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Chairman's Initials.....



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

Held on Tuesday 17th March 2015 at 6.30pm

Slough Fire Station, Station 17, Tuns Lane, Slough, Berkshire SL1 2XA

Members:
(* present)

- Councillor Joginder Bal
- Councillor Christine Bateson
- * Councillor Phillip Bicknell
- * Councillor Paul Bryant
- * Councillor Adrian Edwards (*Vice-Chairman*)
- Councillor Pauline Helliard-Symons
- * Councillor Chris Maskell
- * Councillor Tom McCann
- * Councillor Angus Ross (*Chairman*)

In Attendance:

- Trevor Ferguson (Deputy Chief Fire Officer, DCFO)
- Andy Parsons (Interim Head of Estates, IHE)
- Linda Pye (Principal Policy Officer, PPO)
- Fayth Rowe (Committee Officer, CO)
- Paul Southern (Assistant Chief Fire Officer, ACFO)
- Andrew Vallance (Director of Resources, DR)

Action

38. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

An apology for inability to attend the meeting was received on behalf of Councillor Christine Bateson and Councillor Pauline Helliard-Symons (Councillor Phillip Bicknell attended as substitute for Councillor Pauline Helliard-Symons).

39. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

There were no declarations of interest received.

40. MINUTES OF THE MEETING HELD ON 18th NOVEMBER 2014 AND MATTERS ARISING

Resolved that:

The Part I Minutes of the meeting held on 18th November 2014 be approved as a true and correct record and signed by the Chairman.

41. SAMC TERMS OF REFERENCE

The Committee were asked to review the Strategic Asset Management Committee's Terms of Reference and to recommend possible changes/amendments to the Fire Authority on 22nd April 2015.

Councillor Angus Ross confirmed that two years' ago a fundamental review of the SAMC Terms of Reference had been undertaken to include IT, Fleet and the sharing of assets within its remit.

The ACFO pointed out that at the same time it had been agreed to increase the asset value or leasehold rental value from £100k to £300k. Up to that value the Committee could decide on the appropriate action without referral to another Committee. However, Members of SAMC might want to give consideration to increasing that amount further in light of increasing property prices. The Committee was also responsible for monitoring and controlling the authorised capital programme and where appropriate the approved revenue spend.

The DCFO confirmed that the Fire Authority was currently looking at the Constitution in general. He felt that a value of £300k would be appropriate for everything else apart from estates and Members might want to think about setting two values. Councillor Angus Ross felt that the Terms of Reference should remain as drafted for the time being but if anything arose as a result of the review of the Constitution then consideration could be given to amending them at that stage.

Councillor Paul Bryant referred to item I. He had recently attended a Fire Conference where great emphasis had been given to sharing assets and working with other organisations and he therefore queried whether item I should be expanded. The DR responded that that was covered off under item A. Item I was more specifically referring to the internal workings of the Fire Authority in relation to ensuring that Members of SAMC liaised with other Fire Authority Committees. Councillor Bryant asked if consideration could be given to providing a greater emphasis on shared assets in any future review.

Resolved that:

To note the Strategic Asset Management Committee's Terms of Reference as drafted.

42. DRAFT ANNUAL REPORT – STRATEGIC ASSET MANAGEMENT COMMITTEE (SAMC)

Councillor Angus Ross, Chair of the Strategic Asset Management Committee presented the draft Annual Report. He thanked Officers for their assistance in drafting the report.

He stated that during 2014/15, the Strategic Asset Management Committee (SAMC), had continued to ensure that the strategic overview of the Authority's Capital Programme was managed effectively and had assisted Officers with the delivery of the Authority's Capital Programme in relation to premises, transport and information technology.

The Committee had met on all four of the scheduled meeting dates during the year and all meetings had been quorate, for which he formally thanked Members of the Committee. The Committee continued to hold meetings at different fire stations in order to increase the knowledge of the Authority's assets and this year had met at Whitley Wood, the new HQ (prior to opening), and Slough Fire Station as well as touring Mortimer Fire Station and the new Tinkers Lane, Windsor Fire Station.

The main item of business for the Committee during 2014/15 had been in assisting Officers with the plans to complete the replacement headquarters with the move to the new offices taking place in October 2014. The Thames Valley Control was due to go live in the new building in March 2015. The Committee

would continue to monitor the final settlement with the contractor as it also would in relation to progress on the issues at Wokingham Fire Station.

The Chairman confirmed that a fresh site search in the Theale and Calcot areas had taken place for a replacement for the Dee Road Fire Station. The results of that search would be considered once the IRMP process had been refreshed, at the next meeting of the Committee. Plans for the future of the Dee Road site would also be submitted to future meetings for consideration. The Committee had also overseen the building and opening of the new Tinkers Lane fire station in Windsor and as a result the St. Marks Road site had been marketed and sold, subject to planning permission.

Once the IRMP process had been refreshed the Committee would be in a position to review and approve the Premises Asset Management Plan which would provide the Authority with the buildings it needed in the long term to provide an efficient and effective service to the public of Berkshire.

Considerable funding would be required to achieve the forthcoming projects and therefore Chairman was pleased with the decision to maintain the capital projects reserve to assist with the delivery of the programme. The combination of this reserve along with the capital receipts for the disposal of redundant sites would ensure a minimal impact to the communities served by the Fire Authority and the public purse.

The Committee would continue to investigate the transport strategy, including the links to the Authority's IRMP. It was currently reviewing the size and composition of the fleet to ensure that the Service operated efficiently whilst maintaining sufficient vehicles to meet its needs. The Committee would also continue to review the IT strategy of the Service. Further opportunities would be explored to share services and/or premises with other bodies especially other Fire Authorities and blue light services.

Resolved that:

- The report be noted;
- The report to be presented to the Fire Authority meeting on 22nd April 2015.

43. WAIVER OF STANDING ORDERS IT CONTRACTS

This item was withdrawn following publication of the agenda and would therefore not be considered at the meeting.

44. CHANGES IN PROCUREMENT LEGISLATION

Andrew Vallance, the Director of Resources (DR), informed Members of the Committee of recent changes to the procurement legislation that would impact on public sector organisations.

The report was in response to Fire and Rescue Monthly Bulletin 54: February 2015 and had been produced to provide reassurance to Committee Members that Officers were aware of the new procurement reforms and had taken steps to remain compliant. The new EU Procurement legislation came into force from 26th February 2015 and had resulted in procurement reform which included the introduction of the following areas:

Contracts Finder: Contracts Finder was a free online Cabinet Office web portal which would be used to advertise all tendering opportunities in one place. Under the new procurement reform it would be mandatory to advertise all commercial opportunities over £25k on the web portal allowing all suppliers including Small & Medium Enterprises access to commercial opportunities. RBFRS had always used Contracts Finder and would continue to do so in line with the new set of financial thresholds.

Publication of Contract Register: Following the introduction of the Local Government Transparency Code 2014 it was now a requirement for public sector organisations to publish on their websites all legally enforceable agreements which exceeded £5k including purchase orders and all corporate credit card transactions, initially on a quarterly basis. The Procurement team, in conjunction with the Finance team, had commenced this process before the initial publishing date of 31st December 2014 and would publish such information each quarter until the new financial year. It would then be published monthly in line with best practice from April 2015.

Increased Use of E-Tendering: The new procurement reform also suggested the increased use of electronic tendering and the sharing of planned procurement events through the creation of a procurement pipeline to assist in better planned regional and national procurement projects. RBFRS had now implemented an E-Tendering system to meet all those requirements and would use the In-Tend electronic system for all future tender and competitive processes which would assist in the creation of the procurement pipeline.

Chief Fire Officers Association National Procurement Group (CFOA NPG): CFOA NPG was creating a national back office to enable fire procurement to be co-ordinated nationally to create commercial leverage and standardisation. They had identified a number of key spend categories for which procurement projects had been initiated. An update would be provided at the next SAMC meeting from the National Procurement Group.

DR

The DCFO explained the reasons why item 6 (Waiver of Standing Orders IT Contracts) on the agenda had been withdrawn. Further work had been undertaken and the DCFO had come to the conclusion that Officers were not yet in a position to ask Members for a waiver. It would be necessary to ensure that the information provided to Members was correct and that it would not put the organisation at risk. It was anticipated that the contract sums would be significantly reduced when the report was eventually brought to the Committee. Councillor Angus Ross noted that the Interim Head of IT (IHIT) had not progressed things as quickly as he would have liked due to a number of issues and he queried whether this delay would pose a risk. The DCFO confirmed that contract/project owners were currently being challenged and only those contracts that were necessary would be brought to the Committee for sign off. There was some element of risk around Single Tender Actions. Auditors had been asked to scope a piece of work which would look at where the Fire Authority was compliant and where it was not.

Councillor Paul Bryant queried what a 'procurement pipeline' was. The DR confirmed that it was the on-line advertisement of contracts and was a national initiative with the aim of standardising on products which fire authorities purchased. The RBFRS had followed that practice for some time and had indeed been praised at several national conferences.

Councillor Adrian Edwards raised concerns in respect of the value of some of the single tenders. The DCFO confirmed that he too had some concerns and he confirmed that the audit would pick up on that issue.

Councillor Tom McCann asked if benchmarking information could be provided on best practice to ensure that the fire authority was not making decisions in isolation.

Councillor Phillip Bicknell questioned the Fire Authority's compliance in this area. The DCFO confirmed that there were a number of frameworks which could be used to ensure that the Fire Authority was compliant. He wanted to make sure that he was advising Members on the right balance of Single Tender Actions. This was a complex area and Officers would need to ensure that product owners worked with the IT specialists.

Resolved that:

- The report be noted;
- It was recommended that a review be undertaken in respect of Single Tender requests.

45. 2015 TRANSPORT FLEET PROFILE

Paul Southern, Assistant Chief Fire Officer (ACFO), presented a report which set out the value and operational purpose of the RBFRS fleet.

Members of SAMC had requested information on the RBFRS fleet and in particular the mileage, respective value and operational purpose for each vehicle. It was noted that the asset value reflected the written down book value i.e. the net value after depreciation. The vehicles would have some value for either scrap or sale if other parties were interested in acquiring them. A number of appendices had been attached to the report which set out the relevant information in relation to appliances and various support vehicles.

Members of SAMC had previously expressed concern at the number of vehicles in the fleet and whether the most efficient use of all the vehicles was being achieved. It was therefore proposed that a comprehensive review would be undertaken to determine whether that was the case and whether the fleet provision could be improved. If agreed, the review would be undertaken by a cross-functional group of senior officers, chaired by the Director of Resources. The group would challenge the users of the vehicles to ensure that they were required and used in the most efficient manner. Once the fleet requirements for the RBFRS had been determined it was proposed to develop a delivery model that was as efficient, effective and environmentally-friendly as possible. It was not proposed to include the frontline fleet provision in Appendices A and B in the review at this stage, as the requirements for those would be determined by the refresh of the IRMP which was currently under way.

The Director of Resources would report back to this Committee once the review had taken place.

Councillor Adrian Edwards thanked the ACFO for the report but stated that he had concerns about the number of vehicles. He felt that there should be some rationalisation with a need to look at and review the cost of the fleet. The ACFO confirmed that it was proposed to undertake a baseline review which would

include the justification for each of the vehicles. The IRMP would shortly be looking at the future focus of the service and therefore that might change the number and type of vehicles required.

Councillor Paul Bryant asked if consideration could also be given to the sharing of vehicles wherever possible. The ACFO stated that the Incident Command Unit was currently shared with Oxfordshire and it was something that the Fire Authority would look to do as a matter of course.

Councillor Tom McCann said that in order to set a good baseline then the authority should look at which vehicles had been used in the last flooding incident and those which had not. Some of those vehicles might only be used twice a year but when they were used they performed an essential role. He also asked what the process was for identifying true need. Councillor Phillip Bicknell felt that it would be essential to ensure that emergency vehicles were as good as they could be and then consideration could be given to the other vehicles in order to achieve a balance. It might also be useful to use number plates on the emergency vehicles that did not identify the age of the vehicle.

Councillor Chris Maskell urged caution in placing a condition on the review. He was of the opinion that the word 'comprehensive' was sufficient but that a realistic time frame should be set to complete the review.

Councillor Angus Ross asked if Officers could ensure that the review covered the size of the fleet, a policy around the replacement of vehicles and the option of whether to purchase or lease in order to achieve the best deal (replacement, purchase and disposal). He suggested that in order to allow Officers to complete this piece of work the review should be brought back to the SAMC meeting in September 2015. The DR stated that it might be useful to set up a Star Chamber of Members in order to provide a challenge to the process. It was agreed that at the next SAMC meeting those Members who would be interested in assisting with the review would be selected.

DR

DR

Councillor Adrian Edwards felt that it might help the process if a list of vehicles at each Fire Station could be provided.

(Paul Southern left the meeting at 6.55pm)

Resolved that:

- The report be noted;
- A comprehensive review to be undertaken to assess any improvements required in the efficiency and effectiveness of the fleet and would cover the scope of replacement, purchase and disposal;
- The Members who would be interested in taking part in a Star Chamber would be selected at the SAMC meeting on 15th July 2015;
- A report on the outcome of the review would be brought back to the SAMC meeting on 16th September 2015. .

46. 2014/15 CAPITAL PROGRAMME

Andrew Vallance, the Director of Resources (DR), informed the Strategic Asset Management Committee of capital expenditure against budgets for 2014/15.

Capital expenditure to the end of January 2015 was £511k and was set out in

Appendix A which included explanations for any slippages. It was noted that the item on Breathing Apparatus – Telemetry was under review.

Resolved that:

The report be noted.

47. DATE OF NEXT MEETING

Tuesday 7th July 2015 at 5.30pm – venue to be confirmed.

48. EXCLUSION OF THE PUBLIC

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 Paragraph 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.

49. PART II MINUTES OF THE MEETING HELD ON 18th NOVEMBER 2014

The Part II Minutes of the meeting held on 18th November 2014 were agreed as a correct record and signed by the Chairman.

50. SHARED PREMISES UPDATE PART II

Andy Parsons, Interim Head of Estates (IHE), informed SAMC Members on future opportunities for shared premises with other blue light services and public bodies.

Resolved that :

The report be noted.

51. OPTIONS FOR THE REPLACEMENT OF DEE ROAD

Andrew Vallance, the Director of Resources (DR), updated Members of SAMC on the options for the Dee Road site.

Resolved that:

The report be noted.

52. PROPERTY UPDATE – PROGRESS IN PROVIDING A FIRE STATION IN THEALE/CALCOT AREA

Andrew Vallance, the Director of Resources (DR), updated Members of SAMC on the progress in providing a Fire Station in the Theale/Calcot area.

Resolved that:

The report be noted.

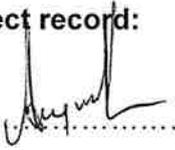
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Chairman's Initials.....

(The meeting concluded at 8.10pm)

Minutes signed by Chairman as a correct record:

Signature


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Print Name

ANGUS ROSS
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Date signed

7.7.2015
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