

DRAFT

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



Held on Monday 22 October 2018 at 6.30pm

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

Members:

- * Councillor Malcolm Alexander
- * Councillor Phillip Bicknell
- (* present)
- * Councillor Jason Brock
- * Councillor Colin Dudley
- * Councillor Paul Gittings
- * Councillor Pauline Helliard-Symons
- * Councillor Tina McKenzie-Boyle
- * Councillor Ted Plenty
- * Councillor Angus Ross
- * Councillor Rachelle Shepherd-DuBey
- * Councillor Emma Webster

In Attendance:

Alex Brown (Head of Capital Projects and Estates)
Conor Byrne (Head of Finance and Procurement)
Tony Deacon (Area Manager, Service Delivery Prevention and Protection)
Trevor Ferguson (Chief Fire Officer, CFO)
Steve Foye (Deputy Chief Fire Officer, DCFO)
Paul Jacques (Area Manager (Collaboration and Policy))
Becci Jefferies (Head of Human Resources, Learning and Development)
Simon Jefferies (Assistant Chief Fire Officer, ACFO)
Andrew McLenahan (Head of Facilities, Fleet and Equipment)
Katie Mills (Head of Corporate Services)
Linda Pye (Clerk)
Nikki Richards (Director of Support Services)
Fayth Rowe (Democratic Support Lead)
Tony Vincent (Head of Business and Information Services)

Action

20. REPRESENTATIVE BODIES

The Fire Brigade Union (FBU) did not address the Committee on any of the agenda items.

21. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

An apology for inability to attend the meeting had been received from Councillor Phillip Bicknell.

22. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

In accordance with the provisions of the Fire Authority's Local Code of Conduct, Councillor Emma Webster stated that should the Thames Valley Police and Crime Panel be discussed at the meeting she would declare a personal interest as she was a Member of this Panel. As her interest was personal and not an other registrable interest or a disclosable pecuniary

interest, she would remain to take part in any debate on the matter.

In accordance with the provisions of the Fire Authority's Local Code of Conduct, Nikki Richards declared a personal interest to Item 8 (Local Government pension Scheme (LGS) Employees Redundancy Pay) on behalf of Green Book staff present at the meeting. As her interest was personal and not an other registrable interest or a disclosable pecuniary interest, she would remain to take part in any debate on the matter.

In accordance with the provisions of the Fire Authority's Local Code of Conduct, Trevor Ferguson and Steve Foye declared a disclosable pecuniary interest on Item 9 (Voluntary Scheme Pays in the Firefighter Pension Scheme), and therefore they determined to leave the room during the debate on the matter.

23. MINUTES OF THE MEETINGS HELD ON 16 JULY 2018 AND 8 OCTOBER 2018 AND MATTERS ARISING

RESOLVED that: the minutes of the meetings held on 16 July 2018 and 8 October 2018 be approved as a true and correct record and signed by the Chairman subject to the following amendment:

16th July 2018 – Page 12 Minute 8 Strategic Asset Investment Framework
– the resolution to be amended to read 'The Strategic Asset Investment Framework to be reviewed annually.'

24. RECEIPT OF ANNOUNCEMENTS

The Chairman, Councillor Colin Dudley, made the following announcements:

Road traffic collision on the M4

- The Chairman began the announcements on a sad note by stating that as Members might have seen in the news, there have been several fatal incidents on roads in the Thames Valley over the past week, including one on the M4 in Berkshire.
- Just after midday on Thursday, 11 October, crews from Newbury and Dee Road and Officers joined with crews from Oxfordshire County Council Fire and Rescue Service to respond to a road traffic collision between junction 14 at Hungerford and Junction 13 at Chieveley. The collision involved a heavy goods vehicle and a minibus with staff and young people on board from Prior's Court Foundation in Thatcham. This tragic incident had claimed the lives of three people, and therefore thoughts went out to the families and friends of those involved.
- But this incident could have been even worse were it not for the actions of firefighters, who showed immense courage at the scene and were able to rescue six people from the collision and transfer them to the care of South Central Ambulance Service. The Chairman thanked all those who not only responded to this tragic incident, but also helped to deal with the aftermath. It was a terrible incident and the Chairman also gave his thanks to the Control Room staff.

Theale Planning Permission

- The Chairman advised that planning permission had now been secured for a new tri-service Community Fire Station at Wigmore Lane in Theale. The shared location offered TVP a dedicated office on site for their Neighbourhood Policing Team and SCAS would have access to shared

welfare facilities.

- There were a large number of comments and conditions accompanying the decision from the Local Planning Authority. The Capital Projects Team was currently working through these to assess the impact on the design and the cost of the plans.
- The next stage would be to open a tender for the remediation of the site. This would be a separate process from the main construction tender. The remediation works were essential to prepare the site before any building work could begin as there was a degree of contamination from its current owner, Network Rail.
- Once the tender for the remediation works was complete and the costs indicated the viability of the scheme, it would then be possible to complete the purchase of the site from Network Rail.
- The main contractor tender would need to be re-run as the previous tender process and associated quotes had expired due to the delays in obtaining the planning permission. The Chairman thanked Councillor Angus Ross as lead on Strategic Asset Management and thanks also to Alex Brown and her team.

Awards Ceremony

- On Friday, 28 September 2018 the annual Awards Ceremony at Wokefield Park was held. The evening celebrated the work of RBFA staff, with twelve members of staff receiving their Long Service Good Conduct medal for twenty years of Service.
- Other awards presented on the night included Support Department of the Year, Employee of the Year, Fire Station of the Year, Volunteer of the Year, and Outstanding Team Achievement and Excellence in Community Safety.
- Members of the public, alongside firefighters were presented with Certificates of Commendation for exceptional acts of courage to assist others in need, and Councillor Paul Gittings was recognised for being a Member of the Fire Authority for ten years.
- Unfortunately the Chairman had been unable to attend but he was very grateful to the Vice-Chairman who stood in for him on the night and by all accounts it was a fantastic evening.

New Starters in Senior Leadership Team

- The Fire Authority had recently recruited two new members to the Senior Leadership Team (SLT).
- Firstly, Tony Deacon who had joined the authority as an additional Temporary Area Manager in Service Delivery. This position, funded from within existing resources, would add significant value to the Service Delivery team in driving forward the Fire Authority's work, particularly in developing the Hub based Protection and Prevention delivery. Tony had joined RBFA on a secondment from his role in Hampshire until 31 March 2019, and brought significant experience, knowledge skills and qualifications in Protection, Prevention and Fire Engineering. Tony would be a member of the Senior Leadership Team and would work alongside Jim Powell in Service Delivery, who would focus on Response, Resilience, Operational Assurance and Readiness.
- Andy McLenahan had also joined the Fire Service as Head of Facilities,

Fleet and Equipment. Andy joined the Fire Authority from a role in the private sector for a large agricultural business. Andy had previously worked with Veolia and Vosa and brought wide ranging experience and qualifications in the professional areas of fleet and facilities management.

- The Chairman was sure that the Management Committee would join him in extending a warm welcome to Andy and Tony and would support them as they began their roles.

Firehouse Completion

- The refurbishment of the Firehouse had been completed at the end of September.
- The work had replaced the control system and the internal layout had been reconfigured. The improved LPG system was now available to meet training needs.
- The re-opening would take place on Friday, 16 November 2018. Members should have now all received invitations to the event. Please RSVP to the Business Support Team by Tuesday, 31 October 2018.

Grey Book Pay Award

- The National Joint Council for Local Authority Fire and Rescue Services had released circular, NJC/4/18, which detailed the 2018 pay award for staff conditioned to the Grey book (uniformed staff) terms and conditions of employment.
- The NJC had agreed an increase of 2% effective from 1 July 2018.
- The offer accepted was an interim position whilst negotiations remained ongoing over broadening of roles.

Finally

- The Chairman advised that he had agreed to accept an urgent late item as part of the agenda by virtue of section 100B (4) (b) of the Local Government Act 1972. The urgent item related to the appointment of an Appeal Sub-Committee.
- Councillor Emma Webster also thanked those crews who had responded to the road traffic collision on the M4 on behalf of West Berkshire as the relevant local authority. Emergency services had worked well with the Emergency Planning Team.

25. ISSUES ARISING FROM THE AUDIT AND GOVERNANCE COMMITTEE

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

26. URGENT ITEM - APPEAL SUB-COMMITTEE

Becci Jefferies, Head of Human Resources and Learning Development (HHR&L&D), stated that there was a need to establish and appoint an Appeal Sub-Committee to conduct a disciplinary hearing. She was therefore seeking three Members to sit on a panel which was likely to be held in mid-late November 2018.

Councillor Colin Dudley asked whether one day would be sufficient for the hearing. Becci Jefferies confirmed that most cases could be conducted and

completed in one day. Councillor Colin Dudley stated that most Members had sat on a panel and some would do in the future and he therefore asked for volunteers.

RESOLVED that:

- It was agreed that Councillors Colin Dudley, Tina McKenzie-Boyle and Pauline Helliard-Symons would sit on the Appeal Sub-Committee with Councillors Jason Brock and Rachelle Shepherd-DuBey acting as substitutes.

27. SERVICE REDESIGN: RESPONSE OPTION ONE – WARGRAVE FIRE STATION

Steve Foye, Deputy Chief Fire Officer (DCFO), presented a report which stated that the closure of Wargrave fire station was part of Option One of the Response proposals included in the Service Redesign IRMP consultation that had run from December 2016 to March 2017. At Fire Authority on 18 April 2017 Members had selected Option One with an amendment to defer the implementation of the closure for twelve months based on the fulfilment of two key criteria:

- (1) the required savings be found elsewhere within the RBFRS budget;
- (2) Wargrave to demonstrate an increase in availability to 60% within that twelve month period.

The twelve month period had commenced on 1 October 2017 and that period had now elapsed. Since October 2017 the establishment had increased from 8 to 15 persons compared to the figures for 2015/16 and 2016/17 of 6 persons and this demonstrated a positive outcome in respect of increasing the number of people available to give fire cover. However, in order for new RDS personnel to have an impact on fire cover they had to commit to a number of training modules to become Breathing Apparatus (BA) qualified and this meant that there would be a lag before new recruits had an impact on availability.

During the twelve month deferment period availability had reached a monthly high of 36.7% in March 2018 and a low of 3.2% in September 2018 as defined by corporate reporting. Figure 2 outlined in the report illustrate it could be possible Wargrave could achieve a 60% target at the beginning of 2019.

The Authority's Medium Term Financial Plan showed budget deficits of £353,000 for 2018/19 and £293,000 for 2019/20. These deficits would be funded from reserves. However, the Authority had a responsibility to balance the budget over the medium term. This meant that additional savings on top of the Efficiency Plan savings of £2.4m would need to be found by April 2020. The current estimate of additional savings that needed to be found was £656,000 if Wargrave station was kept open or £488,000 if it closed. Therefore, at the present time, consequently additional financial resources had not been identified to keep Wargrave station open. Work to bridge the budget gap by April 2020 was underway and progress would be monitored by the Budget Lead Member.

Councillor Colin Dudley referred to an extension of time for either 6, 9 or 12 months and he queried whether any of those time periods could be achieved in budget. The Head of Finance and Procurement (HoFP) stated that the key issue was around making a permanent decision as it would need to be included in the base budget in order for resources to be made available to

keep the station open.

Councillor Emma Webster had led the IRMP and she thanked crews and staff at Wargrave for all their work during the consultation period and in the last year. It was unfortunate that the station had not been able to hit the 60% target but figure 2 in the report indicated a positive direction of travel for Wargrave. The Task and Finish Group had met earlier in the month and it had been helpful to see the table setting out the establishment, starters and leavers. It was also useful to see that there was a process to be followed before staff could be fully utilised. She was of the opinion that if the decision was deferred it would not have a significant impact. The Task and Finish Group had been minded to look for a six month deferral but due to the issue around training times it might be better to extend that period slightly to nine months. She asked Members to consider that and confirmed that she would work with Councillor Phillip Bicknell and HoFP in respect of the finances.

Councillor Paul Gittings agreed that the information provided to the Task and Finish Group had been useful. He stated that Labour had been against the closure of Wargrave and the community had shown their commitment with the establishment numbers reaching 15. He could see no reason why the station would not reach the 60% and he therefore supported the extension of time as he felt that this would not have a fundamental impact on the budget.

Councillor Pauline Helliar-Symons thanked the DCFO for such a detailed analysis. She noted that Wargrave had not met the target but the establishment numbers were improving and the training lag was an issue. She added, figure 2 had demonstrated things were therefore looking better and she felt that keeping the station open was obviously important to local people as they had made a genuine effort to provide cover. She therefore supported the proposal to extend the period to nine months before a decision needed to be made on the future of Wargrave.

Councillor Angus Ross stated that he had been encouraged by what had been achieved over the last year and he had always felt that the timescale had been an ambitious one. To close the station now would be a kick in the teeth for the new members of staff that had been recruited. He hoped that the development of the station would continue and he therefore supported the nine month extension which seemed to be a sensible balance.

Councillor Colin Dudley thanked the team for all their efforts in recruitment activity over the last 12 months. It had been a difficult exercise as those staff recruited did not have a clear understanding of how much time they had left. The Fire Authority had a responsibility to spend money wisely but it also needed fire stations that had the ability to turn out and respond to emergencies. It was good to note that the direction of travel was a positive one and if a further nine month period was agreed then it could become a station of strategic importance.

Councillor Emma Webster made a proposal to move recommendation 2.1.3 that the decision made by the Fire Authority in April 2017, to close Wargrave Fire Station, should be deferred for a further specified period of time, to see if the criteria in paragraph 1.1. of the report could be fulfilled. That period of time should be nine months. This proposal was seconded by Councillor Pauline Helliar-Symons and was agreed unanimously.

RESOLVED that:

- The decision made by the Fire Authority in April 2017, to close Wargrave Fire Station, should be deferred for a further specified period of time, to see if the criteria in paragraph 1.1. of the report could be fulfilled. The period of time for deferment should be nine months.

28. LOCAL GOVERNMENT PENSION SCHEME (LGPS) EMPLOYEES REDUNDANCY PAY

Becci Jefferies, (HHR&L&D), reported that the Local Government (Early Termination of Employment) (Discretionary Compensation) (England and Wales) Regulations 2006 gave Royal Berkshire Fire Authority (RBFA) the power equivalent to apply enhanced redundancy multiplier for (Green Book / non uniformed and Thames Valley Fire Control Service (TVFCS)) staff with access to the Local Government Pension Scheme (LGPS).

RBFRS currently enhances redundancy payments to staff with access to the LGPS in accordance with the powers given to the Authority by the Local Government (Early Termination of Employment) (Discretionary Compensation) (England and Wales) Regulations 2006. Following a meeting of the Executive Committee on 19 October 2007, a decision was taken to enhance redundancy payments to two times statutory weeks based on an employee's actual weekly pay for staff with access to the LGPS.

At a meeting of SLT on 20 February 2018 it was determined that a review of the current redundancy enhancements would be undertaken. The findings of the review were taken to SLT on the 12 June 2018.

The review considered that due to the relationship of redundancy payments to pension regulations for local government employees, comparators for the LGPS provision should be based on the organisations managed by the Royal County of Berkshire Pension Fund, who administer the LGPS for all Berkshire Unitary Authorities and RBFRS.

Becci Jefferies invited Members to agree two members of staff in RBFRS previously employed on permanent contracts but, as a result of organisational change were now on fixed term contracts were protected for a period of three years. Should Management Committee agree a reduction in the enhanced redundancy payment. Any changes to the current enhanced redundancy scheme, if agreed by Members, would be subject to consultation with Representative Bodies.

It was stressed that this report focused only on LGPS as there was no provision in the Firefighter Pension Scheme Regulations to amend for the Firefighter Pension Schemes.

Councillor Ted Plenty asked what the scope of this change would be and how many redundancies had taken place over the last ten years. The HHRL&D responded that there had been a number of restructures which had resulted in some redundancies. She calculated that over the last five years there had been around ten redundancies. (*post meeting note: number of redundancies over ten years was 16*)

Councillor Colin Dudley referred to the statutory week's pay which was different from actual pay. The HHRL&D confirmed that the actual week's pay is used in the calculations.

In answer to a question from Councillor Emma Webster, HHR&L&D confirmed that Unison and the Fire Brigade Union would be consulted on the proposal.

Councillor Rachelle Shepherd-DuBey asked what the difference would be from the amounts that had been paid out at two times statutory pay and what that amount would have been reduced to at one and a half times statutory pay. Councillor Colin Dudley stated that that would be difficult to calculate as the cost would have depended on length of service and salary rate.

In referring to the table in the report, Councillor Paul Gittings was pleased to see that the rate paid by Reading Borough Council was more generous than the other local authorities. He noted that the report was looking to reduce the rate paid by the Fire Authority but he queried what the point was as the number of redundancies had been so low. Local authorities had seen drastic budget reductions and consequent staff redundancies but he felt that it was a good thing for a Fire Authority to have a more generous scheme. It seemed an unnecessary change and he was of the opinion that the unions would not support it. Councillor Colin Dudley responded that it was a sad situation when a member of staff had to be made redundant and it was not a pleasant process to go through as it felt personal. However, in the private sector any multiplier at all was unusual. When staff were made redundant it was due to the fact that the role would no longer exist or in order to make savings. The rates paid by other local authorities had been considered and taken into account but it was essential to mitigate damage to the Fire Authority's budget in the future. He therefore felt that a reduction to one and a half was reasonable in the circumstances. Many staff working in the Fire Authority had long service and this would go some way to mitigate the reduction. The proposal was seconded by Councillor Pauline Helliard-Symons.

RESOLVED that:

- The proposed changes to the enhanced redundancy scheme for staff with access to the LGPS be considered; and
- It be agreed that consultation with representative bodies should commence with authority to reduce the current arrangement for staff eligible for LGPS from two times to one and a half times statutory weeks, based on actual pay, in line with an average across Berkshire Local Unitary Authorities; and
- It be agreed that protection at two times statutory weeks, based on actual pay should be retained for the two members of staff currently on fixed term contracts following organisational change, prior to the proposal, for a period of three years from the date of publication of any amended policy.

29. 'VOLUNTARY SCHEME PAYS' IN THE FIREFIGHTER PENSION SCHEME

(Trevor Ferguson and Steve Foye left the meeting during the debate on this item)

HHRL&D reported that from the 2016/17 tax year, HMRC introduced additional tax charges for high earners through the tapering of annual allowances. Unfortunately, these changes were introduced before the necessary changes to pension regulations were issued, to allow Voluntary Scheme Pays, in these circumstances. Therefore, in December 2017 the Management Committee considered a report relating to Voluntary Scheme Pays arrangements and agreed that individuals who met the criteria outlined in that report would be eligible to access such arrangements. In addition, the Committee agreed that individuals should be required to make an initial contribution of £2,000 (for high earners only) from their own finances towards the resultant Annual Allowance

tax charge.

On 14 September 2018 notification that the Police and Firefighters' Pension (Amendment) Regulation 2018 SI 2018/997 had been received. A technical note regarding how this should be applied to the Firefighter Pension Scheme provided further details and outlined the action for Fire and Rescue Services. This report considered that technical note, which provided no requirement for the individual to make an initial personal contribution, and sought agreement from the Management Committee to remove this requirement.

Councillor Colin Dudley recalled Management Committee had a long and detailed technical discussion on this issue in 2017 and it was only on a majority vote that the requirement for an initial contribution of £2,000 had been agreed for high earners.

In response to a question from Councillor Malcolm Alexander, HHR&L&D confirmed a high earner was in the region of £150k.

Councillor Angus Ross noted that recently in the media it had been reported that the Chancellor had made changes to pensions and he therefore asked if the issue should be deferred. The HHRL&D advised that it was not known what the impact of future legislation would be and this paper just sought to remove the £2,000 contribution.

Councillor Emma Webster referred to page 40 of the agenda Appendix A LGA Technical Note where paragraphs (i) and (ii) under Voluntary Pay Schemes still referred to a sum of £2,000. The HHRL&D replied that the £2,000 referred to in that section related to the Annual Allowance.

The proposal was seconded by Councillor Pauline Helliard-Symons.

RESOLVED that:

- It be noted that the discretion to grant Voluntary Scheme Pays as required by Police and Firefighters' Pension (Amendment) Regulation 2018 SI 2018/997 was exercised in 2017; and
- It be agreed that the requirement for an individual to make an initial contribution of £2,000 (for high earners only) from their own finances should be removed from the Voluntary Scheme Pays arrangements adopted by the Authority.

30. FIREFIGHTER PERSONAL PROTECTIVE EQUIPMENT (PPE) REPLACEMENT – CONTRACT AWARD

(Trevor Ferguson and Steve Foye rejoined the meeting)

The DCFO provided Management Committee Members with an update on the new Firefighter Personal Protective Equipment (PPE) contract with Bristol Uniforms that was due to be operational from 1 July 2019 and replaced the current contract with Ballyclare Limited.

The Fire Authority approved the award of contract for replacement PPE to Bristol Uniforms at its meeting of the 30 April 2018. He advised this report was an enhancement to the contract with Bristol Uniforms. The report was also requesting Management Committee to agree flexibility for officers to address annual inflation increases up to 10% variance against the contract value over the eight year main term of the contract. The total spend over the lifetime of the contact would be £2,144,000.

Councillor Colin Dudley noted that the new contract provided enhanced PPE equipment with the addition of a rescue jacket which would be cheaper than the existing contract.

Councillor Angus Ross queried how the actual cost in relation to the contract would be seen. The DCFO confirmed that the contract would be monitored closely and there would be a suitable variance to allow flexibility. Cost would be monitored outside the contract in order to make sure provision was in line with procurement. The HoFP advised that there was a line in the budget monitoring papers in respect of PPE equipment.

In answer to a question from Councillor Alexander around the specific budget line for specialist PPE, DCFO confirmed that the budget line for PPE was included in Clothing/PPE line.

Councillor Angus Ross stated he was in support for getting more for less and thanked officers for their diligence and detail in the report.

Councillor Colin Dudley confirmed that it was a positive move to improve equipment for firefighters and this was a complete replacement exercise. The rescue jacket should help with co-responders when they attended incidents to ensure that they did not get wet or cold.

Councillor Malcolm Alexander seconded the proposal which was agreed unanimously.

RESOLVED that:

- The revised contract award of £1,949,000 for the PPE managed service contract for structural fire kit provided by Bristol Uniforms be approved;
- It be agreed that the Chief Finance Officer and Chief Fire Officer would be authorised to address any variances to the contract price detailed in 2.1 of up to 10% against the contract value. This provided for a potential total spend of £2,144,000 over the eight year main terms of the contract; and
- It be noted that the total contract price was for a main term of eight years and the option to extend the contract for up to two further years was subject to approval of the Fire Authority.

31. 2018/19 QUARTER 1 APPLIANCE AVAILABILITY

Steve Foye, (DCFO), presented a report which provided Quarter 1 performance update on wholetime (WDS) and retained duty system (RDS) appliance availability. He reported the performance information within the report would also be presented to Audit and Governance Committee.

The report provided detailed information on the Service's work and progress in managing appliance availability for both WDS and RDS appliances.

On 6th February 2018 the Management Committee received a report setting out that both the current station end 328 crewing and the future station end crewing model of 316 were a sustainable, if highly lean and efficient operating model, that required constant managerial attention. The report identified the relationship between station-based establishment and the wider wholetime establishment, which included flexi duty officers and other grey book staff.

The availability of the services' 14 whole-time appliances was measured as the percentage of shifts (day and night) that appliances were available. As there were 91 days in Q1, the total number of day and night shifts equated to 182.

At the Management Committee meeting on 16th July 2018 a request was made to better understand where appliances were unavailable for periods below (or even above) the two hour threshold of the corporate measure. The reasons for appliances becoming unavailable could be various e.g. appliance defects, changeover of appliances going for routine services, appliances returning from incidents or making good equipment following an incident and crewing. In a 24/7 365 operational service, appliances would become unavailable at various times of the day and for various reasons. Whenever an appliance became unavailable every effort was made to bring the service back to 100% availability as soon as possible.

The data provided from TVFCS Vision system and Firewatch data indicate the time periods of wholetime availability which could be used to support service delivery managers in understanding and addressing causes, trends and make performance improvements. However, managers monitor performance across a range of areas and where there are indications of a trend then further exploration of the data is completed.

Steve Foye advised that six wholetime recruits had completed their training halfway through Q1 which augmented existing establishment levels. A further 14 wholetime trainees commenced their initial training in July and they would be joining the duty system during Q2 of 2018/19.

Work had taken place to identify suitable RDS personnel able to undertake WDS contracts at locations where there were long term but not permanent vacancies (e.g. to cover career breaks, maternity leave etc.). This supported local managers in planning for promotion and recruitment to minimise the impact of unavailability.

Good progress had been made through the RDS Project Board in the recruitment of RDS across all stations. Focus will continue to be made on the recruitment of RDS at stations individually to understand their respective challenges.

Councillor Angus Ross referred to the figures for Mortimer as set out in Table 1 which seemed particularly low and he asked if any work was being undertaken to address the issue. The DCFO replied that there was an issue around the number of people and skills associated with that. All RDS stations and the Project Board had been driving recruitment. Hub Management Teams had also been out on the ground. He added it was incumbent for RBFRS to ensure that the right leadership was in place at those stations to support and manage morale.

Councillor Emma Webster thanked the DCFO for providing the figures which were useful and she asked if journey times could be included in future. She stressed the importance of not comparing percentages as each station was unique and therefore it was necessary to understand the demographics around that. Retained was a challenging area nationally.

SF to action

Councillor Colin Dudley stated that it was not possible for all appliances to be available all of the time. Appliances were checked before every shift and invariably defects would be found from time to time which meant that that appliance would be off the run until the issue was resolved. He felt that it was a fantastic achievement that Crowthorne had achieved 78.5% availability and he asked if the Chief Fire Officer could send a letter of congratulations to Crowthorne on his behalf.

TF to action

Councillor Pauline Helliard-Symons referred to some detailed analysis which had taken place some years ago around the geography of the station at

Mortimer. There was a need for a station in this area.

Resolved that:

- The Quarter 1 performance of appliance availability be noted;
- The Service's actions to maintain, improve and monitor appliance availability be noted.

32. RESPONSE TO CONSULTATION ON LOCAL GOVERNMENT FINANCE SETTLEMENT

Conor Byrne (HoFP), presented a report which informed Members of the Authority's response to the Government consultation on the 2019/20 Local Government Finance Settlement.

The key question for the authority was 'Do you agree with the council tax referendum principles proposed by the Government for 2019-20?' For fire and rescue authorities the Government was proposing the ability to raise council tax by up to 3% without the need to hold a referendum.

The Chairman reminded Members that the Fire Authority had asked him and the Chief Fire Officer to lobby MPs for more flexibility around the level of Council Tax and specifically to allow the Fire Authority to increase the precept by £5.

In answer to a question from Councillor Emma Webster, Conor Byrne advised he expected to receive a response to the technical consultation by December 2018.

Councillor Malcolm Alexander asked if any dialogue had been undertaken with MPs. The CFO confirmed that he had written to all the MPs in advance of the consultation and they had also responded to the consultation on the Authority's behalf. The support received from the MPs had been positive. He reported he would share the response received from MP's as soon as they were all back.

TF

RESOLVED that:

- The Authority's response to the Government consultation on the 2019/20 Local Government Finance Settlement was noted.

33. 2018/19 BUDGET MONITORING

Conor Byrne (HoFP), presented a report which set out the estimated revenue outturn for 2018/19 and provided an update on capital projects as at the end of June 2018.

He reported good progress had been made in achieving Efficiency Plan savings.

In referring to the revenue outturn Appendix A, Conor Byrne reported the forecast outturn at the end of the year would be £146,000. The forecast underspend on Retained Firefighters is £198,000 which is a substantial improvement on last year. Additional overtime had been required prior to the graduation of the 14 wholtime recruits to meet operational needs.

In referring to Appendix B, Conor Byrne outlined a small forecasts underspend against the TVFCS budget , and Appendix C outlined the progress against capital projects for the quarter.

Councillor Colin Dudley noted that the first quarter of the year had been quite

volatile.

RESOLVED that:

- The report be noted.

34. FORWARD PLAN

RESOLVED that:

The Forward Plan for the period 1 November 2018 to 29 April 2019 was noted. Councillor Emma Webster asked if Fayth Rowe could ensure that the Wargrave report was included on the Forward Plan to return to Management Committee in nine months.

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35. DATE OF THE NEXT MEETING

Resolved that the next meeting of Management Committee would take place on Monday 3 December 2018 at 6.30pm in the RBFRS Headquarters, Newsham Court, Pincents Kiln, Calcot, Reading, RG31 7SP.

36. 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 and 3 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.

37. WHITLEY WOOD CAPITAL BUILD PROJECT

Alex Brown, Head of Capital Projects and Estates, presented a confidential report on the outcome of the detailed feasibility work and due diligence undertaken in order to present options for the Whitley Wood site.

RESOLVED that the recommendations in the exempt report be agreed.

38. INJURY PENSIONS PAYMENTS

Conor Byrne, Head of Finance and Procurement (HoFP), presented a report which provided an overview on injury pensions payments.

RESOLVED that the recommendations in the exempt report be agreed.

(The meeting closed at 8.48pm)