

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



Held on Monday 3 February 2014 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 (*from 6.45pm*)
*Councillor Pauline Helliard-Symons
*Councillor Edward Plenty
*Councillor Angus Ross
*Councillor Alan Ward)
* *present.*

In Attendance: Gene Ashe (Area Manager Learning and Development, AML&D)
Gerry Barry (Information Manager, (IM) (*part of meeting*)
Andy Fry (Chief Fire Officer, CFO)
Becci Jeffries (Head of HR, HHR)
Andy Mancey (Acting Assistant Chief Fire Officer, A/ACFO)
Paul Maynard (Acting Area Manager, Response, AMR)
Dave Phillips (Area Manager Prevention and Protection, AMP&P)
Caroline Redzikowska (Director, Corporate Services DCS)
Carolyn Rowe (Interim Head of Corporate Services)
Paul Southern (Assistant Chief Fire Officer, ACFO)
Andrew Vallance (Director of Resources, DR)

Observers SM Eddie Cardoso, FBU Representative
SM Tregear Thomas, FBU Representative

Also Present Cllr Emma Webster, Community Safety Champion

581. REPRESENTATIVE BODIES

At the invitation of the Chairman, SM Eddie Cardoso advised that the FBU wished to address the Management Committee on Agenda Item 8.

582. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Apologies had been received from Cllr Jeff Brooks and Cllr Gittings had advised that he may arrive late.

583. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

In accordance with the provisions of the Fire Authority's Local Code of Conduct Cllr Angus Ross, declared a non-pecuniary interest on Item 11 BHQ Update as a member of the Programme Sponsoring Group (PSG) for the Thames Valley Control Project (TVCP).

At the invitation of the Chairman, Cllr Webster advised that she wished to speak on items 8 (2014/15 Budget) and part II Item 23 (Prevention Department Budget Savings 2014), and had a personal interest having met with a number of the personnel in the Prevention Department.

Action

584. MINUTES OF THE MEETING HELD ON 25 NOVEMBER 2013.

Resolved:

That the Minutes of the meeting held on 25 November 2013 be confirmed as a correct record and signed by the Chairman.

585. RECEIPT OF ANNOUNCEMENTS

The Chairman announced that with regard to the planned Peer Review, RBFA committee and working party chairmen had been invited to attend a focus group. He requested that if they were unable to attend, they seek a substitute. He asked that an r.s.v.p. be sent to the Performance Review Team as soon as possible.

586. ISSUES ARISING FROM THE AUDIT AND GOVERNANCE COMMITTEE

Cllr Ross, (Chairman of SAM C) advised that at the recent SAM C meeting, concern had been expressed regarding there being 129 Brigade vehicles, and a review by the Audit and Governance Committee had been requested. The Chairman suggested that it be looked at the first instance by SAM C, and Cllr Ross agreed to work with Officers to draw up terms of reference.

A/
ACFO

587. RECOMMENDATIONS FROM COMMITTEES

It was noted that the following item on the Budget 2014/15 had been recommended by the Budget Working Party.

588. 2014/15 BUDGET

The Director of Resources introduced the report and tabled an additional paper on Fees and Charges for 2014/15.

(Cllr Gittings arrived at this point).

DR advised that the six Unitary Authorities had been delayed in providing their figures, but the provisional figure now received suggested a collection surplus which would result in receipt of an additional £600,000. This would need to be fully checked and would form part of the budget to the FA on the 19 February 2014. He advised that some of the rate changes suggested there may be increased volatility in the figures in future.

DR

The Chairman invited the FBU to speak, and SM Cardoso asked that the Committee reconsider the budget in respect of the loss of the station manager posts and community safety personnel, especially given the likely additional £600,000. He added that the CFO's approach to partnership working was welcomed, and before implementing job losses there was an opportunity to delay the decision until a full business case had been worked up.

The Chairman invited SM Thomas to speak, and SM Thomas said with regard to the station manager posts, all the work and options had not been looked at, and there was an opportunity to look at the range of alternatives in partnership with the FBU.

Members gave detailed consideration to the budget and in particular to the schedule of savings and saving no. 3 (removal of three station commander posts) and saving no. 6 (reduction of four posts in community safety).

Responses to questions included:

- It was expected that at least 50% of the forecasted additional sum would continue in future years as part of the base budget;
- two of the three station manager posts were currently vacant, and five of the pool of six community safety posts were currently occupied;
- as far as known, the 1% freeze grant was now part of the base budget, and when or whether this would change was unknown;
- some contracts already had nil inflation, and at renewal this was sought. At the request of Members, negotiating with existing contractors to forego any uplift would also be pursued;
- there were no additional requirements for savings anticipated for 15/16, and with the additional sum forecast, the saving for 16/17 should now be less than the sum in appendix A. This would be amended for the FA on the 19 February, but was caveated as there were other potential pressures, for example employer national insurance contributions.

DR

DR

The CFO advised the Committee that the Members Planning Workshop on 6 February would provide an opportunity to review the policy direction, recognising there was a window where no further savings were needed for 14/15. The work from the 6 February would need to be translated into a work programme and a redesign of the organisation to address the £1million gap in 2016/17. He advised that with regard to the posts identified for savings there was an option not to disestablish them, but not permanently fill them at this time.

Comment from Members included:

- concern if the wider impact and the evidence base and business case had not yet been fully worked up;
- concern removing posts when additional funds meant it was not necessary to take this course of action;
- concern over relying on the potential additional sum of money to balance the budget;
- a wish to balance the budget as it was, rather than quickly altering the recommendations previously agreed by the Budget Working Party (BWP) based on new provisional information;
- a view that this should be seen in the wider context as public money, in difficult times, and any additional sum should not just be spent;
- recognition that the decision may still be needed, but a wish for it to be correct and concern over an apparent shortage of facts as a basis at this stage;

With regard to the capital budget concern was expressed over amounts of additional money for the new BHQ, when it had been a design and build. In response to questions DR confirmed that Caversham Road was one of the next two stations requiring either renovation or a rebuild.

Cllr Ross (Chairman of SAM C) commented that the new Wokingham Fire Station had raised a number of issues to learn from and do things differently for any further new fire stations. In addition SAM C had raised the matter of the brigade vehicles and it may be that the light vehicle capital sum would not be needed.

With regard to the revenue benefits accruing from the new BHQ, Cllr Ross was disappointed over the amount but hope further savings would come forward from the move.

The Chairman **moved the recommendations as amended to note the tabled paper on fees and charges.** He stated that it was important not to budget in a piecemeal way, and added that this would be a decision for the Fire Authority, and this was a recommendation.

Cllr Gittings moved an **amendment: “That the savings identified under saving items 3 and 6 be put on hold subject to being reviewed during the municipal year 2014/15”.**

This was seconded by Cllr Plenty.

Cllr Gittings said that with the new information supplied to the Committee, and with the 6 February Planning Workshop it would be precipitous to take the action until further information was available.

Cllr Ross said that he hadn't been party to in depth discussions on the impact of implementing those savings.

Cllr Ward said that he did not support the amendment – he considered that the saving was produced by professional officers and any further impact assessment was unlikely to be definitive.

The Chairman did not support the amendment, as it would be budgeting at the last minute. The FA would receive the recommendation for decision and would see the minute. The BWP had recommended the proposals to the Management Committee.

The CFO advised Members that he had not been advocating but rather contributing an alternative approach. Officers would work on the decision of Members.

On being put to the vote the **amendment** was **lost** 2 for and 4 against.

The substantive motion on being put to the vote was carried 4 for and 2 against:
Resolved:

That it be RECOMMENDED to the Fire Authority:

- a) That the Band D Council Tax Precept remains at £60.66;
- b) That the Government's offer of a 1% Council Tax Freeze Grant is accepted;
- c) That the savings listed in Appendix B are accepted;
- d) That the capital programme listed in Appendix C is accepted; **and**
- e) **That the Fees and Charges 2014/15 as tabled be noted.**

589. ROYAL BERKSHIRE PAY POLICY STATEMENT 2014-15

DCS introduced the paper, and outlined that as requested by Management Committee last year, the Audit and Governance Committee (A&GC) had considered this at their meeting on the 28 November 2013. The Pay Policy Statement at Appendix 1 reflected the now available model template.

Regarding Car Provision, and in response to Members the DCS advised that bringing forward the review could be looked at;

Members considered the Statement, and in particular the inclusion of the section on the living wage, and also that regarding the Compensation Policy, and regarding the Re-Engagement of a Retiree Policy.

DCS

Cllr Ward **moved** that the section on **the living wage be removed**, this was seconded by the Chairman.

Cllr Helliar-Symons moved **an amendment**, that **in addition to the living wage being removed**:

- under the **Compensation Policy** the **wording be amended** from “The RBFA will review its compensation policy...to “ The RBFA **may** review its compensation policy”, and

- with regard to **Car Provision** , the final sentence **be amended** to read, “ **A review of the provision of lease cars in general, covering both existing schemes to include all options will be undertaken as soon as possible and the outcomes will be included in the next policy statement.**”

This was seconded by Cllr Ward, and on being put to the vote it was carried with 5 votes for and 2 against.

Resolved

that following consideration, the Pay Policy Statement 2014/15 **as amended** be RECOMMENDED to the Fire Authority approval.

DCS/
HHR

590. EXTENSION OF COMMERCIAL ARRANGEMENTS - CHILDCARE VOUCHERS

The HHR introduced the report and **tabled an amendment** to the recommendation: “ to agree to extend the current commercial arrangement with Sodexo Motivation Solutions for **up to six months** from 31 March 2014 to **30 September 2014.**”

The recommendations as tabled were moved by the Chairman, seconded by Cllr Helliar-Symons and it was unanimously

Resolved:

That an extension to the current commercial arrangement with Sodexo Motivation Solutions **for up to six months** from 31 March 2014 to **30 September 2014 be agreed.**

591. BHQ UPDATE

DR provided a verbal update advising that the building should be watertight by the end of the week, and a paper had also been requested to demonstrate that the practical completion date would be met. The mechanical and electrical aspect of the works had now started.

As requested at the FA on 11 December 2013, all FA Members had received an invitation to visit the site on one of two dates in February.

Cllr Ross (Chairman of SAM C) advised that in future the New BHQ would be referred to as Brigade Headquarters, Pincent Lane, Calcot, and that the Fire Authority would be asked on 19 February 2014 to agree arrangements for the naming of the building.

DR

Resolved

That the verbal update be noted.

592. INDUSTRIAL ACTION- RECKONABLE PENSIONABLE SERVICE

DCS introduced the report which outlined the arrangements by which firefighters could buy back the pensionable service lost due to strike action. The CFO had exercised his delegated power on this matter, and the report was for note.

Resolved:

That the report be noted.

593. FREEDOM OF INFORMATION UPDATE

DCS introduced Gerry Barry, Information Manager (IM) who outlined the annual report to Members. She advised that questions were getting more complex. In the two complaints regarding information requests and the complaint to the ICO, RBFRS's position had been upheld.

Members expressed their interest in the report and responses to questions included:

- if a complaint had not been upheld, censure might include a fine or being monitored for a period;
- where information is disclosed best faith and that it has been done in a thoughtful way has to be demonstrated;
- changes to the legislation by the current and previous Information Commissioners have shown an intention to seek to rationalise, for example referring to information sources already published, but there is no real evidence of a reduction in requests – we can point to published data, and we do have a duty to assist;
- charging will defray a small proportion of the costs and may also act as a deterrent;

The Chairman thanked IM and it was

Resolved:

That the report be noted.

(IM Gerry Barry left at this point)

594. TRAINING COMPANY UPDATE

The Chairman of the Training Company, Cllr Phillip Bicknell provided a verbal update, advising that a profit of £28,000 had been made. He congratulated AM Learning and Development Gene Ashe for his good work so far, and advised Members of plans to widen training provision. Looking forward, this would continue to be a way to generate income.

The Chairman, as a Director on the Training Company added his thanks to AM L&D.

Resolved:

That the verbal update be noted.

595. VERBAL UPDATE ON EMPLOYERS OFFER TO FBU ON RETAINED PENSIONS

The CFO advised that consultation had closed in September 2013, and the results were expected during February 2014. Once advised, RBFRS will have two months to identify eligible personnel - existing, previous employees, and those managing the affairs of any deceased eligible former employees. Those contacted have two months to express an interest. RBFRS then has six months to provide the costs to those who express an interest. There is then a six month period in

which to respond. RBFRs was required to declare a state of readiness for this process.

Resolved:

that the verbal update be noted.

596. 2013/14 BUDGET MONITORING

DR introduced the report and advised that with regard to the capital budget, a further £600,000 had been spent in the last month.

Resolved:

that the report be noted.

597. FORWARD PLAN

Resolved

That the forward plan be noted.

598. BUILDING AND CLEANING AND ASSOCIATED SERVICES

The Chairman advised that this paper had been marked to follow as a part II, but as written was a part I paper.

DR introduced the report and advised Members that there had been an insufficient number of responses to the tender, and as such he was not able to assure Members of the value for money.

Resolved:

That authority be delegated to the Director of Resources, subject to consultation with the Chairman and Vice-Chairman of the Authority, to either extend the existing contract or award an interim cleaning contract, for up to 9 months.

599. DATE OF NEXT MEETING

Monday 7 April 2014 at 6.30pm in the Strategic Command Centre, Brigade Headquarters, Dee Road, Reading RG30 4FS.

The Chairman reminded Members of the Quiz evening being held in memory of Lynda Kenyon at 7pm on Saturday 8 February at Warfield Community Centre RG42 76AB.

600. 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.

601. PART II MINUTES OF THE MEETING HELD ON 25 NOVEMBER 2014

Resolved:

That the Part II Minutes of the meeting held on 25 November 2013 be confirmed as a correct record and signed by the Chairman.

602. BUDGET WORKING PARTY MINUTES

Resolved

That the confidential minutes of the Budget Working Party held on 15 January 2014 be noted.

603. INDUSTRIAL ACTION BY FIRE BRIGADES' UNION AND UPDATE ON BUDGETARY PROVISION OF EMERGENCY RESPONSE ARRANGEMENTS

A/AM Andy Mancey introduced the report. Following detailed consideration by the Committee it was

Resolved:

That the recommendations be agreed.

604. PREVENTION DEPARTMENT BUDGET SAVINGS 2014

AM P&P Dave Phillips introduced the report. Following detailed consideration Members

Resolved:

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

Cllr Helliar- Symons and Cllr Plenty gave their apologies and left the meeting at this point.

605. RESTRICTED MINUTES OF THE MANAGEMENT COMMITTEE MEETING HELD ON 11 DECEMBER 2013.

Resolved:

That the restricted minutes from the meeting of the Management Committee be agreed for adoption.

The meeting closed at 9.45pm