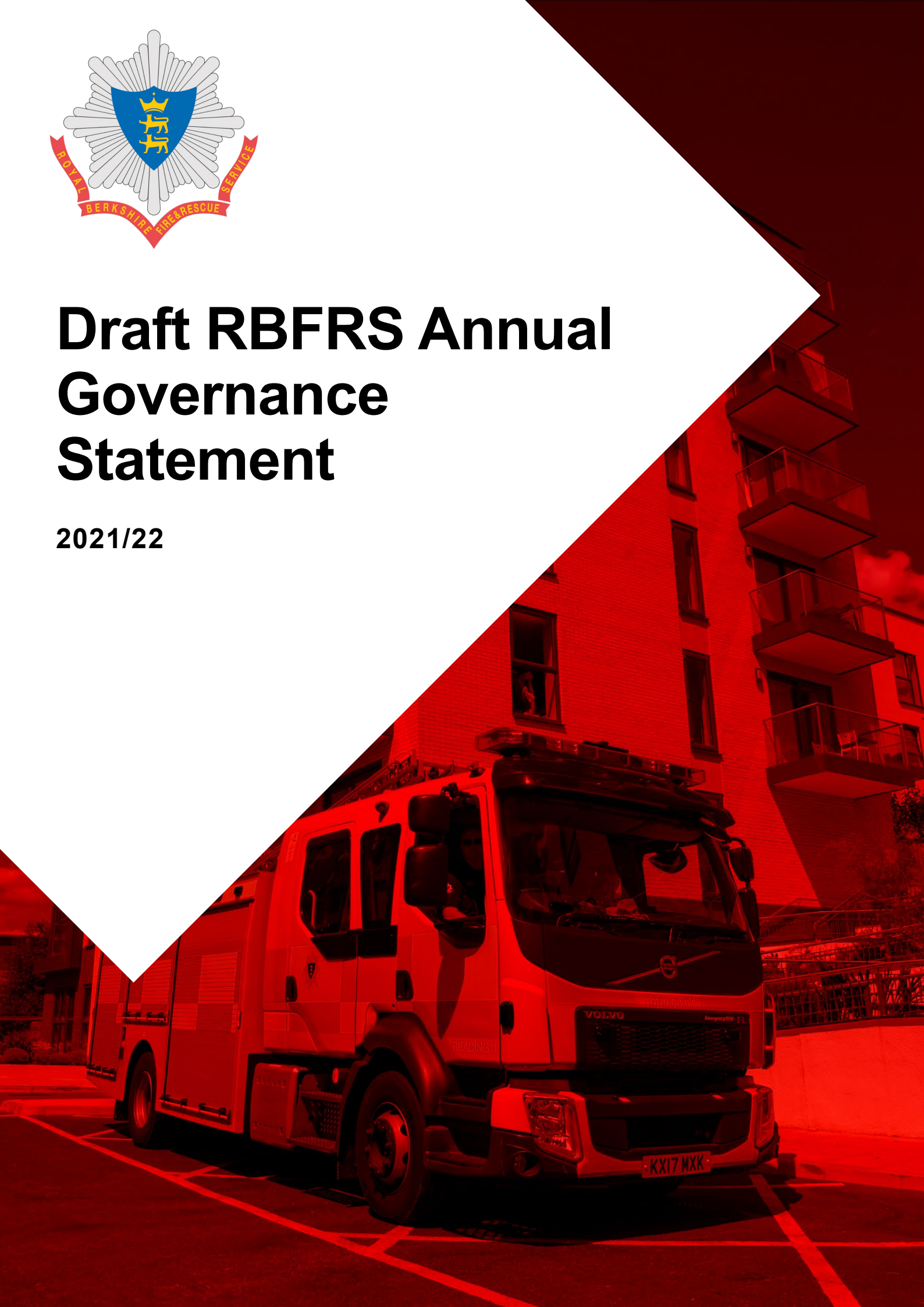




Draft RBFRS Annual Governance Statement

2021/22





Contents

»»	Scope of responsibility	3
»»	Purpose of the Governance Framework	4
»»	The Governance Framework	4
»»	Review of Effectiveness	11
»»	Covid-19 implications for Governance	11
»»	Significant Governance Issues Addressed in 2021/22	12
»»	Significant Governance Issues to be addressed in 2022/23	16
»»	Conclusion	22



Scope of responsibility

Royal Berkshire Fire Authority (the Authority) is responsible for ensuring that its business is conducted in accordance with relevant legislation and standards and that public money is both safeguarded and properly accounted for. It also has a duty under the [Local Government Act 1999](#), to make arrangements to secure continuous improvement in the way in which its functions are exercised, having regard to a combination of economy, efficiency and effectiveness.

In discharging this overall responsibility, the Authority is responsible for putting in place proper arrangements for the governance of its affairs and facilitating the effective exercise of its functions including arrangements for the management of risk.

The Authority has approved and adopted a code of corporate governance which is consistent with the principles of the CIPFA/SOLACE '*Delivering Good Governance in Local Government: Framework*' (2016 edition). This statement explains how the Authority has complied with the Framework and meets the requirements of [Regulation 6\(1\) of the Accounts and Audit Regulations 2015](#), which requires all relevant bodies to prepare an Annual Governance Statement.

The Authority has also reviewed and reported its compliance with the new CIPFA Financial Management Code (FM Code) which is designed to support good practice in financial management and allow the Authority to demonstrate that it is financially sustainable. The FM Code came into force on 1 April 2021.

Local authorities are required to prepare an Annual Governance Statement in order to report publicly on the extent to which they comply with their own code of governance, which in turn is consistent with the good governance principles in the Framework. This includes how they have monitored and evaluated the effectiveness of their governance arrangements in the year, and on any planned changes in the coming period. The process of preparing the governance statement should itself add value to the effectiveness of the governance and internal control framework. The Annual Governance Statement is intended as a valuable means of communication. It enables an authority to explain to the community, service users, tax payers and other stakeholders its governance arrangements and how the controls it has in place manage risks of failure in delivering its outcomes.

The overall aim is to ensure that:

- » Resources are directed in accordance with agreed policy and according to priorities;
- » There is sound and inclusive decision-making; and
- » There is clear accountability for the use of those resources in order to achieve desired outcomes for service users and communities.



Purpose of the Governance Framework

The Governance Framework comprises the systems, processes, culture and values by which the Authority is directed and controlled. It enables the Authority to monitor the achievement of its Annual Objectives and to consider whether those Objectives have led to the delivery of appropriate, cost-effective services.

The system of internal control is a significant part of that Framework and is designed to manage risk to a reasonable level. It cannot eliminate all risk of failure and can, therefore, only provide reasonable and not absolute assurance of effectiveness. The system of internal control is based on an ongoing process designed to identify and prioritise risks in relation to the achievement of the Authority's aims and objectives; to evaluate the likelihood of those risks being realised and the impact should they be realised.

The Governance Framework has been in place within the Authority for the year ended 31 March 2022, and up to the date of approval of the Statement of Accounts.

The Governance Framework

The governance measures in place reflect the seven principles of good governance set out in the CIPFA/SOLACE '*Delivering Good Governance in Local Government: Framework*' (2016 edition) as set out below.

Core Principle A: Behaving with integrity, demonstrating strong commitment to ethical values and respecting the rule of law

The Constitution of the Authority establishes the roles and responsibilities of Members of the Authority and its Committees, together with officer functions. It includes details of delegation arrangements. The Constitution is kept under review to ensure that it is fit for purpose. Proposed changes are overseen by the Audit and Governance Committee. The Audit and Governance Committee's views on the suitability of any changes are reported when they are presented to the full Fire Authority for approval.

The Constitution also contains procedure rules, standing orders and financial regulations that define how decisions are taken and where authority lies for decisions. The statutory roles of the Chief Fire Officer/Chief Executive, Monitoring Officer and Chief Financial Officer are described together with their contributions to provide robust assurance on governance and that expenditure is lawful and in line with approved budgets and procedures. The influence and oversight of these posts is supported by the post-holders' membership of the Senior Leadership Team.

A new local Members' Code of Conduct for all Members was agreed by the Authority in April



2022 and a Register of disclosable pecuniary interests for each Member is reviewed annually and published on the Authority's website. This is further supported by [Protocol on Member and Officer Relations](#) which sets out respective obligations and expectations.

To ensure legal compliance and to avoid a conflict arising, a recommendation will be made to the June 2022 Fire Authority meeting to appoint three "Independent Persons" in the event of an allegation being made that a Member has breached the Authority's Code of Conduct. The [Complaints Procedure](#) related to members of the Fire Authority is available on the RBFRS website.

The role of Monitoring Officer is fulfilled as part of a collaborative arrangement with Buckinghamshire and Milton Keynes Fire and Rescue Authority. This arrangement has been in place since 2017/18 and has proved to be effective in ensuring suitable discharge of this responsibility.

All employees are bound by the Employee Code of Conduct which includes standards of conduct. The Employee Code of Conduct also sets out the requirement for the declarations of interests and for employees to register offers or acceptance of gifts and hospitality. The [Officer Register of Gifts and Hospitality](#) is publicly available on the RBFRS website.

A Grievance, Bullying and Harassment Policy, Complaints Procedure, Whistle Blowing Policy and Anti-Fraud, Bribery and Corruption Policy are maintained and kept under review, providing the opportunity for members of the public and staff to raise issues when they believe that appropriate standards have not been met. Regular updates on complaints received and their resolution is presented to the Audit and Governance Committee via the quarterly performance report.

The Local Pension Board is set up under the auspices of [The Public Service Pensions Act 2013](#). The Board exists to assist the Fire Authority in its role as Scheme Manager; to secure compliance with the various firefighter pension scheme regulations and other legislation relating to governance and administration of the scheme; secure compliance with requirements imposed by the Pensions Regulator. A six monthly report is provided to the Audit and Governance Committee.

Core Principle B: Ensuring openness and comprehensive stakeholder engagement

The [Corporate Plan and Integrated Risk Management Plan \(IRMP\) 2019-23](#), sets out the contribution the Authority will make to its mission; serving the people of Royal Berkshire. It is linked to the Budget, ensuring that the aspirations in the plan are realistic in the context of funding constraints placed upon the Authority.

The Corporate Plan and Community Risk Management Plan is agreed following consultation with the public, staff and stakeholders. The Authority has consulted on and agreed its CRMP Consultation Principles, which are published within the Corporate Plan and Community Risk Management Plan. A Consultation Strategy is in place which underpins all consultation activity and we work with the Consultation Institute to ensure best practice is followed. Details of our [previous public consultations](#) are available on our website.



In 2021/22, we undertook a [Budget and Council Tax Consultation](#) prior to setting the 2022/23 budget. Our [Equality, Diversity and Inclusivity Objectives 2022-2026](#) have been published on our website and underpin our consultation activity.

Whilst the Corporate Plan spans a four-year period, it is reviewed annually. An [Annual Plan](#) is produced and published on the website for each of those four years, setting out Annual Objectives together with Corporate Measures. Each Unitary Authority area also has a dedicated annual [Local Safety Plan](#), which sets out localised risk and how resources will be targeted to meet that risk.

An [Annual Report](#) is published on our website taking account of matters that have arisen during the last 12 months and reporting on performance for that period.

Corporate Measures that are set annually via the Annual Plan are internally monitored through the Strategic Performance Board prior to reporting via the Audit and Governance Committee. Any strategic projects are managed through the Programme Board, with our Priority Programmes being reported to the Audit and Governance Committee via the [Quarterly Performance Reports](#). In addition to publishing the Quarterly Performance Reports, we publish key performance information on our website on a monthly basis. Our website also contains a '[Transparency and Governance](#)' section publishing financial and staff information which includes the Council Tax Leaflet, procurement card transactions and payments over £500.

The Authority is fully committed to working in partnership and has a record of partnership working that predates the statutory duty to collaborate, as set out in the [Policing and Crime Act 2017](#), with examples including a joint Control Room and fleet maintenance arrangements. The three Thames Valley Fire Services, Thames Valley Police, Police and Crime Commissioner and South Central Ambulance Service have put in place governance arrangements to manage and ensure the effectiveness of collaboration in the Thames Valley. The governance arrangements, which are set out in the [Thames Valley Emergency Services Collaboration Report](#), together with a [Thames Valley Collaboration Register](#), are publicly available on our website.

Meetings of [the Fire Authority and its committee meetings](#) are accessible to the public and dates are published on the website, including the minutes and decisions taken at those meetings. The Authority appoints two members to the Thames Valley Fire Control Service Joint Committee and papers are published on the website for these meetings.

Core Principle C: Defining outcomes in terms of sustainable economic, social and environmental benefits

The Corporate Plan and CRMP provides a clear vision and formal statement on the organisation's purpose and intended outcomes, including how we will manage our resources to achieve those outcomes. Our Community Risk Management Plan sets out how we will



safely and effectively manage risk across our Prevention, Protection and Response activities. We have consulted on and published [strategies](#) for our Prevention, Protection and Response activities, which set how we will target local risk to achieve economic, social and environmental benefits, making best use of our available resources.

Our Consultation Principles set out that we will consult with a wide range of stakeholders, including the public, on any changes that will have a material impact on the performance of the services we provide.

The [15-year Strategic Asset Investment Framework](#), sets out our intent for the management and investment in our capital assets which include our buildings, fleet and ICT, underpinning the Corporate Plan and Integrated Risk Management Plan.

The Organisational Risk Management Policy sets out our approach to the identification and management of risk which may impact on our ability to provide our services. The Corporate Risk Register is reviewed on a four weekly basis by the Strategy Leadership Team, and is reported to the Audit and Governance Committee.

The Service's intention is to support wider Government sustainability and environmental targets. In addition to ordering the Service's first alternative fuelled vehicles, a piece of work has been commissioned to undertake an organisational carbon footprint assessment. Once complete, the information will be used to inform future strategies so that the organisation can set out its direction to becoming more sustainable and environmentally friendly.

Core Principle D: Determining the interventions necessary to optimise the achievement of the intended outcomes

Medium to long-term planning is informed by the [Medium Term Financial Plan](#), which sets out the financial strategy for the Authority. This enables the Authority to understand likely future challenges, and ensure its strategic planning is realistic.

Where necessary, appropriate action is identified to mitigate potential financial risk. This is further supported by the Authority's [Efficiency Plan](#), the final savings from which have been built into the 2022/23 Budget. A new plan is being developed for 2023/24.

Our Performance Management Framework sets out how we will manage performance to ensure organisational aims and objectives are achieved. This Framework sets out how we will measure and monitor performance and where and when the organisation will manage performance. This is further supported by the Organisational Risk Management Policy as set out above.

Core Principle E: Developing the Authority's capacity, including the capability of its leadership and the individuals within it

A key theme of the Corporate Plan and Community Risk Management Plan is Capacity, Capability and Resilience. Our [People Strategy 2018-21](#), sets out how we will support our staff



to be the best public servants they can be, creating a workforce that can deliver an efficient and effective service.

The Authority has agreed a Member Development Strategy 2020-23, which is further supported by a Member Development Action Plan.

The training needs of Members and officers are identified through appraisal and review processes. Appropriate training is made available to ensure that individuals are able to undertake their current roles effectively and that they have the chance to develop to meet their, and the Authority's, needs.

There is a Leadership Development Programme in place for supervisory and middle-managers, with the Senior Leadership Team developed through coaching and external leadership development courses.

Our Behavioural Competency Framework is directly linked to our People Strategy, Equality and Diversity and Inclusion Objectives and our Behavioural Competency Framework, and has leadership at its core.

Our Workforce Planning Group allows us to monitor our workforce profile, as well as anticipate future workforce needs and plan accordingly.

We have a Health, Safety and Wellbeing Strategy and Action Plan, to support our staff, with a particular focus on Mental Health.

Independent assurance is provided by Her Majesty's Inspectorate of Constabulary and Fire and Rescue Services across the three pillars of 'effectiveness', 'efficiency' and 'people'. In June 2019, the first inspection report for Royal Berkshire Fire and Rescue Services was issued in which it said the Service was performing to a high standard in these areas and was graded as 'good' in all three pillars.

In August 2020, the Home Secretary commissioned HMICFRS to examine how fire and rescue services were responding to the pandemic.

The findings of the virtual inspection released on 22 January 2021, confirmed that Royal Berkshire Fire and Rescue Service has 'adapted and responded to the pandemic effectively', highlighting the additional support the Service has been offering its communities throughout the public health crisis.

The next round of inspections are underway with RBFRS being inspected in tranche three which started in 2021 and will be completed in summer 2022.

Core Principle F: Managing risks and performance through robust internal control and strong public financial management

The Authority ensures that the Service has appropriate governance arrangements in place and that risk and performance are being effectively managed. As set out above, there is a Performance Management Framework and Organisational Risk Management Policy which sets out how this is achieved.



The Authority has ownership of the strategic risks of the Service and is responsible for monitoring and challenging risks and actions appearing on the Corporate Risk Register. This responsibility for risk and performance management is delegated by the Authority to the Audit and Governance Committee.

The Head of Finance and Procurement is appointed as the Chief Finance Officer and ensures the sound administration of the financial affairs of the Authority, as required by the statutory duties associated with section 112 of the Local Government Finance Act 1988 and the Accounts and Audit Regulations 2015. The Chief Financial Officer is required to adhere to professional standards set by CIPFA.

Until October 2015, the Authority's insurance was arranged through a consortium of nine fire and rescue authorities. These fire and rescue authorities are now members of the [Fire and Rescue Indemnity Company Ltd \(FRIC\)](#). The company commenced trading in November 2015. The Authority's risk protection arrangements are provided through the pooled funds of the company. The aims of the Company are twofold: to reduce risk to the Authority by driving up standards, for example, by adopting best practice in relation to driving standards and also to reduce the cost to the Authority of its risk protection arrangements over the longer-term.

Core Principle G: Implementing good practices in transparency, reporting and audit to deliver effective accountability

Data is published on the website in accordance with the Local Government Transparency Code to promote openness and accountability through reporting on local decision-making, public spending and democratic processes.

The Authority has a designated statutory Data Protection Officer (DPO) that reports through the Authority's Senior Information Risk Owner (SIRO) which is the Deputy Chief Executive/Director of Corporate Services. Both the DPO and SIRO ensure legal compliance with data protection requirements.

The [Pay Policy](#) has been approved by the Authority and is subject to review annually. It is produced in accordance with new or proposed legislation to ensure that it remains relevant and effective. The Pay Policy Statement for 2022-23 was approved by the Authority on 15 February 2022.

In addition to publishing the [Gender Pay Gap Report for 2021](#), on our website. The Authority, also published an Ethnicity Pay Gap Report for 2021 which goes further than the statutory Gender Pay Gap report and gives clearer and more extensive information regarding how individuals are paid at RBFRS and how individual pay elements are distributed across the various protected groups. We will be doing a follow up audit on the Ethnicity Pay Gap report in 2022/23.

An annual [Statement of Assurance](#) is produced to formally confirm to Government, stakeholders and the communities we serve, the adequacy of arrangements for the effective management of financial, governance and operational matters in RBFRS. The Statement confirms the extent to which the requirement of the Fire and Rescue National Framework for England have been met.



The Audit and Governance Committee undertakes the scrutiny function within the Authority and provides a robust challenge to the Authority. The Committee reviews performance and risk within the Authority, initiating reviews where it considers performance could be improved.

The Authority's Internal Audit Service is carried out by external contractors appointed under contract. The appointed Internal Auditor (RSM) is required to provide an annual independent and objective opinion to the Authority on risk management, governance and the control environment. The annual Audit Plan is agreed by the Audit and Governance Committee and in 2021/22 RSM undertook the following audits:

Audit	Assurance Level
Cyber Essentials	Advisory
Performance management	Reasonable assurance
Value for money	Reasonable assurance
Vetting and pre-employment checks	Reasonable assurance
Risk Management and Governance	Substantial assurance
Firefighter Pension Administration	Substantial assurance
Payroll provider	Substantial assurance
Key Financial Controls	Substantial assurance



Review of Effectiveness

The Authority has responsibility for conducting, at least annually, a review of the effectiveness of its governance framework, including the system of internal control. The review of effectiveness is informed by the work of the senior managers within the Authority who have responsibility for the development and maintenance of the governance environment, the Internal Auditors' (RSM) annual report, and by the findings and reports issued by the external auditors and other review agencies and inspectorates.

The Authority has an Audit and Governance Committee with responsibility for monitoring and reviewing the risk, control and governance processes and associated assurance processes to ensure internal control systems are effective and that policies and practices are in compliance with statutory and other regulations and guidance.

Covid-19 implications for Governance

In March 2020, COVID-19 emerged in the UK as a public health emergency. As a governance issue that has been ongoing since 2019/20, the Authority's consideration of COVID-19 has been summarised separately for the purposes of the Annual Governance Statement and provides a summary of the impact on Governance for the period of the pandemic.

Early in the pandemic, in line with government guidance, RBFRS suspended non-essential activities to protect our communities, staff and critical functions. Since then we have continually risk assessed our activities, reintroducing services when case levels and restrictions have allowed.

Internally, our robust governance arrangements continue to enable us to respond to the risk posed by COVID-19 in accordance with the Business Continuity Management and Critical Event Management Policy. Our Critical Event Management Team (CEMT) and Governance structure remained in place until Q4 2022 when this was moved into being managed as part of business as usual activities.



Significant Governance Issues Addressed in 2021/22

The following provides a progress report against the significant governance issues identified in the last Annual Governance Statement.

Governance matter identified	Action taken in 2021/22	Lead Officer	Target date
<p><u>Volatility of Funding</u></p> <p>Volatility of funding continued to be a significant and ongoing pressure for the Authority in 2021/22. In addition to the pressure which emerged in 2021/22, the Authority continues to monitor a number of possible budgetary pressures which may create challenges in the future.</p> <p>The Authority will await the outcome of the Government's Comprehensive Spending Review (CSR). Further potential volatility may result from the CSR and the likely resetting of the business rates funding baseline.</p> <p>Departmental savings of £73,000 and additional income of £28,000 had been built into the base budget for 2021/22.</p> <p>These shortfalls highlight why the Chairman of the Fire Authority has been lobbying MPs and the Government to provide the Fire Authority with increased flexibility around the setting of the precept. Our current CRMP model is required to deliver an effective and efficient service for the people of Berkshire. However, should additional funding</p>	<p>The outbreak of the global coronavirus (COVID-19) pandemic had profound financial consequences for the Authority. However, lobbying of Government through the NFCC resulted in additional funding which meant that the Authority has been able to take all necessary measures to preserve its ability to provide critical emergency response and to protect its staff from unnecessary risk during 2021/22.</p> <p>The precept flexibility lobbying was successful and RBFA increased the council tax precept by £5 for 2022/23 which will increase revenue by £1.2m.</p>	Wayne Bowcock	Feb 2022



Governance matter identified	Action taken in 2021/22	Lead Officer	Target date
<p>not be secured in the upcoming CSR, the Authority will have to consider revisiting its IRMP model to balance the budget.</p>			
<p><u>HMICFRS</u></p> <p>The Service is being inspected as part of tranche 3 of the inspection programme with formal inspection activity commenced in early 2022. Fieldwork is scheduled to take place in spring-summer 2022, with the dates to be confirmed by HMICFRS.</p>	<p>During 2021/22, RBFRS has continued to work towards its HMICFRS Action Plan, which is monitored through the strategic Performance Board and Audit and Governance Committee.</p> <p>The six week fieldwork starts in June 2022 and preparation and evidence collection underway for submission and preparation for fieldwork.</p> <p>Final report publication is expected during Winter 2022/23.</p>	<p>Nikki Richards</p>	<p>December 2022</p>
<p><u>Built Environment</u></p> <p>The Built Environment Programme will remain an area of focus in 2020/21, with ongoing additional financial pressures this creates for the Fire Authority. Following a gap analysis to identify areas of improvement, work will continue to be delivered to ensure the Authority appropriately responds and learns from the findings of the Grenfell Tower Inquiry. Alongside this, the risk posed by High Risk Residential Buildings remains a significant national challenge and forms part of the national Fire Chiefs Council Building Risk Review Programme. The Authority will continue to contribute towards this national programme as well as build on the work already</p>	<p>The Programme has made significant progress towards addressing the 46 recommendations, including the producing of a number of LMS training packages, introduction of EIPs (Electronic Premise Information Plates) and carrying out radio tests within all of our HRRBs.</p> <p>All data for the Building Risk Review Programme was completed in Autumn ahead of schedule with a high level of assurance and data checking prior to submission.</p> <p>We have now moved into phase 2 of our High Risk Residential Building project whereby we continue to work closely with Building Owners and Responsible Persons, alongside our partners in</p>	<p>Noosha Churchill</p>	<p>Ongoing</p>



Governance matter identified	Action taken in 2021/22	Lead Officer	Target date
<p>undertaken locally to address the challenges posed by the High Risk Residential Buildings with the Service, where appropriate, making full use of its statutory powers to drive remediation of those buildings.</p>	<p>local authority housing teams, ensuring where necessary, enforcement action is taken and interim measures are applied as appropriate.</p>		
<p><u>Pay Award</u></p> <p>The 2021/22 Budget was set on the basis that there would be no pay award for staff in line with the Government's announcement of a pay freeze for public sector workers. Furthermore, the Authority would not have been able to balance its budget if any form of pay rise had been factored in. Pay award negotiations since the budget was set will create a significant budget pressure.</p>	<p>The pay award for Green Book staff was 1.75% and for Grey Book staff it was 1.5%. This created significant budgetary pressure which was offset by one-off rebates from business rates appeals.</p> <p>The £5 increase in the precept for 2022/23 has been partly used to provide on-going funding for this unbudgeted pay award.</p> <p>Unfortunately, the macro economic situation has worsened and inflation rates have compounded budget pressures. Coupled with anticipated cost of living pay increase requests and rising costs anything above the budgeted pay award of 2.5% in 2022/23 will be difficult to fund.</p>	<p>Conor Byrne</p>	<p>February 2022</p>
<p><u>Development of new People Strategy</u></p> <p>Our people are our most important asset and the current People Strategy ran until 2021. A key theme of the Corporate Plan and Community Risk Management Plan is Capacity, Capability and Resilience. Our new People Strategy will continue our journey of improvement and support our staff to be the best public servants they can</p>	<p>We will undertake a staff engagement programme to inform the development of our new strategy, which we aim to publish in 2022/23.</p>	<p>Nikki Richards</p>	<p>January 2023</p>



Governance matter identified	Action taken in 2021/22	Lead Officer	Target date
-------------------------------------	--------------------------------	---------------------	--------------------

be, creating a workforce that can deliver excellence to our communities. It will also allow the Service to consider working arrangements following the pandemic, and its longer-term strategy for ways of working.



Significant Governance Issues to be addressed in 2022/23

In addition to the significant issues in action, the following significant governance issues have been identified for 2022/23:

Governance matter identified	Action to be taken in 2022/23	Lead Officer	Target date
<p><u>New Community Risk Management Plan</u></p> <p>Our CRMP and corporate plan runs to 2023 and requires a review to ensure our future plans are relevant to our communities and reflect an ever changing world. Our CRMP model is required to deliver an effective and efficient service for the people of Berkshire.</p> <p>A new plan is needed which will require significant resource and capacity to review and build to meet risk and the needs of our communities. Our new CRMP will continue our journey of improvement and could change how we deliver the service.</p>	<p>Programme of work to be initiated to review risks and help develop our future plans and impacts.</p>	<p>Nikki Richards</p>	<p>February 2023</p>
<p><u>Funding</u></p> <p>The Authority's funding position going into 2022/23 is one of extreme volatility due to both the uncertain political and economic uncertainty at a national level. This uncertainty means that it is increasingly difficult to predict the outcomes of the Government's upcoming Spending</p>	<p>Monitor progress of the government White Paper consultation outcomes and the NFCC fit for the Future vision.</p> <p>Scenario planning will highlight the implications of a financial settlement that requires expenditure cuts to balance the budget.</p>	<p>Wayne Bowcock</p>	<p>February 2023</p>



Governance matter identified	Action to be taken in 2022/23	Lead Officer	Target date
<p>Review which will determine the financial parameters within which the Authority will have to operate.</p>	<p>Development of a new Efficiency Plan.</p>		
<p><u>Pay Award</u> The 2022/23 Budget was set on the basis that there would be a pay award of 2.5% for staff. Pay award negotiations since the budget was set are likely to create a significant budget pressure.</p>	<p>Unbudgeted pay awards will need to be funded through the use of reserves or reduced revenue funding of capital in 2022/23.</p> <p>Scenario planning for 2023/24 will take account of pay awards and strategies will be developed to bring the budget back into balance.</p>	<p>Conor Byrne</p>	<p>February 2023</p>
<p><u>Pensions</u> The pensions landscape remains complex and the technical policy and secondary legislation associated with the Sargeant case is not yet in place During the 2021/22 year RBFRS considered its approach to those due to retire and most affected by the pension situation, agreeing through the Fire Authority, the approach to be adopted in relation to those classed as ‘immediate detriment’.</p> <p>Guidance on the O’Brien/Matthews case and how retained duty system staff should be treated is still awaited and will create significant additional workload pressure for the Service and the administrator in the same time frame.</p> <p>Responding to the changes in pension regulations and ensuring the workforce is resourced appropriately</p>	<p>RBFRS will continue preparation of data and records for when regulations come in to force by taking account of emerging guidance and increasing pension knowledge by working together with the pension administrator and across the sector to ensure effective management of pension arrangements.</p> <p>Recruitment of firefighters will be scheduled to meet workforce needs.</p> <p>Quarterly updates to A&G Committee will provide oversight of the emerging issues.</p>	<p>Becci Jefferies</p>	<p>February 2023</p>



Governance matter identified	Action to be taken in 2022/23	Lead Officer	Target date
<p>through effective planning and will remain a priority area of focus.</p>			
<p><u>Workforce</u></p> <p>Our people are our most important asset and the current People Strategy runs until 2021. A key theme of the Corporate Plan and Community Risk Management Plan is Capacity, Capability and Resilience.</p> <p>Linked to the cost of living crisis, workforce retention is being impacted and we are experiencing a high percentage of staff in development. This will also impact internal costs and capacity.</p> <p>Our new People Strategy will continue our journey of improvement and support our staff to be the best public servants they can be, creating a workforce that can deliver excellence to our communities. It will also allow the Service to consider longer-term strategy for ways of working.</p>	<p>We will undertake a staff engagement programme to inform the development of our new strategy.</p> <p>Continue to ensure our workforce planning takes account of forecasted changes and requirements.</p>	<p>Becci Jefferies</p>	<p>February 2023</p>
<p><u>Refresh of Strategic Documents</u></p> <p>Implementation of Phase One of the Strategic Asset Investment Framework continues, the lack of funding for Phase Two remains an issue for the Fire Authority.</p>	<p>Lobbying of MPs and Government will continue during 2022/23 to highlight the need for financial support to renew our assets to enable the Authority to deliver an efficient and effective service to the public.</p> <p>The Authority's new Efficiency Plan and refreshed Strategic Asset Investment Framework will be developed during 2022/23. The Efficiency Plan will</p>	<p>Wayne Bowcock</p>	<p>February 2023</p>



Governance matter identified	Action to be taken in 2022/23	Lead Officer	Target date
	be based on the outcomes of the value for money exercise that was carried out in spring 2022.		
<p><u>Sustainability</u></p> <p>Increasing expectations that organisations should consider sustainability. It is our intention to support the wider Government sustainability and environmental targets. A strategy needs to be set out so the organisation can set its direction towards becoming more sustainable and environmental friendly.</p>	Review outcomes of the organisational carbon footprint assessment to produce future strategy.	Andy McLenahan	February 2023
<p><u>Built Environment</u></p> <p>The Built Environment Programme will remain an area of focus for 2022/23. RBFRS will continue to deliver within its priority areas of work to ensure that it continues to learn and improve as a result of the findings of the Grenfell Tower Inquiry.</p> <p>The Authority will need to ensure that it is well prepared for the recent legislative changes relating to the built environment and the challenges these will bring.</p> <p>The risk posed by High Risk Residential Buildings is still a significant challenge both at a national and local level.</p>	<p>We will continue to deliver against the priority areas of work identified as part of the Built Environment Programme.</p> <p>We will continue to link in with the national programme of work to ensure we are well positioned for the recent and upcoming legislative changes e.g. Building Safety Bill and the outcomes of Grenfell Phase 2.</p> <p>Alongside this, we will continue with Phase 2 of the HRRB project working with responsible persons to ensure our building are compliant and monitor impacts to our future plans.</p> <p>The Authority will continue to build on the work already undertaken in 2021/22, making full use of its statutory powers to drive remediation of those buildings.</p>	Noosha Churchill	February 2023



Governance matter identified	Action to be taken in 2022/23	Lead Officer	Target date
<p><u>Government White Paper, Fire Reform and PCCs</u></p> <p>A consultative White Paper is due to be published in 2022, setting out the Government's reform agenda in relation to fire and exploring specific proposals on fire governance in more detail, including whether ex</p> <p>The White paper for fire reform is expected to be published for public consultation in Q1 2022.</p> <p>The Fit for the Future initiative partnership between the National Employers (England) (NE England), the Local Government Association (LGA) and the National Fire Chiefs Council (NFCC) ran a consultation process during 2020 and are committed to moving forward work in 2022 across 11 areas for improvement across the breadth of Fire And Rescue services.</p>	<p>The Authority will consider the White paper and its proposals when published and respond to the consultation.</p> <p>Any additional impacts from the wider Fire Reform Agenda will also have significant impacts across all areas of RBFRS activity and will require consideration.</p>	Wayne Bowcock	February 2023
<p><u>HMICFRS</u></p> <p>The Service is being inspected as part of tranche 3 of the inspection programme with formal inspection activity commenced in early 2022. Fieldwork is anticipated to take place in June 2022, and the report will be published towards the end of 2022 and any areas for improvements will not be known until that point.</p>	<p>We will remain focused on delivering the existing HMICFRS Action Plan to completion.</p> <p>We will continue to proactively engage to ensure that the Service is suitably prepared and align internal resource to support organisational preparation.</p> <p>The inspection activity and any findings will be considered in the development of the Annual Plan and Service Plans.</p>	Nikki Richards	December 2022



Governance matter identified	Action to be taken in 2022/23	Lead Officer	Target date
<p><u>Cyber security threat</u></p> <p>There is increasing use of and movement to cloud based IT services. With the increased circumstances of remote working there is additional pressure on those services. There have been increased incidences and threats of ransomware attacks and the potential for the risk of cyber-attacks to increase in frequency.</p>	<p>We will continue to focus resources in this area and commission audits of our systems to test for vulnerabilities.</p>	<p>Tony Vincent</p>	<p>February 2023</p>



Conclusion

The Authority will monitor the governance issues identified in this Statement through its performance and risk management arrangements. This ensures regular review and scrutiny of the issues identified by the Senior Leadership Team and the Authority. The Annual Governance Statement for 2023/24, will include an updated position against the governance issues identified in the 2022/23 Statement.

Signed:

Date:

Chairman of Audit and Governance Committee for Royal Berkshire Fire Authority

Signed:

Date:

Chief Fire Officer and Chief Executive

ROYAL BERKSHIRE
FIRE AND RESCUE SERVICE

-  RoyalBerksFRS
-  @RBFRSOfficial
-  RoyalBerkshireFire
-  Royal Berkshire Fire & Rescue Service
-  rbfrs.co.uk