme remained unchanged. Officers confirmed that this was the case as it set out provision rather than actual spend.

The Chairman thanked the HOFP and his team for the work that they had put into producing this well thought out and good efficiency plan.

Resolved that:

- The draft Efficiency Plan be reviewed and agreed;
- The Efficiency Plan be recommended to the Fire Authority for approval.

35. FORWARD PLAN

The Management Committee were being asked to note the Forward Plan for the period August 2016 to December 2016. Councillor Emma Webster noted that the Social Media Protocol was being reviewed and she queried whether any significant changes would be required. She noted that it would be useful if it could be aligned to those of the unitary authorities as far as was practicably possible so that Members were not working to two very different sets of rules.

The Chairman requested that capital expenditure be aligned to the forward plan in order to ensure that expenditure was being taken forward in a timely manner so that where it was not being spent the balances could be returned to reserves.

Resolved that the Forward Plan be noted.

36. DATE OF THE NEXT MEETING

Resolved that the next meeting would take place on Monday, 19 September 2016 at 5.30pm Hilton St Anne's Manor, London Road, Wokingham, Berkshire, RG40 1ST. The Chairman highlighted the change of venue and the earlier start time.

37. 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 the paragraphs 1, 2, 3 and 4 of Part I of Schedule

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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.

38. PART II MINUTES OF THE MEETING HELD ON 25 JULY 2016

Resolved that: the Part II Minutes of the meeting held on 25 July 2016 be confirmed as a correct record and signed by the Chairman.

The meeting closed at 7.32 pm