

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



Held on Monday 16 September 2013 at 6.30pm

**Strategic Command Centre, Royal Berkshire Fire and Rescue
Service, 103 Dee Road, Tilehurst, Reading RG30 4FS**

Committee Members: *Councillor Phillip Bicknell
Councillor Jeff Brooks
*Councillor Colin Dudley (Chairman)
Councillor Paul Gittings
*Councillor Pauline Helliard-Symons (Vice-Chairman)
*Councillor Edward Plenty
*Councillor Angus Ross (*until 6.45pm*)
*Councillor Alan Ward
* *present.*

In Attendance: Olaf Baars (Acting Chief Fire Officer, A/CFO)
Eddie Cardoso (Station Manager, Performance Review, SMPR)
Andy Mancey (Acting Assistant Chief Fire Officer, AACFO)
Nick Oxborough (Group Manager Performance and Review, GMPR)
Caroline Redzikowska (Director, Corporate Services DCS)
Carolyn Rowe (Committee Manager)
Paul Southern (Acting Deputy Chief Fire Officer, ADCFO)
Andrew Vallance (Director of Resources, DR)

Action

546. REPRESENTATIVE BODIES

There were no members of representative bodies present.

547. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Apologies had been received from Cllr Jeff Brooks, and Cllr Paul Gittings.

548. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

In accordance with the provisions of the Fire Authority's Local Code of Conduct, the DCS confirmed that a dispensation had been granted at the Annual Fire Authority meeting for the Item on Members Allowances.

Cllr Ross declared a non pecuniary interest as a Member of the Thames Valley Fire Control Service Programme Sponsor Group.

There were no declarations of interests from Officers.

549. RECEIPT OF ANNOUNCEMENTS

The Acting CFO provided Members with an update on a traffic incident which had been reported to Members. Early indications that it was minor, and that the fire appliance involved with a car was not at fault. Injuries had been minor and there had been no injuries amongst the RBFRS crew.

550. VERBAL UPDATE ON THE NEW BHQ

The Acting DCFO presented some pictures of the building which showed where the demolition works had been completed and also provided an artist's impression of the front exterior of the building.

He advised Members as follows:

- the roof has been assessed and can be retained in place whilst works proceed;
- it had been confirmed that the fencing is adequate; and
- there is an emerging issue on the mechanical side for the design and build.

Cllr Ross, as Chairman of the Strategic Asset Management Committee (SAM C), advised the Committee that he would be looking at this final matter in some detail and it would be going to the next meeting of SAM C. He added that in addition to the Head of Estates in post, there was now a clerk of works on site.

In response to Cllr Helliard- Symons asking whether the work was still on time, A/DCFO advised that it would be close, and that it absolutely must align to the timetable for Control, which he was comfortable with. He added that occupation would be on a phased basis and that the logistics of phasing (for example two receptions) needed to be considered.

(Cllr Ross left the meeting at this point.)

551. ISSUES ARISING FROM THE AUDIT AND GOVERNANCE COMMITTEE

There were no issues arising from Audit and Governance.

It was noted that Members Allowances which was on the agenda had been considered by Audit and Governance.

552. MINUTES OF THE MEETINGS HELD ON 7 AUGUST 2013.

Resolved:

That the Minutes of the meetings held on 7 August 2013 be confirmed as a correct record and signed by the Chairman.

553. CHIEF FIRE OFFICER APPOINTMENT

DCS introduced the report which provided the details of the remuneration package for the new Chief Fire Officer Andy Fry. Terms had not been concluded at the point when the Fire Authority met to confirm his appointment on the 31 July 2013, and the DCS advised that the terms detailed in the report were within those previously agreed by the Appointments Panel. Members were being asked to confirm the package which was provided in the appendix to the report.

The Chairman reminded the Committee that the Appointments Panel had comprised of five members: the vice Chairman Cllr Helliard- Symons, the group leaders Cllr Brooks and Cllr Gittings, Cllr Ross and himself. The Panel had reviewed and agreed the salary range, and the salary as reported in the paper represented a small increase to that in his current position. With regard to the allowances, for example, the rota payment and the car, those were consistent with those offered to all eligible staff.

In response to Cllr Plenty, DCS confirmed that the Government had raised the possibility of removing pay ranges, but advised that no further information had been provided to date. If it were to change it would be a negotiated position.

In response to the Chairman, DCS confirmed that this remuneration complied with the current rules.

The Chairman moved the recommendations which were seconded by Cllr Helliars-Symons and it was unanimously

resolved:

- a) That the report be noted ; and
- b) That the agreed terms be confirmed.

554. PROGRESS REPORT ON ACHIEVING THE CHARTER FOR MEMBER DEVELOPMENT

Group Manager Performance Review (GMPR) introduced the report and advised that nine members had completed a self assessment, and he would be working with them to draw up action plans. The areas so far identified included fire service legislation, community safety strategy, partnerships, and efficiency and effectiveness.

GMPR advised that a webpage had been established on the RBFRS extranet which included flow charts and hyperlinks. The next stage was to identify the best method to impart information to Members, being aware of the time pressures.

The Chairman suggested that an item be put on the agenda for the 11 December 2013 Fire Authority (December) for a presentation to all Members.

In response to Cllr Helliars-Symons, GMPR advised that it was progressing positively with nine members to date, but 16 members were required. In addition, he confirmed that an interview date needed to be agreed with South East Employers in December – that representing the three year period recognised for completion - or possibly, it may be agreed that this is extended to January 2014.

The Chairman moved an amendment to the recommendations “that the Committee encourage **all** Members to participate in the Charter”. This was seconded by Cllr Helliars-Symons and it was unanimously

Resolved:

That **all** Members be encouraged by the Committee to participate in the Charter.

555. SCHEME OF ALLOWANCES

The DCS introduced the report (tabled) which had been accepted by the Audit and Governance Committee at their meeting on 12 September 2013 for recommendation to the Fire Authority on 25 September 2103.

She outlined the two typing amendments which, as requested by Audit and Governance had been incorporated into the report for the Fire Authority and in the report which had been tabled.

Cllr Ward asked with regard to the hard times referred to in the report, who decided RBFA couldn't afford it.

DR confirmed that he hadn't said it couldn't be afforded, and DCS said that the

GMPR

brief reflected the views of the Fire Authority when this had been discussed. She advised that the report provided two figures - one where there was no overall increase, and one should there not be a restriction on the budget. It was an independent assessment and it would be for the Fire Authority to decide.

Cllr Helliari-Symons queried on page 25 where it appeared to be recommending a reduction in the number of member champions from six to three.

DCS advised that the report incorporated the factors that there were additional SRAs recommended, that the total number of SRAs payable was limited to 12, and that where a Member held two positions which attracted an SRA, only the higher one was paid. With the doubling up of appointments, there need not be a reduction in the number of Champions.

Cllr Helliari-Symons said that she felt aggrieved and that a cut in the SRA amount payable for the role of vice Chairman diminished the role, where lots of roles had a substantial increase – for example IRMP had been doubled. She recognised that a lot of Members had said that there shouldn't be any rise.

Cllr Helliari-Symons referred to page 11 where the report stated that there would be a saving of £900 and said that this equated to the cut in the vice Chairman's SRA. She added that she was surprised that the Audit and Governance Committee had accepted it.

The DCS outlined the increases in the report recommendations – an increase for the Chairman of the IRMP, a new SRA for the Chairman on the Budget Working party, and potentially an SRA for the Chairman of the DAG if there were four or more meetings in any year. She advised that if these recommendations were accepted and the decreases in the report were not accepted, then there would be an increase to the budget.

The Chairman asked about indexation for the amounts paid.

The DCS confirmed that the scheme linked indexation to the National Joint Council (NJC) pay rises. In answer to members she confirmed that there had not been any NJC pay rises during the period of the 2009-13 Scheme, with the exception of a 1% award which has been paid in August 2013, backdated to April 2013. Therefore this 1% rise would apply to Members from June to June.

Cllr Ward suggested that an amendment be looked at for the Fire Authority, accepting the rises and not accepting the decreases.

The Chairman stated that the vice Chairman did a lot of work to support him, and the recommendation would diminish the role when deputising. He said that he did intend to take forward an amendment if it was the will of the group, and include removing the requirement for four meetings annually to trigger an SRA for the DAG Chairman, and making the vice Chairman the Chairman of the DAG Committee.

Cllr Bicknell stated that he was interviewed, and whilst there was no remuneration for the Directorship of the Training Company, and he already received an SRA for being a Member Champion, if it were someone else it might be reasonable to reflect that role in the SRAs as the Training Company had involved lengthy meetings.

Cllr Ward suggested that Champions could also be looked at.

It was agreed that the Chairman of the Budget Working Party and the Chairman would meet regarding an amendment to the Fire Authority.

Resolved:

that the report be noted.

556. UPDATE ON EMPLOYERS OFFER TO FBU ON RETAINED PENSIONS

DR advised that there had been no further information from Government following the consultation with proposals for the retained fire fighter pensions which closed on the 3 September 2013.

The Chairman invited the A/CFO to provide Members with an update on the FBU ballot for strike action.

The A/CFO advised that no date for strike action had been given to any Fire Authority. He advised that the FBU must use the ballot mandate for strike action within 28 days or it would be void. Also, 7 days notice must be given, so news was expected.

The A/CFO advised that currently the Scottish Government were making good progress with the FBU and the FBU did not want to jeopardise that. At one point it was thought there may be short strikes of 23 or 66 minutes, but more recently it was thought that there may be 8 day strikes to test the contingency arrangements.

The Chairman said that it was recognised that this was between our firefighters and Westminster, and that we were seeking to reassure the people of Berkshire. He wished to say thank you to the A/CFO for all his work on this.

A/CFO thanked the Chairman and in turn emphasised that it had been all the team and a wider team, who had undertaken the work even though some of them may have been part of the FBU.

Cllr Helliar-Symons wished to endorse the Chairman's comments, and add her thanks to A/CFO, recognising his colleagues too. She was reassured that RBFRS could cover any real emergencies.

A/CFO stated that thanks were due to those who had made that the situation happen.

Cllr Ward stated that this was a disagreement between the FBU and Government, but recognising that if the Government "loses" it would be the Fire Authority and as such the people of Berkshire who picked up the bill.

A/CFO provided an update on the national position regarding resilience. He confirmed that the Government would not provide military cover, but they have invoked military aid to mobilise 200 defence personnel supported by soldiers. This would be for national emergencies - should contingency arrangements be insufficient for a major incident. However, a request from a CFO may result in the release of some of this resource. He advised that the nearest deployment to Berkshire was in Buckinghamshire.

Resolved:

That the verbal update be noted.

557. FORWARD PLAN

Resolved:

That the forward plan be noted.

558. DATE OF NEXT MEETING

Monday 25 November at 6.30pm in the Strategic Command Centre, Brigade Headquarters, Dee Road, Reading RG30 4FS.

Cllr Ward suggested that, with regard to the Fire Authority on 11 December, an extended period of two hours for group meetings be arranged, with the Fire Authority meeting starting an hour later than usual at 7.30pm.

This would be raised at the Fire Authority on 25 September 2013.

559. EXCLUSION OF THE 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 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.

560. RESTRICTED PART II MINUTES OF THE MEETING HELD ON 7 AUGUST 2013

Resolved:

That the restricted Part II Minutes of the meeting held on 7 August 2013, be confirmed as a correct record and signed by the Chairman.

The meeting closed at 7.35pm