

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



Held on Tuesday 21 January 2014 at 6.30 pm

**At: Strategic Command Centre, Brigade Headquarters, Dee Road,  
Reading, Berkshire RG30 4FS**

Members:

- Councillor Christine Bateson
- \*Councillor Paul Bryant
- \*Councillor Adrian Edwards (Vice Chairman)
- \*Councillor Paul Gittings
- \*Councillor Pauline Helliar-Symons (part meeting)
- \*Councillor Chris Maskell
- \*Councillor Tom McCann
- \*Councillor Angus Ross (Chairman)

*\*present*

In attendance:

- Andy Mancey (Acting Assistant Chief Fire Officer, A/ACFO)
- Caroline Redzikowska (Director, Corporate Services, DCS)
- Fayth Rowe (Committee Officer, CO)
- Paul Southern (Assistant Chief Fire Officer, ACFO)
- Steve Sprason (Interim Head of Estates, IHE)
- Andrew Vallance (Director of Resources, DR)

**Action**

### **261. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE**

Apologies were received from Cllr Christine Bateson.

The Committee agreed to bring forward Part II agenda items 11 and 12 into Part I of the agenda.

### **262. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST**

The Chairman and Cllr Paul Bryant each declared a non pecuniary interest as Members of the Sponsoring Group for the Joint Thames Valley Fire Control Service.

There were no Declarations of Interest received from Officers.

### **263. MINUTES OF THE MEETING HELD ON 15 OCTOBER 2013**

#### **Resolved:**

That the part I minutes of the meeting held on 15 October 2013 be agreed as a correct record and signed by the Chairman.

### **264. UPDATE ON WORKS AT THE NEW BHQ**

The Interim Head of Estates (IHE), Steve Sprason, introduced this item and took the Committee through recent images of the progress of the works at the new BHQ. Further to his report to the Fire Authority on 11 December 2013, he reported that the mechanical and electrical design of the project was now in progress.

The IHE reported that works to the roof had been completed and the general

works had made good progress. He stated that an Internal Project Group had been established and had started to plan the move from Dee Road. He added that the move had been planned to be held over two successive weekends in June 2014. Procurement for office furniture had been made and to date, £1.5 million had been spent on the overall works and an additional payment of £300,000 was about to be made.

In answer to Member's questions he advised the following:

- The works had been to budget
- The contractor had suggested that the timeline for the works to be completed was mid May 2014.
- The contractor would face damages if slippages occurred in the completion of works

In response to a question from Cllr Tom McCann, the IHE stated that he would provide a more detailed written update at future meetings.

IHE

The Chairman stated the IHE had not been involved in the project in the early stages and his expertise since his arrival had been helpful. He added that he too was keen for the building to be opened expeditiously, however there was a balance to get it right.

The Assistant Chief Fire Officer (ACFO) provided a brief background on RBFA Members' decision to receive verbal updates at each SAMC, MC and FA meetings. He advised that verbal updates on works were aimed to enable officers to give the most up-to-date information on the project.

IHE reported that a realistic time scale for the completed works was mid May.

The Director of Corporate Services (DCS) advised that there was a difference between partial completion e.g. the completion of the works, and the date that staff would be able to occupy the building.

The Chairman suggested providing to the next meeting a broad timescale to include the date of practical completion and the date that people and furniture would be able to occupy the building.

IHE

Cllr Paul Gittings commented that the original completion date was ambitious and stated that he was uncomfortable with the delay in the Thames Valley Fire Control Service (TVFCS). He further stated that it was critical to get Control into the building in relation to Control staff and asked for more detailed information on future BHQ updates. In addition, Cllr Gittings requested that the project kept to the agreed timescales as much as possible.

In referring to the official opening of the building, the Chairman stated that this would not be held until it was fully functional. He added that the Chairman of the Fire Authority and the Chief Fire Officer (CFO) had suggested that going forward the building is to be referred to as BHQ, Pincents Lane, Calcot. The Chairman also stated that the CFO had discussed the idea of running a competition with a local primary school in Calcot to look at naming the building, which would occur at the official opening ceremony..

In response to Cllr Paul Bryant, the Acting Assistant Chief Fire Officer (A/ACFO) reported that not all headquarters had an official name.

Cllr Pauline Helliard-Symons commented that the final decision of the official name of the building would be made by RBFA.



IHE

The Chairman confirmed with IHE that two dates for RBFA Members to attend a site visit at BHQ, Pincet Lane would be suggested and in addition, he requested for a Saturday morning slot to be arranged.

In answer to a question from Cllr Paul Bryant, the IHE reported that to date, he was not aware of the energy rating of the building, however; the insulation between the old and new roof should improve energy efficiency.

**Resolved:**

That the verbal update be noted.

**265. 2014 TRANSPORT FLEET PROFILE**

The A/ACFO introduced the report and outlined the profile of the Service fleet of appliances, special appliances and support vehicles. In response to Cllr Pauline Helliar-Symons, the A/ACFO reported that all cars were owned by the Service and some of the frontline fleet were leased vehicles, as outlined in Appendix A.

The Director of Resources (DR) explained that frontline vehicles that had been leased were leased due to a restriction on capital funding during the first six years of the Fire Authority. However, the Fire Authority can now borrow as much as it felt was prudent.

Cllr Paul Bryant commented on the number of Service cars that were of various makes and models and queried whether savings could be made by using one supplier.

The ACFO reported that a joint approach had been made two –three years ago with FRSS in the South East and Police Service. A preferred supplier had been identified; however it had been found that the return in savings was low. He advised that it had been found that better savings could be made by using an alternative process.

Cllr Paul Gittings queried how essential were the number of vehicles to the Service and queried the carbon footprint they were causing. He asked whether electric cars had been considered and whether RBFRS could rationalise its fleet.

The Chairman asked how RBFRS determined whether a vehicle was still required as the size of the establishment had reduced and whether there was a Policy on this.

In response, the A/ACFO advised that the use of the vehicles could be justified and gave an example by reporting that the establishment of the additional posts for the Retained Support Unit all required a vehicle to carry out their role. In addition, he advised that it was cheaper for the Service to own its vehicles, rather than reimburse individual mileage. People carriers were required to relieve crews from incidents. He reported that Landrovers had been used in recent floods; however, there was a possibility that they may not be used again throughout the year.

Cllr Tom McCann asked for the mileage of the vehicles to be recorded and reported in a years time, as he stated that he was interested in the vehicles that were not used.

The ACFO provided an example where some vehicles used more fuel consumption than the mileage suggested as they were used as generators to pump a Fire Engine.

The Chairman stated that he would liaise with the Chairman of the Audit and

Governance Committee (A&GC) to request that A&GC receive a report on the mileage of fleet cars.

Cllr Chris Maskell stated that it was essential the Service had a fleet that was fit for purpose and urged caution on how this was approached.

The ACFO reported that SAMC's Terms of Reference considered all fleet and the procurement of vehicles would be brought to this committee. He further advised that a review would be held on the officers' car scheme in 2014/15.

The Chairman moved an amended recommendation **for a report on the vehicle replacement policy to be brought to a future meeting, and that he would liaise with the Chairman of the A&GC, Cllr Iain McCracken to request that A&GC receive a report on the mileage of fleet cars.**

It was unanimously

### Resolved

- a) That the verbal update be noted.
- b) **That a report on the vehicle replacement policy is brought to a future meeting; and**
- c) **That the Chairman would liaise with the Chairman of the Audit and Governance Committee (A&GC) to request that A&GC receive a report on the mileage of fleet cars.**

A/ACFO

Chairman  
/ACFO

## 266. REALISING THE BENEFITS OF MOVING TO THE NEW BHQ

The Chairman stated that the CFO had asserted that the move to the new BHQ would provide staff with an opportunity to change the concept and culture of the organisation and had asked Members to consider the strategic outcomes listed in paragraph 3.2 of the report.

The DR reported that the CFO had brought new ideas from Suffolk which had been tested in a larger organisation. He added that some of these ideas would be explored in greater detail at the Members Planning Workshop now on Thursday 6 February 2014. In addition, the DR discussed some of the opportunities and benefits a new BHQ had brought to some local authorities.

The following comments were received from Members:

- Suggestion for the use of hot desking to be researched
- Suggestion to seek advice from external consultants on the good use of space and light
- The county should be proud of a new BHQ that was equipped for the 21<sup>st</sup> century.
- Keen to see the involvement of non-uniformed staff in relation to paragraph 3.2c in the report and how this was going to be implemented

The Chairman made an amendment to the recommendations in the report and requested **for an update from the CFO at the next meeting in March 2014.**

**Resolved:**

- a) That the outcomes suggested in paragraph 3.2 be considered
- b) That the agreed outcomes be recommended to the Management Committee for its further discussion and approval;
- c) That officers develop measures for each of the outcomes be Agreed; and
- d) **That an update be received from the CFO at the next meeting in March 2014.**

CFO

**267. PROPERTY UPDATE**

The IHE introduced the report and advised that work had been commissioned to undertake a refresh of the site search for Station 21. The Service had commissioned a site search in December 2011 and had been unable to locate a suitable site due to cost, planning and other limitations.

The Chairman stated that he felt that it was essential that a site refresh was held as soon as possible in order for the decision to be made on the disposal of part or all of the Dee Road site.

Cllr Chris Maskell felt it would be useful to find out the cost to annex a section of land on the current Dee Road site. The DR reported that he had held discussions with the Dee Road site developer.

The ACFO reported that the commission would refresh the site search by looking at the previous sites that had been previously identified.

The Chairman requested preparation of a list of services / facilities based on RBFRS sites e.g. Occupation Health at Station 1 and Driving / Training School at Station 20.

DR

The Chairman moved an amended recommendation to the report **for a discussion to be held with the Chairman of the Fire Authority, Cllr Colin Dudley on the operational requirements of RBFA, and for a date for this to be agreed.**

**Resolved.**

- a) That the report be noted.
- b) **That a meeting is held with the Chairman of RBFA, Cllr Colin Dudley to discuss the operational requirements of RBFA, and for a date for this to be agreed.**

A/ACFO

**268. 2013/14 CAPITAL PROGRAMME**

The DR reported that the largest capital expenditure was on BHQ, Pincents Lane at £1.5 million to date. He advised that this figure would increase, however it was in budget.

In answer to the Chairman, the IHE reported that the Drill Tower in Slough had to be dismantled by hand. He reported that he had asked Service Delivery whether a Drill Tower was required and it had been deemed necessary for the delivery of essential training. He added that subject to the Fire Authority approval of the capital programme, the works on the Drill Tower in Slough would be tendered as

the current Tower was structurally unsafe.

In response to concerns raised by Cllr Chris Maskell, the IHE advised that it was difficult to find the basis of the original estimate to replace the Drill Tower at £99,000. The A/ACFO reported that the original cost had been based on the purchase of a metal tower and would not cover the costs of demolishing the existing tower.

The DCS explained that the original estimate to replace the Drill Tower did not cover demolition which was site specific, due to the proximity of the building to an access road and a residential block of flats.

In referring to changes to the original tender specification for the new BHQ listed in Appendix B, Cllr Pauline Helliar-Symons raised a concern about the increase of costs Members were asked to approve and stated that she thought the original tender was a static figure.

The Chairman reassured the Committee that there was nothing new to the figures from when last considered and echoed the sentiment that he did not want to see an increase in the figures.

In response to Cllr Tom McCann's question on what additional Head Office costs officers envisaged would be brought to Members for consideration in the future, the ACFO explained that the design and build of the project was not specified in the tender. He reported that SAMC and MC had agreed to spend the maximum of £200,000 on improvements. In addition, he reported that discussions were being held with the contractors on a secondary generator specification for the Control Room to give resilience, which would be brought to Members for consideration at a later date.

Members expressed their added concern that the secondary generator specification should have been included in the original budget figure.

The Chairman stated that the issue of a second generator would be raised at the next TVFCS Programme Sponsoring Group. Cllr Tom McCann commented that the decision for a second generator should be made in partnership with TVFCS.

*Cllr Pauline Helliar-Symons left at this point of the meeting.*

**Resolved:**

That the report be noted.

**269. DATE OF THE NEXT MEETING**

Tuesday 18 March 2014 at 6.30pm in the Community Room, Wokingham Fire Station (Station 10).

A site visit to Wargrave Fire Station would be held at 5.30 pm and a lift to transport Members to and from the site visit would be arranged.

**270. 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.

**271. PART II MINUTES OF THE MEETING HELD ON 15 OCTOBER 2013**

**Resolved:**

That the Part II Minutes of the meeting held on 15 October 2013 be Approved for signing by the Chairman.

**272. PART II – UPDATE ON WORKS AT NEW BHQ**

The IHE provided a detailed update on the works at the new BHQ. He advised that the report had sought Member approval to increase the supervision of the building contact, and the payment of additional fees incurred by the professional property services company.

**Resolved:**

That the recommendations in the report be approved.

**273. NEW WINDSOR FIRE STATION, TINKERS LANE**

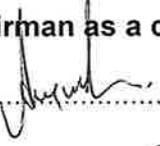
The IHE introduced the report and provided an update on the progress of the provision of the new Fire Station at Tinkers Lane.

**Resolved:**

That the report be noted.

The meeting finished at 9.00 pm.

**Minutes signed by Chairman as a correct record:**

Signature .....

Print Name ..... *A. J. Ross*

Date signed ..... *18.3.2014*

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