

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



Held on Monday 28 January 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 (*until 7.50pm*)
*Councillor Pauline Helliar-Symons (Vice-Chairman)
*Councillor Edward Plenty (*from 6.40pm*)
*Councillor Angus Ross
*Councillor Alan Ward
* *present.*

In Attendance: Olaf Baars (Deputy Chief Fire Officer, DCFO)
Jenny Fay (Information Manager, IM,) *part*
Andy Mancey (Area Manager, Response AM(R))
Nick Oxborough (Group Manager, Performance Review, GMPR)
Caroline Redzikowska (Director, Corporate Services DCS)
Carolyn Rowe (Committee Manager)
Paul Southern (Assistant Chief Fire Officer, ACFO)
Nicole Targett (Corporate Communications Manager, CCM)
Andrew Valance (Director of Resources, DR)

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

446. At the invitation of the Chairman, Maurice Whyte, (FBU Berkshire Acting Brigade Secretary), advised that he wished to address the Management Committee on Agenda Items 8 (2013/14 Budget), and 14 (Principal Officers Car Scheme).

447. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Apologies for absence were received from Cllr Jeff Brooks.

Cllr Gittings apologised that he needed to leave early, and the Chairman agreed that item on the 2013/14 Budget, and the two part II items Premises update-Windsor, and The Appointment of External HR Consultants, be brought forward on the agenda.

448. 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.

The DCFO, ACFO declared an interest in items 14 (Principal Officers Car Scheme) and restricted item 23 (Appointment of External HR Advisers).

Action

449. MINUTES OF THE MEETING HELD ON 26 NOVEMBER 2012

Resolved:

That the Minutes of the meeting held on 26 November 2012 be confirmed as a correct record and signed by the Chairman.

The actions were noted as complete.

450. 2013/14 BUDGET

The Director of Resources (DR), introduced the report, and highlighted key aspects. He stated that it had been updated with new information since the report to the Budget Working Party (BWP) on 9 January 2013. He advised that it was a more complex settlement and that final information wouldn't be available until the end of January. This would be incorporated into the report to the Fire Authority (FA) on 20 February 2013.

With regard to pooling business rates, DR advised that whilst the Unitary Authorities have decided not to pool in 2013/14, they have agreed to shadow the pooling option to inform their decision next year.

(Cllr Plenty joined the meeting at this point)

DR advised that there were adequate reserves to absorb the difference if the final rates figure turns out to be lower than estimated.

The Chairman invited the FBU representative Maurice Whyte (MW), to speak.

MW referred to appendix Dii and sought clarification regarding the costs of the new BHQ at Theale Cross. He asked what prompted the rise in costs from those originally published.

The ACFO reminded the Committee that there was currently an invitation to tender (ITT) underway, but that following the purchase, the FA had decided to invest in refurbishing ahead of occupation to avoid the costs and disruption later.

At the Chairman's invitation, MW spoke expressing concern about it being over budget at a time when there was a recruitment freeze.

Cllr Ross, as Chairman of the Strategic Asset Management Committee (SAM C) reflected SAM C's view that the building should be fit for purpose, and that it was important to avoid problems down the line.

Cllr Gittings stated that there was a compelling reason for a £5 rise, to protect frontline services, and to address the Dee Road site. He added he was aware that this was asking the people of Berkshire to pay an extra £5 per annum.

The Chairman stated that he agreed this was not Government money and was due to prudent management and having the 2nd lowest combined FA precept, which would still be the case. He advised that Cllr Brooks, when giving his apologies, had said that his group supported a raise of £5 per annum.

Cllr Alan Ward, as Chairman the Budget Working Party formally moved the recommendations of the report, stating that he was aware that the Chairman had negotiated with Members regarding this.

The Chairman seconded the recommendations.

Cllr Ross supported this stating that it was protecting the future. He asked that in

the report to the FA, the acronyms and jargon be explained for the public, and also that time be spent on the press release. He also asked that the amount of reserves be included in the FA report.

The Chairman in seconding stated that the recommendation of £5 per annum was less than 10p per week in order to protect frontline services, and that the IRMP survey showed that the public would almost unanimously support a rise, but that it wasn't done lightly. It was the right thing to do.

Cllr Ward in summing up stated that he thought it was the right way forward, albeit he was not sure that focus groups reflect the public as a whole who did not get the detail when they received the bill. He said that he was happy to move and support at the full FA meeting. It was unanimously

Resolved:

That it be recommended to the Fire Authority that:

- a) The Band D Council Tax Precept is increased in 2013/14 by £5 to £60.66;
- b) That the additional income raised by the increase is used towards the development of the new fire station at Theale or Calcot in 2013/14 and 2014/15; and
- c) That the savings listed in Appendix B are accepted.

451. 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.

452. PREMISES UPDATE - WINDSOR

The Committee received a verbal update on the latest position and noted that discussions were continuing.

Resolved:

That the update be noted.

453. APPOINTMENT OF EXTERNAL HR ADVISERS.

The Committee received a report and it was

Resolved:

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

DCS/
DR

(Cllr Gittings left the meeting at this point).

The public were invited to re-enter the meeting room for the resumption of the Part I Agenda.

454. RECEIPT OF ANNOUNCEMENTS

There were no announcements.

455. ISSUES ARISING FROM THE AUDIT AND GOVERNANCE COMMITTEE

It was noted that Agenda items 12 and item 15 were referred by the Audit and Governance Committee, and that they had received and noted agenda item 14.

456. BUDGET MONITORING REPORT

The DR introduced the report confirming that the latest estimated outturn position was for a revenue underspend of £880,000.

Resolved:

That the report be noted.

457. RETAINED FIREFIGHTER RECRUITMENT UPDATE

Area Manager Response, Andy Mancey (AM(R)), introduced the report and confirmed that no comments had been received from Members of the IRMP Working Party to whom the report had previously been circulated.

In reply to Member questions it was confirmed:

- That a minimum of five people was needed to run training courses, which meant that some candidates were held over.
- That one of the reasons for attrition during the process was that the hours applicants could offer did not match the cover needed.
- That the total cost (excluding officer time) was £9,000 per annum.
- After 300 hours they would be able to fulfil fire fighter duties, and that to become "competent" took typically three years for wholetime, and five years for retained.
- That recruitment happened twice a year reflecting the capacity of HR and that the RSU (Retained Support Unit) had recommended ways to modify that.
- Regarding retained provision, the biggest concern was when they didn't turn up. The pagers were local and only one way, which did have the advantage that they could not respond when outside the area, whereas two way would be national.
- The use of Job Centres will be pursued.
- This was one of the four functions of the RSU, and the total cost of the RSU was £500,000 per annum.

Cllr Ward queried whether it still made sense to have retained.

AM (R)

Cllr Plenty asked whether the recruitment numbers and those who made it through the process were more or less than those leaving, and the DCFO agreed to circulate this information to Members.

The DCFO advised that for very rural areas, a retained unit with a five minute delay is still better than the response time from the nearest wholetime pump.

The Chairman thanked AM (R) for the helpful report, and it was

Resolved:

That the report be noted.

458. UPDATE ON ORGANISATIONAL RESTRUCTURE AND STAFF MOVEMENTS

The Director, Corporate Services introduced the report and in response to a member question confirmed that the procedure existed to withdraw the privilege of secondary employment.

Resolved:

That the report be noted.

459. PROGRESS REPORT ON MEMBER DEVELOPMENT CHARTER

The report was introduced by the Group Manager Performance and Review, Nick Oxborough (GMPR), who advised that the Audit and Governance Committee had considered the action plan. He stated that subsequent to this meeting, if Members agreed the recommendations, a report would be brought to the March and May meetings and subsequently quarterly.

The Chairman moved the recommendations which were seconded by Cllr Pauline Helliard-Symons.

Members commented that the training undertaken within their respective Unitary Authorities (UAs) should be taken into account, and that perhaps a small notional sum of £2,000 could be put against Member Training.

The Chairman asked to be advised if there was any slippage in the action plan.

The DCS confirmed that UA training would be taken into account and development and training would build on this where gaps were identified.

Resolved:

- a) That the proposed plan of action to achieve the Charter award be agreed; and
- b) That it be agreed to receive as part of the action plan a quarterly agenda item on Member Development.

460. FREEDOM OF INFORMATION UPDATE

The DCS introduced Jenny Fay, Information Manager (IM), and outlined the annual report to Members.

In response to Member questions it was confirmed:

- that the UAs questions were Berkshire UAs;
- that councillors and political included MPs;
- that Thames Valley Police did sometimes need formal written process (rather than simply telephoning) if following criminal proceedings;
- there is a general log of questions and answers on the website
- if there are repeated requests by someone regarding a particular matter, this could be treated as vexatious.

The DCS advised that charging is being looked where Emergency Incidents are insurance company requests, and this would remove them from FOIs.

The Chairman extended thanks to IM and the team stating it was an important part of being open and honest.

Resolved:

That the report be noted.

461. PRINCIPAL OFFICERS CAR SCHEME

The DCFO, ACFO and AM (R), declared an interest and left the room for the item.

The DCS introduced the report and reprised the background. Clarification of a scheme required Management Committee (MC) agreement as it was slightly different. The PO on 2nd and 3rd call had not been operating the scheme consistently as it had been unclear.

The Chairman invited the FBU to speak. Ed Caruso (FBU) stated that the report reverted back to paying private mileage. He asked that this be determined following the outcome of the current full review of the car scheme, and said that currently middle managers do not get this, and are also adversely affected because of the review.

The DCS advised that a moratorium had been introduced whilst the review was underway, and that cases where this caused an adverse affect were being looked at. She advised that the car moratorium was currently the subject of a collective grievance.

DCFO

The Chairman asked when the review would be ready, and for a report to the next meeting detailing those being asked to retain a car and adversely affected. Cllr Ross asked that the report be shorter and simpler.

DCS

Cllr Ward moved a further amendment **that the arrangements be continued for one year and that proposals for then be brought forward.**

The Chairman agreed to this amendment, and it was

Resolved:

- a) **That the arrangements below be continued for one year, and that proposals for then be brought forward;**
- b) That the draft Principal Officer Rota Scheme in Appendix 1 be **AGREED to continue for one year;**
- b) That the draft Car User Scheme and Allowances for Principal Officers in Appendix 2 be **AGREED for one year;**
- d) **That an update report be brought to the next Management Committee meeting.**

462. FUEL MANAGEMENT

The DCFO introduced the report which had been requested by the Audit and Governance Committee. Limited assurance had been given on the Fuel Management Audit.

DCFO stated that the Auditors had reported issues with the administrative process and that no missing fuel had been identified. Three stations had been looked at and the procedure had not always been adhered to. Regarding fuel cards, a complete rewrite was being carried out which would be consulted on and ready by April 2013.

Cllr Helliar-Symons stated that it was a very good action plan, but that as there didn't appear to be much that was new asked how it would address the issues.

The DCFO advised that there had been a clear instruction to escalate any noncompliance to Group Managers, and that problems will be raised with the Station Commander in order to trace the Watch and ensure responsibility it taken.

The Chairman queried why the issue with fuel cards had been given medium not high priority, and also why the date for addressing the issues was not sooner than April.

The DCFO advised that this was determined by the auditors, and that the changes had been introduced, and would, subject to the necessary consultation, become permanent by April. All the actions were in place, and it was because of the 28 day consultation period.

With the Chairman's agreement, MW, FBU spoke to offer to promulgate quickly.

DCFO advised that if the consultation was expedited, it would be brought into place sooner.

Cllr Ward as vice Chairman of Audit and Governance Committee stated that the full flavour of the concerns was lost, and he drew attention to key aspects of the report and that there had been problems at all of the three stations visited. He asked that Audit be requested to undertake random checks in a few months time.

DR advised that it would get picked up as part of the Auditors 2013/14 forward programme.

The Chairman asked that it be added to the work plan for the Audit and Governance Committee.

DR

Resolved

- a) That the report be noted; and
- b) **That Fuel Management be added to the 2013/14 Audit and Governance work plan.**

DR/
ACFO

463. FORWARD PLAN

Resolved:

That the forward plan be noted

464. DATE OF NEXT MEETING

That the next meeting will be held on Monday 25 March 2013 at 6.30 pm in the Strategic Command Centre, Headquarters, Royal Berkshire Fire and Rescue Service, Dee Road, Tilehurst, Reading, Berkshire, RG30 4FS.

465. 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.

466. PART II MINUTES OF THE MEETING HELD ON 26 NOVEMBER 2012

Resolved:

That the Part II Minutes of the meeting held on 26 November 2012 be confirmed as a correct record and signed by the Chairman.

467. BUDGET WORKING PARTY MINUTES

Resolved:

That the Minutes of the final meeting of the 2013/14 Budget Working Party held on 9 January 2013, be confirmed as a correct record and signed by the Chairman.

468. RETROSPECTIVE WAIVER OF STANDING ORDERS REGARDING SURVEY WORK AT WOKINGHAM FIRE STATION

Resolved:

That all the recommendations in the report be agreed.