

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



Held on Tuesday 14 February 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:
Conor Byrne (Head of Finance and Procurement, HoFP)
Trevor Ferguson (Deputy Chief Fire Officer, DCFO)
Moira Fraser (Clerk)
Paul Jacques (Temporary Area Manager, East (AM(E))
Becci Jefferies (Head of Human Resources, Learning and
Development)
Simon Jefferies (Temporary Assistant Chief Fire Officer, T/ACFO)
Dave Myers (Temporary Assistant Chief Fire Officer, T/ACFO)
Fayth Rowe (Clerk)
FBU Representative

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83. REPRESENTATIVE BODIES

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

84. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Apologies for inability to attend the meeting had been received from Councillors Colin Dudley, Pauline Helliard-Symons, Phillip Bicknell, Chris Maskell and Avtar Cheema. It was noted that Councillor Paul Gittings would be late in arriving for the meeting.

Councillor Angus Ross was appointed as Chair for the meeting.

85. 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.

There were no declarations of interest received from Officers.

86. MINUTES OF THE SPECIAL MEETING HELD ON 16 JANUARY 2017 AND MATTERS ARISING

Resolved that: the minutes of the special meeting held on 16 January 2017 be approved as a true and correct record and signed by the Chairman.

Matters Arising:

Item 74, Co-Responding Update, Page 6 (NJC Trial) – Conor Byrne confirmed that income from the pilot scheme would be shown as a separate line on the 2016/17 budget.

Item 74, Co-Responding Update, Page 6 (Exit Interviews for RDS fire fighters from Hungerford Station) – Officers confirmed that the three RDS fire fighters had elected not to undertake an exit interview. They confirmed that one of the three officers would be continuing to undertake co-responding work and that the other two had not raised any issues about co-responding.

Item 79, Forward Plan, Page 11 – six monthly updates from Lead Members and Members' Champions had been included on the Forward Plan, the purpose of the IRMP Consultation Results had been reworded and the Member Development Strategy had been delayed until the 03 April 2017.

87. RECEIPT OF ANNOUNCEMENTS

Operational Assessment and Fire Peer Challenge

- Between 28 February and 2 March, the Fire Authority would be welcoming an Operational Peer Review Challenge team.
- The team would undertake a review of three key focus areas:
 - (1) An assessment of the progress made since the last Operational Assurance Peer Review in 2013;
 - (2) Assessment of the extent to which delivering the Corporate Plan 2015-19 would improve outcomes for communities across Berkshire; and
 - (3) Assessment of the extent to which delivering the Corporate Plan would meet the requirements of the Home Office reform programme.
- This process was being run in accordance with the Operational Assessment and Fire Peer Challenge guidelines set out by the Local Government Association and the Chief Fire Officers Association.
- The review would provide the organisation with information on whether operational service delivery was efficient, effective and robust. The outcome of the peer review would be reported to Members in due course.

Recruitment to CMT

- Members would be aware that recruitment to the Deputy Chief Fire Officer and Assistant Chief Fire Officer positions was now underway with final interviews taking place on 23 March 2017.
- Following the interviews, Trevor Ferguson would update Members on the outcome of the process and next steps to be taken in the appointment of successful candidates.

IRMP Consultation Update

- A reminder was given that there were several upcoming consultation drop-in events for the Service Redesign consultation. Events would be taking place on the following dates:
 - Saturday, 18 February, 10am to 5pm, at Pangbourne Fire Station
 - Sunday, 19 February, 10am to 5pm, at Wargrave Fire Station
 - Saturday, 25 February, 10am to 5pm, at Windsor Library
- To date 597 responses to the consultation had been agreed.

It was agreed that Fayth Rowe would circulate these dates to all Members.

Bracknell Crews become Dementia Friends

- Crews at Bracknell had recently taken part in dementia awareness training, provided by the Charity Dementia Friends.
- The training was arranged to give crews an improved awareness of the disease and a better understanding of how to communicate with carers and people living with dementia when conducting home fire safety checks.
- With more and more people living with dementia, this type of training could be especially valuable for crews when visiting people's homes. Well done to Bracknell for helping to make the Service more dementia friendly.

Pet oxygen masks to be added to all RBFRS Appliances

- All RBFRS appliances would soon carry pet oxygen masks, after a fantastic fundraising effort from a local canine called Pelucchi.
- Pelucchi was a tripawd Yorkshire Terrier that lived in Maidenhead, and had been a long time supporter of the fire service, frequently popping up on social media to support RBFRS's fire safety messaging.
- At the end of last year Pelucchi and his owner Zoe started to fundraise in an effort to supply RBFRS with "smokey paws" pet oxygen masks, which could be used by crews at incidents involving animal rescues.
- As part of this fundraising effort, they produced a calendar, using photos of Pelucchi at Maidenhead Fire Station.
- The calendar was a great success, selling all copies and providing enough funding for RBFRS to purchase enough smokey paws masks for all appliances across Berkshire.
- The new masks would be fitted in the coming weeks and the Chairman thanked Pelucchi and Zoe for making it happen.

Staffing Matters

Councillor Angus Ross noted that Sylvia Simmonds would be retiring from the Service after 24 years of service. He thanked Councillor Emma Webster for attending a lunchtime event to wish her well and to present her with flowers on behalf of the Fire Authority. Councillor Webster stated that the farewell event had been well attended and that Sylvia's last day would be Friday the 17th February if members wished to pop in and wish her well.

Councillor Ross noted Sue Powell and Sylvia Home were also departing and he asked that Members' thanks for their dedicated service and support over the years be placed on record. Fiona Cooper had decided to take up employment in a different role at the RBFRS.

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Property Working Group

Councillor Ross informed the Committee that he had decided to set up a Property Working group so that he call on expertise of other members. He was pleased to report that a number of volunteers had come forwards and the first meeting would take place in early March.

88. ISSUES ARISING FROM THE AUDIT AND GOVERNANCE COMMITTEE

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

89. 2017/18 BUDGET AND MEDIUM TERM FINANCIAL PLAN (MTFP)

The DCFO noted that the Fire Authority would soon be agreeing the budget for the forthcoming year. Members would be asked to make difficult decisions both at the Fire Authority and in their own Unitary Authorities. The RBFRS needed to make savings of £2.4m in the 2017/18 financial year. Work on the budget and MTFP was being undertaken at the same time as the IRMP consultation which would be required to realise £1.4m of the required savings.

In 2016 the Fire Authority had accepted the Government's offer of a four year settlement and Officers had been tasked with developing an efficiency plan in line with Home Office guidance. The plan had subsequently been approved by the Fire Authority in August 2016. The DCFO noted that local government finance was very volatile at the moment and some of the assumptions made only 12 months ago might need to be revisited. These included the increased costs of business rates, pension costs, inflation and surplus collection rates for 2017/18. The Authority's prudent approach to medium term financial planning had held it in good stead

Conor Byrne, Head of Finance and Procurement (HoFP), provided Members with the latest information in relation to the 2017/18 Budget and the Medium Term Financial Plan.

The Efficiency Plan, previously adopted, contained various assumptions in relation to the Authority's income and expenditure over the next three years. The Plan assumed an annual increase in Council Tax of 1.99% in 2017/18, 2018/19 and 2019/20 as well as a business rates surplus above the Government's baseline of £450k. In relation to the Council Tax base it had been assumed that this would increase by 1.4% per annum. In terms of expenditure, there were various unavoidable pressures which the Authority would face over the next three years. It was assumed that salaries would increase by 1% per annum and that inflation would on average be 1% throughout the next three years. There would also be increases in employer contributions for firefighter pension schemes in 2019/20 due to a change in the way pension scheme liabilities were calculated. The Plan assumed that the additional cost to the Authority would be £404k.

The Efficiency Plan set out a requirement for the Service to reduce the annual revenue budget by £2.4m. £1.4m of these savings would need to be realised from the options presently being consulted on under the Service's IRMP. A further £1m was being realised from the Service's other back office, support and professional services functions. A staff restructure was being undertaken and in 2017/18 it was anticipated that this work would deliver £450k of the £1m savings.

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Since the publication of the Plan it had become apparent that the Authority would face additional cost pressures over and above those identified in the Plan. The 2017/18 Budget and Medium Term Financial Plan (MTFP) had been updated to reflect these additional pressures as follows:

- The most significant pressure had been the increase in the inflation rate over the last few months. The MTFP now assumed inflation of 3% in 2017/18 and 2% in 2018/19 and 2019/20 and would result in additional costs of around £148k in 2017/18 and £75k in the two following years.
- The resetting of Business Rates would lead to higher rates for the Authority resulting in a further pressure of £135k in 2017/18.
- An actuarial review of the LG Pension Scheme had indicated that employer contribution rates would increase. Final confirmation was awaited but an assumption had been made that there would be a stepped increase in each of the next three years leading to an additional pressure of £40k up to 2019/20.
- Cross border income from Buckinghamshire Fire and Rescue Service had been removed from the budget as RBFRS no longer received income for attending cross-border incidents.
- Sponsorship of animal rescue (£44k) had also been removed.
- An additional budget pressure of £75k had also been identified to purchase assistive technology equipment which included £36k for smoke detectors, £33k for water misting systems and £9k for cooker shutoff systems.
- Another additional budget pressure of £97k had been identified in the Training and Organisational Development budget. This funding had been removed from the base budget a few years before but now needed to be added back in.
- However, the Fire Authority would benefit from additional one off income from collection fund surpluses for both Council Tax and Business Rates in 2017/18. The MTFP had assumed a 1.4% growth in the Council Tax Base but it was in fact closer to 2.58%. In 2018/19 and 2019/20 the figure would be revised up from 1.4% to 2%.
- Co-responding income had not been included in the base budget as the evaluation of the trial had still to take place.

(Paul Gittings arrived at 6.56pm).

The HoFP stated that given the increased income and also the increase in pressures Members would need to decide if the assumption around a 1.99% Council Tax increase should be retained. It was his view that it was still appropriate as the net result was that the Authority was still required to make £2.4m of savings.

The HoFP stated that the Capital Investment Programme was set out in Appendix B and the Reserves Position was set out in Appendix C.

Councillor Paul Bryant queried whether it would be possible to recoup some of the money for the assistive technology equipment from recipients. Officers explained that this equipment would be used to protect some of the areas most vulnerable residents and it was therefore unlikely that costs could be recovered. Officers would however seek to identify matched funding, potentially from local authorities, as this equipment would allow residents to live independently for longer in their own homes which would generate savings

for the local authority.

Councillor Bryant queried why there was expenditure of £82k on the apprenticeship levy in 2017/18 but not in the following two years. The HoFP explained that the costs would be built into the base budget for the following two years.

Councillor Emma Webster commented that it had been agreed that income from co-responding would be shown on a separate line but that this was not the case in Appendix A. The HoFP stated that this information was included in the 2016/17 monitoring reports. No income was currently included in the 2017/18 budget as this was in a trial phase. Reference was made to this in paragraph 3.13 of the report.

Councillor Webster accepted that cross border income from Buckinghamshire FRS had been removed but she wondered whether it would be prudent to keep a tally of cross border charging to ensure that the RBFRS was not being disadvantaged. This information also needed to be fed into the IRMP work to ensure that additional costs were not being picked up under a different guise.

Councillor Malcolm Alexander queried whether costs associated with the installation of smoke alarms etc could be recovered from Registered Social Landlords where they were fitted to their properties. Officers confirmed that this was not an avenue that they had pursued to date. It was likely that the administrative costs could outweigh any benefits. Officers felt that the best option would be to seek match funding from local authorities for the reasons previously explained.

Councillor Webster stated that she supported the 1.99% Council Tax increase for the reasons articulated by the HoFP. Councillor Paul Gittings commented that he too supported the increase. The RBFRS was likely to have greater challenges ahead.

Councillor Ross commented that this budget contained more variables than any he could previously recall and that a cautious approach was therefore needed. While he would prefer not to increase Council Tax the 1.99% increase seemed to be the most prudent approach.

Resolved that:

- The latest draft of the 2017/18 Budget and Medium Term Financial Plan which was based on an increase in Council Tax of 1.99% be considered;
- It be agreed that this increase should be recommended to the Fire Authority for approval.

90. CAPITAL BUDGET PROVISION UPDATE FOR STRATEGIC ASSET INVESTMENT FRAMEWORK 2016-2020

Simon Jefferies, Assistant Chief Fire Officer (ACFO), provided the updated capital provision for the Strategic Asset Investment Framework 2016-2020. The report set out the key changes to the framework and the rationale for the changes. The updated Strategic Asset Investment Framework (SAIF) spreadsheet in Appendix B showed spend already approved by the Fire Authority in red and the planned future provision in black text. The paper also recommended the reallocation of some funding to take an opportunity to purchase six reserve fire appliances as detailed in paragraph 3.10 of the report.

The key changes to the report included:

- Scheduling of the rebuild and refurbishment of the Authority's properties to deliver fit for purpose stations at the heart of communities.
- The original indicative figure for the capital build and refurbishment programme within the SAIF was £17.75m this requirement had been reduced to £15.73m and this figure could reduce further.
- Savings of £150k had been realised through the acquisition of a suitable replacement for the Operational Support Unit (OSU). These savings would allow for the replacement of six of the older, high mileage fire appliances with second hand, lower mileage, ex London Fire Brigade appliances. This premise was predicated on the ability to source suitable vehicles.
- Provision of £400k had been added for the Emergency Service Mobile Communication Programme (ESMCP). This funding had been split over two years. The work was being led centrally by the Home Office and it was not yet clear what costs would have to be picked up by the users. It was also possible that the programme might be delayed.

Councillor Paul Bryant queried if the replacement fire appliances referred to in recommendation 2.2 would match the Oxfordshire and Buckinghamshire FRS standards. Officers stated that they would not be identical but that the vehicles would still be newer than the pumps they were replacing. Officers would ensure that there was sufficient synergy before any purchases were made. This was part of an ongoing replacement programme and should be viewed as a stop gap. It was intended that the six vehicles would replace two of the Young Fire Fighter vehicles and four Fleet Reserve appliances. Members stated that it would be important to manage the message both internally and externally about the purchase and that the positive benefits should be highlighted especially to the crews.

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Members stated that it was difficult to distinguish between Appendix A and B and they requested that they be properly annotated for the Fire Authority meeting. Members also asked that the reason for the red text be clarified in the Fire Authority report on the appendix. As an example Councillor Bryant commented that there was £1m in the 2016/17 programme (Appendix A) for Theale Fire Station and in Appendix B there was £130k set aside for Theale in 2016/17. Officers explained that there had already been some expenditure against this budget to pay for professional fees. The budget for the project would be split over two years and there would be an additional £500k in the budget for 2018/19 to fund the workshops.

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Councillor Emma Webster asked that the letter 'e' be removed from the word Lambourn. Councillor Webster queried the timescales for purchasing the ex London Fire Brigade vehicles and queried the age of the vehicles that would be purchased. Dave Myers explained that the vehicles that Officers had had sight of were 2005 models but that any vehicles would be inspected prior to purchase. The timescale for purchasing them depended on the condition and time would also need to be set aside to refit them. It was hoped that the purchase could be completed by June 2017.

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Councillor Webster queried what would happen to the existing Aerial Ladder Platform (ALP). She stated that it might be preferable to retain the existing ALP and that it would therefore be useful to undertake an analysis of cross border charging for this equipment to ascertain if this was the case.

Councillor Webster stated that it might be useful to include a caveat in relation to the table in paragraph 3.5 stating that any proposed expenditure was dependent on the outcome of the IRMP consultation.

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Councillor Webster queried what the term 'major refurbishment' meant. The DCFO stated that any works required would have to be assessed on a case by case basis and the projects would be developed based on a business case. Prior to signing off the scale of any project Member approval would be sought. Councillor Angus Ross commented that any works required would be dependent on a condition survey.

Councillor Paul Gittings commented that he welcomed the refurbishment works especially at Caversham. He noted that some expenditure had been incurred in respect of professional fees associated with the new fire station at Theale. He wondered at what point Members might be privy to some visuals of this major project. Councillor Ross stated that they should be available very soon. Discussions had started with Thames Valley Police, South Central Ambulance Service and the Hampshire FRS vehicle team about their needs. Initial drawings would be available soon. He cautioned however that the size of the site would dictate what could be built on it. The DCFO noted that Officers had started pre-application discussions with colleagues at West Berkshire Council.

Resolved that:

- The amendments to the Strategic Asset Investment Framework 2016-2020 be recommended to the Full Fire Authority;
- It be agreed that £150k from the savings of the purchase of the replacement Operational Support Unit be used to purchase six ex-London Fire Brigade fire appliances as laid out in paragraph 3.10 of the report.

91. APPOINTMENTS PANEL TERMS OF REFERENCE

The revised Terms of Reference for the Appointments Panel were presented to the Management Committee for approval. Members were happy to sign off the Terms of Reference.

Resolved that:

- That the Terms of Reference for the Appointments Panel be agreed.

92. WORKFORCE INFORMATION

Becci Jefferies, Head of HR and Learning Development (HoHR/LD), provided Members of the Committee with strategic level workforce information in order that Members were aware of key workforce statistics, trends, potential challenges and action being taken to ensure that a skilled, competent and engaged workforce was maintained to enable delivery of the Authority's objectives. The HOHR/LD commented that Members should be familiar with the layout of the report.

It was noted that efforts by all staff across the Service, supported by initiatives to support wellness had had a huge impact on short term sickness levels, which continued to decrease. Sickness and long-term succession planning still remained key areas of focus for the next period to ensure that the substantial improvements were maintained.

Councillor Emma Webster queried what percentage of operational employees

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had been placed in temporary roles and the periods of time this had happened for. She also queried what impact this had had on crewing availability at station level. The HOHR/LD commented that there were some individuals that had been acting up over a number of years but that this would be resolved soon as part of the restructure that was taking place when these individuals would return to their substantive roles.

Councillor Webster drew Members' attention to the graph on page 40 which set out the predicted staff numbers by staff groups for the period December 2014 to April 2019. She queried what succession planning had been put in place for the next 12 month period. The HOHR/LD stated that work force planning had become more difficult as a result of the removal of the compulsory retirement age, However planning was based on some key assumptions around service requirements and pensions, intelligence around staffing as well as the impact of decision making e.g. the impact of the IRMP.

Councillor Webster commented on the graph on page 44 of the agenda which set out the percentage of total working days/shifts lost to sickness per person per service between the 01 April 2016 and 30 September 2016. She noted that Control was still an area of concern. She queried what impact utilising operational officers from the TVFCS to stand in as supervisors was having on crewing levels. Officers explained that a range of measures had been introduced to reduce sickness absence in Control. Initiatives to promote health were also being introduced such as specialised preventative exercises developed by the Movement Specialist. Other preventative measures had also been looked at and the Authority's musculoskeletal expert had also looked at the environment to ensure the environment was as ergonomic as possible e.g. adjustable height desks. Work on mental health was also being undertaken. Dedicated HR support had also been provided to work with the Management Team in Control.

In terms of the impact on crewing levels this was considered as part of the crewing level update report. It was noted that supervisors were being rotated and that this also included officers from Oxfordshire and Buckinghamshire FRS. Recruitment was ongoing. Councillor Ross commented that there were some additional benefits of having operational officers in there. Councillor Webster commented that she understood this but that this was not their primary role and could lead to pressure on other parts of the organisation.

Councillor Paul Gittings thanked Officers for this well presented report. He noted the improvement in sickness absence levels but commented that there was still some way to go. He 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 SCAS. Officers commented that due to the small number of employees in Control one long term absence could have a significant impact on the figures.

Councillor Webster commented that in relation to recommendation 2 she felt that if this information was to be presented to the Strategic Programme Board only and that issues would be reported to the Audit and Governance Committee it would be useful if all A&G agendas could be circulated to all Members albeit that non Committee Members would only receive electronic copies.

The DCFO felt that it was important to point out the good work that was being undertaken by the Head of HR and her team. The measures that they had put in place had resulted in significant improvements and the work being

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undertaken by the Movement Specialist was considered to be very innovative and this was widely recognised. Councillor Ross also noted his thanks to the team.

Resolved that:

- The report and the actions taken/planned to address issues highlighted be noted;
- It be agreed that key information contained within this report was reported to The Strategic Programme Board (SPB) on a quarterly basis with areas of issue or interest being raised through Audit and Governance to Fire Authority as appropriate, rather than directly to the Management Committee.

93. BUDGET MONITORING

Conor Byrne, Head of Finance and Procurement (HoFP), informed Members of both the revenue and capital outturns against budgets, up to the end of December 2016. The HoFP stated that as of that date the Authority was reporting a £140k underspend.

Revenue:

Significant issues to date were as follows:

- Uniformed staff costs were anticipated to be below budget at the end of the financial year due to the continuing underspend in relation to retained firefighters. This would be partly offset by set up costs relating to the Community Interest Company.
- The training budget was forecast to be £44k over budget due to additional training needs arising from staff restructures.
- The transport budget was showing an underspend due to cheaper fuel costs at the start of the financial year.
- The Authority no longer received cross-border income from Buckinghamshire FRS and TVFCS operated borderless mobilising between Berkshire, Buckinghamshire and Oxfordshire. The Authority also had not generated any animal rescue sponsorship. Both of these lines would therefore be removed from the 2017/18 Budget.
- Co-responding income had been split out from the 'other income' line. This was unbudgeted income as the co-responding project was still being run as a trial. The forecast was for income of £74k by the end of the financial year.
- Renegotiation of rental agreements by Alex Brown in relation to telecommunication mast had produced a one-off receipt of income amounting to £75k.
- Recharges to partners to cover the costs of TVFCS would be lower than budget due to the current vacancies in Control as well as savings that had been generated from renegotiating telephony tariffs.

Capital:

- Capital expenditure to the end of December 2016 was £791k and £1,905,000 had been forecast to be spent by 31 March 2017. This was due to the fact that payments towards the new fleet would start in quarter four.

Councillor Angus Ross noted that in Appendix A the second biggest variance in regard to income pertained to 'income other' and he requested that this be disaggregated so that Members were able to identify what these income sources were.

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Councillor Malcolm Alexander noted that there was an issue with the bay doors at Ascot Fire Station. He queried whether the funding in quarter 4 mentioned in Appendix B included Ascot Fire Station. Simon Jeffries agreed to provide him with a copy of the schedule.

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Councillor Webster raised some concerns about the kitchen at Bracknell Fire Station. The DCFO agreed to follow up on any outstanding issues. It was noted that whilst the dishwasher at this station was a domestic appliance in the future more robust appliances would be purchased.

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Resolved that:

- The report be noted.

94. CREWING LEVEL MONITORING

Dave Myers, T/ACFO Service Delivery, informed the Committee of the crewing levels for wholetime and retained appliances and TVFCS for the third quarter of 2016/17 (October to December 2016)

The station based establishment (excluding the Retained Support Officers) was 328. During the third quarter of 2016/17 8 wholetime firefighters completed their basic training and had subsequently been posted to stations. There had also been two stationed based personnel who had retired. The establishment figures were set out in the table on page 58 of the agenda and ranged between 336 and 334 employees. However long term absences, due to acting up and secondments, illness and maternity leave meant that actual staff figures available for crewing appliances was between 315 and 313. Pre-arranged overtime was used on 269 occasions over this period to maintain planned crewing levels.

The AME noted that in order to fully crew all 14 wholetime pumping appliances at minimum levels 56 personnel were required per shift. An additional two personnel (58) would be required to crew the special appliance at Whitley Wood Fire Station as well.

During the third quarter of 2016/17 58 personnel were available on 184 (100%) of occasions.

A query was raised at the last Management Committee as to whether wholetime crewing was being reported at 100% full shifts when some were below 100% for parts of those shifts where Officers were travelling between stations. Officers were asked to, where absences exceeded two hours, capture this information. This information was not routinely captured but Station Commanders had been approached and they were comfortable that appliances were not becoming routinely unavailable due to staff movements. Where these incidents did occur they were reported to the Central Management Team. Councillor Emma Webster requested that this information be reported to Management Committee too.

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The T/ACFO noted that the service maintained seven retained pumping appliances. Availability for October and November were up on the previous months reflecting the reduction in annual leave after the peak summer month

period. December however saw a drop in availability across all RDS stations.

A range of management activities were being considered to manage the peaks and troughs of availability. These included reviewing leave policies, recruitment and retention initiatives and the use of supernumerary WDS firefighters when crewing was high.

The minimum crewing level for the TVFCS was 6 (3 of whom had to be supervisory managers). When duty swaps and overtime could not be used to fill the shifts operational officers from the TVFCS were utilised to stand in as supervisors. There had been a peak in sickness absence in November. Working in close proximity meant that there was always a risk of cross infection. During the period crewing fell below the minimum on 13 occasions (7% of shifts). The improvement that took place in December reflected the work that HR had put in place to support the managers in terms of sickness absence.

Councillor Tina Mckenzie-Boyle queried if employees had ever been involved in accidents when travelling between stations. Officers confirmed that incidents would only be recorded where employees were travelling between stations or to meetings. A few incidents had been recorded on the RIDDOR system Councillor Mckenzie-Boyle was pleased to note that this information was recorded.

Councillor Webster noted that, if peak holiday periods were excluded, pre-arranged overtime was used to cover around 100 shifts per month. She queried whether any analysis had been done around the financial costs of this versus an increase to the establishment. Officers confirmed that they had looked into this and pre-arranged overtime remained the more cost effective option. Councillor Webster queried whether pre-arranged overtime had an impact on staff training. Officer explained that it was up to individual employees to ensure that the appropriate competency levels were maintained and managers were tasked with ensuring that they were provided with the opportunities to do so.

Resolved that:

- The report be noted.

95. FORWARD PLAN

The RBFRS Forward Plan for the period 27th February 2017 to 28th June 2017 was noted.

96. DATE OF THE NEXT MEETING

Resolved that the next meeting of Management Committee would take place on Monday 3rd April 2017 at 6.30pm, RBFRS Headquarters, Pincents Kiln, Calcot, Reading, RG31 7SD.

The meeting closed at 8.15pm