

MINUTES OF THE MEETING OF THE MANAGEMENT COMMITTEE



Held on Monday, 22nd July, 2024 at 6.30 pm

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

Members: (*present)

* Councillor Jeff Brooks	Councillor Joshua Reynolds
* Councillor Tina McKenzie-Boyle	* Councillor Zafar Satti
* Councillor Rachelle Shepherd-DuBey	Councillor Wayne Smith
* Councillor Peter Frewer	* Councillor Helen Taylor
* Councillor Paul Gittings	Councillor Simon Werner
Councillor Wendy Griffith	

In Attendance: Mark Arkwell (Deputy Chief Fire Officer, DCFO)
Tom Brandon (Area Manager Response and Resilience, AM R&R)
Paul Bremble (Head of Corporate Services, HCS)
Graham Britten (Monitoring Officer, MO)
Paul Brooks (Head of Assets, HoA)
Conor Byrne (Head of Finance and Procurement, HF&P)
Becci Jefferies (Head of Human Resources and Learning and Development, HHR&L&D)
Jim Powell (Area Manager Collaboration and Policy, AM C&P)
Nikki Richards (Deputy Chief Executive, DChEx)
Fayth Rowe (Democratic Support Lead, DSL)

Action

1. ELECTION OF CHAIR FOR MUNICIPAL YEAR 2024/25

Councillor Paul Gittings presided over the meeting as 2023/24 Management Committee Vice-Chair. He requested nominations for the position of Chair. Councillor Rachelle Shepherd-DuBey nominated Councillor Jeff Brooks. Councillor Paul Gittings seconded the nomination.

There being no other nominations, it was:

RESOLVED that Councillor Jeff Brooks be elected Chair of Management Committee for the 24/25 Municipal Year.

2. APPOINTMENT OF VICE-CHAIR FOR MUNICIPAL YEAR 2024/25

The Chair sought nominations for Vice –Chair. Councillor Peter Frewer

nominated Councillor Paul Gittings. This was seconded by the Chair, Councillor Jeff Brooks.

There being no other nominations, it was:

RESOLVED that Councillor Paul Gittings be elected Vice-Chair of Management Committee for the 2024/25 Municipal Year.

3. REPRESENTATIVE BODIES

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

4. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Apologies were received from Councillors Wendy Griffith, Josh Reynolds, Wayne Smith and Simon Werner.

5. 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.

6. MINUTES OF THE MEETING HELD ON TUESDAY 9 APRIL 2024

The action to ensure that the Forward Plan published in the agenda pack until the end of the year, was complete.

RESOLVED that the Minutes of the meeting on 9 April 2024, be approved as a true record to be signed by the Chair.

7. RECEIPT OF ANNOUNCEMENTS

New Wholetime Firefighter Apprentices

Last Christmas, the Service ran a recruitment campaign for a new cohort of Wholetime Firefighter Apprentices, accepting hundreds of applications over the festive period. Earlier this month, we welcomed 18 successful applicants who will become our newest Wholetime Firefighter Apprentices.

Currently, our newest cohort of recruits are away on a training course at the Fire Service College in Gloucestershire. However, they will return to Berkshire next month to complete the final few weeks of their training, before graduating in early November.

This month (July), we launched another wholetime recruitment drive. As with

previous recruitment campaigns, we have received hundreds of applications which the Resourcing and Development Team are now sorting through.

On behalf of the Authority, the Chair thanked everyone who supported the recruitment and training recruits and requested Members join him in wishing our new Apprentices the best of luck as they embark on the first steps of their new careers.

Particulate Blocking Fire Hoods

Royal Berkshire Fire and Rescue Service (RBFRS) is the first service under the National personal protective equipment (PPE) framework to issue particulate blocking fire hoods.

Research carried out over the last ten years has identified several cancers that are prevalent in firefighters due to contamination, with the head and neck amongst the highest areas at risk whilst wearing PPE in a fire. The old hoods gave between 39 percent particulate blocking and the new hoods have 96 percent particulate blocking properties.

The Chair stated this was another example of how seriously we take the risk of contamination to our frontline firefighters with a commensurate quality mitigation put in place.

Fire Cadets Graduation

Last week, Thirty-nine Fire Cadets from across Berkshire demonstrated their new skills at a Graduation Ceremony held at Maidenhead Fire Station.

Fire Cadets is a youth initiative programme operated by the Service and takes place at four fire stations across the County – Crowthorne, Maidenhead, Newbury, and Whitley Wood.

The Chair stated he attended the Graduation ceremony on behalf of the Authority and was privileged to present the Cadet of the Year awards for each Cadet Unit. He also stated he was pleased to see several members in attendance at the Graduation and thanked them for showing their support.

On behalf of the Authority, he congratulated all the Cadets on successfully completing the course this year.

Internship Opportunities

The Service will once again be welcoming several interns over the summer months. This year marks the third year in which we have run our Summer Internship Scheme. As part of the Scheme, five interns - all of whom are aged 17 or 18 and from underrepresented groups in Berkshire – will join the Service for five weeks.

The Internship will run from Friday, 26 July to Friday, 30 August, during which time the interns will rotate between five departments and visit several fire

stations across the country.

At the end of the internship, the interns will present back to Members, our Senior Leadership Team and other staff about their experience with the Service. I hope to see many of you there for what, based on previous years, will be both an informative and entertaining afternoon.

Meanwhile, the Service will also be welcoming interns as part of the Leonard Cheshire Change100 Scheme. The Change100 Scheme offers university students with a disability and a predicted grade of at least a 2:1 to do a three-month placement at one of Leonard Cheshire's partners.

The Service has proudly supported Change100 for several years and this year, we will be welcoming two interns from the Scheme.

The Chair asked Members to join him in welcoming all our new interns and in wishing them well during their time with the Service.

8. ISSUES ARISING FROM THE AUDIT AND GOVERNANCE COMMITTEE

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

9. LED LIGHTING PRIORITY 2 PROJECT

Paul Brooks, Head of Assets (HoA) reported he was seeking Management Committee approval to release £225,000 from the capital expenditure budget to deliver LED Lighting Priority 2 Project. The funding would be from the Strategic Asset Investment Framework (SAIF) and was part of the Fire Authority's commitment to reduce the Service's carbon footprint.

The sites identified for LED Priority 2 Project were Langley, Newbury, Caversham Road, Wokingham Road and Whitley Wood Fire Stations. Other sites identified in the report (RBFRS Headquarters, Wokingham, Bracknell, Caversham and Lambourn Fire Stations) will be assessed and delivered within other projects.

He stated LED lighting lasts longer and had proven wellbeing benefits reducing headaches and eye strains. He explained the project will be led by the Estates Team who had completed the planning and design. The installation will be completed by November 2024.

It was unanimously **RESOLVED** that:

- 1) The capital expenditure budget of £0.225M for the delivery of the 'LED Lighting Priority 2 Project', as provided for in the SAIF be approved; and
- 2) That it be noted the delivery of this project will be concurrent with the Public Sector Decarbonisation Scheme (PSDS) funded element of the

RBFRS Sustainability Programme Phase 1 as approved by the Authority on 22 April 2024, but it is distinctly separate in respect of funding and governance.

10. ESTATES MINOR NEW WORKS CAPITAL SPEND APPROVAL

Paul Brooks, HoA, reported this report was seeking Management Committee approval to release £171,350 from the SAIF budget on four minor capital projects in Windsor, Wokingham, Lambourn and Mortimer Fire Stations. The works were to do the following:

- Windsor – replacing lighting with LED lighting, fixed fire alarm upgrades and to create a minimum standard for Equality, Diversity and Inclusion (EDI) works without significant alterations to the building.
- Wokingham – EDI works and contamination control upgrades.
- Lambourn – fixed fire alarm installation
- Mortimer – fixed fire alarm installation

In discussing EDI works, he explained dignified facilities in line with the EDI Action Plan were planned for stations to meet individual needs, regardless of characteristics. The total of the planned works includes an 15% contingency and works will be managed by the Capital Projects Team. Subject to Management Committee approval the works will be completed by March 2025.

Paul Brooks confirmed subject to the condition of older buildings, the funding would be returned to the SAIF if the total amount is not used.

Councillor Rachelle Shepherd-DuBey moved the recommendation. This was seconded by the Chair.

RESOLVED that the release of £171,350 from the SAIF to meet all the costs for estate related minor capital projects, as defined in 3.4. to cover professional services, design, planning, contractor costs and construction costs along with ancillary works and other fees be approved.

11. FLEET REPLACEMENT CAPITAL SPEND APPROVAL

Paul Brooks, HoA reported in July 2023, Royal Berkshire Fire Authority (RBFA) approved the intention to invest in appliances as part of its 10-year Strategic Asset Investment Framework (SAIF) and £2.87M was identified for this critical activity. This report was seeking Management Committee approval for capital expenditure up to £220,000 to replace fleet identified in Appendix A (page 39).

The first appliances listed in Appendix A will be delivered by the end of 2024 and a contingency had been built into the recommendation.

He stated the report was seeking to replace identified White Fleet only. Three Flexi Duty Officer (FDO) vehicles planned for replacement in 2024 will be

retained for an additional 12 months, saving £60,000.

Paul Brooks reported the Fleet Strategy will be presented to Management Committee this municipal year and will include plug-in hybrid vehicles. In relation to electric vehicles (EV), the infrastructure will need to be considered. Mark Arkwell, Deputy Chief Fire Officer (DCFO) added he was not certain EV were as reliable for operational use.

The Chair moved the recommendation, and it was seconded by Councillor Tina McKenzie-Boyle.

RESOLVED that:

- 1) The capital expenditure of up to £220,000 over one year for the fleet assets as identified in Appendix A be approved; and
- 2) The budget request for the fleet requirements represents a 20% reduction on the forecasted SAIF 2024 provision be noted.

12. ICT HARDWARE REPLACEMENT

Lukasz Wrona, Head of Business and Information Systems (HBIS) reported on 15 February 2024 the Fire Authority approved the SAIF which included the provision of £552,900 for the necessary investment in ICT hardware. He reported the following equipment had come to the end of its life and required replacing;

- Mobile phones
- Laptops
- Docking stations
- Desktop PCs

Lukasz Wrona added a transition to cloud migration from manual intervention would improve efficiency and ensure reliability of equipment.

Councillor McKenzie – Boyle queried whether old equipment was donated. Lukasz Wrona advised some equipment will be returned to suppliers in order to receive a rebate. Other equipment could be cleansed and donated to schools or charitable organisations.

The Chair requested for future reports to include a business case to identify the benefits and risks to the organisation. Lukasz Wrona agreed to include a business case in a future report.

The Chair moved the recommendation and it was seconded by Councillor Shepherd-DuBey.

RESOLVED that:

- 1) The expenditure of £360,900 on end-user equipment listed in this report be approved; and
- 2) The expenditure of £192,000 on services required to deliver improvements to deployment system and migration of systems to the cloud be approved.

13. 2023/24 BUDGET MONITORING - QUARTER FOUR

Conor Byrne, Head of Finance and Procurement (HF&P) reported the revenue budget agreed by the Fire Authority in February 2023 was set at £41.975m. Income was set to exceed expenditure by £573,000 to allow for the replenishment of the Budget Contingency Reserve.

The Revenue Outturn for 2023/24 shows a surplus of £113,000 compared to budget. *Employee costs* – The overtime cost for wholetime stations was £260,000 over budget due to factors including cover for firefighter vacancies as well as additional water rescue training. The new Operational Support Team will continue to monitor overtime expenditure.

The Green book pay award was finalised (1 April 2023) at 5.4% against the original budget of 4%. The cost of new trainee firefighters was an additional budgetary pressure of £103,000. *Repairs and Maintenance* costs total variance of £355,000 including project costs related to LED lighting and EV charging points. In relation to *Premises Costs* – the Authority has made savings as a result of the falling price of gas. The *Communications* line was lower than budgeted by £117,000.

Increased interest rates resulted in additional investment income of £275,000 compared to the budgeted figure.

Appendix C provide an outline of quarter four capital projects and Appendix D lists the balance and movements on Reserves. The Treasury management activity is shown in Appendix E and show all treasury management operations have been conducted in full compliance with the Authority's Treasury Management Practices.

In discussing the Reserves position, Appendix D, the Chair requested for an update on New Ways of Working at a future Management Committee. Conor reported Budget Working Party will be looking at New Ways of Working from the Transition Fund later in the year.

The Chair moved the recommendation which was seconded by Councillor Shepherd-DuBey.

RESOLVED that:

- 1) The report be noted; and
- 2) The reserves position as set out in Appendix D be agreed.

14. Q4 APPLIANCE AVAILABILITY

Tom Brandon, Area Manager Response and Resilience (AM R&R) reported the Response Standard during the quarter was below target of 75% at 70.1%. He explained the response time included call out time, call handling and travel time and reported, the response standard was not met due to an increase in calls received following storm Henk. In addition, there was an increase in Automatic Fire Alarm (AFA) calls requiring extended call challenge.

He stated it was expected the number of AFAs would reduce with greater confidence in call challenge by new Control operators. RBFRS was the only fire and rescue service in England to improve its attendance times at primary fires over a ten-year period, improving our average speed of response by 22 seconds, as reported in 2022/23.

Whole-time availability across the quarter was 97.8% against a stretched target of 99%. The factors were due to defects, training and staff sickness. This quarter has seen an improvement in On-call appliance availability of 41.5% against a target of 50%. Four out of five On-call stations have improved performance. In referring to Lambourn Fire Station, Tom Brandon stated two new joiners will start in quarter one 2024/25.

In response to the Chair's query of the current Lambourn figure of 1.7%, Tom Brandon reported he would confirm that figure.

AM (R&R)

The Vice-Chair stated he would like to see On-call stations met their target of 50%. In response to a supplementary question from the Vice-Chair, Tom Brandon reported the new AFA policy should simplify the call handling process and Members should see an improvement in call handling times.

Councillor McKenzie-Boyle commented on the increase in Crowthorne On-call availability. She requested that her appreciation to Tony Jell at Crowthorne Fire Station was passed on.

AM (R&R)

The Chair stated that he would like On-call availability to be discussed at the Recruitment and Retention Working Group meeting.

HHR&L&D

In response to a question from Councillor Frewer on whether the two new recruits in Lambourn would increase availability, Tom Brandon reported that it would take time for those new recruits to be operationally competent.

RESOLVED that:

- 1) The 2023/24 quarter four performance of 97.8% appliance availability of the Service's 14 whole-time appliances in line with Corporate Measure 14 be noted; and
- 2) The 2023/24 quarter four overall on-call appliance availability performance of 41.5%, in line with Corporate Measure 15 be noted.

15. FORWARD PLAN

RESOLVED that the Forward Plan be noted.

16. DATE OF NEXT MEETING

Tuesday 8 October 2024 at 6.30pm at RBFRS Headquarters, Newsham Court, Pincents Kiln, Calcot, Reading RG31 7SD.

17. EXCLUSION OF THE PUBLIC

RESOLVED 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 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.

18. PART II MINUTES OF LAST MEETING

RESOLVED that the Minutes of the meeting on 9 April 2024, be approved as a true record to be signed the Chair.

19. INTERNET SERVICES WAIVER AND NEW NETWORK AND INTERNET SERVICES CONTRACT

Lukasz Wrona (HBIS) reported the Internet Service Waiver and New Network and Internet Services Contract related to internet infrastructure. It included digital communication services provided to Thames Valley Fire Control Service (TVFCS).

The Chair asked whether a procurement exercise had been held. Lukasz Wrona reported that a public sector Framework, Crown Commercial Services (CCS) had been chosen to identify the best supplier/ contract.

The Chair requested to see more supporting evidence in future reporting.

RESOLVED that the recommendations in the report be agreed.

(The meeting concluded at 7.44pm)