

MINUTES OF THE MEETING OF THE MANAGEMENT COMMITTEE



Held on Tuesday, 11th October, 2022 at 6.30 pm

Lynda Kenyon Suite, RBFRS Headquarters, Newsham Court,
Pincents Kiln, Calcot, Reading RG31 7SD,

Members: (*present)

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| * Councillor Christine Bateson | * Councillor Tony Linden |
| * Councillor Dennis Benneyworth | * Councillor Jo Lovelock |
| * Councillor Jeff Brooks | * Councillor Dave McElroy |
| * Councillor Colin Dudley | * Councillor Dexter Smith |
| * Councillor Paul Gittings | * Councillor Rachelle Shepherd-DuBey |
| * Councillor Pauline Helliarsymons | * Councillor Simon Werner |
| * Councillor David Cannon | |

In Attendance: Mark Arkwell (Deputy Chief Fire Officer, DCFO)
Graham Britten (Monitoring Officer, MO)
Paul Bremble (Head of Corporate Services, HCS)
Conor Byrne (Head of Finance and Procurement, HF&P)
Doug Buchanan (Area Manager, Response and Resilience, AM R&R)
Abdifatar Hassan (Democratic Support Assistant, DSA)
Becci Jefferies (Head of Human Resources and Learning and Development, HHR&L&D)
Andrew Mclenahan (Head of Facilities, Fleet and Equipment, HFF&E)
Katie Mills (Assistant Chief Fire Officer, ACFO)
Jim Powell, (Area Manager, Collaboration and Policy, AM C&P)
Nikki Richards (Deputy Chief Executive, Dep ChEx)
Fayth Rowe (Democratic Support Lead, DSL)
Tregear Thomas (Area Manager, Prevention and Protection, AM P&P)
Tony Vincent (Head of Business and Information Systems, HBIS)

19. REPRESENTATIVE BODIES

There were no questions received from Representative Bodies on any of the agenda items.

20. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Apologies of absence were received from Councillors Dennis Benneyworth, Jo

Action

Lovelock and Dexter Smith.

Councillors Christine Bateson and Tony Linden were in attendance as substitutes for Councillors Benneyworth and Smith.

21. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

There were no Declarations of Interest from Members in accordance with the provisions of the Fire Authority's Local Code of Conduct.

There were no Declarations of Interest received from Officers.

22. MINUTES OF THE MEETING HELD ON 30 JUNE AND 18 JULY 2022

There were no recorded actions in the Minutes.

RESOLVED that the Minutes of the meeting held on 30 June and 18 July 2022 be approved as a true and correct record, to be signed by the Chair.

23. RECEIPT OF ANNOUNCEMENTS

The Chair made the following announcements.

Rowe Court Fire

- Following an investigation by the Thames Valley Police Major Crime Unit, a man has been jailed for life for murder, arson and Grievous Bodily Harm, after he set fire to a block of flats in Rowe Court, Reading.
- Hakeem Kigundu, aged 32, formerly of Rowe Court, Reading, was sentenced to a whole life order with no minimum term at Reading Crown Court over a two day hearing, which concluded on Friday, 7 October.
- On 15 December 2021, Kigundu deliberately started a fire at a block of flats in Rowe Court, Reading, where he had been a resident. The fire spread, causing major damage to the building, and trapping residents inside. Tragically, two of the residents, Richard Burgess, aged 46, and Neil Morris, aged 45, were killed.
- A multi-agency response was required at the scene, coordinated through the Thames Valley Local Resilience Forum (TVLRF), with many RBFRS departments playing a vital role in the immediate response, recovery and post incident phases. Following the incident, our staff worked with the West Midlands Fire Investigation Team to present evidence to support the case. Thank you to all involved in supporting our response to this challenging incident.

Passing of Her Late Majesty the Queen and proclamation of King Charles III

- I was, as I'm sure everyone across Royal Berkshire Fire and Rescue

Service was, saddened to hear of the passing of Her Late Majesty The Queen on Thursday, 8 September 2022.

- Following the announcement of the death of Her Majesty, the Service supported 'Operation London Bridge', the name given to the funeral plan. I appreciate the incredible efforts made by our staff and partners to ensure that this operation was appropriately supported and that the normal high level of operational response was maintained. Thank you to everyone who supported this effort.
- With the Proclamation of King Charles III, I, as I'm sure all Members here, would like to wish King Charles III well as he begins his reign. Long live the King.

Ministerial Appointment – Jeremy Quin MP

- Prime Minister Liz Truss has appointed Jeremy Quin MP as the Minister of State for Fire, Policing and Tackling Crime.
- I'm sure members will join me in welcoming Jeremy to his new post and look forward to working with him in the future.

Chairman's Internship

- In August, 10 interns joined different teams from across the Service as part of the Chairman's Internship Scheme.
- The scheme was a first of its kind for the Service and offered the interns opportunities to develop their workplace skills and gain experience working in teams from across Royal Berkshire Fire and Rescue Service.
- At the end of the five weeks, interns were presented with certificates at an event to celebrate the completion of their internships. It was great to be a part of the celebration and to hear first-hand the positive experiences each of the interns had during their time at Royal Berkshire Fire and Rescue Service.
- The Chair expressed his thanks to both the Interns and the Project Team behind the internship who've worked so hard over the past year to deliver the scheme. Without their hard work and dedication, none of this would've been possible.

Community Engagement

- Over the past few months, the Service has been delivering valuable community engagement work across Berkshire.
- Both Newbury and Whitley Wood Fire Stations have hosted open days in recent weeks, attracting hundreds of visitors and helping us to reconnect with our communities following the COVID-19 pandemic.
- These events provided an excellent opportunity to share prevention, recruitment and other important messaging as well as offering a family friendly day out for guests.
- We were also proud to once again show our support for the LGBTQ+ community at Reading Pride. A crew from Caversham Road Fire Station joined other staff from across the Service at Kings Meadow to join in this year's celebrations

- Thank you to everyone who was involved in preparing and supporting these invaluable community engagement projects.

Service of Remembrance

- On Sunday, 4 September, we joined the Firefighters Memorial Trust's Service of Remembrance at Holy Sepulchre Church, London.
- We were pleased to join fire and rescue services from across the country in recognition of the commitment and dedication of firefighters across the United Kingdom. After a short church service, standard bearers and guests proceeded to the memorial for a wreath-laying ceremony.
- On 9 September, staff across the Service also paused to remember all those who tragically lost their lives, including 343 firefighters, in the terror attacks on the World Trade Centre in New York in 2001.
- It is very important that we continue to remember all those who have made the ultimate sacrifice in the line of duty.

24. ISSUES ARISING FROM THE AUDIT AND GOVERNANCE COMMITTEE

There were no issues arising from the Audit and Governance Committee.

25. RECOMMENDATION OF COMMITTEES

It was noted agenda Item 8 was recommended from Thames Valley Fire Control Service (TVFCS) Joint Committee on 11 July 2022.

26. THAMES VALLEY FIRE CONTROL SERVICE (TVFCS) SYSTEM CONTRACTS AND HARDWARE REFRESH

Jim Powell, Area Manager Collaboration and Policy (AM C&P), informed Management Committee, the report was a recommendation from Thames Valley Control Service (TVFCS) Joint Committee held on 11 July, attended by Councillor Werner, and Councillor Malvern, as Councillor Lovelock's substitute.

He explained the report had been scrutinised by TVFCS Joint Committee, and subsequently presented to each Fire Authority and Oxfordshire County Council. TVFCS has two key systems, 'Vision 4' mobilising system contract and Integrated Communications Control System (ICCS) which was a radio system. The recommendation was seeking Members to agree the alignment and extension of both contracts for five years, and for Members to note the hardware refresh for the Vision System will be taken from capital expenditure 22/23 Renewals Account.

Jim stated a tendering exercise will need to be held for a new system to go live in 2030 and the current contract could be extended for two years to align to this date.

In response to a question from the Chair, Jim reported each Thames Valley Fire and Rescue Service (Royal Berkshire, Buckinghamshire and Oxfordshire) contribute £50,000 per year.

Councillor Linden asked post 2030, would TVFCS consider looking at whether there was hardware relevant to other blue light partners? Jim reported TVFCS were planning a two – three year project commencing in 2025 which will look at expanding the Service to Thames Valley Police (TVP) and South Central Ambulance Service (SCAS). He stated, TVP and SCAS currently has not expressed an appetite, however this will be looked at again.

In answer to a question from the Chair, Jim reported there was a nominated project Lead that would ensure the transition of software upgrades were administered quickly, as well as there was a secondary Control Room.

The Chair moved the recommendation which was seconded by Councillor Cannon.

RESOLVED that:

- 1) To extend the Vision mobilising system maintenance and support contract for five years, from 10 April 2023 to 10 April 2028, authorising Oxfordshire County Council as lead Authority to undertake this extension, be agreed;
- 2) The use of the annual profiled capital expenditure for 22/23 from the Renewals account to deliver the hardware refresh for the Vision system, be noted; and
- 3) To tender for a five year maintenance and support contract, for the ICCS DS3000 from 10 April 2023 to 10 April 2028 (with options to extend for two years), be agreed.

27. 2022/23 BUDGET MONITORING - QUARTER ONE

Conor Byrne, Head of Finance and Procurement (HF&P), reported the forecast outturn for 2022/23 shown in Appendix A, anticipated a deficit of £618,000 to be funded from reserves.

Staff budgets were under pressure, with overtime forecast to be £274,000 over budget. There were a number of factors, including the need to cover sickness absences, annual leave and training. Additional overtime costs have partly been offset due to a different mix of station staff in development and competent roles.

He stated the latest Green Book pay award for 2022/23 that had been offered by the employers' side equates to an additional budget pressure of £218,000. This has been built into quarter one forecast, and will be mitigated by a number of vacancies that have not been filled.

The potential impact of the pay negotiations for Grey Book had not been built

into this forecast as the offer made by the Employers' side was 2% and the budget had been set with salary increases of 2.5%. The subsequent 5% offer that has been made, if accepted would add a pressure of £500,000 to the budget. This would take the deficit to be over £900,000.

In referring to the *Utilities* line, through hedging, our energy contractor had managed to mitigate market extremes.

He reported the External Auditors were seeking an increase of Audit fees by 90% which was against a backdrop of dysfunction in the local government Audit market.

He reported a reduction in Section 31 Grant income (business rates payments).

However, against the above pressures, the final appeal on business rates charges (Dee Road Fire Station) had been successful and resulted in a net refund of £109,000.

In referring to paragraph 3.15 of the report (*Investment Interest*), Conor reported due to recent interest rate rises, it was anticipated that yields from invested sums should generate additional income this year of £61,000.

In summary, the Authority need to make immediate savings to reduce the deficit, and has imposed a recruitment freeze, in response to the budget pressure of pay wards and rising utility costs.

In response to a question from Councillor Bateson, Conor reported the National Chief's Council (NFCC) were co-ordinating responses in relation to pay negotiations. In terms of revenue budgets, other Fire Authorities may be in a better position.

Councillor Linden asked whether £618,000 deficit would be taken from reserves to balance the budget, and what mitigating measures was the Authority looking at? Conor reported he had met with Budget and Income Generation Lead Member, Councillor Brooks regarding next year's budget setting.

In response to Councillor Shepherd-DuBey, Conor stated the reserves amongst various Fire Authorities were very different. Royal Berkshire was the fourth lowest precept in the County, therefore the continual lobbying of central government to allow us to increase the precept is essential.

Councillor Gittings referred to discussions he had at a recent Chief and Chair's meeting and acknowledged the 5% Pay Award offer would be an enormous stretch for the Authority. He was also grateful for the recent support provided on utility and energy costs to off-set the increase in the market. Conor reported of a meeting he had with energy provider who advised due to recent hedging, the Authority may not have exceeded price caps. The Chair stated that businesses were not previously subject to a price caps.

Councillor Brooks stated the pressures outlined in the quarter one report were

outside the Authority's control. He added, what was in the Authority's control was overtime costs, the recruitment freeze and salary's within support services. The Senior Leadership Team (SLT) were going through a series of saving options for consideration. In referring to the Transition Fund, he stated, he was keen on looking at ways of working that gave the Authority payback (Invest to save).

The Chair stated he was pleased to hear the efforts that were being made to balance the budget.

RESOLVED that the report be noted.

28. APPLIANCE AVAILABILITY BY CREWING TO MEET CORPORATE MEASURES 16 AND 17

Doug Buchanan, Area Manager Response and Resilience (AM R&R), reported the Fire Authority changed the corporate measure definition for Wholetime availability when they agreed the Annual Plan. Quarter one Wholetime Availability was 97.6% against a target of 99%. He stated there would always be an occasion when an appliance was off the run.

The pressures were due to sickness levels, pre-arranged overtime (PAOT) and a growing number of staff that were in development. He stated the Service had a lean establishment of 324, however in April there were 314, in May – 320 and in June – 324. He explained the establishment levels fluctuated due to leaver profile, retirements and transfers which all impact appliance availability. The Service was continually working to mitigate the above pressure by recent recruitment and transfers.

Marginal gains had been made in relation to On-Call Availability. In referring to paragraph 3.11 of the report, he stated the Service had adjusted individual Station targets. He added, that the Service continued to see success in On-Call recruitment, for example, Lambourn was moving in a positive direction.

The overall availability across Wholetime and On-Call duty systems was a response standard target of 75.9% of emergency incidents attended in 10 minutes.

In response to a question from the Chair, Doug stated a report was presented to the Fire Authority on 4 October, on the impact of appliance availability during the Summer Heatwave and that there will be a dip in the response standard in quarter two. The Community Risk Management Plan (CRMP) was in development and Officers will be looking at the impact climate change.

The Chair asked whether Wholetime availability affected Prevention and Safe and Well visits? Doug reported, Local Safety Plans identified targets based within individual areas.

The Vice –Chair asked a question about the target of attending an incident

within 10 minutes. Doug reported the Service achieved its response target of 79% of occasions. He explained that the first appliance arrived at an incident within 10 minutes. The Strategic Performance Board (SPB) were monitoring the arrival time of the second appliance.

In referring to paragraph 3.5, the Vice-Chair asked whether the Service had conducted exit interviews. Doug reported exit interviews were held and the feedback received was around retirement and transfers to other Fire and Rescue Services e.g. London Fire Brigade.

Becci Jefferies, Head of Human Resources and Learning and Development (HHR&L&D), informed Members an annual analysis on exit interviews was held to identify trends. She added the effects of the immediate detriment was another reason for staff leaving, as well as ill-health and resignation. In relation to On-Call staff, some people left the organisation due to a change in their daytime activity, or career change.

Doug reported that a Station Manager was supporting On-Call availability on his work on recruitment and retention. A recent policy change enables On-Call colleagues to supplement another On-Call station.

Councillor Brooks asked whether the Service were monitoring the remainder of occasions when appliances did not arrive within 10 minutes. Doug reported SPB monitors the Response Standard and targeted prevention and protection activities were held in those areas, where the appliance is arriving outside of the 10 minute target.

In response to a follow up question from Councillor Brooks, Jim Powell, Area Manager Collaboration and Policy explained the Service did modelling on Response Standards and informed Members that the 1st appliance target was to arrive within 10 minutes, followed by a 2nd appliance. He added the 2nd appliance arrived within 20 minutes (to back up the 1st appliance).

In answer to questions from Councillor Linden, Andrew McLenahan (Head of Facilities, Fleet and Estates) reported the appliances that were being repaired at Theale Fire Station were put back on the run. Doug reported of the challenges of appliance availability in Lambourn, however, three or four On-Call were recruited.

In answer to Councillor McElroy on Response Standards, Doug stated the incident data informs us that our appliances were located in the best locations around the County. Some bigger geographical areas were difficult to reach, however the risk had been reduced due to the prevention and protection activities in those areas. He added CRMP would also review this.

Nikki Richards, Deputy Chief Executive (DChEx), informed Members that the Service was currently in the middle of CRMP process and modelling will be looked at to refresh the data.

The Chair reported that a heat map is overlaid on areas where incidents were held. He reported the Response Standard included the time from the call came in to when the appliance arrived at the incident.

RESOLVED that:

1) The 2022-23 quarter one performance of 97.6% appliance availability of the Service's 14 whole-time appliances in line with Corporate Measure 16, be noted.

2) The 2022-23 quarter one performance of overall on-call appliance availability of 44.4% in line with Corporate Measure 17, be noted.

29. FORWARD PLAN

RESOLVED that the Forward Plan be noted.

30. DATE OF NEXT MEETING

Tuesday, 6 December 2022, 6.30pm at RBFRS Headquarters, Newsham Court, Pincents Kiln, Calcot, Reading RG31 7SD.

(The meeting concluded at 19:43)