

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



Held on Monday 21 November 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 Helliard-Symons
  - Councillor Tina McKenzie-Boyle
  - \* Councillor Angus Ross
  - \* Councillor Malcolm Alexander
  - \* Councillor Paul Bryant
  - \* Councillor Emma Webster (in the Chair)
  - \* Councillor Chris Maskell

- In Attendance:**
- Conor Byrne (Head of Finance and Procurement, HoFP)
  - Trevor Ferguson (Deputy Chief Fire Officer, DCFO)
  - Moira Fraser (Clerk)
  - Andy Fry (Chief Fire Officer, CFO)
  - Mark Gaskarth (Area Manager West (AM(W)))
  - Becci Jefferies (Head of Human Resources, Learning and Development)
  - Simon Jefferies (Area Manager Risk and Performance)
  - Jane Lubbock (Programme and Procurement Lead)
  - Paul Maynard (Area Manager, Trading Company)
  - Katie Mills (Head of Corporate Services)
  - Dave Myers (Area Manager, East (AM(E)))
  - Jim Powell (Group Manager)
  - Nikki Richards (Head of Business Information Systems)
  - Fayth Rowe (Clerk)
  - FBU Representatives

As both the Chairman and the Vice-Chairman had given their apologies for the meeting Councillor Emma Webster was elected to preside over the meeting.

*(Councillor Emma Webster in the Chair)*

## 51. REPRESENTATIVE BODIES

The FBU confirmed that they wished to address the Management Committee on agenda items 8 and 10.

## 52. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Apologies for inability to attend the meeting had been received from Councillors Colin Dudley (Chairman), Pauline Helliard-Symons (Vice-Chairman) Phillip Bicknell and Tina McKenzie-Boyle.

**Action**

### **53. 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.

### **54. MINUTES OF THE MEETING HELD ON 19 SEPTEMBER 2016 AND MATTERS ARISING**

That the minutes of the meeting held on 19 September 2016 be approved as a true and correct record and signed by the Acting-Chairman.

### **55. RECEIPT OF ANNOUNCEMENTS**

#### **Hungerford Groundbreaking**

Two events had been held earlier this month to celebrate the groundbreaking of Hungerford Community Fire Station prior to refurbishment work commencing.

On Tuesday, 8 November, Fire Authority Members had visited the station, together with a number of other guests including colleagues from Thames Valley Police and South Central Ambulance Service, the Police & Crime Commissioner, Anthony Stansfeld, a number of Hungerford Town Councillors including the Mayor and Deputy Mayor of Hungerford.

Guests heard about the plans and what they mean for the local community. It also provided an opportunity to meet some of the people responsible for developing the plans.

An engagement event was also held for members of the public on Saturday, 12 November, and despite wet weather, around 70 people visited the station over the course of the day. The Acting Chairman thanked all those involved in organising the event.

Work would begin on Monday, 28 November, and was expected to be completed by June 2017. During this time the fire authority's operational response would be maintained from an alternative location on the Hungerford Trading Estate. The Acting Chairman once again thanked Compressor Products International for accommodating the fire station during the decant.

#### **Wholetime Recruitment**

Following the recent wholetime recruitment campaign, RBFRS received requests for 550 application packs. In total, 373 candidates returned their completed forms. Of those completed forms, 102 candidates had been shortlisted.

80 candidates had passed the written test or recently sat the test with another Fire and Rescue Service with physical tests due to start on 21 November 2016. Over the next few months these physical tests would continue together with interviews.

This was an enormous amount of work by the HR and L&D Team and the Chairman thanked all those involved. The Acting Chairman thanked HR and

the Learning and Development Team for the work they had put into the recruitment process.

### **Safe Drive, Stay Alive**

In November, Royal Berkshire Fire and Rescue Service, was delighted to continue to support the excellent Safe Drive Stay Alive (SDSA) event at the Hexagon Theatre in Reading.

Safe Drive Stay Alive road show travelled around the Thames Valley offering attendees an emotive and hard-hitting presentation about the harrowing consequences of being involved in a Road Traffic Collision. The acting Chairman recommended that all Members attend this presentation.

The event was brought to life through the real-life stories of those who had tragically dealt with a Road Traffic Collision. This year alone, the event reached approximately 24,000 young people in the whole of the Thames Valley. The event was aimed at new or pre-drivers, usually in their first year of college or sixth form, to educate them about the dangers of driving.

The Chairman thanked the Prevention Risk Reduction Team, Chaplains and Volunteers that supported the young people at this event. Thanks were also given to Watch Manager, Jim Clark, who year-on-year attended the Safe Drive, Stay Alive events across the counties and spoke on stage to thousands of pupils. Jim shared his experience – personal and professional – about being at a Road Traffic Collision.

Without staff and volunteers, the event would not have such a fantastic support mechanism for the young people. Supporting this event was just one of the ways that the fire authority assisted in educating people on how to prevent emergencies.

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

It was noted that no reports had been referred to the Management Committee by the Audit and Governance Committee.

## **57. REQUESTS FOR WAIVERS OF CONTRACT REGULATIONS**

Conor Byrne, Head of Finance and Procurement (HOFP), presented a report which sought agreement to a waiver of Contract Regulations for two contracts as detailed in the table in Appendix A.

The Authority continued to review and monitor supplier expenditure to ensure that it complied with the new Contract Regulations and offered value for money. In doing so additional spend categories had been subjected to competitive tender in 2016/17 and additional new contracts were being put in place. As part of this arrangement the authority had identified two contracts which would require waivers.

The first request was a waiver for the DS3000 maintenance for 2015/16 (retrospectively at a cost of £35k) and 2016/17 (when the costs had doubled). This was the call handling solution used by Thames Valley Fire Control Service (TVFCS) and the total waiver requested for both years was £112,248. The tender for the future maintenance of the software would be released in December 2016 with a view to the compliant contract being in place by April 2017.

## DRAFT

The second request was to approve the award of a contract for up to two years to Benenden Healthcare who were a unique social enterprise offering private healthcare. The potential maximum waiver request was £124,000 (£62k per annum). This would initially be funded from the Transition Fund and if this scheme was cost neutral it would be extended for a future year.

Councillor Paul Bryant queried why the maintenance costs had not been included in the initial contract and Officers acknowledged that this had been an omission. Councillor Bryant queried why the Benenden Healthcare contract would be funded from the Transition Fund. Officers explained that it was anticipated that the scheme would reduce absence due to sickness and that upfront funding was needed to get the scheme in place. Officers were confident that the scheme would be successful. However its effectiveness would be monitored and reported back prior to a decision as to whether the scheme would be extended was taken. The idea had been generated by the Staff Ideas Forum and had been agreed at CMT. Members were being asked to consider the waiver and not the introduction of the scheme.

The CFO commented that this proposal should be viewed as an 'invest to save scheme'. It was a small sum of money which would be used to drive down the direct and indirect costs associated with sickness.

Councillor Malcolm Alexander queried whether there would be any tax implications for employees. Conor Byrne explained that the level of contribution was too small to have any tax implications for employees.

Councillor Chris Maskell asked for clarity as to how the scheme would benefit the authority. Becci Jefferies noted that unlike many similar schemes there were no exceptions in place for existing conditions. The scheme allowed faster access to diagnostic procedures using the private sector which would then expedite access to treatment by the NHS where appropriate. The CFO noted that each case would be assessed on its own merits and would be used to augment the treatment that could be accessed from the NHS. There was also an opportunity to switch to private treatment where there was a long delay in accessing treatment on the NHS. This would then allow the employees to return to work sooner.

Members agreed to the waiver for both contracts.

### **RESOLVED that:**

- The request for a waiver of Contract Regulations for 2016/17, plus a retrospective waiver for 2015/16 be agreed as detailed in Appendix A.

### **58. FLEXI DUTY OFFICER CAR REVIEW**

Eddie Cardoso, on behalf of the FBU, welcomed the paper and the closure from this long standing issue. They did however have some concerns about the timescales.

Dave Myers, Area Manager (East) (AME), informed Management Committee of the intention to implement a single scheme for provision of cars to Flexi Duty Officers (FDO's) and to develop the scheme with agreed negotiated outcomes by April 2017. A review of car provision had been conducted in 2015 and it identified that different staff groups had different requirements. A single scheme had therefore proved too difficult to implement. It was therefore agreed to separate provision for uniformed and non-uniformed staff. Non-uniformed

staff provision would be the subject of a separate review.

This scheme, for Flexi Duty Officers, was being introduced as a means of reducing a number of risks associated with current arrangements for car provision and also to achieve financial savings. The proposal directly affected Flexi Duty Officers but might affect a wider group of Officers who currently received benefits.

The recommended option which had been developed following discussions with the Strategic Asset Management (SAM) Lead, the SAM Task and Finish Group, representative bodies and managers addressed the risks, realised some savings and had additional benefits in terms of resilience and management.

There were currently 39 employees on the Flexi Duty Officer Rota who would require vehicle lease car provision. The calculations were based on 41 cars to allow for servicing and breakdowns. Costs had been calculated over a five year period to give some level of comparison. Option 3 would deliver savings of circa £78k. This option would provide control over the minimum specification for vehicles including CO<sup>2</sup> emissions, regular servicing etc but would still offer freedom of choice within the set parameters.

Councillor Paul Bryant queried what the impact of reducing staffing numbers would have on the contract. Officers explained that while a cost might be incurred the vehicles would dissipate with Officers when they left. The leases would also be managed through workforce planning.

Councillor Angus Ross noted that paragraph 2.6 of the report made reference to supporting 'officer movements in urban driving conditions and in inclement weather'. Given the nature of the area he queried whether movements in rural driving conditions should be supported. Officers explained that the scheme was not trying to encourage provision of off road capability.

Councillor Chris Maskell queried how the level of corporate risk from road safety would be reduced. Officers explained that vehicles would be newer, there would be some control over the specifications and they would be regularly serviced which would reduce risks as the vehicles would be well maintained.

Councillor Angus Ross thanked Officers for the work they had undertaken over a significant period of time. Councillor Emma Webster also asked that the Chairman's thanks for this work being done be conveyed to the relevant Officers.

**RESOLVED that:**

- A Lease Car provision process be agreed for all Flexi Duty Officers as per Option 3 (Fully Leased option) of the report;
- The content of the report be noted.

**59. RBFRS FLEET STRATEGY REVIEW**

Dave Myers, Area Manager (East) (AME), presented the reviewed Fleet Strategy and updates which reflected an agreed corporate Fleet Strategy from 2016-19.

The existing Fleet Strategy expired in 2015 and it had contained references to vehicles and processes some of which were now out of date and out of

service. The Head of Service for Fleet and Engineering had reviewed the needs of RBFRS and had developed a fit for purpose strategy which reflected the legal, financial and environmental requirements of a modern fire service fleet provision. The strategy had been developed, in conjunction with the SAM Lead, the SAM Task and Finish Group and Officers, in the corporate template to compliment other departmental strategies and to give clear and transparent direction for the next four years.

The AME noted that the fleet comprised 140 vehicles and the strategy had been aligned to the Medium Term Financial Plan. To date the fleet had been reduced by 20 vehicles and 13 more vehicles were being reviewed to see if they were unfit for purpose or beyond a serviceable life.

The strategy also considered opportunities for collaboration and 11 vehicles were being procured in partnership with Oxfordshire Fire and Rescue Service and Buckinghamshire Fire and Rescue Service. Officers had also generated savings of around £155k by purchasing a reconditioned vehicle.

Councillor Angus Ross commented that there had been a few iterations of this report and that he thanked Officers for this good piece of work. He also thanked those Officers and Members that had been involved in the production of the document. He also thanked Hampshire Fire and Rescue Service for their input. As the Lead member for Strategic Asset Management he would ensure that the strategy was adhered to and that progress against it was monitored.

**RESOLVED that:**

- The RBFRS Fleet Strategy document as detailed in Appendix A be agreed.

**60. PRE-ARRANGED OVERTIME AND ESTABLISHMENT LEVELS**

Stephen Collins, on behalf of the FBU commented that in the Union's opinion the report did not accurately reflect the reasons for pre-arranged overtime. If the establishment was maintained the level of overtime would come down. He hoped that the inaccurate figures would not be used to inflict more misery on staff.

Dave Myers, Area Manager (East) (AME), informed Management Committee of the factors influencing current pre-arranged overtime and crewing levels.

The Corporate Management Team had requested a high level review of influencing factors on pre-arranged overtime and crewing establishment levels. The findings suggested that the bulk of pre-arranged overtime was due to crewing levels (linked to the establishment levels) and to staff absences from sickness and leave. However, it was noted that there had been a positive downward trend (30% reduction) in pre-arranged overtime costs over the last 12 months which had been attributed to increases in establishment levels through recruitment.

The use of pre-arranged overtime to cover short term gaps in staffing numbers was entirely legitimate, but the balance between its continued use and the appropriate numbers of establishment posts needed to be considered against leave policies, crewing levels and as part of a wider IRMP review.

The AME hoped that improved reporting mechanisms could be used to dispel any issues around misinformation. The current wholtime station based establishment was 328. This did not include the Retained Support Unit. This figure, which was set in 2014, was based on an optimum of five fire fighters per

appliance or 72 fire fighters per shift and a minimum of four fire fighters per appliance or 58 per shift. At that time it was concluded that a ridership of 1.5 should be applied to maintain a crewing minimum without a significant reliance on overtime.

At the end of the current period there were 328 personnel employed but only 312 were available due to long term absence. Based on these figures the current ridership factor fluctuated between 1.25 and 1.5 across stations at an average of 1.4. Recent recruitment activity meant that there were now 336 personnel in station based posts which was a significant increase compared to the 2015/16 figure of 311. The most significant use of overtime payments was in relation to maintaining crewing levels.

The AME noted that as Station Managers now had closer control over their budgets and as a consequence were now able to better scrutinise their overtime costs. They had also been tasked with providing a quarterly report setting out the reasons for the planned overtime. The AME noted that planned overtime tended to increase over peak holiday periods as a consequence of the authority's Flexible Leave Policy.

Councillor Angus Ross questioned whether the more stable establishment in the TVFCS had an impact on overtime payments. Officers confirmed that it had but re-iterated that the establishment figure of 328 only applied to station based personnel.

Councillor Paul Gittings asked if Officers wanted to comment on the disparity between the report and the comments made by the FBU. The DCFO explained that the management information was evolving; the quality of the information was improving and would improve managers understanding. He acknowledged that anecdotal information might differ but that better reporting would help to clarify these differences and he felt that this represented a significant step forward.

Councillor Paul Bryant noted that the table on pages 34 and 35 that set out the reasons for overtime payments in various stations did not add up to 100% and he questioned the reason for this. Officers noted that the table set out the main contributors but did not include some of the miscellaneous reasons. Councillor Emma Webster accepted this but requested that the figures for Station 10 be revisited as they added up to 102%. Councillor Webster also queried the purpose of the asterisk next to some of the items. Officers confirmed that this was erroneously included and they would be removed.

**AME to  
ACTION**

*(Councillor Paul Gittings left the meeting at 7.40pm)*

Members requested that a report be brought back to the Management Committee in six months time so that progress could be revisited. Councillor Bryant commented that it would be useful if agreement between the authors and the FBU about the information could be reached before the report was presented to Members.

**AME to  
ACTION**

Councillor Chris Maskell stated that while he thought the report was a good idea he felt that it did not provide sufficient explanation and on that basis he would be abstaining from voting on this item.

**RESOLVED that:**

- The content of the report and the processes identified for action be noted.
- An update report be brought to the management Committee in six months

time.

## 61. CREWING LEVEL MONITORING

Dave Myers, Area Manager (East) (AME), informed Management Committee of the crewing levels for wholetime and retained appliances and TVFCS for the second quarter (July to September) of 2016/17.

The station based establishment (excluding the Retained Support Officers) was 328. During the second quarter of 2016/17 8 wholetime firefighters started their basic training and had subsequently been posted to stations. There had also been a commensurate decrease in the establishment due to retirements and resignations.

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 t Whitley Wood Fire Station as well.

During the 02<sup>nd</sup> quarter of 2016/17 56 personnel were available on 184 (100%) of occasions and 58 were available on 180 (98%) shifts. On 30% of occasions wholetime appliances were crewed with 5 fire fighters. Pre-arranged overtime was used on 471 occasions over this period to maintain planned crewing levels.

The Retained Support Unit continued to run with a significant number of vacancies although 11 trainee RDS firefighters had started undertaking basic training. They were available on average of 40% of the time.

There were currently two full time equivalent vacancies in the Thames Valley Fire Control Service, one employee was on long term sick and one was on maternity leave. 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. During the period crewing fell below the minimum on 12 occasions (7%). Recruitment was ongoing.

Councillor Emma Webster noted that the chart on page 40 made reference to wholetime crewing being available for 100% of full shifts and she queried whether crewing levels were below 100% for parts of those shifts. Officers confirmed that there were periods within those shifts where they were not fully crewed. Officers needed time to get from one station to another to cover vacancies arising from issues such as short term sickness. Councillor Webster noted that the maximum travel time between stations was two hours and she therefore asked that in future instances where the absence exceeded 2 hours be captured.

Councillor Webster queried whether there were restrictions on what duty officers seconded to the TVFCS could do. Mark Gaskarth explained that a new policy as adopted in April 2016. Attendance had improved but absence figures were still higher than the norm for the organisation as a whole albeit that the figures were not atypical for Control Rooms due to the nature of the environment. The duty officers were used as stand in supervisors and could assist with decision making and taking administrative calls. Attendance/sickness levels were reported to the Joint Committee. Councillor Angus Ross commented that one of the accidental benefits of this process was enhanced face to face contact between duty mangers and control room staff although he accepted that it could have a negative impact on the 'day job'.

**AME to  
ACTION**

Councillor Paul Bryant stated that there had been issues around recruitment of the RDS and he queried whether anything new was being done to improve the position. The CFO agreed that this had been a long standing issue nationally. Adrian Thomas's Conditions of Service Review had recently been published. There was some emphasis on steps that could be taken by Central Government to increase recruitment and retention of retained fire fighters including: bounty payments for employers and extending some of the benefits currently available for armed forces reservists to the fire services. The CFO stated that it would be necessary to revisit the rewards package currently offered as the current package did not provide a significant financial reward or psychological benefit from the job. The introduction of the co-responders scheme and increasing the financial payments could go some way to addressing some of these issues.

Councillor Malcolm Alexander felt that more could be done to sell the benefits to employers such as trained staff that could be used to train others, the ability to adopt a proactive approach to safety work and better qualified staff in medical emergencies.

**RESOLVED that:**

- The report be noted.

**62. 2016/17 BUDGET MONITORING**

Conor Byrne, Head of Finance and Procurement (HOFP), informed Members of revenue and capital outturns against budgets up to the end of September 2016.

**Revenue:**

The revenue outturn was forecast to be £107k below the annual budget by the end of the financial year.

Significant issues to be noted in respect of the revenue budget were as follows:

- Uniformed staff costs were expected to be £170k below budget at the end of the financial year due to the continuing underspend in relation to retained firefighters.
- There would be an underspend on TVFCS salaries during 2016/17 due to vacancies which in turn would reduce the income received from partners to cover the costs of running the control room.
- Budgets had recently been devolved to Fire Stations and Station Managers were continuing to provide valuable feedback in relation to their costs with a particular focus on overtime at each fire station.
- There were some non-uniformed vacant posts that were being protected pending departmental restructures. Some of these savings would be used to ensure critical tasks were being completed whilst restructuring took place (£80k).
- A review of all cross-border charges and income would be carried out during 2017/18.

**Capital:**

Capital expenditure to the end of September 2016 was £607k and details were

set out in Appendix B.

**RESOLVED that:**

- The report be noted.

**63. FORWARD PLAN**

The Forward Plan for the period 6<sup>th</sup> December 2016 to 18<sup>th</sup> April 2017 was noted. Members requested that an additional column be added to the forward plan listing the name of the Lead Member.

**Fayth  
Rowe to  
Action**

**64. DATE OF THE NEXT MEETING**

**RESOLVED that** the next meeting would take place on Tuesday, 14 February 2017 in the Brigade Headquarters, Pincents Kiln, Calcot, Reading, RG31 7SP.

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

**66. PART II MINUTES OF THE MEETING HELD ON 19 SEPTEMBER 2016**

**RESOLVED that** the Part II Minutes of the meeting held on 19 September 2016 be confirmed as a correct record and signed by the Vice-Chairman.

**67. INTEGRATED RISK MANAGEMENT PLAN – SERVICE REDESIGN CONSULTATION OPTIONS**

Simon Jefferies, Area Manager (Risk and Performance), presented a confidential report which provided the Committee with an update on the extensive work of the IRMP lead Member and the IRMP Task and Finish Group on proposed options for the service redesign consultation which was planned to start on 12<sup>th</sup> December 2016 and to seek agreement on the options to be recommended to the Fire Authority for consultation.

**RESOLVED that:**

- The recommendations as set out in the exempt report be agreed.

**68. PROPERTY UPDATE - THEALE**

Simon Jefferies, Area Manager (Risk and Performance), updated Members of the Management Committee on progress relating to the potential site for the new Theale Community Fire Station and to request delegated authority to the Lead Member for Strategic Assets and the Deputy Chief Fire Officer to purchase the site.

**RESOLVED that:**

- The recommendations as set out in the exempt report be agreed.

*The meeting closed at 8.05 pm*