

MINUTES OF THE ROYAL BERKSHIRE FIRE AUTHORITY'S MANAGEMENT COMMITTEE



Held on Monday 25 November 2013 at 6.30pm

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

Committee Members: Councillor Phillip Bicknell
*Councillor Jeff Brooks
*Councillor Colin Dudley (Chairman)
*Councillor Paul Gittings
Councillor Pauline Helliar-Symons (Cllr Webster Substituting)
Councillor Edward Plenty
Councillor Angus Ross
*Councillor Alan Ward (*until 7.30pm*)
* *present.*

In Attendance: Andy Fry (Chief Fire Officer, CFO)
Becci Jeffries (Head of HR, HHR)
Andy Mancey (Area Manager, Head of Response, AMR)
Caroline Redzikowska (Director, Corporate Services DCS)
Carolyn Rowe (Committee Manager)
Paul Southern (Assistant Chief Fire Officer, ACFO)
Steve Sprason (Interim Head of Estates, IHE)
Andrew Vallance (Director of Resources, DR)

Action

561. REPRESENTATIVE BODIES

There were no members of representative bodies present.

562. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Apologies had been received from Cllr Phillip Bicknell, Pauline Helliar-Symons - Cllr Emma Webster substituting, Cllr Plenty and Cllr Angus Ross. Cllr Alan Ward apologised that he was required to attend a meeting at his Unitary Authority, and so would be leaving at 7.30pm.

563. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

In accordance with the provisions of the Fire Authority's Local Code of Conduct, a declaration of interest was made by the following senior officers present affected by the item on the Review of Local Pay Ranges 2013 :CFO, DCS, DR, ACFO and HHR.

564. MINUTES OF THE MEETING HELD ON 16 SEPTEMBER 2013.

Resolved:

That the Minutes of the meeting held on 16 September 2013 be confirmed as a correct record and signed by the Chairman.

565. RECEIPT OF ANNOUNCEMENTS

The Chairman announced that he had met with Cllr Kay Hammond (Chairman of the LGA Fire Services Management Committee), and had updated her on the latest position on the Control project.

The Chairman reminded Members of the invite to the Planning Workshop on Wednesday 29 January 2014 from 4pm – 7pm, and encouraged them to respond.

The Chairman welcomed GM Paul Maynard and invited him to update Members on the success of RBFRS at the recent. GM Maynard advised there had been individual awards and, for the third consecutive year, the World Championship Award had been won. Members congratulated the team, and expressed their appreciation.

566. ISSUES ARISING FROM THE AUDIT AND GOVERNANCE COMMITTEE

There were no issues arising from Audit and Governance.

567. RECOMMENDATIONS FROM COMMITTEES

It was noted that there was one item on the agenda which had been recommended by the IRMP Working Party.

568. IRMP WORKING PARTY: ALTERNATIVE OR COMPLEMENTARY WHOLETIME DUTY SYSTEMS

Area Manager Andy Mancey, Head of Response, (AMR) introduced the report. He gave a presentation to Members outlining the background, the process that had been undertaken, and the officer recommendations. These had been accepted by the IRMP WP, with one addition: **that RBFRS should investigate a flexible rostering system operating at station level.**

There had been a good response to the consultation and challenge day.

The recruitment freeze agreed by the Fire Authority had already resulted in savings, and research on alternative crewing systems to the current 2:2:4, showed that limited additional savings could be realised.

With regard to crewing with four or five on a pump, there was no national direction and a number of different models were adopted locally by F.A.s. A paper would be brought forward to Members regarding crewing levels. Currently crewing was at five, but where there were only four crew members available, the pump still went on the run. Four was the minimum.

Regarding the proposal for the use of overtime, the rate for wholetime would be negotiated, and retained personnel where used, would be on flat rate up to 42 hours per week. The survey had shown some resistance from wholetime firefighters to working with retained, and this would be explored.

Cllr Webster, as chairman of the IRMP WP added that the high level of the response had been noted and the vote had been unanimous. Members had put on record their thanks to the officers.

DCFO

With regard to the crewing numbers, the CFO advised that the core establishment or base number would be determined by how well top up arrangements worked.

With regard to managing the risk, Cllr Webster confirmed that the IRMP WP had also considered the budget as part of their risk assessment.

The Management Committee unanimously

Resolved

- a) That the review be noted, and
- b) that the update from the IRMP Working Party be noted, and
- c) that it be endorsed that:
 - i. The current arrangements for recall to duty, use of other available on duty staff and standbys from other stations should continue as part of backup or resilience arrangements.
 - ii. RBFRS should negotiate greater clarity outside of the Grey Book over the definition of overtime and when and how overtime can be used.
 - iii. RBFRS should negotiate a staff bank pool arrangement to include Retained and Wholetime that should include consideration of the rate of pay (including consideration of flat rate).
 - iv. RBFRS should negotiate a Local Roster Reserve (Berkshire) shift system which is outside of the Grey Book. (This may be voluntary or mandatory)
 - v. RBFRS should continue to monitor and manage leave arrangements, to ensure that the impact of seasonal variations is reduced.
 - vi. RBFRS should continue to drive down absence levels.
 - vii. RBFRS should investigate a flexible rostering system operating at station level.

569. PUBLICATION SCHEME : REPORT CHARGING

AMR introduced the report, and advised that many authorities charged for incident reports and fire investigation reports, and, if members agreed, an amended publication scheme would be produced.

Those requesting such reports included individuals - who in turn may claim this cost against insurance, and corporate bodies such as insurance companies. It was noted that other authorities had found that requests had decreased following the introduction of charging. A certain level of information would be provided without charge.

It was not proposed to charge statutory bodies, and the Chairman requested that a reciprocal arrangement be negotiated with the Police. Cllr Webster offered to raise this at a meeting she had scheduled with the Police, and it was agreed that AMR would prepare a briefing note.

The Chairman asked how quickly it could be implemented, and the DCS advised that the revised publication scheme was almost ready. The Chairman requested that it be brought in with effect from 1 January 2014.

Members considered the alternative options for the levels of charging as set out in the report, and it was unanimously

Agreed

- a) that the charges be set according to the hybrid proposal set out in paragraph 3.5.3, resulting in charges of £94.61 for an incident (IRS) report and £331.72 for a Fire Investigation Report; and
- b) that the Publication Scheme be amended accordingly.

570. REVIEW OF LOCAL PAY RANGES

The DCS reminded the Committee of the declaration of interest from the senior officers present. She introduced the report which related to local pay ranges from 1 April 2013, and a recommendation regarding individual pay reviews relating to performance for the year 2012/13.

Senior Officers, apart from the CFO who was asked by Members to remain, left the room for the consideration of the item. The issue of the new CFO relying on the personal development interviews (PDIs), conducted between senior staff and his predecessor was recognised, and he advised that he intended to look at these further in discussion with the individuals and with HR.

Resolved:

- a) that the report be noted; and
- b) that a one percent increase be applied in the Local Pay Ranges effective from 1 April 2013; and
- c) that the Chief Fire Officer be authorised to review individual pay for staff within the Local Pay Ranges Groups with reference to the 2013 PDI; and
- d) that a one percent increase to spinal column points 50 -52 of Grade 7 be authorised.

571. CREWING LEVEL MONITORING REPORT : JULY- SEPTEMBER 2013

AMR introduced the report and drew the Committee's attention to an **amendment** to paragraph 3.7, which he corrected as follows: the wholetime station establishment figure for the quarter was **340** personnel, excluding the Retained Support Unit (RSU), leaving **328** operational station based staff to crew appliances.

With regard to Windsor, Members noted that this could be taken off future reports. It was recognised that although the RSU was based at Ascot, figures for availability were still poor because the RSU was only available from Monday to Thursday and some Fridays. In addition, there had been some turnover in the RSU during the reported period.

Resolved

That the report **as amended**, be noted.

572. VERBAL UPDATE ON THE TRAINING COMPANY

The Chairman, as a Director of the Training Company, provided a verbal update, informing the Committee that the 2013/14 sales were encouraging at £141,000 compared to £103,000 last year. Profit to October 2013 was £29,000, compared to a full year loss in 2012/13 of £8,000.

Progress has been in spite of there being no manager, but with the support of AM Gene Ashe.

The Board of the Training Company would be meeting the following day (26 November 2013).

The current saving of the manager's salary in the figures was noted and the Chairman said that it would be usual for the Board to link profit targets to any appointment if made.

It was agreed that it was important to use Twitter and the Chairman said this would be raised at the Board meeting.

Resolved

That the verbal update be noted.

573. HUMAN RESOURCES MONITORING REPORT: STAFF RETENTION, RETIREMENTS, ACCIDENTS AT WORK, SICKNESS AND EQUALITY AND DIVERSITY.

Becci Jeffries, Head of HR (HHR) introduced the report, and summarised the key aspects.

With regard to the improvement in duty days lost, HHR advised that this statistic depended on the nature of the illness, for example, whether there could be a return to work on restricted duties.

Where there were resignations, exit interviews were given to understand the reasons.

With regard to fitness, beyond a tolerance of 10% personnel would be off the run, and if there wasn't a medical condition for ongoing unfitness, it would be managed under performance and capability.

The CFO commented that the Fire Minister's proposals for addressing concerns about working until 60, suggested that if personnel could not get fit, they could be retired early and access their full pension. As such, there was a potential risk to the Authority as any pension liability would rest with RBFA. With regard to the comparative data across Fire Authorities, it showed RBFPS having the highest wholtime staff sickness.

Members thanked HHR for the well presented, comprehensive report and it was

Resolved

That the report be noted.

574. VERBAL UPDATE ON NEW BHQ

The Interim Head of Estates, Steve Spason (IHE), gave a verbal update on progress on the new BHQ and presented some recent pictures showing progress. He advised that variations to date amounted to £65,000.

The principle risk remained the mechanical and electrical aspect of the works. The design packages were expected to be complete by the end of November 2013, and a revised programme would then be issued.

The contractor was part of the considerate contractor scheme, and Cllr Webster

advised that as the local member she had not received any complaints..

The Chairman said that a name for the new BHQ would need to be agreed, and that an official opening would follow after the building had been completed and occupied by staff. He thanked IHE for his additional contribution to the project, as well as thanking ACFO for his ongoing work.

Resolved

That the verbal update be noted.

575. 2013/14 BUDGET MONITORING

The Director of Resources (DR) introduced the report. There was a revenue underspend of £387,000 to date, capital expenditure was starting to reflect the cost of the new BHQ, and additional invoices had been received since the report had been written.

In answer to a question regarding the purchase of defibrillators, AMR said that, with regard to their procurement and contract standing orders, he had been advised that a framework agreement which would enable quicker procurement was due shortly, and he hoped they would be in place by Easter.

Resolved

That the report be noted.

576. FORWARD PLAN

Resolved:

That the forward plan be noted.

577. DATE OF NEXT MEETING

Monday 3 February 2014 at 6.30pm in the Strategic Command Centre, Brigade Headquarters, Dee Road, Reading RG30 4FS.

578. 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.

579. INSURANCE

The Committee considered the report and it was

Resolved:

That the recommendations in the report be agreed.

580. INDUSTRIAL ACTION BY THE FIRE BRIGADES UNION, BUDGETARY PROVISION AND WAIVER OF STANDING ORDERS

The Committee considered the report and asked for further information to be circulated. An amendment to the recommendations was seconded and it was **Resolved**

That the recommendations **as amended** be agreed.

The meeting closed at 9.35pm