

MINUTES OF THE MEETING OF THE AUDIT AND GOVERNANCE COMMITTEE



Held on Monday, 20th October, 2025 at 6.30 pm

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

Members: (*present)

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|---------------------------------|-----------------------------|
| * Councillor Billy Drummond | * Councillor Zafar Satti |
| * Councillor Dennis Benneyworth | * Councillor Dilbagh Parmar |
| * Councillor Greg Bello | Councillor Andy NG Siu-hong |
| * Councillor Tricia Brown | Councillor Owen Jeffery |
| * Councillor Mohammed Nazir | |

In Attendance: Andrew Davies (Grant Thornton, External Auditor)
Angela Smith (Programme Officer & Inspection Manager)
Annie Pratt (Head of Corporate Services, HCS)
Anna Smy (Data and Performance Manager, Intelligence, Risk and Performance)
Conor Byrne (Head of Finance and Procurement, HF&P)
Daniel Harris (Internal Auditor, RSM) - Virtual
David Crease (Area Manager, Prevention and Protection, AM P&P)
Frank Long (Group Manager (B) Intelligence Risk and Performance Manager)
Grace Hawkins (Grant Thornton, External Auditor)
Graham Britten (Monitoring Officer, MO)
Kathryn Richardson (HMICFRS Service Liaison Lead) – Virtual
Katie Mills (Assistant Chief Fire Officer, ACFO)
Lucy Greenway (Senior HR Adviser)
Lukasz Wrona (Head of Business and Information Systems, HBIS)
Mark Arkwell (Deputy Chief Fire Officer, DCFO)
Michaela Smith (Democratic Support Assistant, DSA)
Nikki Richards (Deputy Chief Executive, DChEx)
Tom Brandon (Area Manager, Response and Resilience, AM R&R)
Sarah J Jassal (Grant Thornton, External Auditor) - Virtual

14. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Apologies were received from Councillor Benneyworth and Vice-Chair Councillor Jeffery.

Action

15. 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.

16. MINUTES OF THE MEETING HELD ON 10 JULY 2025

RESOLVED that the Minutes of the meeting on 10 July 2025, be approved as a true record to be signed the Chair.

17. CONSIDERATION OF ANY MATTERS PROPERLY REFERRED TO THIS COMMITTEE FOR DECISION

There were no matters properly referred to this Committee for decision.

18. ANNUAL GOVERNANCE STATEMENT

Angela Smith, Programme Officer & Inspection Manager, reported that Royal Berkshire Fire 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.

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 good governance principles in the Framework. This included how the Authority had monitored and evaluated the effectiveness of their governance arrangements in the year, and on any planned changes in the coming period.

The Annual Governance Statement explained how the Authority had complied with the Framework and met the requirements of Regulation 6 of the Accounts and Audit Regulations 2015.

Angela Smith asked that the Fire Authority agree the Annual Governance Statement for 2024/25.

Councillor Drummond asked about 'the internal costs' that were quoted on page 33 of the Draft RBFARS Annual Governance Statement and Nikki Richards, Deputy Chief Executive, DchEx, stated she would confirm total costs to him directly outside the meeting, as this information was not to hand and that the costs relating to recruitment were for additional training and administration.

DchEX

Referencing page 34 of the statement, Councillor Bello asked if there had been any cyber security attacks on the Authority during 2025. Lukasz Wrona, Head of Business and Information Systems, HBIS, confirmed minor cyber incidents had taken place, but nothing that required reporting to the ICO or the Authority and no data had been lost.

Daniel Harris (Internal Auditor, RSM) stated work carried out by RSM for 2024/25 was detailed on page 31, and it stated they are required to give a year end opinion on the risk management, governance and internal control arrangements. RSM issued an unqualified positive opinion, and he queried whether one line stating this could be added to the document. Nikki Richards (DChEx) confirmed that wording can be drafted and added into the document for the Chair to review.

Programme
Office and
Inspection
Officer

The Chair asked for further information on the legislation changes within the Telecommunications Act on page 35. Mark Arkwell, Deputy Chief Fire Officer, DCFO, confirmed that the changes provide greater powers for the telecom providers and that income generated by infrastructure on RBFRS sites would reduce in the future due to these changes.

The Chair asked for an update on the work carried out in relation to the changes to the Procurement Act, also detailed on page 35. Conor Byrne, Head of Finance and Procurement, HF&P, confirmed work had been completed and the amended contract standing orders were brought to the committee, which were in place, and compliant with the act and any related documentation had also been updated.

The Chair moved the recommendations, and it was seconded by Councillor Drummond.

On being put to the vote, it was **RESOLVED** that the Annual Governance Statement for 2024/25 be agreed.

19. INTERNAL AUDIT UPDATE

Daniel Harris, Internal Auditor, RSM, introduced the item and stated the report provided an update on the progress made and whether anything significant might impact the year end opinion. On page 47, one remaining final report from 2024/25 internal audit plan, Cyber Security, had been issued. Four medium priority actions had been agreed and were detailed within the report.

An update on the 2025/26 programme of work and appendix A on page 51 listed the audits in this year's programme. One draft report on Risk and Governance had been issued, and all remaining audits had been scheduled in, with a further cyber review planned for January 2026. There had been no further changes to the 2025/26 plan.

Councillor Drummond raised a question on password information on page 61. Lukasz Wrona, Head of Business and Information Systems, HBIS, confirmed that on-going training helped to mitigate this risk as well as measures which limited where RBFRS accounts could be accessed from.

Councillor Bello raised questions on information in page 54 (self-assessment score) and 58 (firewall password) of the pack. In answer to the first question Lukasz Wrona (HBIS) replied he did not have data to hand, but would provide it outside of the meeting, in answer to the second question he confirmed that further work was needed to provide satisfactory evidence to the auditors. Daniel Harris added that the data on page 54 related to the security update management, and the two actions in relation to that were linked to access management and malware protection.

HBIS

In response to Councillor Nazir's question about insufficient evidence, Daniel Harris assured Members that although a lack of security had the potential to disrupt an organisation, none of the actions were categorised as high priority issues and RBFRS reacted swiftly with a response to the raised actions. Daniel Harris concluded RSM would revisit the actions in January 2026 and feedback to the Committee that they have been implemented.

Lukasz Wrona (HBIS) added the audit was against a standard which required a specific amount of evidence and the result did not say measures were not in place.

Looking at page 51, which detailed the internal audit plan, the Chair asked how realistic the March 2026 deadline was. Daniel Harris confirmed the Risk Management and Payroll Provider review had been issued in draft form and would come to the next meeting. The Equality Impact Assessment and Pensions Administration should be finalised in December and be ready for the March meeting.

Page 81 detailed the quarterly client briefing note which contained information related to current publications and news that may affect the emergency services sector and page 96 detailed emerging risks businesses faced. A benchmarking paper on page 69 showed the number of actions and assurance opinions received within 2024/25. The results showed that RBFRS compared very well against other fire authority clients across the country.

The Chair asked if the data included the ambulance services and Daniel Harris replied that this data was covered within the NHS section which is not included in the agenda pack.

The Chair moved the recommendations, and it was seconded by Councillor Drummond.

It was **RESOLVED** that RSM's Progress Report be noted.

20. EXTERNAL AUDIT UPDATE

Touching on the main points from the accounts Conor Byrne, Head of Finance and Procurement, HF&P, began with page 131 and stated this showed movement on reserves for 2024/25. The balance on 31/03/2025 for General Fund and Earmarked Reserves was £490,000 lower than the previous year, Capital Receipts reduced by £3.9 million for the year and this resulted in total useable reserves falling by £4.4 million for 2024/25. Page 133 showed the Comprehensive Income and Expenditure Statement with a deficit of £5.3 million for the year derived using accepted accounting practices. Reconciliation between £5.3 million and £490,000 detailed on page 137 showed the main difference between these two figures related to the way pensions were accounted for. The Balance Sheet on page 134 showed a reduction in net liabilities of £31.2 million, mainly due to the reduction in pension liabilities, along with a reduction due to an increase in corporate bond yields since March 2024.

The first report to be covered by Grace Hawkins, Grant Thornton, External Auditor, was the audit findings report, she confirmed the audit was substantially completed, the only outstanding element being the assurances from the pension fund auditor and these were expected in December. Grace Hawkins gave her thanks to Conor Byrne and his team who had enabled Grant Thornton to complete the audits earlier than last year. The 21-22 and 22-23 financial year accounts were disclaimed by EY and Grant Thornton had worked their way through the implications of this on ongoing audits. All bodies impacted by the backstop had received grant funding from central government to support the work and it is very much a live discussion within the sector as work progresses. Until then the opinion will remain disclaimed due to the ongoing impact on the opening balances, although Grant Thornton hoped to issue the opinion in December following receipt of the assurance letter and well in advance of the next backstop on 27 February 2026.

Andrew Davies, Grant Thornton, External Auditor, began stating the last two years returned disclaimed opinions, where no assurance was provided and Grant Thornton issued a disclaimed opinion on their audit report on 14 February 2025, and this included the buildings revaluation using gross internal area (GIA) data. Significant progress had been made this year, accounts and working papers were provided on time and all queries addressed in a timely manner. The GIA issue that was reported had been addressed, with relevant areas being remeasured. One adjustment was required and had been made. The opening balances issue remained based on the reserve issues. All work was complete with the exception of the letter from the pension fund (as mentioned above). The report cannot be issued until this is received. All substantive testing is complete, the testing did not identify any errors that impacted on the Authority's financial position, but Grant Thornton did identify two issues that increased the Authority's assets by £705,000.

Materiality on the audit was £1 million, and any issue over that figure was noted (no issues were found) and performance materiality was £700,000. The triviality

threshold was £50,000, any issue noted would be included in the report and audit adjustments were on pages 256 and 257.

Significant risks were identified, one of these, management override of control, and is present on all audits. Other risks included valuation of land and pension liability. Two recommendations were outstanding, but no others were raised as part of this audit.

Andrew Davis added that Grant Thornton would issue a full and final audit findings report in December when they issue their opinion.

Councillor Bello asked for clarification on the term disclaimed and Grace Hawkins explained when no audit work had been completed, no opinion could be given. This was the case for the two years prior to Grant Thornton taking over audit work for RBFRS.

Conor Byrne (HF&P), added that the previous auditors, EY, were unable to carry out audits for the Service due to resourcing issues. This led to backstop dates being created which meant if new auditors were not in place by that date, then a disclaimed opinion would be noted. It is hoped that the Service is now back on track for the 24/25 audits. Councilor Bello raised a further question on the balance sheet and asked for clarification on the terms useable and unusable reserve. Conor Bryne replied that the figure was £11.840 million, that useable reserves were reserves that were available to the Authority and an unusable reserve would be an unrealisable amount, for example to cover a pension liability.

On the subject of disclaimed opinion, Councillor Nazir asked if the Service would be able to be recompensed by EY and Conor Byrne replied saying this was not possible due to the contract that was in place at the time.

The Chair asked for clarification on derecognition-disposals, and Conor Byrne confirmed these were assets that had been disposed of. The Chair highlighted some grammatical errors on page 183 of the report.

Moving on to the annual report, Grace Hawkins explained Grant Thornton also provided commentary on arrangements for securing value for money and this was reported through the annual report and focused on three areas – financial sustainability, governance and achieving economy, efficiency and effectiveness. This was a positive report with no significant weaknesses or key recommendations, and Grant Thornton were satisfied the Authority had good arrangements in place for securing value for money (VFM).

Sarah Jassal, also from Grant Thornton, went through the key messages within the report.

The executive summary confirmed no significant weaknesses were identified in the Authority's arrangements across any of the VFM criteria, and this was in line with the findings last year. No new improvement recommendations were raised

this year, four previous recommendations had been fully implemented, and one recommendation partially addressed. Improvements included sensitivity analysis now included in the Medium-Term Financial Plan, enhanced reporting of capital spending and efficiency savings and risk register now aligned with strategic commitments in the Community Risk Management Plan (CRMP). Two prior recommendations had been re-raised - governance document review and the establishment of a data quality policy. Insights within the report on page 301 detailed opportunities identified to strengthen procurement and contract management, although Members were assured, these areas were not a weakness – purely examples of sector best practice for consideration.

Sarah Jassal summarised that the overall findings that the quality of the arrangements in place were strong, with relatively few areas of improvement compared to other fire and rescue services.

Grace Hawkins confirmed that Grant Thornton required a letter of representation from management as part of their standard procedures and this would be approved alongside the accounts and the annual governance statement. In answer to a question from the Chair, Grace Thornton confirmed that authority has been delegated to Conor Byrne should any minor amendments be required and Conor Byrne added any changes would be actioned in consultation with the Chair.

Councillor Nazir asked if it was normal practice to have the letter mentioned above, and Grace Hawkins confirmed it was.

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

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

- 1) The Audit Findings Report be noted; and
- 2) The Auditor's Annual Report be noted; and
- 3) The Letter of Representation for 2024/25 be approved; and
- 4) The 2024/25 Statement of Accounts be approved; and
- 5) Authorisation be given to the Head of Finance and Procurement, in consultation with the Chair of the Audit & Governance Committee, to make any minor alterations and sign the Accounts once the audit has been completed.

The meeting was then adjourned by the Chair to allow for a break; the meeting commenced again at 7.50pm

21. GENDER, ETHNICITY AND DISABILITY PAY GAP REPORTS 2025

Lucy Greenway, Senior HR Adviser, reported that The Equality Act 2010 required the service to publish information on the gender pay gap every year and although there is no requirement for the service to publish ethnicity pay gap

figures or disability pay gap figures, RBFRS had opted to publish these figures voluntarily. The same calculations were used for all pay gaps, these calculations were very complex, and figures were based on pay rates as at 31 March 2025.

The results showed a mean gender pay gap of -6.46% and a median gender pay gap of -6.06%, in simple terms for each £1 earned by males, females earned £1.06. At RBFRS the median gender pay gap is considerably better than the available national figures (2024). The national median gender pay gap for 2024 was 13.1%.

Mean and median figures were calculated for each quartile for males and females as seen in 3.10. Recruitment activity of predominantly male Firefighter Apprentices had significantly impacted the pay gap as well as Grey Book staff attracted allowances and additional payments for the mostly male Grey Book population.

Quartiles were very fluid, and the gender pay gap had been affected by the equality data collection exercise which impacted figures for each quartile as those not declaring a gender could not be included in the calculations.

The ethnicity pay gap considered white staff and staff from ethnic minorities. The results identified overall the mean ethnicity pay gap was -1.55% (indicating for the mean, ethnic minority staff are paid slightly more than white staff) and the median was 2.76% (indicating for the median ethnic minority staff are paid slightly less than white staff). In simple terms for each £1 earned by white staff, at RBFRS, ethnic minorities earned £1.05 for the mean and £0.97 for the median.

There are no national figures for comparison and no mandatory requirement to report these findings. The pay gap had been impacted by recruitment activity in lower quartiles, along with equality data collection exercise where 6% of staff did not disclose their ethnicity. The ethnicity quartiles differed slightly from the pay gap quartiles; this is mainly due to long-serving members of staff sitting within the mid-high end of their pay spine.

In relation to the disability pay gap, findings have identified overall the mean disability pay gap was -8.31% and the median was -4.75%. In simple terms for each £1 earned by those with no declared disability, those with a declared disability earned £1.08 for the mean and £1.04 for the median. Those with a declared disability are paid more than those with no declared disability. This is the first year that RBFRS have calculated disability pay gap figures and there are no nationally reported figures that could be used for comparison.

RBFRS are confident that across the service staff are paid for equal work but are aware that culturally barriers may exist which may hinder career progression for ethnic minority staff. In order to attract a more diverse workforce RBFRS have utilised equality impact assessments, renewed their disability confident

leader status, continued to engage in the Change 100 program and the Summer Internship program amongst other things.

To assist Members who were not aware of the Change 100 Program and the Summer Internship the Chair asked Lucy Greenway to provide further information on the program. Lucy Greenway confirmed the Change 100 program was aimed at individual university graduates who had disabilities and/or neurodiversity issues to work at the Service over the summer. The Summer Internship was a program aimed at 18-year-olds, to work with the Service over a short period of time to gain experience in a working environment.

The Chair raised a question about wording on page 321, point 3.23, and wording on page 327. Lucy Greenway confirmed that the second sentence of point 3.23 should read '*A negative pay gap indicates that white staff are paid less than those from ethnic minorities*' and that the wording on page 327 should be 2025 not 2024.

Councillor NG Sui-hong asked a question about the data on page 342 and Lucy Greenway replied that within all pay gaps ethnic minority was low but this does not mean there is an issue with promotion for this group of staff.

Councillor Bello stated he felt these three reports were very encouraging and offered praise to the Authority and the Service for publishing figures when there was no mandatory ruling to do so and for the help offered to those staff with mental health and neuro-diversity conditions. Other Members agreed with Councillor Bellos comments and the Chair added that she was impressed with the progress the Service has made in these areas of the past few years.

It was **RESOLVED** that:

- 1) the details of the Gender Pay Gap Report shown in Appendix A be noted and it be agreed it be published on the RBFRS website and on gov.uk; and
- 2) the details of the Ethnicity Pay Gap Report shown in Appendix B be noted and it be agreed it be published on the RBFRS website; and
- 3) the details of the Disability Pay Gap Report shown in Appendix C be noted and it be agreed it be published on the RBFRS website.

22. DISCIPLINE AND COMPLAINT EFFECTIVENESS ASSESSMENT 2024/2025

Lucy Greenway, Senior HR Adviser, presented the Discipline and Complaints Effectiveness Assessment report and stated HR undertook an annual comparison of discipline and complaint cases recorded across the Service. The actual review contains greater detail than the content presented here, but for confidentiality purposes the report is kept short.

In summary there had been a decrease in the number of discipline cases in relation to behaviour, but an increase in relation to breach of policy/process, the number of cases related to bullying and harassment remain consistent and outcomes continue to be monitored. Time taken to complete cases are also monitored and depend on the complexity of the case. Data is collected in relation to cases to identify any on-going trends, although none had been identified. Disciplinary investigation training was available to all managers, and refresher training would be rolled out soon.

Moving onto Complaint cases Lucy Greenway confirmed that the number of cases had decreased this year, the amount related to bullying and harassment had decreased and those relating to discrimination had increased. Two complaints were escalated for further investigation under the disciplinary policy, and no trends had been identified. No complaint received were completed within the 28-day timeframe due to a number of factors including availability of staff.

Investigations were undertaken by managers in addition to their day-to-day working activities, HR utilised qualified external parties to assist with discipline and complaint cases, and HR advised on all cases. Procedures had been put in place to ensure management was effective and included a review of manager guidance, the assignment of welfare officers, checklists, documents and audits.

An external audit took place in 2024/25 to provide reassurance that policies and procedures had been followed. Overall, the audit found the service had a robust suite of policies and procedures.

Councillor Drummond enquired about the discrimination case on page 391 that was not upheld and Lucy Greenway confirmed at the time of compiling the report the case was open and no comment could be made.

Councillor Satti asked what breach of policy/process were made in the cases on page 385 and Lucy Greenway confirmed this is usually where a member of staff had not followed a policy correctly or failed to report a safety breach for example.

Councillor Nazir referenced page 395 and asked whether there was a known reason why there were no raised complaints from within the ethnic minority group. Lucy Greenway confirmed there was no known reason, and this continued to be monitored.

The Chair asked if 'Say So' platform could be used to raise a complaint and if the training in relation to complaint cases was compulsory. Lucy Greenway confirmed yes to both questions and added the, 'Say So' platform was anonymous and that training forms part of the development assessment pathway (DAP) for managers. Nikki Richards, Deputy Chief Executive, DChEx, added that this training was to investigate complaints not to raise complaints and that the platform does not need to be anonymous unless the person raising the complaint wishes it to be.

The Chair asked if it would be useful to have a larger pool of staff trained on cases so they were could support in future and Lucy Greenway confirmed there was already a set of staff in place that could assist in this way and that the delays mentioned in the agenda were not because of lack of trained staff, but more likely due to time constraints and availability of parties.

It was **RESOLVED** that the details of the Discipline and Complaints Effectiveness Assessment report be noted.

23. QUARTERLY PERFORMANCE REPORT 2025/26 - QUARTER ONE (APRIL - JUNE 2025)

Frank Long, Group Manager (B) Intelligence Risk and Performance Manager, presented the Quarterly Performance Report and informed Members the format of the report had changed – across each quadrant a highlights section at the start addressed key areas of interest.

Quadrant 1 – Service Provision, page 8 contained the summary of key highlights.

Reading from the highlights, Councillor Drummond quoted ‘13.6% increase in the number of partner referrals received’ and asked what the number was before. Katie Mills, Assistant Chief Fire Officer, ACFO, confirmed it was within Corporate Measure 5 on page 13 and the actual number was 1,345, the number received before was 1,184.

The Chair asked whether the arrow on page 16 for ‘Year to Date’ (90.1%) should be pointing down and not up and Frank Long confirmed the arrow was pointing the wrong way.

The Chair asked for further clarification on on-call frontline pumping appliances on page 16. Tom Brandon, Area Manager Response and Resilience, AM R&R, confirmed that year on year there was a slight decrease in figures, primarily due to key individuals having left the service, and the data was a substantial improvement on the previous quarter. Data had remained below the 50% target and certain stations were struggling to improve. Staffing issues at Lambourn had been resolved and improvements were being seen. Asked by the Chair if the 50% target was achievable, Tom Brandon replied it was a healthy target to aspire to. The Chair enquired if a part time worker could become a part time fire fighter. Tom Brandon replied in relation to on-call stations, anyone who was recruited must reside within 5 minutes of the station, therefore recruitment is a logistical problem.

Councillor Bello raised a question about the specific geographical areas where youth antisocial behaviour had been identified. Dave Crease confirmed this was Quarter 1 and involved school leavers. Areas included Burghfield, Twyford and Reading.

The Chair asked for clarification on the last paragraph on page 17 – large scale incidents. Tom Brandon (AMRR) replied this was due to an extremely dry hot spring which caused flammable conditions and wildfires. The crews were very busy and officers who were off duty were called to assist them. Katie Mills (ACFO) added the Service had taken steps to increase resilience with this issue in order to mitigate some of the impact.

Quadrant 2 – Corporate Health, page 20 contained the summary of key highlights.

Frank Long confirmed the reason the result for Corporate Measure 24 on page 23 was 0% was due to the recent rollout of the behaviour framework and code of conduct and that 0% was expected. Nikki Richards, Deputy Chief Executive, DChEx, added that current statistics sit at 66% for the area.

In answer to the Chairs question about percentages for Corporate Measure 24, Tom Brandon (AMRR) answered the 'year to date' figure was the result at the end of Quarter 1 and for the next Quarter that figure would be the average of Quarter 1 and Quarter 2.

Quadrant 3 - Priority Programmes.

Frank Long explained the data showed mainly closed items in blue and on target items in green.

The Chair asked within the Strategic Asset Investment Framework (SAIF) section what was the reason that Langley was in red. Mark Arkwell, Deputy Chief Fire Officer, DCFO, believed this related to the budget. The figures quoted in the SAIF were best guesses and would sometimes change. The budget is being revisited as costs are higher than originally thought due to inflation and changes to requirements.

Frank Long added that the only other red was on page 40, the ESMCP project. This was a national project, and seriously delayed and RBFRS have no control over timescales.

Quadrant 4 – Assurance, page 41 detailed highlights.

Highlights within the risk register included the Grenfell Inquiry Recommendations which reduced from 24 to 18, and the recent His Majesty's Inspectorate (HMI) recommendation on evacuation procedures for high-rise buildings trialled at Calico two months ago.

Lukasz Wrona, Head of Business and Information Systems, HBIS, replied to the Chairs question about the treated score for risk ID 941 (AddressBase Data and Process) and explained the risk score and impact level was high and when you calculate a risk score, probability would be lower whilst the level of impact was likely to be higher. That is the reason why the treatment score was relatively high. Frank Long added that RBFRS continue to review live audit and how to

utilise risk management. One area was around the four T's - treat, tolerate, transfer and termination of risk. Risks required SLT oversight and RBFRS are aware they have no ability to reduce certain risks. Katie Mills (ACFO) gave the example of firefighter safety. Safety is an inherent risk and closely monitored, the Service does all it can to mitigate the risk, but despite policies and procedures being in place there will always be a risk associated with the role.

In answer to the Chair's question about risk 681 (WDS Operational Availability, Crewing and Capabilities), Katie Mills (ACFO) said this was about having the correct operational make-up including incident commanders and specialist skills. Challenges remain in the form of sickness levels, training, and retirement profiles and these areas directly relate to the risk. Despite the work that had been carried out including on-going day-to-day management the risk remains volatile.

To clarify scores, Nikki Richards (DChEx) explained the inherent score was the starting point without any mitigation in place, the treated score was what the Service was aiming for and the current score was where the Service was now, with some mitigation in place.

The Chair asked whether appliances in addition to the 14 in use were ready to be utilised. Tom Brandon (AMRR) replied the additional 5 appliances were the on-call appliances, if an appliance breaks down, then these 5 can be used.

Councillor Parmar raised a question about sick-leave and Becci Jefferies, Head of Human Resources and Learning Development, HHR&L&D, confirmed a number of practices were in place. These included return to work interviews, any required adjustments, risk assessments or light duties if needed. Occupational health schemes were also utilised to help monitor all aspects including staff wellbeing.

The Chair asked if AFI can be added into the glossary.

It was **RESOLVED** that:

- 1) the performance against Service Provision and Corporate Health measures for the targets agreed by the Fire Authority for 2024-25 be noted; and
- 2) the progress made on the priority programmes be noted; and
- 3) the position of corporate risk be noted; and
- 4) any further actions, if appropriate be discussed and agreed.

24. FORWARD PLAN

RESOLVED that the Forward Plan be noted.

Data and
Performance
manager

25. DATE OF NEXT MEETING

Monday 26 January 2026, 6.30pm at RBFRS Headquarters, Newsham Court,
Pincent's Kiln, Calcot, Reading RG31 7SD.

(The meeting concluded at 20:57)
