

MINUTES OF THE MEETING OF THE MANAGEMENT COMMITTEE



Held on Tuesday, 6th December, 2022 at 6.30 pm

Royal Berkshire Fire and Rescue Service Headquarters, Newsham Court, Pincents Kiln, Calcot, Reading, Berkshire RG31 7SD.

Members: (*present)

* 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 Helliar-Symons	Councillor Simon Werner
* Councillor David Cannon	

In Attendance: Mark Arkwell (Deputy Chief Fire Officer, DCFO)
Wayne Bowcock (Chief Fire Officer, CFO)
Paul Bremble (Head of Corporate Services, HCS)
Graham Britten (Monitoring Officer, MO)
Conor Byrne (Head of Finance and Procurement, HF&P)
Abdifatar Hassan (Democratic Support Assistant, DSA)
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)

Observers: James Aldridge, Local Democracy Reporter, Reading Chronicle

31. REPRESENTATIVE BODIES

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

32. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Apologies of absence were received from Councillor Jo Lovelock.

33. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

There were no Declarations of Interest from Members in accordance with the

Action

provisions of the Fire Authority's Local Code of Conduct.

There were no Declarations of Interest received from Officers.

34. MINUTES OF THE MEETING HELD ON 11 OCTOBER 2022

There were no recorded actions in the Minutes.

RESOLVED that the Minutes of the meeting held on 11 October 2022 be approved as a true record, to be signed by the Chair.

35. RECEIPT OF ANNOUNCEMENTS

The Chair made the following announcements.

Firefighter Pay Offer Rejected

The Fire Brigades Union has announced the decision of its membership, in line with its executive council recommendation, to reject the offer of a pay increase of 5 per cent effective from 1 July 2022.

The FBU has started (commenced on 5 December 2022) a ballot of its members seeking support for industrial action which will run until Monday, 30 January 2023.

While this ballot is carried out, Royal Berkshire Fire and Rescue Service continues to put arrangements in place to meet our legal duties under the 2004 Fire and Rescue Services Act, to ensure as far as possible, the safety and protection of the communities we serve.

As a Service, we are committed to continuing to work with all staff and representative bodies to communicate openly as this situation develops.

Throughout this period it is critical that we continue to treat all of our colleagues with respect.

I, as well as the Chair of the Royal Berkshire Fire Authority, Councillor Paul Gittings continue to keep you updated on any developments over the coming weeks.

Service of Remembrance

As the Union Flag was flown at full-mast across our Service's buildings, staff came together on Friday, 11 November and Sunday, 13 November to commemorate Remembrance Day and Remembrance Sunday.

On Remembrance Day, staff at headquarters and fire stations throughout the county commemorated all those who have lost their lives in conflicts around the world by gathering outside to observe the national two-minute silence.

Leading up to Remembrance Day, our fire cadets at Maidenhead, Crowthorne and Newbury used their creative talents to recreate the symbolic poppy to remember all those who have fallen.

The Service also hosted its latest Armed Forces Veterans' Hub Event, which took place on 4 November 2022 at Newbury Fire Station, with the theme for the event set as Remembrance Day.

At this event, attendees were able to speak to a range of organisations and charities that support the armed forces community, including Operation Courage – the NHS service that provides specialist care for those armed forces veterans suffering from a mental health crisis – and the Royal Air Force Benevolent Fund.

I'd like to join the Service and the nation in paying tribute to all those that have made the ultimate sacrifice.

Awards Ceremony

On Tuesday, 1 November 2022, the Service's Annual Awards ceremony took place at the Coppid Beech Hotel in Bracknell.

The original event was due to take place on 10 September at Welford Park. However, this was postponed due to the sad passing of Her Late Majesty the Queen.

Awards were presented in 13 categories, followed by a Long Service Award, and Long Service Good Conduct Medals, for 20 years' service.

This year three recipients also received a 30 year Long Service Good Conduct clasp, to be worn on the ribbon of recipient's existing 20 year medals.

You can find out more about the Award winners and medal recipients on the RBFRS website but I'd like to take this time to congratulate them all on their achievements. I would also like to express my gratitude to the events team who worked so hard to make the event a success.

Theale Official Opening

Theale Community Fire Station, located on Wigmore Lane, was officially opened following a ribbon-cutting ceremony in October.

The state-of-the-art facility is the third community tri-service station to be opened in the Royal County following the refurbishment of Hungerford Fire Station and the rebuild of Crowthorne in and 2017 and 2020 respectively.

Crews at Theale have been attending emergency incidents and providing a valuable service to communities across Berkshire since October 2021, but the official opening was delayed due to the pandemic.

We are extremely proud to have opened our third tri-service community fire station. It demonstrates our continued commitment towards working

collaboratively with our emergency service partners as we continue to make improvements for all Services in the efficient use of public funds.

Community Engagement

Over the last few weeks, the Service held several community engagement events at Bracknell, Langley, Maidenhead, Slough and Lambourn fire stations.

These events provide opportunities for staff to share valuable fire prevention and protection messages to the people we serve.

Larger-scale open days, such as those held recently at Bracknell and Langley, also gave members of the public the chance to talk to staff from all three blue-light emergency services.

Staff provided live demonstrations of emergency situations, such as rescues from height with ladders, firefighting drills using the station's training tower, and Road Traffic Collisions (RTC) extractions, while providing up-close experiences with different fire appliances and specialist vehicles, such as the Aerial Ladder Platform (ALP).

Thanks to the hard work and dedication of our staff, events such as these provide hundreds of visitors with memorable and positive experiences of the Service, helping to strengthen ties between our Service and our local communities.

Chairman's Internship Project Recognised with Positive Action Award

Finally I am delighted to announce that our Chairman's Internship scheme was the winner of the Positive Action Award at the Asian Fire Service Association (AFSA) Awards, which took place on 23 November 2022.

The Chairman's Internship Scheme encourages young people who may not have considered a career in the fire and rescue sector to explore some of the many roles available to them. The scheme aims to recruit young people from ethnic groups across Berkshire currently under-represented within the Service. It is a paid internship running over five weeks, giving interns a fantastic opportunity to begin to develop their workplace skills and discover the opportunities available in a modern fire and rescue service.

The Project Team worked to design and shape the internship from scratch, organising planned activities, hosting engagement days, advertising and carrying out numerous interviews and assessment centres. Members of the Project Team all brought their own knowledge and expertise to contribute to the Scheme, making it what it is today.

Well done to all involved and congratulations on winning this fantastic award.

Announcement from Chief Fire Officer (CFO), Wayne Bowcock

The CFO advised he wanted to provide Members an update following his recent communication on the London Fire Brigade (LFB) Independent Culture Review

report. The LFB commissioned Nazir Afzal OBE to carry out a review following the suicide of a young member of staff. Over 2000 staff were interviewed during the review period and 23 recommendations have been made. The outcome of the report should put all Fire and Rescue Services on notice.

He reassured Members that Royal Berkshire Fire and Rescue Service (RBFRS) was in a good place and discussed recent cultural change in the organisation by the implementation of the Behaviour Competency Framework. The Service has a zero tolerance in relation to its Harassment and Bullying Policy. A high percentage of staff were good public servants and acknowledged there was a sub-section of society that did not have the behaviours demonstrated by the majority.

A gap analysis on the Service and the reports 23 recommendations will be carried out by the end of this week and CFO stated he will personally lead on the analysis via the Equality, Diversity and Inclusion (EDI) Steering Group. Regular updates will be provided to the Fire Authority through the EDI Champion.

36. ISSUES ARISING FROM THE AUDIT AND GOVERNANCE COMMITTEE

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

37. ICT WAIVER

Nikki Richards, Deputy Chief Executive (DchX) presented the report and explained Royal Berkshire Fire Authority (RBFA) were the contract regulating interface to Airwave. As referenced in paragraph 3.6 of the report, the Interface had to be approved by Government Communications Headquarters (GCHQ) to allow it to connect to Airwave. She stated, GCHQ's approval added an additional level of security.

Paragraph 3.10 outline the total value of the new interface, excluding VAT. The VAT takes the cost over the threshold outlined in the Contract Regulations, hence the reason why Officers were seeking Management Committee approval.

The interface was part of the mobilising system for Thames Valley Fire Control, of which Royal Berkshire would contribute towards a third of the total cost. In referring to paragraph 8.2, Nikki Richards stated she hoped the quote was secure, however due to the VEAT (Voluntary Ex-Ante Transparency Notice) process could surpass the limited period of the quote.

In response to the Chair, Nikki Richards stated the cost would come out of existing RBFA Budgets and would contribute a third of the cost with Thames Valley Fire and Rescue Service (FRS) partners.

Jim Powell, Area Manager Collaboration and Policy (AM C&P), reported he had

been liaising with Thames Valley Fire FRS partners and they were agreed on the proposed course of action and had agreed to share the costs.”

In response to Councillor Benneyworth, Nikki Richards stated the quote was issued early to mid-November. She had made the contractors aware of the governance process. She stated the quote was still within the limited period, however there was a risk the quote could be increased significantly.

The Chair moved the recommendations of the report, which was seconded by Councillor Cannon.

The Chair stated he felt it was imperative Officers continued communicating with the contractors. Councillor Brooks stated the recommendation was straightforward, due to the nature of the interface was required for Thames Valley Fire Control Service (TVFCS). Councillor Smith stated he agreed in principle subject to due diligence.

In response to the above comments, Nikki stated that it was a requirement for RBFA to publish a VEAT Notice to allow the Service to be legally compliant. The VEAT was open for challenge and will be advertised for 10 days on the government website Contracts Finder.

RESOLVED that it be agreed to waive competition under the RBFA Contract Regulations CR16 due to the following reasons:

- Effective competition is prevented due to government control
- The supply or service is unique to a single supplier such as proprietary or patented goods or is deemed necessary due to the requirements of operational alignment and there is no satisfactory alternative
- The service or works are of a specialist nature and can only be carried out by one supplier
- If the goods or services are not procured there is a risk of danger to life or property or a major impact on the Authority of the public

38. 2022/23 BUDGET MONITORING - QUARTER TWO

Conor Byrne, Head of Finance and Procurement (HF&P) reported the forecast revenue outturn for 2022/23 showed an anticipated deficit of £800,000, to be funded from reserves. He stated the projected overspend was due to Pay Awards, Station staff budgets pressures, interest rate rises and in 2022/23 a 20% reduction in the Firelink Home Office grant had commenced, and will be reduced further over the next five years.

He stated that a Budget Working Party had been established to consider the challenges outlined in the report.

The Chair moved the recommendation and it was seconded by Councillor Dexter Smith. Councillor McElroy commended Councillor Brooks and Conor Byrne for their work on the Budget and highlighted that cuts will have to be

made to a Service which was currently lean. He stated the budget pressures were a direct result of Westminster and referenced Brexit and public spending/contracts during Covid.

Councillor Brooks reassured the Committee by stating the Fire Authority was in a position to use its reserves to cover the pressures outlined in the report. He stated, the Budget Working Party was currently working on a budget that would be fit for the people of Berkshire.

The Chair stated there were pressures on public finances and the times we were in was unprecedented, and stated, the Ukraine War had caused inflation. The Fire Authority had a history of delivering a balanced budget and stated the Authority had reserves to manage the above pressures.

RESOLVED that the report be noted.

39. APPLIANCE AVAILABILITY BY CREWING TO MEET CORPORATE MEASURES 16 AND 17 - QUARTER TWO

Doug Buchanan, Area Manager Response and Resilience (AM R&R), reported the wholetime availability across the quarter was 97.4%. He explained availability was affected due to a busy summer period (Summer Heatwave) and the Service was managing pre-covid sickness levels.

On-Call availability had decreased from the previous quarter and was 40.3% against a target of 60%. He stated the target was impacted when key individuals with significant qualifications were off sick or on leave. He reported Officers were supporting On-Call staff to improve availability.

In discussing the Response Standard, Doug Buchanan reported it had dropped below 75%, and was 69.3%. He reported of the financial impacts of pre-arranged overtime (PAOT) and advised through the imminent Community Risk Management Plan (CRMP), officers would give due consideration to the crewing model.

In response to a question from Councillor Brooks, Doug Buchanan reported the Audit and Governance Committee receive detailed performance data, and agreed to forward Management Committee the Response Standard in West Berkshire.

AM (R&R)

In response to a question from Councillor Smith on whether the Service were still in need of staff with driving skills, Doug Buchanan reported there were a number of staff who were in development.

Councillor Gittings (Royal Berkshire Fire Authority Chair) commended staff during the summer heatwave and Her Late Majesty's the Queen's funeral. In relation to the Response Standard, he advised that the Service could not be complacent in this area and referenced the much needed improvement to On-Call in West Berkshire.

Councillor Helliar-Symons stated it had been a challenging summer, she commended the Firefighters for going the extra mile and expressed her thanks for their amazing achievement.

Councillor McElroy stated that the heatwave experienced in the summer, should be expected to be the norm.

The Chair stated the heatwave this summer was exceptional and commended the Firefighters in their full Personal Protective Equipment (PPE) in 41oC heat. He explained, the Response Standard recorded the moment the call was received in Control to the arrival of the appliance at the incident and reminded Members that for On-Call staff, it was their second job, and they too should be commended. He also stated that Officers were looking at ways to reduce PAOT and thanked Firefighters on behalf of RBFA.

RESOLVED that:

- 1) The 2022-23 quarter two performance of **97.4%** appliance availability of the Service's 14 whole-time appliances in line with Corporate Measure 16¹ be noted.
- 2) The 2022-23 quarter two performance of overall On-Call appliance availability of **40.3%** in line with Corporate Measure 17² be noted.

40. FORWARD PLAN

RESOLVED that the Forward Plan be noted.

41. DATE OF NEXT MEETING

Tuesday 7 February 2023, 6.30pm at RBFRS Headquarters, Newsham Court, Pincents Kiln, Calcot, Reading RG31 7SD.

(The meeting concluded at 7:16pm)