

MINUTES OF THE MEETING OF THE MANAGEMENT COMMITTEE



Held on Tuesday, 8th October, 2024 at 6.30 pm

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

Members: (*present)

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| * Councillor George Blundell | * Councillor Wendy Griffith |
| * Councillor Tina McKenzie-Boyle | * Councillor Dave McElroy |
| * Councillor Jeff Brooks | * Councillor Wayne Smith |
| * Councillor Rachelle Shepherd-DuBey | * Councillor Helen Taylor |
| * Councillor Peter Frewer | * Councillor Simon Werner |
| * Councillor Paul Gittings | |

In Attendance:

Mark Arkwell (Deputy Chief Fire Officer, DCFO)
Wayne Bowcock (Chief Fire Officer, CFO)
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)
Dave Crease (Area Manager, Protection and Protection, AM P&P)
Becci Jefferies (Head of Human Resources and Learning and Development, HHR&L&D)
Katie Mills (Assistant Chief Fire Officer, ACFO)
Nikki Richards (Deputy Chief Executive, DChEx)
Fayth Rowe (Democratic Support Lead, DSL)
Andy Stockwell (Group Manager Change and Improvement, GM C&I)
Lukasz Wrona (Head of Business and Information Systems, HBIS)

20. REPRESENTATIVE BODIES

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

21. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Apologies were received from Councillor Wayne Smith.

Action

22. 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.

23. MINUTES OF THE MEETING HELD ON 22 JULY 2024

The following actions on page 14 had been completed, which were:

- Tom Brandon, Area Manager Response and Resilience confirmed the Lambourn figure was correct.
- Tom Brandon, Area Manager Response and Resilience confirmed he had passed on Councillor McKenzie-Boyle thanks and appreciation to Tony Jell at Crowthorne Fire Station.
- Nikki Richards, Deputy Chief Executive on behalf of Becci Jefferies confirmed On-Call will be included as an agenda item at the next Recruitment and Retention Working Group meeting.

RESOLVED that the Minutes of the meeting on 22 July 2024, be approved as a true record to be signed by the Chair.

24. RECEIPT OF ANNOUNCEMENTS

CRMP Priority Six implementation

On Monday, 16 September, RBFRS introduced changes to its Operational Resource Management Policy – a key enabler to implement Priority Six of the Authority's Community Risk Management Plan (CRMP).

This reconfirms the requirement to provide 14 fire engines as a minimum baseline and now recognises that our On-call staff can form part of this baseline on some occasions.

The intention of this policy change is to ensure we have a more reliable and resilient operating model and that our fire engines are available more often than they have been.

The Service is expected to reduce the overtime budget by approximately £150,000 per year. The money saved is being immediately reinvested into additional fire fighter posts meaning they will be less reliant on the voluntary use of overtime.

Since its implementation there has been 7 occasions where On Call colleagues have formed part of the response baseline, when there were insufficient wholtime firefighters available. This has meant that just over £6,000 has

already been found to support the ongoing investment into additional frontline firefighter roles.

The Service will continue to closely monitor the effects of this change. The Chair stated he looked forward to receiving the three-month evaluation report early in the new year.

Implementation of new Automatic Fire Alarm policy

Following a public consultation and agreement at Fire Authority, RBFRS has now changed the way it responds to Automatic Fire Alarms in certain types of buildings.

The changes took effect on the 20th September, meaning that RBFRS has stopped automatically sending a fire engine when there is an automatic fire alarm notification in buildings such as shops, offices, leisure centres, sports grounds, libraries and health centres.

RBFRS is continuing to attend automatic fire alarm notifications at schools, high risk buildings and where anyone sleeps, such as hotels, hospitals, care homes, houses, and flats.

In all cases, an emergency response is still being sent to 999 calls and confirmed fires.

RBFRS needed to change the way it responds to automatic fire alarm notifications to ensure communities and firefighters are kept safe. This is because 99% of the automatic fire alarm calls received are false alarms.

Attending these types of incidents takes time and resource and therefore causes significant disruption to the delivery of essential services and training.

The changes help to align our processes to neighbouring fire and rescue services in the Thames Valley. Buckinghamshire Fire and Rescue Service are currently running a six-month pilot following the same AFA guidance and Oxfordshire County Council Fire and Rescue Service will introduce the same measures in October.

The Chair thanked everyone involved in helping to prepare the Service and the wider community for the changes.

Summer Internship Scheme concluded

In August, we welcomed five young people from across the county as part of the third year of the Summer Internship Scheme.

The Summer 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. This year, the scheme was open to young people from

Berkshire who are aged 17-18 and from ethnic groups that are currently under-represented in the Service.

During the five-week programme, interns worked as part of several teams and took part in activities aimed at increasing their awareness of the work done by the Service.

It was a pleasure to attend the end of internship event where the interns reflected on their experiences whilst with the Service. The Chair thanked the interns for their efforts during their time spent working at the Service and the Project Team, host departments, crews and mentors who supported their journey within the Service.

Multi-agency high rise exercise.

Firefighters from across the Service were joined by Thames Valley Fire Control Service and crews from Buckinghamshire Fire and Rescue Service and Oxfordshire County Council Fire and Rescue Service for a major training exercise in the AMS Tower at the University of Reading.

Crews were also joined by Thames Valley Police, South Central Ambulance Service, Reading Borough Council and Wokingham Borough Council for the scenario on the evening of Monday, 16 September.

The exercise saw crews respond to a fire on the fourth floor of the tower, with casualties, made up of volunteers from the Service, the charity Wokingham CLASP and actors from the Casualty Actors Union, being scattered across the fifth and sixth floors above the 'fire.'

During the exercise, staff at Thames Valley Control Service responded to a high number of calls from actors involved in the exercise, feeding that information back to the fireground to inform crews at the scene.

The Chair thanked everyone involved, both in the organising and the performing of this large-scale training exercise.

His Majesty Inspectorate for Constabulary Fire and Rescue Service

The third inspection of the service by His Majesty Inspectorate for Constabulary and Fire and Rescue Service commenced earlier this week, with the inspectorate having already carried out virtual interviews with partner agencies that the Service works with and the Head of Finance, as well as carrying out a staff survey. This week see's the inspectorate come into the Service to carry out the first in person interviews with staff.

On Wednesday this week, the Chair stated he will be attending the strategic briefing, where the Directors will present to the Inspectorate an update on the improvements that have been carried out since the last inspection in June 2022.

The Inspectorate will return week commencing 21st October, where they will be visiting Stations and teams to get a wider understanding of the service. The findings of the inspection will be reported back to the service in spring next year.

Wayne Bowcock, Chief Fire Officer added to the above announcements, by stating the Service had been in touch with Shinfield Studios in relation to Fire Safety. In discussing HMICFRS Inspection, he confirmed Katie Mills (Assistant Chief Fire Officer), Tom Brandon (Area Manager Response and Resilience) and Mark Arkwell (Deputy Chief Fire Officer) were interviewed by the Inspection Team on Productivity, Change and Improvement earlier this week.

Wayne Bowcock, Chief Fire Officer shared that he considered it was a huge privilege to be attending the Cenotaph this year on Remembrance Day as part of his new role as Contingent Commander for the Civilian Services Contingent. Each year, the Contingent Commander nominate volunteers, and he stated last year Tim Weeks was nominated and this year (November 2024) he had nominated William Fox.

25. ISSUES ARISING FROM THE AUDIT AND GOVERNANCE COMMITTEE

There were no issues arising from Audit and Governance Committee.

26. RECOMMENDATIONS FROM COMMITTEES

No recommendations from Committees were received.

27. SUSTAINABILITY STRATEGY 2024 - 2029

In presenting this report, Paul Brooks, Head of Assets (HoA) stated Royal Berkshire Fire and Rescue Service (RBFRS) had recognised there was a climate emergency which had formed the foundation of the Sustainability Strategy. The Strategy had been developed with stakeholders and supports RBFRS's strategic commitments. In outlining the four strategic themes (Our People, Guardianship, Consumption Reduction and Decarbonisation) he stated they had been mapped to 16 UN sustainable development goals.

In addition, an action plan had been developed which will be reviewed by Estates Development and Sustainability Working Group (EDSWG). Attached with the strategy was the policy, which subject to Member approval will be formally signed off by the Chair, Councillor Jeff Brooks and Chief Fire Officer, Wayne Bowcock.

In response to a positive comment on the strategy made by Councillor Rachelle Shepherd-DuBey, Councillor Dave McElroy echoed her sentiment. He stated he noticed water was referenced several times throughout the document, in particular the reduction of water pollution and protecting water based eco

systems. He asked whether this was a new addition to the strategy, as this was something he had raised previously.

Paul Brooks stated there was a cultural change as the strategy was looking to reduce water usage by undertaking assessments at incidents as an example.

Councillor Paul Gittings stated he would have liked to see an action plan alongside the strategy. Paul Brooks he will submit a Sustainability road map to Management Committee at its next meeting in December. He requested Members do not share the road map beyond the Fire Authority. In response to Councillor Paul Gittings, Paul Brooks agreed to insert sustainable implications in the report, subject to Senior Leadership Team (SLT) approval.

HOA

The Chair commented the wider installation of smoke alarms and sprinkler systems would potentially reduce incidents and would reduce the use of water at incidents.

Paul Brooks took the opportunity to thank Sophie Fox, Sustainability Co-ordinator and the rest of the Capital Projects Team.

The Chair made an amendment to the recommendation and changed *RBFRS* to **RBFA** and *note* to **agree**. This was seconded by Councillor Rachelle Shepherd-DuBey.

In being put to the vote, it was unanimously **RESOLVED** that:

- 1) The RBFA Sustainability Strategy 2024-2029 be agreed; and
- 2) The RBFA Sustainable Development Policy Statement for co-signature by the RBFA Chair and RBFRS Chief Fire Officer be agreed.

28. FLEET AND EQUIPMENT STRATEGY 2024 - 2029

Paul Brooks, HoA explained the Fleet and Equipment Strategy 2024-29 will provide a framework to support the delivery of plans arising from the Community Risk Management Plan (CRMP), Corporate Plan and Strategic Asset Investment Framework (SAIF). The strategy is aligned to the corporate vision and includes the following six principles that support the Service's strategic intent:

- Cost-Effectiveness
- Reliability & Resilience
- Quality
- Adaptability
- Sustainability
- Innovation

Paul Brooks discussed the work that was currently underway with Thames Valley Fire and Rescue (FRS) partners and Hampshire FRS in procuring and fitting appliances to a standardised specification. He reported that RBFRS will receive five new appliances next year.

In response to comments from Councillors Wendy Griffith and Dave McElroy, Paul Brooks explained operational sustainability will be maintained. For example, equipment would not be replaced until the relevant technology was available to support it.

The Chair amended the recommendation from *note* to **agree**. This was seconded by Councillor Rachelle Shepherd-DuBey.

On being put to the vote, it was **RESOLVED** that RBFRS Fleet and Equipment Strategy 2024-2029 be agreed.

29. BUDGET MONITORING - QUARTER ONE

In delivering the 2024/25 Quarter One Budget Monitoring report, Conor Byrne, Head of Finance and Procurement (HF&P) reported the Fire Authority approved the 2024/25 Revenue Budget set at £45.964m. Appendix A show the forecast revenue outturn for 2024/25 and stated an anticipated surplus of £80,000 compared to the original budget.

Employee Costs – Grey Book pay award from 1 July 2024 was agreed at 4% resulting in an additional budget pressure of £39,000. 18 new recruits joined in July, following training will join wholetime stations in November. The number of firefighters in development was higher than in the budget. There was a forecast cost saving due to vacancies of £369,000 on wholetime stations. The Green Book pay award had not been finalised to date.

Occupational Health – costs are forecast to be £46,000 higher than budget due to cost increases and referrals for complex mental health cases had increased.

The Pension Grant to cover additional pension costs was £87,000 higher than budgeted.

In response to the Chair's comment on Appendix C (Capital expenditure), Conor Byrne stated TVFCS DS3000 technical refresh was currently £18,000 under budget at the end of quarter one. The project was due to be completed in quarter two and stated they were not seeing anything that would bring the project off-course.

RESOLVED that the report be noted.

30. QUARTER ONE APPLIANCE AVAILABILITY TO MEET CORPORATE MEASURES 14 AND 15

Tom Brandon, Area Manager Response and Resilience outlined the wholetime availability across the quarter was 97.7%, which exceeded the target against 97.4%. On-call appliance availability in quarter one was 34.1% against a target of 50%. He stated the Response Standard was 74.7% against a corporate measure target of 75% which was an improvement from quarter four of 70.1%.

In referring to the table in paragraph 3.2 which showed average incidents during the day and night, he stated there was more demand in the day. He also explained the Response Standard Performance included call handling time, turnout time and travel time.

Tom Brandon reported On-call availability was 15% below the target against 50%. He briefly listed the performance challenges faced with on-call availability in the quarter.

- On-call appliances were available for 27 shifts out of 34 shifts when the 14th wholetime appliance was degraded, which meant P6 could have been enacted to maintain baseline appliance availability on more than 80% of occasions.
- 19 trained firefighters had left the establishment which led to an overall reduction from 65 to 61
- 14 out of 15 new firefighters were still undertaking the On-Call Training Programme (OCTP).
- Three firefighters will complete their training programme in quarter two.

In referring to the table in paragraph 3.21, the Chair stated the performance of Lambourn in the quarter had stood out. Katie Mills, Assistant Chief Fire Officer (ACFO) discussed the quality of work that went into managing the crewing model. She advised that a new corporate measure had been developed to monitor the number of times the 14th appliance is turned out. On-call firefighters were normally available at night. This data will be presented to Audit and Governance Committee.

Councillor Paul Gittings stated he felt Lambourn figures were hopeful. He mentioned the controversy around P6 and stated he felt the performance figures gave justification for the policy. He referenced paragraph 3.14 which stated the 14th appliance was degraded on 33 occasions during the quarter because of a lack of uptake for Pre-arranged overtime (PAOT). He asked whether road works affected the Response Standard.

In answer to a question from Councillor Dave McElroy, Tom Brandon explained 10 additional firefighter posts allow RBFRS to recruit above establishment to improve resilience and reduce over reliance of PAOT. He reported some employees had left RBFRS for London Fire Bridge (LFB).

The Chair reported that the Recruitment and Retention Working Group were looking into how to mitigate this risk.

In response to Councillor Paul Gittings, Wayne Bowcock, Chief Fire Officer reported the Service received Road Traffic Orders which was sent to stations. He outlined the challenges the Service faced in maintaining Response Standard.

Tom Brandon reported he would forward his presentation to Management Committee.

RESOLVED that:

- 1) The 2024/25 quarter one performance of 97.7% appliance availability of the Service's 14 whole-time appliances in line with Corporate Measure 14 be noted.
- 2) The 2024/25 quarter one overall on-call appliance availability performance of 34.1%, in line with Corporate Measure 15 be noted.

31. FORWARD PLAN

RESOLVED that the Forward Plan be noted.

32. DATE OF NEXT MEETING

Wednesday 4 December 2024, 6.30pm at RBFRS Headquarters, Newsham Court, Pincents Kiln, Calcot, Reading RG31 7SD.

33. EXCLUSION OF 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.

34. PART II MINUTES OF THE LAST MEETING

RESOLVED that the Part II Minutes of the meeting on 22 July 2024, be approved as a true record to be signed by the Chair.

35. CONTINGENCY FIRE CREW ARRANGEMENTS: INDUSTRIAL ACTION RESILIENCE

Andy Stockwell, Group Manager Change and Improvement reported the Fire Authority had a legal duty to ensure effective business continuity arrangements were in place. This included but not limited to Industrial Action (National and local) and pandemics.

The report was seeking Management Committee approval to enter into procurement process for replacement provision.

The Chair moved the recommendations which was seconded by Councillor Peter Frewer. On being put to the vote 8 voted for, and one abstained.

RESOLVED that:

- 1) The recommendations in the report be agreed and noted RBFRS intends to request approval of contract award, following a full procurement process, at the Management Committee meeting on 10th February 2025.

36. THAMES VALLEY FIRE CONTROL - CONTINGENCY CALL HANDLING TENDER

Mark Arkwell, DCFO reported he was seeking Management Committee approval to enter into a tender process for the provision of a Contingency Call Handling Service. The contract was similar to the existing one which was due to expire in April 2025. Costs would be shared with Thames Valley FRS partners via the Thames Valley Fire Control Service (TVFCS) revenue budget.

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

RESOLVED that it be agreed to tender for provision of a Contingency Call Handling Service and related services for Thames Valley Fire Control Service.

(The meeting concluded at 19:51)