

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



Held on Tuesday 18 March 2014 at 6.30pm

Community Room, Station 10, Wokingham Fire Station, 11-13
Easthampstead Road, Wokingham, Berkshire, RG40 2EH

- Members:**
- * Councillor Christine Bateson
 - * Councillor Paul Bryant
 - (* present)
 - * Councillor Adrian Edwards (*Vice-Chairman*)
 - * Councillor Paul Gittings
 - Councillor Pauline Helliar-Symons
 - * Councillor Chris Maskell
 - * Councillor Tom McCann
 - * Councillor Angus Ross (*Chairman*)
 - * Councillor Emma Webster (*substitute for Councillor Pauline Helliar-Symons*)

- In Attendance:**
- Jan Chadaj (Interim Head of IT, IHIT)
 - Andy Mancey (Acting Assistant Chief Fire Officer, A/ACFO)
 - Andy Parsons (Interim Head of Estates, IHE)
 - Linda Pye (Principal Policy Officer, PPO)
 - Caroline Redzikowska (Director, Corporate Services, DCS)
 - Fayth Rowe (Committee Officer, CO)
 - Andrew Vallance (Director of Resources, DR)

Action

274. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

An apology for inability to attend the meeting was received on behalf of Councillor Pauline Helliar-Symons. Councillor Emma Webster acted as substitute for Councillor Helliar-Symons.

275. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

Councillor Christine Bateson declared a personal interest in agenda item 8 as she was a Councillor for the Royal Borough of Windsor and Maidenhead.

The Chairman and Councillor Paul Bryant both declared a personal interest in agenda items 7 and 8 as they were Members of the Sponsoring Group for the Joint Thames Valley Fire Control Service.

There were no Declarations of Interest received from Officers.

276. MINUTES OF THE MEETING HELD ON 21 JANUARY 2014 AND MATTERS ARISING

Resolved:

That the Part I Minutes of the meeting held on 21st January 2014 be approved as a true and correct record and signed by the Chairman.

Site Visit at BHQ – These visits had taken place and Members had found them to be useful. Councillor Emma Webster was disappointed that no health and safety briefing had been given to them on site. However, it was noted that a briefing had been given on the Thursday visit but not on the Saturday.

Vehicle Replacement Policy – this report had been delayed to the meeting on 15th July 2014.

A/ACFO

Mileage of Fleet Cars – the Chair of the Audit and Governance Committee was content that the Strategic Asset Management Committee should undertake the initial work on this issue.

Chairman/
ACFO

Resolved:

That a list of services/facilities based on RBFRS sites to be brought to the next meeting of the Strategic Asset Management Committee on 15th July 2014.

DR

277. PURCHASE OF LEASED VEHICLES

Andrew Vallance (DR) sought Members' views on the termination of four fire appliance leases and the purchase of the four vehicles.

The Fire Authority had been forced to lease four vehicles in 2003/2004 due to borrowing restrictions and these vehicles would come to the end of their primary lease rental periods on 31st March 2014. Although the vehicles were ten years old they had an expected useful life of up to 15 years and the Head of Transport and Engineering would therefore like to purchase the vehicles for a total sum of £39,500.

Councillor Paul Bryant asked if there were any estimates on the reliability of the vehicles. The DR stated that the Head of Transport and Engineering was confident that the vehicles still had a long term operational role and confirmed that trends and expenditure would be monitored over the five year period. It was felt that the purchase of these vehicles would demonstrate excellent value for money and due to the fact that they had experienced less wear and tear over the years their shelf life had been prolonged. Councillor Bryant queried whether the vehicles had been used during the recent floods. The A/ACFO confirmed that they would have been used heavily but only in shallow water.

Councillor Emma Webster queried where the vehicles were based. The A/ACFO responded that the Operational Support Unit would be based at Whitley Wood. He did not have the information to hand in relation to the other vehicles but he thought that they would be based in retained sites. He stated that even after the 15 year period those vehicles which had become redundant for service use would often be used to provide support to the Fire Cadets.

Resolved:

- (a) That the termination of the four appliance leases be agreed;
- (b) The purchase of all four vehicles for £39,500 be agreed.

278. IT ASSET MANAGEMENT PLAN

Jan Chadaj (IHIT) introduced the proposed IT Asset Management Plan. He reported that since last Summer there had been several strands of work in IT as

follows:

- A review of IT operational processes;
- A benchmarking of projects;
- An external audit of key processes;
- Staff leadership and mentoring;
- A review of all contracts.

The IHIT apologised for the large amount of detailed information provided in the report. Appendix A of the report set out a list of the 26 current IT contracts and the action which it was proposed to be taken. Some of the contracts listed were IT specific and some were related to the Fire Service. He referred specifically to item 6 (Trove) and advised that the contract cost should read £10,500 and not £11,572 as quoted and the Department Owner should be Corporate Services.

The CFO was in the process of changing the direction of leadership and with the need to balance budgets it was therefore considered timely to review IT generally. The authority therefore proposed to take a longer term approach to strategic planning. A review of current IT contracts, systems, processes and spending had therefore taken place in this context together with a clearer understanding of future contract requirements.

Current key infrastructure projects included network firewalls and Control Room voice systems. Many projects had been put on hold pending the delivery of the Thames Valley Fire Control Project (TVFCP), the BHQ move, the replacement of Windows XP, a PC and laptop refresh, MDT rollout and the plan to move to a more supported Firewatch application. Consideration was also being given as to how compliant the authority was and whether it was following procurement processes etc. IT contracts did not lend themselves to negotiation in the same way that other contracts did.

In terms of the future, the IHIT stated that the IT environment had now stabilised and any driver for change needed to be cost as well as functionally effective. Due to the need to relocate the Server Room and network as well as support the BHQ move, there was a strong need to reduce the risk to the IT environment caused by avoidable change over the coming year. As the TVFCP project had been delayed resources were required in that area for a longer period than originally anticipated. This delay took the authority beyond the cessation date of several contracts which would either need to be renewed or extended. The recommended action proposed against each of the contracts had been made based on a framework and the IHIT asked if there were any specific contracts which Members would like to discuss in greater detail.

Councillor Adrian Edwards referred to Item 24 Crisis Commander and he hoped that there would be no delay between the end of one contract and the start of another. The IHIT confirmed that there would be no delay and there was a reluctance to change until absolutely necessary.

Councillor Paul Bryant advised that he had been involved with the IT Strategy for West Berkshire and as a result had looked at strategies from other authorities. There were a large number of strands involved and in particular the PSN requirements which were aimed at sharing with other public sector organisations in order to reduce costs. With the close relationship to Bucks & Oxon he queried whether the authority had looked at opportunities to share resources. The DR confirmed that this was something the authority was looking at and he had a

meeting arranged with Bucks & Oxon. The IHIT confirmed that the Head of Procurement was currently looking at the framework following a review of procurement throughout the authority. There was now a need to stop and pause in order to take stock of which direction the authority wanted to go in.

Councillor Emma Webster queried what was being done to ensure the same level of service was received particularly in relation to the Capita contract. She noted that some systems and products seemed to have been bought off the shelf but with various 'add ons' which made them less user friendly. Councillor Webster asked how the authority could ensure that it got systems that people were happy with. The IHIT responded that it might be necessary to invest money in order to obtain something which was fit for purpose. This was why it was proposed to extend a large number of contracts for a year to 15 months in order to allow time to refocus. Firewatch was a good example – the brigade had been only the second in the country to take this application on and although it had changed significantly from the original core product it still did not provide full functionality. Of the 46 Fire Services in the UK, 23 were now using Firewatch but there was only one possible alternative competitor but their product was not as good in his opinion. An upgraded version of Firewatch would be available in the near future which might be more fit for purpose. One of the key issues was that people did not necessarily know how to use it properly and therefore it was proposed that a super user group would be set up across the brigade to determine what functionality was required and to train users.

Councillor Tom McCann felt that it would be essential to think strategically about where the authority wanted to be in 5-10 years time and to determine how Members could develop a strategy. The current report was about where the authority was now and it would be interesting to see what other fire authorities were doing. The Chairman responded that the report was a necessary starting point but it would be necessary to move away from a plan towards a strategy and there would be some things which were of a greater priority. He therefore felt that it would be useful to have a further column in the list of contracts around risk.

Councillor Chris Gittings was of the view that people just wanted IT systems to work and that it was essential to have evidence of staff training. What was frightening was the vast array of contracts which were required to run the service and he asked whether it would be possible to consolidate some of the contracts so that there were fewer suppliers. He felt that a strategy was required in respect of staff training and the ease of access to information by staff and members of the public. It should also include the possibility of sharing services with other authorities.

The IHIT advised that the Fire Authority was different from other organisations. IT consisted of two core elements – there was a requirement to be connected and have an interface and a means of producing information was also required. What differentiated the Fire Service was the need to have a system which allowed it to carry out the day to day businesses. An organisation could make savings by sharing with other organisations where they had common services e.g. telephony, wages etc.

The DCS confirmed that the Firewatch system was complicated and she likened it to a spider at the centre of a web as it fed into a number of other systems. There were no super users amongst the non-uniformed and uniformed staff but they were able to use it for specific purposes.

The Committee asked if the IHIT could come back to the next meeting of SAMC with a report which covered opportunities for sharing with other organisations and a proposed IT Strategy going forward which would include timescales.

Resolved:

- (a) That the proposed plan be approved;
- (b) That the Interim Head of IT should bring a report back to the next meeting of the Strategic Asset Management Committee setting out opportunities for sharing with other organisations and a proposed IT Strategy going forward.

IHIT

279. DRAFT STRATEGIC ASSET MANAGEMENT COMMITTEE ANNUAL REPORT

Councillor Angus Ross presented the draft Annual Report of the Strategic Asset Management Committee (SAMC). SAMC had continued to ensure that the strategic overview of the authority's Capital Programme was managed effectively and assisted Officers with the delivery of the authority's Capital Programme in relation to premises, transport and information technology.

Councillor Adrian Edwards asked if the contribution to this Committee made by Paul Southern, ACFO, could be referred to in the report. The Chairman confirmed that he would amend the report accordingly and would also make reference to the Head of Estates.

AR

Resolved:

The report was noted and would be amended to take account of the comments made above.

280. THEALE CROSS BRIGADE HEADQUARTERS – GENERATOR ISSUES

(Councillors Angus Ross and Paul Bryant declared a personal interest in Agenda item 8 by virtue of the fact that they were Members of the Sponsoring Group for the Joint Thames Valley Fire Control Service. As their interest was personal and not prejudicial or a disclosable pecuniary interest they determined to take part in the debate).

Andrew Vallance, Director of Resources (DR), outlined to Members the reasons why there was a need to increase the capacity of the generators to be provided in relation to the new BHQ and to obtain agreement to the allocation of funding in that respect.

The original Design and Build proposal for Theale Cross had been tendered on the basis of the existing 135KA generator transferring from the Dee Road site to Theale Cross, and with a new mobile 80KVA generator being acquired as a backup to the primary generator. There would be a facility to plug in the mobile 80KVA generator if required and would only be used in the event of failure of the primary generator.

As the design had evolved and been completed it had become apparent that the generator specification contained within the building contract was not sufficient to support the new building and Control requirements and a generator with the capacity of at least 350KVA was required. The electrical infrastructure within the building would also need to be able to support this size of generator and the

requisite infrastructure to support either a 350KVA or 500KVA had already been installed as this needed to progress as the build project proceeded. The estimated cost of a 500KVA generator was approximately £100,000. A 350KVA generator would support Control and critical systems but it would not run the whole of the new headquarters. If the capacity of the generator was increased to 500KVA then the authority would have a facility which would maintain the whole of the headquarters in the event of a mains failure.

As mentioned previously the overall budget estimate for the procurement of the generator and completion of associated works was a maximum of £100,000 but it was hoped that the final figure would be less. This would be dependent upon the final option adopted and whether it was possible to procure a reconditioned primary generator. It was proposed that the final decisions in that respect should be delegated to the CFO in consultation with the Chairman and Vice-Chairman of this Committee.

Councillor Angus Ross asked when that decision needed to be made by. DR confirmed that there was no immediate issue as all the enabling work was being carried out.

In answer to a question about whether the generator would be noisy, DR responded that the generator would be located at the rear of the premises and would be in an industrial area and therefore the impact of noise would be minimal. Andy Mancey, A/ACFO, confirmed that the current generator at Dee Road had only been required a few times and therefore the generator would not be running all the time. Making a decision sooner rather than later would mean that should a power failure happen then the headquarters would be fully covered.

Councillor Tom McCann noted that the 500KVA generator would provide cover the whole of the new headquarters and he therefore suggested that it would make sense for the Committee to make a decision that evening to procure a 500KVA generator rather than a 350KVA as the cost difference would be minimal. This was agreed by the Committee and an amendment to the recommendation was also requested to make it clear that the additional funding required should be taken from the development fund.

Resolved:

- (a) That the report be noted;
- (b) That it be recommended to the Fire Authority the provision of additional funding from the **development fund** to accommodate the increased generator requirements as detailed herein up to a maximum £100,000, with the decision on the final option to be adopted and the detailed spend being delegated to the Chief Fire Officer in consultation with the Chairman and vice-Chairman of this Committee; and
- (c) That the capacity for the 500KVA generator be agreed.

281. PROPERTY UPDATE

(Councillors Angus Ross and Paul Bryant declared a personal interest in Agenda item 8 by virtue of the fact that they were Members of the Sponsoring Group for the Joint Thames Valley Fire Control Service. As their interest was personal and not prejudicial or a disclosable pecuniary interest they determined to take part in

the strategic direction of that site going forward would be set in other meetings.

Wokingham Fire Station:

The DCS confirmed that negotiations had been ongoing with the contractor and the number of points in dispute had been narrowed down considerably. However, agreement could not be reached on liability for the major issues in relation to the floors. A final meeting with the original contractor had therefore been arranged to discuss the next steps where either agreement would be reached or the authority would move forward to adjudication. The Fire Authority's consultants were in the process of finalising the preparation of a costed remediation specification which would include the costs of decanting out of the Fire Station and re-establishing a base for a short time in the old Wokingham Fire Station building.

DCS

The Chairman asked if Members of the Committee could be kept informed of the outcome of the meeting with the contractor.

New Windsor Fire Station at Tinkers Lane:

The contractor's proposal still included a number of provisional sums and detailed specification in relation to some items was still awaited. The contractor had progressed the design of the sprinkler system but sight of the specification was still awaited. The Council had now submitted a revised detailed planning application.

The A/ACFO made reference to an accident in Norfolk where a fire station had been lost as a result of a fire. The building had not been fitted with a sprinkler system and this was a good example to reinforce the importance of installing sprinkler systems.

Disposal of Existing Windsor Fire Station – St. Marks Road:

It was reported that adverts would be placed in property magazines on 22nd and 27th March for the sale of the site on the open market. Councillor Christine Bateson confirmed that consultation on the proposal for the future use of the site would be completed on 31st March 2014 and she would prefer to wait until after that date before the site was formally placed on the market. The A/AFCO confirmed that advertisement of the site could be put back a week or so as requested by Councillor Bateson.

Rating:

Appeals against the 2010 Rating Revaluation had been undertaken and seven station assessments had been settled and would result in an initial gross refund of around £34,000. The Valuation Officer had also agreed to reduce the assessment on Theale Cross down to zero, effective from 8th July 2013 for the period of construction. This would lead to a gross refund in the order of £96,000.

Full information had now been provided by the authority's assessor in relation to new assessments of Tinkers Lane and Theale Cross and he had also been fully briefed in respect of a rates mitigation strategy for Dee Road and the existing Windsor Fire Station which would ensure that the authority was able to mitigate any rates liability during any periods when part or parts of the property were held vacant.

The Chairman thanked Officers for this excellent piece of work.

the debate).

(Councillor Christine Bateson declared a personal interest in Agenda item 8 by virtue of the fact that she was a Member of the Royal Borough of Windsor and Maidenhead. As her interest was personal and not prejudicial or a disclosable pecuniary interest she determined to take part in the debate).

Andrew Vallance, Director of Resources (DR), updated the Committee on progress in relation to a variety of property related projects as set out below.

New Brigade Headquarters – Theale Cross:

The current contractual completion date for the new BHQ was 18th April 2014. However, this date was unlikely to be achieved and discussions were ongoing with the contractor with a view to their producing a revised programme to include instructed variations, and their submitting a formal application for an extension of time. It had initially been proposed to extend the contractual completion date to 19th May 2014 but it was hoped that this could be extended to 30th May 2014 to ensure that the quality of work was maintained to a high standard. If that revised date was not achieved then consideration could be given to seeking liquidated damages for non-compliance. The DR confirmed that all works would be undertaken within the budget envelope and the extension of time would allow the contractor to complete the works to the correct standard. All projects tended to slip and he felt that the situation was controllable.

The Chairman had anticipated that the date would slip to June and therefore he was content with the 30th May 2014. In response to a query the IHE confirmed that retention had been set at 5% of the contract sum which he felt was an adequate amount.

Councillor Tom McCann stated that prior to agreeing to an extension of time the authority should obtain a written statement that the delay could not be used as an argument if the authority should consequently need to seek liquidated damages. The DR confirmed that once agreed the professional advisers would seek a formal extension of time and provided instructions went out in the forthcoming week then the date of 30th May 2014 should be achievable.

In response to a query it was confirmed that the generator issue would be resolved outside of the proposed timescale above.

Site Search for Dee Road Fire Station Relocation:

The HUB consultancy had been commissioned to refresh the site search in respect of the above. Their draft report had been received at the end of February and was now being reviewed. It was noted that the number of sites were limited and consideration was being given as to which ones could be taken forward as a possibility. This would then inform the discussion as to what could be done with the Dee Road site.

Councillor Emma Webster stated that sites where it was felt that planning permission would not be forthcoming should not be discounted as even if the site would not be compliant with policy this could be waived if the community benefit outweighed any harm.

A meeting had been arranged for 7th April 2014 to progress this issue and an update would be provided at the next Fire Authority meeting.

Dee Road was in the middle of a community which lacked facilities e.g. health and

Resolved:

- (a) The report was noted.
- (b) The DCS to keep Members of the Committee informed of the outcome of the meeting with the contractor in relation to liability for works at Wokingham Fire Station.
- (c) The advert for sale of the existing Windsor Fire Station be delayed until after the end of March 2014.

282. 2013/14 CAPITAL PROGRAMME

Andrew Vallance, Director of Resources (DR), presented a report which informed the Strategic Asset Management Committee of capital expenditure against budgets for 2013/14.

The main expenditure in the Capital Programme had been in relation to the refurbishment of the new HQ. The refurbishment budget for the new headquarters included an approved contingency of £225,000 of which £90,557 had been allocated to cover changes in specification and these had been highlighted in Appendix B.

The original budget for a new drill tower at Slough Fire Station was now insufficient in that it only covered the cost of demolishing the existing tower. A budget bid of £100,000 had therefore been approved as part of the 2014/15 budget to cover the costs of building a new tower.

Resolved:

That the report be noted.

283. REALISING THE BENEFITS OF MOVING TO THE NEW BHQ - UPDATE

Andrew Vallance, Director of Resources (DR), reported on behalf of the CFO, that four Staff Engagement Forums had been set up. Two would take place on 25th March 2014 and two on 8th April 2014. All staff would be invited to talk through the benefits of the move to the new BHQ and a report would be brought back to the next meeting to provide feedback from the Forums.

Councillor Angus Ross reiterated that this was a one-off opportunity for the authority to set a new culture and way of working and he had been assured that this was being built in. He hoped that at the next meeting a detailed programme for the move could be provided.

Resolved:

- (a) That the report be noted.
- (b) The Chairman requested that a detailed programme of the move to the new BHQ would be provided for the next meeting of the Strategic Asset Management Committee on 15th July 2014.

DR

284. DATE OF NEXT MEETING

Tuesday 15th July 2014 at 5.30pm. Venue to be confirmed.

285. EXCLUSION OF THE PUBLIC

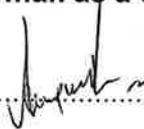
That under Section 100(A)(4) of the Local Government Act 1972 (as amended), the public be excluded from the meeting for the following Agenda Items on the grounds that they involve the likely disclosure of exempt information, as defined in the Paragraph 1, 2 and 3 of Part I of Schedule 12A of the said 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.

286. PART II MINUTES OF THE MEETING HELD ON 21 JANUARY 2014

That the Part II Minutes of the meeting held on 21st January 2014 be approved as a true and correct record and signed by the Chairman.

The meeting concluded at 8.20pm

Minutes signed by Chairman as a correct record:

Signature 

Print Name *A. J. Ross*

Date signed *22.7.14*