



# R B F & R S

## news release

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### **FIRE AUTHORITY ANNUAL MEETING**

West Berkshire councillor Dr Paul Bryant was re-elected unanimously as Chairman of Royal Berkshire Fire Authority (RBFA) at the authority's annual meeting on 30 June, embarking on his fifth year in office.

Bracknell Forest's Councillor Colin Dudley was elected as vice-Chairman. The authority also welcomed a new member from Slough, Councillor Diana Coad, whilst two new Independent members were appointed to the RBFA Standards Committee, Colonel Phillip King OBE and Mr Baldev Sian.

Dr Bryant said it was a privilege and an honour to be asked to lead the authority again. He told members:

"I will do all I can for the Royal Berkshire Fire and Rescue Service (RBFRS). I would like to pay tribute to all our staff for the great job they do in keeping Berkshire safe and to our Chief Fire Officer, Iain Cox, who is the driving force and inspiration to the Brigade. I would also like to thank the unions - the FBU and UNISON - for their support and I value the close and friendly relationship we have with them.

"We are proud to have achieved Level 3 of the Local Government Equality and Diversity Standard. It is important that we run a service that respects everyone whether they be employed by the service or as members of the public we serve. Congratulations to our Learning and Development team, judged outstanding by OFSTED and also to our World Champion Extrication Team.

"I am particularly proud that we are one of the most cost-effective Combined Fire Authorities in the country. We cost an average of £55.11 per year per (Band D) household whereas the average is £65.05. We have co-operated with other fire authorities to achieve some excellent savings through collaborative procurement.

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"The economic situation is affecting many public services, with funding being reduced. We are expecting hard times ahead but we will do all within our power to maintain, if not improve, our service to the public."

Members approved the annual accounts, noting an **underspend of £548,000**. RBFRS Chief Fire Officer, Iain Cox, advised Members that the majority of this related to funds allocated for the recruitment, training and salaries of retained firefighters. Because it had not been possible to recruit sufficient numbers, the money remained unspent.

He said: "We, in common with many other fire and rescue services, continue to have a significant problem in recruiting and retaining our Retained (part time) firefighters. We are examining potential means of addressing the problem and are carrying out an extensive review, the results of this work are due in the autumn."

Members also heard a report from RBFRS Area Manager Gene Ashe, on the benefits of sprinklers in multi-occupancy premises registered as social housing. AM Ashe explained the proven advantages of sprinklers, not only for landlords and tenants but for a wide range of associated organisations which would all stand to gain from fewer fires in such properties. The support of Members will be sought in promoting these benefits within their own Unitary Authorities.

**ENDS.**

**NB**

**Notes for Editors:**

**Details of the annual accounts as approved by the authority can be found with the papers sent out on 24 June. If you require any additional information, please contact Nicole Targett on 0118 932 2283 or at [targettn@rbfrs.co.uk](mailto:targettn@rbfrs.co.uk)**