

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



**Held on Monday 20 May 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) (*from 6.35pm*)  
\*Councillor Paul Gittings  
\*Councillor Pauline Helliard-Symons (Vice-Chairman) (*from 6.55pm*)  
\*Councillor Edward Plenty  
\*Councillor Angus Ross  
\*Councillor Alan Ward  
\* *present.*

**In Attendance:** Olaf Baars (Deputy Chief Fire Officer, DCFO)  
Iain Cox (Chief Fire Officer CFO)  
Becci Jefferies (Head of Human Resources , HHR)  
Nick Oxborough (Group Manager, Performance Review, GMPR)  
Caroline Redzikowska (Director, Corporate Services DCS)  
Fayth Rowe (Committee Officer)  
Paul Southern (Assistant Chief Fire Officer, ACFO)  
Andrew Vallance (Director of Resources, DR)

**Observers:** Fire Brigades Union Representatives (FBU)  
Royal Berkshire Fire and Rescue Service Officers

**502.** There were no items on the agenda FBU representatives wished to raise with the Management Committee.

**503. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE**

Apologies for lateness were received from the Vice –Chairman, Councillor Pauline Helliard-Symons. There were no apologies for absence.

**504. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST**

Cllr Angus Ross, Wokingham Borough Council Councillor, declared a non-pecuniary interest on Item 12 BHQ Update as a member of the Programme Sponsoring Group (PSG) for the Thames Valley Control Project (TVCP).

The DCFO and ACFO both declared an interest in the Part II item on Emerging Pension Issues. There were no other declarations of interest from Councillors relating to the items to be considered at the meeting, in accordance with the provisions of the Fire Authority's Local Code of Conduct.

**505. MINUTES OF THE MEETING HELD ON 25 MARCH 2013**

**Resolved:**

That the Minutes of the meeting held on 25 March 2013 be confirmed as a correct record and signed by the Chairman.

**Action**

It was noted that the actions on the agenda were complete.

#### **506. RECEIPT OF ANNOUNCEMENTS**

- a) The Chairman stated that a couple of minutes should be spent on updating the Committee on the recent fire in Windsor. The DCFO reported that he had issued a written briefing, which was circulated to Members on 14 May, he commented that the fire spread unusually rapidly. The building, No 9 Park Street, was a Georgian terrace which was of significant historic interest. The building was under reconstruction and had been stripped internally, this, combined with the weather conditions led to the rapid fire spread, which penetrated via the roof to numbers 10 – 11.

18 pumps were mobilised to prevent fire spread and for salvage operations. 5 pumps were involved in salvage in house numbers 10 and 11. House number 9, which was fully involved in fire, was extinguished with an aerial ladder platform. The cause of the fire was still under investigation. He stated that video images of the fire had been posted on YouTube.

*The Chairman left the meeting for a few minutes.*

The Chairman commented that it was worth noting that AM Gene Ashe was in charge of managing the operation and on behalf of RBFA congratulated him for his efforts and also congratulated the DCFO for his mentoring. He further stated that the training received had been put into practice and reported that he would be congratulating all crews involved at the next Fire Authority meeting.

In answer to a question from Cllr Brooks, the DCFO reported that the 1<sup>st</sup> pump arrived from Windsor in 7 minutes and the 2<sup>nd</sup> pump arrived in 8 minutes was from Slough.

The CFO reiterated the number of pumps that were involved in the operation and he formally thanked Surrey, Milton Keynes and Buckinghamshire and London FRS.

- b) The Chairman stated that this was the last Management Committee attended by the CFO. He formally thanked the CFO for the work he had done in running RBFRS and requested that his thanks was recorded in the minutes. This was seconded by Cllr Plenty.

#### **507. ISSUES ARISING FROM THE AUDIT AND GOVERNANCE COMMITTEE**

The Committee noted the recommendation from the Audit and Governance Committee on 9 May 2013 for an urgent item on the Procurement of Digital Controls. Item 17 on the agenda.

#### **508. RECOMMENDATIONS OF COMMITTEES**

The Committee noted that there were no Recommendations of Committees and Working Parties since the Management Committee on 24 April 2013.

**509. ROYAL BERKSHIRE FIRE AUTHORITY CORPORATE PLAN 2013/14 AND ANNUAL REPORT 2012/13**

The ACFO introduced the report and stated that he was getting final details for the draft annual report. He reported that the Annual Report looked back on the performance, targets and achievements in the last year and the Corporate Plan looked at planned targets for the coming year.

The ACFO reported that as from the 1 June 2013, the word draft would be removed from the document and a photo of the Road Traffic Collision (RTC) Team would be inserted. In referring to page 63 of the report, he reported that there was a need to insert a paragraph on the East Cover Review and tabled his suggested paragraph. He added that the draft report had been forwarded to Cllr Jones and reported that he would bring his comments on the document at the next Fire Authority meeting.

The ACFO asked the Committee whether they were comfortable for the Action Plan and Annual Report to be published on the RBFRS website and sought their consideration on the suggested tabled paragraph on the East Cover Review.

In discussing the Action Plan and Annual Report, the Committee made the following requests to be incorporated in the Annual Report and Action Plan:

- Further explanation on how RBFRS intend to increase their efforts on reducing the actual number of fire deaths
- To include the results from all surveys

In answer to a query made by Cllr Brooks, the ACFO reported that the targets in 2013/14 were rounded to the percentage of previous year's figures.

In agreement to a comment made by Cllr Brooks, Cllr Gittings stated that he was aware that all fire deaths this year were not preventative; however there was a need to put in context there was a national problem. He further commented that the statement needed to be carefully worded.

The DCFO reported that 6 out of the 7 fire deaths were vulnerable people and were on someone's radar. He stated that RBFRS were involved in partnership and safeguarding measures to break down barriers, to make sure that we were trusted partners and suggested that words to the effect were inserted into the Action Plan.

Cllr Gittings questioned what does partnership working entails and requested that this area was highlighted and put into the public domain.

In response to the comments received and the need to include sub text explanation into the fire death targets, the ACFO suggested some wording to insert into the Action Plan to inform that RBFRS would work with partner agencies to make every contact count.

ACFO

In response to the ACFO, the Chairman stated that he was content for the Audit and Governance Committee to continue to examine these figures.

The ACFO reported that the survey results would be included on a later date and suggested that his tabled paragraph be included on page 63.

In response to comments received to reword the paragraph by Cllrs Ward and Gittings, as they were not happy with the English; the Chairman moved the amended recommendation to insert the revised paragraph on the East Cover Review into the Plan; read out as follows,

**‘Following the decision to make Wokingham Fire Station full time emergency cover from October 2011, it has been identified that the fire engine based at this station can get to some incidents quicker than Bracknell’s retained fire engine. In addition there have been difficulties recruiting retained fire fighters at Ascot Fire Station, despite several recruitment campaigns. A review of emergency response will therefore be undertaken to identify options to provide optimum emergency cover in the east of the county area. The review will follow the Authority’s IRMP process and if proposals are likely to affect the current emergency cover provision, a 12 week public consultation will follow’.**

ACFO

and it was unanimously,

**Resolved:**

- a) That the Corporate Plan 2013/14 and Annual Report 2012/13 be considered,
- b) **That the amended paragraph on the East Cover Review be approved and inserted into the Plan,**
- c) That officers publish the Plan on the RBFRS website be Agreed, and
- d) That it be Recommend that the Plan be approved by the Fire Authority.

*The Vice –Chairman arrived at this point of the meeting.*

**510. PROGRESS REPORT ON ACHIEVING THE CHARTER FOR MEMBER DEVELOPMENT**

The GMPR introduced the report and stated that Member Development was progressing well. He reported that Cllr Auty, Member Development Champion had sight and supported the draft guidance on the application of Learning and Development Opportunities to Support Member Development. He took the Committee through the LGA website and directed Members to the support and resources pages available and outlined the following;

- Ashridge vital learning website
- Learning guides against skills and development opportunities
- Reference bibliography
- Workbooks – list under Ashridge or LGA workbook

In referring to the draft guidance, the GMPR drew Members attention to the Action Plan designed for Members to identify their desired planned learning outcomes / objectives. He reported that the Action Plan would be reviewed after 12 months and stated that he had hoped that the process was easy to complete.

In answer to the Chairman, the GMPR reported that to date, he had received interest on joint Member Development training from three Unitary Authorities. He reported that he would provide the Chairman with the names of the other three Unitary Authorities that had not responded.

GMPR

The Chairman reported that Bracknell Forest Council were going through the Peer Review and stated that they had already received the Member Charter.

In response to comments and queries made by the Committee, the GMPR reported that it was his intention to revise the Member Induction Package to make it a more comprehensive document. He reported that South East Employers expectation was a minimum of 16 Fire Authority Members were involved in completing the self assessment process. He reported that he had discussed with Cllr Auty his completion of the forms and that he had hoped that he would carry out a presentation to the Fire Authority. The GMPR reported that all that was required was an additional 15 Members names for meetings to be arranged in July and for the assessment in November. He further agreed to make the process as easy as possible for Members.

GMPR

The DCS reported that the learning outcomes on the LGA website were generally available to all Councillors, however; officers were able to personalise it to concentrate on Fire Authority business.

In response to a comment received from Cllr Plenty, the GMPR reported that there were two sides to the LDA website, left hand side for Members and the right hand side for Officers. He stated that he assumed that the LGA had selected an element of management skills Members would need and that some of the areas on the website were generic.

**Resolved:**

- a) That the report be noted.

**511. HUMAN RESOURCES MONITORING REPORT – STAFF RETENTION, RETIREMENTS, ACCIDENTS AT WORK, SICKNESS AND EQUALITY AND DIVERSITY**

The HHR provided a summary of the Human Resources Monitoring report. The Chairman queried whether the significant higher days lost per employee for Control staff for this period was due to possible uncertainties in relation to their posts? He also asked whether the average number of duty days sickness absence per employee at 9.6 days for the period had something to do with Control.

The HHR reported that there were a number of issues that reflected Control's long period of uncertainty and the HR Team were looking after the interests of staff. There were also a number of issues that contributed to sickness absence e.g. mental health.

In referring to Appendix 2, Cllr Brooks commented that the trend had gone up in the total sickness absence days lost from October 2007 to March 2013. In response, the Chairman stated that RBFA had more staff in 2007.

The Committee had identified the increased number of days lost by cause was due to mental health. The CFO reported that the Fire-fighters charity had changed their remit to specifically focus on mental health.

Cllr Ward queried whether Members should be concerned with the fitness testing figures which show 17 % of staff were in the high risk category, 56% of operational staff at increased risk and 27% was <94 (OK) for both BMI and waist size.

The CFO reported that this issue had been discussed at a Corporate Management Team (CMT) meeting and the figures were based on operational staff. He added that the fitness rate was higher than the obesity rate.

The HHR reported that health promotions had been held to educate staff e.g. the hidden nasties in food and health campaigns had been run on walk to work and cycle to work schemes.

Cllr Gittings commented that there was a need to look at the figures in the round and asked whether fitness testing made effective fire-fighters, however, he agreed with Cllr Ward that there should not be a red column which indicates that 17% were at high risk.

**Resolved:**

- a) That the report be noted.

**512. UPDATE ON EMPLOYERS OFFER TO FBU ON RETAINED PENSIONS**

The CFO provided a brief verbal update. He advised that negotiations were still being held with the FBU and if agreed, a formal consultation would be held. He reported that no Fire Authority should settle at the moment until the parties have come to an agreement. He reported that as soon as RBFA were informed of the agreement then the work would be carried out.

In response to the Chairman, the FBU representatives present advised that they did not wish to comment.

**513. NEW BHQ UPDATE**

The ACFO presented a verbal update and reported that a Letter of Intent (LOI) had been issued to enable Graham Contractors to get on the site. He advised that the intention was to start surveys next week and the key element was to finalise the main contract within the next eight weeks.

The ACFO reported that a similar verbal update went to SAMC on 30 April 2013 and an request was made for a report to be brought back to make an recommendation that Members of the Committee could be summoned to meet at short notice if an urgent decision was required. He advised that the recommendation would be brought to a future Management Committee for approval.

The appointed Clerk of Works started their post this week and along with the DR and DCS, the ACFO reported that interviews would be held this week for the post of Head of Property. He stated that to date the project was on time and to budget.

Cllr Ross, as Chairman of SAMC reported that the Committee did not want to get in the way of process, however wanted to oversee suitable controls.

The Chairman thanked the ACFO for his verbal update.

#### **514. FORWARD PLAN**

The Committee spent some time on the Forward Plan. In answer to Cllr Brooks, the DCS advised that the Scheme of Allowance would not be brought to the annual Fire Authority meeting in June 2013.

The Chairman requested for Scheme of Allowances to be brought to the next A&GC and suggested that changes on how the allowances were apportioned were to be dealt with at a later date.

DR/CT

Cllr Ross requested that an item on the governance of the headquarters building to be included on the forward plan.

CT

Cllr Ward confirmed that the item on the Scheme of Allowances would be brought to the next A&GC in September, then the Fire Authority meeting in September 2013.

#### **515. DATE OF NEXT MEETING**

Monday 22 July at 6.30pm in the Strategic Command Centre,  
Headquarters, Royal Berkshire Fire and Rescue Service, Dee Road,  
Tilehurst, Reading, Berkshire, RG30 4FS

#### **516. 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.

#### **517. PART 11 MINUTES OF THE MEETING HELD ON 25 MARCH AND 24 APRIL 2013**

##### **Resolved:**

That the restricted Part II Minutes of the meeting held on 25 March 2013 and 24 April 2013 be confirmed as a correct record and signed by the Chairman.

#### **518. PROCUREMENT OF DIGITAL CONTROLS FOR FUEL MANAGEMENT**

The DCFO requested the Committee to consider the recommendations set out in the report.

##### **Resolved:**

That the recommendations set out in the report were approved.

*The DCFO, ACFO and HHR left the meeting at this point.*

**519. EMERGING PENSIONS ISSUES**

The CFO introduced the report and sought consideration on the options outlined in the report.

**Resolved:**

That an option identified in the report was approved.

The meeting closed at 8.20pm