

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



Held on Monday 19 September 2016 at 6.30pm

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

- Members:**
- * 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)
 - * Alex Brown (Strategic Property Manager, SPM)
 - * Trevor Ferguson (Deputy Chief Fire Officer, DCFO)
 - * Moira Fraser (Clerk)
 - * Andy Fry (Chief Fire Officer, CFO)
 - * Mark Gaskarth (Area Manager, West (AM(W)))
 - * Katie Mills (Head of Corporate Services)
 - * Becci Jefferies (Head of Human Resources, Learning and Development)
 - * Dave Myers (Area Manager, East (AM(E)))
 - * Simon Jefferies (Area Manager Risk and Performance)
 - * Anne-Marie Scott (Director of People and Organisational Development, DPOD)
 - * Nikki Richards (Head of Business Information Systems, HBIS)
 - * Paul Maynard (Area Manager, Trading Company)
 - * Paul Southern (Assistant Chief Fire Officer, ACFO)
 - * FBU Representatives

Action

39. REPRESENTATIVE BODIES

The FBU confirmed that they wished to address the Management Committee on agenda item 5 (Receipt of Announcements).

40. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

There were no apologies for absence received.

41. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

In accordance with the provisions of the Fire Authority's Local Code of Conduct, Councillors Paul Bryant and Angus Ross stated that should the Thames Valley Fire Control Service (TVFCS) be discussed at the meeting they declared a personal 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.

42. MINUTES OF THE MEETING HELD ON 11 AUGUST 2016 AND MATTERS ARISING

That the minutes of the meeting held on 11 August 2016 be approved as a true and correct record and signed by the Chairman subject to the following amendments: Page 7 second last paragraph first sentence should read “ The HOFP commented that 2017/18 would be particularly difficult as it had a savings target of £975k”.

Matters Arising:

Councillor Paul Bryant commented that he was very disappointed with the Member turn out at the recent excellent “Getting to Know Royal Berkshire Fire and Rescue Service” event.

43. RECEIPT OF ANNOUNCEMENTS

The Chairman congratulated all those who had taken part in ‘The Big Pull’ which saw the 3.5 tonne Water Rescue Unit pulled from Lambourn to Langley. There was great support from across the Service with the team being led by Green Watch, Caversham Road. To date over £3000 had been raised for three fantastic causes – The Fire Fighters Charity, Cystic Fibrosis and Brookfields Special Educational Needs School in Tilehurst.

The Chairman reported that on Saturday, 8 October, Bracknell Fire Station would be celebrating 50 years! All Members had been invited to attend alongside staff and their families, past and present. The event would start at 6.30pm and those attending were asked to RSVP to Charlotte Cartwright.

The Chairman reminded Members that on 21 September, the Passing out Parade for the Service’s latest group of new recruits would be taking place at Whitley Wood Fire Station. The new recruits had taken part in a really intensive 14 week course which would give them the skills they needed to go straight ‘on the run’. New recruits would be posted to fire stations in the first week of October. All Members had received an invitation to attend and if anyone had not responded and they wished to attend they should contact Chris Holland as soon as possible.

The Chairman noted that all Members had received an email from him informing them that Deputy Chief Fire Officer, Trevor Ferguson, had been offered, and accepted, the role of Chief Fire Officer. The next stage of the recruitment process was for the Fire Authority to consider and approve the terms of the appointment on 28 September 2016. He would continue in his role as Deputy Chief Fire Officer until Chief Fire Officer Andy Fry’s retirement early the following year. He, on behalf of all Members congratulated the DCFO on his successful appointment to this role. The Chairman commented that this had been an excellent interview process and that the DCFO was undoubtedly the best person for the job.

Eddie Cardoso, on behalf of the FBU, congratulated the Fire Authority on the quick and efficient way they had dealt with the recruitment and congratulated Trevor Ferguson on his appointment. They commented that they looked forward to working with him in his new role.

44. ISSUES ARISING FROM THE AUDIT AND GOVERNANCE COMMITTEE

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

45. ICT CAPITAL EXPENDITURE PLAN

The Committee considered a report which set out the three year capital bids for ICT. Appendix A set out the detailed justification and evidence as to how the bids supported the delivery of Vision 2019 and the ICT Strategy.

Nikki Richards (HBIS) reported that the ICT Strategy 2016-19 had been agreed in April 2016 by the Strategic Asset Management Committee. At a similar time the Fire Authority had agreed their Strategic Asset Investment Framework (SAIF) which included ICT provision. The HBIS was confident that the 2016/17 projects could be delivered within the remaining six months of the year should Members be minded to approve the plan.

The total annual value of the bids was lower than the sum set aside in the SAIF. It was however possible that some additional bids might be required in year three to deliver the Vision 2019 but it was not expected that these bids would exceed the provision.

The HBIS commented that on the face of it some of the bids were not challenging but Officers had taken the view that it would be preferable to get a suitable baseline ICT structure in place and that it should be developed at a pace that the organisation could work with.

In response to a query from Councillor Paul Bryant the HBIS confirmed that software licences would be procured under a Government Framework. Councillor Bryant also queried whether the Helpdesk System would be aligned with those used by Buckinghamshire and Oxfordshire. HBIS commented that they did not currently have a helpdesk system but that discussions about IT procurement would be ongoing with these organisations.

Councillor Paul Gittings asked if these systems would make the organisation more efficient, deliver savings and allow a more collaborative way of working. The HBIS stated that one of the key strands of the ICT Strategy was that it would improve ways of working, liberate time and deliver efficiencies especially around hidden costs associated with older or non-compatible systems. The authority was on a journey to deliver a more common platform, improve the ability to share information both internally and externally and deliver other time benefits. The ICT Strategy was designed provide a more holistic and integrated way of working based on incremental improvements that the organisation could deliver.

Councillor Colin Dudley welcomed the Helpdesk System which represented best practice and would help to identify issues so that consistent problems could be addressed. Councillor Emma Webster was concerned about making use of expensive agency staff to deliver the projects.

The HBIS commented that the progress with the ICT Strategy would be monitored by the Audit and Governance Committee. A contract register was now in place which would highlight replacements dates which meant that systems should not be going out of service.

Councillor Angus Ross sought reassurance that the figures included training

costs. The HBIS confirmed that they did.

Councillor Chris Maskell noted that SAMC had identified a number of risks and he sought reassurance that these had been addressed. The HBIS commented that there was always a level of risk associated with ICT projects but that she was confident that the risks had been addressed.

Councillor Philip Bicknell stated that the authority needed to implement this plan in order to get the organisation to the next stage. He accepted that going forward more money would have to be spent given the pace at which IT changed.

Councillor Paul Bryant was concerned that two sums of £30k had been set aside to upgrade Firewatch to versions 7.6 and 7.7. The HBIS noted that the upgrades were free but that the funding was to purchase additional modules for the system. In response to a query about the Emergency Service Mobile Communications Project (ESMCP) she explained that provision for expenditure was set aside in the plan but that if it was not required it would not be spent.

The Chairman stated that the plan set out a range of capital bids but that this did not mean that the money would be spent. Where appropriate RBFRS would approach Thames Valley partners to go out to tender and procure the necessary systems for cyber security. It was the foremost issue for many organisations and it was essential that the authority protected itself from cyber terrorism.

Councillor Ross reassured the Management Committee that as the lead Member for Strategic Assets he was working closely with Officers on this well thought out Strategy. It was not a guarantee of perfection but a necessary start.

Resolved that:

- **the three year ICT capital bids be agreed.**

46. 2016/17 BUDGET MONITORING

The Committee were informed about the capital and revenue outturns against budget up to the end of June 2016. Conor Byrne ((HoFP) reported at the end of June 2016 £8,809m of the £32,720m had been spent or committed. It was anticipated that by year end £32,705 would be spent which represented a small (££65k) underspend.

Uniformed staff costs were anticipated to be below budget (£130k) at year end due to vacancies in the Retained Duty System (RDS). Budgets had recently been devolved to Fire Stations and Station Managers were already providing valuable feedback in relation to their costs particularly in relation to overtime payments. It was anticipated that there would be a slight overspend on the training budget arising from the recent staffing restructures. There would also be a slight overspend at year end in relation to IT equipment. The overspend was as a result of additional demand from the Fire Safety department. Income was also likely to be slightly below budget as a result of a loss of income from cross border income from Buckinghamshire FRS. It was also unlikely that there would be any animal rescue sponsorship during the current financial year.

Capital expenditure was set out in Appendix B and showed that to date £346k of the £5.7m had been spent. Some of the budget associated with bigger projects would need to be reprofiled into later years. He also noted that the

four appliances had been purchased for £800k against a £1m budget. The CFO commented that by purchasing single specification vehicles in conjunction with Buckinghamshire and Oxfordshire significant savings had been achieved. This was a good example of reducing costs through collaboration.

Councillor Emma Webster queried if any of the IT spend related to capitalisation of salaries. Offices noted that there was an agency member of staff whose salary was largely capitalised and was included in the bids presented earlier. The agency member of staff had been employed to give the authority the space it needed to get the ICT Plan implemented. Councillor Webster queried if the employee was employed five days a week. Officers confirmed that they were. Councillor Webster asked that agency salaries above a certain threshold be reviewed.

Councillor Pauline Helliar-Symons noted the comments made about budgets being devolved to Station Managers. Officers noted that previously many of the processes had been automated and Station Managers had not been able to drill down into the detail. Having control meant that better linkages could be made with the Learning and Development Department in order to consider overtime payments etc. The DCFO stated that this was helping to develop accountability, improve understanding and improve intelligence and might help to squeeze out additional savings.

Councillor Angus Ross queried whether the authority could charge for bariatric rescues. The CFO stated that although this was not a statutory responsibility it fitted with the FRS duty to deliver a humanitarian service. The Fire Service had the capability to deal with this issue and he did not feel that it would be suitable to charge the ambulance service for this activity.

Councillor Paul Gittings noted that once again there was an underspend on the RDS budget. The Chairman commented that currently a £65k underpend on a £33m budget was being predicted which equated to a variance of 0.2% and he therefore had no concerns about this budget.

Resolved that:

- **the report be noted**

47. FORWARD PLAN

The Management Committee were asked to note the Forward Plan for the period September 2016 to December 2016.

Resolved that the Forward Plan be noted.

48. DATE OF THE NEXT MEETING

Resolved that the next meeting would take place on Tuesday 08 November 2016 in the RBFRS Headquarters, Pincents Kiln, Calcot, Reading, RG31 7SP.

49. 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 12A of the said Act indicated and is exempt information if, and so long as, in

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all the circumstances of the case, the public interest in maintaining the exemption outweighs the public interest in disclosing the information.

50. PROPERTY UPDATE

The Committee considered an exempt report.

Resolved that:

- the recommendation in the exempt report be agreed.

The meeting closed at 7.50pm

Post meeting note: The Management Committee scheduled on 8 November was moved to be held on Monday 21 November 2016.