

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



Held on Monday 26 November 2012

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

Committee Members: Councillor Phillip Bicknell (**Cllr Emma Webster substituting*)
*Councillor Jeff Brooks
*Councillor Colin Dudley (Chairman)
*Councillor Paul Gittings (*until 7.50pm*)
*Councillor Pauline Helliard-Symons (Vice-Chairman)
Councillor Edward Plenty
*Councillor Angus Ross (*from 6.45pm*)
*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)
Andy Mancey (Area Manager, Response AM(R))
Bryan Morgan (Area Manager, Risk Management, AM(RM))
Caroline Redzikowska (Director, Corporate Services DCS)
Carolyn Rowe (Committee Manager)
Nicole Targett (Corporate Communications Manager, CCM)

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

427. At the invitation of the Chairman, Maurice Whyte, (FBU Berkshire Acting Brigade Secretary), advised that he wish to address the Management Committee on Agenda Item 8 (Results of IRMP Consultation).

428. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Apologies for absence were received from Cllr Phillip Bicknell (Cllr Emma Webster substituting) and Cllr Edward Plenty.

429. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

There were no 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.

There were no declarations of interest from officers.

430. MINUTES OF THE MEETING HELD ON 17 SEPTEMBER 2012

Resolved:

That the Minutes of the meeting held on 17 September 2012 be confirmed as a correct record and signed by the Chairman.

The actions by the DCFO were noted.

Action

431. RECEIPT OF ANNOUNCEMENTS

- a) The Chairman extended congratulations to the Extrication Team who had successfully retained their World Championship title.
- b) The Chairman announced that he had attended the meeting of Buckinghamshire and Milton Keynes FA where they had unanimously agreed to join the TVFCS. This would provide savings in future years, and there was a report on the agenda seeking the agreement of the Management Committee. Oxfordshire County Council would also be receiving a report for agreement.
- c) The CFO projected some pictures showing the current flood areas across Berkshire. He stated that to date there had been some localised flooding at Purley, and that the impact of the current rain and flooding would be over the next 24 – 48 hours.

(Cllr Ross joined the meeting at this point.)
- d) The Chairman announced that following his attendance at the Combined Fire Authority Conference in October where the Fire Minister had presented, he had written to the Minister to highlight that the same budget cuts would be harder and have a greater impact to those Fire and Rescue services that were already lean and efficient such as RBFRS.

432. ISSUES ARISING FROM THE AUDIT AND GOVERNANCE COMMITTEE

There were no reports referred by the Audit and Governance Committee.

433. RECOMMENDATIONS OF COMMITTEES

There were two recommendations from the IRMP Working Party, the first of which, the results of the IRMP Consultation, was noted as being a separate report on the agenda.

Regarding this item, Cllr Emma Webster asked for clarification regarding the proposed replacement wording at paragraph 3.11 regarding Day Crewing Plus, and what had now been agreed. The DCFO confirmed that the wording would in future consistently state Day Crew Plus, with any additional description following that heading.

ACFO

The second recommendation from the IRMP Working Party was regarding the review of the Aerial Ladder Platform provision. Management Committee was asked to accept and agree the officer recommendations.

Cllr Gittings stated that he was aware that Cllr Plenty had some concerns and he sought confirmation that full information was available regarding the incidence of high rise buildings and ALP use in Slough and elsewhere. It was confirmed that the recommendation was to Management Committee for their decision.

AM (R)

With the Chairman's agreement, Maurice White (FBU) also spoke on this item saying it should go to the Fire Authority for decision. He was asked, and confirmed that no points had been missed which he expected the FA to raise.

Cllr Webster confirmed that all the Slough members had been invited to the IRMP WP when this item was considered, and Members agreed that they would take the decision at the Management Committee.

The Chairman moved to adopt the recommendations, and this was seconded by Cllr Pauline Helliar-Symons. It was unanimously:

Agreed:

- a) That RBFRS requires only one aerial appliance (ALP) to fulfil the 'normal' levels of operational activity; consequently, a replacement ALP will not be required.
- b) That mutual aid from adjacent Fire and Rescue Services be used to ensure that the nearest appropriate aerial appliance is mobilised to life threatening incidents requiring the attendance of such an appliance.
- c) That the remaining ALP should continue to be located at Station 20 – Whitley Wood Fire Station and the current crewing arrangement should continue.
- d) That, in the context of other IRMP considerations and future financial pressures, consideration be given to withdrawing the current ALP from Slough.

434. RESULTS OF IRMP CONSULTATION

The Chairman invited Maurice Whyte (MW) (FBU) to speak. MW asked whether the RBFRS consultation process was working given the response rate compared to that achieved by the FBU.

The Chairman stated that he would normally anticipate a greater response than from members of the public.

The CFO commented that the response rate was as he would have expected unless there had been a specific local issue, and that there could be consultation fatigue.

The Chairman thanked the FBU for the high response that they had achieved.

MW stated that the FBU hadn't experienced consultation fatigue. He referred to the report and the wording at paragraph 3.11, and stated that it seemed to go away entirely from the original consultation on Day Crew Plus.

Cllr Emma Webster stated that this was the amendment that she had asked for earlier to be taken as part of the recommendations.

MW referred to Appendix B paragraph 20 and queried how a falling number of incidents could make the response worse

AM (RM) advised that the report also stated that it was the concentration of incidents.

The DCFO advised that the impact of call challenge affected mainly urban areas, and that remote rural incidents were therefore proportionately higher.

The CFO advised that there was not one single thing, and that with small numbers it would be statistically patchy

MW referred to Appendix B paragraph 40 and asked about mobile resource deployment to lay bys and car parks.

The CFO stated that it would be a waste of time for RBFRS to stand by in lay bys and that it would not be good for the public or for RBFRS

ACFO

Cllr Ward asked whether the FBU had consulted about the new fire station at Theale, as in his experience people will always say that they are against a closure. He was advised they had not.

The AM(RM) introduced the IRMP consultation report and outlined the consultation processes. He stated that there had been 449 responses, including 86 from private individuals and businesses of which 63 had been by email.

In response to Member Questions it was stated that:

- there was not a specific mechanism to ensure how the consultation was channelled at the UAs, and it was suggested that in future an Executive response be asked for;
- with reference to Appendix C and the comments regarding the replacement for the Dee Road Fire Station, AM (RM) confirmed that this had been purely regarding the fire station, not the new BHQ.

Cllr Webster referred to paragraph 3.11 of the report which proposed replacement wording, and she sought to **amend this to Day Crewing Plus**. The Chairman supported that the wording should be consistent concerning Day Crewing Plus.

ACFO

Members comments included:

- that how we consulted was important as well as to whom;
- that as the document was complicated a simple summary with key facts would be helpful;
- that unless people are upset, they may tend not to respond;
- that perhaps RBFRS could do a "state of the service" type presentation to UAs;
- that when invited RBFRS already attend and present to UAs;

The CFO confirmed that there would be thought given to how the consultation would be done next year.

ACFO

The Chairman moved the recommendations **as amended**, and this was seconded by Cllr Pauline Helliard-Symons and unanimously

Resolved:

That the Management Committee

- a) Note the consultation report; and
- b) Accept the IRMP Working Party proposed change to the plan; **as amended** and
- c) Recommend the amended plan to the Fire Authority on 5th December 2012 for final approval.

435. THAMES VALLEY CONTROL SERVICE – ADMISSION OF BUCKINGHAMSHIRE & MILTON KEYNES FIRE AUTHORITY

The DCFO introduced the report and outlined the recommendations and key aspects of the report. He stated that Buckinghamshire & Milton Keynes Fire Authority (BMKFA) had voted unanimously in support of joining TVFCS on the

basis outlined under 3.2. He confirmed that in the interim, until they have reached a steady state, they would not be a full partner, in order to mitigate the risk of distraction or delay to the programme until that time.

The DCFO referred to paragraph 4.2 and stated that the cost apportionment was being worked on and was still to be validated. Under 4.3 with regard to the grant funding available, he advised that BMKFA had spent approximately £200,000 of the £1.8million, and that the remainder would be put into the renewals funds which would be available to all partners.

The DCFO corrected the omission of “not” in paragraph 4.8 to read, “BMKFA calls within the TVFCS will **not** have a significant impact...”.

Cllr Ross advised that both he and Cllr Bryant as members of the Sponsoring Group, had met with two members of BMKFA, and that he had been encouraged. He commended the development as a meeting of minds, and one that would not affect the TVFCS progress with Oxfordshire. He stated that at the next meeting of Group on 17 January 2013, BMKFA would be welcomed as observers.

The Chairman moved and Cllr Ross seconded the recommendations.

In response to a query about BMKFA being a non-voting member, the Chairman stated that at the BMKFA meeting, which he had attended, when a member had queried this approach, other BMKFA Members had defended it. Cllr Ross stated that BMKFA had recognised that they must not prejudice the current programme.

Cllr Helliar-Symons stated that whilst the risks might be slight, the current programme could not be jeopardised or slowed down. She wished to put on record, appreciation to all those who had made it happen. The Chairman concurred, and in particular thanked Councillors Ross and Bryant.

Cllr Gittings stated that it was very welcome, albeit important to note the £200,000 lost by their earlier decision. He recognised this might increase uncertainty across all staff, and asked that the process regarding staff be expedited.

The Chairman stated that the previous decision by BMKFA had been based on the certainty of the Cambridgeshire proposals at that time.

Cllr Ross stated that the TVFCS programme now had more certainty and had overtaken in terms of progress and certainty.

It was unanimously **Resolved:**

That the Management Committee:

- a) **Agree** that BMKFA be invited to join the TVFCS as a full partner in steady state in accordance with the principles set out in the report; and
- b) **Agree** that, in the interim, BMKFA be invited to contribute as a full partner in the work to establish a Joint Committee to manage the TVFCS; and
- c) **Agree** that BMKFA be invited to participate in the delivery programme as a non-voting member in accordance with the principles set out in the paper; and.
- d) **Delegate** to the Chief Fire Officer the authority to sign a legally binding partnership agreement between the TVFCS partners and BMKFA, drafted in accordance with the principles set out in the paper.

(Councillor Gittings left the meeting at this point)

436. THAMES VALLEY FIRE CONTROL SERVICE PROGRAMME UPDATE

The Area Manager, Risk Management AM (RM) introduced the report, and advised that the programme was still on track to be achieved by April 2014. He highlighted some key aspects of the report, and advised that, subject to the decision by Oxfordshire on 10 December 2012, BMKFA Members would be included in the invite to the Programme Sponsoring Group (PSG) to visit the new control room when they meet on 17 January 2013.

In answer to Member questions, the following points were made:

-There was no reason to expect a delay to the work identifying the employing authority, or to the PSG receiving it for decision at their January meeting, unless a legal matter arose.

-Assurance was given that there was no delay to the programme timelines, following the slight delay in issuing the Invitation to Tender (ITT) document.

The DCFO agreed to report back to Cllr Webster outside the meeting regarding ISDN/PSDN daily reporting.

The recommendations were proposed by the Chairman and seconded by Cllr Ross and it was

Resolved

That the report be noted.

DCFO

437. NEW BRIGADE HEADQUARTERS (THEALE CROSS) VERBAL UPDATE

The CFO read a verbal update, a copy of which was tabled for Members.

Following a question from the Chairman, it was confirmed that any questions received from the contractors and the answers that were given would be provided to all the contractors.

Resolved:

That the update be received.

ACFO/
DCS

438. HUMAN RESOURCES MONITORING REPORT

The Head of Human Resources (HHR) introduced the report which covered the period April 2012 to September 2012.

In response to member questions

- it was agreed that the HHR would respond separately to a query regarding the leaver statistics and a Wargrave Station firefighter;

- it was confirmed the figures included retained firefighters;

- the figures on sickness whilst noted as being comparable to other FAs, were of concern, and were closely monitored. Members were referred to the additional paper that had been brought to their meeting on 5 July 2012 which had included

HHR

the evidential data that demonstrated the positive impact of training, and that managers who required further training were targeted. The procedure had also been amended to ensure that return to work interviews took place. It would continue to be monitored;

-personnel who had failed their fitness test would remain on the run if within 10%, but not if outside that, and would be retested shortly.

The Chairman thanked HHR for the report which was very important, and added that an important factor when looking at morale was appraisals. He advised that the Committee would be looking with interest at those figures at the end of the year.

Resolved

That the report be noted.

439. BUDGET MONITORING REPORT

The CFO introduced the report drawing attention to the reduction in other contracts budget due to the national tendering process for external audit.

In answer to Cllr Ross, it was confirmed that the Swinley costs had been resolved – and 85% of the cost over £60,000 had been recouped. The total costs could be looked at, albeit it would be an extrapolation for other FAs as they only billed for the additional and not the base costs.

DCFO

Cllr Brooks stated that he believed there had been an underspend each year for the last 10 to 12 years of approximately 2%. He asked if this could be confirmed in the context of whether there may be a similar underspend in 2013/14, so that some of the £1.4million savings may not be required.

DR

Cllr Ward stated that the Budget Working Party next met on 12 December, and he was seeking a balanced budget on present assumptions by then, recognising it was likely to be Christmas Eve or later before the grant settlement was known. The balances may mean that if things are much worse in January than expected, there was not a requirement for a knee jerk reaction.

Cllr Ross asked about the cost of a referendum, given that the net result of the rise would be low and likely to be acceptable based on the feedback of the focus groups. The Chairman stated it would be approximately £500,000.

Cllr Ward commented that he believed there had never been referendum which voted for a rise, and it also delayed the billing process.

The DCFO advised that with regard to the projected underspend, £413,000 was as a result of using switch crewing, and the majority of the remaining saving was the retained firefighter budget.

Cllr Helliard-Symons asked about the full year cost of the 1% pay rise (backdated to July 2012), and was advised it was £250,000.

Resolved

That budget monitoring report be noted.

440. FORWARD PLAN

Members requested the following updates:

That the wording for the item on alternative crewing be amended to day crew plus;

That the report on Pangborne and Mortimer be removed as it had now been included in a report on all stations.

That a verbal update on the new BHQ, be included for each F.A. meeting in addition to each Management Committee.

Resolved:

That the forward plan, as amended, be noted.

441. DATE OF NEXT MEETING

That the next meeting will be held on Monday 28 January 2013 at 6.30 pm in the Strategic Command Centre, Headquarters, Royal Berkshire Fire and Rescue Service, Dee Road, Tilehurst, Reading, Berkshire, RG30 4FS.

442. 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.

443. PART II MINUTES OF THE MEETING HELD ON 17 SEPTEMBER 2012

Resolved:

That the Part II Minutes of the meeting held on 17 September 2012 be confirmed as a correct record and signed by the Chairman.

444. ROYAL BERKSHIRE FIRE AND RESCUE (TRAINING) LTD

The CFO introduced the paper and members considered the report and recommendations. It was unanimously

Resolved:

That all the recommendations in the report be agreed.

445. PROVISION OF LEGAL ADVICE

The DCS introduced the report and members considered the report and recommendations. It was unanimously

Resolved:

That all the recommendations in the report be agreed.

The meeting closed at 8.50pm