

## ROYAL BERKSHIRE FIRE AUTHORITY REPORT



COMMITTEE	AUDIT AND GOVERNANCE COMMITTEE
DATE OF MEETING	26 JANUARY 2026
SUBJECT	ANNUAL STATEMENT OF ASSURANCE 2024/25
LEAD OFFICER	ANNIE-ROSE PRATT, HEAD OF CORPORATE SERVICES
LEAD MEMBER	N/A
EXEMPT INFORMATION	PART I
ACTION	NOTE AND AGREE

### 1. EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

- 1.1 The Fire and Rescue National Framework for England states that the annual Statement of Assurance should:

*“outline the way in which the authority and its fire and rescue service has had regard – in the period covered by the document – to this National Framework, the Community Risk Management Plan and to any strategic plan prepared by the authority for that period. The authority must also provide assurance to their community and to government on financial, governance and operational matters”*

- 1.2 The Royal Berkshire Fire Authority Statement of Assurance is structured as such that the headline judgements are made about the adequacy of arrangements associated with financial, governance and operational matters. In addition to which, a judgement is made on adherence to the National Framework.

### 2. RECOMMENDATION

- 2.1 **NOTE** the summary judgements within the Statement of Assurance for each of the four key areas of Finance, Governance, Operations and delivering the National Framework.
- 2.2 **AGREE** the Statement of Assurance for 2024/25 for publication, subject to any amendments to be made by the Head of Corporate Services in consultation with the Chair of the Audit and Governance Committee.

## Part I

### 3. REPORT

- 3.1 The internal assessment was conducted with RBFRS officers against the Framework criteria and produced the following summary judgements for 2024/25:
- 3.2 **FINANCIAL** – requirements associated with the appropriate management of financial matters were **fully met**. Evidence to support this judgement and information on identified areas for improvement are set out in the Statement of Assurance.
- 3.3 **GOVERNANCE** – requirements associated with appropriate business practice, high standards of conduct and sound governance were **fully met**. Evidence to support this judgement and information on identified areas for improvement are set out in the Statement of Assurance.
- 3.4 RBFRS had a number of audits completed during 2024/25 and the outcomes of these are noted in the Statement of Assurance. Any audit actions come to Audit & Governance Committee for scrutiny and awareness. The criteria for these audit outcomes are noted here.
- Substantial assurance definition: the board can take substantial assurance that the controls upon which the organisation relies to manage this risk are suitably designed, consistently applied and effective.
  - Reasonable assurance definition: the board can take reasonable assurance that the controls upon which the organisation relies to manage this risk are suitable designed, consistently applied and effective. There are some issues to be addressed to ensure the controls work as expected.
  - Partial Assurance definition: the board can take partial assurance that the controls upon which the organisation relies to manage this risk are suitable designed, consistently applied and effective. Action is needed to strengthen the control framework to manage the identified risks
  - Advisory definition: Reviews of area for specific testing, these result in no opinion being given and are also known as 'agreed upon procedures' assignments. This approach will result in a factual report on the findings of our testing and a list of advisory actions where we suggest improvements to controls
- 3.5 **OPERATIONAL** – requirements associated with operational matters were **fully met**. Evidence to support this judgement and information on identified areas for improvement are set out in the Statement of Assurance.
- 3.6 **NATIONAL FRAMEWORK** – requirements associated with the Fire and Rescue National Framework for England have been **fully met** as set out in the Statement of Assurance. This assessment was based on the judgements set out for Financial, Governance and Operational evidence. This is further

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supported by the independent inspection carried out by His Majesty's Inspectorate of Constabulary and Fire and Rescue Services.

- 3.7 Further assurance is provided via audit activities as set out in the Statement of Assurance.

### **4. CONTRIBUTION TO STRATEGIC COMMITMENTS**

- 4.1 The Statement of Assurance aligns to the Strategic Commitments across a number of financial, governance and operational matters.

### **5. FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS**

- 5.1 There are no direct financial implications arising from this report.

### **6. LEGAL IMPLICATIONS**

- 6.1 The Fire and Rescue National Framework, published by the Department of Communities and Local Government in July 2012, introduced the requirement for fire and rescue authorities in England to produce a 'Statement of Assurance' on an annual basis. An updated National Framework was published in May 2018. This maintained the requirement.
- 6.2 Section 21 of the Fire and Rescue Services Act 2004 (FRSA 2004) requires Fire and Rescue Authorities to 'have regard' to the National Framework in carrying out their functions.

### **7. EQUALITY AND DIVERSITY IMPLICATIONS**

- 7.1 There are no direct equality and diversity implications arising from this report.

### **8. RISK IMPLICATIONS**

- 8.1 The Statement of Assurance demonstrates that a Fire and Rescue Service has identified the risks it faces and where appropriate are taking the necessary steps to mitigate them.

### **9. SUSTAINABILITY IMPLICATIONS**

- 9.1 There are no sustainability implications arising from this report.

### **10. CONSISTENCY WITH DUTY TO COLLABORATE**

- 10.1 The judgement decisions within the report demonstrate RBFRS is working in collaboration with partners.

### **11. PRINCIPAL CONSULTATION**

- 11.1 Statutory Officers and the Senior Leadership Team have been consulted in the preparation of this report.

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### **12. BACKGROUND PAPERS**

- 12.1 There are a large number of background documents referenced in the Statement, some of which are available as hyperlinks. Associated documents are not attached with this paper but can be made available in electronic format on request.

### **13. APPENDICES**

- 13.1 Appendix A – Statement of Assurance 2024/25.

### **14. CONTACT DETAILS**

- 14.1 Angela Smith – Deputy Head of Corporate Services - 07776 340332.