



**Agenda
for the Meeting
of the
Audit and Governance Committee**

Wednesday, 23rd March 2022

At

6.30pm

RBFRS Headquarters
Lynda Kenyon Suite
Newsham Court
Pincents Kiln
Calcot
Reading
Berkshire
RG31 7SD

For further information regarding this meeting, please contact:

Committee Team
0118 938 4611

E-Mail at committeeteam@rbfrs.co.uk

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



MEETING: Audit and Governance Committee Meeting

DATE AND TIME: Wednesday, 23rd March 2022 at 6.30 pm

VENUE: Lynda Kenyon Suite
RBFRS Headquarters
Newsham Court
Pincents Kiln
Calcot
Reading, Berkshire RG31 7SD

S U M M O N S

You are hereby summoned to attend the meeting of the Royal Berkshire Fire Authority at the time, date and venue indicated above, when it is proposed to deal with the business set out in the enclosed Agenda.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Graham Britten'.

GRAHAM BRITTEN
Monitoring Officer

To: Members of the Audit and Governance Committee:

Councillor Avtar Cheema	Councillor Harjinder Minhas
Councillor Christine Bateson	Councillor Garth Simpson
Councillor Jane Stanford-Beale	Councillor Simon Werner
Councillor Tina McKenzie-Boyle	Councillor Alison Swaddle
Councillor Tony Linden	

Copy to: Senior Leadership Team (SLT), Royal Berkshire Fire and Rescue Service

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MEETING: Audit and Governance Committee Meeting

DATE AND TIME: Wednesday, 23rd March 2022 at 6.30 pm

VENUE: Lynda Kenyon Suite
RBFRS Headquarters
Newsham Court
Pincent's Kiln
Calcot
Reading, Berkshire RG31 7SD

AGENDA

- 1. Apologies for Absence**
- 2. Declarations of Interest**

Purpose:

To receive Declarations of Interest from Councillors relating to items to be considered at the meeting, in accordance with the provisions of the Fire Authority's Local Code of Conduct, and any from Officers.

- 3. Minutes of the Meeting held on 24 January 2022 (Pages 7 - 18)**

Recommendation:

That the Minutes of the meeting and any recorded actions held on 24 January 2022, be confirmed as a correct record and signed by the Chairman.

- 4. Consideration of any matters properly referred to this Committee for decision**

Item 13 – Strategic Asset Investment Framework ICT Business Cases, from Fire Authority on 15 February 2022.

- 5. Internal Audit Update (Pages 19 - 78)**

Purpose:

To note the finding as presented in RSM's Progress Report

- 6. External Audit Update (Pages 79 - 126)**

Purpose:

To note the contents of the Audit Planning Report in Appendix A.

7. Annual Statement of Assurance 2020/21 *(Pages 127 - 148)*

Purpose:

To 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, and agree the 2020/21 Statement of Assurance for publication.

8. Member Code of Conduct Review and Consultation Results *(Pages 149 - 192)*

Purpose:

To receive for note the results of the Draft RBFA Code of Conduct Consultation and recommend the adoption of the Code of Conduct to the Fire Authority for approval.

9. Protocol on Member and Officer Relations *(Pages 193 - 212)*

Purpose:

To agree the amendments to the Protocol on Member and Officer Relations, and that it be published on Royal Berkshire Fire and Rescue Service website.

10. Complaints, Comments and Compliments Policy Review *(Pages 213 - 240)*

Purpose:

To agree the proposed changes to the Complaints, Comments and Compliments Policy, and note that staff and Representative Bodies will be consulted on the proposed changes.

11. Member Development Annual Report and Progress against the Action Plan *(Pages 241 - 264)*

Purpose:

To note the Annual Report on Member Development, progress against the Action Plan and Member Development Survey Results.

12. Annual Report on Governance *(Pages 265 - 278)*

Purpose:

To note the contents of the report and recommend the Fire Authority note Members' Allowances and Attendance record from 1 June 2021 – 31 May 2022.

13. Information Communication Technology (ICT) Strategic Asset Investment Framework (SAIF) Clarification and Business Cases *(Pages 279 - 338)*

Purpose:

To note the content of the report, the appended business cases and associated Equality Impact Assessments.

14. CIPFA Financial Management Code Report *(Pages 339 - 350)*

Purpose:

To receive for note the contents as presented in the CIPFA Financial Management Report.

15. Quarterly Performance Report Quarter Three *(Pages 351 - 354)*

Purpose:

To receive for note an overview of Royal Berkshire Fire and Rescue Service's (RBFRS) Quarter Three performance for the 2021/22 financial year.

The Quarterly Performance Report is printed under a separate cover.

16. Date of next meeting

Thursday 28 July 2022, at 6.30pm, RBFRS Headquarters, Newsham Court, Pincents Kiln, Calcot, Reading, Berkshire RG31 7SD.

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MINUTES OF THE MEETING OF THE AUDIT AND GOVERNANCE COMMITTEE



Held on Monday, 24th January 2022, at 6.30 pm
 Royal Berkshire Fire and Rescue Service (RBFRS) Headquarters
 Newsham Court, Pincents Kiln, Calcot, Reading RG31 7SD

- Members:** (*present)
- * Councillor Christine Bateson
 - * Councillor Jane Stanford-Beale
 - * Councillor Tina McKenzie-Boyle
 - * Councillor Anne Chadwick
 - * Councillor Avtar Cheema
 - * Councillor Tony Linden
 - * Councillor Harjinder Minhas
 - * Councillor Garth Simpson
 - * Councillor Simon Werner
 - * Councillor Dexter Smith (substitute)
 - * Councillor Colin Dudley (substitute)

- In Attendance:**
- Mark Arkwell (Deputy Chief Fire Officer, DCFO)
 - Lincoln Ball (Local Pensions Board Chair, LPBC)
 - Graham Britten (Monitoring Officer, MO)
 - Wayne Bowcock (Chief Fire Officer, CFO)
 - Alex Brown (Head of Property Capital Projects and Estates, HPCP&E)
 - Doug Buchanan (Area Manager Response and Resilience, AM R&R)
 - Conor Byrne (Head of Finance and Procurement, HF&P)
 - Becca Chapman (Data, Performance and Risk Manager, DP&R)
 - Sam Faulknall-Mills (Performance and Planning Officer, P&PO)
 - Lucy Greenway (Senior HR Advisor, SHRA)
 - Becci Jefferies (Head of Human Resources and Learning and Development, HHR&L&D)
 - Amir Kapasi (Internal Auditors, RSM)
 - Allison Kennett (External Auditors, Ernest and Young (EY))
 - Katie Mills (Head of Corporate Services, HCS)
 - Nikki Richards (Deputy Chief Executive, DCEO)
 - Fayth Rowe (Democratic Support Lead, DSL)
 - Hannah Sheehan (Democratic Support Assistant, DSA)
 - Tregear Thomas (Area Manager Prevention and Protection, AM P&P)
 - Tony Vincent (Head of Business and Information Systems, HBIS)

30. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Apologies for absence were received from Councillors Chadwick, Minhas and Simpson. Councillors Dudley and Smith attended as substitutes.

31. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

Action

There were no Declarations of Interest from Councillors relating to items to be considered at the meeting, in accordance with the provisions of the Fire Authority's Local Code of Conduct, and any from Officers.

32. MINUTES OF THE MEETING HELD ON 20 OCTOBER 2021

The Chairman abstained due to being absent at the last meeting. Councillor Linden proposed the recommendation and it was seconded by Councillor Dudley.

There were no recorded actions.

RESOLVED that the Minutes of the meeting held on 20 October 2021, be approved as a true and correct record and signed by the Vice-Chairman.

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

There were no matters of consideration referred to this Committee for decision.

34. INTERNAL AUDIT UPDATE

Conor Byrne, Head of Finance and Procurement (HF&P), introduced the report, stating that one audit, which was a review of vetting and pre-employment checks had been completed since the last meeting. Conor also stated that attached at Appendix A was RSMs' Emergency Services News Briefing which will provide some background information for Members.

Amir Kapasi, Internal Auditor (RSM), highlighted page 21 of the agenda, which outlines the audit on vetting and pre-employment checks. The audit received a positive assurance rating, with two low and one medium priority actions. The one medium priority action was in relation to evidence of qualification checks.

Councillor Dudley thanked RSM for the Audit and asked when we could expect results from the Risk Management and Governance Audit commencing on 17 March, as it would be useful to have a draft report before our inspection. Amir stated that the field work for the Audit will take 5-7 days and that a draft report can be expected by 8 May.

The Chairman moved the recommendation and it was seconded by Councillor Stanford-Beale.

RESOLVED that the findings as presented in RSM's Progress Report be noted.

Amir Kapasi left the meeting.

35. EXTERNAL AUDIT UPDATE

Conor Byrne introduced the report stating that the 2019/20 Statement of Accounts were signed off at the last meeting. The Audit for the 2020/21 Statement of Accounts is now being planned and it is hoped that they will be presented at the next Committee meeting in March.

Allison Kennett, External Auditor (EY) highlighted page 51 of the agenda pack which provides an overview of the 2020/21 Audit Strategy. Audit risk and areas of focus are; misstatements due to fraud or error, inappropriate capitalisation of revenue expenditure and inappropriate recording of other income, pension liability evaluation, valuation of land and buildings and compliance with ISA 570. Allison also highlighted page 53 which outlined materiality levels for Royal Berkshire Fire Authority, planning materiality of £907k, performance materiality of £680k and audit differences of £45k. All uncorrected misstatements relating to primary statements greater than £45k would be reported to the Audit and Governance Committee. She added that page 55 outlines the value for money conclusion, with a main change in NAO's 2020 Code.

Allison stated that the Audit on the 2020/21 statement of accounts was well underway and that no major issues had yet been identified. A letter had been received from Deloitte but their Audit hasn't been finished and there will be several questions once they've finished their Audit. It is hoped that the Statement of Accounts 2020/21 can be brought to Audit and Governance Committee on 23 March.

The Chairman asked when Deloitte's Audit would be completed. Allison said that EY are in constant liaison with Deloitte but are still awaiting a date.

The Chairman moved the recommendation and it was seconded by Councillor Linden.

RESOLVED that the contents of the Audit Planning Report in Appendix A be noted.

Allison Kennett left the meeting.

36. EMERGENCY SERVICES MOBILE COMMUNICATION PROGRAMME- PRESENTATION

Tony Vincent, Head of Business and Information Systems (HBIS), gave a presentation on the Emergency Services Mobile Communication Programme (ESMCP).

Tony explained that Airwave was the existing radio communication system and that it will be replaced by Emergency Services Network (ESN), as part of the ESMCP Home Office project.

Tony provided the following updates from the programme:

- Paul Channing formerly the NFCC Liaison to the South Central region, has been appointed Regional Programme Manager.

- RBFRS is mobilising resourcing to carry out coverage surveys across Critical Operational Locations, to be completed by May 2022. The outcome will be fed back to the National Programme and Local FRS Operational teams.
- There are concerns around the increased costs for local FRSs, due to the withdrawal of the Firelink Grant.
- Nationally, the cost of ESN vs Airwave is reduced but some FRSs could see increased cost. There is ongoing lobbying at National Programme and Home Office level to ensure no FRS is worse off.
- Any cost impacts for RBFRS likely to manifest during the year of ESN implementation. Members will be advised of this as soon as there is more information available.
- The NFCC are consulting on ESMCP Programme governance to reduce inefficiency and address resourcing constraints.
- TVFCS connection to Airwave is via SANH Link, which is reaching the end of supportable life. SANH will be replaced by DCS, which will then be replaced by ESN once available. Originally, TVFCS planned to move direct from SANH to ESN, but ESMCP delays dictate DCS implementation during 2022.

Councillor Dudley asked who does the survey of Critical Operational Locations, when will it be done and how much will it cost? Tony explained that the burden is with local FRSs and that it will be resourced within service delivery. He explained that some COLs are trivial and others are not, all Fire Stations are COLs and the most complex will be AWE.

Councillor Dudley asked if colleagues within the Thames Valley were doing the same thing and if there was a target date? Tony said that the target date for completion was May 2022, and that Thames Valley colleagues were aware of this date.

The Chairman asked whether we would be behind with the 4G network? Tony explained that the moving from 4G to 5G will have a device impact. The Chairman asked whether the cost risk of the extra devices had been considered. Tony said that ESMCP is a corporate risk which is monitored at SLT meetings and that there are treatments in place around cost.

Councillor Dudley asked that with SANH originally being split between 5 FRSs and now 3 FRSs, if this will have an additional burden on the SAIF? Tony said that the cost increase will come out of the revenue budget, not the capital budget. Councillor Dudley requested that he is provided with the figures of the cost difference between splitting it 3 ways, rather than 5 ways.

Councillor Stanford-Beale asked how long the health checks would take and what the cost was, for the changeover to SANH? Tony said that a health check will be around £15,000 and that the timeline depends on how the health check goes. If there is a clean bill of health, it should take around 4-6 weeks, if remedial work is required, it will take longer but this is dependent on Capita, so it is hard to say an exact time.

HBIS

Please contact committeeteam@rbfrs.co.uk if you would like a copy of the presentation.

37. PAY POLICY STATEMENT 2022/2023

Becci Jefferies, Head of HR and Learning and Development (HHRL&D), introduced the report stating that it was an annual requirement to prepare and publish a Pay Policy Statement. The draft Pay Policy Statement for 2022/23 is set out in Appendix A. The following updates were made in relation to a revised Car Scheme, a section related to the removal of discrimination from public sector pension schemes, additional information on incremental pay increases and inclusion of the re-structure of the Senior Management Team, these are detailed within the report.

The Chairman moved the recommendation and it was seconded by Councillor Stanford-Beale.

RESOLVED that the draft Pay Policy stated be noted and recommended to the Fire Authority for approval.

Councillor Dudley stated that he would like to put on record his congratulations to Becci for her British Empire Medal and thanked her for all her hard work.

38. MEMBER CODE OF CONDUCT REVIEW AND CONSULTATION

Graham Britten, Monitoring Officer (MO) introduced the report, highlighting 3.1 to 3.6 stating that in November 2020 the Fire Authority considered the best practice recommendations from the Committee on Standards in Public Life (CSPL) and agreed that a review of the Code of Conduct be held annually; and where possible take into account the views of the public, community organisations, and neighbouring and appointing authorities. The Fire Authority had also resolved that in any review of the Code of Conduct the outcomes of the Local Government Association's consultation on its model Code of Conduct be taken into account; the prohibition of 'harassment' be added to the prohibition of bullying; definitions and examples of both bullying and of harassment be included; the requirement on Members to comply with any formal standards investigation be included; and the requirement to comply with the Authority's protocol on Gifts and Hospitality be included.

The Committee was informed that the draft proposed new Members' code of conduct incorporated all of those resolutions of the Authority; and that departures in the draft from the Local Government Association Model code of conduct were shaded yellow.

The Committee was advised that the inclusion of the Core Code of Ethics demonstrated that RBFA and RBFRS adopt the principles of the Core Code of Ethics in everything they do. Members were advised that a typo on page 110 at

3.13 in reference to paragraph 10.3 should be 10.2; and were reminded of the proposed the consultation survey questions.

The Chairman proposed an amendment to the recommendation after considering 3.13 of the report and Item 10 Appendix A. She proposed that gifts and hospitality remain at a £25 threshold, until there is a full consensus of all Councils after their 2022/23 review of their Code of Conduct, as only Slough Borough Council has opted to move to £50. The Vice-Chair seconded the amendment stating that he believed £25 is more than generous. He also stated that it is vitally important that Members comply with the Code of Conduct.

The Chairman moved the amended recommendation and it was seconded by the Vice-Chair.

RESOLVED that the Committee:

- 1) **AGREE** a six week consultation commencing 28 January 2022 be held on the adoption by the Authority of the Draft RBFA Member Code of Conduct (as amended).
- 2) **AGREE** the Draft RBFA Member Code of Conduct Consultation questions.
- 3) **AGREE** that consultation findings be brought back to Audit and Governance Committee for recommendation to Fire Authority.

39. GRIEVANCE, BULLYING AND HARRASSMENT POLICY; ANTI-FRAUD, BRIBERY AND CORRUPTION POLICY; EMPLOYEE CODE OF CONDUCT; BEHAVIOURAL COMPETENCY FRAMEWORK

Becci Jefferies, Head of HR and Learning and Development (HHRL&D), introduced the report. The Grievance, Bullying and Harassment Policy has been updated to incorporate feedback from Stonewall, this includes further information on discrimination and a section on Dual Discrimination and examples of inappropriate Behaviour.

The Employee Code of Conduct and Behavioural Competency Framework have been updated to align with the national Core Code of Ethics for Fire and Rescue Services.

The Anti-Fraud, Bribery and Corruption Policy has been added to the new policy template, minor grammatical changes and initial equality impact assessments undertaken.

Councillor Bateson asked whether the Say-So employee complaints hotline was in person or over the phone. Becci explained that individuals make anonymous calls or notifications via the website and these are then shared with the Service for consideration or investigation as appropriate.

Councillor Dudley highlighted the Policy Detail on page 143 and asked why Discrimination and Dual-Discrimination were listed separately and what the

difference was. Becci explained that this addition to the policy came from feedback from Stonewall and that she would forward on their rationale for further information. Councillor Dudley requested that the information be sent to him and included as a post meeting minute note, so all Members were cited. Nikki Richards, Deputy Chief Executive (DCEO) explained that Dual Discrimination was around intersectionality and where there is more than one discriminatory factor affecting an individual, but that we can provide further information on this.

The Chairman moved the recommendation and it was seconded by Councillor Bateson.

RESOLVED that:

- 1) The revised Grievance, Bullying and Harassment Policy and Anti-Fraud, Bribery and Corruption Policies are approved.
- 2) The changes to the Employee Code of Conduct and the Behavioural Competency Framework be noted.

40. GENDER AND ETHNICITY PAY GAP REPORTS 2021

Lucy Greenway, Senior HR Advisor introduced the report. Each year the Authority is required under The Equality Act 2010 to publish calculations showing how large the pay gap is between their male and female employees. Ethnicity Pay Gap reporting is not currently mandatory in the UK, it is expected to be introduced by 2023. To get ahead of the curve RBFRS has also completed an Ethnicity Pay Gap Report for 2021.

The Gender Pay Gap Report is based on data as of 31 March 2021. The mean is calculated by adding up the hourly rate of male/female employees and dividing the figure by the total number of male/female employees. The median is calculated by listing all hourly rates of each gender and finding the central rate. The median is considered to be a better measure.

A positive pay gap indicates men are paid more than women and a negative pay gap indicates women are paid more than men. At 3.6 of the report the findings show that there is a mean gender pay gap of 0.78% and a median of 9.63%. This means that every £1 earned by men at RBFRS, women earn a mean of 99p and a median of 90p. The median gender pay gap is better than the national figure in 2020 of 15.5%.

3.9 of the report outlines the mean and medium pay gap across the four quartiles. Quartiles are very fluid and staff movement is relatively small year on year. It is recognised that women are underrepresented in the operational workforce, an action plan has been developed to address this and is at Appendix B.

The Ethnicity Pay Gap Report is based on data as of 31 March 2021. The mean ethnicity pay gap is calculated by adding up the hourly rate of all White/Ethnic Minority employees and dividing by the total number of White/Ethnic Minority employees. The median is calculated by listing all hourly rates of each ethnicity group and finding the central rate.

A positive pay gap indicates that those in the White group are paid more than those in the Ethnic Minority group. The mean ethnicity pay gap is 1.74% and the median is 9.63%. This means that for each £1 earned by white staff at RBFRS, Ethnic Minorities earn a mean of 98p and a median of 90p. There are no national figures for comparison.

It is recognised that Ethnic Minority groups are underrepresented across the Service and RBFRS are taking action to address this with the development of a positive action plan and community engagement activities through the Local Safety Plans.

Councillor Dudley highlighted page 201, where it states that the medium pay gap is positive for the Ethnic Minority group and asked whether this meant that the Ethnic Minority group were paid more? Lucy explained that the mean ethnicity pay gap is 1.74% and the medium is 9.63%, both pay gaps being positive meaning that white staff are paid slightly more than ethnic minority staff.

Councillor Linden stated that Officers were working hard in terms of diversity and that 4% of staff being ethnic minority is too low, and that we need to reflect our society.

The Chairman asked whether the Ethnicity Pay Gap would impact HMICFRS? Nikki explained that this is an issue across the whole sector, which HMICFRS highlighted previously.

Councillor Stanford-Beale stated that it may be worth comparing data with Local Authorities. But that she understood that it takes time for changes to come into fruition. Nikki explained that changes have been in place for some time, but that there is not a huge turnover of staff. Barriers to entry are not there as much and that we continue to do more in terms of attracting a diverse group of staff.

The Chairman moved the recommendation and it was seconded by Councillor Stanford-Beale.

RESOLVED that the Committee:

- 1) Note the details of the Gender Pay Gap Report and agree it is published on the RBFRS website and on gov.co.uk;
- 2) Note the Gender Pay Gap Action Plan
- 3) Note the details of the Ethnicity Pay Gap Report and agree it is published on the RBFRS website.

41. LOCAL PENSIONS BOARD SIX MONTH UPDATE

Lincoln Ball, Pension Board Chair introduced the report. He stated that there had been one potential breach since the last report, this is highlighted in 3.10 of the report. Lincoln stated that he will be retiring at the end of February, but will remain on the Board, this is outlined in 3.4 – 3.8.

Lincoln explained that the pension landscape still remained complex, with the

age discrimination element of the 2015 Firefighters' Pension Scheme. The new legislation is expected on 1 April 2022, as this has got closer administrative complexities have increased.

The Chairman moved the recommendation and it was seconded by Councillor Bateson.

RESOLVED that the contents of the report and any likely future changes in the composition of the Local Pensions Board are noted.

Councillor Dudley thanked Lincoln for his service to RBFRS, the Chairman echoed his comments.

42. QUARTERLY PERFORMANCE REPORT - QUARTER TWO

Becca Chapman, Data, Performance and Risk Manager (DP&RM), introduced the report stating that progress has been made against plans in all four quadrants.

Sam Faulknall-Mills, Performance and Planning Officer (P&PO), outlined the key highlights from the report; the completion of Theale Tri-Service Community Fire Station, the new Aerial Ladder Platform (ALP) becoming fully operational and having a height and reach capacity of 45m with the previous ALP having 32m and Wholetime response standard exceeding the target and the first engine arriving within 10 minutes on 77% of occasions.

Councillor Linden asked how our Police and Ambulance partners were working within Theale Fire Station. Alex Brown, Head of Capital Projects and Estates (HPCP&E), said that all site users were getting on well at Theale and monthly meetings take place there between partners.

Councillor Linden asked why On-Call appliance availability had gone down to 34.7%. Mark Arkwell, Deputy Chief Fire Officer (DCFO), explained that there had been significant impact this quarter, with 16 On-Call vacancies, 5 staff leaving between Q1 and Q2 and 11 On-Call staff also moving to 6 month temporary Wholetime contracts to support the response standard in Q2. Also during 2020 On-Call colleagues provided additional support across the wider organisation and to other partners, this meant they were unable to take leave, so they are now taking leave which was carried forward. Another impact was the 'pingdemic' with many unable to work due to having to self-isolate, the On-Call model has limited resilience, and therefore this can easily take an appliance off the run. He said that there was starting to be an improvement in On-Call availability and that we continue to strengthen our recruitment efforts now Covid-19 restrictions are starting to relax.

Councillor Dudley asked how we were doing in terms of PDR's. Nikki said that the completion rate was in excess of 90%. Becci added that the rate was 93.8% for Q2, but that it is expected that some will continue to come through in Q3. Becci also added that the recommendations following the PDR audit in Spring

Agenda Item 3

Action

2021 should improve the output. Councillor Dudley said that a completion rate of over 90% was very good considering Covid-19 implications.

The Chairman moved the recommendation and it was seconded by Councillor Linden.

RESOLVED that:

- 1) The performance against Service Provision and Corporate Health measures for the targets agreed by the Fire Authority for 2020/21 be noted;
- 2) The progress made on the two priority programmes be noted; and
- 3) The position of corporate risk be noted.

43. DATE OF NEXT MEETING

Wednesday, 23 March 2022, at 6.30pm, Lynda Kenyon Suite, Royal Berkshire Fire and Rescue Service (RBFPS) Headquarters, Newsham Court, Pincents Kiln, Calcot, Reading, Berkshire RG31 7SD.

(The meeting concluded at 19:55)

Post meeting note:

Becci provided the following answer to Councillor Dudley's question on item 39:

Dual discrimination (can also be called combined/intersectional discrimination) and isn't explicitly accounted for in the Equality Act. It was a recommendation from Stonewall to include it as best practice and show that we're being cognisant of this and the different ways discrimination can occur/affect individuals.

I have provided an example to illustrate:

Intersectional discrimination, is where a person is discriminated against because of a particular combination of two or more protected characteristics; for example, a policy preventing employees from wearing headscarves would discriminate against Muslim women. The policy would not affect other women or Muslim men, so it could not be said to be purely sex or religious discrimination – rather, it is the unique combination of being both female and Muslim.

Tony provided the following answer to Councillor Dudley's question regarding the size of increase to ongoing costs after the DCS implementation, which was being driven by the costs being split 3 ways instead of 5.

The increase in cost (assuming DCS ongoing costs are equivalent to SANH) will be £3261.33. The calculation is below:

	Annual Cost		RBRFS	OFRS	B&MKFRS	WFRS	NFRS
SanH	£ 24,460.00		£ 4,892.00	£ 4,892.00	£ 4,892.00	£ 4,892.00	£ 4,892.00
DCS*	£ 24,460.00		£ 8,153.33	£ 8,153.33	£ 8,153.33	n/a	n/a
		Increase	£ 3,261.33	£ 3,261.33	£ 3,261.33		

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ROYAL BERKSHIRE FIRE AUTHORITY



COMMITTEE	AUDIT & GOVERNANCE COMMITTEE
DATE OF MEETING	23 MARCH 2022
SUBJECT	INTERNAL AUDIT UPDATE
LEAD OFFICER	CONOR BYRNE, HEAD OF FINANCE AND PROCUREMENT
LEAD MEMBER	n/a
EXEMPT INFORMATION	NONE
ACTION	FOR NOTE

1. EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

- 1.1 The Committee will receive an update on audits completed since the last Committee meeting.

2. RECOMMENDATION

That Audit and Governance Committee:

- 2.1 **NOTE** the findings as presented in RSM's Progress Report.

3. REPORT

- 3.1 RSM's Progress Report is attached as **Appendix A** and shows that two audits has been completed and finalised since the last Committee meeting. These relate to firefighter pension administration and payroll.
- 3.2 RSM issued its highest assurance opinion in relation to both audits stating that, "taking account of the issues identified, the committee can take substantial assurance that the controls upon which the organisation relies to manage this risk are suitably designed, consistently applied and effective."
- 3.3 A representative from RSM will attend the meeting to update Members.

4. CONTRIBUTION TO STRATEGIC COMMITMENTS

- 4.1 Commitment 5 – We will ensure that Royal Berkshire Fire and Rescue Service provides good value for money.

Agenda Item 5

5. FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

- 5.1 The work of the internal auditors assures Members that the Authority's finances are in good order.

6. LEGAL IMPLICATIONS

- 6.1 In accordance with Public Sector Internal Audit Standards, the Head of Internal Audit is required to provide an annual opinion, based upon and limited to the work performed, on the overall adequacy and effectiveness of the organisation's risk management, control and governance processes. The opinion should contribute to the Authority's Annual Governance Statement.

7. EQUALITY AND DIVERSITY IMPLICATIONS

- 7.1 None.

8. RISK IMPLICATIONS

- 8.1 The internal audit programme aims to identify key risks and report on the effectiveness of controls and mitigating actions.

9. CONSISTENCY WITH DUTY TO COLLABORATE

- 9.1 Internal audits will consider how the Authority is meeting this requirement where applicable.

10. PRINCIPAL CONSULTATION

- 10.1 No issues for statutory officers.

11. BACKGROUND PAPERS

- 11.1 2021/22 Internal Audit Plan.

12. APPENDICES

- 12.1 Appendix A - 2021/22 Progress Report

13. CONTACT DETAILS

- 13.1 Conor Byrne - Head of Finance and Procurement
Email: byrnec@rbfrs.co.uk
Tel: 07585 991602

ROYAL BERKSHIRE FIRE AND RESCUE SERVICE

Internal Audit Progress Report

For the Audit and Governance Committee on 23 March 2022

This report is solely for the use of the persons to whom it is addressed.
To the fullest extent permitted by law, RSM UK Risk Assurance Services LLP
will accept no responsibility or liability in respect of this report to any other party.

Agenda Item 5
Appendix A



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Agenda Item 5
Appendix A

Introduction

The internal audit plan for 2021/22 was approved by the Audit & Governance Committee at the 31st March 2021 meeting. This report provides an update on progress against that plan and summarises the results of our work to date.

As the developments around Covid-19 will continue to impact on all areas of the organisation’s risk profile, we will continue to work closely with management to deliver an internal audit programme which remains flexible and ‘agile’ to ensure it meets your needs in the current circumstances.

Reports

1.1 Summary of final reports being presented to this committee

We have **finalised two reports** since the last meeting and this section summarises these reports. Two further audits are in progress and will be reported to the next meeting.

Page 23

Assignment	Opinion issued		Actions agreed		
	L	M	H		

Firefighter Pension Administration – West Yorkshire Pension Fund (WYPF)

Our testing has confirmed that West Yorkshire Pension Fund has effective controls in place to manage pension administration processes and associated risks including the monitoring and recovery of overpayments on behalf of RBFRS.



3 0 0

Dataplan

Our review has confirmed that Dataplan has robust controls in place to manage the payroll processes which our testing has demonstrated compliance with. Our sample testing identified one exception which has resulted in one ‘Low’ priority action being agreed with management. The action relates to the absence of version control on the Operational Guide to Royal Berkshire Fire Authority Payroll



1 0 0

Appendix A
Agenda Item 5

1.2 Themes arising from control observations in 2021/22

Theme*	Low	Medium	High
Planning	0	0	0
Policies and / or procedures	1	0	0
Non-compliance with policies / procedures	2	0	0
Design of the control framework	0	0	0
Training / awareness for staff	0	0	0
Management or performance information	1	1	0
Terms Of Reference	3	0	0
Lack of segregation of duties	0	0	0
Security	0	0	0
Governance weaknesses	7	1	0
Information technology	0	0	0
Sucession Planning	1	0	0
Total	15	2	0

* The themes arising above relate to the finalised 2021/22 reports only

Appendix A – Progress against the internal audit plan 2021/2022

Assignment and Executive Lead	Status / Opinion issued	Actions agreed			Actual Audit & Governance Committee
		L	M	H	
Performance Management 1.21/22					
Doug Buchanan – Director of Service Delivery		9	1	0	October 2021
Vetting and Employment Checks					
Becci Jefferies – Head of HR & Learning and Development		2	1	0	January 2022
Firefighter Pension Administration					
Becci Jefferies – Head of HR & Learning and Development		3	0	0	March 2022
Payroll Provider – Dataplan					
Becci Jefferies – Head of HR & Learning and Development		1	0	0	March 2022

Assignment and Executive Lead	Status / Opinion issued	Actions agreed			Actual Audit & Governance Committee
		L	M	H	
Value for Money Conor Byrne – Head of Finance and Procurement Services	Fieldwork Complete – draft report to be issued shortly				
Key Financial Controls Conor Byrne – Head of Finance and Procurement Services	Fieldwork Complete – draft report to be issued shortly				
Risk Management and Governance Katie Mills – Interim Director of Corporate Services	Commencing 17 th March 2022				
Cyber Essentials Tony Vincent – Head of Business Information and Systems	Commencing 21 st March 2022				
		Total	15	2	0

Appendix B – Other matters

Changes to the audit plan

Note	Auditable area	Reason for change
	None to report	

Annual Opinion 2021/22

The Audit and Governance Committee should note that the assurances given in our audit assignments are included within our Annual Assurance report. The Committee should note that any negative assurance opinions will need to be noted in the annual report and may result in a qualified or negative annual opinion. We have not issued any negative opinions to date in 2021/22.

RSM External reviews of quality

One of the key measures of quality is an independent third-party assessment and, as a firm we are required to conform to the requirements of the International Professional Practices Framework (IPPF) published by the Global IIA. Under the Standards, internal audit services are required to have an external quality assessment (EQA) every five years. The RSM UK Risk Assurance service line commissioned an external independent review of our internal audit services in 2021, to provide assurance as to whether our approach continues to meet the requirements.

The external review concluded that RSM 'generally conforms to the requirements of the IIA Standards' and that 'RSM IA also generally conforms with the other Professional Standards and the IIA Code of Ethics. There were no instances of non-conformance with any of the Professional Standards'. The rating of 'generally conforms' is the highest rating that can be achieved, in line with the IIA's EQA assessment model.

Information and briefings

Since the last JAC we have issued the following client briefing, which we have appended:

- Strengthening resilience: lessons learnt from the impacts of the pandemic
- RSM's Conformance with the IIA Standards and Codes of Practice
- Emergency Services – Quarterly Client Briefing (March 2022)

For more information contact

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The matters raised in this report are only those which came to our attention during the course of our review and are not necessarily a comprehensive statement of all the weaknesses that exist or all improvements that might be made. Actions for improvements should be assessed by you for their full impact. This report, or our work, should not be taken as a substitute for management's responsibilities for the application of sound commercial practices. We emphasise that the responsibility for a sound system of internal controls rests with management and our work should not be relied upon to identify all strengths and weaknesses that may exist. Neither should our work be relied upon to identify all circumstances of fraud and irregularity should there be any.

Our report is prepared solely for the confidential use of Royal Berkshire Fire & Rescue Service and solely for the purposes set out herein. This report should not therefore be regarded as suitable to be used or relied on by any other party wishing to acquire any rights from RSM UK Risk Assurance Services LLP for any purpose or in any context. Any third party which obtains access to this report or a copy and chooses to rely on it (or any part of it) will do so at its own risk. To the fullest extent permitted by law, RSM UK Risk Assurance Services LLP will accept no responsibility or liability in respect of this report to any other party and shall not be liable for any loss, damage or expense of whatsoever nature which is caused by any person's reliance on representations in this report.

This report is released to you on the basis that it shall not be copied, referred to or disclosed, in whole or in part (save as otherwise permitted by agreed written terms), without our prior written consent.

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY – FIREFIGHTER PENSION ADMINISTRATION – WEST YORKSHIRE PENSION FUND

Why we completed this audit

The pension administration processes for Royal Berkshire Fire and Rescue Services (herein referred to as RBFRS) are carried out by an external service provider, West Yorkshire Pension Fund (WYPF), and have been since April 2016. WYPF utilise an internally developed pension system called UPM to manage the pension administration process, maintain member profiles and record invoices for overpayments.

RBFRS has three Firefighter pension schemes in progress which are administered through WYPF; the 1992, 2006 and 2015 Firefighters Pension Schemes. The 1992 scheme was closed to new members and replaced by the 2006 scheme in April 2006, and the 2006 scheme was closed to new members and replaced by the 2015 scheme in April 2015.

Conclusion

Our testing has confirmed that West Yorkshire Pension Fund has effective controls in place to manage pension administration processes and associated risks including the monitoring and recovery of overpayments on behalf of RBFRS.

Internal audit opinion:

Taking account of the issues identified, 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.



Key findings

We noted the following controls to be adequately designed and operating effectively:

Procedures



Through review of evidence requested, we confirmed that there are dedicated pages on the WYPF intranet covering key processes within Firefighterr Pension Administration. We also reviewed evidence to confirm members of staff are informed on updates to the documented processes on the intranet via team meetings. The working instructions are assigned an owner responsible for updating the instructions on an ongoing basis. Through testing we confirmed that the working instructions reflected current practice.

New Starters



Testing a sample of 10 new starters (from a RBFERS HR report) from April 2021 we confirmed in all cases the new starter had been added to the correct pension scheme on UPM in a timely manner, and a welcome letter was sent to the member once set up. We also obtained evidence from September 2021 to confirm that an Exception Report highlighting new starters added to UPM was shared with Dataplan for review.

Early Retirement and Re-Employment

From checking on UPM, the Pensioner Services Manager confirmed that there has been no early retirement cases within the last 12 months. Thus, no further testing was undertaken in this area.



Within the last 12 months there had been one case relating to re-employment. In this case we confirmed the member was re-employed in 2016 which resulted in abatement (Where a member's new salary and pension exceeds their previous salary, the excess is deducted from their pension. This is known as 'abatement') however, the member divorced their spouse in February 2021 which impacted abatement. In this case we reviewed evidence to confirm RBFERS verified the members salary and contractual hours, the abatement calculation was completed on the Fire re-employed Case form by the Service Centre Five team and reviewed by the Pensioners Services Manager. We also reviewed evidence to confirm the member was informed by letter of the impact on abatement.

Tax Code Changes



Tax code changes are downloaded by the WYPF IT team on a daily basis, direct from HMRC. The files are uploaded onto member records automatically by matching parameters such as their roll number, NI number and surname. We confirmed that since the start of the calendar year (2021) no tax code changes /amendments were required, thus no further testing was undertaken.

Voluntary Scheme Pays (VSP), Mandatory Schemes Pays (MSP), and Annual Allowance (including Tapered allowances):

We confirmed for five out of 18 members whose annual pension contributions in the financial year 2020/21 exceeded £40k that their Pension Savings Statement had been sent out prior to the 6 October 2021. We also obtained evidence to confirm WYPF emailed RBFRS a list of members who have been issued a Pension Saving Statement on 25 October 2021.



We undertook testing for one member who had a breach of annual allowance in the financial year 2020/21 and was on Voluntary and Mandatory Scheme Pays. Our testing confirmed that the member was informed of the requirements under both Scheme Pays via letter, and the deduction to benefits and annual allowance tax charge was calculated by a member of the RBFRS team and authorised by the Senior Pensions Officer at WYPF. Additionally, our testing confirmed the member was sent a Scheme Pays Actual Confirmation letter, the request to pay was added to UPM and submitted via BACS in line with the Scheme Pays deadline, and that the payment of the MSP and VSP charge had been included in the Accounting for Tax File Note on UPM for payment in January 2023 and January 2022 respectively in line with agreed procedures.

Payment Runs and Control Account Reconciliations



Pension payment runs occur monthly and are paid via an online payment system requiring two staff members, a preparer and an authoriser. Those with ability to authorise cannot prepare the transaction(s). Testing of the pay runs processed in June, July and August 2021 confirmed in all cases the Fire Payroll Checklist had been completed, exceptions reports had been produced and countersigned, and the SQL Reports Checklist had been completed. We also confirmed that in all instances the BACS File Summary Reports were produced in line with the month-end timetable and Gross-to-Net reports had also been produced, the amounts on which (i.e. the Net Pay figure and tax) agreed back to the reconciliation spreadsheet.

We obtained evidence to confirm that for June, July and August 2021 that the pension control account reconciliation, PAYE reconciliations and control account reconciliations to the general ledger had been prepared by the Pay and Pensions Officer and reviewed by the Accounting Manager with all variances resolved in with sufficient evidence to demonstrate the process and being prepared in line with timescales.

We have agreed three 'Low' priority management actions and these are documented within the detailed findings below.

2. DETAILED FINDINGS AND ACTIONS

This report has been prepared by exception. Therefore, we have included in this section, only those areas of weakness in control or examples of lapses in control identified from our testing and not the outcome of all internal audit testing undertaken.

Area: Pension Administration		
Control	Retiring Firefighters who were initially on the 1992 scheme before joining the 2015 scheme are dealt with under immediate detriment. This means where applicable, the member can decide to either receive benefits that the member would be entitled to under the terms of the 1992 Scheme or the 2015 Scheme.	Assessment:
	<p>RBFRS informs WYPF via the Retirement Notification when members who are retiring would like to make an application and review their remedy options. This decision to notify WYPF of immediate detriment is made by the member. Based on the information provided within the Retirement Notification, WYPF will calculate benefits that the member would be entitled to under the terms of the two schemes.</p> <p>Where immediate detriment is applicable and has been requested, the member would receive quotations under each of the following terms:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • If the member had remained on the 1992 Scheme; • If the member had transitioned to the 1992 Scheme on 1 April 2015 (only applicable where the member transitioned after 1 April 2015); and • The calculation under current regulations. This is the actual proportion on the 1992 scheme and 2015 Scheme. <p>The Retirement Quote process and checklist is completed and counterchecked by a Senior Pensions Officer before retirement pack can be produced.</p> <p>The member then receives a Retirement Pack for each remedy option; to enable a decision to be made. Once the member has chosen their benefit package, the Pension Claim Form and disclaimer is signed by the member and returned to WYPF. Once election is confirmed, the member is sent a Pension Advice Letter.</p> <p>Subsequently, the Retirement Actual process (inputting lump sum payment, and check pension amount agrees) is set up. As part of the checking process the lump sum for payment is authorised. The Retirement Actual checklist is completed by a Senior Pensions Officer and signed off by one other.</p> <p>Once the process is completed, the Senior Pensions Manager emails the Accounting Manager at RBFRS to confirm the lump sum paid.</p>	<p>Design ✓</p> <p>Compliance ×</p>
Findings / Implications	<p>From a report provided by RBFRS we selected a sample of 10 leavers from April 2021. In three of the 10 cases WYPF had been informed of immediate detriment.</p> <p>Through testing we noted the following exceptions:</p>	

Area: Pension Administration

- In all cases the calculations relating to immediate detriment had been completed however, the preparer’s details had not been documented. The Member Services Manager confirmed that the Client Relationships Manager had completed these. In two of the three cases the spreadsheet containing the immediate detriment calculations had documented the Member Services Manager’s initials to confirm their review. In the remaining one case, the reviewer’s initials had not been documented. Without documenting the details of the preparer and reviewer there is reduced traceability relating to the segregation of duties between the preparer and reviewer of the manual immediate detriment calculations. In the absence of segregation of duties there is a risk retirement packs are sent out to members with inaccurate information preventing members from making well informed election choices;
- In all instances the Retirement Quote Checklist and Retirement Actual Checklist had been completed. However, it was noted that these had not been countersigned by a Senior Pensions Officer and recorded on UPM. The Member Services Manager highlighted that this is due to remote working, as prior to Covid-19 the checklists will have been printed, checked by a Senior Pensions Officer, signed and re-uploaded to UPM. The Member Services Manager confirmed that although the document has not been signed, the workflow process in UPM for the Retirement Quote and Retirement Actual process instructs the authoriser to review the relevant checklist as part of the checker’s duties. Without documenting the review of the checklists there is a risk this has not been reviewed by one other to ensure the process has been completed correctly and completely. Thus, there is a risk Retirement Packs are sent to a member which contain errors.

Management Action 1	WYPF will ensure the review of the Retirement Quote and Retirement Actual checklist by an independent checker is documented on UPM. WYPF will document the preparer and reviewer of calculations completed for immediate detriment cases.	Responsible Owner: Assistant Director (Finance, Administration and Governance)	Date: 17 December 2021	Priority: Low
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Area: Pension Administration

Control	The Service Centre Five (SC5) team identifies overpayments through Death Mortality Screening reports received from Accurate Data Services. The SC5 team inform the Finance team of overpayments via UPM. With regard to the recovery of overpayments, it is dependent on the type of overpayment (ie for those relating to injury reviews, overpayments could be in the region of £10k; in these cases, WYPF referred back to the Fire Authority to agree time frames and amounts to recover). Where overpayments have incurred and no further payments are due (for instance due to member death), the next of kin is invoiced the overpayment amount. For overpayments of regular amounts, WYPF would offer the pensioner different ways of recovery ie one-off payment, deduction from monthly pension (reducing balance). Once agreed, an invoice is issued to the member by the Finance team.	Assessment:	
		Design	✓
		Compliance	×

Area: Pension Administration

Overpayments are monitored by the Finance team at WYPF through the reconciliation spreadsheet completed by the Senior Finance Officer and returned to the Authority each month. The UPM system also allows for the monitoring of overpayments.

Findings / Implications

We noted through discussion with the Pensioner Services Manager that if an overpayment is less than £100 it is automatically written off. Review of working instructions confirmed this.

The Pensioner Services Manager confirmed that members deaths are the main cause for overpayments where payments are paid in advance. It was noted that the SC5 team receive a Death Mortality Screening report from an external provider called Accurate Data Services. This report lists UK deaths within the last month which allows the team to identify member deaths where an overpayment may have occurred.

Through review of reconciliations produced by the Finance team we confirmed that monthly monitoring of overpayments from the current financial year to date is undertaken.

The Pensioner Service Manager and the Senior Finance Officer confirmed that there has been one overpayment identified since the start of the current financial year. Through discussions and review of evidence we confirmed that an advanced payment was paid to the member on 31 August 2021 however, the member had died on 26 August 2021. WYPF was informed of the death by the member's next of kin on 7 September 2021 thus, this resulted in an overpayment of £817.31.

Through discussions with the Pensioner Services Manager and through review of evidence we confirmed a letter was sent to the member's next of kin on 8 September 2021, explaining the process for recovering the money. We also reviewed an invoice dated 13 September 2021 which has been sent to the next of kin. This was in line with the working instructions.

The Senior Finance Officer confirmed that the invoice for £817.31 was paid on 11 November 2021. We obtained evidence from SAP to confirm this had been recorded. However, our review highlighted that the recovery of this overpayment was not reflected on UPM. Review of UPM confirmed the process for reclaiming this overpayment was still listed as 'open' on the workflow. The Senior Finance Officer confirmed that this has been an oversight by the Invoice team as when invoices are received for overpayments the process is also closed on UPM.

It was noted that the Invoice team undertake a monthly review of open work trays assigned to the team thus, this error will have been identified and the process will have been closed on UPM as part of the monthly review. Without updating UPM to record recovered overpayments, there is a risk UPM does not contain current information in a timely manner.

There is also a risk that the next of kin is chased for the overpayment which appears to have not been recovered on UPM. Our review of the reconciliation produced by the Senior Finance Officer confirmed that the overpayment has been recorded.

Management Action 2	WYPF will remind staff to close the process in UPM once overpayments have been recovered.	Responsible Owner: Financial Controller	Date: 17 December 2021	Priority: Low
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Assignment (5.19/20) Firefighter Pension Administration

Original management action / priority WYPF will implement written succession plans for our 'Fire' clients with reference to specific RBFRS workarounds where appropriate.
Original due date: 30 September 2019.
Revised due date 31March 2021.
Low.

Audit finding / status *The action has not been implemented.*
 The Assistant Director (Finance, Administration and Governance) confirmed that this action has not yet been implemented. This is due to structure changes at Bradford Council which have taken longer than anticipated to implement. It was noted that this is mainly due to resolving HR and Union issues. As a result, WYPF does not yet have a written succession plan in place. The Assistant Director (Finance, Administration and Governance) highlighted that although a documented plan is not in place, succession planning is actively discussed through management meetings.

Management Action 3	We will develop written succession plans for the Royal Berkshire Fire and Rescue Service once the changes to the workforce structure have been implemented (provisionally in Q4 2020/21).	Responsible Owner: Assistant Director (Finance, Administration and Governance)	Date: 31 March 2022	Priority: Low
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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY – PAYROLL PROVIDER - DATAPLAN

Why we completed this audit

Royal Berkshire Fire & Rescue Service (RBFRS) has outsourced the processing of their payroll to West Yorkshire Pension Fund (WYPF) who have in turn subcontracted the payroll element to Dataplan. Dataplan has been a provider of payroll services for over 50 years and has been processing the payroll of RBFRS since April 2016.

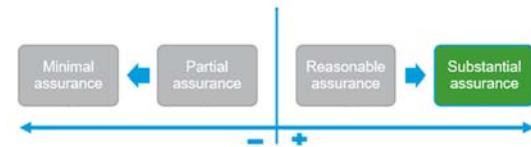
At Dataplan, the RBFRS payroll account is managed by a permanent team of two, consisting of the Deputy Head of Education and a Payroll Processor, who are supported by other members of the Education team as required. RBFRS utilise Flexipay Payroll Software to manage the payroll. RBFRS and Dataplan utilise ePaysafe (an online payroll portal to share payroll related documentation including amendment notifications and monthly exception reports).

Conclusion

Our review has confirmed that Dataplan has robust controls in place to manage the payroll processes which our testing has demonstrated compliance with. Our sample testing identified one exception which has resulted in one 'Low' priority action being agreed with management. The action relates to the absence of version control on the Operational Guide to Royal Berkshire Fire Authority Payroll.

Internal audit opinion:

Taking account of the issues identified, the Service can take substantial assurance that the controls upon which the organisation relies to manage the identified area are suitably designed, consistently applied and operating effectively.



Key findings

We identified the following controls were well designed and operating effectively:



Contract:

There is a signed contract in place between the West Yorkshire Pension Fund, and Dataplan, which confirms that Dataplan will provide employee payroll services for Royal Berkshire Fire and Rescue Service. This contract is signed by both parties. The initial contract term ran until 3 January 2019, with an option to extend for a further two years which was exercised and further extended in January 2021 to May 2024.



Access rights:

Access to the RBFRS payroll on the Flexipay system, as well as access to the Payment Hub BACS system, is suitably restricted to appropriate members of Dataplan staff. We reviewed the 'Flexipay list of users' report which showed all users and one master account, covering three main access profiles. We reviewed the editing rights of the Manager, Project, IT, and Standard profiles, and confirmed that the rights were appropriate, and that no profiles have the right to delete audit trails. We also confirmed that the functions of Payroll and HR have a suitable segregation of duties as HR and the associated systems are operated by staff at RBFRS, while payroll functions are administered by Dataplan staff.

Starters and Leavers



The HR team at RBFS upload details of new starters, leavers and other amendments to the ePaysafe system on a monthly basis. For new starters, Dataplan receive an Action 5 Sheet, a Changes to Bank Details form and HMRC Starter Checklist from RBFRS. For leavers, Dataplan receives an 'Action 5' sheets from RBFRS. Outstanding holiday pay is calculated by Dataplan and Flexipay is updated using the information provided on the 'Action 5' sheets. Dataplan manually enter the data into Flexipay which is then 'accuracy checked' by an independent person. Due to remote working, the original document is placed in a folder by one staff member, and then moved to a checked folder by another staff member of staff.

Sample testing of 20 staff (10 starters and 10 leavers) confirmed that all processes had been appropriately followed with no exceptions noted.



Permanent and Temporary Amendments to Standing Data

Testing a sample of 15 amendments including changes to pension contribution, temporary and permanent promotions confirmed in all cases the amendment was actioned in a timely manner as per the request from RBFRS and independently checked.



Tax Code Changes

Our testing of five tax code change instructions from HRMC in the current financial year, confirmed that all had been correctly updated in Flexipay and the changes were implemented within an appropriate timeframe and actioned as per the HMRC notification. Our testing also confirmed that all tax changes were visible in the staff member's payslip in the month following the change.



Exception Reporting

Payslips Report and Analysis of Pay for Period including the Variance Report are provided to RBFRS on a monthly basis for review and approval prior to payments being made. Our review of the July, August and September 2021 payrolls confirmed that these reports were provided to RBFRS and subsequently, checked and approved by RBFRS each month prior to payment.



Year End Documentation

Testing confirmed that for 2020/21, year-end documentation including the month end BACS file for period 12, RTI file (Includes all information about tax and other deductions under the PAYE system) and employee P60s had been produced in a timely manner and in line with government deadlines.



Overpayments

Our testing of five overpayments confirmed in all cases Dataplan were notified via an Action 5 Sheet of how to reclaim the funds. In all cases the overpayment was reclaimed in line with RBFRS instruction and pay had been reverted to normal once the overpayment was paid.



Pension Contributions and Tapered Members

Deductions of pension's contributions are automated in line with the member's scheme rules. Our testing of five members from a report provided by RBFRS confirmed in all instances tapered arrangements had not been applied. This was due to the Immediate Detriment note issued by the Home Office and the Fire Authority's decision not to taper members from 2021.

2. DETAILED FINDINGS AND ACTIONS

This report has been prepared by exception. Therefore, we have included in this section, only those areas of weakness in control or examples of lapses in control identified from our testing and not the outcome of all internal audit testing undertaken.

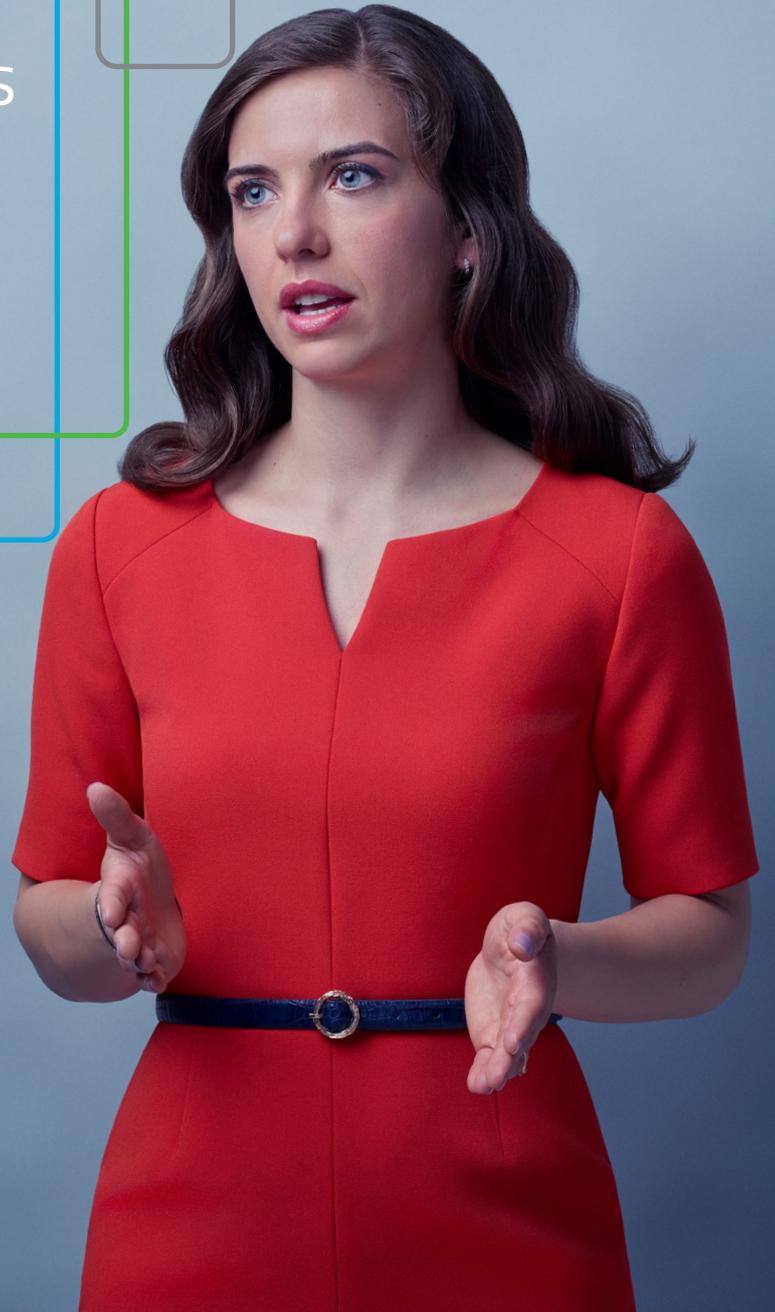
Area: Payroll	
Control	<p>Dataplan has in place an Operational Guide to Royal Berkshire Fire Authority Payroll. The Operational Guide details the monthly payroll processes for RBFR's.</p> <p>The Operational Guide to Royal Berkshire Fire Authority Payroll is updated on an ongoing basis. This is made available to all relevant staff via the shared network and communicated to staff at induction.</p> <p>Staff also have access to the Flexipay Manual and 'How To' videos related to using Flexipay. These are communicated to staff on induction. The 'How To' videos are available to staff via the intranet and the Fleixpay Manual via the Flexipay system.</p>
	<p>Assessment:</p> <p>Design ✓</p> <p>Compliance ×</p>
Findings / Implications	<p>Through review of the Operational Guide to Royal Berkshire Fire Authority Payroll we confirmed the following is outlined:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Key contact details at both RBFRS and Dataplan; • The process for actioning permanent and temporary contractual amendments; • The process for checking amendments; • The process for preparing the payroll including the Pay Check reports produced and shared with RBFRS for approval; • The process for running and approving the payroll once the Pay Check reports are approved by RBFRS; • Calculations for calculating outstanding holiday pay for leavers; and • The Payroll Checking Schedule template. <p>Through review of evidence we confirmed that the operational guide is made available to staff via the shared network.</p> <p>The Deputy Head of Education Services also confirmed that Dataplan staff with payroll related duties are informed of the Operational Guide as part of induction training. Review of the Dataplan Initial Training Checklist confirmed training includes the process for adding new starters, processing a leaver and Flexipay.</p> <p>We also reviewed evidence to confirm 'How To' videos are available on the intranet informing users of Flexipay on how to undertake payroll activities. This includes but not limited to, how to add job end dates for leavers. Additionally, we reviewed evidence to confirm the Fleixpay Manual details how to add new starters to the payroll and this is made available to staff via Fleixpay.</p> <p>The Deputy Head of Education Services and Financial Controller and Chief Information Security Officer (CISO) confirmed that the Operational Guide is updated when changes are made to the procedure, and as such, does not have a fixed review period.</p> <p>Review of the Operational Guide to Royal Berkshire Fire Authority Payroll demonstrated that it has been updated to detail the processes in place where members of staff are working remotely due to Covid-19.</p>

Area: Payroll

Our review highlighted that the Operational Guide to Royal Berkshire Fire Authority Payroll does not include version control. Without documenting the details of last review there is a risk the Operational Guide is not reviewed to reflect changes in practice. Thus, there is a risk the Operational Guide used by staff to process the payroll are outdated and not reflective of the current process.

Management Action 1	Dataplan will include version control on the Operational Guide to Royal Berkshire Fire Authority Payroll.	Responsible Owner: Deputy Head of Education Services	Date: 24 th January 2022- now complete	Priority: Low
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Strengthening
resilience: lessons
learnt from
the impacts of
the pandemic



February 2022

ANALYSIS OF INTERNAL AUDIT REVIEW OUTCOMES

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

With the onset of the coronavirus pandemic, organisations have had to re-think, act quickly, and in many respects change how they have been operating. Throughout the pandemic we have seen a rise in fraud, cyber risk, supply chain disruption and economic uncertainty. These have been coupled with the adoption of homeworking arrangements and the relaxation of certain controls.

Following the initial onset of the pandemic, RSM's internal audit teams continued to undertake reviews, but in a remote setting. Our reviews have focused on our clients' responses to the pandemic and the lessons that were learnt, as well as issues around business continuity, agile and remote working, return to work and mental health. Just like many organisations across the UK, RSM has also had to work its way through the effects of the pandemic and adapt to the new ways of working while continuing to provide quality results for our clients.

Some audit plans were paused during the early stages of the pandemic, but many organisations were keen to restart their internal audit work given the importance of seeking assurance over the controls in place, particularly where new processes had been established at pace.

As part of RSM's approach to categorising internal audit findings, we agree low, medium and high priority management actions with our clients. A high management action is appropriate where there is a serious internal control or risk management issue, and where immediate attention is necessary.

Management actions in focus

As part of our research, we have analysed pandemic-related management actions that were agreed with our clients as part of internal audit reviews during the latter part of 2019/20 and 2020/21, including reviews of actions related to:

- business continuity;
- return to work;
- agile and remote working;
- coronavirus recovery;
- financial management;
- governance; and
- mental health and wellbeing.

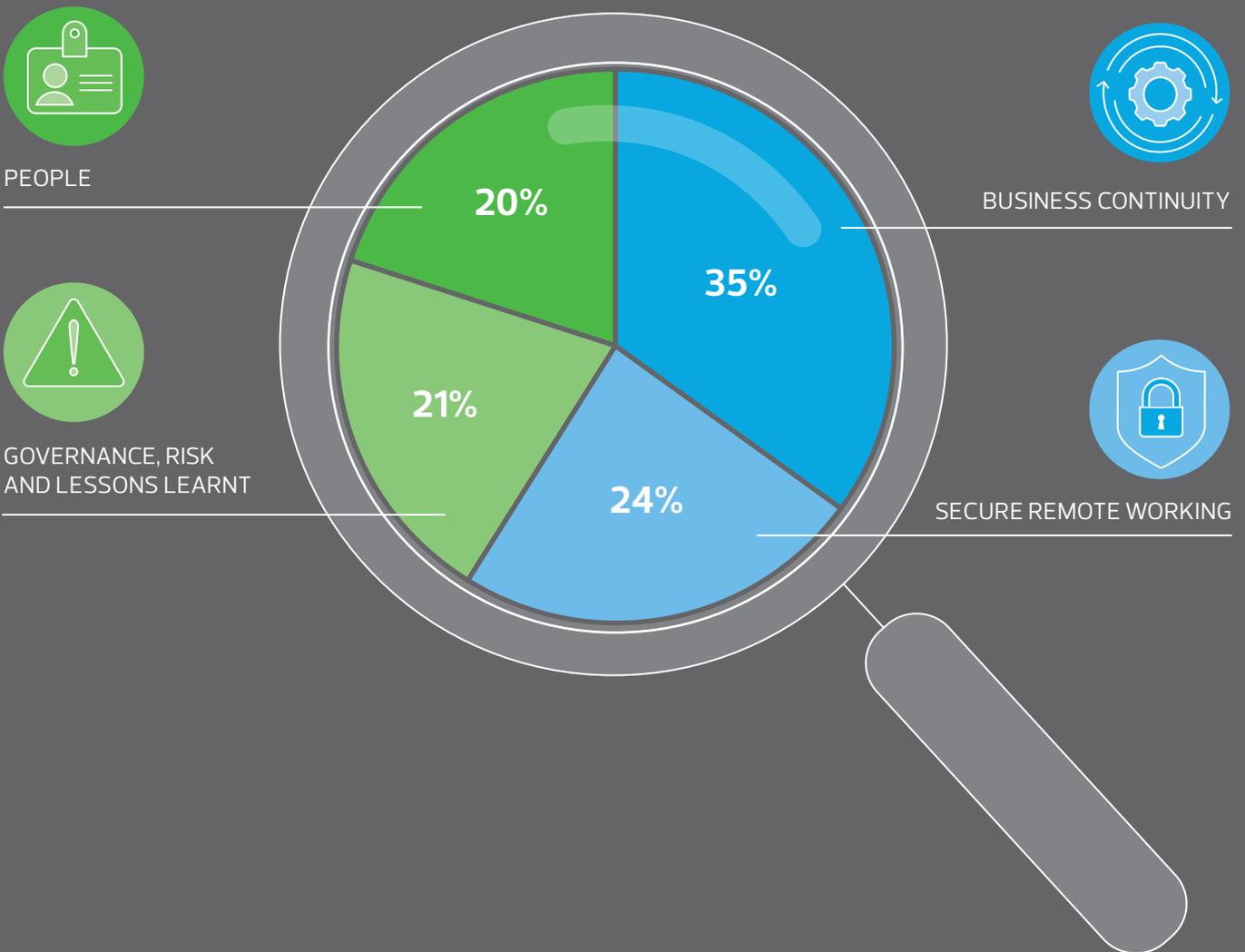
This paper highlights the key outcomes from our reviews, and summarises the management actions agreed with our clients.

Overall, we have analysed 289 high, medium and low priority management actions agreed across 70 different reviews with a broad range of clients. Management actions were agreed with 63 organisations across the public and third sectors, and corporate organisations including several financial services businesses.

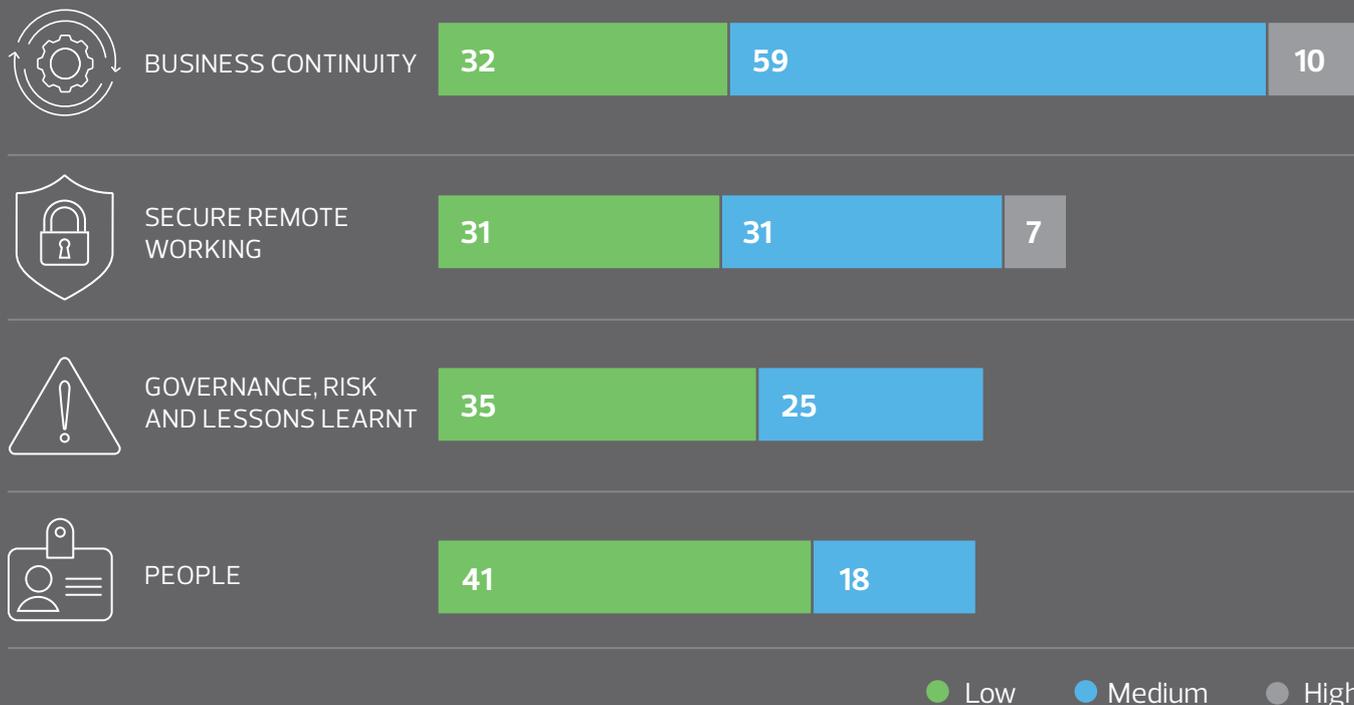
The 289 management actions covered by this report fall into one of four broad areas:

1. business continuity;
2. secure remote working;
3. governance, risk and lessons learnt; and
4. people.

PERCENTAGE OF AGREED MANAGEMENT ACTIONS



NUMBER OF HIGH, MEDIUM AND LOW MANAGEMENT ACTIONS AGREED



It is of note that all of the high-priority management actions that were agreed relate to business continuity and secure remote working. These actions are agreed where urgent attention is necessary as a result of a serious internal control or risk management issue that may lead to:

- substantial losses;
- violation of corporate strategies, policies or values;
- reputational damage;
- negative publicity in national or international media; and/or
- adverse regulatory impact, such as loss of operating licences or material fines.

A medium graded action is used where timely (but less immediate) action is needed as a result of an internal control risk management issue that could lead to:

- financial losses that could affect the effective function of a department;
- loss of controls or process being audited; and/or
- possible reputational damage, eg negative publicity in local or regional media.

We consider each of the four areas noted above in the following sections, concluding with specific sector context drawn from our regular reviews of the risks that sectors face and how these risks have changed during the pandemic.

Key findings

1

The majority of management actions we agreed related to business continuity (101 management actions) across all sectors that were a part of this review. The focus of management actions is on ensuring that plans and policies are reviewed and updated where necessary, and that key members of staff involved in the business continuity plan receive sufficient training.

2

The majority of secure remote working related management actions we agreed were related to security, IT systems and infrastructure, and policies and procedures. Other areas included training, risk assessments and equipment provision. From our reviews, only 12 per cent of organisations could take a substantial level of assurance that the controls in place to ensure secure remote working were operating effectively to manage risks.

3

Reviewing and updating risk assessments was a key area where we agreed management actions and ensured a stronger alignment and communication among boards, committees and other key risk management members regarding the challenges and opportunities created by the pandemic.

4

Very few organisations could have predicted that the pandemic would manifest as it has done, and organisations have had to move quickly to respond. In practice this has likely led to marked changes in risk appetite and often to significant changes in the control environment, as new or revised processes and procedures have been put in place. The need for both effective risk management and to gain assurance over internal controls has been magnified.

5

As hybrid working starts to become the 'new normal', organisations have had to pay particular attention to people; their health, safety and mental wellbeing, as well as their training and personal development. A host of factors should be considered in relation to employee wellbeing, including developing strategies and initiatives to engage and support staff as needed.

BUSINESS CONTINUITY

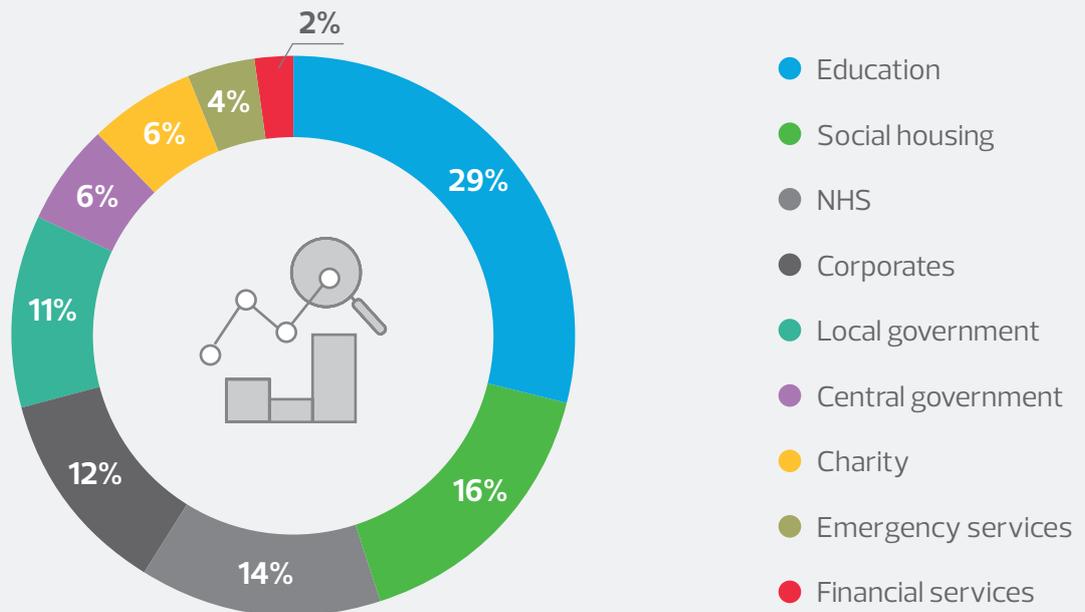
Following the uncertainty associated with coronavirus, organisations have reviewed their business continuity plans and ensured robust procedures are in place. Many organisations would not have had a global pandemic at the top of their risk registers, or even included one at all. While business continuity plans are designed to enable organisations to remain operational, the events that unfolded were far reaching, all-encompassing, and very difficult to navigate. As a result, many organisations have had to live test their disaster recovery arrangements and have incorporated learnings to ensure the robustness of their business continuity plans post-pandemic.

It is clearly essential for organisations to have an emergency plan to enable operational activity to continue, to respond quickly as events unfold, and to mitigate risks and their impacts.

Business continuity management covers risks to infrastructure, cyber operations, employees, business/operational activities and communication. Perhaps unsurprisingly, across all sectors that were a part of this review the majority of management actions we agreed were those relating to business continuity (101 management actions). In particular, the top three areas of management actions we agreed related to reviewing business continuity plans, training, and emergency planning. Other areas included effective testing of the business continuity plan, policies and strategies, impact analysis and disaster recovery.

The majority of management actions were issued to education clients (29 per cent) across seven reviews. However, our data indicates that the social housing sector seemed less well prepared. There were only two business continuity reviews for this sector as part of our analysis, yet business continuity-related management actions made up 16 per cent of the total for social housing.

SECTOR ANALYSIS ON BUSINESS CONTINUITY RELATED MANAGEMENT ACTIONS



Summary of key themes

As part of our business continuity reviews, management actions we agreed included:

- 1 Delivering business continuity and disaster recovery training to key members of staff involved in the process, and providing related training to new members of staff with business continuity planning responsibilities as part of their induction.
- 2 Reviewing policies and strategies relating to business continuity, updating them where needed, and ensuring they are approved by the board.
- 3 Reviewing and updating business impact analysis and assessments to ensure they are reflective of current working practices.
- 4 More clearly identifying in business continuity plans the staff and equipment requirement in an emergency, and identifying the alternative arrangements to use should these staff members be absent.
- 5 Periodic testing of the business continuity plan and incorporating lessons learnt from the testing into the plan.
- 6 Revising IT business continuity and disaster recovery plans to incorporate a cyber resilience plan that would assist in the event of disaster or disruption to business-critical activities. A testing exercise is also needed to ensure the plan is fit for purpose in the event of disaster or disruption.

For many organisations, reviewing and updating business continuity plans was key to ensuring that, as far as possible, disruption was minimised and that resilience was strengthened. One of the common mistakes many organisations make is to think that resilience can be obtained by simply writing down comprehensive plans and procedures. But having a plan to deal with a major disruption is very different from being able to execute it.

We have seen many plans that suggest moving teams, personnel and operations to alternative locations or premises; that course of action has often been impossible due to the pandemic lockdown measures. In other words, very few, if any, business continuity plans envisaged large-scale home working.



SURVEY SNAPSHOT

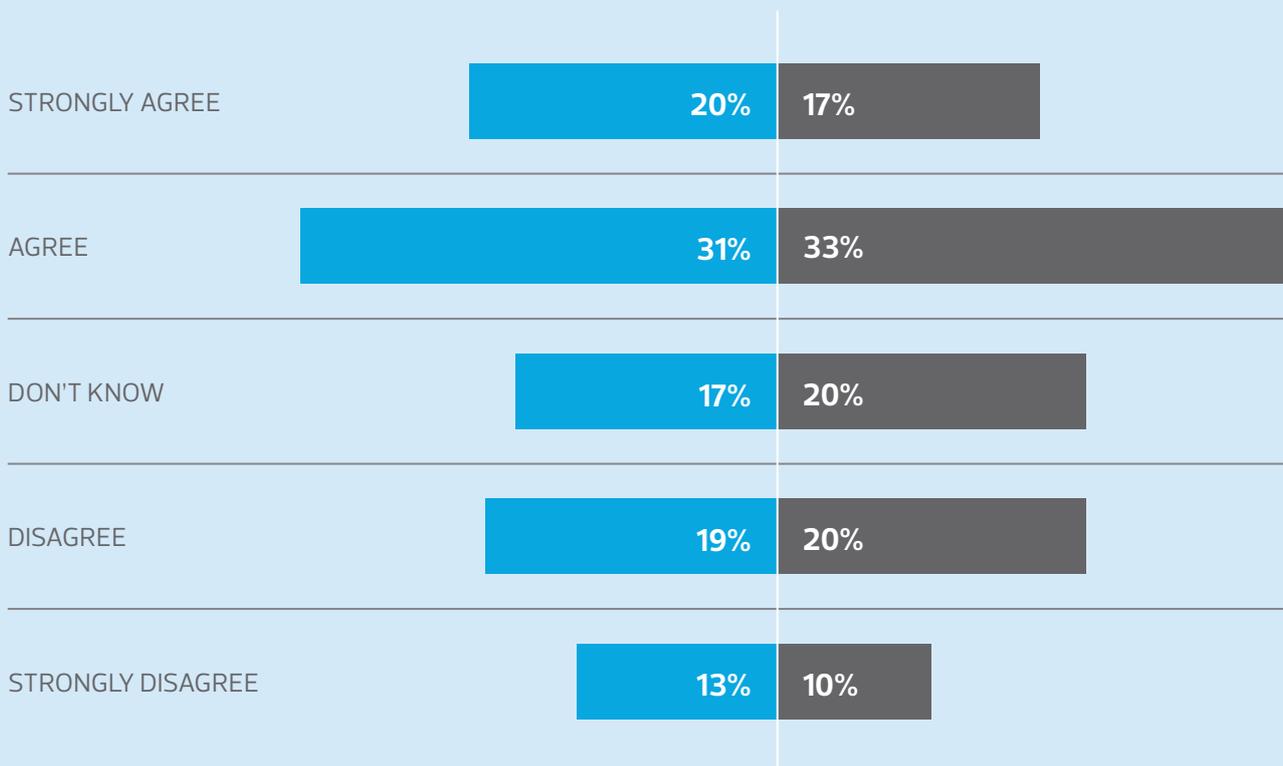
Business continuity survey findings at a healthcare client

As part of one of our reviews, we surveyed staff and senior management at a large NHS Trust to understand their knowledge of business continuity plans in their area.

Whilst this data is specific to one NHS Trust, organisations more generally may benefit from ensuring their business continuity arrangements have been effectively communicated.

The business continuity survey received 147 responses. From the survey responses it was clear that not all staff knew how or where to locate their local business continuity plan. This is illustrated below.

SURVEY FINDINGS



- I know how to locate the business continuity plan for my area
- I know how to find central documentation and communications in regard to business continuity

Sector spotlight

The majority of management actions relating to business continuity were in education, social housing and NHS organisations.

EDUCATION

- Business continuity and critical incident policies should be reviewed and approved by the board.
- The IT team should complete the restructure of the IT infrastructure and then update the IT disaster recovery plan to include the new requirements.
- The testing of business continuity arrangements should be formally recorded, with results of the tests and any lessons learnt being reported to the risk management committee.

SOCIAL HOUSING

- The business continuity plan should be expanded to cover other scenarios, as well as the pandemic.
- Ensuring that Incident Management Team meetings cover the review and maintenance of the business continuity plan, and discussions need to take place on how often meetings should be conducted in response to different severity levels.
- A schedule to test the business continuity plan should be designed and implemented. The outcome of these tests will be reported to the board, and where necessary, acted upon.

NHS

- A copy of all local business continuity business plan tests and action plans should be held in a central location.
- There should be an action register to record the outcomes of local and trust wide business continuity plan testing.
- The Emergency Preparedness, Resilience and Response (EPRR) policy should be reviewed and updated to incorporate the lessons learnt from the coronavirus outbreak and how the current EPRR processes and controls can be improved.



KEY QUESTIONS FOR ORGANISATIONS TO CONSIDER

Does your organisation have assurance that business and critical incident policies have been approved by the board?

Do you have assurance that the business continuity plan reflects the lessons learnt from the pandemic?

Has business continuity training been rolled out to all key members of staff involved in the process, and to new members of staff with business continuity planning responsibilities?

SECURE REMOTE WORKING

Since the beginning of the coronavirus lockdown at the end of March 2020, many organisations have had to rapidly adapt to a large proportion of their workforce working entirely from home. Technology continues to facilitate the success of virtual working, and digital transformation has been a big focus for organisations, with the pandemic accelerating investment in all things digital. The world has harnessed the opportunities technology provides us, for example virtual meetings. There have been some benefits, including reduced costs, time savings, and beneficial environmental impacts. However, the pandemic has also offered opportunities for criminals to launch sophisticated and dangerous cyber-attacks.

The Chartered Institute of Internal Auditors' (IIA) annual analysis of the top business risks faced by organisations across Europe were cybersecurity and data security (79 per cent), regulatory change and compliance (59 per cent) and digitalisation, new technology and AI (50 per cent).

[RSM's survey of the views of Heads of Internal Audit](#) mirrored the findings presented by the IIA's analysis. It showed that cybersecurity was rated as the second-highest challenge for internal audit functions in 2021, the second-highest risk for the business, and the most selected area for inclusion in internal audit plans for 2021. The risks associated with data privacy and management were also rated highly by our surveyed Heads of Internal Audit.

Cybercrime is, of course, nothing new. But increased levels of connectivity, remote working, reliance on technology, and automation means the risk of attack is rising rapidly.

The pandemic has made many organisations more vulnerable to cyber-attacks because of:

- relaxed or more informal control environments;
- revised processes and procedures; and
- changing employee workforce profiles.

Remote and hybrid working are becoming the new normal, so organisations have had to carefully review policies and implement new ways of working to address some of the concerns around information security risks. It is more important than ever to ensure there are no technical barriers to effective working outside of the office environment.

The majority of secure remote working related management actions we agreed were related to security, IT systems and infrastructure and policies and procedures. Other areas included training, risk assessments and equipment provision.

From our reviews, only 12 per cent of organisations could take a substantial level of assurance that their controls to ensure secure remote working were operating effectively. This illustrates that many organisations have significant room to improve their IT control environments to:

- ensure data security;
- manage cyber-crime threats; and
- enhance IT operational effectiveness.



Find out more by browsing our report:

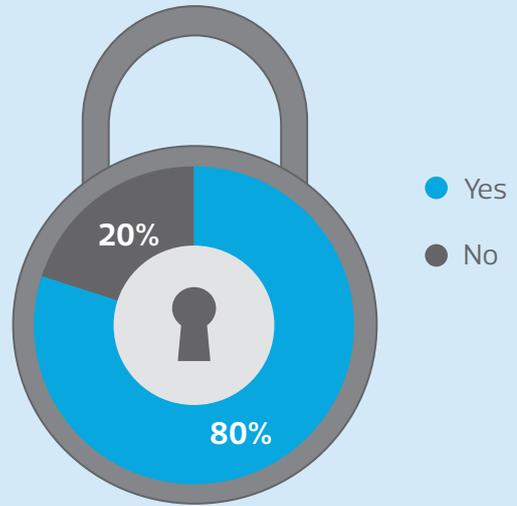
[The Real Economy: Cyber Security – breaking the kill chain](#) on The Real Economy [website](#) hub.



SURVEY SNAPSHOT

DO YOU KNOW HOW TO WORK SECURELY IN A HOME ENVIRONMENT?

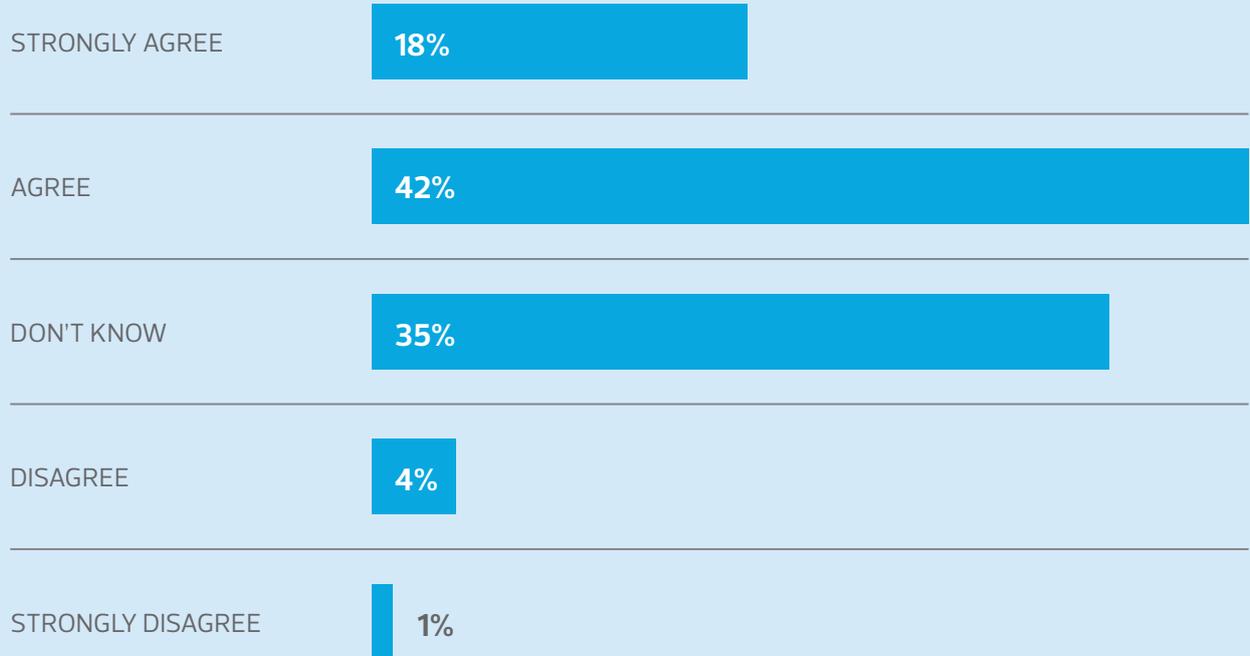
A secure remote working survey shared with one of our emergency services clients received 1,025 responses. It showed that while the majority of respondents knew how to work securely in a remote setting, just under 20 per cent did not.



YOU FIND YOUR EMPLOYER’S INFORMATION SECURITY AND REMOTE WORKING POLICIES FRIENDLY AND EASY TO FOLLOW AND UNDERSTAND

When asked about the policies relating to secure remote working, over half of respondents 'strongly agreed' or 'agreed' that the employer's information security and remote working policies were easy to follow or understand.

However, interestingly a significant proportion of respondents stated that they 'don't know.'



Management actions – and questions to ask in your own organisation

Security

- User accounts with no password expiry date should be reviewed.
- In future, all machines where the security software showed as 'Not Protected' are properly accounted for and the justification for them being not protected should be adequate and formally documented.
- A risk analysis should be conducted to take into account the potential impact of unavailability of security logs in the event of an incident, to determine if further capacity for security logs is required.
- Firewall rulesets should be formally documented and reviewed on a periodic basis to ensure these offer the best possible security.

IT systems and infrastructure

- Management should identify the most critical and at-risk areas in the organisation's IT network and schedule an annual penetration test to assess its vulnerability.
- Ensuring that unsupported servers are segregated from the network (where possible), and that they are upgraded to supported solutions.
- All processes and procedures (eg standard build) need to be kept up to date to ensure these are an accurate representation of the IT environment and can be followed.
- A formal patching policy should be established to define how patching activities are performed across the IT estate.

Policies and strategies

Management should assess, review and update where necessary the following policies:

- OneDrive policy settings that allow for the sharing of links to information on OneDrive and who they can be shared with;
- IT Security Policies and the Social Media Policy to ensure they are understandable for staff;
- IT Usage Policy to reflect the current IT environment; and
- Remote Working Policy and Information Security Policy and Internet and Email Policy are updated to include the organisation's security requirements and procedures to follow when working remote.

Other areas

- Periodic cyber-security training should be provided for staff to raise awareness of the cyber-security threats they face and how to secure their working environment in a remote setting.
- A checklist for staff that can be used to verify whether staff have adequate equipment/home environment to facilitate working from home should be developed. Information should also be collected to identify what office equipment, remote access and software is needed.
- Routine spot checks need to be undertaken on completed risk assessments to ensure that they are reviewed and updated timely.
- An online assessment for all staff who work remotely to assess their home environments should be developed. A training package should also be designed to support remote working staff.



KEY QUESTIONS FOR ORGANISATIONS TO CONSIDER

Does your organisation have assurance that there is an effective and suitably robust IT infrastructure in place so that staff are able to work from home securely?

Are all policies relating to secure remote working up to date and easily accessible to staff?

Do you have oversight of your equipment and current records of where your IT assets are?

TECHNOLOGY: ENSURING ROBUSTNESS AND SUITABILITY

Technology will need to be factored into new and amended plans to ensure that both existing and new technology infrastructure can withstand another change in circumstance or continued remote working.

As more businesses move towards cloud-first and software as a service models, there will be a greater reliance on the robustness of technology infrastructure and on technology partners to provide reliable managed services and support.



Look out for our in-depth paper highlighting outcomes from our secure remote working and operational resilience reviews.

Key factors for consideration:



IT strategic plans that underpin future business planning, including digital transformation and introduction of emerging technology such as AI and RPA.



Reliance on key third parties, their financial and operational stability, and their continued ability to support the business.



Robustness of IT disaster recovery processes, including regular testing exercises.



To find out more, please visit [Business continuity management](#) | [Coronavirus: adapting to change](#) | [RSM UK](#)

GOVERNANCE, RISK AND LESSONS LEARNT

Clearly, the pandemic has changed the way boards and committees operate, with decisions made remotely and with a particular focus on crisis management. While this has placed new demands on board and committee members, we have seen some positives emerge, such as enhanced efficiency as more people attend meetings virtually.

Until the pandemic, governance meetings have changed little since the start of the 20th century. Board and committee meetings have reflected this traditional model, even though how business is done and how we communicate has transformed beyond recognition. The pandemic has provided an opportunity to reflect on how we deliver governance and oversight in the longer term as we embrace both virtual and face-to-face meetings.

Few organisations would have predicted the pandemic to take hold as it has, and in response, organisations have had to move quickly, leading to changes in risk appetite. As new or revised processes and procedures have been put in place there have been significant changes to the control environment. This has magnified the need for effective risk management as well as the need to gain assurance over internal controls.

The August 2020 issue of the Global Institute of Internal Auditors' (IIA) *Tone at the Top*, '[The Board's Role in an Evolving Internal Audit Plan](#),' notes that risk assessments and audit plans will likely be very different in a post-pandemic environment. The IIA also states that the 'director's role in supporting development of an effective and responsive audit plan must account for changes in the speed of emerging risks, the disruptive impact of technology, and the ability of internal audit to provide effective independent assurance.'



A large proportion of the management actions we agreed as part of our reviews related to risk management and risk assessments. In particular, these related to reviewing and updating risk assessments and ensuring a stronger alignment and communication among boards, committees and other key risk management members on the challenges and opportunities created by the pandemic. As risk appetite may have changed during the pandemic, organisations also need to understand what their risk tolerances are now and, in addition, continue ensuring that risk registers (along with associated controls and assurances) are routinely updated.

From any crisis there are, of course, opportunities and learnings. Since March 2020 we have undertaken several 'lessons learnt' reviews, and we have agreed management actions related to wider organisational governance and risk management.

Management actions – and food for thought

Coronavirus lessons and responses

- Evaluate what went well during each wave of the pandemic as well as areas for improvement. The findings can be incorporated into working practices to help ensure the organisation is in a good position to meet any future challenges.
- Identify critical information that should be reported and reviewed by the governing bodies. This will enable effective reviews and decision-making, considering the changes in priorities and challenges as a result of the pandemic.
- Consider the effectiveness of governance processes and ensure lessons are applied to future incident management.

Board operation

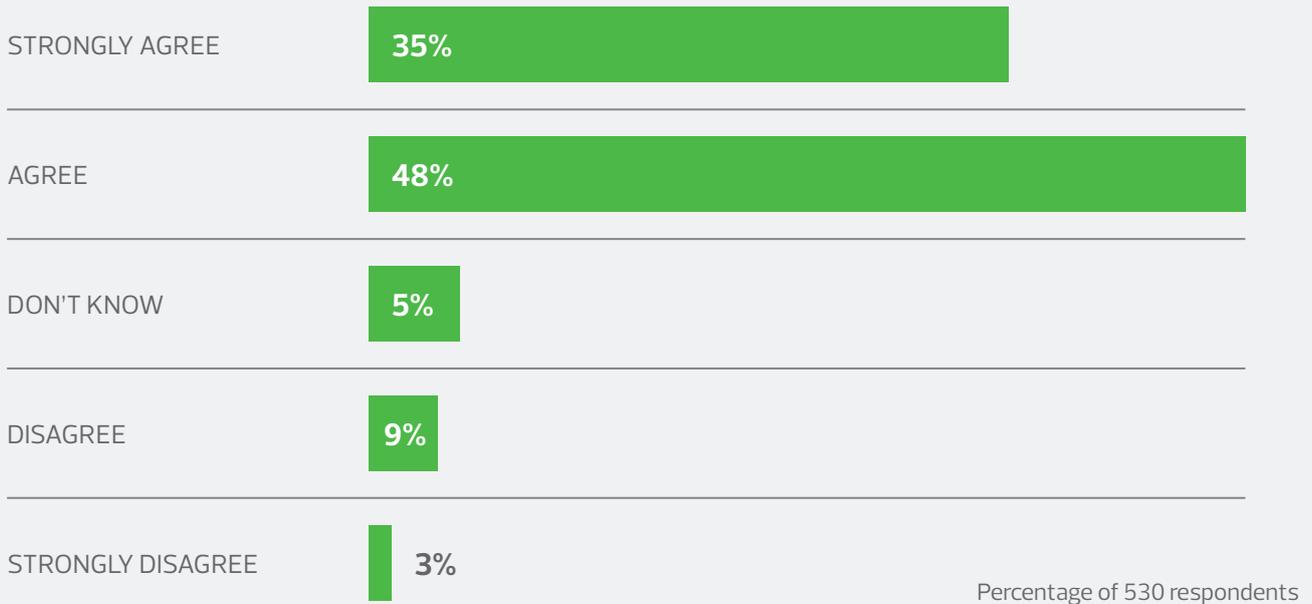
- An annual report should be presented to the board, outlining any instances that triggered the business continuity plans and any near misses.
- Where a decision has been taken via email between meetings, confirmation of it should be in the minutes of the following meeting to be formally approved as part of the standing agenda item.
- The actions identified in the previous meeting should have a status update to confirm whether they have been completed and formally recorded in the minutes.

Risk management

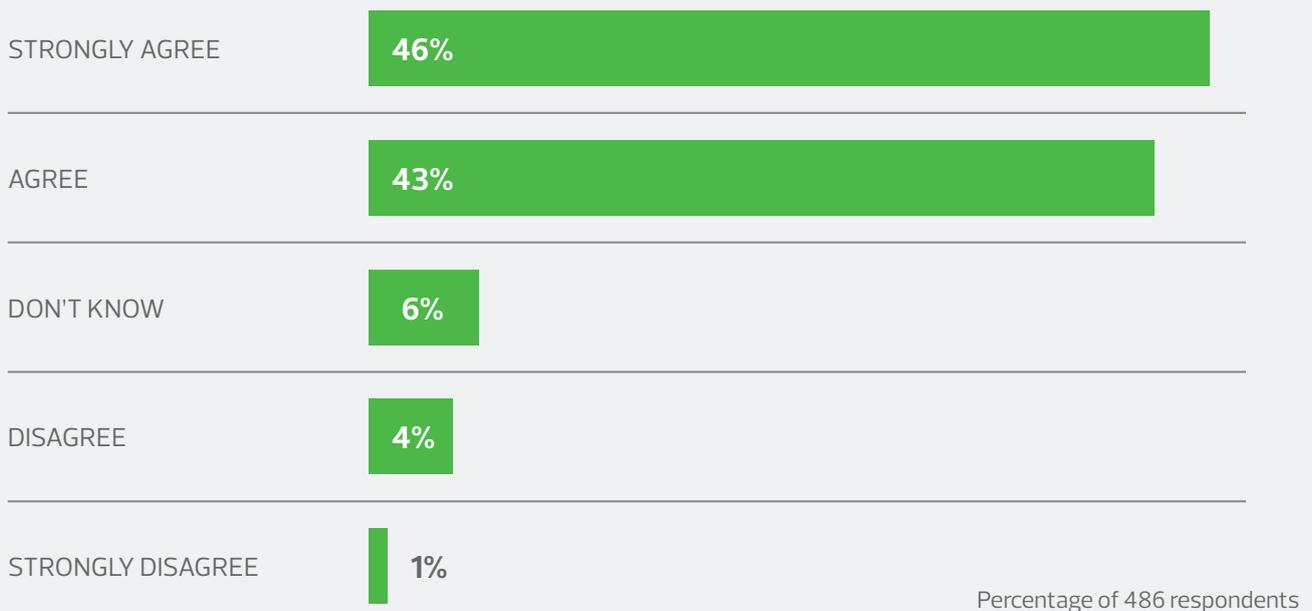
- Risk assessments for current and emerging threats to business-critical activities should be reviewed and updated. Additionally, a dedicated risk owner should be allocated for each risk identified.
- Risk assessments should only be marked as completed with evidence to support the review being undertaken or appropriate communication to reject the risk assessment taking place.
- Organisations should update relevant coronavirus risk assessments and include reference to Display Screen Equipment (DSE) and homeworking to ensure that this has been considered in line with the Health and Safety Executive guidance.
- Organisations need to assess the risks relating to the pandemic, document mitigating controls and provide assurance to the audit committee that this risk is being effectively managed.

As part of our risk management culture reviews, between January 2020 and April 2021 we shared 20 surveys with senior management and board members across a wide range of sectors including healthcare, education, central and local government, social housing and charities. We put the following two statements to survey respondents, and the majority of them were positive about the way risks are being dealt with by senior management and the board:

THE BOARD PROVIDES CONSISTENT, COHERENT, SUSTAINED AND VISIBLE LEADERSHIP IN TERMS OF HOW THE ORGANISATION EXPECTS PEOPLE TO BEHAVE AND RESPOND WHEN DEALING WITH RISK



SIGNIFICANT RISKS ARE IDENTIFIED AND BROUGHT TO THE ATTENTION OF SENIOR MANAGEMENT AND THE BOARD



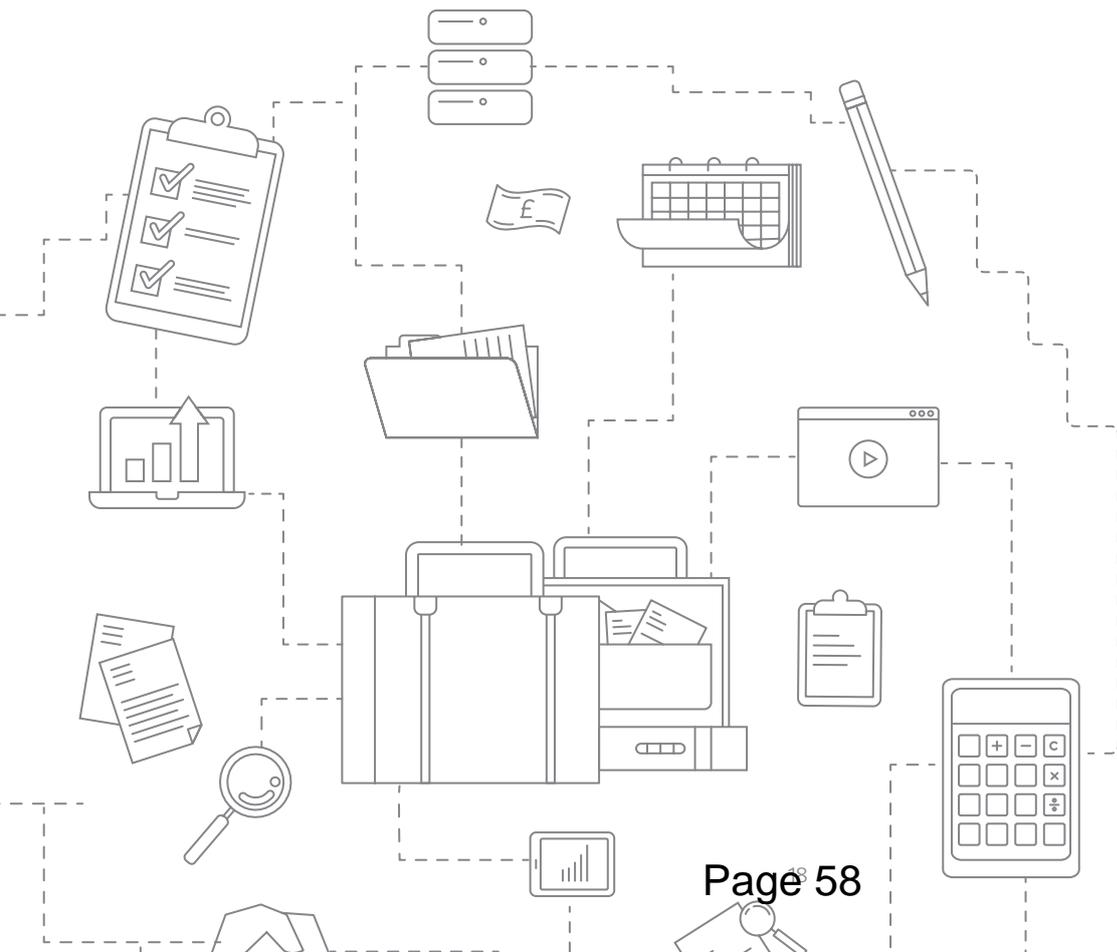
Some of our clients furloughed staff (as did RSM), particularly during the initial phase of the pandemic. Consequently, we have undertaken several furlough-specific reviews where we had agreed management actions.



KEY QUESTIONS FOR ORGANISATIONS TO CONSIDER

Does your organisation have assurance that risk assessments are frequently being reviewed and updated where necessary?

Has your organisation applied lessons that were learnt as a result of the pandemic to ensure you are able to meet any future challenges?



PEOPLE

As hybrid working starts to become the 'new normal', organisations have had to pay particular attention to people; their health, safety and mental wellbeing as well as their training and personal development. A host of factors should be considered in relation to employee wellbeing, including developing strategies and initiatives to engage and support staff.

Home working means that employers have an extended obligation to ensure that their employees are safe, and have a suitable workstation at home. As we move towards a long-term 'hybrid' working model, and for many people home working may become a permanent arrangement, it is good practice for employers to consider the Health and Safety Executive guidelines. A workspace should have a full health and safety risk assessment.



Management actions

Regarding people, we have agreed internal audit management actions regarding the need for:

- organisations to keep reviewing the support in place to ensure the health, safety and wellbeing of staff and take appropriate action where required. This includes raising staff awareness of the health and wellbeing resources available;
- homeworking health, safety and security self-assessment checklists to be completed;
- staff to complete the DSE assessment to ensure that they have a suitable working environment and, if necessary, they are able to request further equipment to improve their working space;
- health and wellbeing information and support for staff to be publicised and accessible;
- organisations to actively monitor coronavirus-related absences and provide support where required; and
- the Health and Safety Policy to be updated to include the processes for assessing risk for vulnerable persons.

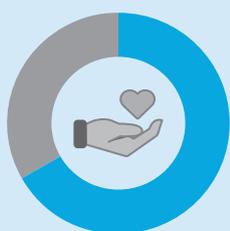
Mental health and wellbeing

We all recognise the importance of wellbeing and mental health. Be it the nature of work undertaken, or working differently – perhaps in a remote setting – we all face personal challenges. In trying to understand these challenges, employee engagement is vital, as it allows employers to gauge whether measures put in place are effective and whether there is room for improvement. Following the onset of the pandemic, it is important to recognise how this has impacted mental health. Encouraging employees to maintain a positive work/life balance is key.

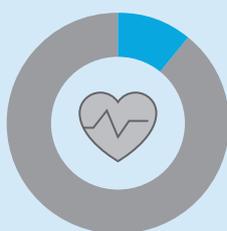
Managers regularly checking in with team members can help prevent feelings of isolation. Normalising conversations on employee wellbeing and having systems and tools in place to handle this is recommended. For example:

- offering benefits such as an employee assistance programme (EAP);
- introducing and embedding mental health first aid throughout the organisation; and
- ensuring absence management policies and procedures relating to mental health support the timely referral of employees to specialist health where appropriate.

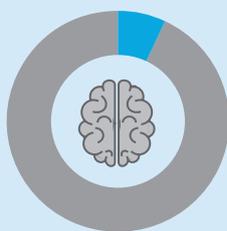
 **SURVEY SNAPSHOT**



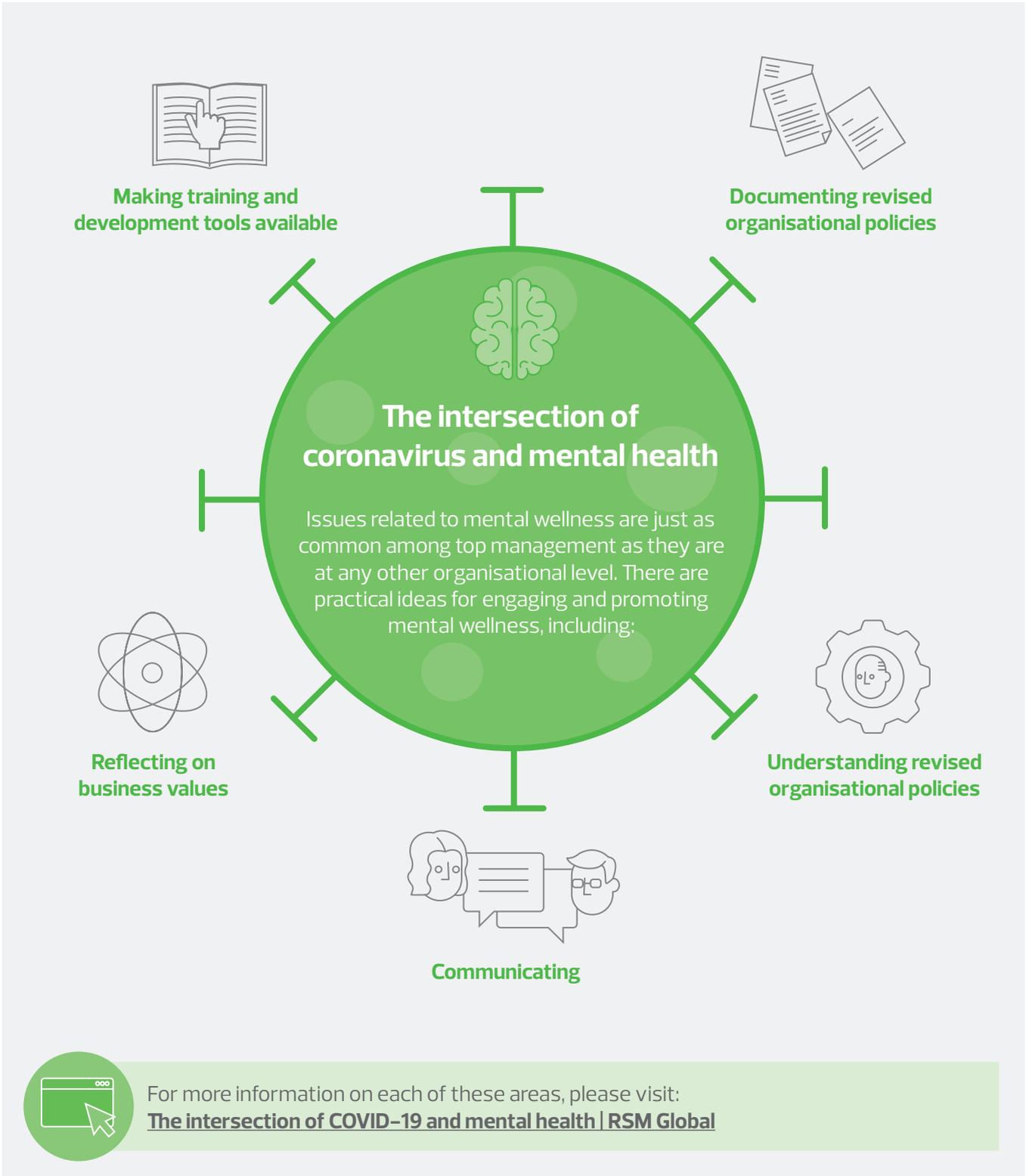
An occupational health survey issued to one of our emergency services clients found that **almost a third** of respondents were not aware of the EAP service.



At a large NHS Trust, we asked 171 people whether there were effective channels in place to identify wellbeing concerns. In using data analytics tool sentiment analysis, just **11 per cent** of employees were positive in their response.



When asked, 'Do you feel your mental health has been impacted significantly during the coronavirus pandemic?', just **7 per cent** gave anecdotal responses that were considered to display 'positive' sentiment.



Environmental, social and governance

In some respects, coronavirus has amplified environmental, social and governance (ESG) concerns. Putting sustainable and responsible practices at the heart of the business is fast becoming a pivotal requirement for regulators, investors, and other stakeholders – especially after COP26. While profit will always and inevitably be a key indicator of success, it can no longer be the only benchmark. In relation to the environmental aspects of ESG, reducing travel will support many pledges made to become carbon zero within the next ten years and climate positive after that.

People are the most important asset of any business, and they sit at the core of the 'social' pillar of ESG. When developing an ESG strategy, or rethinking how your business impacts society, it is crucial to consider all your stakeholders' interests, from investors to employees. This will help secure a sustainable and inclusive future for your business, which is fundamental to an ESG strategy. The key things to consider for your social impact and value strategy are working conditions and employee relations and welfare.



Find out more on ESG on the [RSM's website](#).



KEY QUESTIONS FOR ORGANISATIONS TO CONSIDER

Has your organisation developed hybrid / flexible working policies that both support staff and reflect business needs?

Has your organisation considered ways in which it will support Net Zero and tackle climate change?

Has your organisation begun its ESG journey, and have you considered your ESG maturity?

CONCLUSION

The challenges from the coronavirus pandemic have been evident across the diverse sectors we work with. We have seen enormous pressures for some of our clients, and many navigated them remarkably well. A myriad of learnings presented themselves throughout the pandemic, particularly in terms of a more ready embrace of technology, a fresh commitment to resilience and collaborative working, and a renewed focus on work/life balance. These learnings will continue for many organisations as we move into a recovery period.

Coronavirus has had a significant financial impact on many organisations. Although the government has put in place numerous measures to support businesses, some firms will continue to face the long-term effects of the pandemic.

Organisations have had to consider their future business models, shift to effective remote working, review how services are delivered, and bring forward enhanced digitalisation plans. All of this has resulted in an increasing need for assurance over a portfolio of risks that are not necessarily new, but where the likelihood of those risks occurring have increased significantly.

To understand what others are thinking and how organisations are responding to this challenging and evolving environment, [RSM surveyed Heads of Internal Audit in the UK](#) on their views about the challenges of coronavirus, the future changes for internal audit functions, and how organisations are managing risk and preparing for a potential UK SOX reporting environment.

The survey showed that the top three most significant challenges that arose for internal audit teams during the pandemic were:

1. providing assurance over key business areas when the business has other competing priorities;
2. maintaining visibility and presence while working remotely; and
3. retaining the ability to execute overseas work.

Providing an entirely remote internal audit service has presented challenges that we at RSM have not been immune to. Yet, throughout the pandemic we have worked closely with our clients to ensure we continue to provide assurances over key business risks.

The pandemic has impacted how organisations have addressed the management actions that were agreed with internal audit. There are also clear areas where internal audit functions will need to direct their focus to support businesses in 2022 including, for example, efficient risk management and routinely monitoring business continuity plans.

Audit plans will continue to remain agile. RSM has adapted – and will continue to adapt – our ways of working to respond to the needs of our clients. Many organisations will now be deciding which processes and procedures that were adopted or revised during the pandemic will remain in the longer term, and whether they will require assurance as to whether the controls in place are operating as intended.

Appendix A

FURTHER INFORMATION

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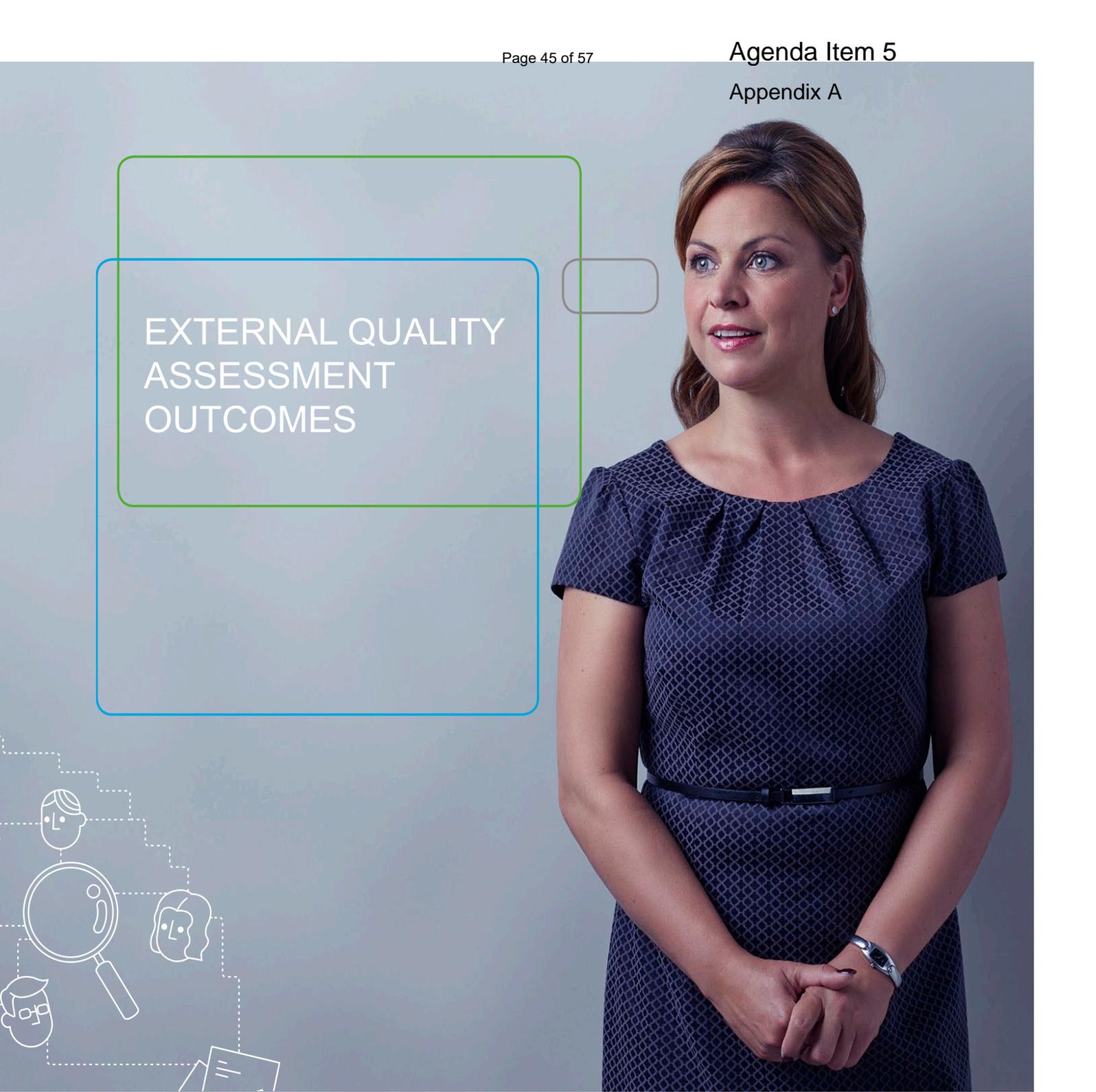
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EXTERNAL QUALITY
ASSESSMENT
OUTCOMES

RSM'S CONFORMANCE WITH THE IIA STANDARDS AND CODES OF PRACTICE

RSM UK Risk Assurance Services LLP

January 2022

THE POWER OF BEING UNDERSTOOD
AUDIT | TAX | CONSULTING



Appendix A

RSM'S CONFORMANCE WITH THE IIA STANDARDS AND CODES OF PRACTICE

RSM UK Risk Assurance Services LLP commissioned an external quality assessment (EQA) of its internal audit services in 2021. An EQA is required every five years, in line with the requirements of the International Professional Practices Framework (IPPF) and the Standards set by the Global Institute of Internal Auditors (IIA). Our independent EQA reviewed our conformance with the IPPF Standards, the Public Sector Internal Audit Standards (PSIAS), Internal Audit Code of Practice on effective internal audit in the Private and Third sectors, and the Internal Audit Financial Services Code of Practice. We provide below our summary of the results for your information.

Review approach

Our independent EQA assessor, Grant Thornton has utilised its established assessment framework to review RSM's internal audit services in relation to vision and strategy, planning and prioritisation, people and culture, working practices, tools, quality and deliverables, and role and mandate.

Our EQA involved a review of a sample of 10 audit files and audit reports shared with audit committees as well as a review of our working papers. Our own internal audit methodology has been reviewed against both the Standards and Codes of Practice.

The review process also involved interviewing RSM partners, directors and managers, and to gather client views, our independent assessor set up and ran a client survey, enabling broader reach and to obtain input from a larger pool of organisations we work with. Thank you to everyone that took the time to share their thoughts and insights.

Key strengths observed in our EQA

From the assessment, the following key strengths were noted.

- A well developed methodology with good conformance with standards, supported by manuals and policies, which is 'well understood and applied consistently' across clients and regions. 'Audit engagements follow a clear structure, are well executed with adequate supervision.'
- 'Audit strategy, charter and plans are well developed for each client.'
- 'The audit reports reviewed were clear, concise and well written for the needs of RSM IA's clients.'
- 'RSM IA provides useful, value add thought leadership and benchmarking for its clients.'
- 'There is a strong focus in RSM IA on training and capability, resulting in good levels of competence and technical knowledge, supported by Subject Matter Experts and the Technical Team.'

EQA outcomes



We are pleased to confirm that based on the work undertaken and the sample of files reviewed by our independent EQA assessor, RSM UK Risk Assurance Services LLP 'generally conforms to the requirements of the IIA Standards' and that 'RSM IA also generally conforms with the other Professional Standards set out above and the IIA Code of Ethics. There were no instances of non-conformance with any of the Professional Standards.'

The rating of 'generally conforms' is the highest rating that can be achieved, in line with the IIA's EQA assessment model.

RSM'S CONFORMANCE WITH THE IIA STANDARDS AND CODES OF PRACTICE

Survey outcomes

In total 160 surveys were shared with a representative cross section of our clients, in terms of sector and region. 67 responses to the survey were received from public and third sector organisations, corporate businesses and financial services clients.

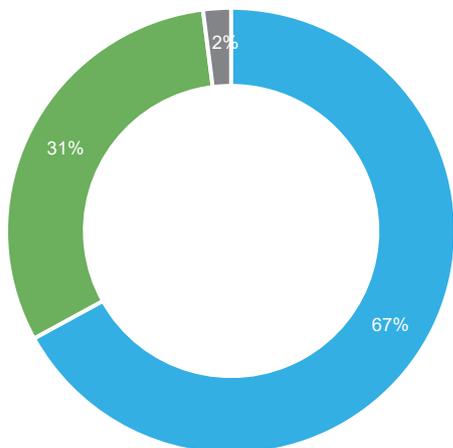
We very much value the feedback received from our survey participants. We are committed to providing an excellent client service and from both the survey feedback and overall EQA outcomes, the 'areas identified for improvement from the EQA will be taken forward as part of a continuous improvement plan.'

Overall, the responses to the survey were very positive, with 91 per cent either agreeing or agreeing strongly with the survey questions.

EQA survey results

RSM builds strong relationships with our organisation so that audit work is aligned to our key risks, strategy and priorities.

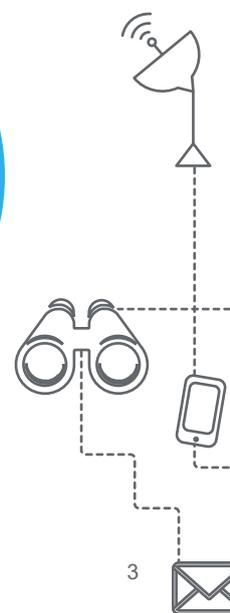
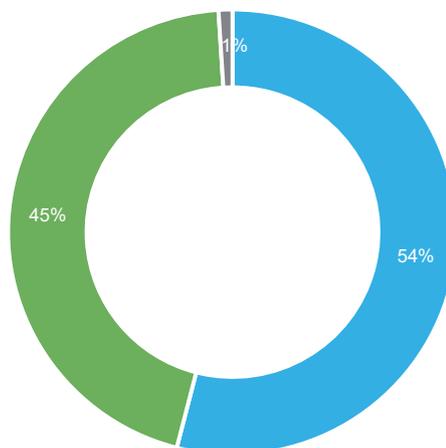
■ Strongly agree ■ Agree ■ Neither agree or disagree



High level survey findings

- Internal audit's role is well-understood, with 'teams well respected for their audit expertise, collaborative approach and sector guidance provided.'
- 'IA teams show a good understanding of client needs and sector requirements', with audits focussed on the right areas.
- 'Audit planning and prioritisation is seen as collaborative', with audit work carried out efficiently and to a good standard.
- The internal audit team has been 'very proactive and flexible' in how it has responded to the challenges of auditing during the pandemic.
- Audit reports reviewed were well written and the style and format clear and concise.

RSM audit work helps improve our control environment to support organisation objectives, governance or regulatory compliance and external requirements.



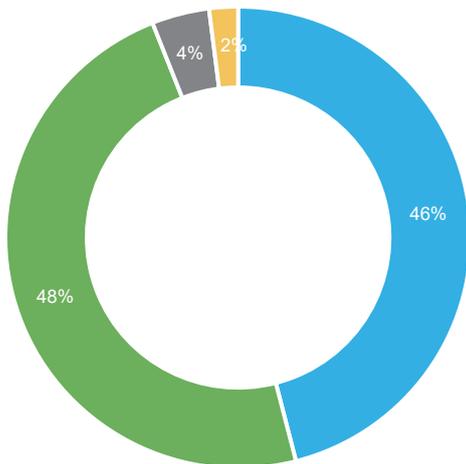
Appendix A

RSM'S CONFORMANCE WITH THE IIA STANDARDS AND CODES OF PRACTICE

EQA survey results continued

The risk assessment activity helps to focus the audit plan on the key risks and priorities for our organisation and takes account of our risk appetite.

- Strongly agree
- Agree
- Neither agree or disagree
- Not applicable or I can't judge



Client survey quotes:

'RSM provide an efficient and effective internal audit service, and make a contribution which is highly valued.'

'RSM staff have a real breadth of experience which they can tap into to provide advice, guidance and best practice.'

'RSM meets all requirements of a professionally run internal audit team.'

What does this mean for our clients?

You can be assured that your internal audit services continue to conform with internationally recognised Standards and the Codes of Practices. The internal audit services you receive follow an established and embedded methodology, that facilitates audit work that is both effective and responsive to you, as our clients', assurance needs.

RSM UK Risk Assurance Services LLP is pleased to confirm the outcomes of our EQA. If you require any further information, please contact your RSM client manager or engagement partner.



FOR FURTHER INFORMATION CONTACT

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Emergency Services News Briefing

March 2022



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Fire	7

In this edition of our news briefing, we draw attention to some of the key developments and publications. We also highlight our latest report on the lessons learnt following the coronavirus pandemic.

Police

A joint thematic inspection of the criminal justice journey for individuals with mental health needs and disorders

Between April and May 2021, Her Majesty’s Inspectorate of Probation – supported by Her Majesty’s Inspectorate of Constabulary and Fire and Rescue Services (HMICFRS), Her Majesty’s Crown Prosecution Service Inspectorate, Care Quality Commission, Healthcare Inspectorate Wales and Her Majesty’s Inspectorate of Prisons – carried out a joint thematic inspection. This inspection followed the progress of individuals with mental health needs and disorders through the criminal justice system, from first contact with the police to release from prison. The inspection found poor support for people with mental health issues as they progress through the criminal justice system in England and Wales .

[Read more](#)

Questions for committee’s consideration

Are you aware of the issues identified in this report and the steps your organisation is taking to address them?

Police officer uplift

The government’s drive to protect the public by recruiting 20,000 additional police officers enters a new phase with the launch of a new advertising campaign. More than 11,000 people have already joined the police as part of the recruitment drive, helping to cut crime by 14 per cent (excluding fraud and computer misuse). The 11,053 additional officers to date have enabled police forces to set up new units tackling crime and protecting vulnerable people .

[Read more](#)

Questions for committee’s consideration

Are you assured around where the additional resource is being directed and whether this is in line with police and crime plan priorities?

Strategic Review of Policing

The Police Foundation has published its Strategic Review of Policing in England and Wales, setting out a long-term strategic vision for a modern police service capable of meeting the challenges of the 21st century. The review also sets out 56 recommendations which includes recommendations on radical reform to police culture, skills and training, and organisational structure.

Among the recommendations in the report are calls for a 'licence to practice' for police officers, administered by the College of Policing, the professional standards body. The licence should be renewed every five years, subject to an officer demonstrating professional development through achieving relevant qualifications, passing an interview, or presenting a portfolio of activities and achievements.

[Read more](#)

Policing inspection programme and framework

HMICFRS launched a consultation which welcomed the views on its proposed policing inspection programme for the next three years. From April 2022, the inspection programme will take a multi-year approach rather than an annual one, setting out how HMICFRS will work and the areas that will be inspected in the next three years. However, HMICFRS intend to review the programme each year in light of new and emerging priorities for policing, as well as how its ability to inspect and promote improvement is affected by government funding. The consultation sought views on whether HMICFRS cover the right themes and areas of policing .

The consultation closed on 10 March 2022 and the final document, which will be appropriately revised to reflect the results of consultation, will be made available on HMICFRS's website

[Read more](#)

Questions for committee's consideration

Is your Audit Committee sighted on the outcomes of the HMICFRS inspection programme, and do you receive regular updates on progress against recommendations?

Police grants in England and Wales

The Home Office has published its final allocations of grants to police and crime commissioners in England and Wales for 2022 to 2023. The allocations of the Police Main Grant and DCLG Formula Funding that were provided to local policing bodies in 2021/22 'have been increased in line with the total overall increase of these grant streams in 2022/23 .'

[Read more](#)

Questions for committee's consideration

Are you aware of how your grant allocation affects your MTFP and are you assured of steps being taken to address any gaps in funding?

Value for money profiles

The latest value for money (VfM) profiles are available, to view comparative data on a number of policing activities. Available on the HMICFRS website, the latest VfM profiles enable individuals to explore the performance and spending of police forces .

[Read more](#)

Questions for committee's consideration

Has your Force reviewed this analysis to determine any outlying areas and are these being investigated?

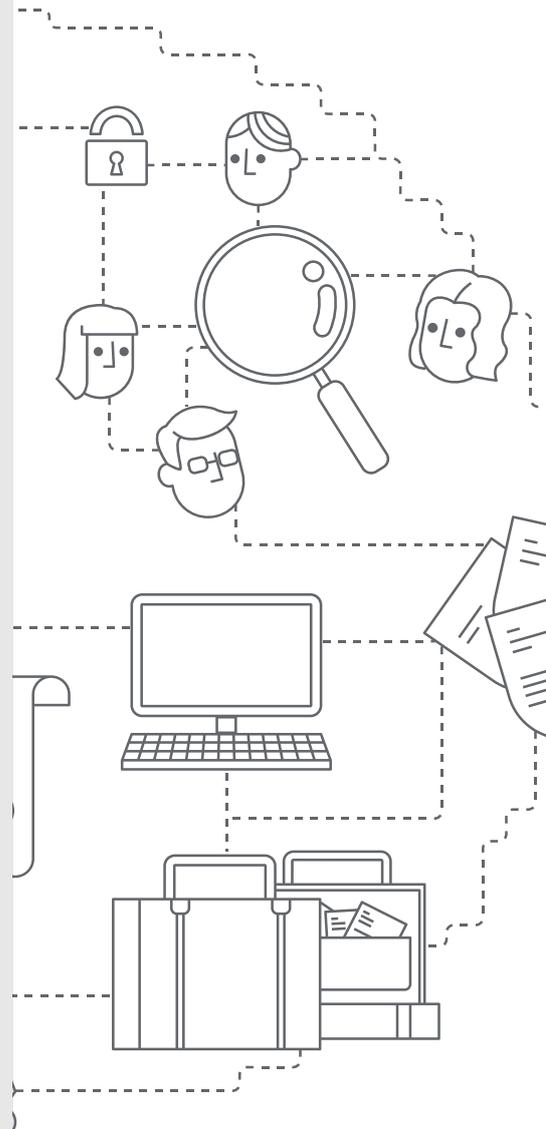
Strengthening resilience: lessons learnt from the impacts of the pandemic

As a consequence of the coronavirus pandemic, organisations have had to re-think, act quickly, and in many respects change how they have been operating. The pandemic has seen a rise in fraud, cyber risk, supply chain disruption and economic uncertainty, coupled with the adoption of homeworking arrangements and the relaxation of certain controls.

Throughout the pandemic, RSM's internal audit teams have continued to undertake reviews in a remote setting. Just like many organisations across the globe, we have had to navigate our way through the effects of the pandemic and adapt to the new ways of working while continuing to provide quality services for our clients. Some audit plans were paused during the early stages of the pandemic, but many organisations were keen to restart their internal audit work given the importance of seeking assurance over the controls in place, particularly where new processes had been established at pace. Our audit work has focused on our clients' responses to the pandemic and the lessons that have been learnt; with a focus on business continuity, agile and remote working, return to work and mental health.

As part of our research, we have analysed pandemic related management actions that were agreed with our clients as part of internal audit reviews during the latter part of 2019/20 and 2020/21. Overall, we have analysed 289 high, medium and low priority management actions agreed across 70 different reviews with a broad range of clients. Management actions were agreed with 63 organisations across the public and third sectors, and corporate organisations including several financial services businesses.

Access our report on [the RSM website](#).



Questions for committee's consideration

Has your organisation considered the key questions contained within the full report?

Fire

Detailed analysis of non-fire incidents

The Home Office has published statistics on non-fire incidents attended by fire and rescue services across England for the financial year 2020 to 2021 (1 April 2020 to 31 March 2021). Key statistics include:

- there were 151,044 non-fire incidents and 2,746 fatalities in non-fire incidents (a decrease of 12 per cent and an increase of five per cent respectively compared to the previous year);
- the most common categories of non-fire incidents attended were affecting entry/exit, road traffic collisions and assisting other agencies;
- fire and rescue services (FRSs) attended 22,524 road traffic collisions, this is a decrease of 28 per cent from last year; and
- FRSs attended 13,843 medical incidents, a decrease of 25 per cent compared with the previous year (18,347) and a decrease of 56 per cent compared with the financial year 2015 to 2016 (31,347).

[Read more](#)

Questions for committee's consideration

How does your fire service benchmark / compare against these statistics?

Are you satisfied with the data being reported through your organisation and actions plans in place to improve performance?

Does your organisation understand how attendance at non-fire incidents impacts on the skills and training of your teams?

Is training aligned to the different demands being placed on the service?



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ROYAL BERKSHIRE FIRE AUTHORITY



COMMITTEE	AUDIT & GOVERNANCE COMMITTEE
DATE OF MEETING	23 MARCH 2022
SUBJECT	EXTERNAL AUDIT UPDATE
LEAD OFFICER	CONOR BYRNE
LEAD MEMBER	N/A
EXEMPT INFORMATION	N/A
ACTION	FOR NOTE

1. EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

- 1.1 EY will present their Draft Audit Results Report in relation to the 2020/21 Statement of Accounts.

2. RECOMMENDATIONS

That the Committee:

- 2.1 **NOTE** the contents of the Draft Audit Results Report in Appendix A.

3. REPORT

- 3.1 EY's Draft Audit Results Report is attached as **Appendix A**. This sets out the audit work undertaken to date.
- 3.2 Although it had been hoped to bring the audited accounts to this committee meeting for approval this has not been possible due to the ongoing delays in auditing the Berkshire Pension Fund accounts. It is anticipated that the Statement of Accounts will be ready for sign off at the next Committee meeting in July.
- 3.3 The scale fee for the 2020/21 audit is set out on page 36 of the Audit Planning Report. Members should note that PSAA have still not made a decision in relation to EY's request to increase the scale fee.

4. CONTRIBUTION TO STRATEGIC COMMITMENTS

- 4.1 Commitment 5 – We will ensure that Royal Berkshire Fire and Rescue Service provides good value for money.

5. FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

- 5.1 The work of the external auditors assures members that the Authority's finances are in good order.

6. LEGAL IMPLICATIONS

- 6.1 Complies with the Local Audit (Appointing Person) Regulations 2015

7. EQUALITY AND DIVERSITY IMPLICATIONS

- 7.1 None.

8. RISK IMPLICATIONS

- 8.1 Financial risks are identified and mitigations and controls are tested by the external auditors.

9. CONSISTENCY WITH DUTY TO COLLABORATE

- 9.1 The Authority opted into the national procurement exercise run by PSAA to appoint its external auditors.

10. PRINCIPAL CONSULTATION

- 10.1 The Chief Fire Officer has noted the contents of the report.

11. BACKGROUND PAPERS

- 11.1 None.

12. APPENDICES

- 12.1 Appendix A – EY Draft Audit Results Report

13. CONTACT DETAILS

- 13.1 Conor Byrne - Head of Finance and Procurement
Email: byrnec@rbfrs.co.uk
Tel: 0118 938 4720

**Royal Berkshire Fire
Authority
Draft audit results
report**

Year ended 31 March 2021
11 March 2022



Private and Confidential

11 March 2022

Dear Audit and Governance Committee Members

2021 Draft Audit Results Report

We are pleased to attach our audit results report, summarising the status of our audit for the forthcoming meeting of the Audit and Governance Committee. We will update the Audit and Governance Committee at its meeting scheduled for 23 March 2022 on further progress to date and explain the remaining steps to the issue of our final opinion.

The audit is designed to express an opinion on the 2020-2021 financial statements and address current statutory and regulatory requirements. This report contains our findings related to the areas of audit emphasis, our views on Royal Berkshire Fire Authority's accounting policies and judgements and material internal control findings. Each year sees further enhancements to the level of audit challenge and the quality of evidence required to achieve the robust professional scepticism that society expects. We thank the management team for supporting this process. We have also included an update on our work on value for money arrangements.

This report is intended solely for the information and use of the Audit and Governance Committee, other members of the Authority and senior management. It is not intended to be and should not be used by anyone other than these specified parties.

We welcome the opportunity to discuss the contents of this report with you at the Audit and Governance Committee meeting on 23 March 2022.

Yours faithfully

Andrew Brittain

Associate Partner

For and on behalf of Ernst & Young LLP

Encl

Contents

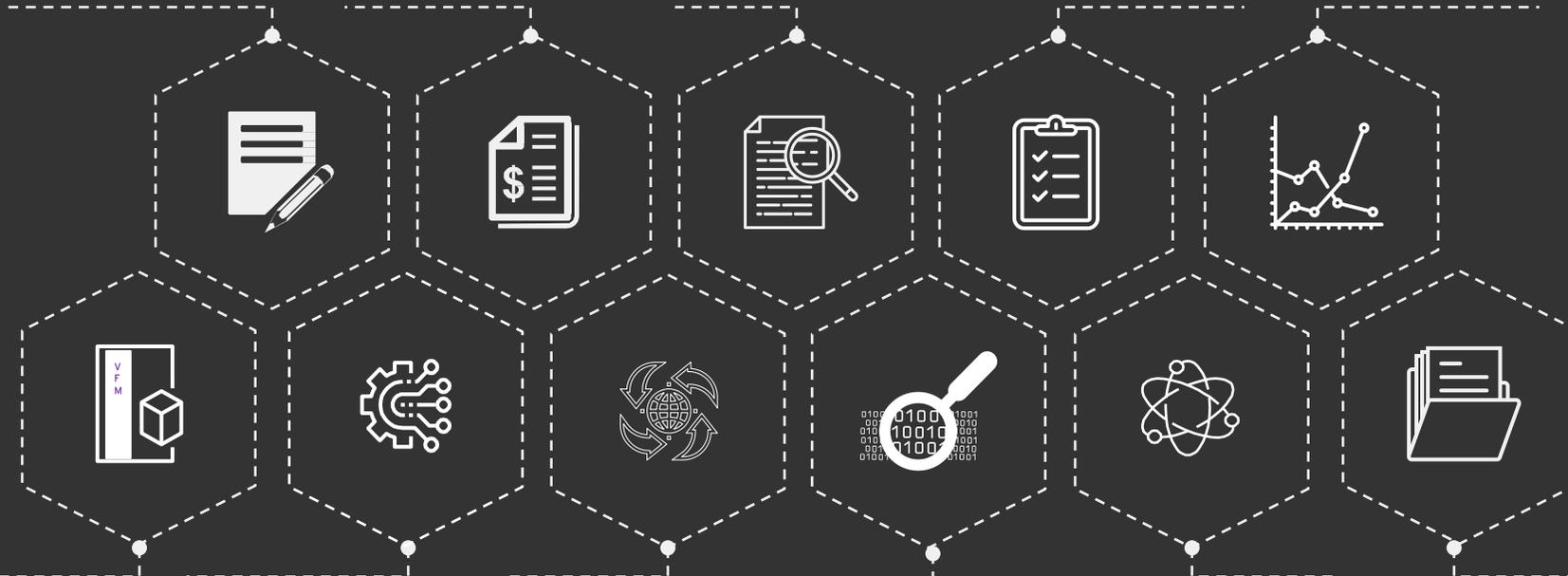
01 Executive Summary

02 Understanding Financial Statements

03 Areas of Audit Focus

04 Audit Report

05 Audit Differences



06 Value for Money

07 Other Reporting Issues

08 Assessment of Control Environment

09 Data Analytics

10 Independence

11 Appendices

Appendix A

Agenda Item 6

Public Sector Audit Appointments Ltd (PSAA) issued the "Statement of responsibilities of auditors and audited bodies". It is available from the PSAA website (<https://www.psa.co.uk/audit-quality/statement-of-responsibilities/>). The Statement of responsibilities serves as the formal terms of engagement between appointed auditors and audited bodies. It summarises where the different responsibilities of auditors and audited bodies begin and end, and what is to be expected of the audited body in certain areas. The "Terms of Appointment and further guidance (updated April 2018)" issued by the PSAA sets out additional requirements that auditors must comply with, over and above those set out in the National Audit Office Code of Audit Practice (the Code) and in legislation, and covers matters of practice and procedure which are of a recurring nature. This report is made solely to the Audit and Governance Committee and management of Royal Berkshire Fire Authority in accordance with the statement of responsibilities. Our work has been undertaken so that we might state to the Audit and Governance Committee, and management of Royal Berkshire Fire Authority those matters we are required to state to them in this report and for no other purpose. To the fullest extent permitted by law we do not accept or assume responsibility to anyone other than the Audit and Governance Committee and management of Royal Berkshire Fire Authority for this report or for the opinions we have formed. It should not be provided to any third-party without our prior written consent.



01 Executive Summary



Executive Summary

Scope update

In our audit planning report tabled at the 24 January 2022 Audit and Governance Committee meeting, we provided you with an overview of our audit scope and approach for the audit of the financial statements. We carried out our audit in accordance with this plan, with the following exceptions:

- ▶ Changes in materiality: We updated our planning materiality assessment using the draft results and have also reconsidered our risk assessment. Based on our materiality measure of gross expenditure on the provision of services, we have updated our overall materiality assessment to £866k (Audit Planning Report – £907k). This results in updated performance materiality, at 75% of overall materiality, of £649k, and an updated threshold for reporting misstatements of £43k.

Additional audit procedures as a result of Covid-19

Other changes in the entity and regulatory environment as a result of Covid-19 that have not resulted in an additional risk, but result in the following impacts on our audit strategy were as follows:

Information Produced by the Entity (IPE): We identified an increased risk around the completeness, accuracy, and appropriateness of information produced by the entity due to the inability of the audit team to verify original documents or re-run reports on-site from the Authority's systems. We undertook the following to address this risk:

- Used the screen sharing function of Microsoft Teams to evidence re-running of reports used to generate the IPE we audited; and
- Agreed IPE to scanned documents or other system screenshots.



Executive Summary

Status of the audit

Our audit work in respect of the Authority opinion is substantially complete. The following items relating to the completion of our audit procedures were outstanding at the date of this report.

- ▶ Whole of Government Accounts: We have yet to receive the NAO instructions on this for 2020/21.
- ▶ Officers remuneration - recently received the last of the information we needed, so we can now complete this task
- ▶ Investment properties and property, plant and equipment - waiting for report from EY Real Estates and for audit team to complete valuation and additions tasks
- ▶ Pension Scheme Liabilities - awaiting clarification from Deloitte on the status of the Royal County of Berkshire Pension Fund audit
- ▶ Grant income - recently received the last of the information we needed, so we can now complete this task
- ▶ Journals testing - final few samples require checking
- ▶ Going concern disclosure - as part of this review we need a cash flow forecast for at least 12 months from the signing date of the accounts. As we have not yet confirmed a date when we will be signing the accounts, this remains an outstanding request.
- ▶ Manager and partner final review of the audit file
- ▶ Completion of audit tasks following file review procedures
- ▶ Receipt of signed management representation letter
- ▶ Completion of subsequent event review

Given that the audit process is still ongoing, we will continue to challenge the remaining evidence provided and the final disclosures in the Narrative Report and Accounts which could influence our final audit opinion.



Executive Summary

Auditor responsibilities under the new Code of Audit Practice 2020

Under the Code of Audit Practice 2020 we are still required to consider whether the Authority has put in place 'proper arrangements' to secure economy, efficiency and effectiveness on its use of resources. The 2020 Code requires the auditor to design their work to provide them with sufficient assurance to enable them to report to the Authority a commentary against specified reporting criteria (see below) on the arrangements the Authority has in place to secure value for money through economic, efficient and effective use of its resources for the relevant period.

The specified reporting criteria are:

- Financial sustainability
How the Authority plans and manages its resources to ensure it can continue to deliver its services;
- Governance
How the Authority ensures that it makes informed decisions and properly manages its risks; and
- Improving economy, efficiency and effectiveness:
How the Authority uses information about its costs and performance to improve the way it manages and delivers its services.

Status of the audit - Value for Money

We are completing the documentation of our VfM work, but have not identified any significant weaknesses to date against the three reporting criteria we are required to consider under the NAO's 2020 Code.

Audit differences

There were some small amendments made to the disclosure notes.

Our work on the Local Government Pension Scheme is not yet completed. However, Deloitte, the auditor of the LGPS Pension Fund have identified that due to a time-lag in pricing of the LGPS Pension Fund's illiquid investments as at 31 March 2021, there has been an increase of £48.12m in the value of those assets in the Pension Fund as a whole. Royal Berkshire Fire Authority's share of that increase amounts to £548,568. The Authority have currently chosen not to amend the statement of accounts to reflect this as this amount is not material to the statements.

We have other no audit differences to report to date.

Other reporting issues

We have reviewed the information presented in the Annual Governance Statement for consistency with our knowledge of the Authority. We have no matters to report as a result of this work.

We have not yet performed the procedures required by the National Audit Office (NAO) on the Whole of Government Accounts submission. The NAO (National Audit Office) are currently reviewing the Data Collection Tool. We will audit this once your officers have the updated software and have been able to submit their entries.

We have no other matters to report.



Executive Summary

Areas of audit focus

In our Audit Plan we identified a number of key areas of focus for our audit of the financial report of Royal Berkshire Fire Authority. This report sets out our observations and status in relation to these areas, including our views on areas which might be conservative and areas where there is potential risk and exposure. Our consideration of these matters and others identified during the period is summarised within the "Areas of Audit Focus" section of this report.

As noted in the status of the audit section above, work is yet to conclude in a number of areas but we request that you review these and other matters set out in this report to ensure:

- ▶ There are no residual further considerations or matters that could impact these issues
- ▶ Where relevant you concur with the resolution of the issue
- ▶ There are no further significant issues you are aware of to be considered before the financial report is finalised

There are no matters, other than those reported by management or disclosed in this report, which we believe should be brought to the attention of the Audit and Governance Committee or Management.

Control observations

We have adopted a fully substantive approach, and so have not tested the operation of controls. We have, however, updated our understanding of the key processes and the controls which are in place to detect or prevent error. Through this work, we have not identified any significant deficiencies in the design or operation of an internal control that might result in a material misstatement in your financial statements and which is unknown to you.

Independence

We can confirm that we remain independent of the Authority.

Please refer to Section 10 for our update on Independence.



02

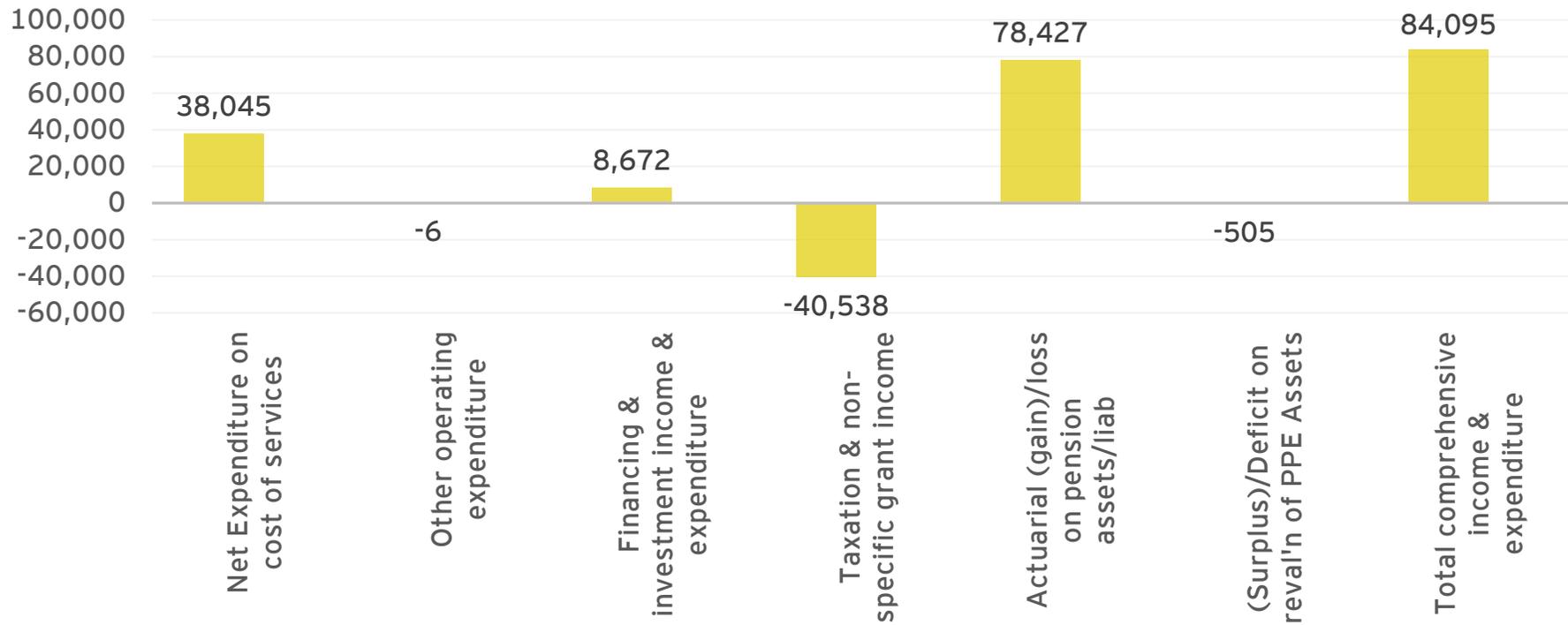
Understanding Financial Statements



Understanding Financial Statements

Key components of net expenditure

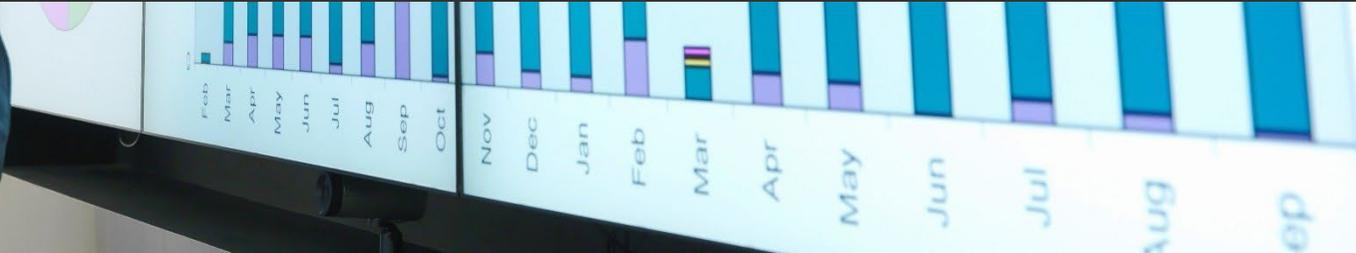
The provision of services for the year ended 31 March 2021 was £6,173k deficit, a decrease in deficit of £5,399k from the prior year. During the year there were no significant events that impacted the underlying financial position of the Authority. The following provides an overview of the material items:



Our audit procedures consider the nature of the Authority's results including the impact of non-recurring and recurring items where the size is variable although judgmental. Such an assessment provides a useful insight into the underlying net expenditure and outturn.



03 Areas of Audit Focus





Areas of Audit Focus

Fraud risk

Risk of misstatements due to fraud or error - Management override

What is the risk?

The financial statements as a whole are not free of material misstatements whether caused by fraud or error. As identified in ISA (UK and Ireland) 240, management is in a unique position to perpetrate fraud because of its ability to manipulate accounting records directly or indirectly and prepare fraudulent financial statements by overriding controls that otherwise appear to be operating effectively. We identify and respond to this fraud risk on every audit engagement.

Agenda Item 6
Appendix A

What did we do and what judgements did we focus on?

We:

- ▶ Identified fraud risks during the planning stages.
- ▶ Enquired of management about risks of fraud and the controls put in place to address those risks.
- ▶ Understood the oversight given by those charged with governance of management's processes over fraud.
- ▶ Considered the effectiveness of management's controls designed to address the risk of fraud.
- ▶ Tested journals at year-end to ensure that there were no unexpected or unusual postings.
- ▶ Reviewed accounting estimates for evidence of management bias.
- ▶ Looked for and investigated any unusual transactions.

We used our data analytics capabilities to assist with our work, including journal entry testing. We assessed journal entries for evidence of management bias and evaluated for business rationale. We specifically reviewed any elements where judgement could influence the financial position or performance of the Authority in a more positive or more favourable way.

What are our conclusions ?

Work is still on-going in this area. To date we have not identified any material weaknesses in controls or evidence of material management override. We have not identified any instances of inappropriate judgements being applied or management bias. We have not identified any other transactions during our audit which appeared unusual or outside the normal course of business.



Areas of Audit Focus

Fraud risk

Misstatements due to fraud or error - Inappropriate capitalisation of revenue expenditure and inappropriate recording of other income

What is the risk?

Under ISA 240, management is in a unique position to perpetrate fraud through the override of controls. We have considered the main areas where management may have the incentive and opportunity to do this.

From our risk assessment, we have assessed that the risk could manifest itself through the inappropriate capitalisation of revenue expenditure to improve the financial position of the general fund.

Capitalised revenue expenditure can be funded through borrowing with only minimal MRP charges recorded in the general fund, deferring the expenditure for 30+ years when the borrowing is repaid.

In addition, we have assessed that there is a risk that other income may be misstated due to improper revenue recognition.

What judgements are we focused on?

We focus on whether expenditure is properly capitalised in its initial recognition, or whether subsequent expenditure on an asset enhances the asset or extends its useful life.

For 2020/21, property, plant and equipment additions totalled £6,464k. We will consider whether this figure is complete, the asset is in existence and whether the asset has been valued correctly in the statement of accounts.

We will lower the testing threshold for other income, to ensure it is materially correct.

What did we do?

We have:

- ▶ For significant additions, we have examined invoices, capital expenditure authorisations, leases and other data that support these additions. We have reviewed the sample selected against the definition of capital expenditure in IAS 16.
- ▶ We have extended our testing of items capitalised in the year by lowering our testing threshold. We have also reviewed a larger random sample of capital additions below our testing threshold.
- ▶ Journal testing - we have used our testing of journals to identify high risk transactions, such as items originally recorded as revenue expenditure and subsequently capitalised.
- ▶ For other income, we have lowered our testing threshold to satisfy ourselves that other income stated is materially correct.

We have utilised our data analytics capabilities to assist with our work, including journal entry testing. We assessed journal entries more generally for evidence of management bias and evaluated them for business rationale.

What are our conclusions?

Our testing of additions has not yet been completed.

Our testing of other income has not identified any material misstatements from the inappropriate recording of other income.



Areas of Audit Focus

Significant risk

Pension liability valuation

What is the risk?

The Local Authority Accounting Code of Practice and IAS19 require the Authority to make extensive disclosures within its financial statements regarding its membership of the Local Government Pension Scheme administered by Royal County of Berkshire Pension Fund.

The Authority's pension fund deficit is a material estimated balance and the Code requires that this liability be disclosed on the Authority's balance sheet. At 31 March 2021 this totalled £445 million.

The information disclosed is based on the IAS 19 report issued to the Authority by the actuary to Royal County of Berkshire Pension Fund and also the Firefighters Pension Fund.

Accounting for this scheme involves significant estimation and judgement and therefore management engages an actuary to undertake the calculations on their behalf. ISAs (UK) 500 and 540 require us to undertake procedures on the use of management experts and the assumptions underlying fair value estimates.

Appendix A

Agenda Item 6

What did we do?

We have:

- ▶ Liaised with the auditors of Royal County of Berkshire Pension Fund, to obtain assurances over the information supplied to the actuary in relation to Royal Berkshire Fire Authority;
- ▶ Assessed the work of the LGPS pension fund actuary and the Firefighters pension fund actuary (Barnet Waddingham) including the assumptions they have used by relying on the work of PWC - Consulting Actuaries commissioned by the National Audit Office for all Local Government sector auditors, and considering any relevant reviews by the EY actuarial team;
- ▶ For the Firefighters Pension Fund we audit the benefits payable and contributions receivable based on our testing threshold; and
- ▶ Reviewed and tested the accounting entries and disclosures made within the Authority's financial statements in relation to IAS19.

In addition:

- ▶ In response to the revised requirements of ISA540, the auditing standard on accounting estimates, we amended our audit approach based on procedures to evaluate management's process. The revised standard requires auditors to test the method of measurement of accounting estimates to determine whether the model is appropriately designed, consistently applied and mathematically accurate, and that the integrity of the assumptions and the data has been maintained in applying the model. Neither we, nor PWC as consulting actuaries commissioned by the NAO for all local government sector audits, are able to access the detailed models of the actuaries in order to evidence these requirements. Therefore, we modified our planned approach and undertook alternate procedures to create an auditor's estimate, to provide a different method of gaining assurance. We employed the services of an EY Pensions specialist to review the Authority's IAS19 reports and run a parallel actuarial model which was compared to that produced by Barnett Waddingham (BW).

What are our conclusions?

Our EY Pensions Consultancy team were satisfied the actuarial model for the pension liability had been carried out correctly.

Our conclusion on the pensions valuation is still outstanding as we are waiting for Deloitte to confirm completion of their audit of Royal County of Berkshire Pension Fund. We have noted one immaterial difference on the valuation of the pensions assets to date, which is disclosed in section 05 of this report.

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Areas of Audit Focus

Other areas of audit focus

Valuation of land and buildings (inherent risk)

What is the risk?

We identified the valuation of land and buildings as an area of audit focus in our Audit Planning Report discussed at the Audit and Governance Committee on 24 January 2022. The fair value of Property, Plant and Equipment (PPE) and Investment Properties (IP) represent significant balances in the Authority's accounts and are subject to valuation changes, impairment reviews and depreciation charges. Management is required to make material judgemental inputs and apply estimation techniques to calculate the year-end balances recorded in the balance sheet.

What judgements are we focused on?

The value of property, plant and equipment was £31m in 2019/20 and is now being reported at £37m for 2020/21.

As this is one of the largest accounting estimates on the balance sheet and one subject to a high degree of subjectivity we deem the valuation of property, plant and equipment to represent an inherent risk of material misstatement.

ISAs (UK and Ireland) 500 and 540 require us to undertake procedures on the use of management experts and the assumptions underlying fair value estimates.

What did we do?

We have:

- ▶ Considered the work performed by the Authority's valuers, including the adequacy of the scope of the work performed, their professional capabilities and the results of their work;
- ▶ Sample tested key asset information used by the valuers in performing their valuation (e.g. floor plans to support valuations based on price per square metre);
- ▶ Considered if there were any specific changes to assets that have occurred and that these have been communicated to the valuer;
- ▶ Considered changes to useful economic lives as a result of the most recent valuation; and
- ▶ Tested that accounting entries had been correctly processed in the financial statements.

What are our conclusions?

Our work on land and buildings valuation has yet to be concluded.



Areas of Audit Focus

Going concern

Going concern disclosures (inherent risk)

What is the risk?

There is a presumption that the Authority will continue as a going concern for the foreseeable future. However, the Authority is required to carry out a going concern assessment that is proportionate to the risks it faces. In light of the continued impact of Covid-19 on its income sources, there is a need for the Authority to ensure its going concern assessment, including its cashflow forecast, is thorough and appropriately comprehensive. The Authority is then required to ensure that its going concern disclosure within the statement of accounts adequately reflects its going concern assessment and in particular highlights any uncertainties it has identified. We consider the unpredictability of the current environment to give rise to a risk that the Authority will not appropriately disclose the key factors relating to going concern, underpinned by managements assessment with particular reference to Covid-19.

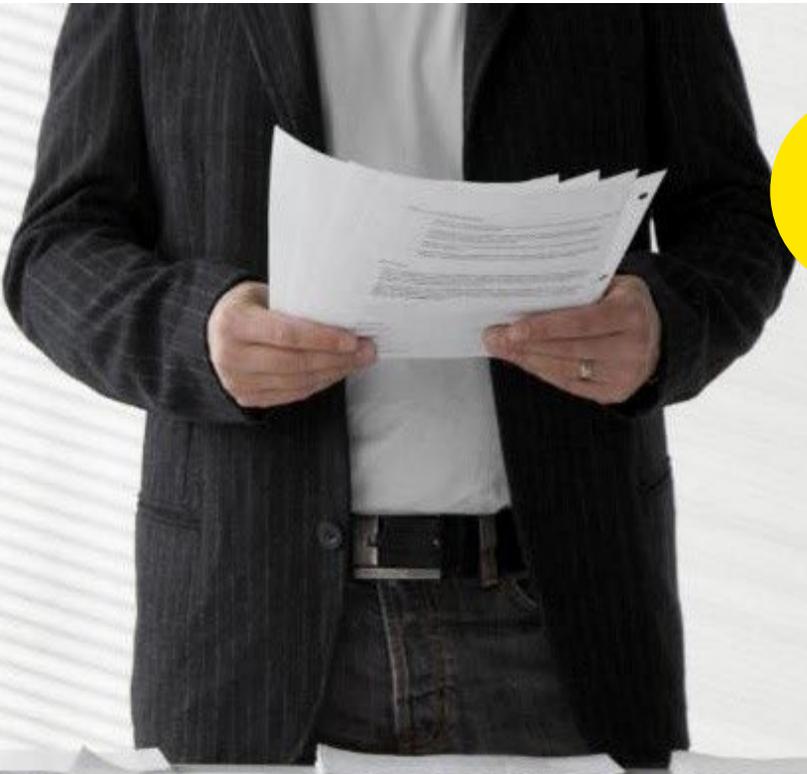
What did we do?

We have:

- Continued to assess the adequacy of disclosures required in 2020/21, and the impact on our opinion, should these be inadequate;
- Obtained management’s going concern assessment and review for any evidence of bias and consistency with the accounts;
- Reviewed the financial modelling and forecasts prepared by the Authority. This considered key assumptions, stress testing applied to those assumptions and considered the risk to cashflow up to at least 12 months after the signing date of the accounts and opinion;
- Ensured that an appropriate going concern disclosure has been made within the financial statements; and
- Considered the impact on our audit report and compliance with EY consultation requirements, if such are determined appropriate.

What are our conclusions?

Our work on the going concern disclosure will be finalised when we can review the cashflow forecasts from 12 months from the proposed signing date.



04 Audit Report



Audit Report

Draft audit report

Our opinion on the financial statements (draft)

INDEPENDENT AUDITOR'S REPORT TO THE MEMBERS OF ROYAL BERKSHIRE FIRE AUTHORITY

Opinion

We have audited the financial statements and the firefighters' pension fund financial statements of Royal Berkshire Fire Authority for the year ended 31 March 2021 under the Local Audit and Accountability Act 2014. The financial statements comprise the:

- ▶ Movement in Reserves Statement,
- ▶ Comprehensive Income and Expenditure Statement
- ▶ Balance Sheet
- ▶ Cash Flow Statement
- ▶ The related notes 8.1 to 8.36
- ▶ The firefighters' pension fund financial statements comprising the Fund Account and the Net Assets Statement.

The financial reporting framework that has been applied in their preparation is applicable law and the CIPFA/LASAAC Code of Practice on Local Authority Accounting in the United Kingdom 2020/21.

In our opinion the financial statements:

- ▶ give a true and fair view of the financial position of Royal Berkshire Fire Authority as at 31 March 2021 and of its expenditure and income for the year then ended; and
- ▶ have been prepared properly in accordance with the CIPFA/LASAAC Code of Practice on Local Authority Accounting in the United Kingdom 2020/21.

Basis for opinion

We conducted our audit in accordance with International Standards on Auditing (UK) (ISAs (UK)) and applicable law. Our responsibilities under those standards are further described in the Auditor's responsibilities for the audit of the financial statements section of our report below. We are independent of the Authority in accordance with the ethical requirements that are relevant to our audit of the financial statements in the UK, including the FRC's Ethical Standard and the Comptroller and Auditor General's (C&AG) AGN01, and we have fulfilled our other ethical responsibilities in accordance with these requirements.

We believe that the audit evidence we have obtained is sufficient and appropriate to provide a basis for our opinion.

Conclusions relating to going concern

In auditing the financial statements, we have concluded that the Chief Financial Officer's use of the going concern basis of accounting in the preparation of the financial statements is appropriate.

Based on the work we have performed, we have not identified any material uncertainties relating to events or conditions that, individually or collectively, may cast significant doubt on the authority's ability to continue as a going concern for a period of twelve months from when the financial statements are authorised for issue.

Our responsibilities and the responsibilities of the Chief Financial Officer with respect to going concern are described in the relevant sections of this report. However, because not all future events or conditions can be predicted, this statement is not a guarantee as to the authority's ability to continue as a going concern.



Audit Report

Draft audit report continued)

Our opinion on the financial statements (draft)

Other information

The other information comprises the information included in the Statement of Accounts 2020/21, other than the financial statements and our auditor's report thereon. The Chief Financial Officer is responsible for the other information.

Our opinion on the financial statements does not cover the other information and, except to the extent otherwise explicitly stated in this report, we do not express any form of assurance conclusion thereon.

Our responsibility is to read the other information and, in doing so, consider whether the other information is materially inconsistent with the financial statements or our knowledge obtained in the course of the audit or otherwise appears to be materially misstated. If we identify such material inconsistencies or apparent material misstatements, we are required to determine whether there is a material misstatement in the financial statements themselves. If, based on the work we have performed, we conclude that there is a material misstatement of the other information, we are required to report that fact.

We have nothing to report in this regard.

Matters on which we report by exception

We report to you if:

- ▶ in our opinion the annual governance statement is misleading or inconsistent with other information forthcoming from the audit or our knowledge of the Authority;
- ▶ we issue a report in the public interest under section 24 of the Local Audit and Accountability Act 2014;

- ▶ we make written recommendations to the audited body under Section 24 of the Local Audit and Accountability Act 2014;
- ▶ we make an application to the court for a declaration that an item of account is contrary to law under Section 28 of the Local Audit and Accountability Act 2014;
- ▶ we issue an advisory notice under Section 29 of the Local Audit and Accountability Act 2014;
- ▶ we make an application for judicial review under Section 31 of the Local Audit and Accountability Act 2014;
- ▶ we are not satisfied that the Authority has made proper arrangements for securing economy, efficiency and effectiveness in its use of resources for the year ended 31 March 2021.

We have nothing to report in these respects.

Responsibility of the Chief Financial Officer

As explained more fully in the Statement of the Responsibilities set out on page 11, the Chief Financial Officer is responsible for the preparation of the Statement of Accounts, which includes the Authority financial statements and the firefighters pension fund financial statements, in accordance with proper practices as set out in the CIPFA/LASAAC Code of Practice on Local Authority Accounting in the United Kingdom 2020/21, and for being satisfied that they give a true and fair view and for such internal control as the directors determine is necessary to enable the preparation of financial statements that are free from material misstatement, whether due to fraud or error.

In preparing the financial statements, the Chief Finance Officer is responsible for assessing the Authority's ability to continue as a going concern, disclosing, as applicable, matters related to going concern and using the going concern basis of accounting unless the Authority either intends to cease operations, or have no realistic alternative but to do so.



Audit Report

Draft audit report continued)

Our opinion on the financial statements (draft)

The Authority is responsible for putting in place proper arrangements to secure economy, efficiency and effectiveness in its use of resources, to ensure proper stewardship and governance, and to review regularly the adequacy and effectiveness of these arrangements.

Auditor's responsibilities for the audit of the financial statements

Our objectives are to obtain reasonable assurance about whether the financial statements as a whole are free from material misstatement, whether due to fraud or error, and to issue an auditor's report that includes our opinion. Reasonable assurance is a high level of assurance, but is not a guarantee that an audit conducted in accordance with ISAs (UK) will always detect a material misstatement when it exists. Misstatements can arise from fraud or error and are considered material if, individually or in the aggregate, they could reasonably be expected to influence the economic decisions of users taken on the basis of these financial statements.

Irregularities, including fraud, are instances of non-compliance with laws and regulations. We design procedures in line with our responsibilities, outlined above, to detect irregularities, including fraud. The risk of not detecting a material misstatement due to fraud is higher than the risk of not detecting one resulting from error, as fraud may involve deliberate concealment by, for example, forgery or intentional misrepresentations, or through collusion. The extent to which our procedures are capable of detecting irregularities, including fraud is detailed below. However, the primary responsibility for the prevention and detection of fraud rests with both those charged with governance of the entity and management.

- ▶ We obtained an understanding of the legal and regulatory frameworks that are applicable to the Authority and determined that the most significant are:
 - Local Government Act 1972,
 - Local Government Act 2003,

- The Local Authorities (Capital Finance and Accounting) (England) Regulations 2003 as amended in 2018 and 2020,
- The Local Audit and Accountability Act 2014, and
- The Accounts and Audit Regulations 2015.

In addition, the Authority has to comply with laws and regulations in the areas of anti-bribery and corruption, data protection, employment Legislation, tax Legislation, general power of competence, procurement and health & safety.

- ▶ We understood how Royal Berkshire Fire Authority is complying with those frameworks by understanding the incentive, opportunities and motives for non-compliance, including inquiring of management, head of internal audit, those charged with governance and obtaining and reading documentation relating to the procedures in place to identify, evaluate and comply with laws and regulations, and whether they are aware of instances of non-compliance. We corroborated this through our reading of the Authority's committee minutes, through enquiry of employees to confirm Authority's policies, and through the inspection of employee handbooks and other information. Based on this understanding we designed our audit procedures to identify non-compliance with such laws and regulations. Our procedures had a focus on compliance with the accounting framework through obtaining sufficient audit evidence in line with the level of risk identified and with relevant legislation.
- ▶ We assessed the susceptibility of the Authority's financial statements to material misstatement, including how fraud might occur by understanding the potential incentives and pressures for management to manipulate the financial statements, and performed procedures to understand the areas in which this would most likely arise. Based on our risk assessment procedures, we identified manipulation of reported financial performance through inappropriate capitalisation of revenue expenditure, inappropriate recording of other income and management override of controls to be our fraud risks.



Audit Report

Draft audit report continued)

Our opinion on the financial statements (draft)

- ▶ To address our fraud risk of inappropriate capitalisation of revenue expenditure we tested the Authority's capitalised expenditure to ensure the capitalisation criteria were properly met and the expenditure was genuine.
- ▶ To address our fraud risk of inappropriate recording of other income we lowered our testing threshold to satisfy ourselves that other income stated is materially correct.
- ▶ To address our fraud risk of management override of controls, we tested specific journal entries identified by applying risk criteria to the entire population of journals. For each journal selected, we tested specific transactions back to source documentation to confirm that the journals were authorised and accounted for appropriately.

A further description of our responsibilities for the audit of the financial statements is located on the Financial Reporting Council's website at <https://www.frc.org.uk/auditorsresponsibilities>. This description forms part of our auditor's report.

Scope of the review of arrangements for securing economy, efficiency and effectiveness in the use of resources

We have undertaken our review in accordance with the Code of Audit Practice, having regard to the guidance on the specified reporting criteria issued by the Comptroller and Auditor General (C&AG) in April 2021, as to whether the Royal Berkshire Fire Authority had proper arrangements for financial sustainability, governance and improving economy, efficiency and effectiveness. The Comptroller and Auditor General determined these criteria as those necessary for us to consider under the Code of Audit Practice in satisfying ourselves whether the Royal Berkshire Fire Authority put in place proper arrangements for securing economy, efficiency and effectiveness in its use of resources for the year ended 31 March 2021.

We planned our work in accordance with the Code of Audit Practice. Based on our risk assessment, we undertook such work as we considered necessary to form a view on whether, in all significant respects, the Royal Berkshire Fire Authority had put in place proper arrangements to secure economy, efficiency and effectiveness in its use of resources.

We are required under Section 20(1)(c) of the Local Audit and Accountability Act 2014 to satisfy ourselves that the Authority has made proper arrangements for securing economy, efficiency and effectiveness in its use of resources.

We are not required to consider, nor have we considered, whether all aspects of the Authority's arrangements for securing economy, efficiency and effectiveness in its use of resources are operating effectively.

Delay in certification of completion of the audit

We cannot formally conclude the audit and issue an audit certificate until we have completed the work necessary to issue our assurance statement in respect of the Authority's Whole of Government Accounts consolidation pack. We are satisfied that this work does not have a material effect on the financial statements or on our value for money conclusion.

Until we have completed this procedure we are unable to certify that we have completed the audit of the accounts in accordance with the requirements of the Local Audit and Accountability Act 2014 and the Code of Audit Practice issued by the National Audit Office.



Audit Report

Draft audit report continued)

Our opinion on the financial statements (draft)

Use of our report

This report is made solely to the members of Royal Berkshire Fire Authority, as a body, in accordance with Part 5 of the Local Audit and Accountability Act 2014 and for no other purpose, as set out in paragraph 43 of the Statement of Responsibilities of Auditors and Audited Bodies published by Public Sector Audit Appointments Limited. To the fullest extent permitted by law, we do not accept or assume responsibility to anyone other than the Authority and the Authority's members as a body, for our audit work, for this report, or for the opinions we have formed.

Andrew Brittain (Key Audit Partner)
Ernst & Young LLP (Local Auditor)
Reading
2022



05 Audit Differences



Audit Differences

In the normal course of any audit, we identify misstatements between amounts we believe should be recorded in the financial statements and the disclosures and amounts actually recorded. These differences are classified as “known” or “judgemental”. Known differences represent items that can be accurately quantified and relate to a definite set of facts or circumstances. Judgemental differences generally involve estimation and relate to facts or circumstances that are uncertain or open to interpretation.

Summary of adjusted differences

None to date.

Summary of unadjusted differences

We report all unadjusted amounts greater than £37,384 relating to Royal Berkshire Fire Authority to those charged with governance.

Our work on the Local Government Pension Scheme is not yet completed. However, Deloitte, the auditor of the LGPS Pension Fund have identified that due to a time-lag in pricing of the LGPS Pension Fund’s illiquid investments as at 31 March 2021, there has been an increase of £48.12m in the value of those assets in the Pension Fund as a whole. Royal Berkshire Fire Authority’s share of that increase amounts to £548,568. The Authority have currently chosen not to amend the statement of accounts to reflect this as this amount is not material to the statements.

There are no other unadjusted differences identified to date.



06

Value for Money



Value for money

The Authority's responsibilities for value for money (VFM)

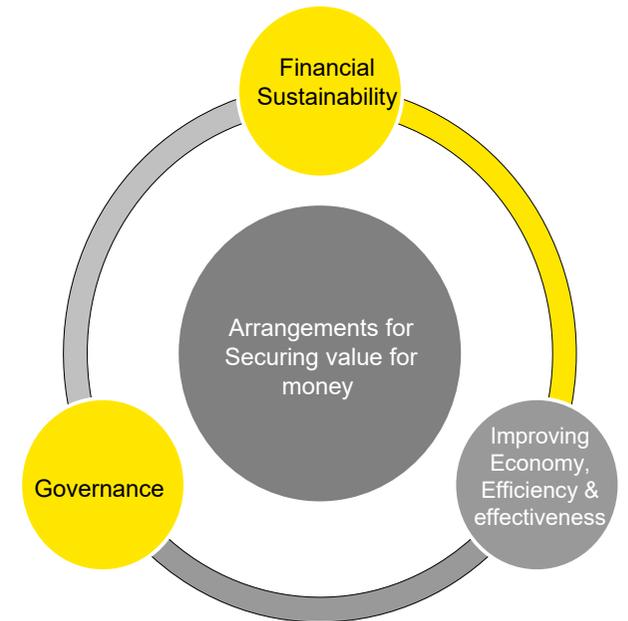
The Authority is required to maintain an effective system of internal control that supports the achievement of its policies, aims and objectives while safeguarding and securing value for money from the public funds and other resources at its disposal.

As part of the material published with its financial statements, the Authority is required to bring together commentary on its governance framework and how this has operated during the period in a governance statement. In preparing its governance statement, the Authority tailors the content to reflect its own individual circumstances, consistent with the requirements set out in the CIPFA code of practice on local authority accounting. This includes a requirement to provide commentary on its arrangements for securing value for money from their use of resources.

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Appendix A

Status of our VFM work

We are completing the documentation of our work on your value for money arrangements but have not identified any significant weaknesses to date. We will report our full commentary on our VfM work including any weaknesses identified and associated recommendations in our Auditor's Annual Report, which is required to be issued by three months after the date of issuing the financial statement audit opinion.





07 Other reporting issues

Other reporting issues

Consistency of other information published with the financial statements, including the Annual Governance Statement

We must give an opinion on the consistency of the financial and non-financial information in the Statement of Accounts 2020/21 with the audited financial statements.

We must also review the Annual Governance Statement for completeness of disclosures, consistency with other information from our work, and whether it complies with relevant guidance.

Financial information in the Statement of Accounts 2020/21 and published with the financial statements was consistent with the audited financial statements.

We have reviewed the Annual Governance Statement and can confirm it is consistent with other information from our audit of the financial statements and we have no other matters to report.

Whole of Government Accounts

Alongside our work on the financial statements, we also review and report to the National Audit Office on your Whole of Government Accounts return. The extent of our review, and the nature of our report, is specified by the National Audit Office.

We have not yet been provided with the scope of work by the NAO, however, we expect it to be consistent with prior years. As the authority is below the expected threshold of £500m, we expect to have no issues to raise.

Other reporting issues

Other reporting issues

Other powers and duties

We have a duty under the Local Audit and Accountability Act 2014 to consider whether to report on any matter that comes to our attention in the course of the audit, either for the Authority to consider it or to bring it to the attention of the public (i.e. “a report in the public interest”). We did not identify any issues which required us to issue a report in the public interest.

Other matters

As required by ISA (UK&I) 260 and other ISAs specifying communication requirements, we must tell you significant findings from the audit and other matters if they are significant to your oversight of the Authority’s financial reporting process. They include the following:

- Significant qualitative aspects of accounting practices including accounting policies, accounting estimates and financial statement disclosures;
- Any significant difficulties encountered during the audit;
- Any significant matters arising from the audit that were discussed with management;
- Written representations we have requested;
- Expected modifications to the audit report;
- Any other matters significant to overseeing the financial reporting process;
- Related parties;
- External confirmations;
- Going concern; and
- Consideration of laws and regulations.

We have nothing to comment in respect of these to date.



08

Assessment of Control Environment



Assessment of Control Environment

Financial controls

As part of our audit of the financial statements, we obtained an understanding of internal control sufficient to plan our audit and determine the nature, timing and extent of testing performed.

Although our audit was not designed to express an opinion on the effectiveness of internal control, we are required to communicate to you significant deficiencies in internal control.

We have not identified any significant deficiencies in the design or operation of an internal control that might result in a material misstatement in your financial statements of which you are not aware.



09 Data Analytics



Data Analytics - Journal Entry Testing

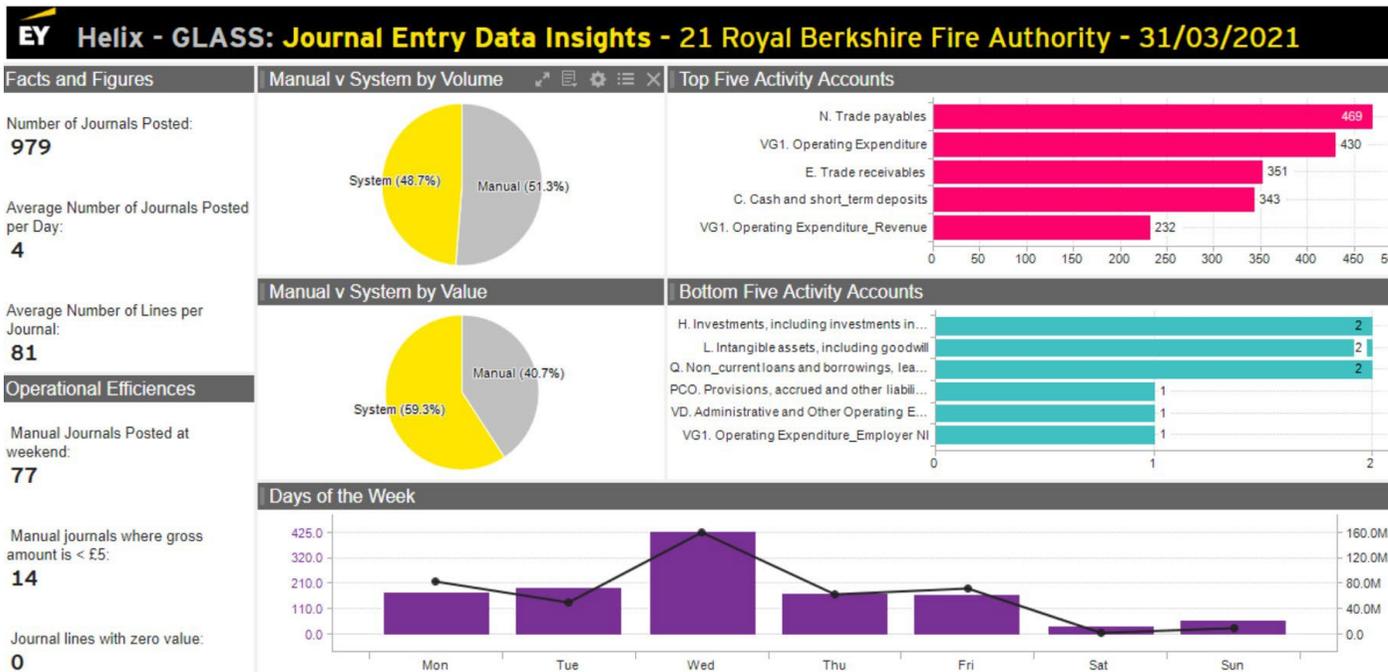
What is the risk?

In line with ISA 240 we are required to test the appropriateness of journal entries recorded in the general ledger and other adjustments made in the preparation of the financial statements.

What judgements are we focused on?

Using our analysers we are able to take a risk based approach to identify journals with a higher risk of management override, as outlined in our audit planning report.

Journal entry data criteria – 31 March 2021



What did we do?

We obtained general ledger journal data for the period and have used our analysers to identify characteristics typically associated with inappropriate journal entries or adjustments, and journals entries that are subject to a higher risk of management override.

We then performed tests on the journals identified to determine if they were appropriate and reasonable.

What are our conclusions?

We isolated a sub set of journals for further investigation and obtained supporting evidence to verify the posting of these transactions and concluded that they were appropriately stated.



10 Independence

Relationships, services and related threats and safeguards

The FRC Ethical Standard requires that we provide details of all relationships between Ernst & Young (EY) and the Authority, and its members and senior management, including all services provided by us and our network to the Authority, its members and senior management, and other services provided to other known connected parties that we consider may reasonably be thought to bear on the our integrity or objectivity, including those that could compromise independence and the related safeguards that are in place and why they address the threats.

There are no relationships from 1 April 2020 to the date of this report, which we consider may reasonably be thought to bear on our independence and objectivity.

Services provided by Ernst & Young

The next page includes a summary of the fees that you have paid to us in the year ended 31 March 2021 in line with the disclosures set out in FRC Ethical Standard and in statute.

As at the date of this report, there are no future services which have been contracted and no written proposal to provide non-audit services has been submitted.

We confirm that we have not undertaken non-audit work.

EY Transparency Report 2021

Ernst & Young (EY) has policies and procedures that instil professional values as part of firm culture and ensure that the highest standards of objectivity, independence and integrity are maintained.

Details of the key policies and processes in place within EY for maintaining objectivity and independence can be found in our annual Transparency Report which the firm is required to publish by law. The most recent version of this Report is for the year end 30 June 2021:

[EY UK 2021 Transparency Report | EY UK](#)

Fees

As part of our reporting on our independence, we set out below a summary of the fees paid for the year ended 31 March 2021. We confirm that we have not undertaken non-audit work outside the NAO Code requirements. We have complied with Auditor Guidance Note 1 issued by the NAO.

Description	Final Fee 2020/21 £	Planned Fee 2020/21 £	Final Fee 2019/20 £
Scale Fee - Code work	26,180	26,180	26,180
Proposed increase to the scale fee due to changes in work required to address professional and regulatory requirements and scope associated with risk (Note 1)	23,737	23,737	23,737
Revised Proposed Scale Fee	49,917	49,917	49,917
Additional Fees (Note 2):			
- Additional work on land & buildings	TBC	TBC	-
- Additional work on pensions	TBC	TBC	7,000
- VFM additional procedures	5,000 - 9,000	TBC	-
- Covid-19 inefficiencies	TBC	TBC	11,500
- Going concern assessment & disclosure	TBC	TBC	-
- Revised auditing standard for estimates	1,900 minimum	TBC	-
Non-audit work	-	-	-
Total	TBC	TBC	68,407

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Note 1 - The proposed increase to the scale fee to £49.917 reflects the increased risk and complexity facing all public sector bodies, adjusted for the change in risk profile as well as the changes and incremental increase in regulatory standards. We have also adjusted the baseline fee to reflect our current assessment of the Authority's readiness for audit, including data analytics, quality of working papers. The proposed increase in the baseline fee is relatively consistent with other Fire and Rescue Authorities of a similar size, risk profile and complexity that EY audits. The 19/20 fee variation is awaiting determination by PSAA.

Note 2 - The impact on the audit of Covid-19, going concern and estimates ISAs, the new NAO code encompassing additional VfM procedures also impact the work that is required to be done. The circumstances of the 20/21 audit also required additional procedures on L&B and pensions. As we near the conclusion of the audit, we will quantify the impact of these additional procedures and where we propose a variation to the Authority's scale fee.

On both points, we will continue to discuss and share with the Chief Financial Officer our assessment of the audit fees required to safeguard audit quality and our professional standards. We will also report our proposed final position to the Audit and Governance Committee.

We intend to report to PSAA at this stage our assessment of the changes required to the baseline fee from £26,180 to £55,851. In doing so, we will notify PSAA whether the Authority agree, partially agree or do not agree with our assessment. PSAA are ultimately responsible for determining the scale fee and any variations to it.



11

Appendices

Required communications with the Audit and Governance Committee

There are certain communications that we must provide to the those charged with governance of UK entities. We have detailed these here together with a reference of when and where they were covered:

 Our Reporting to you

Required communications	 What is reported?	  When and where
Terms of engagement	Confirmation by the Audit and Governance Committee of acceptance of terms of engagement as written in the engagement letter signed by both parties.	The statement of responsibilities serves as the formal terms of engagement between the PSAA's appointed auditors and audited bodies
Our responsibilities	Reminder of our responsibilities as set out in the engagement letter.	Audit planning report, presented at the Audit and Governance Committee on 24 January 2022.
Planning and audit approach	Communication of the planned scope and timing of the audit, any limitations and the significant risks identified. When communicating key audit matters this includes the most significant risks of material misstatement (whether or not due to fraud) including those that have the greatest effect on the overall audit strategy, the allocation of resources in the audit and directing the efforts of the engagement team.	Audit planning report, presented at the Audit and Governance Committee on 24 January 2022.
Significant findings from the audit	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▶ Our view about the significant qualitative aspects of accounting practices including accounting policies, accounting estimates and financial statement disclosures ▶ Significant difficulties, if any, encountered during the audit ▶ Significant matters, if any, arising from the audit that were discussed with management ▶ Written representations that we are seeking ▶ Expected modifications to the audit report ▶ Other matters if any, significant to the oversight of the financial reporting process 	Audit results report, presented at the Audit and Governance Committee on 23 March 2022.

Appendix A

Our Reporting to you

Required communications	What is reported?	When and where
Going concern	<p>Events or conditions identified that may cast significant doubt on the entity's ability to continue as a going concern, including:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▶ Whether the events or conditions constitute a material uncertainty related to going concern ▶ Whether the use of the going concern assumption is appropriate in the preparation and presentation of the financial statements ▶ The appropriateness of related disclosures in the financial statements 	Audit results report, presented at the Audit and Governance Committee on 23 March 2022.
Misstatements	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▶ Uncorrected misstatements and their effect on our audit opinion, unless prohibited by law or regulation ▶ The effect of uncorrected misstatements related to prior periods ▶ A request that any uncorrected misstatement be corrected ▶ Material misstatements corrected by management 	Audit results report, presented at the Audit and Governance Committee on 23 March 2022.
Subsequent events	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▶ Enquiry of the audit committee where appropriate regarding whether any subsequent events have occurred that might affect the financial statements. 	Audit results report, presented at the Audit and Governance Committee on 23 March 2022.
Fraud	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▶ Enquiries of the audit committee to determine whether they have knowledge of any actual, suspected or alleged fraud affecting the entity ▶ Any fraud that we have identified or information we have obtained that indicates that a fraud may exist ▶ Unless all of those charged with governance are involved in managing the entity, any identified or suspected fraud involving: <ol style="list-style-type: none"> a. Management; b. Employees who have significant roles in internal control; or c. Others where the fraud results in a material misstatement in the financial statements. ▶ The nature, timing and extent of audit procedures necessary to complete the audit when fraud involving management is suspected ▶ Any other matters related to fraud, relevant to the Audit and Governance Committee responsibility. 	Audit results report, presented at the Audit and Governance Committee on 23 March 2022.

Appendix A

		Our Reporting to you
Required communications	What is reported?	When and where
Related parties	<p>Significant matters arising during the audit in connection with the entity's related parties including, when applicable:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▶ Non-disclosure by management ▶ Inappropriate authorisation and approval of transactions ▶ Disagreement over disclosures ▶ Non-compliance with laws and regulations ▶ Difficulty in identifying the party that ultimately controls the entity 	Audit results report, presented at the Audit and Governance Committee on 23 March 2022.
Independence	<p>Communication of all significant facts and matters that bear on EY's, and all individuals involved in the audit, objectivity and independence.</p> <p>Communication of key elements of the audit engagement partner's consideration of independence and objectivity such as:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▶ The principal threats ▶ Safeguards adopted and their effectiveness ▶ An overall assessment of threats and safeguards ▶ Information about the general policies and process within the firm to maintain objectivity and independence <p>Communications whenever significant judgements are made about threats to objectivity and independence and the appropriateness of safeguards put in place.</p>	<p>Audit planning report, presented at the Audit and Governance Committee on 24 January 2022.</p> <p>Audit results report, presented at the Audit and Governance Committee on 23 March 2022.</p>
External confirmations	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▶ Management's refusal for us to request confirmations ▶ Inability to obtain relevant and reliable audit evidence from other procedures. 	Audit results report, presented at the Audit and Governance Committee on 23 March 2022.
Consideration of laws and regulations	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▶ Subject to compliance with applicable regulations, matters involving identified or suspected non-compliance with laws and regulations, other than those which are clearly inconsequential and the implications thereof. Instances of suspected non-compliance may also include those that are brought to our attention that are expected to occur imminently or for which there is reason to believe that they may occur ▶ Enquiry of the audit committee into possible instances of non-compliance with laws and regulations that may have a material effect on the financial statements and that the audit committee may be aware of 	Audit results report, presented at the Audit and Governance Committee on 23 March 2022.

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Appendix A

		Our Reporting to you
Required communications	What is reported?	When and where
Significant deficiencies in internal controls identified during the audit	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▶ Significant deficiencies in internal controls identified during the audit. 	Audit results report, presented at the Audit and Governance Committee on 23 March 2022.
Group Audits	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▶ An overview of the type of work to be performed on the financial information of the components ▶ An overview of the nature of the group audit team's planned involvement in the work to be performed by the component auditors on the financial information of significant components ▶ Instances where the group audit team's evaluation of the work of a component auditor gave rise to a concern about the quality of that auditor's work ▶ Any limitations on the group audit, for example, where the group engagement team's access to information may have been restricted ▶ Fraud or suspected fraud involving group management, component management, employees who have significant roles in group-wide controls or others where the fraud resulted in a material misstatement of the group financial statements. 	<p>Audit planning report, presented at the Audit and Governance Committee on 24 January 2022.</p> <p>Audit results report, presented at the Audit and Governance Committee on 23 March 2022.</p>
Written representations we are requesting from management and/or those charged with governance	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▶ Written representations we are requesting from management and/or those charged with governance 	Audit results report, presented at the Audit and Governance Committee on 23 March 2022.
Material inconsistencies or misstatements of fact identified in other information which management has refused to revise	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▶ Material inconsistencies or misstatements of fact identified in other information which management has refused to revise 	Audit results report, presented at the Audit and Governance Committee on 23 March 2022.
Auditors report	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▶ Key audit matters that we will include in our auditor's report ▶ Any circumstances identified that affect the form and content of our auditor's report 	Audit results report, presented at the Audit and Governance Committee on 23 March 2022.



Appendix E

Management representation letter

Management Rep Letter

[To be prepared on the entity's letterhead]

[Date]

Ernst & Young
Apex Plaza
Reading
Berkshire
RG1 1YE

Dear Andrew,

Royal Berkshire Fire and Rescue Authority - Audit for the year ended 31 March 2021

This letter of representations is provided in connection with your audit of the financial statements of Royal Berkshire Fire Authority ("the Authority") for the year ended 31 March 2021. We recognise that obtaining representations from us concerning the information contained in this letter is a significant procedure in enabling you to form an opinion as to whether the financial statements give a true and fair view of the Authority's financial position of Royal Berkshire Fire Authority as of 31 March 2021 and of its financial performance (or operations) and its cash flows for the year then ended in accordance with CIPFA LASAAC Code of Practice on Local Authority Accounting in the United Kingdom 2020/21.

We understand that the purpose of your audit of our financial statements is to express an opinion thereon and that your audit was conducted in accordance with International Standards on Auditing, which involves an examination of the accounting system, internal control and related data to the extent you considered necessary in the circumstances, and is not designed to identify - nor necessarily be expected to disclose - all fraud, shortages, errors and other irregularities, should any exist.

Accordingly, we make the following representations, which are true to the best of our knowledge and belief, having made such inquiries as we considered necessary for the purpose of appropriately informing ourselves:

A. Financial Statements and Financial Records

1. We have fulfilled our responsibilities, under the relevant statutory authorities, for the preparation of the financial statements in accordance with, the Accounts and Audit Regulations 2015 and CIPFA LASAAC Code of Practice on Local Authority Accounting in the United Kingdom 2020/21.
2. We acknowledge, as members of management of the Authority, our responsibility for the fair presentation of the financial statements. We believe the financial statements referred to above give a true and fair view of the financial position, financial performance (or results of operations) and cash flows of the Authority, the CIPFA LASAAC Code of Practice on Local Authority Accounting in the United Kingdom 2020/21, and are free of material misstatements, including omissions. We have approved the financial statements.
3. The significant accounting policies adopted in the preparation of the financial statements are appropriately described in the financial statements.
4. As members of management of the Authority, we believe that the have a system of internal controls adequate to enable the preparation of accurate financial statements in accordance with the CIPFA LASAAC Code of Practice on Local Authority Accounting in the United Kingdom 2020/21 that are free from material misstatement, whether due to fraud or error. We have disclosed to you any significant changes in our processes, controls, policies and procedures that we have made to address the effects of the COVID-19 pandemic on our system of internal controls.
5. We believe that the effects of any unadjusted audit differences, summarised in the accompanying schedule, accumulated by you during the current audit and pertaining to the latest period presented are immaterial, both individually and in the aggregate, to the Authority financial statements taken as a whole. We have not corrected these differences identified and brought to our attention by the auditor because [specify reasons for not correcting misstatement].



Appendix E

Management representation letter

Management Rep Letter (continued)

B. Non-compliance with law and regulations, including fraud

1. We acknowledge that we are responsible for determining that the Authority's activities are conducted in accordance with laws and regulations and that we are responsible for identifying and addressing any non-compliance with applicable laws and regulations, including fraud.
2. We acknowledge that we are responsible for the design, implementation and maintenance of internal controls to prevent and detect fraud.
3. We have disclosed to you the results of our assessment of the risk that the financial statements may be materially misstated as a result of fraud.
4. We have no knowledge of any identified or suspected non-compliance with laws or regulations, including fraud that may have affected the Authority (regardless of the source or form and including without limitation, any allegations by "whistleblowers"), including non-compliance matters:
 - ▶ involving financial statements;
 - ▶ related to laws and regulations that have a direct effect on the determination of material amounts and disclosures in the consolidated or Authority's financial statements;
 - ▶ related to laws and regulations that have an indirect effect on amounts and disclosures in the financial statements, but compliance with which may be fundamental to the operations of the Authority's activities, its ability to continue to operate, or to avoid material penalties;
 - ▶ involving management, or employees who have significant roles in internal controls, or others; or
 - ▶ in relation to any allegations of fraud, suspected fraud or other non-compliance with laws and regulations communicated by employees, former employees, analysts, regulators or others.

C. Information Provided and Completeness of Information and Transactions

1. We have provided you with:
 - ▶ Access to all information of which we are aware that is relevant to the preparation of the financial statements such as records, documentation and other matters;
 - ▶ Additional information that you have requested from us for the purpose of the audit; and
 - ▶ Unrestricted access to persons within the entity from whom you determined it necessary to obtain audit evidence.
2. All material transactions have been recorded in the accounting records and all material transactions, events and conditions are reflected in the financial statements, including those related to the COVID-19 pandemic.
3. We have made available to you all minutes of the meetings of the Authority, the Executive Committee and the Audit and Governance Committee held through the year to the most recent meeting on the following date: [list date].
4. We confirm the completeness of information provided regarding the identification of related parties. We have disclosed to you the identity of the Authority's related parties and all related party relationships and transactions of which we are aware, including sales, purchases, loans, transfers of assets, liabilities and services, leasing arrangements, guarantees, non-monetary transactions and transactions for no consideration for the year ended, as well as related balances due to or from such parties at the year end. These transactions have been appropriately accounted for and disclosed in the financial statements.
5. We believe that the methods, significant assumptions and the data we used in making accounting estimates and related disclosures are appropriate and consistently applied to achieve recognition, measurement and disclosure that is in accordance with CIPFA LASAAC Code of Practice on Local Authority Accounting in the United Kingdom 2020/21.
6. We have disclosed to you, and the Authority has complied with, all aspects of contractual agreements that could have a material effect on the financial statements in the event of non-compliance, including all covenants, conditions or other requirements of all outstanding debt.

Management representation letter

Management Rep Letter (continued)

7. From 20 October 2021, the date of our last management representation letter, through the date of this letter we have disclosed to you any unauthorized access to our information technology systems that either occurred or to the best of our knowledge is reasonably likely to have occurred based on our investigation, including of reports submitted to us by third parties (including regulatory agencies, law enforcement agencies and security consultants), to the extent that such unauthorized access to our information technology systems is reasonably likely to have a material impact to the financial statements, in each case or in the aggregate.

D. Liabilities and Contingencies

1. All liabilities and contingencies, including those associated with guarantees, whether written or oral, have been disclosed to you and are appropriately reflected in the financial statements.
2. We have informed you of all outstanding and possible litigation and claims, whether or not they have been discussed with legal counsel.
3. We have recorded and/or disclosed, as appropriate, all liabilities related to litigation and claims, both actual and contingent.

E. Going Concern

1. The Statement of Accounting Policies in the financial statements discloses all the matters of which we are aware that are relevant to the Authority's ability to continue as a going concern, including significant conditions and events, our plans for future action, and the feasibility of those plans.

F. Subsequent Events

1. There have been no events, including events related to the COVID-19 pandemic, subsequent to year end which require adjustment of or disclosure in the financial statements or notes thereto.

G. Other information

1. We acknowledge our responsibility for the preparation of the other information. The other information comprises the narrative statement.
2. We confirm that the content contained within the other information is consistent with the financial statements.

H. Ownership of Assets

1. Except for assets recognised as right-of-use assets in accordance with IFRS 16 Leases, the Authority has satisfactory title to all assets appearing in the balance sheet, and there are no liens or encumbrances on the Authority's assets, nor has any asset been pledged as collateral. All assets to which the Authority has satisfactory title appear in the balance sheet.
2. All agreements and options to buy back assets previously sold have been properly recorded and adequately disclosed in the financial statements.
3. There are no formal or informal compensating balance arrangements with any of our cash and investment accounts.

I. Reserves

1. We have properly recorded or disclosed in the Authority financial statements the useable and unusable reserves.

J. Contingent Liabilities

1. We are unaware of any violations or possible violations of laws or regulations the effects of which should be considered for disclosure in the financial statements or as the basis of recording a contingent loss (other than those disclosed or accrued in the financial statements).

Management representation letter

Management Rep Letter (continued)

2. We are unaware of any known or probable instances of non-compliance with the requirements of regulatory or governmental authorities, including their financial reporting requirements, and there have been no communications from regulatory agencies or government representatives concerning investigations or allegations of non-compliance, except for matters of routine, normal, recurring nature none of which involves any allegations of noncompliance with laws or regulations that should be considered for disclosure in the financial statements or as a basis for recording a loss contingency.

K. Use of the Work of a Specialist

1. We agree with the findings of the specialists that we engaged to evaluate the fair value of property, plant and equipment and the IAS19 actuarial valuations of pension liabilities and have adequately considered the qualifications of the specialists in determining the amounts and disclosures included in the financial statements and the underlying accounting records. We did not give or cause any instructions to be given to the specialists with respect to the values or amounts derived in an attempt to bias their work, and we are not otherwise aware of any matters that have had an effect on the independence or objectivity of the specialists.

L. Pension Liability and PPE Estimates

1. We confirm that the significant judgments made in making the pension liability and property, plant and equipment have taken into account all relevant information and the effects of the COVID-19 pandemic of which we are aware.

2. We believe that the selection or application of the methods, assumptions and data used by us have been consistently and appropriately applied or used in making the pension liability and property, plant and equipment estimates.

3. We confirm that the significant assumptions used in making the pension liability and property, plant and equipment estimates appropriately reflect our intent and ability to carry out the specific courses of action on behalf of the entity.

4. We confirm that the disclosures made in the financial statements with respect to the accounting estimates, including those describing estimation uncertainty and the effects of the COVID-19 pandemic, are complete and are reasonable in the context of CIPFA LASAAC Code of Practice on Local Authority Accounting in the United Kingdom 2020/21.

5. We confirm that appropriate specialized skills or expertise has been applied in making the pension liability and property, plant and equipment estimates.

6. We confirm that no adjustments are required to the accounting estimates and disclosures in the consolidated and parent entity financial statements, including due to the COVID-19 pandemic.

M. Retirement benefits

1. On the basis of the process established by us and having made appropriate enquiries, we are satisfied that the actuarial assumptions underlying the scheme liabilities are consistent with our knowledge of the business. All significant retirement benefits and all settlements and curtailments have been identified and properly accounted for.

Yours faithfully,

Head of Finance and Procurement and Chief Financial Officer

Chairman of the Audit and Governance Committee

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ED None

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ROYAL BERKSHIRE FIRE AUTHORITY



COMMITTEE	AUDIT AND GOVERNANCE COMMITTEE
DATE OF MEETING	23 MARCH 2022
SUBJECT	ANNUAL STATEMENT OF ASSURANCE 2020/21
LEAD OFFICER	KATIE MILLS, HEAD OF CORPORATE SERVICES
LEAD MEMBER	N/A
EXEMPT INFORMATION	NONE
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 Integrated 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** that the RBFA Statement of Assurance 2020/21 be approved.
- 2.3 **AGREE** that the Statement of Assurance will be finalised and re-published by the Director of Corporate Services, following the conclusion of the audit of the Statement of Accounts 2020/21, in consultation with the Chair of the Audit and Governance Committee.

Agenda Item 7

3. REPORT

- 3.1 The internal assessment was conducted by RBFRS officers against the Framework criteria and produced the following summary judgements:
- 3.2 **FINANCIAL** – requirements associated with the appropriate management of financial matters were **fully met** (subject to the conclusion of the external audit of Statement of Accounts 2020/21). Evidence to support this judgement and information on identified areas for improvement are set out in the Statement of Assurance
- 3.2 **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
- 3.3 **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
- 3.4 **NATIONAL FRAMEWORK** – requirements associated with the Fire and Rescue National Framework for England have been **fully met** as set out in **Appendix E** of the Statement of Assurance. This assessment was based on the judgements set out for financial, Governance and Operational evidence. This is further supported by the independent inspection carried out by Her Majesty's Inspectorate of Constabulary and Fire and Rescue Services.
- 3.5 Further assurance is provided via audit activities as set out in the Statement of Assurance.
- 3.6 Additional assurance on the judgement in relation to the Financial matters, is provided through the annual audit of the Statement of Accounts and receipt of the Annual Audit Letter. The audit has not yet concluded, however, mindful of the internal assurance exercise undertaken, it is proposed that the Statement of Assurance be published with the Financial element being Fully Met. Following the conclusion of the external audit, and subject to an unqualified opinion being issued, any identified areas for improvement will be added to the published Statement of Assurance in consultation with the Chair of the Audit and Governance Committee.
- 3.7 The Annual Statement of Assurance report is at Appendix A.

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. CONSISTENCY WITH DUTY TO COLLABORATE

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

10. PRINCIPAL CONSULTATION

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

11. BACKGROUND PAPERS

- 11.1 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 hard copy or electronic format on request.

12. APPENDICES

- 12.1 Appendix A – Statement of Assurance

13. CONTACT DETAILS

- 13.1 Angela Smith
Programme Office and Inspection Manager
07776 340 332

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Annual Statement of Assurance 2020-21

Royal Berkshire Fire and Rescue



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DRAFT

The Statement of Assurance will be finalised and re-published, following the conclusion of the audit of the Statement of Accounts 2020/21, in consultation with the Chair of the Audit and Governance Committee.



Introduction

We are required by the [Fire and Rescue National Framework for England](#) to provide an Annual Statement of Assurance on financial, governance and operational matters to enable our communities, Government, local authorities and partners to make a valid assessment of our governance arrangements. This Statement of Assurance sets out the governance arrangements the Royal Berkshire Fire Authority (RBFA) had in place for the period 1 April 2020 to 31 March 2021.

We have written this document in accordance with the [guidance](#) published by the Department for Communities and Local Government on Statements of Assurance for fire and rescue authorities in England, which suggests that where relevant information is clear, accessible and user friendly is available within existing documents, extracts or links to these documents may be included within a Statement of Assurance. This Statement includes extracts or links to key documents, or other sources of information, where relevant.

In 2018/19 Her Majesty's Inspectorate of Constabulary and Fire and Rescue Services (HMICFRS) completed its first cycle of inspections and the next cycle is underway. Royal Berkshire Fire and Rescue Service (RBFRS) was rated as 'good' across the three main inspection pillars of 'effectiveness', 'efficiency', and 'people'. A copy of the inspection report is available on the HMICFRS website. RBFRS continues to deliver its action plan to address the area for improvements identified in its first inspection, which is overseen by the Audit and Governance Committee. HMICFRS will re-inspect RBFRS in 2022, providing further external assurance.

The Fire and Rescue Service National Framework

The Fire and Rescue National Framework for England sets out the Government's priorities and objectives for Fire and Rescue Authorities in England. The National Framework outlines the high-level expectations although it does not require a detailed account of operational matters which are best determined locally.

The key priorities established by the framework are:

- Making appropriate provision for fire prevention and protection activities and response to fire and rescue related incidents;
- Identifying and assessing the full range of foreseeable fire and rescue related risks their areas face;
- Collaborating with emergency services and other local and national partners to increase the efficiency and effectiveness of the service they provide;
- Being accountable to communities for the service they provide; and
- Developing and maintaining a workforce that is professional, resilient, skilled, flexible and diverse.



Our legal responsibilities

The following legislation provides the main legal basis and outlines the statutory responsibilities and powers of the Royal Berkshire Fire Authority.

- The Fire and Rescue Services Act 2004
- The Civil Contingencies Act 2004
- Regulatory Reform (Fire Safety) Order 2005
- Policing and Crime Act 2017

In 2018, the Government launched a revised Fire and Rescue National Framework which sets out the Fire Authority's main responsibilities and these are shown below:

Royal Berkshire Fire Authority is required to:

- Contribute to safer communities by developing an Integrated Risk Management Plan (IRMP) to identify, assess and mitigate all foreseeable fire and rescue related risks faced by the communities of Royal Berkshire.
- Work in partnership with the people of Royal Berkshire and a wide range of partners locally and nationally to deliver a capable, resilient service.
- Be accountable to you for our actions and decision making.
- Have scrutiny arrangements in place that reflect the high standard you expect for an important public safety service.
- Provide assurance to you and to Government on financial, governance and operational matters and on national resilience capability.



How we make our judgements

In looking at our obligations, we have made a judgement on each based on the following definitions

Fully met	The requirements of applicable legislation and guidance are being consistently met.
Substantially met	The requirements of applicable legislation and guidance are mostly being met. Where legislation and guidance are not being met there is minimal risk to the Fire Authority discharging associated duties and powers for the provision of a fire and rescue service.
Partially met	The requirements of applicable legislation and guidelines are being inconsistently applied exposing the Fire Authority to considerable risk in discharging the necessary duties and powers associated with the provision of a fire and rescue service.



Summary Judgements

Financial Matters

It is the view of RBFA that, at the end of the 2020-21 financial year, requirements associated with the appropriate management of financial matters were fully met. This is subject to conclusion of the external audit of the Statement of Accounts 2020-21.

Governance Matters

It is the view of RBFA that, at the end of the 2020-21 financial year, requirements associated with appropriate business practice, high standards of conduct and sound governance were fully met.

Operational Matters

It is the view of RBFA that, at the end of the 2020-21 financial year, requirements associated with operational matters were fully met.

National Framework Requirements

It is the view of RBFA that at the end of the 2020-21 financial year, the requirements associated with the Fire and Rescue National Framework for England have been fully met.



Financial Assurance

It is the view of RBFA that, at the end of the 2020/21 financial year, requirements associated with the appropriate management of financial matters were fully met. This is subject to conclusion of the external audit of the Statement of Accounts 2020/21.

Evidence in support of the judgement

The Fire Authority places significant importance on ensuring that its financial management arrangements are in line with the expectations of a public body. An annual, independent audit is undertaken to review the Fire Authority's Statement of Accounts, which summarise the financial position of the Fire Authority at the end of the financial year and performance throughout the year.

The primary function of the external auditor is to express an opinion as to whether the Fire Authority's financial statements are free from material misstatement. However, the auditor also has responsibility for assessing whether the Fire Authority has reliable systems of control in place and the arrangements for securing economy, efficiency and effectiveness in the use of its resources.

The unaudited [2020-21 Statement of Accounts](#) are published on the Service website. The accounts are audited by independent external auditors who provide a view on the information contained in the accounts being 'true and fair'. The auditor considers whether the Authority has demonstrated it has delivered value for money prior to signing the audit statement.

The external auditor is currently undertaking the audit of the Accounts 2020/21. The [Annual Audit Letter](#) issued by the auditor in relation to these accounts will be used to confirm their assurance opinion on the financial matters of the Authority. The interim judgement on financial matters, based on internal assurance activity, will be finalised and updated in the Statement of Assurance following conclusion of the Audit.

The external audit of the draft statement of accounts for the year ended 31 March 2021 has not yet been completed by our external auditors, EY LLP, due to the delay in completing the audit of the financial year ending 31 March 2020, and subsequent rescheduling of the audit of the financial year ending 31 March 2021. This situation is allowed for by [Regulation 10, paragraph \(2a\) of the Accounts and Audit Regulations 2015](#).

Therefore this notification explains, as per paragraph (2a), that we are not yet able to publish our audited 2020-21 final Statement of Accounts in line with deadline of 30 September 2021, as per paragraph (1). The Audit and Governance committee will consider the results of the 2020-21 audit at its meeting, after which we will publish the final audited accounts.

Further information about how the Service implements financial controls can be found in our [Constitution](#).



Areas for Future improvement

To be completed on receipt of the Annual Audit Letter.

DRAFT



Governance Assurance

It is the view of RBFA that, at the end of the 2020-21 financial year, requirements associated with appropriate business practice, high standards of conduct and sound governance were fully met.

Evidence in support of the judgement

Our governance arrangements

Royal Berkshire Fire Authority is a combined Fire Authority which means it is made up of 20 elected councillors from the six Unitary Authorities in Berkshire: Bracknell Forest, Slough Borough, Reading Borough, Royal Borough of Windsor and Maidenhead, West Berkshire and Wokingham. The Fire Authority is a legal body with statutory duties and responsibilities, including the scrutiny of the Service as a whole. The Fire Authority is responsible for setting the strategic direction, policies and priorities of the Service.

Find out more about the Fire Authority on our [website](#).

Organisational governance

The Fire Authority, as a public body, places significant emphasis on ensuring that effective governance arrangements are in place.

Governance is concerned with how the Fire Authority manages its affairs on a day to day basis including business practices, standards of conduct and overall management procedures.

The Fire Authority undertakes an annual assessment of the governance arrangements using the principles of the CIPFA/SOLACE Framework *Delivering Good Governance in Local Government*. Our Annual Governance 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 [Annual Governance Statement 2020/21](#) confirms assurance in the governance arrangements.

The Fire Authority is committed to being fully transparent in accordance with the principles of good governance and legal requirements.

Contracted internal audits

RBFA has contracted out internal audit to RSM, an external company. In addition to auditing aspects of the Fire Authority required by legislation, the internal auditors are also instructed, as part of the audit plan agreed with the Audit and Governance Committee, to audit various other aspects of the service.

In 2020/21 the following core audits were completed:



- Key Financial Controls (Annual Pension Return)
- Risk Management and Governance
- IT - Cyber Essentials
- Firefighter Pension Administration
- Payroll Provider – Data Plan
- Capital Projects
- Fleet Management

Our auditors found substantial assurance on all six of these audits (a seventh audit was completed which was an advisory audit with no assurance level assessment required). All audit actions are monitored through the Strategic Performance Board and Audit and Governance Committee.

The internal auditor's overall audit opinion for 2020/21 was as follows:

“The organisation has an adequate and effective framework for risk management, governance and internal control.”

The appointed Internal Auditors (RSM) undertook a Governance and Risk Management Audit as part of the 2020/21 audit plan. As part of this audit, the auditors found substantial assurance that *“effective arrangements and processes in relation to governance and risk management”*.

Substantial assurance is the highest level of assurance assigned by the auditors.

Areas for improvement

There were three low priority management actions highlighted by the internal auditors in 2020/21 as a result of the Governance and Risk Management Audit. Actions will be progressed over the year and will be reported on at our [Strategic Performance Board](#).

- We will ensure that minutes are updated to specifically record that actions agreed at previous meetings have been discussed and progress updates received. Only when actions are reported as completed will progress updates stop.
- We will update the Audit and Governance Committee, Fire Authority and Management Committee Terms of References to include a footnote outlining that these should be read in accordance with the organisation's Standing Orders.
- As part of the implementation of the risk management course, we will identify all staff responsible for risk management within the organisation. An exercise will then be completed to ensure appropriate risk training has been provided and a formal record will be retained to evidence this.



Operational Assurance

It is the view of RBFA that, at the end of the 2020-21 financial year, requirements associated with operational matters were fully met.

Evidence in support of the judgement

Management of Risk

The [Corporate Plan 2019-2023](#) includes our Community Risk Management Plan. The Authority had a statutory duty under the Fire and Rescue Service National Framework, to produce a plan to identify and assess all foreseeable fire related risks' at a county, regional and national level.

The Plan brings together our three strands of service delivery; Prevention, Protection and Response and sets out our plans to ensure the right resources are in the place, at the right time to respond to emergencies. Our Protection, Prevention and Response Strategies agreed in 2020/21 provide a roadmap for our activities across the three areas.

The public and any other stakeholder must be consulted on the content of the plan and are consulted again if we plan to change the service we currently deliver. The consultation must be undertaken in accordance with the legal principles of consultation and current Government guidance, as well as our own Consultation Principles which has also been subject to public consultation.

The responses received to any consultations are considered by the Fire Authority before any decision is made. Further information on our [consultations](#) are available on our website.

The processes we have adopted use a combination of risk modelling, historical data and professional judgement to make an assessment of impact and consequence with likelihood that an event will occur, ensuring that a thorough analysis has been completed. Our published [risk methodology](#) outlines the methods of modelling and mapping used to calculate risk and risk location within Berkshire.

We take into account local community and risk information by creating [Local Safety Plans](#) which feed into our risk management process. We outline our approach, the risks and the associated analysis in our [Corporate Plan and Community Risk Management Plan](#) published on our website.

We work closely with our partners as part of the Thames Valley Local Resilience Forum (TVLRF) and actively provide resource, capacity and capability in support of the work of the Forum. RBFRS is committed to a programme of joint service training with Thames Valley Police, South Central Ambulance Service and the three Thames Valley fire services to deliver JESIP training to enable and fulfil the requirements of the JESIP Doctrine.



Specific Events

RBFA actively monitors how the service is delivered to the community of Berkshire through a variety of systems including:

- Regular performance reports
- Risk based operational debriefs
- Feedback from staff to identify improvements on how the service can be delivered through an operational assurance process
- Attendance at significant emergency incidents by managers to monitor the performance of the firefighters

RBFA ensures that all relevant matters arising from the above areas are considered, and where appropriate changes are made to improve the way the community is served throughout Berkshire.

A number of key performance indicators (KPIs) are used to monitor performance of our emergency response arrangements. The Strategic Performance Board (SPB) scrutinise performance and report to the Senior Leadership Team. Members play a key role in scrutinising performance through regular reports and presentations to Audit & Governance Committee and the full Fire Authority. All our [performance reports](#) and performance against targets are published on our website.

The Operational Assurance Framework exists to monitor, report and act on outcomes from active monitoring and incident debriefs and this feeds into both national operational learning and joint organisational learning.

Mutual Aid Agreements

RBFRS has mutual aid agreements with each of the neighbouring fire and rescue services whereby:

- In the event of a significant emergency, RBFA can, and have, requested additional resources from neighbouring fire authorities
- Should the address of an emergency be closer to a fire engine from a neighbouring fire authority, a request will be made for that fire engine to attend the incident

Specialist equipment and trained personnel can also be requested from other fire and rescue services to attend significant emergencies in Berkshire. In the event of a national emergency elsewhere in the county, RBFA has the following specialist resources that can be deployed to assist those in need:

- A Mass Decontamination Unit (MDU), to support large scale hazardous substance incident;
- A High Volume Pump, (HVP) to support large scale flooding incidents;
- A Water Rescue Unit, (WRU) to support rescues from large scale flooding incidents.



Health and Safety Assurance

We have an established suite of key health and safety performance indicators that enable us to closely monitor health and safety performance at all levels. The indicators cover areas such as personal injuries and vehicle accidents, near misses, events that are reportable to HSE under the RIDDOR, fitness testing and sickness. This is monitored quarterly by our Health, Safety and Wellbeing Committee. RIDDOR injury events, sickness and fitness data are also monitored by our Strategic Performance Board.

A comprehensive health and wellbeing provision is in place to support employees throughout their career. During 2020/21 significant effort was placed on protecting the health, safety and wellbeing of staff in all roles, ensuring measures were in place to maintain operational resilience and ensure safe working environments. Proactive advice and support was provided to take account of the range of challenges being faced by individuals and protect the most vulnerable staff.

Training Assurance

Operational staff in qualification is regularly measured and development and assessment pathways take account of the skills and knowledge required for role. On-call individuals are afforded additional training opportunities alongside their whole time colleagues. Operational staff in qualification is measured at our Strategic Performance Board with papers published on our website.

An annual training plan is developed and a suite of core skill courses are available for all staff. During the period of the pandemic and the periods of restricted attendance and movement, training and learning support was delivered utilising online facilities and through the introduction of a learning management system that will provide a blended approach to training and assessment and support flexibility of access to learning into the future.

Duty to Collaborate

The Corporate plan and CRMP 2019-2023 outlines the legislation contained in the Policing and Crime Act 2017, which places a duty on emergency services to collaborate in the interests of efficiency and effectiveness. To support, champion and provide strategic oversight of collaborative activity within the service, RBFA has appointed a Lead Member for Collaboration. This Councillor forms part of Thames Valley Steering Group and is joint lead for Thames Valley Fire Control Service (TVFCS) Joint Committee. The Thames Valley Collaboration Steering Group provides the structure, governance and direction for blue light collaboration. This and our collaboration activities are explained in greater detail in the [Thames Valley Collaboration Report](#) and the Thames Valley Collaboration Register.



Areas for Future Improvement

Reporting and assurance activity is managed through our Strategic Performance Board and Audit and Governance Committee. This monitors any actions and improvement plans.

Our [Annual Report](#) provides the details of our successes along with areas of improvement in line with our Vision. Our [Annual Plan](#) sets out our Annual Objectives and highlights areas of focus in achieving these Objectives.

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National Framework Assurance

It is the view of Royal Berkshire Fire Authority (RBFA) that, at the end of the 2020/21 financial year, requirements associated with the Fire and Rescue National Framework for England have been fully met.

Evidence in support of the judgement

To provide an assessment of how well RBFA adheres to the National Framework, an internal assessment was undertaken and subject to an internal moderation exercise to scrutinise the assessments made. We use external evaluations through audits, assessment against professional standards and independent inspections. The outcome was that RBFA fully met the Framework requirements for 2020/21.

This outcome is further supported by the independent inspection by HMICFRS who judged RBFRS as good across the three main pillars of 'Effectiveness', 'Efficiency' and 'People'.

Equality, Diversity and Inclusion

Under the Equality Act 2010, public authorities have a legal obligation to comply with the public sector equality duty (PSED). This is a duty on public authorities to consider how our policies, decisions and activities affect people who are protected under the Equality Act. This incorporates nine protected characteristics age, disability, gender reassignment, marriage and civil partnership, pregnancy and maternity, race, religion and belief, sex and sexual orientation.

To meet our statutory obligations, when exercising our functions, we must have due regard to the need to:

- Eliminate unlawful discrimination, harassment and victimisation and other conduct prohibited by the Act;
- Advance equality of opportunity between people who share a protected characteristic and those who do not;
- Foster good relations between people who share a protected characteristic and those who do not

The general equality duty is supported by specific duties to help organisations to show compliance, requiring public bodies to additionally:

- Publish diversity information annually to demonstrate our compliance with the equality duty;



- Prepare and publish specific and measurable equality objectives at least every four years.

We are committed to promoting equality, diversity and inclusion (EDI) in both the service we deliver to the community and the employment of our staff. EDI is about understanding and respecting differences and ensuring the right people receive the right services. We also understand that a diverse workforce with individuals who can offer different skills, experience and knowledge will benefit us as an organisation and ensure we are able to meet the needs of the diverse community we serve.

The diversity of our workforce is important and we are working hard to attract and retain a wider pool of applicants into all positions.

An Equality, Diversity and Inclusion (EDI) Forum assists the Service to consider its activities and pulls of diversity of experience regarding areas for attention and progression/development. We consult on and publish our Equality Objectives as part of our commitment to meeting the duties placed upon us. The Forum is a knowledge-sharing and consultative body that supports the Service to maintain progress regarding our objectives by drawing on a range of perspectives and experiences.

Our Future Plans

RBFA is determined to continue to provide a safe and efficient service, whilst meeting changing local needs and balancing the budget. Plans put in place over the last few years have provided a good foundation to meet that challenge.

In 2018, RBFA published our [Corporate Plan and CRMP 2019-2023](#), demonstrating how RBFRS will deliver its services, in order to achieve the Fire Authority's six Strategic Commitments. Work will start during 2022 to refresh this key document.

Our [Annual Plan for 2021/22](#) is published on our website and includes specific areas of focus for the year ahead in support of our Vision for 2023 and beyond, and to ensure RBFRS utilises and maximises its available resources to deliver a quality service to the people of Royal Berkshire.

The Impact of Covid-19

As with all public sector organisations, the Covid-19 global pandemic has had a unique impact on our service. Our [Annual Governance Statement](#) details the Authority's consideration of Covid-19 and provides a summary of the impact on Governance for the period of the pandemic. We have also continued to meet our statutory responsibilities throughout the period of Covid-19 pandemic and this was highlighted by HMICFRS in their [Covid-19 Thematic inspection letter](#).



HMICFRS were commissioned by the Home Secretary to inspect how fire and rescue services in England were responding to the COVID-19 pandemic. The inspection of RBFRS took place in October 2020, and largely focused on the period between April and June 2020. HMICFRS issued a findings letter and in summary stated that the Service had “adapted and responded to the pandemic effectively.”

Our internal governance arrangements have proved adequate in supporting a swift response to COVID-19. This will continue to be a significant governance issue during 2020/21 and will continue to be managed through internal governance arrangements, learnings from this period will be fed into the COVID-19 Learning Report.

How we engage with our communities

You can get involved with the work of the Fire Authority by attending the public meetings that are held regularly by the Authority.

We value the views of our communities to ensure we are providing the service you need. We consult formally on the ways in which we propose to deliver services through the CRMP consultation and this and more information about our plans and priorities can be found on our website www.rbfrs.co.uk.

Access to information

A range of information about RBFRS is routinely published on our website. For more information on access to data and information, please visit our [website](#).

Should you require help with accessing the information in a different format, please view our [accessibility statement](#) or contact us using communications@rbfrs.co.uk.

ROYAL BERKSHIRE
FIRE AND RESCUE SERVICE

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

ROYAL BERKSHIRE FIRE AUTHORITY REPORT



COMMITTEE	AUDIT AND GOVERNANCE COMMITTEE
DATE OF MEETING	23 MARCH 2022
SUBJECT	MEMBER CODE OF CONDUCT REVIEW AND CONSULTATION RESULTS
LEAD OFFICER	GRAHAM BRITTEN, MONITORING OFFICER
LEAD MEMBER	COUNCILLOR TINA MCKENZIE-BOYLE
EXEMPT INFORMATION	NONE
ACTION	FOR DECISION

1. EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

- 1.1 To review the results of the Draft Royal Berkshire Fire Authority (RBFA) Member Code of Conduct Consultation, and to recommend the adoption of the RBFA Code of Conduct to the Fire Authority for approval.

2. RECOMMENDATION

That Audit and Governance Committee:

- 2.1 **NOTE** the results of the Draft RBFA Member Code of Conduct consultation (Appendix B); and
- 2.2 **RECOMMEND** to the Fire Authority for approval the adoption of the RBFA Member Code of Conduct (Appendix A).

3. REPORT

- 3.1 In November 2020, Audit and Governance Committee recommended the Fire Authority; note the findings and actions from the audit against the 15 best practice recommendations made by the Committee on Standards in Public Life (CSPL). The Committee also recommended a review of the Code of Conduct be held annually commencing 2021/22, and where possible take into account

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the views of the public, community organisations, and neighbouring and appointing authorities. Minute reference 24.

- 3.2 In January 2022, Audit and Governance Committee agreed that subject to the gifts and hospitality amendment threshold be brought back to £25, instead of £50, a six-week consultation be held to commence on 28 January 2022 on the adoption of the Draft RBFA Member Code of Conduct. The Committee also agreed for the consultation findings be brought back to its next meeting, minute reference 38.
- 3.3 The consultation was circulated via Royal Berkshire Fire and Rescue (RBFRS') social media platforms and via email to Unitary Authorities, Thames Valley Fire and Rescue Service Partners and community groups. The consultation document was available in printed version upon request. There were no requests for a printed version.
- 3.4 Throughout the consultation period (Friday 28 January until Friday 11 March) regular tweets, repeat emails were circulated and a post on Facebook was made in the final consultation deadline week. The online questionnaire asked three questions below:

Question 1. Do you support the behaviours required of councillors, as set out in the Draft RBFA Code of Conduct when they are publicly representing Royal Berkshire Fire Authority on official business and when using social media? Yes / No / please explain

Question 2. Do you think the expected standards of councillor conduct and the actions that could be taken should an allegation be made, are clear? Yes / No / please explain

Question 3. Have you got any other comments you would like to make on the Draft RBFA Model Code of Conduct. Yes / No / please explain

3.5 Key results

- A total of 44 respondents participated in the consultation, however not all 44 respondents completed all of the consultation questions.
- Nine respondents indicated they heard about the consultation via email, five social media and one on Royal Berkshire Fire and Rescue Service website. A number of respondents skipped this question.
- 100% of respondents' support the behaviours required of councillors, as set out in the Draft RBFA Code of Conduct when they are publicly representing Royal Berkshire Fire Authority on official business and when using social media. One respondent commented '*All people should treat each other with dignity and respect*'.

- 90.91% think the expected standards of councillor conduct and the actions that could be taken should an allegation be made were clear. Two respondents answered 'No', but did not provide a comment or suggestion on how this could be improved. One respondent commented '*Good clear expectations from people in public office*'
- 90.91% did not have any other comments they would like to make on the Draft RBFA Model Code of Conduct. One respondent commented the seventh Nolan principle of public life 'Leadership' had not been included in the Appendix. The appendix has been subsequently updated to include all seven Nolan principles of public life.

3.6 The total impressions (audience reached) in promoting the consultation across Twitter, LinkedIn and Facebook was 3,504.

3.7 Lessons learnt from the first Code of Conduct consultation would be applied prior to future consultations and review of the Code of Conduct. For example, the use of graphics and video content to explain the purpose of the consultation would be used in 'reels' and 'stories' in social media platforms, such as Instagram. In addition, the time of the year and number of other live public consultations would be reviewed, to avoid too many organisational public consultations at any one time.

3.8 Appendix B show the survey results in its entirety, which include the demographic of respondents.

3.9 Based on the survey, (Appendix B) Members are asked to note the survey results and recommend the adoption of the RBFA Code of Conduct to the Fire Authority for approval.

4. CONTRIBUTION TO STRATEGIC COMMITMENTS

4.1 Commitment 5 – We will ensure that Royal Berkshire Fire and Rescue Service provides good value for money.

4.2 Commitment 6 – We will work with Central Government and key stakeholders in the interests of the people of Royal Berkshire.

5. FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

5.1 There are no direct financial implications relevant to the report.

6. LEGAL IMPLICATIONS

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- 6.1 Section 27 of the Localism Act 2011 requires relevant authorities to promote and maintain high standards of conduct by Members and Co-Opted Members of the authority. Each local authority must publish a code of conduct.

7. EQUALITY AND DIVERSITY IMPLICATIONS

- 7.1 There are no negative equality and diversity implications from the recommendations.

8. RISK IMPLICATIONS

- 8.1 The recommendation will have no adverse effect on the conduct or delivery of the Authority's functions.

9. CONSISTENCY WITH DUTY TO COLLABORATE

- 9.1 Future updates to the Code of Conduct and future consultations thereof will be made with Fire Authority partners and communities.

10. PRINCIPAL CONSULTATION

- 10.1 Chief Fire Officer was consulted during the preparation of this report.
- 10.2 The Head of Finance and Procurement was consulted during the preparation of this report.
- 10.3 Monitoring Officer report author.

11. BACKGROUND PAPERS

- 11.1 Audit and Governance Committee Minute reference 38 – 24 January 2022.
- 11.2 Local Government Association Model Code of Conduct.
- 11.3 Core Code of Ethics for Fire and Rescue Services (England).

12. APPENDICES

- 12.1 Appendix A – RBFA Member Code of Conduct
- 12.2 Appendix B – RBFA Member Code of Conduct survey results

13. CONTACT DETAILS

13.1 Graham Britten, Monitoring Officer 01296 744441

13.2 Fayth Rowe, Democratic Support Lead 0118 938 4611

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DRAFT Royal Berkshire Fire Authority (RBFA) Member Code of Conduct

March 2022





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Code of Conduct

Joint Statement

The role of councillor across all tiers of local government is a vital part of our country's system of democracy. It is important that as councillors we can be held accountable and all adopt the behaviours and responsibilities associated with the role. Our conduct as an individual councillor affects the reputation of all councillors. We want the role of councillor to be one that people aspire to. We also want individuals from a range of backgrounds and circumstances to be putting themselves forward to become councillors. As councillors, we represent local residents, work to develop better services and deliver local change. The public have high expectations of us and entrust us to represent our local area, taking decisions fairly, openly, and transparently. We have both an individual and collective responsibility to meet these expectations by maintaining high standards and demonstrating good conduct, and by challenging behaviour which falls below expectations. Importantly, we should be able to undertake our role as a councillor without being intimidated, abused, bullied, or threatened by anyone, including the general public. This Code has been designed to protect our democratic role, encourage good conduct and safeguard the public's trust in local government.

Introduction

The Local Government Association (LGA) has developed this Model Councillor Code of Conduct, in association with key partners and after extensive consultation with the sector, as part of its work on supporting all tiers of local government to continue to aspire to high standards of leadership and performance. It is a template for councils to adopt in whole and/or with local amendments. All councils are required to have a local Councillor Code of Conduct. The LGA will undertake an annual review of this Code to ensure it continues to be fit- for purpose, incorporating advances in technology, social media and changes in legislation. The LGA can also offer support, training and mediation to councils and councillors on the application of the Code and the National Association of Local Councils (NALC) and the county associations of local councils can offer advice and support to town and parish councils.

Definitions

For the purposes of this Code of Conduct, a "councillor" means a member or co-opted member of a local authority or a directly elected mayor. A "co-opted member" is defined in the Localism Act 2011 Section 27(4) as "a person who is not a member of the authority but who

- a) is a member of any committee or sub-committee of the authority, or;

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Appendix A

- b) is a member of, and represents the authority on, any joint committee or joint subcommittee of the authority; and who is entitled to vote on any question that falls to be decided at any meeting of that committee or sub-committee”.

For the purposes of this Code of Conduct, “local authority” includes county councils, district councils, London borough councils, parish councils, town councils, fire and rescue authorities, police authorities, joint authorities, economic prosperity boards, combined authorities and National Park authorities.

Purpose of the Code of Conduct

The purpose of this Code of Conduct is to assist you, as a councillor, in modelling the behaviour that is expected of you, to provide a personal check and balance, and to set out the type of conduct that could lead to action being taken against you. It is also to protect you, the public, fellow councillors, local authority officers and the reputation of local government. It sets out general principles of conduct expected of all councillors and your specific obligations in relation to standards of conduct. The LGA encourages the use of support, training and mediation prior to action being taken using the Code. The fundamental aim of the Code is to create and maintain public confidence in the role of councillor and local government.

General principles of councillor conduct

Everyone in public office at all levels; all who serve the public or deliver public services, including ministers, civil servants, councillors and local authority officers; should uphold the Seven Principles of Public Life, also known as the Nolan Principles (Appendix A).

Building on these principles, and of those of the National Fire Chief Council (NFCC) Code of Ethics (Appendix C) the following general principles have been developed specifically for the role of councillor. In accordance with the public trust placed in me, on all occasions:

- I act with integrity and honesty
- I act lawfully
- I treat all persons fairly and with respect; and
- I lead by example and act in a way that secures public confidence in the role of councillor.

In undertaking my role:

- I impartially exercise my responsibilities in the interests of the local community

- I do not improperly seek to confer an advantage, or disadvantage, on any person
- I avoid conflicts of interest
- I exercise reasonable care and diligence; and
- I ensure that public resources are used prudently in accordance with my local authority's requirements and in the public interest.

Application of the Code of Conduct

This Code of Conduct applies to you as soon as you sign your declaration of acceptance of the office of councillor or attend your first meeting as a co-opted member and continues to apply to you until you cease to be a councillor.

This Code of Conduct applies to you when you are acting in your capacity as a councillor which may include when:

- you misuse your position as a councillor
- Your actions would give the impression to a reasonable member of the public with knowledge of all the facts that you are acting as a councillor;

The Code applies to all forms of communication and interaction, including:

- at face-to-face meetings
- at online or telephone meetings
- in written communication
- in verbal communication
- in non-verbal communication
- in electronic and social media communication, posts, statements and comments.

You are also expected to uphold high standards of conduct and show leadership at all times when acting as a councillor.

Standards of councillor conduct

This section sets out your obligations, which are the minimum standards of conduct required of you as a councillor. Should your conduct fall short of these standards, a complaint may be made against you, which may result in action being taken.

Guidance is included to help explain the reasons for the obligations and how they should be followed.

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Appendix A

Your Monitoring Officer has statutory responsibility for the implementation of the Code of Conduct, and you are encouraged to seek advice from your Monitoring Officer on any matters that may relate to the Code of Conduct.

Should a complaint be made against you in your role as councillor or co-opted member, it will be dealt with in accordance with the provisions of the Localism Act 2011 and its supporting Regulations.

If allegations are made against you they will be handled by the Monitoring Officer in consultation with Independent Persons appointed by RBFA in accordance with RBFA's adopted procedure. They will determine the allegation and prohibit trivial or malicious allegations by councillors. The procedure on How to make a Complaint about a Fire Authority Member is outlined [here](#).

Councillors are required to comply with any formal standards investigation conducted by the Monitoring Officer and Independent Persons.

If there is a conflict of interest in the Authority's Monitoring Officer carrying out the investigation, a Monitoring Officer from a neighbouring Authority will be asked to conduct the formal investigation.

Where the Authority makes a decision on an allegation of misconduct following formal investigation, a decision notice will be published as soon as possible on its website.

General Conduct

1. Respect

As a councillor:

- 1.1 I treat other councillors and members of the public with respect.
- 1.2 I treat local authority employees, employees and representatives of partner organisations and those volunteering for the local authority with respect and respect the role they play.

Respect means politeness and courtesy in behaviour, speech, and in the written word. Debate and having different views are all part of a healthy democracy. As a councillor, you can express, challenge, criticise and disagree with views, ideas, opinions and policies in a robust but civil manner. You should not, however, subject individuals, groups of people or organisations to personal attack.

In your contact with the public, you should treat them politely and courteously. Rude and offensive behaviour lowers the public's expectations and confidence in councillors.

In return, you have a right to expect respectful behaviour from the public. If members of the public are being abusive, intimidatory or threatening you are entitled to stop any conversation or interaction in person or online and report them to the local authority, the relevant social media provider or the police. This also applies to fellow councillors, where action could then be taken under the Councillor Code of Conduct, and local authority employees, where concerns should be raised in line with the local authority's **Member/Officer protocol**.

2. Bullying, harassment and discrimination

As a councillor:

2.1 I do not bully any person.

2.2 I do not harass any person.

2.3 I promote equalities and do not discriminate unlawfully against any person.

The Advisory, Conciliation and Arbitration Service (ACAS) characterises bullying as offensive, intimidating, malicious or insulting behaviour, an abuse or misuse of power through means that undermine, humiliate, denigrate or injure the recipient. Bullying might be a regular pattern of behaviour or a one-off incident, happen face-to-face, on social media, in emails or phone calls, happen in the workplace or at work social events and may not always be obvious or noticed by others.

The Protection from Harassment Act 1997 defines harassment as conduct that causes alarm or distress or puts people in fear of violence and must involve such conduct on at least two occasions. It can include repeated attempts to impose unwanted communications and contact upon a person in a manner that could be expected to cause distress or fear in any reasonable person.

Unlawful discrimination is where someone is treated unfairly because of a protected characteristic. Protected characteristics are specific aspects of a person's identity defined by the Equality Act 2010. They are age, disability, gender reassignment, marriage and civil partnership, pregnancy and maternity, race, religion or belief, sex and sexual orientation.

The Equality Act 2010 places specific duties on local authorities. Councillors have a central role to play in ensuring that equality issues are integral to the local authority's performance and strategic commitments, and that there is a strong vision and public commitment to equality across public services.

3. Impartiality of officers of **Royal Berkshire Fire Authority**

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Appendix A

As a councillor:

3.1 I do not compromise, or attempt to compromise, the impartiality of anyone who works for, or on behalf of, Royal Berkshire Fire Authority.

Officers work for Royal Berkshire Fire Authority as a whole and must be politically neutral. They should not be coerced or persuaded to act in a way that would undermine their neutrality. You can question officers in order to understand, for example, their reasons for proposing to act in a particular way, or the content of a report that they have written. However, you must not try and force them to act differently, change their advice, or alter the content of that report, if doing so would prejudice their professional integrity.

4. Confidentiality and access to information

As a councillor:

4.1 I do not disclose information:

- a. given to me in confidence by anyone
- b. acquired by me which I believe, or ought reasonably to be aware, is of a confidential nature, unless
 - i. I have received the consent of a person authorised to give it;
 - ii. I am required by law to do so;
 - iii. the disclosure is made to a third party for the purpose of obtaining professional legal advice provided that the third party agrees not to disclose the information to any other person; or
 - iv. the disclosure is:
 1. reasonable and in the public interest; and
 2. made in good faith and in compliance with the reasonable requirements of the local authority; and
 3. I have consulted the Monitoring Officer prior to its release.

4.2 I do not improperly use knowledge gained solely as a result of my role as a councillor for the advancement of myself, my friends, my family members, my employer or my business interests.

4.3 I do not prevent anyone from getting information that they are entitled to by law.

Local authorities must work openly and transparently, and their proceedings and printed materials are open to the public, except in certain legally defined

circumstances. You should work on this basis, but there will be times when it is required by law that discussions, documents and other information relating to or held by the local authority must be treated in a confidential manner. Examples include personal data relating to individuals or information relating to ongoing negotiations.

5. Disrepute

As a councillor:

5.1 I do not bring my role or local authority into disrepute.

As a Councillor, you are trusted to make decisions on behalf of your community and your actions and behaviour are subject to greater scrutiny than that of ordinary members of the public. You should be aware that your actions might have an adverse impact on you, other councillors and/or your local authority and may lower the public's confidence in your or your local authority's ability to discharge your/its functions. For example, behaviour that is considered dishonest and/or deceitful can bring your local authority into disrepute.

You are able to hold the local authority and fellow councillors to account and are able to constructively challenge and express concern about decisions and processes undertaken by the council whilst continuing to adhere to other aspects of this Code of Conduct.

6. Use of position

As a councillor:

6.1 I do not use, or attempt to use, my position improperly to the advantage or disadvantage of myself or anyone else.

Your position as a member of the local authority provides you with certain opportunities, responsibilities, and privileges, and you make choices all the time that will impact others. However, you should not take advantage of these opportunities to further your own or others' private interests or to disadvantage anyone unfairly.

7. Use of Royal Berkshire Fire Authority resources and facilities

As a councillor:

7.1 I do not misuse Royal Berkshire Fire Authority resources.

7.2 I will, when using the resources of the local authority or authorising their use by others:

- a. act in accordance with Royal Berkshire Fire Authority's requirements;
and

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Appendix A

- b. ensure that such resources are not used for political purposes unless that use could reasonably be regarded as likely to facilitate, or be conducive to, the discharge of the functions of **Royal Berkshire Fire Authority** or of the office to which I have been elected or appointed.**

You may be provided with resources and facilities by the local authority to assist you in carrying out your duties as a councillor.

Examples include:

- office support
- stationery
- equipment such as phones, and computers
- transport
- access and use of local authority buildings and rooms.

These are given to you to help you carry out your role as a councillor more effectively and are not to be used for business or personal gain. They should be used in accordance with the purpose for which they have been provided and the local authority's own policies regarding their use.

8. Complying with the Code of Conduct

As a Councillor:

- 8.1 I undertake Code of Conduct training provided by my local authority.**
- 8.2 I cooperate with any Code of Conduct investigation and/or determination.**
- 8.3 I do not intimidate or attempt to intimidate any person who is likely to be involved with the administration of any investigation or proceedings.**
- 8.4 I comply with any sanction imposed on me following a finding that I have breached the Code of Conduct.**

It is extremely important for you as a councillor to demonstrate high standards, for you to have your actions open to scrutiny and for you not to undermine public trust in the local authority or its governance. If you do not understand or are concerned about the local authority's processes in handling a complaint you should raise this with your Monitoring Officer.

Protecting your reputation and the reputation of the local authority

9. Interests

As a councillor:

9.1 I register and disclose my interests.

Section 29 of the Localism Act 2011 requires the Monitoring Officer to establish and maintain a register of interests of members of the authority.

You need to register your interests so that the public, local authority employees and fellow councillors know which of your interests might give rise to a conflict of interest. The register is a public document that can be consulted when (or before) an issue arises. The register also protects you by allowing you to demonstrate openness and a willingness to be held accountable. You are personally responsible for deciding whether or not you should disclose an interest in a meeting, but it can be helpful for you to know early on if others think that a potential conflict might arise. It is also important that the public know about any interest that might have to be disclosed by you or other councillors when making or taking part in decisions, so that decision making is seen by the public as open and honest. This helps to ensure that public confidence in the integrity of local governance is maintained.

You should note that failure to register or disclose a disclosable pecuniary interest as set out in Table 1, is a criminal offence under the Localism Act 2011.

Appendix B sets out the detailed provisions on registering and disclosing interests. If in doubt, you should always seek advice from your Monitoring Officer.

10. Gifts and hospitality

As a councillor:

10.1 I do not accept gifts or hospitality, irrespective of estimated value, which could give rise to real or substantive personal gain or a reasonable suspicion of influence on my part to show favour from persons seeking to acquire, develop or do business with the local authority or from persons who may apply to the local authority for any permission, licence or other significant advantage.

10.2 I register with the Monitoring Officer any gift or hospitality with an estimated value of at least £25 within 28 days of its receipt.

10.3 I register with the Monitoring Officer any significant gift or hospitality that I have been offered but have refused to accept.

In order to protect your position and the reputation of the **Royal Berkshire Fire Authority**, you should exercise caution in accepting any gifts or hospitality which are (or which you reasonably believe to be) offered to you because you are a councillor. The presumption should always be not to accept significant gifts or hospitality. However, there may be times when such a refusal may be difficult if it is seen as rudeness in which case you could accept it but must ensure it is publicly registered. However, you do not need to register gifts and hospitality which are not related to

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your role as a councillor, such as Christmas gifts from your friends and family. It is also important to note that it is appropriate to accept normal expenses and hospitality associated with your duties as a councillor. If you are unsure, do contact your Monitoring Officer for guidance.

Appendix One – The Seven Principles of Public Life

The principles are:

Selflessness

Holders of public office should act solely in terms of the public interest.

Integrity

Holders of public office must avoid placing themselves under any obligation to people or organisations that might try inappropriately to influence them in their work. They should not act or take decisions in order to gain financial or other material benefits for themselves, their family, or their friends. They must disclose and resolve any interests and relationships.

Objectivity

Holders of public office must act and take decisions impartially, fairly and on merit, using the best evidence and without discrimination or bias.

Accountability

Holders of public office are accountable to the public for their decisions and actions and must submit themselves to the scrutiny necessary to ensure this.

Openness

Holders of public office should act and take decisions in an open and transparent manner. Information should not be withheld from the public unless there are clear and lawful reasons for so doing.

Honesty

Holders of public office should be truthful.

Leadership Holders of public office should exhibit these principles in their own behaviour. They should actively promote and robustly support the principles and be willing to challenge poor behaviour wherever it occurs.

Leadership

Holders of public office should exhibit these principles in their own behaviour. They should actively promote and robustly support the principles and be willing to challenge poor behaviour wherever it occurs.

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Appendix Two - Registering interests

Within 28 days of becoming a member or your re-election or re-appointment to office you must register with the Monitoring Officer the interests which fall within the categories set out in Table 1 (Disclosable Pecuniary Interests) which are as described in "The Relevant Authorities (Disclosable Pecuniary Interests) Regulations 2012". You should also register details of your other personal interests which fall within the categories set out in Table 2 (Other Registerable Interests).

"Disclosable Pecuniary Interest" means an interest of yourself, or of your partner if you are aware of your partner's interest, within the descriptions set out in Table 1 below.

"Partner" means a spouse or civil partner, or a person with whom you are living as husband or wife, or a person with whom you are living as if you are civil partners.

1. You must ensure that your register of interests is kept up-to-date and within 28 days of becoming aware of any new interest, or of any change to a registered interest, notify the Monitoring Officer.
2. A 'sensitive interest' is as an interest which, if disclosed, could lead to the councillor, or a person connected with the councillor, being subject to violence or intimidation.
3. Where you have a 'sensitive interest' you must notify the Monitoring Officer with the reasons why you believe it is a sensitive interest. If the Monitoring Officer agrees they will withhold the interest from the public register.

Non participation in case of disclosable pecuniary interest

4. Where a matter arises at a meeting which directly relates to one of your Disclosable Pecuniary Interests as set out in Table 1, you must disclose the interest, not participate in any discussion or vote on the matter and must not remain in the room unless you have been granted a dispensation. If it is a 'sensitive interest', you do not have to disclose the nature of the interest, just that you have an interest. Dispensation may be granted in limited circumstances, to enable you to participate and vote on a matter in which you have a disclosable pecuniary interest.
5. [Where you have a disclosable pecuniary interest on a matter to be considered or is being considered by you as a Cabinet member in exercise of your executive function, you must notify the Monitoring Officer of the interest and must not take any steps or further steps in the matter apart from arranging for someone else to deal with it]

Disclosure of Other Registerable Interests

6. Where a matter arises at a meeting which directly relates to the financial interest or wellbeing of one of your Other Registerable Interests (as set out in Table 2), you must disclose the interest. You may speak on the matter only if members of the public are also allowed to speak at the meeting but otherwise must not take part in any discussion or vote on the matter and must not remain in the room unless you have been granted a dispensation. If it is a 'sensitive interest', you do not have to disclose the nature of the interest.

Disclosure of Non-Registerable Interests

7. Where a matter arises at a meeting which directly relates to your financial interest or well-being (and is not a Disclosable Pecuniary Interest set out in Table 1) or a financial interest or well-being of a relative or close associate, you must disclose the interest. You may speak on the matter only if members of the public are also allowed to speak at the meeting. Otherwise you must not take part in any discussion or vote on the matter and must not remain in the room unless you have been granted a dispensation. If it is a 'sensitive interest', you do not have to disclose the nature of the interest.
8. Where a matter arises at a meeting which affects –
 - a. your own financial interest or well-being;
 - b. a financial interest or well-being of a relative or close associate; or
 - c. a financial interest or wellbeing of a body included under Other Registrable Interests as set out in Table 2

you must disclose the interest. In order to determine whether you can remain in the meeting after disclosing your interest the following test should be applied

9. Where a matter (referred to in paragraph 8 above) affects the financial interest or well-being:
 - a. to a greater extent than it affects the financial interests of the majority of inhabitants of the ward affected by the decision and;
 - b. a reasonable member of the public knowing all the facts would believe that it would affect your view of the wider public interest

You may speak on the matter only if members of the public are also allowed to speak at the meeting. Otherwise you must not take part in any discussion or vote on the matter and must not remain in the room unless you have been granted a dispensation.

If it is a 'sensitive interest', you do not have to disclose the nature of the interest.

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10. [Where you have an Other Registerable Interest or Non-Registerable Interest on a matter to be considered or is being considered by you as a Cabinet member in exercise of your executive function, you must notify the Monitoring Officer of the interest and must not take any steps or further steps in the matter apart from arranging for someone else to deal with it]

Table 1: Disclosable Pecuniary Interests This table sets out the explanation of Disclosable Pecuniary Interests as set out in the Relevant Authorities (Disclosable Pecuniary Interests) Regulations 2012.

Subject	Description
Employment, office, trade, profession or vocation	Any employment, office, trade, profession or vocation carried on for profit or gain.
Sponsorship	Any payment or provision of any other financial benefit (other than from the council) made to the councillor during the previous 12-month period for expenses incurred by him/her in carrying out his/her duties as a councillor, or towards his/her election expenses. This includes any payment or financial benefit from a trade union within the meaning of the Trade Union and Labour Relations (Consolidation) Act 1992.
Contracts	Any contract made between the councillor or his/her spouse or civil partner or the person with whom the Subject Description Employment, office, trade, profession or vocation Page 13 of 16 Approved 3rd 12.2020 Updated 19 January and 17 May 2021 councillor is living as if they were spouses/civil partners (or a firm in which such person is a partner, or an incorporated body of which such person is a director* or a body that such person has a beneficial interest in the securities of*) and the council — (a) under which goods or services are to be provided or works are to be executed; and (b) which has not been fully discharged.
Land and Property	Any beneficial interest in land which is within the area of the council. 'Land' excludes an easement, servitude,

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	interest or right in or over land which does not give the councillor or his/her spouse or civil partner or the person with whom the councillor is living as if they were spouses/ civil partners (alone or jointly with another) a right to occupy or to receive income.
Licenses	Any licence (alone or jointly with others) to occupy land in the area of the council for a month or longer.
Corporate tenancies	Any tenancy where (to the councillor's knowledge)— (a) the landlord is the council; and (b) the tenant is a body that the councillor, or his/her spouse or civil partner or the person with whom the councillor is living as if they were spouses/ civil partners is a partner of or a director* of or has a beneficial interest in the securities* of.
Securities	Any beneficial interest in securities* of a body where— (a) that body (to the councillor's knowledge) has a place of business or land in the area of the council; and (b) either— (i)) the total nominal value of the securities* exceeds £25,000 or one hundredth of the total issued share capital of that body; or (ii) if the share capital of that body is of more than one class, the total nominal value of the shares of any one class in which the councillor, or his/ her spouse or civil partner or the person with whom the councillor is living as if they were spouses/civil partners have a beneficial interest exceeds one hundredth of the total issues share capital of that class.

* 'director' includes a member of the committee of management of an industrial and provident society.

* 'securities' means shares, debentures, debenture stock, loan stock, bonds, units of a collective investment scheme within the meaning of the Financial Services and Markets Act 2000 and other securities of any description, other than money deposited with a building society.

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Table 2: Other Registrable Interests

You must register as an Other Registerable Interest:

- a) any unpaid directorships
- b) any body of which you are a member or are in a position of general control or management and to which you are nominated or appointed by your authority
- c) any body
 - (i) exercising functions of a public nature (ii) directed to charitable purposes or (iii) one of whose principal purposes includes the influence of public opinion or policy (including any political party or trade union) of which you are a member or in a position of general control or management

Appendix Three - Core Code of Ethics Principles are:

Putting our communities first

We put the interests of the public, the community, and service users first.

Integrity

We act with integrity including being open, honest, and consistent in everything that we do.

Dignity and respect

We treat people with dignity and respect, making decisions objectively based on evidence, without discrimination or bias.

Leadership

We are all positive role models, always demonstrating flexible and resilient leadership.

We are all accountable for everything we do and challenge all behaviour that falls short of the highest standards.

Equality, diversity and inclusion (EDI)

We continually recognise and promote the value of EDI, within RBFA, Royal Berkshire Fire and Rescue Service and the wider communities in which we serve.

We stand against all forms of discrimination, create equal opportunities, promote equality, foster good relations, and celebrate difference.

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Appendix Four – the Committee on Standards in Public Life

The LGA has undertaken this review whilst the Government continues to consider the recommendations made by the Committee on Standards in Public Life in their report on Local Government Ethical Standards. If the Government chooses to implement any of the recommendations, this could require a change to this Code.

The recommendations cover:

- Recommendations for changes to the Localism Act 2011 to clarify in law when the Code of Conduct applies
- The introduction of sanctions
- An appeals process through the Local Government Ombudsman
- Changes to the Relevant Authorities (Disclosable Pecuniary Interests) Regulations 2012
- Updates to the Local Government Transparency Code
- Changes to the role and responsibilities of the Independent Person
- That the criminal offences in the Localism Act 2011 relating to Disclosable Pecuniary Interests should be abolished

The Local Government Ethical Standards report also includes Best Practice recommendations. These are:

Best practice 1: Local authorities should include prohibitions on bullying and harassment in codes of conduct. These should include a definition of bullying and harassment, supplemented with a list of examples of the sort of behaviour covered by such a definition.

Best practice 2: Councils should include provisions in their code of conduct requiring councillors to comply with any formal standards investigation and prohibiting trivial or malicious allegations by councillors.

Best practice 3: Principal authorities should review their code of conduct each year and regularly seek, where possible, the views of the public, community organisations and neighbouring authorities.

Best practice 4: An authority's code should be readily accessible to both councillors and the public, in a prominent position on a council's website and available in council premises.

Best practice 5: Local authorities should update their gifts and hospitality register at least once per quarter, and publish it in an accessible format, such as CSV.

Best practice 6: Councils should publish a clear and straightforward public interest test against which allegations are filtered.

Best practice 7: Local authorities should have access to at least two Independent Persons.

Best practice 8: An Independent Person should be consulted as to whether to undertake a formal investigation on an allegation, and should be given the option to review and comment on allegations which the responsible officer is minded to dismiss as being without merit, vexatious, or trivial.

Best practice 9: Where a local authority makes a decision on an allegation of misconduct following a formal investigation, a decision notice should be published as soon as possible on its website, including a brief statement of facts, the provisions of the code engaged by the allegations, the view of the Independent Person, the reasoning of the decision-maker, and any sanction applied.

Best practice 10: A local authority should have straightforward and accessible guidance on its website on how to make a complaint under the code of conduct, the process for handling complaints, and estimated timescales for investigations and outcomes.

Best practice 11: Formal standards complaints about the conduct of a parish councillor towards a clerk should be made by the chair or by the parish council, rather than the clerk in all but exceptional circumstances.

Best practice 12: Monitoring Officers' roles should include providing advice, support and management of investigations and adjudications on alleged breaches to parish councils within the remit of the principal authority. They should be provided with adequate training, corporate support and resources to undertake this work.

Best practice 13: A local authority should have procedures in place to address any conflicts of interest when undertaking a standards investigation. Possible steps should include asking the Monitoring Officer from a different authority to undertake the investigation.

Best practice 14: Councils should report on separate bodies they have set up or which they own as part of their annual governance statement and give a full picture of their relationship with those bodies. Separate bodies created by local authorities should abide by the Nolan principle of openness and publish their board agendas and minutes and annual reports in an accessible place.

Best practice 15: Senior officers should meet regularly with political group leaders or group whips to discuss standards issues.

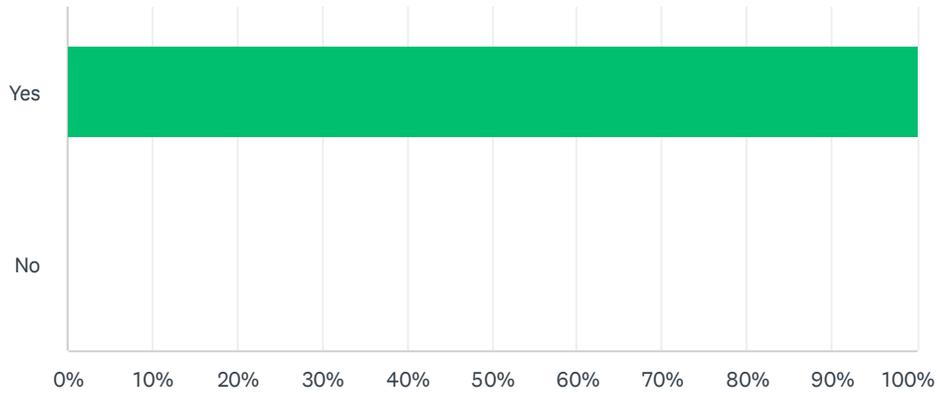
The LGA has committed to reviewing the Code on an annual basis to ensure it is still fit for purpose.

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Appendix A

Q1 In order to continue, you must confirm that you agree with the conditions above.

Answered: 44 Skipped: 0

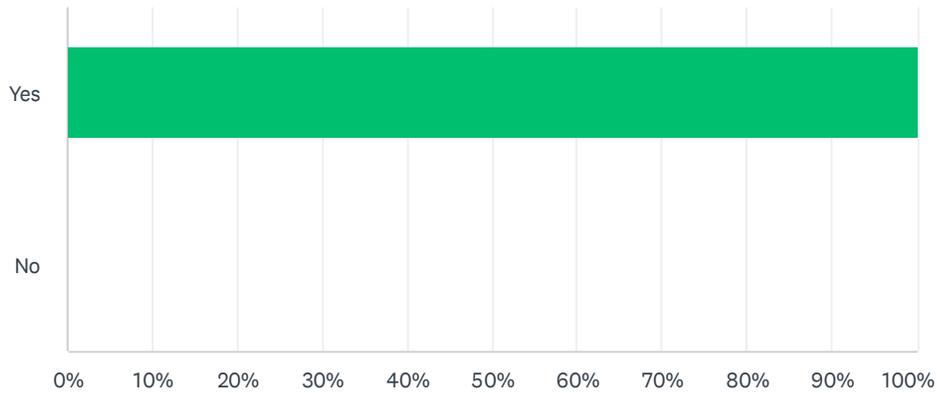


ANSWER CHOICES	RESPONSES	
Yes	100.00%	44
No	0.00%	0
TOTAL		44

Appendix B

Q2 Do you support the behaviours required of councillors, as set out in the Draft RBFA Code of Conduct when they are publicly representing Royal Berkshire Fire Authority on official business and when using social media?

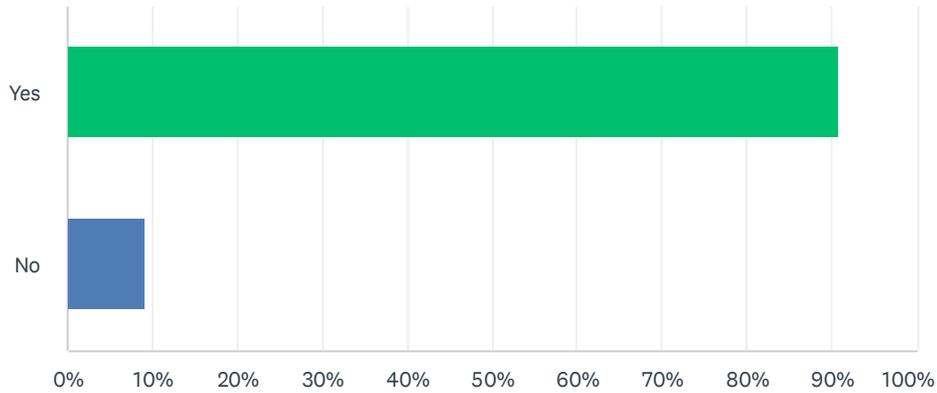
Answered: 24 Skipped: 20



ANSWER CHOICES	RESPONSES	
Yes	100.00%	24
No	0.00%	0
TOTAL		24

Q3 Do you think the expected standards of councillor conduct and the actions that could be taken should an allegation be made, are clear?

Answered: 22 Skipped: 22

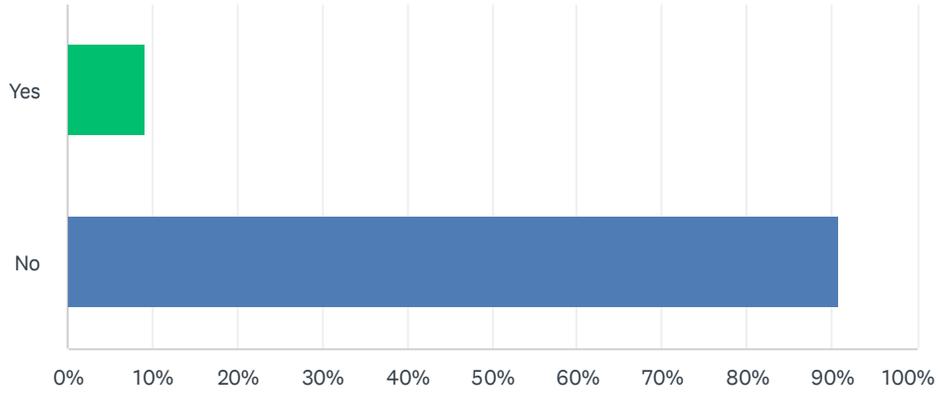


ANSWER CHOICES	RESPONSES	
Yes	90.91%	20
No	9.09%	2
TOTAL		22

Appendix B

Q4 Have you got any other comments you would like to make on the Draft RBFA Model Code of Conduct.

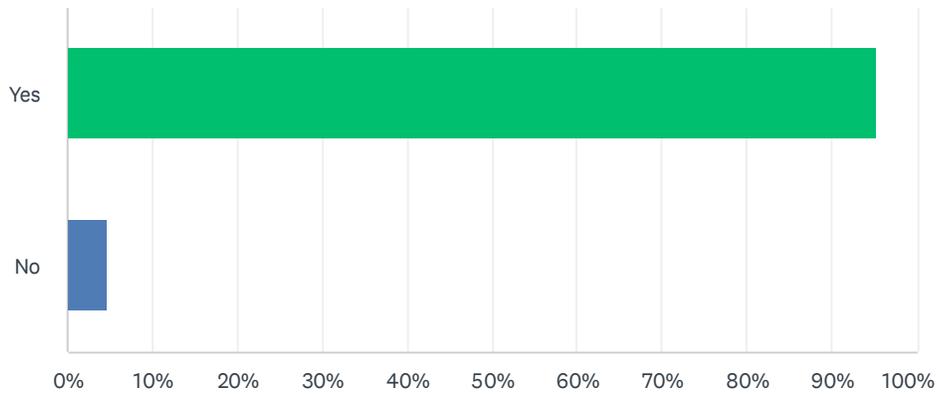
Answered: 22 Skipped: 22



ANSWER CHOICES	RESPONSES	
Yes	9.09%	2
No	90.91%	20
TOTAL		22

Q5 Would you be happy to complete these questions?

Answered: 21 Skipped: 23

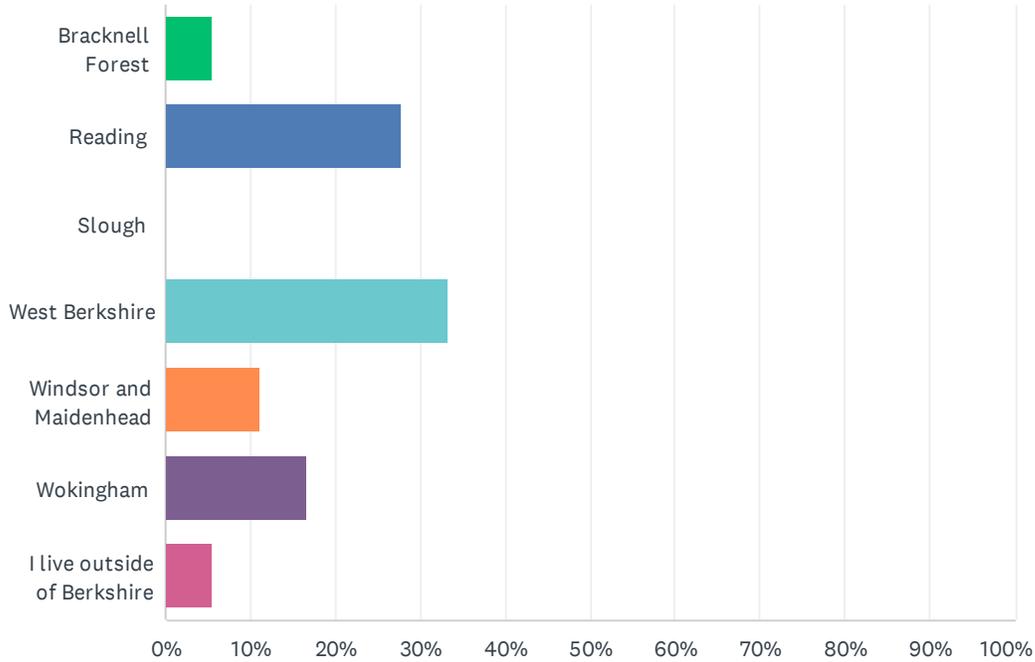


ANSWER CHOICES	RESPONSES	
Yes	95.24%	20
No	4.76%	1
TOTAL		21

Appendix B

Q6 If you are a resident of Berkshire, please select which Unitary Authority you live in

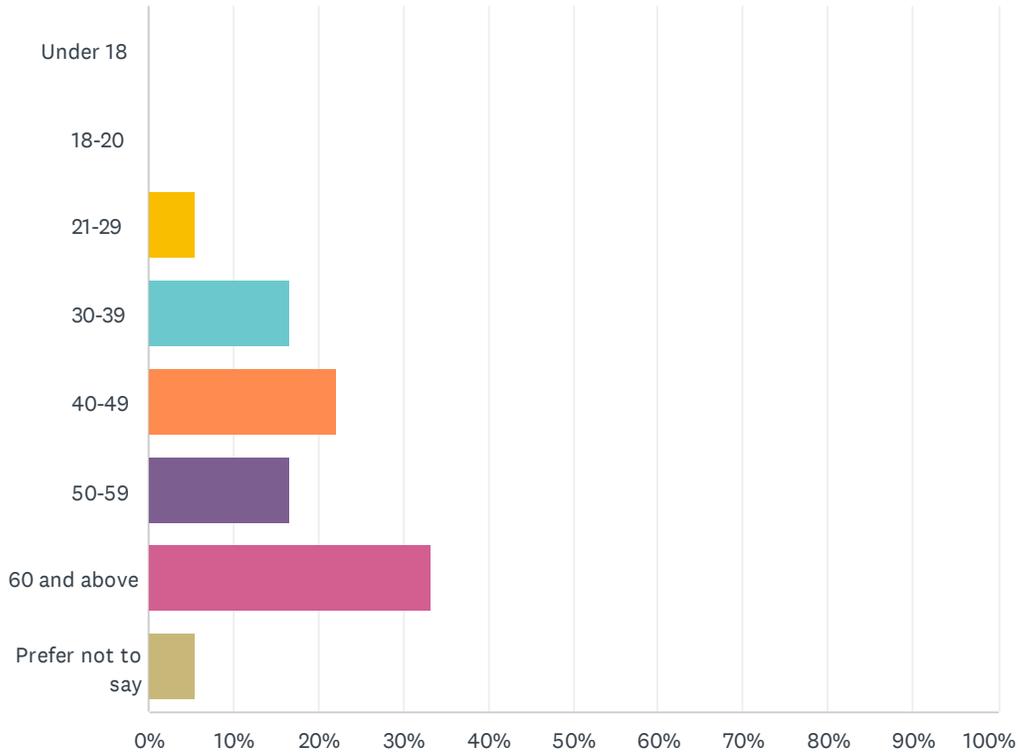
Answered: 18 Skipped: 26



ANSWER CHOICES	RESPONSES
Bracknell Forest	5.56% 1
Reading	27.78% 5
Slough	0.00% 0
West Berkshire	33.33% 6
Windsor and Maidenhead	11.11% 2
Wokingham	16.67% 3
I live outside of Berkshire	5.56% 1
TOTAL	18

Q7 What is your age?

Answered: 18 Skipped: 26

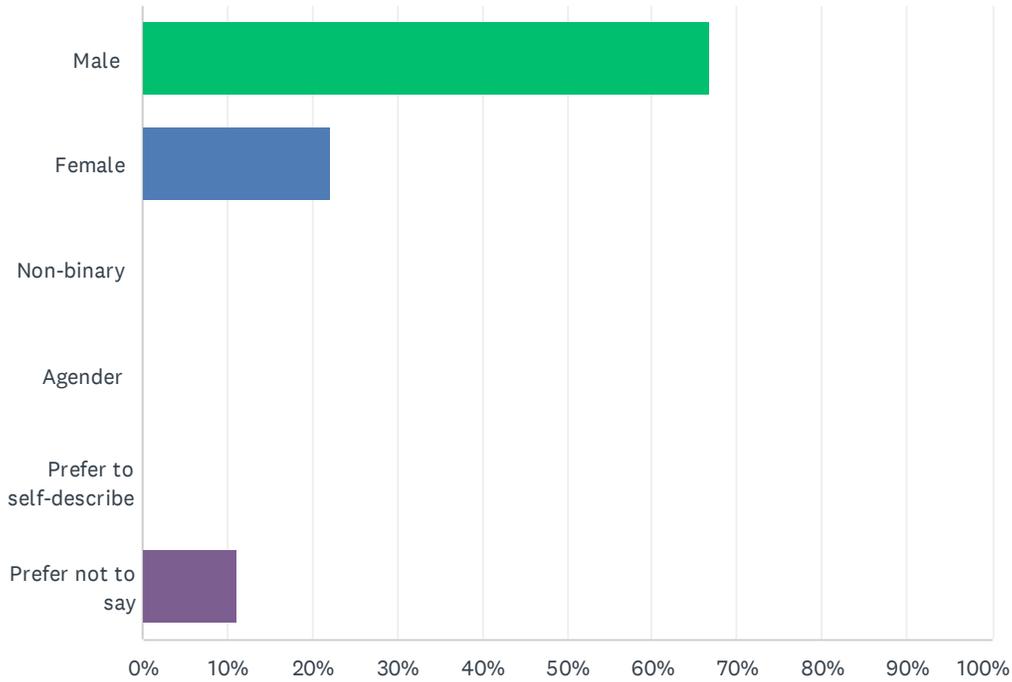


ANSWER CHOICES	RESPONSES
Under 18	0.00% 0
18-20	0.00% 0
21-29	5.56% 1
30-39	16.67% 3
40-49	22.22% 4
50-59	16.67% 3
60 and above	33.33% 6
Prefer not to say	5.56% 1
TOTAL	18

Appendix B

Q8 Which of the following best describes your gender identity?

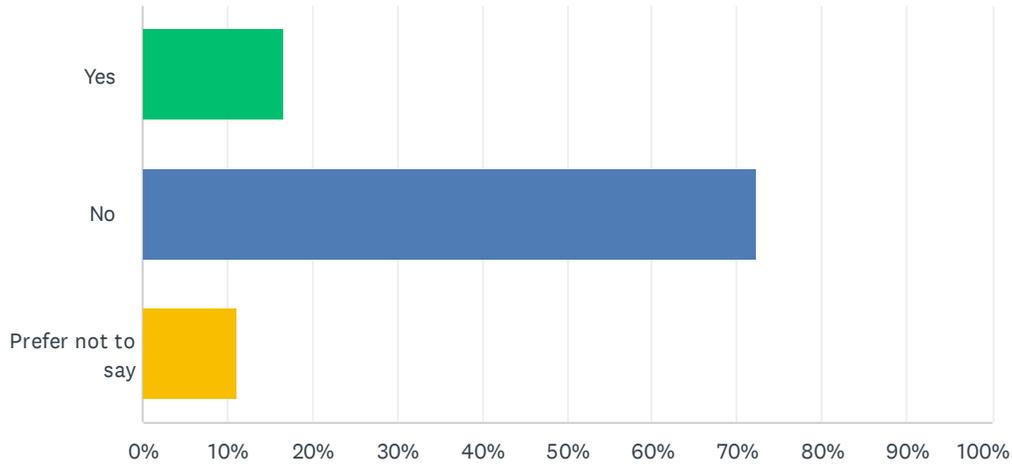
Answered: 18 Skipped: 26



ANSWER CHOICES	RESPONSES	
Male	66.67%	12
Female	22.22%	4
Non-binary	0.00%	0
Agender	0.00%	0
Prefer to self-describe	0.00%	0
Prefer not to say	11.11%	2
TOTAL		18

Q9 Do you consider yourself to have a disability?

Answered: 18 Skipped: 26

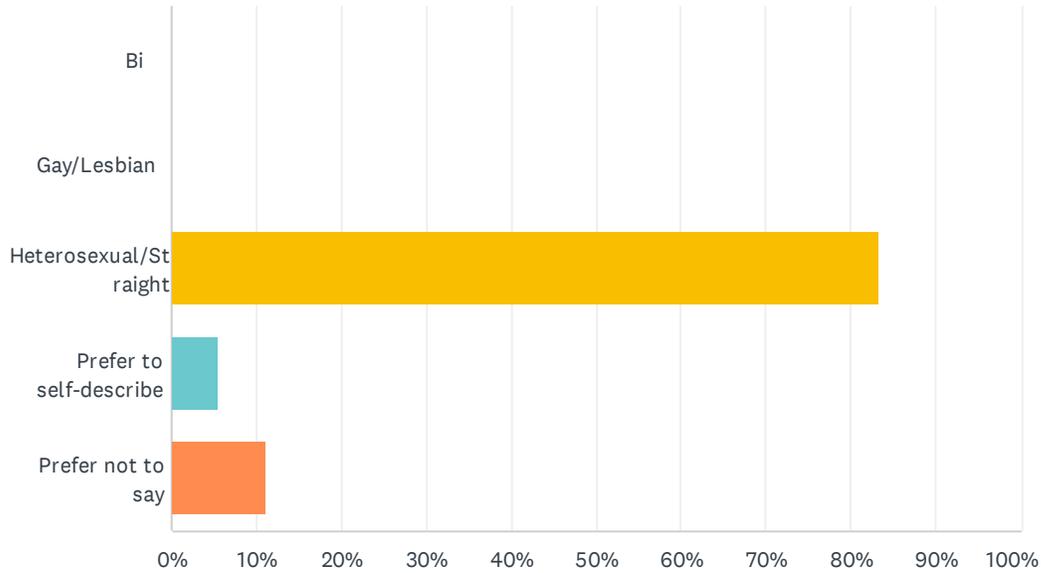


ANSWER CHOICES	RESPONSES	
Yes	16.67%	3
No	72.22%	13
Prefer not to say	11.11%	2
TOTAL		18

Appendix B

Q10 Which of the following best describes your Sexual Orientation?

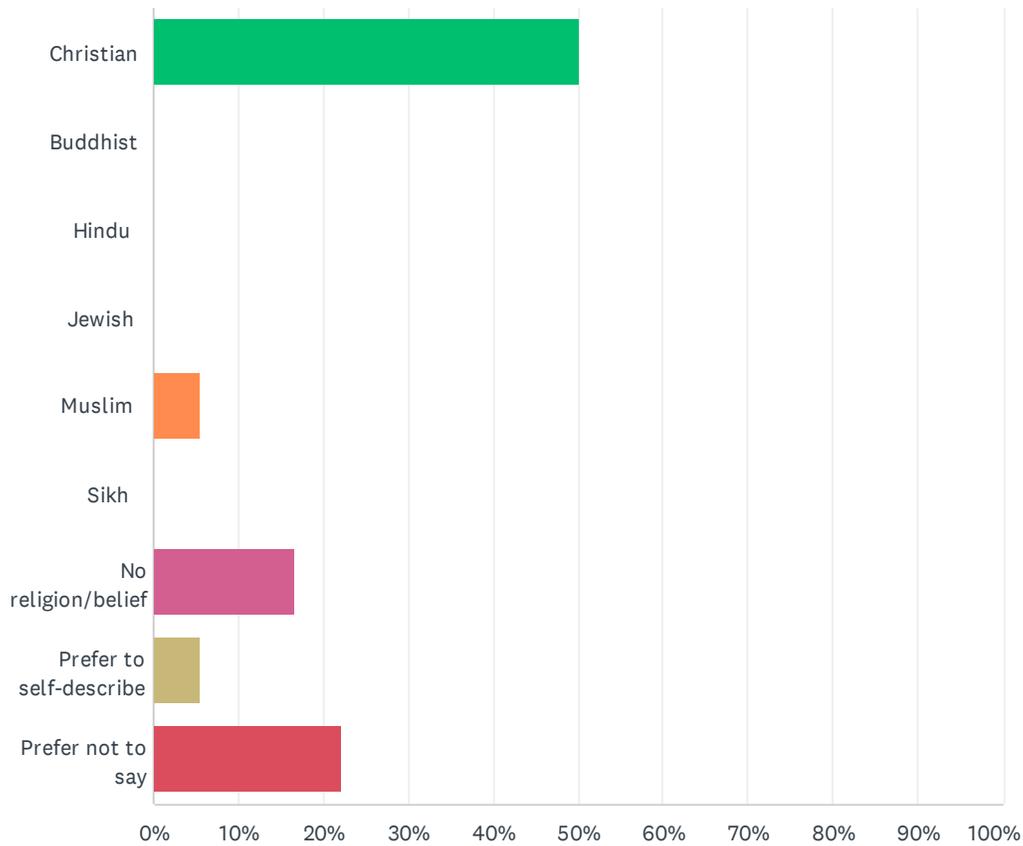
Answered: 18 Skipped: 26



ANSWER CHOICES	RESPONSES	
Bi	0.00%	0
Gay/Lesbian	0.00%	0
Heterosexual/Straight	83.33%	15
Prefer to self-describe	5.56%	1
Prefer not to say	11.11%	2
TOTAL		18

Q11 Which of the following best describes your Religion?

Answered: 18 Skipped: 26

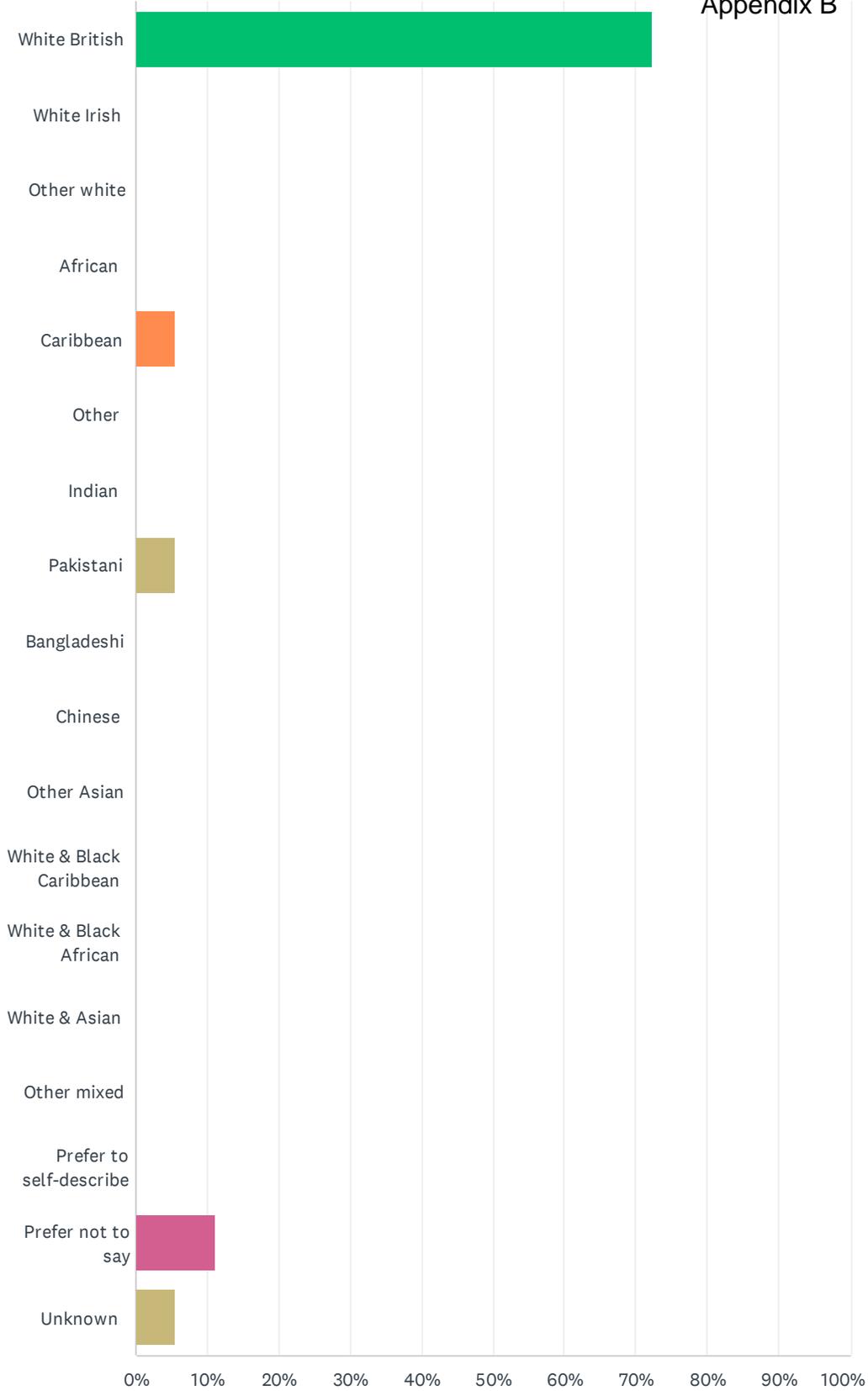


ANSWER CHOICES	RESPONSES	
Christian	50.00%	9
Buddhist	0.00%	0
Hindu	0.00%	0
Jewish	0.00%	0
Muslim	5.56%	1
Sikh	0.00%	0
No religion/belief	16.67%	3
Prefer to self-describe	5.56%	1
Prefer not to say	22.22%	4
TOTAL		18

Appendix B

Q12 Which of the following best describes your Ethnic Group?

Answered: 18 Skipped: 26

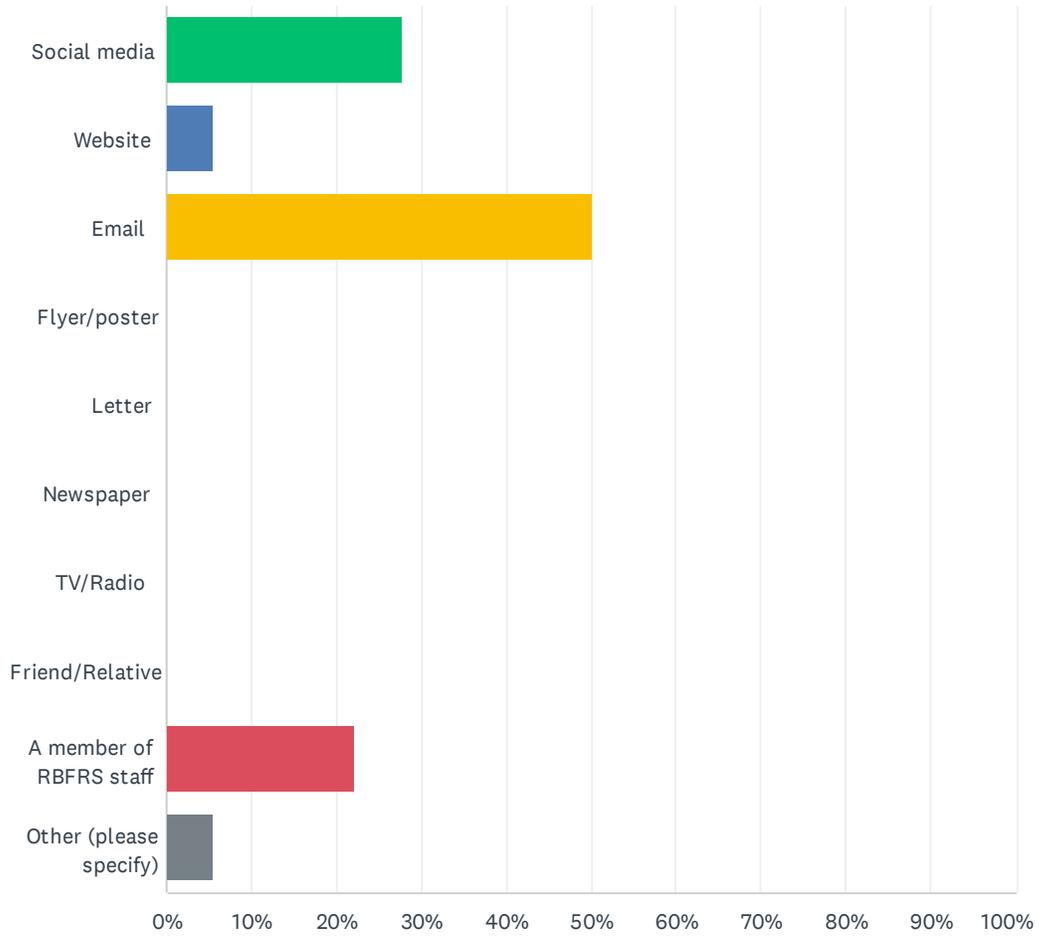


Royal Berkshire Fire Authority Members' Code of Conduct
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ANSWER CHOICES	Appendix B	RESPONSES
White British		72.22% 13
White Irish		0.00% 0
Other white		0.00% 0
African		0.00% 0
Caribbean		5.56% 1
Other		0.00% 0
Indian		0.00% 0
Pakistani		5.56% 1
Bangladeshi		0.00% 0
Chinese		0.00% 0
Other Asian		0.00% 0
White & Black Caribbean		0.00% 0
White & Black African		0.00% 0
White & Asian		0.00% 0
Other mixed		0.00% 0
Prefer to self-describe		0.00% 0
Prefer not to say		11.11% 2
Unknown		5.56% 1
TOTAL		18

Q13 How did you hear about this consultation?

Answered: 18 Skipped: 26



Royal Berkshire Fire Authority Members' Code of Conduct
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ANSWER CHOICES	Appendix B	RESPONSES	
Social media		27.78%	5
Website		5.56%	1
Email		50.00%	9
Flyer/poster		0.00%	0
Letter		0.00%	0
Newspaper		0.00%	0
TV/Radio		0.00%	0
Friend/Relative		0.00%	0
A member of RBFRS staff		22.22%	4
Other (please specify)		5.56%	1
Total Respondents: 18			

ROYAL BERKSHIRE FIRE AUTHORITY REPORT



COMMITTEE	AUDIT AND GOVERNANCE COMMITTEE
DATE OF MEETING	23 MARCH 2022
SUBJECT	PROTOCOL ON MEMBER AND OFFICER RELATIONS
LEAD OFFICER	GRAHAM BRITTEN, MONITORING OFFICER
LEAD MEMBER	COUNCILLOR TINA MCKENZIE-BOYLE
EXEMPT INFORMATION	NONE
ACTION	FOR DECISION

1. EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

- 1.1 To the review the Protocol on Member and Officer Relations, and approve amendments in line with CO39 of the Audit and Governance Committee Terms of Reference.

2. RECOMMENDATION

That Audit and Governance Committee:

- 2.1 **AGREE** the amendments to the Protocol on Member and Officer Relations (Appendix A) and that it be published on Royal Berkshire Fire and Rescue Service website.

3. REPORT

- 3.1 The Protocol on Member and Officer Relations was adopted by the Fire Authority on 10 October 2017, and introduced guidance on the effective working relationship between Members and Officers. The Protocol is required to be reviewed every four years, or sooner, at the request of the Committee. All proposed amendments have been highlighted yellow.
- 3.2 The recommendation that local authorities have in place a Member/Officer Protocol is derived from the Third Report of the Committee on Standards of Conduct in Public Life: "Standards of Conduct in Local Government in

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England, Scotland and Wales” 1997, and widely acknowledged as best practice.

- 3.3 Royal Berkshire Fire Authority is committed to ensuring there is a strong, constructive and trusting relationship between Members and officers. When adopted in 2017, the Protocol sought to underpin the existing positive working relationships and support continued good practice.
- 3.4 The Protocol provides guidance on the behaviour, roles and responsibilities of both Members and officers, and puts in place a mechanism should any issues arise surrounding this subject.
- 3.5 In reviewing the Protocol, Thames Valley Fire and Rescue Service partners protocols on Member and Officer relations were also reviewed to identify further good practice and identify areas in which Royal Berkshire Fire Authority’s Protocol could be expanded.
- 3.6 Appendix A highlighted in yellow are the proposed additions to the Protocol on Member and Officer Relations. The key amendments are as follows:
 - The protocol has been amended to include hyperlinks to the Members’ Code of Conduct and Employees’ Code of Conduct in paragraph 2.1 of Appendix A and has been made gender neutral throughout the document.
 - The Fire Authority recently updated Audit and Governance Committee Terms of Reference on 16 November 2020, minute reference 34. Paragraph 3.3 is referring to CO39 of the Term of Reference, which outline that Audit and Governance Committee are responsible for approving the adoption or revision of any policies, codes or guidance.
 - Paragraphs 6.1.14 and 6.2.1 include references to the Core Code of Ethics which has been embedded into Employees Code of Conduct and is proposed to be embedded into Royal Berkshire Fire Authority Members Code of Conduct, following the consultation results due to be presented to this Committee.
 - Paragraph 7.1.5 includes a section on personal familiarity, and the possible unintended consequences on working relationships between Members and Officers.
 - It was identified that the existing Protocol did not outline the officer posts that are politically restricted, listed in paragraph 9 and Annex A. Annex B outline the Core Code of Ethics.
 - Finally, paragraph 11 (Breaches of the Protocol) has included where the employee concerned is a Director of Service, the matter should be raised with the Chief Fire Officer/Chief Executive.

- 3.7 This report is requesting Members agree the amendments to the Protocol and that it be published on Royal Berkshire Fire and Rescue Service website.

4. CONTRIBUTION TO STRATEGIC COMMITMENTS

- 4.1 The Member/Officer Protocol supports the Authority's commitment to upholding standards of conduct in public life.

5. FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

- 5.1 There are no direct financial implications relevant to the report.

6. LEGAL IMPLICATIONS

- 6.1 Common law has established that if the actions of an individual Member adversely affects the ability of an officer to execute his or her contract of employment it can undermine the implied contractual obligation of trust and confidence for which the Authority may be vicariously liable (for which compensation might be payable). The promulgation of a Member/Officer Protocol is a practice measure to mitigate the Authority of vicarious liability.

7. EQUALITY AND DIVERSITY IMPLICATIONS

- 7.1 There are no negative equality and diversity implications from the recommendations.

8. RISK IMPLICATIONS

- 8.1 Failure to have an established protocol that clarified Member and officer roles could place Members and officers at risk of compromising their respective positions.

9. CONSISTENCY WITH DUTY TO COLLABORATE

- 9.1 None for the purpose of this report.

10. PRINCIPAL CONSULTATION

- 10.1 Chief Fire Officer was consulted during the preparation of this report.
- 10.2 The Head of Finance and Procurement was consulted during the preparation of this report.
- 10.3 Monitoring Officer report author.

11. BACKGROUND PAPERS

Agenda Item 9

- 11.1 Protocol on Member and Officer Relations Part 9 Constitution Oxfordshire County Council.
- 11.2 Protocol on Member Officer Relations Buckinghamshire and Milton Keynes Fire Authority.

12. APPENDICES

- 12.1 Appendix A – Member / Officer Protocol

13. CONTACT DETAILS

- 13.1 Fayth Rowe, Democratic Support Lead 0118 938 4611

PROTOCOL ON MEMBER AND OFFICER RELATIONS

March 2022





Protocol on Member and Officer Relations

Royal Berkshire Fire Authority is committed to ensuring there is a strong, constructive and trusting relationship between Members and officers. This policy aims to provide a formal protocol for the working relationship between Members and officers to ensure that current good practice continues.

The Protocol provides guidance on the behaviour, roles and responsibilities of both Members and officers, and puts in place a mechanism should any issues arise surrounding this subject.

The aims of this Protocol are to:

- Provide a formal protocol which covers the relationship between elected Members and officers;
- Provide a mechanism to deal with any issues that may arise which affect the relationship between elected Members and officers; and
- Support the Authority's commitment to upholding standards of conduct in public life.



“Every Local Authority should have its own written statement or protocol governing relations between Members and Officers.”

(Third Report of the Committee on Standards in Public Life, the Nolan Committee).

1. Introduction

- 1.1. The relationship between elected Members of Royal Berkshire Fire Authority and officers has always been and continues to be one of the main organisational strengths. However, the Authority accepts it is required to have a formal protocol which covers the relationship between elected Members and officers. This Protocol is prepared to meet those requirements but against a background of a good working partnership which is well-established, widely accepted and benefits everyone who serves or is employed in the Authority.
- 1.2. The Authority recognises that a strong, constructive, appropriate and trusting relationship between Members and officers is essential to the effective and efficient working of the organisation.
- 1.3. This Protocol takes into account the respective and different roles of Members and officers and does not seek to change or influence these roles. It is accepted that from time to time issues may arise which need to be addressed. This Protocol provides a mechanism by which to address any such matters.
- 1.4. It is recognised that the Authority is a corporate entity but that in terms of its political structure there is an Administration and Opposition and this dimension involves both Members and officers operating in a political sensitive climate. Officers have an overriding obligation to serve the Authority as a corporate body but must be aware of the political dimension.
- 1.5. This Protocol forms a key part of the Authority’s approach to corporate governance and its commitment to uphold standards of conduct in public life. The Authority supports the wider aims of protecting and enhancing the integrity and reputation of public services and high standards of personal conduct.



2. Operation of this protocol

- 2.1 This Protocol will be applied having regard to the requirements of the **Members' Code of Conduct** and **Employees' Code of Conduct** and relevant policies, procedures and processes. Members and officers must at all times observe this Protocol; where there is a conflict or discrepancy between this Protocol and those Codes and policies referred to above, then those Codes and policies shall have precedence.
- 2.2 This Protocol does not affect or interfere with any rights of or protection which a person may have in law.

3. Responsibility for the protocol

- 3.1 The Chief Fire Officer/Chief Executive is responsible for the operation of this Protocol and will ensure that it is reviewed on a four yearly cycle. However, the Audit and Governance Committee may request a review at any time.
- 3.2 They will rule on the interpretation and/or the application of the Protocol in matters of dispute and such rulings will be final. Where such a matter is relevant to or involves the Chief Fire Officer/Chief Executive then the Monitoring Officer shall be the appropriate officer under this paragraph.
- 3.3 **The Audit and Governance Committee** is responsible for approving any amendments or additions to the Protocol following consultation with Member and officer representatives where appropriate, **in line with CO39 of the Audit and Governance Committee Terms of Reference.**

4. Members' access to information

- 4.1 Members have a statutory right under the Local Government Act 1972, to inspect any document which contains material relating to any business which is to be transacted at an Authority meeting. This extends to background papers. If there are any concerns about the rights of Members to inspect documents, those involved should consult with the Monitoring Officer.
- 4.2 Members are free to approach the Service to provide them with such information, explanation and advice as they may reasonably need to assist them in discharging their role as Members of the Authority. Such approaches should normally be directed to the appropriate senior officer or, in cases of doubt, to the Chief Fire Officer/Chief Executive. Members should not put undue pressure on officers to release information and documents to which they are not entitled to have access.
- 4.3 An exception to the above will be information or reports that contain confidential personal information about employees or other persons (an



example would be a report containing personal medical information or annual appraisal details of an individual). If the Chief Fire Officer/Chief Executive wishes to withhold a confidential report then they will consult with the Chairman and the Monitoring Officer and, where a report is to be withheld, reasons will be given to the member concerned.

5. Member and Officer Roles

- 5.1 This Protocol recognises that Members are elected and officers are appointed to serve the people of Berkshire and that their roles are distinct.
- 5.2 The Members are accountable to the electorate who determine the people they wish to represent them on the local authorities. The local authorities of Berkshire then nominate elected Members to sit on Royal Berkshire Fire Authority.
- 5.3 Officers are accountable to the people of Berkshire through this Authority.
- 5.4 Members are primarily responsible for:
 - 5.4.1 Setting the strategic direction and political leadership of the Authority as set out in the Constitution.
 - 5.4.2 Performing the Authority's regulatory functions.
 - 5.4.3 Monitoring and reviewing, primarily through the Management Committee and the Audit and Governance Committee functions, the Authority's performance in implementing its plans and strategies and in delivering its services.
 - 5.4.4 Participation in partnership working.
 - 5.4.5 Representing the Authority on national, regional and local bodies and organisations.
- 5.5 Under the Authority's Constitution some Members have additional responsibility at Member level, for example being Chairman of a committee or task group or as Lead Member or Member Champion for a specific area of the Service. To ensure effective Member/officer engagement, Members should ensure that they act within the parameters of the Scheme of Delegation and terms of reference for these posts.
- 5.6 It is important that Members of the Authority:
 - 5.6.1 Do not involve themselves in the day to day management of the



Authority's services as the responsibility rests with the Chief Fire Officer/Chief Executive and senior managers and there are clearly defined lines of accountability to Members.

- 5.6.2 Respect the impartiality of officers and not undermine their role in carrying out their duties.
- 5.6.3 Do not ask officers to undertake work or to act in a way which seeks to support or benefit a particular political party or gives rise to the officer being criticised for operating in a party political manner.
- 5.6.4 Do not ask officers to exceed their authority where that authority is given to them in law, by the Authority or by their managers.
- 5.6.5 Do not impinge, interfere or obstruct an officers ability to discharge their responsibility as set out in the Scheme of Delegation.
- 5.7 This Protocol recognises the role of opposition groups in the Authority, acting individually or jointly, and that relationships will be different and complex. Members in opposition have the same rights and obligations in their relationships with officers and should be treated equally. Where opposition groups, individually or collectively, appoint their Members to perform shadow or spokesperson roles, then the requirement of 5.6 above will apply.
- 5.8 It is, however, envisaged that all Members will work co-operatively to ensure that the Authority meets its statutory obligations and provides an effective and efficient fire and rescue service to the people of Berkshire.
- 5.9 The primary role of officers is to advise, inform and support all Members and to implement the lawfully agreed policies of the Fire Authority.
- 5.10 In performing this role, officers will act professionally, impartially and with political neutrality. Whilst officers will report a Member's view on an issue, the officer should not be influenced or pressured to make comments or recommendations which are contrary to his or her professional judgement or views.
- 5.11 The Chief Fire Officer/Chief Executive, the Monitoring Officer and the Chief Finance Officer have specific responsibilities placed on them by law. These responsibilities go beyond their obligations as employees of the Authority. Where an officer is discharging his or her responsibilities under any statutory office, a Member or Members shall not:-
 - 5.11.1 Interfere with or obstruct the officer in exercising those responsibilities.



5.11.2 Victimise any officer who is discharging or has discharged his or her responsibilities of the statutory office.

5.11.3 Both Members and officers will, regardless of their role always act in accordance with the core values of the Authority.

6. Member/officer obligations and expectations

6.1 Members will require and expect officers:-

6.1.1 To be committed to the Authority as a whole and not to any political group or individual.

6.1.2 To work in partnership with Members in an impartial and professional manner.

6.1.3 To understand and support the roles of Members and the associated workloads and pressures.

6.1.4 To implement decisions of the Authority and its subordinate committees which:

- are lawful;
- have been properly approved in accordance with the law and the Authority's constitution; and
- formally recorded.

6.1.5 To respond to enquiries and complaints in accordance with the Authority's standards.

6.1.6 To provide professional advice, which is not influenced by political views or preferences, and which does not compromise the political neutrality of officers.

6.1.7 To provide information to Members on matters that can reasonably be considered appropriate and relevant taking into account the Members' individual responsibilities and position and the Members' rights to access documents and information, subject to specific exclusions, e.g. personal interests and confidentiality.

6.1.8 To be aware of, and sensitive to, the internal and external political environment.

6.1.9 To act with honesty, respect, dignity and courtesy at all times.

6.1.10 To provide support and learning and development opportunities for Members to help them in performing their various roles in respect of their Authority membership.

6.1.11 To act with integrity and appropriate confidentiality.



- 6.1.12 Not to raise issues of a personal nature outside agreed procedures.
- 6.1.13 Not to use their relationship with Members to advance their personal interests or to influence decisions improperly.
- 6.1.14 To comply at all times with the Employee Code of Conduct and **Core Code of Ethics Principles**.
- 6.1.15 Not to support Members in any role other than that of an Authority Member and not to undertake any actions which are not compatible with this protocol.
- 6.2 Officers can expect Members:-
 - 6.2.1 To comply at all times with the Members' Code of Conduct, **Core Code of Ethics Principles**, the law, the Constitution and such other protocols and conventions agreed by the Authority.
 - 6.2.2 To work constructively with officers, acknowledging their separate and distinct roles and responsibilities.
 - 6.2.3 To understand and support the respective roles and responsibilities of officers and their associated workloads, pressures and reporting lines.
 - 6.2.4 To give political leadership and direction and to seek to further their agreed strategy with the understanding that Members have the right to take the final decision and issues based on advice and within the competence of the Authority.
 - 6.2.5 To treat them fairly and with respect, dignity and courtesy.
 - 6.2.6 To act with integrity, to give support and to recognise appropriate confidentiality.
 - 6.2.7 To recognise that officers work to the instructions of their senior officers and not to individual Members.
 - 6.2.8 Not to subject them to intimidation, harassment or put them under pressure. Members will have regard to the seniority of officers in determining what reasonable requests are, having regard to the relationship between Members and officers and the potential vulnerability of officers, particularly at junior levels.
 - 6.2.9 Not to request them to exercise discretion which involves acting outside the Service's competence, policies and procedures.
 - 6.2.10 Not to authorise, initiate or certify any financial transactions or enter into any contract, agreement or undertaking on behalf of the Authority, or in their role



as Member of the Authority without proper and lawful authority.

- 6.2.11 Not to use their position or relationship with officers to advance their personal interest or those of others, or to influence decisions improperly.

7. Behaviour limitations

7.1 The different roles of Members and officers require particular limitations upon behaviour. Both Members and officers need to ensure that their working relationship is appropriate to their respective role and that they do not act in any way which would lead to their behaviour being questioned. It is not possible to provide a list of circumstances where behavioural issues might be of concern. The main examples below help to illustrate the point.

- 7.1.1 A close personal relationship between a Member and an officer which confuses their separate roles and influences the proper discharge of the Authority's functions, not least in creating a perception that a Member or officer may be securing advantageous treatment.
- 7.1.2 A close personal relationship between a Member and an officer which could impinge on the ability of other officers to undertake their respective duties and discharge responsibilities under the Scheme of Delegation.
- 7.1.3 The need to maintain the separation of roles means that there are limits to those matters on which a Member may seek the advice of an officer, both in relation to personal matters and party political issues.
- 7.1.4 Relationships with a particular individual or party group should not be such as to create public suspicion that an employee favours one Member or group above the others.

7.1.5 Without detriment to the need for effective working relationships, between Members and Officers, close personal familiarity between individual members and officers can damage the principle of mutual respect. It could also, intentionally or accidentally, lead to the passing of confidential information, or information which should not properly be passed between them e.g. personal details. Such familiarity could also cause embarrassment to other Members and/or other employees and even give rise to suspicions of favouritism. For instance, it is not generally appropriate for members and officers to request or accept each other as 'Friends' on social media such as Facebook or Instagram.



8. Political groups

- 8.1 It is in the interests of the Authority to support, to some degree, the effective operation of all its political groups and not one particular group. The operation of political groups may, however, pose particular issues for officers in terms of their impartiality.
- 8.2 A political group may request the Chief Fire Officer/Chief Executive or member of the Senior Leadership Team to prepare a written report on a matter or matters relating to the Authority for consideration by the group.
- 8.3 An officer report to a political group will be restricted to a statement of material facts and identification of options and the merits or otherwise of such options for the Authority. Such reports will not cover any political implications on the matter or any option. Such reports will not include any recommendations.
- 8.4 The release of such reports to other political groups shall be dealt with in accordance with any conventions in existence at the time.
- 8.5 A political group may request the Chief Fire Officer/Chief Executive or a member of the Senior Leadership Team to attend a meeting of the group to advise on particular matter relating to the Authority. The Chief Fire Officer/Chief Executive or member of the Senior Leadership Team may arrange for the attendance of a representative on his or her behalf, or may decline to attend or send a representative where he or she is of the opinion that the particular issue is of such a political nature that it would be inappropriate to attend.
- 8.6 Officer advice at a meeting of a political group will be restricted to a statement of material facts and identification of options and the merits or otherwise of such options for the Authority. The advice will not cover any political implications of any matter or any option.
- 8.7 All officers will respect the confidentiality of any matter which they hear in the course of attending any political group meeting or in respect of any requests for advice and the giving of that advice.

9. Political Activity

- 9.1 There are officer posts, within Royal Berkshire Fire and Rescue Service that are politically restricted. They cannot stand for local authority elections or as a Member of Parliament, nor can they "speak or publish written work for the public at large or to a section of the public with the apparent intention of



affecting public support for a political party”. The list of politically restricted posts is outlined in Annex A.

10. Attendance of officers at Management Committee and Audit and Governance Committee

10.1 It is accepted that in carrying out its role, the Management Committee and Audit and Governance Committee may require an officer to attend to answer questions or to discuss issues. In requiring an officer to attend, a Committee will consider the seniority of the officer it would be appropriate to invite. There is a presumption against inviting officers outside the senior officers’ range to attend in this capacity. Requests for officer attendance shall also have regard to workloads of officers.

10.2 Where an officer attends such a meeting their contributions should be confined to matters of fact and explanation. However, an officer may be asked to explain and justify advice which they had given prior to a decision having been made, including decisions taken by them under delegated powers.

10.3 Officers should not be drawn into discussions of a political nature which would be inconsistent with the political neutrality requirement, nor should any questioning of an officer be reasonably interpreted as constituting harassment.

10.4 In committee proceedings the capability or competence of officers must not be questioned. The distinction needs to be drawn between reviewing the policies, performance and decisions of the Authority and its services and the appraisal of staffs’ individual performance. The latter is not a function of the Management Committee or Audit and Governance Committee.

10.5 The approach here is consistent with the committee terms of reference as set out in the Authority’s standing orders.

10.6 In applying this part of the Protocol, account will be taken of any guidance agreed by Management Committee and/or the Audit and Governance Committee provided that guidance is consistent with the principles of this Protocol.

11. Breaches of the Protocol

11.1 Where a Member is dissatisfied with the conduct, behaviour or performance of an officer, the matter should, in the first instance, be raised with the officer’s line manager. Where any matter remains unresolved or is of



significant concern it should be raised with the appropriate senior manager. Where the officer concerned is a senior manager, the matter should be made with the Chief Fire Officer/Chief Executive or a Director of the Service. **Where the employee concerned is a Director of Service, the matter should be raised with the Chief Fire Officer/ Chief Executive.** Where the employee concerned is the Chief Fire Officer/Chief Executive, the matter should be raised with the Monitoring Officer.

- 11.2 The management of staffing matters is the responsibility of officers with the exception of the duties of Members specifically outlined in the Constitution.
- 11.3 Where the relationship between Members and officers or other Members breaks down or becomes strained, every effort will be made to resolve matters informally. This can be achieved through conciliation by an appropriate senior manager, group leader and if necessary the Chairman. Officers will also have recourse to the Grievance Procedure or to the Authority's Monitoring Officer as appropriate.
- 11.4 Any complaints received will be managed in accordance with the relevant policies and procedures.
- 11.5 Breaches of protocol by a Member may result in a complaint to the Audit and Governance Committee and, in the case of officers, may lead to disciplinary action in line with regulations/policies.
- 11.6 Any issues arising from or in relation to this protocol will be reported to the next appropriate Audit and Governance Committee meeting.



Signatures

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to be 'Colin Dudley'.

Councillor Colin Dudley

**Chairman – Royal Berkshire Fire
Authority**

A handwritten signature in purple ink, appearing to be 'P.E. Helliar-Symons'.

Councillor Pauline Helliar- Symons

**Vice-Chairman – Royal Berkshire Fire
Authority**

Wayne Bowcock

**Chief Fire Officer – Royal Berkshire Fire and
Rescue Service**



Annex A

Politically restricted posts

Chief Fire Officer / Chief Executive
Deputy Chief Executive / Director of Support Services
Deputy Chief Fire Officer
Assistant Chief Fire Officer
Head of Business and Information Systems
Head of Corporate Services
Head of Finance and Procurement
Head of Human Resources and Learning and Development
Head of Property, Capital Projects and Estates
Head of Facilities, Fleet and Equipment
Area Managers
Deputy Head of Finance
Group Managers
ICT Service Delivery Manager
Democratic Support Lead/Assistant
Communications and Engagement Lead / Officer
Health and Safety Manager
Facilities Manager



Annex B

Core Code of Ethics Principles are:

Putting our communities first

We put the interests of the public, the community, and service users first.

Integrity

We act with integrity including being open, honest, and consistent in everything that we do.

Dignity and respect

We treat people with dignity and respect, making decisions objectively based on evidence, without discrimination or bias.

Leadership

We are all positive role models, always demonstrating flexible and resilient leadership.

We are all accountable for everything we do and challenge all behaviour that falls short of the highest standards.

Equality, diversity and inclusion (EDI)

We continually recognise and promote the value of EDI, within RBFA, Royal Berkshire Fire and Rescue Service and the wider communities in which we serve.

We stand against all forms of discrimination, create equal opportunities, promote equality, foster good relations, and celebrate difference.

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Appendix A

ROYAL BERKSHIRE FIRE AUTHORITY



COMMITTEE	AUDIT AND GOVERNANCE COMMITTEE
DATE OF MEETING	23 MARCH 2022
SUBJECT	COMPLAINTS, COMMENTS AND COMPLIMENTS POLICY REVIEW
LEAD OFFICER	KATIE MILLS, HEAD OF CORPORATE SERVICES
LEAD MEMBER	N/A
EXEMPT INFORMATION	NONE
ACTION	TO AGREE

1. EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

- 1.1 To seek agreement from the Audit & Governance Committee regarding the proposed changes to the Complaints, Comments and Compliments Policy.

2. RECOMMENDATION

- 2.1 **AGREE** the proposed changes to the Complaints, Comments and Compliments Policy; and
- 2.2 **NOTE** that staff and representative bodies will be consulted on the proposed changes, and if further amendments are proposed will be presented to the next Audit and Governance Committee. If no further changes are required following publication, the Policy will be published.

3. REPORT

- 3.1 In line with organisational drive to simplify and streamline policies, the Complaints, Comments and Compliments Policy has been reviewed and updated to improve a variety of areas.
- 3.2 During the review, it was noted that the current policy required further guidance on dealing with unreasonable complainant behaviour or unreasonably persistent behaviour. These complaints are resource intensive and can hinder services to the residents of Berkshire.

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- 3.3 An unreasonable complaint behaviour policy has been written, which sets out clear examples of what constitutes as unreasonable complainant behaviour or unreasonably persistent behaviour.
- 3.4 The policy outlines steps that the Service can take to manage any unreasonable behaviour. This includes an initial request to the complainant asking them to change their behaviour and a warning that the Service may restrict access to contacting the service if said behaviour continues.
- 3.5 The decision to restrict access can only be made by the Chief Fire Officer (CFO) or an appropriate deputy in their absence and deciding whether a complainant is unreasonable, requires each case to be independently reviewed with the complainant's behaviour and circumstances taken into account.
- 3.6 The appeals process has now been streamlined, with the complainant entitled to one appeal, to the Chief Fire Officer (CFO) and the appeal to the Fire Authority has been removed. A secondary appeal while appearing at first to offer a greater provision for complainants, actually results in an unnecessary hindrance in their complaint being processed and acts merely as a delay in the next step of the process in referral to the Local Government and Social Care Ombudsman. The appeal duplication also creates extra burden on the Service and this change would bring us into alignment with other fire and rescue services.
- 3.7 Following feedback from the HMICFRS Inspection regarding a need for greater monitoring of complaints, a new monthly report has been created which is circulated to the Senior Leadership Team to help identify and track any potential trends. Reference to this report has been included in the updated policy.
- 3.8 Previously, the policy set out that a full response to any complaint would be given in 7 working days. This has been updated to 10 days, to reflect the differing organisational work patterns of investigating officers and remove inconsistency around what constitutes a working day.
- 3.9 Duty officers will still continue to appoint an investigating officer out of usual working hours (Monday – Friday 09.00 – 17.00) if required. However, this provision will be managed on a case by case basis dependent on the details of the complaint. The automatic appointment is being removed as the policy already states that any individual taking a complaint should look to resolve it immediately and in the case that this is not urgent, appointing an investigating officer out of hours, provides no benefit to the complainant or a swifter response time. By ensuring that all complaints are channelled through Heads

of Service, there is a greater oversight in service areas and a consistent flow of information through a single channel. Anyone receiving a complaint that is related to an urgent safety or wellbeing matter are bound by RBFRS' policies and procedures and a removal of an out of hours investigating officer would not change this.

- 3.10 Accessibility guidance has been added to the policy, with complainants able to appoint an advocate to act on their behalf, once the Service has received written consent.

4. CONTRIBUTION TO STRATEGIC COMMITMENTS

- 4.1 Commitment 1 – We will provide education and advice on how to prevent fire and other emergencies.
- 4.2 Commitment 2 – We will ensure a swift and effective response when called to emergencies
- 4.3 Commitment 3 - We will provide advice, consultation and enforcement in relation to fire safety standards in buildings.
- 4.4 Commitment 4 – We will seek opportunities to contribute to a broader safety, health and wellbeing agenda, whilst delivering our core functions.
- 4.5 Commitment 5 – We will ensure that Royal Berkshire Fire and Rescue Service provides good value for money.
- 4.6 Commitment 6 – We will work with Central Government and key stakeholders in the interests of the people of Royal Berkshire.

5. FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

- 5.1 This report provides RBFA financial information under the corporate health quadrant.

6. LEGAL IMPLICATIONS

- 6.1 The Local Government and Social Care Ombudsman (LG&SCO) is the independent body responsible for investigating complaints made against public bodies where it is alleged that there has been maladministration causing injustice; a failure to provide a service that it was the public body's function to provide; or there was a total failure to provide such a service.
- 6.2 Fire and rescue authorities are specifically included in the list of public bodies within the scope of the LG&SCO by section 25 of the Local Government Act 1974.
- 6.3 However, subject to limited exceptions, complaints will not be investigated by the LG&SCO until a complainant has exhausted a local authority's internal complaints procedure.

7. EQUALITY AND DIVERSITY IMPLICATIONS

- 7.1 This report provides RBFRS equality and diversity information under the corporate health quadrant.
- 7.2 The complaints form has been redesigned to improve ease of use for all users including those with disabilities such as sight loss.
- 7.3 The policy has been updated to include the option of individuals appointing an advocate or responsible person to act on their behalf. This also improves ease of access for our communities.
- 7.4 An equality impact assessment has been created (Appendix B) to ensure that we are fulfilling our responsibility to consider the ramifications of all our decisions and activities, particularly regarding the groups protected by the Equality Act (2010).

8. RISK IMPLICATIONS

- 8.1 This report provides RBFRS corporate risk information under the risk quadrant.

9. CONSISTENCY WITH DUTY TO COLLABORATE

- 9.1 This report provides information on RBFRS performance measures and targets, as such there is are no identified areas for collaboration.

10. PRINCIPAL CONSULTATION

- 10.1 Staff and representative bodies will be consulted on the proposed changes if policy is agreed and if further amendments are proposed will be presented to the next Audit and Governance Committee. If no further changes are required following publication, the Policy will be published.

11. BACKGROUND PAPERS

- 11.1 Local Government & Social Care Ombudsman unreasonable complainant behaviour guidance.

12. APPENDICES

- 12.1 Appendix A – Complaints, Comments & Compliments Policy and Procedure
- 12.2 Appendix B – Complaints Form
- 12.2 Appendix C - Equality Impact Assessment

13. CONTACT DETAILS

13.1 James Pinchin
Business Support Lead
0118 938 4610

13.2 Katie Mills
Head of Corporate Services
0118 938 4605

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RBFRS Policy Document

Policy Information	Details
Policy Name	Complaints, Comments & Compliments Policy and Procedure
Author	Business Support Lead
Owner	Head of Corporate Services
Protective Marking	Official
Version	5
Status	Significant changes to policy, subject to consultation following A&G
Issue Date	To be issued following agreement by A&G and consultation
Review Date	2 Years from issue date

Policy Statement	Royal Berkshire Fire and Rescue Service (RBFRS) welcomes and values any feedback whether it is a compliment, comment or complaint. We are committed to resolving complaints in a positive, thorough and fair manner, to ensure we provide the best service to the people of Royal Berkshire.
Purpose	The purpose of this policy is to ensure that complaints, comments and compliments are logged and investigated with due care and that complaints and their outcomes are logged for monitoring purposes.
Scope	This policy applies to all complaints, comments and compliments received from members of the public or organisations. Separate procedures are in place for internal complaints or a complaint against a specific employee.
Supporting Information	Complaints form

Revision History			
Revision	Description	Author	Date
4	Complaint policy updated to reflect minor changes in process for handling complaints, a complaint definition and inclusion of process for Comments and Compliments. Policy template updated.	Business Support Lead	01/2022
5	Policy updated to include process for dealing with unreasonable behaviour. Appeals process has been streamlined. Guidance on accessibility has been included along with a new monitoring mechanism to help identify trends. Response time has changed to remove lack of clarity over definition of working day. Policy template updated. Flowchart added as appendix A.	Business Support Lead	03/2022
Authorisation			
Audit and Governance Committee	Report submitted for Committee on 23 March 2022		

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Complaints and Comments Policy and Procedure

Complaints and Comments Introduction

Royal Berkshire Fire and Rescue Service (RBFRS), is committed to delivering excellent customer service and recognises the importance of customer feedback. Such feedback is invaluable in helping us evaluate and improve the services that we provide.

The purpose of this policy is to ensure that complaints, comments and compliments are recorded and investigated thoroughly, professionally and in a timely manner with their outcomes logged for learning and monitoring purposes.

Complaints and Comments Definition

Definition of a Complaint

RBFRS defines a complaint as 'Any communication from outside the organisation expressing dissatisfaction with the service provided or actions taken by RBFRS staff members.'

Where comments are received through social media, we will direct individuals to the formal complaints process. We will not discuss personal information via any social media channel.

Anonymous complaints will be reviewed but depending on the information provided, these can be difficult to investigate or resolve effectively, and therefore may not be recorded as a complaint.

Complaints and Comments Policy

An online enquiry form is available on RBFRS's website through our contact us page where individuals can directly share their complaint with the Service. We will acknowledge complaints sent via this method within 1 working day of receipt (based on office hours 09.00 – 17.00, Monday – Friday). Alternatively, all members of the Service have access to the complaints procedure and will be ready to act positively towards anyone seeking to complain. To assist this, every complaint will be readily accepted and the information diligently gathered using the [complaints form](#) as a record of the event. Details of the complaints procedure can be provided to anyone seeking them. If the person receiving the complaint cannot resolve the complaint immediately, they should advise the Complainant that their complaint will be investigated and that they will be contacted within 10 days with a full response. If a full response is not possible within 10 days, they will be advised when a response is likely to be given.

During Office Hours (Monday – Friday 09.00 – 17.00) every complaints must be sent to the Business Support Team (complimentsandcomplaints@rbfrs.co.uk) as soon as possible, attaching the [complaints form](#) with appropriate sections completed. Where the complaint has not been resolved by the person receiving the complaint, the Business Support Team will forward the relevant details to the appropriate Head of Service or Senior Manager and Accountable Director. The Head of Service or Senior Manager will be responsible for allocating an appropriate Investigating Officer to investigate the complaint.

Out of hours, the Duty Officer must be notified as soon as possible. If the person receiving the complaint has been unable to resolve the complaint satisfactorily, the Duty Officer will be responsible for deciding whether an urgent investigation is required and if so, will appoint an

investigating officer. The Business Support Team, appropriate Head of Service and DCFO must still be informed via complaints form, for monitoring and recording purposes.

The Investigating Officer will be responsible for dealing with the investigation, recording all details and liaising directly with the complainant. The Investigating Officer is also responsible for informing the Business Support Team, Head of Service and accountable Director of the outcome of the investigation via email and an updated [complaints form](#).

If the complaint is regarding a specific individual, then HR advice must be sought by the investigating Officer.

If the complainant is not satisfied with the outcome, they have the right to appeal to the Chief Fire Officer / Chief Executive. The complainant should provide full details in writing of which parts of the complaint remain unresolved as well as their desired outcome. The appeal should be emailed to complimentsandcomplaints@rbfrs.co.uk or sent in writing to the Complaints Team, Royal Berkshire Fire and Rescue Service, Newsham Court, Pincents Kiln, Reading, RG31 7SD.

Appeals should be made within 28 days of our response to the complaint. However, we may consider any exceptional reasons that complainant might have in not meeting this time limit.

Once an appeal has been received, we will acknowledge this within three working days, fully investigate and respond to the appeal within 28 days. If a full response is not possible within 28 days, the complainant will be advised when a response is likely to be given.

In the event they are not satisfied with the Chief Fire Officer's / Chief Executive's decision, as a final resort, they can refer the complaint to the Ombudsman. The details are available from the [Local Government & Social Care Ombudsman website](#).

Complaints and Comments Procedure

At all times personnel should be polite to people making complaints regardless of the attitude of the complainant or the nature of the complaint.

COMPLAINTS DO NOT HAVE TO BE MADE IN WRITING

Where possible, endeavour to resolve the complaint immediately.

When receiving any complaint, the following action should be taken:

1. The person receiving the complaint must always give their name and designation.
2. All complaints must be recorded on the [complaints form](#) ensuring that all sections are fully completed. If the complaint is in writing, the complaints form must be attached to it.
3. The Business Support Team must be notified via email (complimentsandcomplaints@rbfrs.co.uk), with a copy of the complaints form.
4. During working hours, the Business Support Team will assign a unique complaint number and forward the relevant details to the appropriate Head of Service or Senior Manager and Accountable Director. The Head of Service or Senior Manager will be responsible for allocating an appropriate Investigating Officer to investigate the complaint.
- 4b. If the complaint is outside of office hours (Monday to Friday 09.00 – 17.00) the Duty Officer must also be informed and they will decide whether an urgent investigation is required. If this is the case, they will be responsible for appointing an investigating officer.

Agenda Item 10

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Appendix A

5. When the complaint has been investigated, the Investigating Officer must record:
- Details of the investigation (including correspondence, witness statements and notes of telephone conversations).
 - The action taken.
 - The date of the response to Complainant.
 - Whether the Complainant is satisfied or not.

All correspondence, witness statements and telephone notes etc. to be emailed, along with the complaint form, to the Business Support Team and copied to the Head of Service and accountable Director. If the information relates to a staff member, then this will be stored by HR rather than Business Support. All correspondence (electronic and paper/hard copy) must be kept securely during the course of the investigation and deleted/destroyed at close of the investigation.

Details of the complaint will still be recorded in the event of the complainant no longer wishing to proceed with their complaint. The details will be recorded as a comment using the same procedure as for complaints.

The Business Support Team or HR will retain comments and complaint files for 2 years after close. Records may be retained for a further period if they have on-going business value or if there is specific legislation which requires the information to be held for a further period. Retention periods of complaints which relate to employees may be determined by employment policies and associated retention periods.

Accessibility

In the event you wish to make a complaint it is useful to put the details of your complaint in writing.

If this is something you do not feel comfortable doing or have difficulty in doing you can:

- appoint an advocate to act on your behalf
- ask a friend, carer or family member to help you
- ask an organisation like Citizens Advice Bureau to help you.

We will require written consent from any 3rd party to act on behalf of an individual.

Unreasonable Complainant Behaviour Policy & Procedure

Unreasonable Complainant Behaviour Introduction

RBFRS is committed to ensuring that all complaints are dealt with in an open, fair and timely manner. We aim to respond to all complaints positively and ensure that complainants are satisfied with the way their complaint has been handled.

In a minority of cases, people pursue their complaints in a way that is unreasonable. Complainants may behave unacceptably, or be unreasonably persistent in their contact with the Service. This is resource intensive and hinders our services to other residents of Berkshire. We will not tolerate abusive, offensive, threatening or other forms of unacceptable or unreasonable behaviour.

Unreasonable Complainant Behaviour Policy & Procedure

The Unreasonable Complainants policy is designed to deal with complainants where the Complaints Procedure has been correctly implemented as far as possible and nothing further can reasonably be done to rectify a real or perceived problem.

Examples of unreasonable actions and behaviours include:

- Consistently refuses to co-operate with the complaints process
- Repeatedly refuses to accept that issues are not within the power of the Service to investigate, change or influence
- Makes repetitive, persistent and unreasonable demands that are not achievable or realistic
- Verbally abusive or intimidating towards our staff
- Adopting a 'scatter gun' approach, pursuing parallel complaints on the same issue with a variety of organisations
- Makes the same complaint repeatedly after the complaints process has concluded and refusing to refer to the Ombudsman for an independent view
- Repeatedly refuses to accept documented evidence as factual
- Persistently complains about or challenges an issue based on an historic and irreversible decision or incident.
- Places excessive demands on the time and resource of our employees whilst an enquiry or complaint is still being considered
- Makes malicious or unfounded allegations about our employees
- Submitting repeat complaints with minor additions/variations that the complainant insists make these new complaints

When we consider someone's behaviour unreasonable, we will explain why and ask them to change it. We will also warn them that, if the behaviour continues, we will take action to restrict their contact with the Service.

Examples of the restrictions the Service could include:

- Implementing a temporary access restriction whereby the individual may only contact the Service via one designated route such as a generic email address or telephone number
- Provide the individual with a temporary single point of contact within the Service
- Limit the number and duration of an individual's contact by stipulating set times per week / month they may contact the Service
- Advise the individual in writing that the matter has become exhausted and all further correspondence will be read but in the absence of any new or additional information this will be logged only
- Terminate conversations where an individual is aggressive, abusive or offensive; a warning will be given before terminating

Where the behaviour is so extreme that it threatens the immediate safety and welfare of our staff, we may report the matter to the police or consider taking legal action. In such cases, we may not give the customer prior warning.

Appendix A

The Chief Fire Officer/Chief Executive or appropriate deputy in their absence will decide whether the circumstances justify any restriction of access. Deciding whether a complainant is unreasonable requires each case to be independently reviewed, with the complainant's behaviour and circumstances taken into account.

In the event of access being restricted, the complainant will be informed in writing about the decisions taken and we will state how long any restriction will apply for before it is reconsidered and say how the decision can be challenged.

If, as a last resort, the Service decides to end all communication with the Complainant due to unreasonable behaviour, the complainant will be referred to the [Local Government & Social Care Ombudsman website](#).

The Business Support Team will keep record of reasons why a complainant has been deemed unreasonable and the actions taken.

Compliments Policy and Procedure

Compliments Introduction

RBFRS welcomes and values any form of feedback. Where a compliment has been received about the service provided by a member of RBFRS we will, where possible, pass the feedback onto the individual(s) concerned and Head of Service/Director. We will also, where appropriate, respond to the sender of the compliment.

Compliment Definition

Our People Strategy sets out our commitment to ensuring that everyone's contribution is valued and positive behaviours are recognised. Our staff are an integral part of the organisation and we share positive feedback to celebrate their achievements. We encourage the recognition of excellent service, for example through our internal publications and nominations for our annual award ceremony.

Compliments Responsibilities

The person receiving the compliment should forward to Business Support for recording.

Business Support will record the compliment, inform the relevant Head of Service/Director and individual concerned (if not already completed), and assess on a case-by-case basis if a response is to be sent to the sender.

Compliments Procedure

1. Compliment is received into the Business Support Team. Compliments do not have to be made in writing, however if received verbally, as much information as possible should be captured and sent to the Business Support Team by email.
2. The compliment will be recorded by a member of the Business Support Team.
3. A response may be sent to the compliment received, which will be assessed on a case by case basis.
4. The compliment will be sent to the individual/team concerned, copying their line manager.

The Business Support Team will retain compliment files for 2 years. Records may be retained for a further period if they have on-going business value or if there is specific legislation which requires the information to be held for a further period.

Complaints, Comments & Compliments Performance Monitoring

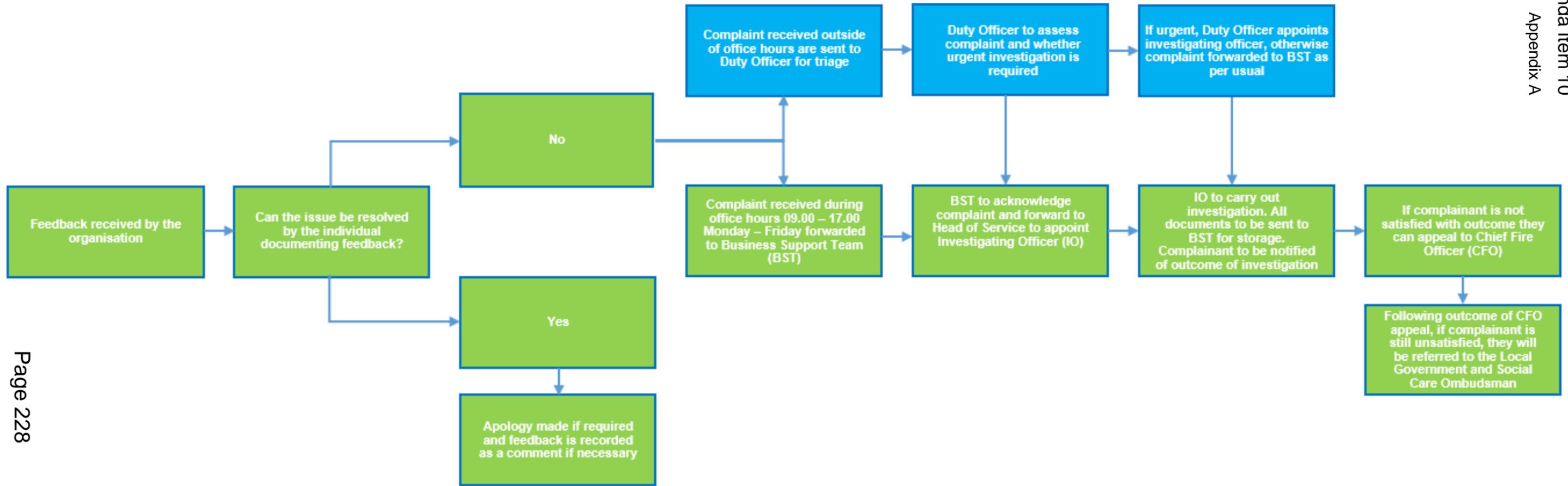
Corporate Services will produce a monthly highlights report to assist the Senior Leadership Team to identify and monitor any trends where appropriate.

Corporate Services will also produce a more detailed analysis of complaints, comments and compliments, and this will be reported quarterly to the Strategic Performance Board and then onto the Audit and Governance Committee.

Anonymised information will be reported in all of the complaints reports. Policy and Procedure Review

This policy will be reviewed within 2 years of its publication date or when required by a change in circumstances.

Appendix A – Complaint Process Flowchart





Complaints Form

Complaint Number:

(allocated by Business Support Team)

Person Recording Compliant

Name:		Date:		Time:	
Role:		Location:			

During office hours (Monday to Friday 09:00-17:00), notify the Business Support Team of this complaint via email (BusinessSupportTeam@rbfrs.co.uk) (attaching a copy of this form).

For out of hours complaints, notify the Duty Officer as soon as possible and forward them a copy of this form. If you have been unable to resolve the complaint satisfactorily, the Duty Officer will be responsible for allocating an officer to investigate the complaint.

Complainant's Details

Complainant's Name:			
Complainant's Address:			
Tel:		Email:	

How was the complaint made:

- In person Telephone Writing Email
 Other *Specify:*

Nature of the complaint and preferred method of contact:

What does the Complainant want (e.g. an apology, an explanation, reassurance or action)?

Complaints Form	Issue Date
Owner: Business Support Team	23 March 2021 (v08)

Head of Service or Duty Officer (out of hours)

Name:		Date informed:	
Role:			
Action taken:			

Notify the Business Support Team of this complaint via email (BusinessSupportTeam@rbfrs.co.uk), attaching a copy of this form.

Investigating Officer

Name:		Date informed:	
Role:			
Date of initial contact with Complainant:			
Action taken:			
Outcome:			
Date Complainant responded to/Closed:			

Was Complainant satisfied with the outcome?

Yes No *(detail further action required, if applicable)*

Further action required / any other comments:

--

Complaints Form	Issue Date
Owner: Business Support Team	23 March 2021 (v08)

APPEALS**Chief Fire Officer (CFO)**

Date of Appeal to CFO:	
Action taken by CFO:	
Date of response:	

Was the Complainant satisfied with the outcome of the appeal to CFO?

Yes No *(detail further action required, if applicable)*

Further action required:	
---------------------------------	--

Clerk and Monitoring Officer (CMO)

Date of Appeal to CMO:	
Action taken by CMO:	
Date of response:	

Was the Complainant satisfied with the outcome of the appeal to CMO?

Yes No *(detail further action required, if applicable)*

Further action required:	
---------------------------------	--

Local Government Ombudsman

Date referred to Ombudsman:	
Name of contact:	
Result of Ombudsman's decision:	

Complaints Form	Issue Date
Owner: Business Support Team	23 March 2021 (v08)

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EQUALITY IMPACT ASSESSMENT (EIA)

EIA Register Reference Number:	2022-2025
Name of activity: (i.e. change, policy, procedure, project)	Compliments and Complaints Policy
Directorate/department:	Corporate Services/HR
Name of department head/policy owner/project lead:	Katie Mills
Name(s) of person(s) completing this assessment:	James Pinchin
Date of commencement of assessment:	01/04/2022
Dates of Review: (please complete the review log at time of each review)	01/06/2022

1. What is/are the aims/purpose and intended outcomes of the activity you are assessing?

The purpose of the policy is to ensure that complaints, comments and compliments are logged and investigated with due care and that complaints and their outcomes are logged for monitoring purposes. The policy applies to all complaints, comments and compliments received from members of the public or organisations. Separate procedures are in place for internal complaints or a complaint against a specific employee.

2. Who is/may be affected by the activity, and how? Consider applicants, service users, members of the public, RBFRS employees, partner organisations etc.

Please refer to the completion guidance.

Has any consultation taken place with those who may be affected in order to inform this assessment?

The policy affects the public and has implications to staff of RBFRS who will be responsible for adhering to the policy.

Form 280

Equality Impact Assessment (EIA)	Issue Date
Owner: Human Resources	06 October 2021 (v06)

Staff and representative bodies will be consulted on the proposed changes if policy is agreed and if further amendments are proposed will be presented to the next Audit and Governance Committee. If no further changes are required following publication, the Policy will be published.

Information

3. What information is already available that tells you what impact the activity has/will have on people? Consider quantitative and qualitative data, consultation, research, complaints etc. What does this information tell you?

Please list any policies that are related or referred to as part of this assessment.

Is there any equality data relating to this activity? Please also consider any further data that may inform your assessment i.e. consultations, complaint data, external research.

Please refer to the central register to identify any related existing EIAs.

Please describe any additional research undertaken to inform this assessment.

These sources of information will be used to inform your assessment of the activity.

The Local Government and Social Care Ombudsman’s guidance documents including ‘Effective Complaint Handling for Local Authorities’ and ‘Guidance on managing unreasonable complainant behaviour’ were reviewed and used as a foundation for good practice throughout the policy.

Local Councils and other Fire and Rescue Services policies were reviewed to help identify any potential gaps and areas of improvement.

The Compliments and Complaints Policy and Procedure has been updated on the back of feedback that RBFERS received during the first HMICFRS Inspection. The Inspection highlighted a need for greater monitoring of complaints, a new monthly report has been created which is circulated to the Senior Leadership Team to help identify and track any potential trends. Reference to this report has been included in the updated policy.

4. What impact may this activity have on the following groups?

Assessment of impact on groups in **bold** is a legal requirement, but it is important to consider the potential impacts of your activity on all of the following groups to ensure that your activity does not have unintended consequences.

Equality Impact Assessment (EIA)	Issue Date
Owner: Human Resources	06 October 2021 (v06)

	Neutral Impact	Positive Impact	Negative Impact	Please provide detail of potential impact(s), including any relevant evidence from the information section above:
Sex (Men and Women)	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	The policy will be universally applied and it is not expected to have an impact relating to sex.
Race (All Racial Groups)	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	The policy will be universally applied and it is not expected to have an impact relating to race.
Disability (Mental, Physical, and Carers of Disabled people)	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	Accessibility guidance has been added to the updated policy, with complainants able to appoint an advocate to act on their behalf, once the Service has received written consent.
Religion or Belief	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	The policy will be universally applied and it is not expected to have an impact relating to religion or beliefs.
Sexual Orientation (All diverse sexual orientations)	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	The policy will be universally applied and it is not expected to have an impact relating to sexual orientation.
Pregnancy and Maternity (Includes new mothers and those returning to the workplace)	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	The policy will be universally applied and it is not expected to have an impact relating to pregnancy and maternity.
Marital Status (Married and Civil Partnerships)	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	The policy will be universally applied and it is not expected to have an impact relating to marital status.
Trans People (Includes non-binary)	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	The policy will be universally applied and it is not

Form 280

Equality Impact Assessment (EIA)	Issue Date
Owner: Human Resources	06 October 2021 (v06)

	Neutral Impact	Positive Impact	Negative Impact	Please provide detail of potential impact(s), including any relevant evidence from the information section above:
identities and all other diverse gender identities/expressions)				expected to have an impact relating to trans people.
Age (People of all ages)	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	The policy will be universally applied and it is not expected to have an impact relating to age.
People in different family circumstances (including those with caring responsibilities)	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	The policy will be universally applied and it is not expected to have an impact relating to people in different family circumstances.
People in different social circumstances (including socio-economic factors i.e. poverty and isolation)	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	The policy will be universally applied and it is not expected to have an impact relating to people in different social circumstances.
Different employee groups (including consideration of on-call staff, grades, contract status. Also consider non-employee groups i.e. casual workers, volunteers)	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	The policy will be universally applied and it is not expected to have an impact relating to sex.
Other – this may include consideration of other factors as relevant to the activity such as unemployment, homelessness, urbanisation, rurality, health and wellbeing implications.	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	No further consideration at this point.

Equality Impact Assessment (EIA)	Issue Date
Owner: Human Resources	06 October 2021 (v06)

5. What further research or consultation is needed to check the impact/potential impact of the activity on different groups? If needed, how will you gather additional information, and from whom? Please refer to the EIA guidance.

Staff and representative bodies will be consulted on the proposed changes if policy is agreed and if further amendments are proposed will be presented to the next Audit and Governance Committee. If no further changes are required following publication, the Policy will be published.

Summary of Assessment

6. Taking account of the assessment above, have any negative and/or disproportionate impacts been identified? If so, what amendments will you make to the activity?

No

7. After these amendments (if any) have been made, is/will there still be a negative impact on any group?

Yes No

If No, go to section 9.

If Yes, please explain:

Click or tap here to enter text.

8. Can commencing or continuing the activity without further amendment be justified? If so, how? Please refer to the guidance documents for further information.

No

9. How can you ensure that any positive or neutral impact is maintained?

Form 280

Equality Impact Assessment (EIA)	Issue Date
Owner: Human Resources	06 October 2021 (v06)

Compliments and complaints are reviewed at the Strategic Performance Board as well as by the Audit and Governance Committee.

The new monthly report produced by the Business Support Team will also help to identify trends and monitor any impacts on varying groups.

10. How will you monitor the impact of the activity in future? Please identify timelines and responsible owner for monitoring, including detail of links to project/service plans if relevant.

All compliments and complaints are reviewed on an on-going basis with the Business Support Lead responsible for producing a monthly report for SLT as well as reports for the Strategic Performance Board.

Action Plan

Following the assessment, please complete the action plan below.

Action Plan Owner: Click or tap here to enter text.	Commencement date: Click or tap to enter a date.	Sign off date: Click or tap to enter a date. Please ensure all actions are completed before sign-off.
---------------------------------------------------------------	------------------------------------------------------------	------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------

As a result of conducting this assessment, what actions are proposed to remove or reduce any negative impact identified?

Action Plan

Identified Impact:	Recommended Actions:	Responsible Lead:	Target Completion Date:	Completion Date:
Click or tap here to enter text.	Click or tap to enter a date.			
Click or tap here to enter text.	Click or tap to enter a date.			
Click or tap here to enter text.	Click or tap to enter a date.			

Equality Impact Assessment (EIA)	Issue Date
Owner: Human Resources	06 October 2021 (v06)

Appendix C

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Click or tap here to enter text.	Click or tap to enter a date.			
Click or tap here to enter text.	Click or tap to enter a date.			

Equality Impact Assessment (EIA)	Issue Date
Owner: Human Resources	06 October 2021 (v06)

Review Log

Please ensure that you update the action plan accordingly as a result of any changes to the assessment.

Date of Review:	Reason for Review: (i.e. outcomes of consultation, further research conducted, change to activity etc.)	Outcome of Review: (please describe resulting changes to EIA)
Click or tap to enter a date.	Click or tap here to enter text.	Click or tap here to enter text.
Click or tap to enter a date.	Click or tap here to enter text.	Click or tap here to enter text.
Click or tap to enter a date.	Click or tap here to enter text.	Click or tap here to enter text.
Click or tap to enter a date.	Click or tap here to enter text.	Click or tap here to enter text.
Click or tap to enter a date.	Click or tap here to enter text.	Click or tap here to enter text.
Click or tap to enter a date.	Click or tap here to enter text.	Click or tap here to enter text.

Admin

Please send the first draft and any further amended versions to Business Support to be held in the central register.

Check this box if you have undertaken research as part of this assessment that may be of use to others in completing other equality impact assessments:

Append this equality impact assessment as necessary to project reports, business cases and other documents as relevant to governance routes.

Equality Impact Assessment (EIA)	Issue Date
Owner: Human Resources	06 October 2021 (v06)

ROYAL BERKSHIRE FIRE AUTHORITY



COMMITTEE	AUDIT AND GOVERNANCE COMMITTEE
DATE OF MEETING	23 MARCH 2022
SUBJECT	MEMBER DEVELOPMENT ANNUAL REPORT AND PROGRESS AGAINST ACTION PLAN
LEAD OFFICER	KATIE MILLS, HEAD OF CORPORATE SERVICES
LEAD MEMBER	COUNCILLOR PAULINE HELLIAR-SYMONS
EXEMPT INFORMATION	NONE
ACTION	NOTE

1. EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

- 1.1 To receive an Annual Report and to note the progress of the Action Plan on Member Development activities in 2021/22.

2. RECOMMENDATION

That Audit and Governance Committee:

- 2.1 **NOTE** the Member Development Annual Report;
- 2.2 **NOTE** the progress of the 2020-23 Member Development Action Plan (Appendix A), and
- 2.3 **NOTE** the results of the Member Development Survey (Appendix B)

3. REPORT

- 3.1 The Fire Authority approved its three-year Member Development Strategy (Appendix C) on 24 October 2019. The Strategy is aligned to the Corporate Plan and Community Risk Management Plan 2019-23.
- 3.2 The coming year (2022/23) will be the final year of the three-year Member Development Strategy. A new Strategy and Action Plan will be recommended to this Committee in March/ April 2023, and aligned to the development of the new People Strategy, Corporate Plan and Community Risk Management Plan.
- 3.3 Each year, Members are requested to complete an online survey on Member Development courses / activities attended, and where possible, Democratic

Agenda Item 11

Support use survey feedback to develop courses or activities for the next Municipal year.

- 3.4 In response to feedback received in the last Member Development survey, a review was held on the Healthy Organisation and Wellbeing course, and it was developed to include unconscious bias training, as part of the Equality, Diversity and Inclusion (EDI) module.
- 3.5 We have also responded to Members feedback from the survey on scheduling both face-to-face and online courses throughout 2021/22. However, due to the impact of COVID-19 restrictions, all but one course and fire station visits were held in person. However, we remain committed to this hybrid approach moving forward, where COVID-19 restrictions allow.
- 3.6 This year, a Member survey was conducted between 18 – 24 February 2022, which not only focused on Member Development, but sought responses to questions on the Fire Authority and Royal Berkshire Fire and Rescue Service (RBFRS) more generally, similar to that of the internal staff survey. For the purpose of this report, only Member Development survey responses will be presented. The other elements of the survey will form the basis of Member / Officer Workshop discussions later in the year.
- 3.7 Table One shows Member attendance on courses have reduced in comparison to 2019/20 and 2020/21. This is due to the majority of Members having already attended courses previously over the Strategy period.¹
- 3.8 A targeted approach was applied to Members that had not completed particular courses /activities, as a result all 20 Members attended courses relevant to them or undertook a station visit for the first time.
- 3.9 All of the courses outlined in Table One and courses / activities listed in the Action Plan (Appendix A), are now delivered as part of our business as usual activity. These courses will be reviewed as part of the development of a new Member Development Strategy.
- 3.10 In October 2021, 1:1 meetings were held between Group Leaders and members of their Groups to capture their vast skills and to identify whether development opportunities offered in the action plan covered their specific needs. Members were also asked to complete an updated skills questionnaire which included columns for annual objectives to be set. The skills questionnaire formed the basis of 1:1 meetings.
- 3.11 Courses attended in the 2021/22 Municipal Year required Members to complete an online feedback form at the end of each session. Overall, Members were satisfied with the courses and content provided.

¹ The full list of courses and activities attended as outlined in the action plan is not illustrated in Table 1.

- 3.12 All Fire Authority Members are encouraged to visit their local fire station, which has been emphasised as part of the Member Induction. However, COVID-19 restrictions had prevented informal stations visits.
- 3.13 This year, five formal station visits were arranged by Democratic Support. Three station visits were arranged with Members visiting a station within their relevant Hub areas. Members located within each Hub area (Central, East and West Hubs) visited Bracknell, Maidenhead and Newbury Fire Stations. The Fire Authority in November 2021, was held at its most recently built fire station, Theale Community Fire Station. Members were given the opportunity to tour the station, and meet the crews.
- 3.14 In addition, a number of Members attended Crowthorne Fire Station official reopening event with local dignitaries in October 2021.
- 3.15 Station visits have become a focus in the last six months, due to the number of Members that have completed business as usual courses. Due to the positive feedback received from both Members and staff located at fire stations an increased focus will be on the arrangement of station visits in the next Municipal year, subject to any COVID-19 restrictions.
- 3.16 In the last year, Members attended external courses organised by the Local Government Association (LGA) and Ministry of Defence (MOD). The LGA course was aimed at Audit Committee Chairman and Vice-Chairman, and discussed ways in which Audit Committees can gain maximum assurance that local authorities are managing its services and finances effectively, to deliver more with less. Members attended an MOD masterclass aimed at local authority staff and elected members on the work of Defence Transition Services (DTS) and the Veterans Welfare Service (VWS), to raise awareness of the services available to Service personnel, leavers and their families. Democratic Support will continue to signpost Members to relevant external courses in the coming year.
- 3.17 E-learning courses on Protecting Information and Equality, Diversity and Inclusion was circulated to all Members via email in November 2021. No Member completed these courses and it has since been identified by the Member Development Working Group that reminders for upcoming courses in 2022/23 will be made at Fire Authority and Committee meetings, as outlined in the action plan.
- 3.18 Attendance on internal and external courses are optional. Democratic Support will continue with a targeted approach to attract newly appointed Members and Members to attend courses that they have not completed in the forthcoming year.
- 3.19 Table One illustrates attendance at Member Development activities in 2021/22, and provides a comparison to previous years. The table does not include Member attendance at Member briefings. Four Member briefings were held during the year.

Table One

Course Title	Facilitators	Attendance 2019/20	Attendance 2020/21	Attendance 2021/22
1:1 with Group Leaders	Group Leaders Cllrs Dudley, Gittings and Shepherd-DuBey	14	15	14
Thames Valley Fire Control Visit	TVFCS	5	11	3
Formal Fire Station visits (Bracknell, Maidenhead and Newbury)	RBFRS	N/A	N/A	11
Understanding the Financing of the Fire Authority	RBFRS	Cancelled	6	5
Healthy Organisation and Wellbeing	RBFRS	5	6	3
Modern.Gov App	RBFRS	2	N/A	1
Safety at Home and Understanding Safe and Well Visits	RBFRS	6	6	5
New Member Induction	RBFRS	9	1	2
Local Government Association (LGA) course/webinars	LGA	2	1	1
Member Workshop (s)	RBFRS	12	N/A	15 ²

3.20 The results from the Member Development online survey are attached as Appendix B, and will be used to improve and develop Member Development courses in 2022/23. The survey responses will be used to inform the development of a new Strategy and Action Plan.

4. CONTRIBUTION TO STRATEGIC COMMITMENTS

4.1 All Strategic Commitments are supported by the Member Development Programme.

5. FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

² Two Workshops were held in 2021/22 (June 2021 and March 2022). Figure does not include March 2022 Workshop attendance.

- 5.1 The majority of the Member Development courses and activities have been delivered in-house within existing resources. External courses were provided free of charge.

6. LEGAL IMPLICATIONS

- 6.1 The Member Development Strategy and Action Plan supports the Fire Authority in discharging its statutory duties.

7. EQUALITY AND DIVERSITY IMPLICATIONS

- 7.1 Equality, Diversity and Inclusion training forms part of the Member Development Programme.

8. RISK IMPLICATIONS

- 8.1 None specified.

9. CONSISTENCY WITH DUTY TO COLLABORATE

- 9.1 As outlined in the Member Development Strategy, we will continue to identify opportunities to work with partners to deliver the Member Development programme where possible.

10. PRINCIPAL CONSULTATION

- 10.1 Statutory officers and the Senior Leadership Team have been consulted in the development report.

11. BACKGROUND PAPERS

- 11.1 None.

12. APPENDICES

- 12.1 Appendix A – Member Development Action Plan
- 12.2 Appendix B – Member Development Survey Results
- 12.3 Appendix C – Member Development Strategy 2020-2023

13. CONTACT DETAILS

Hannah Sheehan, Democratic Support Assistant
0118 938 4613

Fayth Rowe, Democratic Support Lead
0118 938 4611

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MEMBER DEVELOPMENT STRATEGY ACTION PLAN 2020-2023

Action	Target completion date	Progress 2021/22	Lead Officer/Member
Review the annual Member Induction Programme	Business as usual	Annual Member Induction session reviewed for new Members appointed in 2021/22. Face-to-face sessions were arranged in line with government COVID guidelines at the time. Two induction sessions were arranged with new appointees following annual meeting in June 2021, and recent Member appointment in February 2022. As part of the Member Induction, one to one meetings are held with Chief Fire Officer, Head of Finance and Procurement and Head of Corporate Services.	Head of Corporate Services Democratic Support Lead
Safety at Home Course and Understanding Safe and Well Visits	Business as usual	This course is delivered by Safety Education Officer and provides smoke alarm advice and tips on ways to protect your home and family from kitchen-related fires. Members were taken through the process of Safe and Well Visits and how that data is fed into quarterly performance reports.	Head of Corporate Services Democratic Support Lead
Control Room Visits	Business as usual	For a second year, Control Room sessions were arranged remotely to protect Members and Officers, in line with the Services' response to COVID-19. Members were taken through the Control Room with Thames Valley Fire Control Service (TVFCS) Group Manager.	Head of Corporate Services Democratic Support Lead

MEMBER DEVELOPMENT STRATEGY ACTION PLAN 2020-2023

Action	Target completion date	Progress 2021/22	Lead Officer/Member
Members to be invited to RBFRS events and demonstrations	Business as usual	In line with COVID-19 government regulations, Members were invited to attend Station visits, Crownthorne Fire re-opening and annual Awards Ceremony.	Senior Leadership Team Democratic Support Lead
Update the skill based questionnaire for completion by Members annually	Annually February	Questionnaire updated by Member Development Working Group to be used alongside scheduled 1:1s with Group Leaders. This year the skills questionnaire provided additional columns for annual objectives to be set.	Member Development Working Group
Group Leaders to undertake annual 1:1 with Members	Annually October	2021/22 Member 1:1s were held with Group Leaders in October 2021. 2022/23 1:1s will be held in July and September 2022, between Group Leaders and Members using the skilled based questionnaire.	Group Leaders
New Members to be assigned a Member and Officer Buddy on joining the Fire Authority	Business as usual	This action is undertaken as part of the new Member Induction.	Group Leaders Senior Leadership Team
Publish an annual Member Development Programme	Annually	Published at the start of the Municipal Year.	Head of Corporate Services Democratic Support Lead

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Appendix A

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MEMBER DEVELOPMENT STRATEGY ACTION PLAN 2020-2023

Action	Target completion date	Progress 2021/22	Lead Officer/Member
Hold an annual strategic Members Workshop	Annually	Two Member /Officer workshops were held in June 2021 with a second due to take place in March 2022. Through the course of the year, a series of virtual briefing sessions have also been scheduled for Members, to provide an update on progress with the Service. These additional briefings will continue in 2022/23 and cover a range of matters including the development of a new Corporate Plan and Community Risk Management Plan and on progress towards the Service's second inspection by Her Majesty's Inspectorate of Constabulary and Fire and Rescue Services. These will be valuable for all members to attend, as they are to enable members to keep up to date with new developments in the Service.	Head of Corporate Services
Review Members' Handbook	Annually	The 'About Us' section of the Member Handbook is reviewed annually to support Member Development.	Head of Corporate Services Democratic Support Lead
Ensure all Members notified of committee paper publication	Business as usual	This action is undertaken as business as usual.	Democratic Support Lead

MEMBER DEVELOPMENT STRATEGY ACTION PLAN 2020-2023

Action	Target completion date	Progress 2021/22	Lead Officer/Member
Undertake an annual Member Development Survey	Annually	This year the Member Survey has been expanded, at the request of the Chairman. The survey has been separated into two sections, one on Member Development and the other is a general Member survey which may be used as part of the Member / Officer workshop.	Head of Corporate Services Democratic Support Lead
Members to participate in the Understanding the Fire Authority RBFRS Core Skills Course	Business as usual	Whilst primarily focused on staff development, the course may offer opportunities for Member Development and a chance for Members to meet with staff members from across the service.	Democratic Support Lead
Ongoing opportunities to work in partnership with other fire and rescue services and local authority partners to be explored	Business as usual	Opportunities to be explored on an ongoing basis and as they arise.	Head of Corporate Services Democratic Support Lead
Ensure attendance at all Member Development activities is captured and added to training page on the website	Business as usual	All Member training has been captured and updated on Royal Berkshire Fire and Rescue Service website under each Member profile. Attendance will be reported annually via the Audit and Governance Committee.	Democratic Support Lead

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Appendix A

MEMBER DEVELOPMENT STRATEGY ACTION PLAN 2020-2023

Action	Target completion date	Progress 2021/22	Lead Officer/Member
Ensure feedback from individual Member Development training sessions is captured	Following each course	New electronic evaluation forms were introduced to capture Members feedback at the end of each course.	Democratic Support Lead
Undertake colour profiles	Business as usual	All Members have been sent the colour profile link (excluding newly appointed Members). The colour profile could be used to aid the annual 1:1 process.	Business Support Officer
New Members upon joining the Fire Authority to undertake a colour profile	Annually	New Members will be sent the colour profile link upon joining the Fire Authority. Completion is optional.	Business Support Officer
Opportunities for e-learning to be utilised for Members	Business as usual	E-learning courses on Protecting Information and Equality, Diversity and Induction were sent to all members.	Senior Leadership Team
Create an information hub on Modern Gov to aid Member Development and update annually	Annually	Key information for Members to be added to Modern Gov and updated annually.	Democratic Support Lead
Annual report on Member Development to the Audit and Governance Committee	Business as usual	Annual updates on Member Development provided by Organisational Development Champion to Audit and Governance Committee.	Head of Corporate Services Democratic Support Lead

MEMBER DEVELOPMENT STRATEGY ACTION PLAN 2020-2023

Action	Target completion date	Progress 2021/22	Lead Officer/Member
Understanding the Financing of the Fire Authority	Business as usual	This course provided an overview of budget setting and the process behind reports presented to the Fire Authority and the statutory reporting requirements of producing Annual Statement of Accounts.	Head of Finance and Procurement
Healthy Organisation and Wellbeing Course	Business as usual	This course provide an in-depth view of health and wellbeing initiatives within RBFRS and include Equality, Diversity, Inclusion and Mental Health. This course was further developed to include unconscious bias training in response to feedback received in the last Member Development survey.	Head of HR and Learning and Development
Modern.Gov Q&A Session	Annually	Informal drop-in session arranged to support Members with using the Modern.gov app, and RBFRS supplied Tablets.	Democratic Support Lead
Attendance at development opportunities outside of the organisation	Annually	Members attended courses organised by Local Government Association (LGA) on Audit Committee and Ministry of Defence workshop.	Head of corporate services Democratic Support Lead

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Appendix A

Member Development Survey Results

March 2022



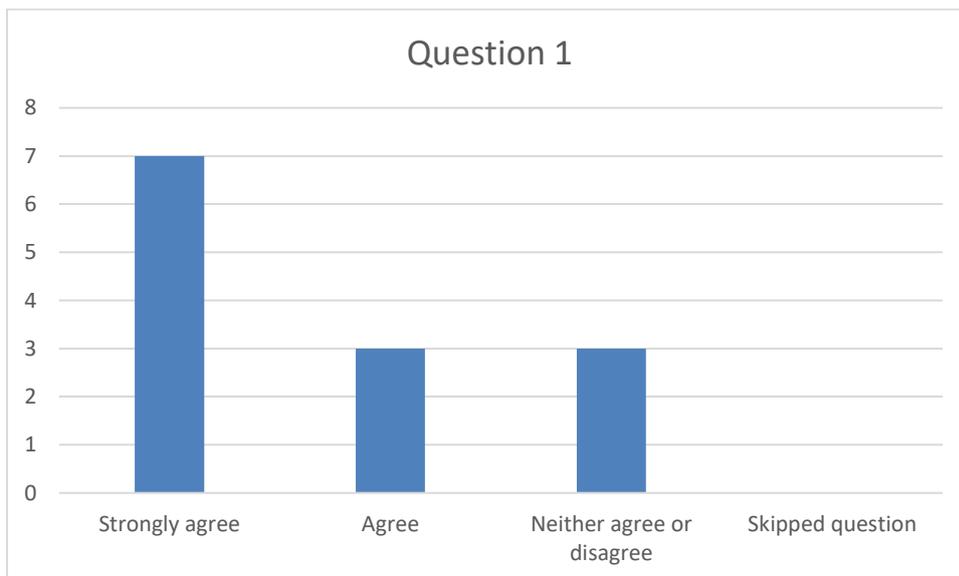
Member Development Survey Results 2022

Background

The Member Development Survey was held from 18 – 24 February 2022. Three email reminders were sent to all twenty Fire Authority Members between the above period. The survey was anonymous and asked eleven questions on Member Development to include frequency of courses, 1:1 questionnaires and meetings with Group Leaders. Some of the questions were aimed a new Members, relating to Member Induction and Buddy System, therefore questions relating to New Members were skipped by the majority of respondents.

The survey results are based on answers from 13 respondents.

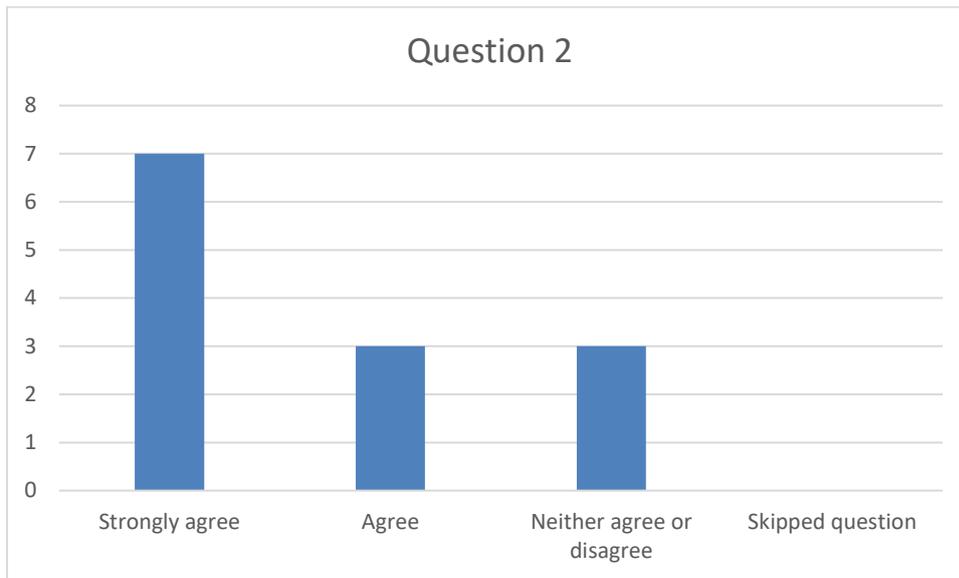
- 1) I believe the above courses / activities provide good general knowledge of the different areas of Royal Berkshire Fire and Rescue Service.



Summary – Almost 100% of the respondents (strongly agreed and agreed combined) felt the courses provided in 2021/22 provide good general knowledge of the different areas of Royal Berkshire Fire and Rescue Service.

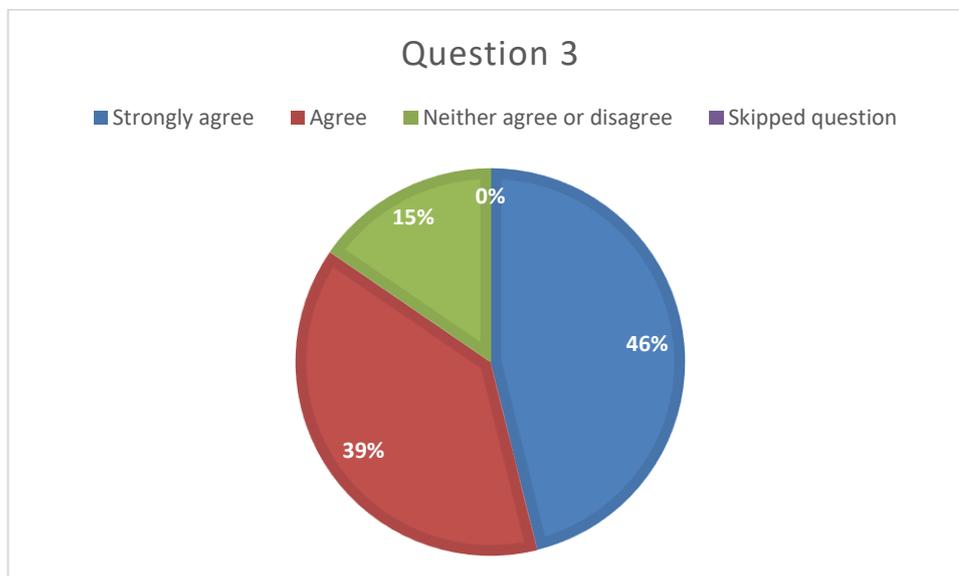


- 2) I believe the above courses have expanded my knowledge of the fire and rescue service.



Summary – Seven Members Strongly agreed, three agreed and three neither agreed or disagreed courses had expanded their knowledge of the fire and rescue service.

- 3) I have a good level of understanding of the issues affecting Royal Berkshire Fire and Rescue Service.



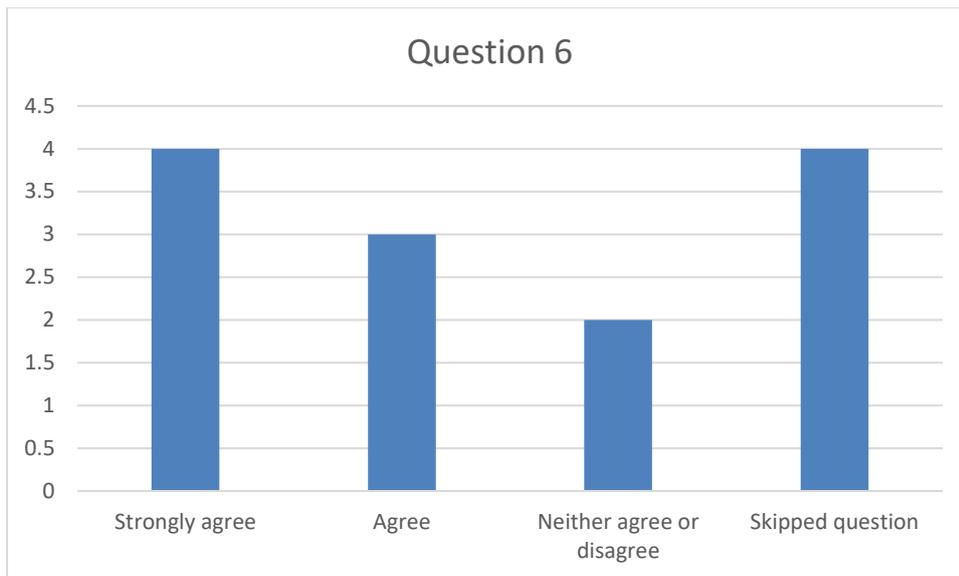
Summary – Six respondents Strongly agree (46%) and five agree (39%) that they have a good level of understanding of the issues affecting Royal Berkshire Fire and Rescue Service.

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Appendix B

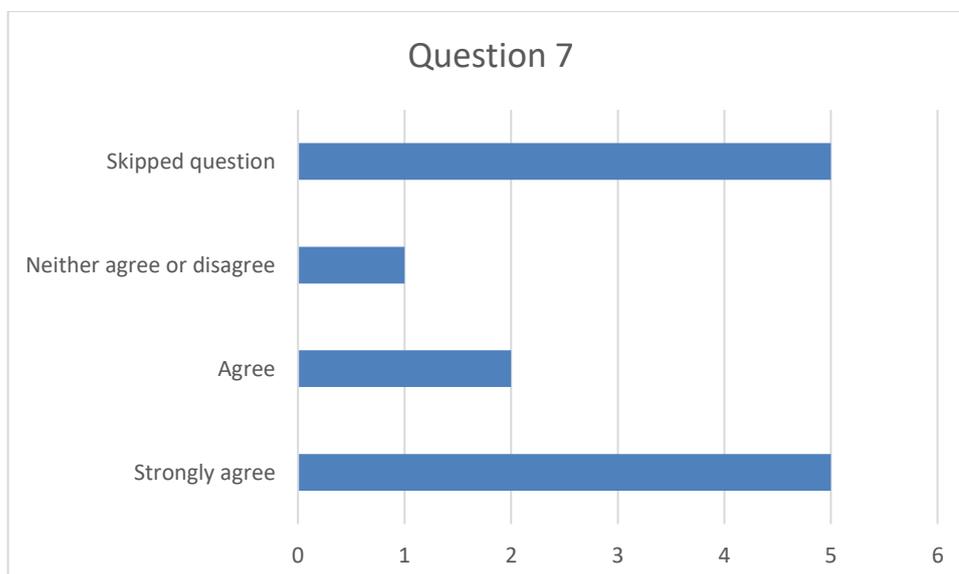
Questions four and five were skipped by all respondents – as they were questions on Member Induction and Buddy System. For ease of reference they were:

- 4) As a new Member appointed in 2021/22, I found the Member Induction very useful.
- 5) I found the designated officer from Senior Leadership Team (Buddy System), allocated to me very useful.
- 6) The skills questionnaire provided a good opportunity for me to identify additional areas of learning within the Fire and Rescue Service.



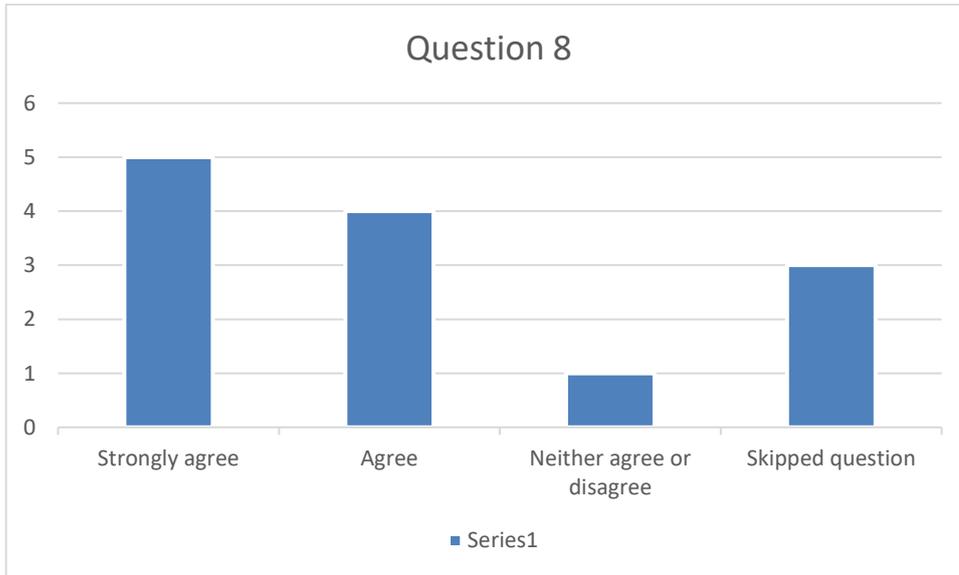
Summary – The majority of respondents (four answered strongly agree and three answered agree) felt the skills questionnaire provided a good opportunity to identify additional areas of learning.

- 7) I found the skills questionnaire a useful tool to use ahead of my 1:1 with my Group Leader?



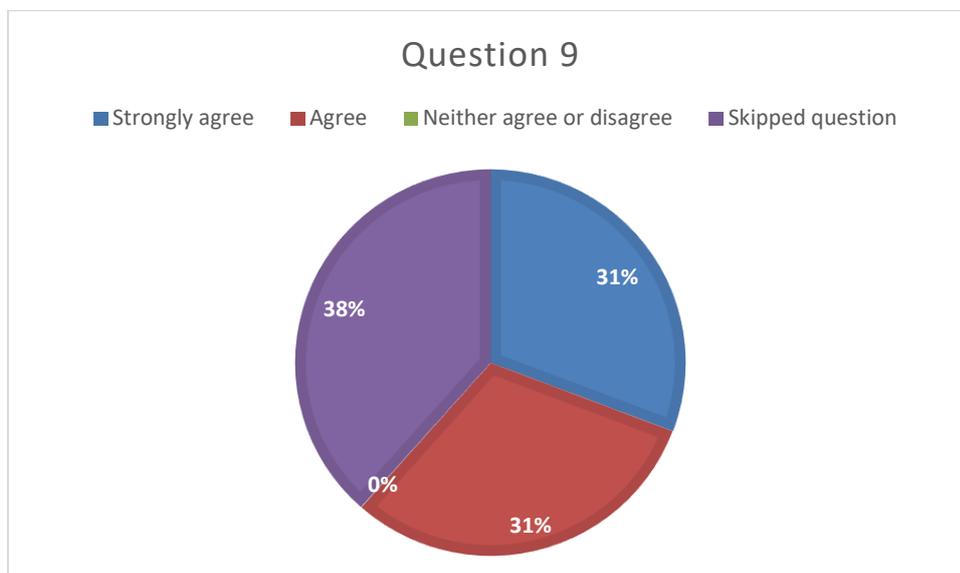
Summary – Only five respondents found the skills questionnaire a useful tool. Five respondents skipped this question.

- 8) I found the 1:1 with my Group Leader useful. It provided an opportunity for me to discuss my own personal development.



Summary – Five respondents strongly agreed and four agreed with the statement that they found 1:1 with their Group Leader useful. This question was skipped by three respondents.

- 9) I am happy with the scheduling of courses / activities being held in the afternoon and evenings, and are mixed between online and face to face sessions.



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Appendix B

Summary – Five respondents skipped this question (38%), the number of respondents that answered Strongly agree were five (31%) and agree, five (31%).

- 10) Please use this space if you have any other useful comments and suggestions you would make in relation to Member Development.

The comments below were made in response to question 10.

‘The trips to Crowthorne and Theale were really good. It was good to see how the welfare of staff and efficiency is at the centre of the design for the building. I feel that having the Fire Authority meetings at Theale brings a sense of urgency to the Members’

‘Often have meeting clashes making attendance on Member Development courses difficult’

‘Buddy System did not exist when I joined in 2015’

‘Need a refresh’

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Member Development Strategy 2020-2023

Section 1: Strategic Policy Statement

This three year strategy aims to ensure all Members have access to a high standard of support and information to facilitate their role on Royal Berkshire Fire Authority. The Strategy aims to support Member development across three categories:

1. Need to know information about Royal Berkshire Fire and Rescue Service
2. Visits to local fire stations including Wholetime and Retained
3. Other information that Members would like to know

Section 2: Context

The Member Develop Strategy is underpinned by the Corporate Plan and Integrated Risk Management Plan 2019-2023. The framework provided by this Strategy must be considered in the context of the Strategic Commitments with outcomes aligned to delivery of the Corporate Plan and Integrated Risk Management Plan 2019-2023. In overall terms, the Strategy is designed to enable Members to fulfil our mission in **Serving the People of Royal Berkshire**.

Outcomes will be aligned to at least one of the following Strategic Commitments:

1. We will provide education and advice on how to prevent fires and other emergencies.
2. We will ensure a swift and appropriate response when called to emergencies.
3. We will provide advice, consultation and enforcement in relation to fire safety standards in buildings.
4. We will seek opportunities to contribute to a broader safety, health and wellbeing agenda, whilst delivering core functions.
5. We will ensure that Royal Berkshire Fire and Rescue Service provides good value for money.
6. We will work with Central Government and key stakeholders in the interests of the people of Royal Berkshire.

[Full details of the policy agenda is available in Royal Berkshire Fire Authority's Corporate Plan and Integrated Risk Management Plan 2019-23.](#)

Section 3: Strategy

Our Aims, Principles and Objectives

Through the Member Development Strategy, we will aim to:

- Equip Members with the skills and knowledge necessary to fulfil their roles and ensure they are fully aware of their responsibilities and accountabilities;
- To ensure Member development is fully embedded in the culture of RBFA and Royal Berkshire Fire and Rescue Service (RBFRS) and its importance is recognised by all;

Agenda Item 11

Appendix C

- Equip Members to balance the conflicting and competing priorities of their roles and constructively work with officers in Serving the People of Rpyal Berkshire.

The principles that will underpin all Member development activity are:

- To maintain a clear commitment to Member development and support;
- To ensure a strategic approach is taken to Member development;
- To ensure that Member development is effective in building capacity; and
- To support Members in their roles on RBFA.

Our Member development objectives are:

To ensure we meet our aims and principles, this Strategy sets out a number of objectives that we will be working towards as part of our Member development activity:

Maintain a clear commitment to Member development and support	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Seek commitment and approval of the Member Development Strategy; 	Year 1
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ensure the planning and delivery of Member development is the responsibility of Members and officers; 	Ongoing
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ensure equality of opportunity and access for all; 	Ongoing
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Provide specialist training for the Democratic Support team and the wider organisation through the core skills programme. 	Ongoing
Ensure a strategic approach is taken to Member development	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Develop an induction programme for all new Members covering core skills, governance matters and learning specific to RBFRS and the Fire and Rescue Service generally; 	Ongoing
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Annually refresh the Member Development Programme based on Member need 	Annual
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Assign a lead Member (Member Champion for Organisational Development) and lead officer (Head of Corporate Services) responsibility for Member Development providing regular strategic oversight; and 	Annual
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Work in collaboration with Local Authorities and partners in Berkshire to identify opportunities to deliver Member development programmes that are complimentary and cohesive. 	Annual Ongoing
Ensure Member development is effective in building capacity	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Outcomes and benefits of Member development activities are clearly communicated and understood by those participating; 	Ongoing
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Evaluate the outcomes and benefits of Member development activities through participant feedback; 	Ongoing
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Develop Member understanding of local and national issues that impact on the Fire and Rescue Service; 	Ongoing
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Lead Member and Member Champions in place for key themes with briefing and support in these roles as appropriate; 	Ongoing
		Ongoing

Support Members in their roles on RBFA

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Use a range of tools in the delivery of Member development to ensure suitability for a range of learning styles; • Provide opportunities to meet with agencies and the community; • Monitor and record attendance at Member development activities; • Annually report on the progress of the Member development programme to the Audit and Governance Committee. 	Ongoing	
	Ongoing	
	Annual	
	Annual	
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Schedule a programme of Member development activities and publicise at the earliest opportunity; • Ensure the Member development programme is delivered at times appropriate for Members; • Offer Member development opportunities at a range of locations across Berkshire; • Ensure our systems and ways of working best support Members in their roles; and • Champion the role of RBFA in terms of local democracy and contribution to Serving the People of Royal Berkshire. 	Ongoing
		Ongoing

Section 4: Delivering the Strategy

A Task and finish group, chaired by the Member Champion for Organisational Development, will develop an action plan for delivery of a Member development programme under the three headings outlined at the start of the Strategy.

To support the delivery of the Member Development Strategy, a number of different opportunities can be used including (but not limited to):

New Member Induction Programme	Bespoke inhouse briefing sessions	Annual Workshop	Buddy System
Joint training opportunities with Local Authorities	Visit your local station	External learning opportunities e.g. conferences (based on business case where funding required)	Member Handbook
Attendance at RBFRS Events	Communication Channels e.g. Cascade, Shout, Press Releases and Social Media	Opportunities to meet with partners such as SCAS and TVP	Dedicated Member support provided by Corporate Services
Support through systems such as Modern Gov	Briefing notes	Peer coaching and mentoring	E-learning

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Appendix C

Measuring our Delivery

To ensure continuous improvement, a number of measures will be used to monitor the success of the Member Development Strategy including:



As part of the Annual Report on Member Development, performance against these measures will be reported to the Audit and Governance Committee at the end of each Municipal Year.

Approval

The Member Development Strategy was approved by Fire Authority on 24 October 2019. The Member Development Strategy will be reviewed on an annual basis.

ROYAL BERKSHIRE FIRE AUTHORITY



COMMITTEE	AUDIT AND GOVERNANCE COMMITTEE
DATE OF MEETING	23 MARCH 2022
SUBJECT	ANNUAL REPORT ON GOVERNANCE
LEAD OFFICER	KATIE MILLS, HEAD OF CORPORATE SERVICES
LEAD MEMBER	COUNCILLOR TINA MCKENZIE-BOYLE
EXEMPT INFORMATION	NONE
ACTION	DECISION

1. EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

- 1.1 To consider the Annual Report on Governance detailing Member Attendance and Allowances in 2021/22 for submission to the Fire Authority on 30 June 2022.
- 1.2 For the purpose of this report, appendices A and B (Members Allowances and Attendance) are shown from 1 June 2021 to 28 February 2022. As outlined in recommendation 2.2.1 and 2.2.2, the appendices will be updated to the end of May 2022.

2. RECOMMENDATION

- 2.1 **NOTE** the report; and
- 2.2 **RECOMMEND** that the Fire Authority:
- 2.2.1 **NOTE** Members' Allowances received from 1 June 2021 – 31 May 2022;
- 2.2.2 **NOTE** the 2021/22 attendance record of Royal Berkshire Fire Authority Members from 1 June 2021 – 31 May 2022.

3. REPORT

- 3.1 This is the second year as a Fire Authority we have had to live with COVID-19 measures and adapt accordingly. From 4 May 2021, the Local Authorities and Police and Crime Panels (Coronavirus (Flexibility of Local Authority and Police and Crime Panel Meetings) (England and Wales) Regulations 2020, expired. This meant Fire Authority and Committee meetings where required to be held

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in person. As a Fire Authority, we have ensured that the Government's COVID guidelines were followed and, more recently, with the easing of national restrictions, that the Service's own risk assessments and guidance has been followed to ensure the safety of Members and staff.

- 3.2 In July 2021, we received our Annual Internal Audit Opinion from RSM, which gave the following opinion from the 12 months ended 31 March 2021.

'The organisation has an adequate and effective framework for risk management, governance and internal control'.¹

- 3.3 I am extremely proud of this opinion, however, as Chairman of Audit and Governance Committee, I am not complacent and will continue to work with Officers and this Committee to ensure as an Authority, we always look to improve our processes and internal controls.

- 3.4 All except one audit (Performance Development Reviews) received Substantial Assurance. The internal audits carried out are listed below:
- Fleet Management
 - Firefighter pension Administration – West Yorkshire Pension Fund
 - Review of Payroll Provider – Dataplan
 - Governance and Risk Management
 - Capital Projects – Theale Community Fire Station
 - Firefighter Pension Account Government Return

- 3.5 The Performance Development Review audit was given Reasonable Assurance by RSM. The Head of Human Resources and Learning and Development (HHR&L&D) positively and swiftly responded to the audit opinion given on 7 July 2021, and as part of the 2021/22 Quarter Two Performance Report was able to give the following assurances:

'In addition, RBFRS underwent a PDR audit in Spring 2021, which made recommendations regarding the setting of objectives and the inclusion of two deadlines as part of the PDR process – one for completing the meetings and one for returning the endorsed paperwork.

Interim guidance was issued on setting behavioural and SMART objectives, including relevant examples for station based staff. This was then incorporated into the revised PDR policy.

HR undertakes a monthly PDR completion audit and chases individual managers where PDRs have not been completed. This is escalated to Head of Service where appropriate.

A revised policy was issued in October 2021, which included further information and examples on setting SMART and behavioural objectives and two deadline dates for completion – one for completing the PDR interviews (30 June) and one for returning the endorsed paperwork to HR (31 July). This will ensure that staff are receiving the

¹ Annual internal audit report 2020/21 7 July 2021

completed and endorsed paperwork in a timely fashion, which will enable them to understand and continue to work on their objectives.

In line with the policy revision, the training for managers will be revised, with more emphasis on setting objectives and revised section on the Behavioural Competency Framework.^{1 2}

3.6 In October 2021, the Audit and Governance Committee approved the 2019/20 Statement of Accounts. The delay in signing off the Authority's financial statements was due to issues identified by Deloitte in relation to their audit of the Royal County of Berkshire Pension Fund.

3.7 In accordance to Audit and Governance Committee Terms of Reference, the Committee approved policies on

- Grievance, Bullying and Harassment
- Anti-Fraud, Bribery and Corruption

3.8 At its meeting in January 2022, the Committee recommended the Draft Royal Berkshire Fire Authority Members' Code of Conduct for public consultation. Our draft Code largely adopts the Local Government Association (LGA) Model Code of Conduct but was expanded to include the complaints procedure taken from our existing Code of Conduct. The consultation closes on 11 March 2022 and I look forward to receiving the results.

3.9 We have scrutinised the assumptions of the Medium Term Financial Plan (MTFP) and performance of the Service through Quarterly Performance Reports, and received regular updates on Emergency Services Mobile Communications Programme (ESMCP).

3.10 Governance

3.10.1 No formal complaints have been received against Members this year. I would like to take this opportunity to thank our Independent Persons who have been on standby on the event they will be required to investigate complaints along with our Monitoring Officer, Graham Britten. Our Independent Persons, Roger Penfold and David Comben tenure will come to end on 29 June 2022, and the Fire Authority will appoint new Independent Persons at its meeting on 30 June 2022.

3.11 Member Allowances

Member Allowances for the period of June 2021 – Feb 2022 are shown in **Appendix A**. An update on these figures will be made to Fire Authority on 30 June 2021 28

3.12 Member Attendance

The attendance record of Members for the Municipal Year 2021/22, is shown in Appendix B of this report. The Appendix includes all meetings up to the 28

² Quarterly Performance Report Quarter Two 2021-2022 July to September

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February 2022. Like Member Allowances, these attendance figures will be updated and reported to the Fire Authority in June 2022.

3.13 In a challenging year, Member attendance has been good with no meetings being inquorate, and all business being able to be conducted. Committee meeting absences have often been due to meeting clashes, and apologies, when received, have generally been in good time.

3.14 Appendix B details Committee meeting attendance only, and does not include Member attendance at Member briefings and events held during the year, for example, Task and Finish Groups, Working Groups, Steering Groups, Fire Liaison Group meetings and Member Development courses.

4. CONTRIBUTION TO STRATEGIC COMMITMENTS

4.1 Commitment 5 – We will ensure that Royal Berkshire Fire and Rescue Service provides good value for money.

5 FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

5.1 The Member Allowances and expenses (Appendix A) outline the cost to the Fire Authority.

6 LEGAL IMPLICATIONS

6.1 There are no legal implications in this report.

7. EQUALITY AND DIVERSITY IMPLICATIONS

7.1 There are no Equality and Diversity implications in this report.

8. RISK IMPLICATIONS

8.1 There are no risk implications in this report.

9. CONSISTENCY WITH DUTY TO COLLABORATE

9.1 None for the purpose of this report.

10. PRINCIPAL CONSULTATION

10.1 Consultation has been undertaken with the Chief Fire Officer, Chief Finance Officer and Monitoring Officer.

11. BACKGROUND PAPERS

11.1 Audit and Governance Committee on 19 July 2021, 20 October 2021 and 24 January 2022.

11.2 Members' Scheme of Allowances 2021/22

12. APPENDICES

12.1 Appendix A – Members' Allowances.

12.2 Appendix B – Members' Attendance.

13. CONTACT DETAILS

13.1 Fayth Rowe, Democratic Support Lead 0118 938 4611

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Royal Berkshire Fire Authority - Member Allowances and Travel Expenses paid to date

Member Payments 29 June 2021- 28 February 2022

<u>SURNAME</u>	<u>FORENAME</u>	<u>To date Member Allowance</u>	<u>To date Special Responsibility Allowance</u>	<u>To date Travel Expenses</u>	<u>Total Paid to Date 28/02/22</u>
Bateson	Christine	£1,914.15	£956.97	0.00	£2,871.12
Benneyworth	Dennis	£1,914.15	£2,871.00	0.00	£4,785.15
Brooks	Jeff	£1,914.15		0.00	£1,914.15
Brown	Tricia	£1,914.15		0.00	£1,914.15
Cannon	David	£1,914.15	£2,871	0.00	£4,785.15
Chadwick	Anne	£1,701.34		0.00	£1,701.34
Dudley	Colin	£1,914.15	£9,571.50	0.00	£11,485.65
Gittings	Paul	£1,914.15	£1,914.01	0.00	£3,828.16
Helliar-Symons	Pauline	£1,914.15	£5,317.50	67.95	£7,299.60
Linden	Tony	£1,914.15		0.00	£1,914.15
Lovelock	Jo	£1,914.15		0.00	£1,914.15
McKenzie-Boyle	Tina	£1,914.15	£2,871	0.00	£4,785.15
Ross	Angus	£1,914.15	£2,871	85.50	£4,870.65
Shepherd-DuBey	Rachelle	£1,914.15	£1,914.01	0.00	£3,828.16
Simpson	Garth	£1,914.15		0.00	£1,914.15
Smith	Dexter	£1,914.15	£2,871	0.00	£4,785.15
Stanford-Beale	Jane	£1,914.15		0.00	£1,914.15
Swaddle	Alison	£0.00		0.00	£0.00
Werner	Simon	£1,914.15		0.00	£1,914.15
Independent Person (s)					
Comben	David	0	0.00	0.00	0.00
Penfold	Roger	0	0.00	0.00	0.00
					68,424.35

Please Note:

Councillor Alison Swaddle Basic Allowance will be backdated from 1 February 2022 in March 2022, following appointment on 15 February 2022.

Councillor Chadwick stood down from the Fire Authority on 31 January 2022

No more than 10 Special Responsibility Allowances (SRA) are paid

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Username	Total Expected	Present	% Present	Apologies	Meeting	Meeting Date	Attendance
Councillor Alison Swaddle	1	1	100%	0	Royal Berkshire Fire Authority	15/02/22 18:30	Present, as expected
Councillor Angus Ross	11	9	82%	2	Management Committee Management Committee Management Committee Management Committee Management Committee Royal Berkshire Fire Authority Royal Berkshire Fire Authority Royal Berkshire Fire Authority Royal Berkshire Fire Authority Thames Valley Fire Control Service Joint Committee Thames Valley Fire Control Service Joint Committee	30/06/21 19:00 29/07/21 18:30 12/10/21 18:30 07/12/21 18:30 03/02/22 18:30 30/06/21 18:30 02/11/21 18:30 05/01/22 18:30 15/02/22 18:30 12/07/21 14:00 16/12/21 14:00	Present, as expected Present, as expected Apologies Present, as expected Apologies, sent representative Present, as expected Present, as expected Present, as expected Present, as expected Present, as expected Present, as expected
Councillor Anne Chadwick	7	5	71%	2	Audit and Governance Committee Audit and Governance Committee Audit and Governance Committee Audit and Governance Committee Royal Berkshire Fire Authority Royal Berkshire Fire Authority Royal Berkshire Fire Authority	30/06/21 19:00 19/07/21 18:30 20/10/21 18:30 24/01/22 18:30 30/06/21 18:30 02/11/21 18:30 05/01/22 18:30	Present, as expected Present, as expected Present, as expected Apologies, sent representative Present, as expected Present, as expected Apologies
Councillor Avtar Cheema	7	5	71%	2	Audit and Governance Committee Audit and Governance Committee Audit and Governance Committee Audit and Governance Committee Royal Berkshire Fire Authority Royal Berkshire Fire Authority Royal Berkshire Fire Authority Royal Berkshire Fire Authority	30/06/21 19:00 19/07/21 18:30 20/10/21 18:30 24/01/22 18:30 30/06/21 18:30 02/11/21 18:30 05/01/22 18:30 15/02/22 18:30	Present, as expected Apologies due to Council Business Present, as expected Present, as expected Present, as expected Present, as expected In attendance Apologies
Councillor Christine Bateson	7	5	71%	2	Audit and Governance Committee Audit and Governance Committee Audit and Governance Committee Audit and Governance Committee Royal Berkshire Fire Authority Royal Berkshire Fire Authority Royal Berkshire Fire Authority Royal Berkshire Fire Authority	30/06/21 19:00 19/07/21 18:30 20/10/21 18:30 24/01/22 18:30 30/06/21 18:30 02/11/21 18:30 05/01/22 18:30 15/02/22 18:30	Present, as expected Apologies Apologies Present, as expected Present, as expected Present, as expected In attendance Present, as expected

Username	Total Expected	Present	% Present	Apologies	Meeting	Meeting Date	Attendance
Councillor Colin Dudley	9	8	88%	1	Management Committee Management Committee Management Committee Management Committee Management Committee Royal Berkshire Fire Authority Royal Berkshire Fire Authority Royal Berkshire Fire Authority Royal Berkshire Fire Authority	03/02/22 18:30 29/07/21 18:30 12/10/21 18:30 07/12/21 18:30 30/06/21 19:00 30/06/21 18:30 02/11/21 18:30 05/01/22 18:30 15/02/22 18:30	Apologies, sent representative Present, as expected Present, as expected Present, as expected Present, as expected Present, as expected Present, as expected In attendance Present, as expected
Councillor David Cannon	13	9	69%	2	Management Committee Management Committee Management Committee Management Committee Management Committee Royal Berkshire Fire Authority Royal Berkshire Fire Authority Royal Berkshire Fire Authority Royal Berkshire Fire Authority Thames Valley Collaboration Steering Group Thames Valley Collaboration Steering Group Thames Valley Fire Control Service Joint Committee Thames Valley Fire Control Service Joint Committee	30/06/21 19:00 29/07/21 18:30 12/10/21 18:30 07/12/21 18:30 03/02/22 18:30 30/06/21 18:30 02/11/21 18:30 05/01/22 18:30 15/02/22 18:30 13/07/21 11:45 16/12/21 14:37 12/07/21 14:00 16/12/21 14:00	Present, as expected Present, as expected Present, as expected Present, as expected Apologies Present, as expected Present, as expected Apologies Present, as expected Expected Expected Present, as expected Present, as expected
Councillor Dennis Benneyworth	9	6	67%	3	Management Committee Management Committee Management Committee Management Committee Management Committee Royal Berkshire Fire Authority Royal Berkshire Fire Authority Royal Berkshire Fire Authority Royal Berkshire Fire Authority	30/06/21 19:00 29/07/21 18:30 12/10/21 18:30 07/12/21 18:30 03/02/22 18:30 30/06/21 18:30 02/11/21 18:30 05/01/22 18:30 15/02/22 18:30	Present, as expected Apologies Present, as expected Apologies Apologies Present, as expected Present, as expected Present, as expected Present, as expected
Councillor Dexter Smith	8	7	88%	1	Management Committee Management Committee Management Committee Management Committee Management Committee Royal Berkshire Fire Authority Royal Berkshire Fire Authority Royal Berkshire Fire Authority Royal Berkshire Fire Authority	12/10/21 18:30 29/07/21 18:30 30/06/21 19:00 07/12/21 18:30 03/02/22 18:30 30/06/21 18:30 02/11/21 18:30 05/01/22 18:30 15/02/22 18:30	Present, as expected Apologies Present, as expected Present, as expected Present, as expected Present, as expected Present, as expected In attendance Present, as expected

Username	Total Expected	Present	% Present	Apologies	Meeting	Meeting Date	Attendance
Councillor Garth Simpson	8	4	50%	3	Audit and Governance Committee Audit and Governance Committee Audit and Governance Committee Audit and Governance Committee Royal Berkshire Fire Authority Royal Berkshire Fire Authority Royal Berkshire Fire Authority Royal Berkshire Fire Authority	30/06/21 19:00 19/07/21 18:30 20/10/21 18:30 24/01/22 18:30 30/06/21 18:30 02/11/21 18:30 05/01/22 18:30 15/02/22 18:30	Present, as expected Present, as expected Apologies, sent representative Apologies, sent representative Present, as expected Present, as expected Absent Apologies
Councillor Harjinder Minha	8	3	38%	4	Audit and Governance Committee Audit and Governance Committee Audit and Governance Committee Audit and Governance Committee Royal Berkshire Fire Authority Royal Berkshire Fire Authority Royal Berkshire Fire Authority Royal Berkshire Fire Authority	20/10/21 18:30 19/07/21 18:30 30/06/21 19:00 24/01/22 18:30 30/06/21 18:30 02/11/21 18:30 05/01/22 18:30 15/02/22 18:30	Present, as expected Apologies due to Council Business Present, as expected Apologies Present, as expected Apologies Absent Apologies
Councillor Jane Stanford-Beale	7	7	100%	0	Audit and Governance Committee Audit and Governance Committee Audit and Governance Committee Audit and Governance Committee Royal Berkshire Fire Authority Royal Berkshire Fire Authority Royal Berkshire Fire Authority Royal Berkshire Fire Authority	30/06/21 19:00 19/07/21 18:30 20/10/21 18:30 24/01/22 18:30 30/06/21 18:30 02/11/21 18:30 05/01/22 18:30 15/02/22 18:30	Present, as expected Present, as expected Present, as expected Present, as expected Present, as expected Present, as expected In attendance Present, as expected
Councillor Jeff Brooks	9	4	44%	4	Management Committee Management Committee Management Committee Management Committee Management Committee Royal Berkshire Fire Authority Royal Berkshire Fire Authority Royal Berkshire Fire Authority Royal Berkshire Fire Authority	30/06/21 19:00 29/07/21 18:30 12/10/21 18:30 07/12/21 18:30 03/02/22 18:30 30/06/21 18:30 02/11/21 18:30 05/01/22 18:30 15/02/22 18:30	Apologies Absent Present, as expected Apologies Apologies Apologies Present, as expected Present, as expected Present, as expected

Username	Total Expected	Present	% Present	Apologies	Meeting	Meeting Date	Attendance
Councillor Jo Lovelock	8	4	50%	4	Management Committee Management Committee Management Committee Management Committee Management Committee Royal Berkshire Fire Authority Royal Berkshire Fire Authority Royal Berkshire Fire Authority Royal Berkshire Fire Authority	30/06/21 19:00 29/07/21 18:30 12/10/21 18:30 07/12/21 18:30 03/02/22 18:30 30/06/21 18:30 02/11/21 18:30 05/01/22 18:30 15/02/22 18:30	Apologies Present, as expected Apologies due to Council Business Present, as expected Apologies Apologies Present, as expected In attendance Present, as expected
Councillor Paul Gittings	9	7	77%	2	Management Committee Management Committee Management Committee Management Committee Management Committee Royal Berkshire Fire Authority Royal Berkshire Fire Authority Royal Berkshire Fire Authority Royal Berkshire Fire Authority	30/06/21 19:00 29/07/21 18:30 12/10/21 18:30 07/12/21 18:30 03/02/22 18:30 30/06/21 18:30 02/11/21 18:30 05/01/22 18:30 15/02/22 18:30	Apologies due to Council Business Present, as expected Present, as expected Present, as expected Present, as expected Apologies due to Council Business Present, as expected Present, as expected Present, as expected
Councillor Pauline Helliars-Symons	9	9	100%	0	Management Committee Management Committee Management Committee Management Committee Management Committee Royal Berkshire Fire Authority Royal Berkshire Fire Authority Royal Berkshire Fire Authority Royal Berkshire Fire Authority	12/10/21 18:30 29/07/21 18:30 30/06/21 19:00 07/12/21 18:30 03/02/22 18:30 30/06/21 18:30 02/11/21 18:30 05/01/22 18:30 15/02/22 18:30	Present, as expected Present, as expected
Councillor Rachelle Shepherd- DuBey	9	6	66%	3	Royal Berkshire Fire Authority Management Committee Management Committee Management Committee Management Committee Royal Berkshire Fire Authority Royal Berkshire Fire Authority Royal Berkshire Fire Authority Management Committee	15/02/22 18:30 29/07/21 18:30 12/10/21 18:30 07/12/21 18:30 03/02/22 18:30 30/06/21 18:30 02/11/21 18:30 05/01/22 18:30 30/06/21 19:00	Present, as expected Present, as expected Apologies Apologies Present, as expected Present, as expected Present, as expected Apologies Present, as expected

Username	Total Expected	Present	% Present	Apologies	Meeting	Meeting Date	Attendance
Councillor Simon Werner	8	2	25%	1	Audit and Governance Committee Audit and Governance Committee Audit and Governance Committee Audit and Governance Committee Royal Berkshire Fire Authority Royal Berkshire Fire Authority Royal Berkshire Fire Authority Royal Berkshire Fire Authority	30/06/21 19:00 19/07/21 18:30 20/10/21 18:30 24/01/22 18:30 30/06/21 18:30 02/11/21 18:30 05/01/22 18:30 15/02/22 18:30	Absent Apologies Absent Absent Absent Present, as expected Absent Present, as expected
Councillor Tina McKenzie-Boyle	8	3	38%	5	Audit and Governance Committee Audit and Governance Committee Audit and Governance Committee Audit and Governance Committee Royal Berkshire Fire Authority Royal Berkshire Fire Authority Royal Berkshire Fire Authority Royal Berkshire Fire Authority	30/06/21 19:00 19/07/21 18:30 20/10/21 18:30 24/01/22 18:30 30/06/21 18:30 02/11/21 18:30 05/01/22 18:30 15/02/22 18:30	Apologies Apologies Apologies, sent representative Present, as expected Apologies Apologies In attendance Present, as expected
Councillor Tony Linden	8	8	100%	0	Audit and Governance Committee Audit and Governance Committee Audit and Governance Committee Audit and Governance Committee Royal Berkshire Fire Authority Royal Berkshire Fire Authority Royal Berkshire Fire Authority Royal Berkshire Fire Authority	30/06/21 19:00 19/07/21 18:30 20/10/21 18:30 24/01/22 18:30 30/06/21 18:30 02/11/21 18:30 05/01/22 18:30 15/02/22 18:30	Present, as expected Present, as expected
Councillor Tricia Brown	9	7	78%	2	Management Committee Management Committee Management Committee Management Committee Management Committee Royal Berkshire Fire Authority Royal Berkshire Fire Authority Royal Berkshire Fire Authority Royal Berkshire Fire Authority	30/06/21 19:00 29/07/21 18:30 12/10/21 18:30 07/12/21 18:30 03/02/22 18:30 30/06/21 18:30 02/11/21 18:30 05/01/22 18:30 15/02/22 18:30	Present, as expected Present, as expected Present, as expected Present, as expected Apologies Present, as expected Present, as expected Present, as expected Apologies

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ROYAL BERKSHIRE FIRE AUTHORITY REPORT

COMMITTEE	AUDIT AND GOVERNANCE COMMITTEE
DATE OF MEETING	23 MARCH 2022
SUBJECT	ICT SAIF CLARIFICATION AND BUSINESS CASES
LEAD OFFICER	TONY VINCENT, HEAD OF BUSINESS AND INFORMATION SYSTEMS
LEAD MEMBER	N/A
EXEMPT INFORMATION	NONE
ACTION	FOR NOTE

1. EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

- 1.1 This report provides additional background information and detail against both the mandatory and discretionary spending proposals included in the ICT SAIF approval to spend request as considered at the Fire Authority meeting held on the 15th February 2022.
- 1.2 More detail regarding the mandatory items is contained within the body of this report.
- 1.3 Four business cases and their attendant initial equality impact assessments are presented at appendices A-D in support of the discretionary items.

2. RECOMMENDATION

That Audit and Governance Committee:

- 2.1 **NOTE** the content of the report, the appended business cases and associated Equality Impact Assessments.

3. REPORT

- 3.1 At the Fire Authority Meeting held on the 15th February 2022, Members requested further detail regarding the ICT SAIF submission, specifically in terms of any monetary and non-monetary benefits associated with the four spending categories marked discretionary in the accompanying report.

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- 3.2 This report provides the requested additional detail in the form of separate business cases for each discretionary spend item.
- 3.3 In summary, although there are identified benefits associated with each item, their nature makes it extremely difficult to quantify in monetary terms. This is because benefits will manifest in productivity improvements derived from greater use of technology, supported by these foundational projects. Further, the benefits of these infrastructure projects will mostly accrue to organisational units outside of ICT.
- 3.4 Provision of foundational capability by ICT strategic investment leads to innovative and somewhat unpredictable benefits realisation, as differing parts of the organisation will utilise new capabilities in different ways. Therefore no monetary savings derived from introduction of the proposed capabilities have been presented. Non-monetary benefits of the proposed solutions are detailed within each business case attached as appendices A-D.
- 3.5 Items identified as mandatory within the ICT SAIF spending approval proposals were as follows:
- i. Implementation of DCS to replace existing SANH airwave link to TVFCS
 - ii. MDT replacement
 - iii. Fireground Radio replacement
 - iv. Station End replacement
 - v. Project support resource from project management, technical support, and applications develop perspectives
- 3.6 The table below sets out the rationale for each item identified in section 3.5(i)-3.5(v)

Project	Cost	Rationale
DCS implementation	£47k	Includes the RBFRS portion of the Capita costs to migrate the current SANH Airwave direct link to updated technology (DCS). Driven by the withdrawal of support for SANH as a technology. No central government grant exists to cover this cost and so will be split across all active partners in the existing SANH partnership (currently Royal Berkshire, Buckinghamshire, Oxfordshire, Northamptonshire and Warwickshire).
MDT Replacement	£141k	Includes the wholesale replacement of aging end of life MDT hardware to devices aligned with out Thames Valley partners but which can use the same software as today. The proposed replacement devices are already certified as ESN ready, significantly de-risking RBFRS' ESN transition activities.

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Fireground radio replacement	£136k	Includes the replacement of aging and inefficient fireground radios for use by crews and officers at incidents. Replacement devices will result in higher fidelity communication between involved parties at incidents. This is part of RBFRS' response to a number of public enquiries associated with major incidents that cite poor local communications as a significant contributory factor to suboptimal outcomes at this type of incident.
Station end replacement	£67k	Includes the replacement of aging, insecure and failing station end mobilising equipment that automatically carries out key mobilising functions on station, such as: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Activating sirens and lighting • Opening appliance bay doors • Updating incident information screens in appliance bay • Printing tip sheet, etc.
Project support resourcing	£292.8k	Includes <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 3rd party implementation costs (est) of £90k to migrate RBFRS intranet and website content to a new provider on the expiry of the current contract. • 2 x mid-grade 3 positions to backfill existing resources during the development of digitised services across the organisation, in accordance with HMICFRS feedback on use of technology • 1 x mid-grade 4 technical support resource to backfill existing resources during the rollout of new and enhanced digital services such as Microsoft 365, Digital protection, Network upgrade, Telephone systems refresh etc. • Provision of a 3rd party technical project management resource to coordinate all aspects of implementation of major infrastructure projects and associated digital enhancement activities.

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4. CONTRIBUTION TO STRATEGIC COMMITMENTS

- 4.1 Commitment 1 – We will provide advice on how to prevent fires and other emergencies.
- 4.2 Commitment 2 – We will ensure a swift and appropriate response when called to emergencies.
- 4.3 Commitment 3 – We will provide advice, consultation and enforcement in relation to fire safety standards in buildings.
- 4.4 Commitment 4 – We will seek opportunities to contribute to a broader safety, health and wellbeing agenda, whilst delivering our core functions.
- 4.5 Commitment 5 – We will ensure that Royal Berkshire Fire and Rescue Service provides good value for money.
- 4.6 Commitment 6 – We will work with Central Government and key stakeholders in the interests of the people of Royal Berkshire.

5. FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

- 5.1 None – the ICT SAIF funding approval for 2022-23 was approved at the Fire Authority meeting held on the 15th February 2022 and no change to costs have been identified at this time.

6. LEGAL IMPLICATIONS

- 6.1 None

7. EQUALITY DIVERSITY AND INCLUSION IMPLICATIONS

- 7.1 Initial Equality Impact Assessments have been carried out for each of the attached business cases.

8. RISK IMPLICATIONS

- 8.1 Risks associated with the proposed activities are identified within each attached business case.

9. CONSISTENCY WITH DUTY TO COLLABORATE

- 9.1 DCS replacement will be a collaborative project, with costs spread across participating FRS'.
- 9.2 Some mandatory and discretionary proposals contain elements that either improve harmonisation of services and implemented technology across the Thames Valley, or provide opportunities for joint procurement. Each will be explored at point of initiation.

10. PRINCIPAL CONSULTATION

- 10.1 Conor Byrne, Head of Finance and Procurement
- 10.2 RBFRS Senior Leadership Team

11. BACKGROUND PAPERS

11.1 None.

12. APPENDICES

- 12.1 Appendix A – Mobile Booster Implementation business case and EIA
- 12.2 Appendix B – Computer Peripherals business case and EIA
- 12.3 Appendix C – Mobile telephone deployment expansion business case and EIA
- 12.4 Appendix D – Firewatch development business case and EIA

13. CONTACT DETAILS

- 13.1 Tony Vincent, Head of Business Information and Systems
- 13.2 07787 263320
- 13.3 vincentt@rbfrs.co.uk

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Business Case			
Programme (if applicable):	ICT Strategy Action Plan		
Project / Work Package Name:	Mobile Carrier Signal Booster	PMO Ref:	n/a
Project / Work Package Manager:	Tom Carvell		
Date:	8 th March 2022	Version:	
Sponsors Name:	Tony Vincent	Allocated Cost Code:	

1.0	Funding Stream (please 'x' as appropriate)		2.0	Purpose (please 'x' as appropriate)	
1.1	Existing Budget		2.1	Project	
1.2	Capital Bid	X	2.2	Temporary Resource	
1.3	Transition Fund		2.3	Increase in Revenue	
			2.4	Capital Purchase	X

3.0	Reason for submitting this business case (link to Strategic Commitments)
	<p>Since initial occupation, RBFRS Headquarters has suffered from variable mobile telephone signal strength, due to generally lower signal levels in the area coupled with the building construction method further degrading signal levels, especially in areas surrounding the inner courtyard, and in particular on the ground floor. The building of steel framework construction and is also equipped with treated window glass to minimise solar gain as there are no opening windows in the building. Both techniques attenuate mobile telephone mobile signals significantly.</p> <p>Newsham court was equipped with a mobile signal booster unit some 4 years ago, which was subsequently decommissioned as it was found to lie outside the OFCOM licensing remit and therefore deemed illegal for use in the UK. Between that period and 2021 there were no legally licensable commercially available mobile signal booster available.</p> <p>During the construction of the Theale Community Fire Station, similar mobile carrier signal coverage issues were identified and the market for booster technology was examined again. A suitable, legal and effective solution was sourced, trialled and subsequently implemented at Theale, using funds from the capital project associated with the build.</p> <p>As a new, licensable, effective and affordable solution was now available on the UK market, provision was made in the 2022/2023 SAIF for implementation of the solution at Newsham Court.</p> <p>The proposal is fully aligned with the ICT strategy, which states:</p> <p><i>“Further efficiencies in the execution of RBFRS ways of working will be largely met through digitisation and automation of existing manual, paper based processes, and an increased requirement to deliver information flexibly, quickly and securely to the right recipients”</i></p>



The ICT strategy also states that:

“The RBFRRS ICT strategy should adopt a “mobile first” approach to applications and services that focusses on providing a role-tailored, simple and intuitive, high quality user experience regardless of physical location or access method”

Finally, 4/5g mobile telephone carrier signals form a key element in RBFRRS’s network connectivity resilience strategy. The Network refresh approved in the 2021/22 budget and currently underway utilises 4G connectivity as an automated backup in the event of primary network outage. Increasing mobile carrier signal strength at Newsham Court will positively impact user experiences in such outage situations, and with the use of tethered 4/5g hotspots as the final fall-back capability for individual users, will support continued operations for all but the most severe of business continuity events.

It follows that acceptable mobile telephone carrier signal coverage within RBFRRS premises is an important element in delivering the ICT strategic vision. This proposal is therefore a foundational factor in being able to provide assurance of a consistent and ubiquitous mobile platform experience as more daily tasks become mobile centric going forward, as well as enhancing overall network resilience for staff members using the building.

4.0	Project/ Work Package SMART Objectives
	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Carry out full mobile signal coverage survey to determine optimal booster/repeater locations by end of Q2 2022/23 2. Implement identified mobile carrier signal booster system to agreed specification at Newsham court to improve mobile signal levels across the premises for all major UK mobile carriers (O2, Vodafone, EE, 3) by end Q3 2022/23 3. Test and validate mobile signal improvement and overall system performance by end of Q3 2022/23

5.0 Options Appraisal	
Option Number	Brief Description of Option
1 Do nothing	Do nothing – ongoing signal issues across most mobile carrier networks due to building construction materials and methods. Increasing issues over time as more services are delivered on mobile-only platforms as per the ICT strategy action plan. Potential for some operational impact (Boss mobile on service devices, critical operational telephone communications, SMS messaging delay etc.)
2	Implement the identified solution – multiple signal repeaters and boosters strategically placed within the building to ensure good consistent mobile coverage across the premises. No modifications or configuration to mobile devices required.



<p>3</p>	<p>Migrate to alternative mobile carrier. Unlikely to remediate primary issue as building fabric limits mobile carrier signal penetration for all carriers. Could result in additional handset costs and/or disruption where existing devices are locked to Vodafone.</p>
<p>4 (if applicable)</p>	<p>Implement alternative technical solution. Not possible as all other technical solutions are not licensed for us in the UK by OFCOM</p>



5.1 Cost				
	Costs			
Option Number	Year 1	Year 2	Year 3	Total
1 (do nothing)	0	0	0	0
2	£40k	0	0	£40k
3	£10k	0	0	£10k
4 (if applicable)	0	0	0	0

5.2 Monetary Savings				
	Savings			
Option Number	Year 1	Year 2	Year 3	Total
1 (do nothing)	0	0	0	0
2	0	0	0	0
3	0	0	0	0
4 (if applicable)	0	0	0	0

5.3 Non Monetary Benefits / Efficiencies of Recommended option	
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Improvement in mobile carrier signal coverage for all users of Vodafone, O2, EE, and 3 mobile networks whilst at Newsham Court. • Improved user experience for both staff and visitors to Newsham Court. • Improved service resilience in the event of total primary network outage at Newsham Court. • Foundational element of executing elements of the ICT strategy action plan, specifically in connectivity assurance for both operational and non-operations business processes that will increasingly rely on mobility solutions. • Supports an increase in use of mobile platforms for key activities, reducing need for fixed location computing devices, and potentially improving process effectiveness and efficiency. • Reputational improvement – external visitors to Newsham Court • Reduction in reliance on guest wireless technologies for effective digital communication at Newsham Court.

5.4 Cost/Savings Assumptions				
Option Number				
1 (do nothing)	n/a – no savings identified			
2	n/a – no savings identified			



3	n/a – no savings identified			
4 (if applicable)	n/a – no savings identified			

5.5 Risks & Benefits (Include anything arising from the Equality Impact Assessment)		
Option Number	Risks	Benefits
1 (do nothing)	Ongoing poor mobile performance and resultant barriers to digitisation activities	Avoidance of implementation costs
2	None identified	Improved mobile experience at Newsham Court
		Enablement of downstream ICT strategy actions
		Improved performance under business continuity situations
		Greater assurance of continuity of service during primary network outages
3	Inability to demonstrate significant performance improvement	Avoidance of implementation costs
	Some devices may need to be replaced where locked to current provider	
4 (if applicable)	Enforcement action from OFCOM regarding any non-compliant booster technology, with attendant reputational damage	None identified

6.0 Recommendation



Option 2 – Proceed with proven, legal, and effective signal booster technology from Zonewave, as implemented at Theale Community Fire Station.

7.0	Monitoring and Evaluation	
7.1	Who will manage the implementation?	ICT Service Delivery
7.2	Who will monitor and evaluate the outcomes?	HBIS
7.3	Frequency of Reporting?	On completion of works
7.4	Who will manage Equality Impact Assessment review?	HBIS

8.0	Commissioning	
Decision (Approved/ Rejected)		
Decision Made on		
Decision Made by		
Comments (if Rejected)		



EQUALITY IMPACT ASSESSMENT (EIA)

EIA Register Reference Number:	<i>To be completed by Business Support</i>
Name of activity: (i.e. change, policy, procedure, project)	Mobile Carrier Signal Booster Implementation at Newsham Court
Directorate/department:	Corporate Services
Name of department head/policy owner/project lead:	Tony Vincent
Name(s) of person(s) completing this assessment:	Tony Vincent
Date of commencement of assessment:	8 th March 2022
Dates of Review: (please complete the review log at time of each review)	Click or tap here to enter text.

1. What is/are the aims/purpose and intended outcomes of the activity you are assessing?

To implement mobile carrier signal booster technology at Newsham Court in order to address long-standing mobile phone coverage issues inherent in the building due to construction methods and general mobile signal coverage in the geographical area. The outcome will be better signal strength across the four major mobile networks in the UK at the premises, meaning that both staff and visitors will enjoy an enhanced mobile experience.

2. Who is/may be affected by the activity, and how? Consider applicants, service users, members of the public, RBFRS employees, partner organisations etc.

Please refer to the completion guidance.

Has any consultation taken place with those who may be affected in order to inform this assessment?

All those utilising mobile devices at Newsham Court. No consultation necessary as no action required by the impacted demographic to take advantage of enhanced signal strengths.

Information

3. What information is already available that tells you what impact the activity has/will have on people? Consider quantitative and qualitative data, consultation, research, complaints etc. What does this information tell you?

Please list any policies that are related or referred to as part of this assessment.

Is there any equality data relating to this activity? Please also consider any further data that may inform your assessment i.e. consultations, complaint data, external research.



Please refer to the central register to identify any related existing EIAs.
Please describe any additional research undertaken to inform this assessment.

These sources of information will be used to inform your assessment of the activity.

Direct experience of implementing the proposed solution at Theale Community Fire Station in December 2021.

4. What impact may this activity have on the following groups?

Assessment of impact on groups in **bold** is a legal requirement, but it is important to consider the potential impacts of your activity on all of the following groups to ensure that your activity does not have unintended consequences.

	Neutral Impact	Positive Impact	Negative Impact	Please provide detail of potential impact(s), including any relevant evidence from the information section above:
Sex (Men and Women)	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	No change of use or behaviour required in mobile capabilities for impacted users
Race (All Racial Groups)	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	No change of use or behaviour required in mobile capabilities for impacted users
Disability (Mental, Physical, and Carers of Disabled people)	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	No change of use or behaviour required in mobile capabilities for impacted users
Religion or Belief	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	No change of use or behaviour required in mobile capabilities for impacted users
Sexual Orientation (All diverse sexual orientations)	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	No change of use or behaviour required in mobile capabilities for impacted users
Pregnancy and Maternity (Includes new mothers and those returning to the workplace)	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	No change of use or behaviour required in mobile capabilities for impacted users
Marital Status (Married and Civil Partnerships)	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	No change of use or behaviour required



	Neutral Impact	Positive Impact	Negative Impact	Please provide detail of potential impact(s), including any relevant evidence from the information section above:
				in mobile capabilities for impacted users
Trans People (Includes non-binary identities and all other diverse gender identities/expressions)	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	No change of use or behaviour required in mobile capabilities for impacted users
Age (People of all ages)	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	No change of use or behaviour required in mobile capabilities for impacted users
People in different family circumstances (including those with caring responsibilities)	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	No change of use or behaviour required in mobile capabilities for impacted users
People in different social circumstances (including socio-economic factors i.e. poverty and isolation)	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	No change of use or behaviour required in mobile capabilities for impacted users
Different employee groups (including consideration of on-call staff, grades, contract status. Also consider non-employee groups i.e. casual workers, volunteers)	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	No change of use or behaviour required in mobile capabilities for impacted users
Other – this may include consideration of other factors as relevant to the activity such as unemployment, homelessness, urbanisation, rurality, health and wellbeing implications. Please see completion notes for further guidance.	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	No change of use or behaviour required in mobile capabilities for impacted users



- 5. What further research or consultation is needed to check the impact/potential impact of the activity on different groups? If needed, how will you gather additional information, and from whom? Please refer to the EIA guidance.**

None

Summary of Assessment

- 6. Taking account of the assessment above, have any negative and/or disproportionate impacts been identified? If so, what amendments will you make to the activity?**

No negative impacts identified.



7. After these amendments (if any) have been made, is/will there still be a negative impact on any group?

Yes

No

If No, go to section 9.

If Yes, please explain:

Click or tap here to enter text.

8. Can commencing or continuing the activity without further amendment be justified? If so, how? Please refer to the guidance documents for further information.

Click or tap here to enter text.

9. How can you ensure that any positive or neutral impact is maintained?

Capture feedback from on-site user community on a regular basis.

10. How will you monitor the impact of the activity in future? Please identify timelines and responsible owner for monitoring, including detail of links to project/service plans if relevant.

n/a – no change to solution envisaged in foreseeable future.



Action Plan

Following the assessment, please complete the action plan below.

Action Plan Owner: n/a	Commencement date: n/a	Sign off date: n/a Please ensure all actions are completed before sign-off.
----------------------------------	----------------------------------	------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------

As a result of conducting this assessment, what actions are proposed to remove or reduce any negative impact identified? n/a

Action Plan				
Identified Impact:	Recommended Actions:	Responsible Lead:	Target Completion Date:	Completion Date:
Click or tap here to enter text.	Click or tap to enter a date.			
Click or tap here to enter text.	Click or tap to enter a date.			
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Click or tap here to enter text.	Click or tap to enter a date.			
Click or tap here to enter text.	Click or tap to enter a date.			
Click or tap here to enter text.	Click or tap to enter a date.			



Review Log

Please ensure that you update the action plan accordingly as a result of any changes to the assessment.

Date of Review:	Reason for Review: (i.e. outcomes of consultation, further research conducted, change to activity etc.)	Outcome of Review: (please describe resulting changes to EIA)
8/3/22	Initial Assessment	n/a
Click or tap to enter a date.	Click or tap here to enter text.	Click or tap here to enter text.
Click or tap to enter a date.	Click or tap here to enter text.	Click or tap here to enter text.
Click or tap to enter a date.	Click or tap here to enter text.	Click or tap here to enter text.
Click or tap to enter a date.	Click or tap here to enter text.	Click or tap here to enter text.
Click or tap to enter a date.	Click or tap here to enter text.	Click or tap here to enter text.

Admin

Please send the first draft and any further amended versions to Business Support to be held in the central register.

Check this box if you have undertaken research as part of this assessment that may be of use to others in completing other equality impact assessments:

Append this equality impact assessment as necessary to project reports, business cases and other documents as relevant to governance routes.

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Business Case			
Programme (if applicable):	ICT Strategy Action Plan		
Project / Work Package Name:	Computer Peripherals	PMO Ref:	n/a
Project / Work Package Manager:	Gary Thomas		
Date:	8 th March 2022	Version:	
Sponsors Name:	Tony Vincent	Allocated Cost Code:	

1.0	Funding Stream (please 'x' as appropriate)		2.0	Purpose (please 'x' as appropriate)	
1.1	Existing Budget		2.1	Project	
1.2	Capital Bid	X	2.2	Temporary Resource	
1.3	Transition Fund		2.3	Increase in Revenue	
			2.4	Capital Purchase	X

3.0 Reason for submitting this business case (link to Strategic Commitments)

Changes to ways of working within RBFRRS since the advent of the global Covid-19 have dictated the supply and distribution of new and additional computer peripheral devices that are required in order to facilitate effective remote working for an increasingly flexible workforce. For the past two years, central government COVID-19 grants have provided funding for the acquisition of additional docking stations, monitors, keyboards, mice, as well as the acquisition of new devices to the service, such as webcams, hands-free speaker/mic units and headsets, all of which are essential to effective remote working, collaboration and communication.

The ICT strategy states:

“Evidence from other organisations who have successfully enabled a flexible working ethos suggest that the key to unlocking flexibility is to provide technical solutions that replace or augment the ability to communicate, interact and collaborate with colleagues, peers and teams. Ideally, there should be no material difference in either the methods used, nor the richness of the collaboration experience, whether the participant is at HQ, at a station, at home, or even when mobile in a vehicle.”

As the UK emerges from COVID-19, and restrictions are eased, it is clear that a shift to more flexible working practices is likely to be enduring, and as we move into a new normal, central government grant funding to keep this capability functioning effectively is unlikely to materialise. Therefore it is prudent to plan for replacement of these items within the framework of the capital spending plan rather than adopt a more ad-hoc approach that could negatively impact the ICT revenue budget.

External peripherals, particularly those with moving parts or that are worn by users, exhibit a much shorter useful lifespan than other elements of the client device suite. It is wise to



plan for 50% replacement on an annual basis, leading to a two-year lifecycle for most peripherals falling into this category.

4.0	Project/ Work Package SMART Objectives
	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Create replacement schedule based on date of deployment for key peripheral equipment, ensuring that stations and HQ benefit earlier from any replacement schedules 2. Assess identified candidate equipment for replacement if beyond useful life 3. Replace equipment on an as-necessary basis

5.0	Options Appraisal
Option Number	Brief Description of Option
1 Do nothing	Do nothing – procure replacement equipment on an ad-hoc basis on failure.
2	Devise and implement a rolling replacement programme based on a two-year useful life and involving assessment of need as a pre-requisite. Ongoing analysis of failure rates to adjust replacement cycles as necessary based on real-world experience.
3	
4 (if applicable)	



5.1 Cost				
	Costs			
Option Number	Year 1	Year 2	Year 3	Total
1 (do nothing)	£20k*	£20k*	£20k*	£60k*
2	£30k	0	£30k	£60k
3				
4 (if applicable)				

*Approximate ad-hoc costs associated with replacement of existing equipment, which will manifest as a pressure on the ICT revenue budget.

5.2 Monetary Savings				
	Savings			
Option Number	Year 1	Year 2	Year 3	Total
1 (do nothing)	0	0	0	0
2	0	0	0	0
3	0	0	0	0
4 (if applicable)	0	0	0	0

5.3 Non Monetary Benefits / Efficiencies of Recommended option	
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Removal of likely in-year revenue budget pressures • Lower disruption to user community through planned rather than ad-hoc replacement • Reduction in administrative effort within ICT team (maintenance of spares stocks, etc.)

5.4 Cost/Savings Assumptions				
Option Number				
1 (do nothing)	n/a – no savings identified			
2	n/a – no savings identified			
3				



4 (if applicable)				
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5.5 Risks & Benefits (Include anything arising from the Equality Impact Assessment)		
Option Number	Risks	Benefits
1 (do nothing)	Variable and/or unplanned introduction of revenue budget pressures	
	Delays to replacement of equipment and consequential disruption to business activities	
2	None identified	Lower administrative effort to manage device replacement
3		
4 (if applicable)		

6.0 Recommendation	
Option 2 – adopt a two year rolling replacement plan for all computer peripheral devices, resulting in planned expenditure and minimisation of revenue budget pressures as well as administrative effort.	

7.0 Monitoring and Evaluation		
7.1	Who will manage the implementation?	ICT Service Delivery
7.2	Who will monitor and evaluate the outcomes?	HBIS
7.3	Frequency of Reporting?	On completion of works
7.4	Who will manage Equality Impact Assessment review?	HBIS



8.0 Commissioning	
Decision (Approved/ Rejected)	
Decision Made on	
Decision Made by	
Comments (if Rejected)	



EQUALITY IMPACT ASSESSMENT (EIA)

EIA Register Reference Number:	<i>To be completed by Business Support</i>
Name of activity: (i.e. change, policy, procedure, project)	Planned replacement of Computer Peripheral devices
Directorate/department:	Corporate Services
Name of department head/policy owner/project lead:	Tony Vincent
Name(s) of person(s) completing this assessment:	Tony Vincent
Date of commencement of assessment:	8 th March 2022
Dates of Review: (please complete the review log at time of each review)	Click or tap here to enter text.

1. What is/are the aims/purpose and intended outcomes of the activity you are assessing?

To ensure all computer peripheral devices are replaced on a schedule that minimises overall downtime and disruption for RBFRS staff.

2. Who is/may be affected by the activity, and how? Consider applicants, service users, members of the public, RBFRS employees, partner organisations etc.

Please refer to the completion guidance.

Has any consultation taken place with those who may be affected in order to inform this assessment?

All HQ & Station-based RBFRS staff; full, partial or ad-hoc remote workers, Staff predominately mobile as part of their duties.

Information

3. What information is already available that tells you what impact the activity has/will have on people? Consider quantitative and qualitative data, consultation, research, complaints etc. What does this information tell you?

Please list any policies that are related or referred to as part of this assessment.



Is there any equality data relating to this activity? Please also consider any further data that may inform your assessment i.e. consultations, complaint data, external research. Please refer to the central register to identify any related existing EIAs.

Please describe any additional research undertaken to inform this assessment.

These sources of information will be used to inform your assessment of the activity.

Direct experience of deploying and using the equipment in question over the past two years.

4. What impact may this activity have on the following groups?

Assessment of impact on groups in **bold** is a legal requirement, but it is important to consider the potential impacts of your activity on all of the following groups to ensure that your activity does not have unintended consequences.

	Neutral Impact	Positive Impact	Negative Impact	Please provide detail of potential impact(s), including any relevant evidence from the information section above:
Sex (Men and Women)	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	No change of use or behaviour required in mobile capabilities for impacted users
Race (All Racial Groups)	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	No change of use or behaviour required in mobile capabilities for impacted users
Disability (Mental, Physical, and Carers of Disabled people)	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	Opportunity to refine peripheral provision for those with disabilities that require reasonable adjustments; enablement of remote working capability.
Religion or Belief	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	No change of use or behaviour required in mobile capabilities for impacted users
Sexual Orientation (All diverse sexual orientations)	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	No change of use or behaviour required in mobile capabilities for impacted users



	Neutral Impact	Positive Impact	Negative Impact	Please provide detail of potential impact(s), including any relevant evidence from the information section above:
Pregnancy and Maternity (Includes new mothers and those returning to the workplace)	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	Enablement of greater flexibility in working arrangements for this group
Marital Status (Married and Civil Partnerships)	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	No change of use or behaviour required in mobile capabilities for impacted users
Trans People (Includes non-binary identities and all other diverse gender identities/expressions)	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	No change of use or behaviour required in mobile capabilities for impacted users
Age (People of all ages)	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	No change of use or behaviour required in mobile capabilities for impacted users
People in different family circumstances (including those with caring responsibilities)	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	Enablement of greater flexibility in working arrangements for this group
People in different social circumstances (including socio-economic factors i.e. poverty and isolation)	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	Enablement of greater flexibility in working arrangements for this group
Different employee groups (including consideration of on-call staff, grades, contract status. Also consider non-employee groups i.e. casual workers, volunteers)	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	No change of use or behaviour required in mobile capabilities for impacted users
Other – this may include consideration of other factors as relevant to the activity such as unemployment, homelessness,	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	No change of use or behaviour required in mobile capabilities for impacted users



	Neutral Impact	Positive Impact	Negative Impact	Please provide detail of potential impact(s), including any relevant evidence from the information section above:
urbanisation, rurality, health and wellbeing implications. Please see completion notes for further guidance.				

5. What further research or consultation is needed to check the impact/potential impact of the activity on different groups? If needed, how will you gather additional information, and from whom? Please refer to the EIA guidance.

None

Summary of Assessment

6. Taking account of the assessment above, have any negative and/or disproportionate impacts been identified? If so, what amendments will you make to the activity?

No negative impacts identified.



7. After these amendments (if any) have been made, is/will there still be a negative impact on any group?

Yes

No

If No, go to section 9.

If Yes, please explain:

Click or tap here to enter text.

8. Can commencing or continuing the activity without further amendment be justified? If so, how? Please refer to the guidance documents for further information.

Click or tap here to enter text.

9. How can you ensure that any positive or neutral impact is maintained?

Capture ongoing feedback from user community on a regular basis.

10. How will you monitor the impact of the activity in future? Please identify timelines and responsible owner for monitoring, including detail of links to project/service plans if relevant.

n/a – expected replacement like-for-like in foreseeable future.



Action Plan

Following the assessment, please complete the action plan below.

Action Plan Owner: n/a	Commencement date: n/a	Sign off date: n/a Please ensure all actions are completed before sign-off.
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As a result of conducting this assessment, what actions are proposed to remove or reduce any negative impact identified? n/a

Action Plan				
Identified Impact:	Recommended Actions:	Responsible Lead:	Target Completion Date:	Completion Date:
Click or tap here to enter text.	Click or tap to enter a date.			
Click or tap here to enter text.	Click or tap to enter a date.			
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Click or tap here to enter text.	Click or tap to enter a date.			

Agenda Item 13

Appendix B Royal Berkshire Fire and Rescue Service



Review Log

Please ensure that you update the action plan accordingly as a result of any changes to the assessment.

Date of Review:	Reason for Review: (i.e. outcomes of consultation, further research conducted, change to activity etc.)	Outcome of Review: (please describe resulting changes to EIA)
8/3/22	Initial Assessment	n/a
Click or tap to enter a date.	Click or tap here to enter text.	Click or tap here to enter text.
Click or tap to enter a date.	Click or tap here to enter text.	Click or tap here to enter text.
Click or tap to enter a date.	Click or tap here to enter text.	Click or tap here to enter text.
Click or tap to enter a date.	Click or tap here to enter text.	Click or tap here to enter text.
Click or tap to enter a date.	Click or tap here to enter text.	Click or tap here to enter text.

Admin

Please send the first draft and any further amended versions to Business Support to be held in the central register.

Check this box if you have undertaken research as part of this assessment that may be of use to others in completing other equality impact assessments:

Append this equality impact assessment as necessary to project reports, business cases and other documents as relevant to governance routes.



Business Case			
Programme (if applicable):	ICT Strategy Action Plan		
Project / Work Package Name:	Mobile Phone deployment	PMO Ref:	n/a
Project / Work Package Manager:	Gary Thomas		
Date:	8 th March 2022	Version:	
Sponsors Name:	Tony Vincent	Allocated Cost Code:	

1.0	Funding Stream (please 'x' as appropriate)		2.0	Purpose (please 'x' as appropriate)	
1.1	Existing Budget		2.1	Project	
1.2	Capital Bid	X	2.2	Temporary Resource	
1.3	Transition Fund		2.3	Increase in Revenue	
			2.4	Capital Purchase	X

3.0 Reason for submitting this business case (link to Strategic Commitments)

The current ICT strategy states:

“Further efficiencies in the execution of RBFRS ways of working will be largely met through digitisation and automation of existing manual, paper based processes, and an increased requirement to deliver information flexibly, quickly and securely to the right recipients”

and that:

“The RBFRS ICT strategy should adopt a “mobile first” approach to applications and services that focusses on providing a role-tailored, simple and intuitive, high quality user experience regardless of physical location or access method”

A “mobile first” approach obviously requires ubiquitous access to mobile devices. Currently, RBFRS equips approximately 150 staff with mobile devices and provides an addition 30 appliance based mobile device for crew communication. Given a establishment of 642, this means that the majority of RBFRS staff are not currently provided with any service sourced Mobile devices.

Neighbouring services have implemented “Bring Your Own Device” (BYOD) strategies for providing access to mobile apps for staff, which although attractive at first glance, introduces significant additional complexity in terms of mobile device security management, administrative processes, expenses claiming, policy creation and compliance monitoring, as well as introducing potentially significant variation in user experience across differing mobile platforms. Web/mobile app development is also significantly more complex in order to develop, deploy and test across a large number of platforms and multiple mobile ecosystems, and higher costs for the provision of 3rd party developed mobile applications for the same reason.



Conversely, provision of a service device to staff results in the following benefits:

- Clear separation of work and personal mobile usage
- No expenses policy or process overhead
- Control of the mobile security platform from end to end
- Single platform – single user experience – simplified development and testing environment
- Minimised administrative effort to manage the mobile fleet.

With the above in mind, the current strategy is to provide service devices in favour of the alternative BYOD approach.

This strategic direction dictates that over time a greater proportion of staff will be issued with mobile devices, as more services become available via mobile platforms. Examples of this include mobile application development in the building information space, future digitisation of standard testing regimes, Firewatch mobile application to include enhanced on-call functionality, training/certification recording, shift requests, crewing enhancements, asset management, defecting and absence requesting, all of which can and will be provided via a mobile application in the near future. The core capability to enable much of this functionality already exists within the Firewatch and IBIS environment. Finally, collaboration applications are already deployed to mobile platforms so that staff so equipped are able to participate in remote or hybrid meetings on a mobile device with the same look, feel and functionality as those participants on laptop or desktop windows devices.

This proposal sets aside capital funding to expand the existing mobile fleet by up to 225 devices, allowing ICT to equip many more wholetime and on-call staff with individual mobiles in order to improve and harmonise the digital experience for a larger cross section of the user population.

4.0	Project/ Work Package SMART Objectives
	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Validate schedule for delivery of key mobile applications and their target demographic 2. Structure device procurement programme based on application deployment schedules

5.0	Options Appraisal
Option Number	Brief Description of Option
1 Do nothing	Do nothing – broadly maintain existing mobile fleet size and deployment profile.



2	Implement the identified solution – prepare for expanded deployment of mobile devices based on business need and mobile applications development schedules
3	Adopt BYOD approach to expanded access to mobile applications
4 (if applicable)	



5.1 Cost				
	Costs			
Option Number	Year 1	Year 2	Year 3	Total
1 (do nothing)	0	0	0	0
2	£87k	0	0	£87k
3	0	0	0	0
4 (if applicable)	0	0	0	0

5.2 Monetary Savings				
	Savings			
Option Number	Year 1	Year 2	Year 3	Total
1 (do nothing)	0	0	0	0
2	0	0	0	0
3	0	0	0	0
4 (if applicable)	0	0	0	0

5.3 Non Monetary Benefits / Efficiencies of Recommended option	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Cost avoidance of equipping greater numbers of staff with windows laptop devices for limited application access – average difference between Mobile device cost and laptop is approximately £400 per unit plus operating system licensing • Greater commonality of experience across wider cross section of staff due to access to digital resources • Maintenance of excellent mobile security environment • Minimisation of ongoing mobile platform development costs • Minimisation of administrative overhead in management of mobile fleet • Removal of impediments to mobile application deployment due to inequality of access to devices • Business process and operational efficiency opportunities enabled by greater penetration of mobile services across the organisation 	

5.4 Cost/Savings Assumptions				
Option Number				
1 (do nothing)	n/a – no savings identified			
2	n/a – no savings identified			



3	n/a – no savings identified			
4 (if applicable)				

5.5 Risks & Benefits (Include anything arising from the Equality Impact Assessment)		
Option Number	Risks	Benefits
1 (do nothing)	Continuing inequality of mobile access and consequential lack of visible investment in some staff demographics	Avoidance of procurement costs
2	Inconvenience of carrying multiple devices for some staff	Homogenous, simple management environment
		Physical separation of personal and work data and system access
		No change to existing administrative process or policies required
3	More complex mobile device security administration	Avoidance of procurement costs
	Administrative overhead associated with service permission to access, manage and potentially remotely wipe personal devices	
	Administrative overhead associated with claiming expenses for business use of personal devices	
	Greater complexity/cost in platform and ecosystem in terms of mobile application procurement and development.	
4 (if applicable)		

6.0 Recommendation



Option 2 – Set aside £87k to expand deployment of mobile devices by up to 225 devices in support of mobile application and services deployment.

7.0 Monitoring and Evaluation		
7.1	Who will manage the implementation?	ICT Service Delivery
7.2	Who will monitor and evaluate the outcomes?	HBIS
7.3	Frequency of Reporting?	On completion of works
7.4	Who will manage Equality Impact Assessment review?	HBIS

8.0 Commissioning	
Decision (Approved/ Rejected)	
Decision Made on	
Decision Made by	
Comments (if Rejected)	



EQUALITY IMPACT ASSESSMENT (EIA)

EIA Register Reference Number:	<i>To be completed by Business Support</i>
Name of activity: (i.e. change, policy, procedure, project)	Mobile telephone deployment expansion
Directorate/department:	Corporate Services
Name of department head/policy owner/project lead:	Tony Vincent
Name(s) of person(s) completing this assessment:	Tony Vincent
Date of commencement of assessment:	8 th March 2022
Dates of Review: (please complete the review log at time of each review)	Click or tap here to enter text.

1. What is/are the aims/purpose and intended outcomes of the activity you are assessing?

To expand the deployment of RBFRS service mobile devices to a greater cross section of RBFRS staff in order to improve and harmonise the digital user experiences of uniformed and non-uniformed staff.

2. Who is/may be affected by the activity, and how? Consider applicants, service users, members of the public, RBFRS employees, partner organisations etc.

Please refer to the completion guidance.

Has any consultation taken place with those who may be affected in order to inform this assessment?

All those who may benefit from the use of RBFRS mobile devices but whom do not currently have access.

Information

3. What information is already available that tells you what impact the activity has/will have on people? Consider quantitative and qualitative data, consultation, research, complaints etc. What does this information tell you?

Please list any policies that are related or referred to as part of this assessment.



Is there any equality data relating to this activity? Please also consider any further data that may inform your assessment i.e. consultations, complaint data, external research. Please refer to the central register to identify any related existing EIAs. Please describe any additional research undertaken to inform this assessment. *These sources of information will be used to inform your assessment of the activity.*

Expansion of existing mobile device deployment.

4. What impact may this activity have on the following groups?

Assessment of impact on groups in **bold** is a legal requirement, but it is important to consider the potential impacts of your activity on all of the following groups to ensure that your activity does not have unintended consequences.

	Neutral Impact	Positive Impact	Negative Impact	Please provide detail of potential impact(s), including any relevant evidence from the information section above:
Sex (Men and Women)	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	No change of use or behaviour required in mobile capabilities for impacted users
Race (All Racial Groups)	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	No change of use or behaviour required in mobile capabilities for impacted users
Disability (Mental, Physical, and Carers of Disabled people)	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	No change of use or behaviour required in mobile capabilities for impacted users
Religion or Belief	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	No change of use or behaviour required in mobile capabilities for impacted users
Sexual Orientation (All diverse sexual orientations)	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	No change of use or behaviour required in mobile capabilities for impacted users
Pregnancy and Maternity (Includes new mothers and those returning to the workplace)	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	No change of use or behaviour required in mobile capabilities for impacted users



	Neutral Impact	Positive Impact	Negative Impact	Please provide detail of potential impact(s), including any relevant evidence from the information section above:
Marital Status (Married and Civil Partnerships)	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	No change of use or behaviour required in mobile capabilities for impacted users
Trans People (Includes non-binary identities and all other diverse gender identities/expressions)	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	No change of use or behaviour required in mobile capabilities for impacted users
Age (People of all ages)	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	No change of use or behaviour required in mobile capabilities for impacted users
People in different family circumstances (including those with caring responsibilities)	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	No change of use or behaviour required in mobile capabilities for impacted users
People in different social circumstances (including socio-economic factors i.e. poverty and isolation)	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	No change of use or behaviour required in mobile capabilities for impacted users
Different employee groups (including consideration of on-call staff, grades, contract status. Also consider non-employee groups i.e. casual workers, volunteers)	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	Expansion of mobile service provision to more employee groups will provide opportunities to improve effectiveness and efficiency of daily tasks
Other – this may include consideration of other factors as relevant to the activity such as unemployment, homelessness, urbanisation, rurality, health and wellbeing implications. Please see completion notes	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	No change of use or behaviour required in mobile capabilities for impacted users



	Neutral Impact	Positive Impact	Negative Impact	Please provide detail of potential impact(s), including any relevant evidence from the information section above:
for further guidance.				

5. What further research or consultation is needed to check the impact/potential impact of the activity on different groups? If needed, how will you gather additional information, and from whom? Please refer to the EIA guidance.

None

Summary of Assessment

6. Taking account of the assessment above, have any negative and/or disproportionate impacts been identified? If so, what amendments will you make to the activity?

No negative impacts identified.



7. After these amendments (if any) have been made, is/will there still be a negative impact on any group?

Yes

No

If No, go to section 9.

If Yes, please explain:

Click or tap here to enter text.

8. Can commencing or continuing the activity without further amendment be justified? If so, how? Please refer to the guidance documents for further information.

Click or tap here to enter text.

9. How can you ensure that any positive or neutral impact is maintained?

Capture feedback from user community on a regular basis.

10. How will you monitor the impact of the activity in future? Please identify timelines and responsible owner for monitoring, including detail of links to project/service plans if relevant.

n/a – no change to solution envisaged in foreseeable future.



Action Plan

Following the assessment, please complete the action plan below.

Action Plan Owner: n/a	Commencement date: n/a	Sign off date: n/a Please ensure all actions are completed before sign-off.
----------------------------------	----------------------------------	------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------

As a result of conducting this assessment, what actions are proposed to remove or reduce any negative impact identified? n/a

Action Plan				
Identified Impact:	Recommended Actions:	Responsible Lead:	Target Completion Date:	Completion Date:
Click or tap here to enter text.	Click or tap to enter a date.			
Click or tap here to enter text.	Click or tap to enter a date.			
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Click or tap here to enter text.	Click or tap to enter a date.			



Review Log

Please ensure that you update the action plan accordingly as a result of any changes to the assessment.

Date of Review:	Reason for Review: (i.e. outcomes of consultation, further research conducted, change to activity etc.)	Outcome of Review: (please describe resulting changes to EIA)
8/3/22	Initial Assessment	n/a
Click or tap to enter a date.	Click or tap here to enter text.	Click or tap here to enter text.
Click or tap to enter a date.	Click or tap here to enter text.	Click or tap here to enter text.
Click or tap to enter a date.	Click or tap here to enter text.	Click or tap here to enter text.
Click or tap to enter a date.	Click or tap here to enter text.	Click or tap here to enter text.
Click or tap to enter a date.	Click or tap here to enter text.	Click or tap here to enter text.

Admin

Please send the first draft and any further amended versions to Business Support to be held in the central register.

Check this box if you have undertaken research as part of this assessment that may be of use to others in completing other equality impact assessments:

Append this equality impact assessment as necessary to project reports, business cases and other documents as relevant to governance routes.

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Business Case			
Programme (if applicable):	ICT Strategy Action Plan		
Project / Work Package Name:	Firewatch Development	PMO Ref:	n/a
Project / Work Package Manager:	Steve Smith		
Date:	8 th March 2022	Version:	
Sponsors Name:	Tony Vincent	Allocated Cost Code:	

1.0	Funding Stream (please 'x' as appropriate)		2.0	Purpose (please 'x' as appropriate)	
1.1	Existing Budget		2.1	Project	
1.2	Capital Bid	X	2.2	Temporary Resource	
1.3	Transition Fund		2.3	Increase in Revenue	
			2.4	Capital Purchase	X

3.0	Reason for submitting this business case (link to Strategic Commitments)
	<p>Firewatch is RBFRS' enterprise resource planning platform, spanning activities from equipment defecting to crewing across operational, finance, fleet, and human resources functions. As the reach of the application is broad, it is usual to expect feature and update requests from the organisation that fall outside of normal maintenance regimes during a municipal year.</p> <p>ICT is already aware of multiple business feature requests (e.g. R&D planner, LMS integration) that are likely to attract a development cost to implement. Past experience has shown that these costs average approximately £50k each year, which to date have been absorbed in departmental revenue budgets.</p> <p>Over time more and more points of Firewatch integration to other systems will be required, meaning overall reliance of the core application to evolve with RBFRS needs will increase.</p> <p>Examples of activities that would not have been possible without this type of funding include the Asset Management Project, Finance systems reporting, feature enhancements like shift marketplace, crewing holiday management etc. Future integration opportunities with Microsoft Active Directory, Sage Accounting, 3rd party services, and mobility solutions will not be possible, removing efficiency opportunities through workflow automation.</p>

4.0	Project/ Work Package SMART Objectives
	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Assess business requirements for Firewatch feature updates/enhancements through ongoing engagement with business groups by BIS Business Partnering. 2. Prioritise target projects based on business need and cost 3. Engage Infographics to develop and test based on requirements.



5.0 Options Appraisal	
Option Number	Brief Description of Option
1 Do nothing	Do nothing – manage requirements on an ad-hoc basis and fund from existing revenue budgets, introducing unplanned pressures.
2	Fund discrete update/enhancement projects from an earmarked capital fund to minimise administrative burden on project initiation
3	
4 (if applicable)	



5.1 Cost				
	Costs			
Option Number	Year 1	Year 2	Year 3	Total
1 (do nothing)	£50k*	£50k*	£50k*	£150k*
2	£50k	£50k	£50k	£150k
3				
4 (if applicable)				

*Approximate ad-hoc costs associated with historical requirement for update/enhancement, which will manifest as an unplanned pressure on departmental revenue budgets.

5.2 Monetary Savings				
	Savings			
Option Number	Year 1	Year 2	Year 3	Total
1 (do nothing)	0	0	0	0
2	0	0	0	0
3	0	0	0	0
4 (if applicable)	0	0	0	0

5.3 Non Monetary Benefits / Efficiencies of Recommended option	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Removal of likely in-year revenue budget pressures • Improvement in project start-up lead times • Reduction in administrative effort within ICT team 	

5.4 Cost/Savings Assumptions				
Option Number				
1 (do nothing)	n/a – no savings identified			
2	n/a – no savings identified			



3				
4 (if applicable)				

5.5 Risks & Benefits (Include anything arising from the Equality Impact Assessment)		
Option Number	Risks	Benefits
1 (do nothing)	Variable and/or unplanned introduction of revenue budget pressures	
	Delays to project initiation due to lack of funding clarity	
2	None identified	Lower administrative effort to manage business project requests
3		
4 (if applicable)		

6.0 Recommendation	
Option 2 – plan for £50k per annum of capital to be set aside to fund business-led update/enhancement projects impacting the Firewatch Application.	

7.0 Monitoring and Evaluation		
7.1	Who will manage the implementation?	ICT Service Delivery
7.2	Who will monitor and evaluate the outcomes?	HBIS
7.3	Frequency of Reporting?	On completion of works
7.4	Who will manage Equality Impact Assessment review?	HBIS



8.0 Commissioning	
Decision (Approved/ Rejected)	
Decision Made on	
Decision Made by	
Comments (if Rejected)	



EQUALITY IMPACT ASSESSMENT (EIA)

EIA Register Reference Number:	<i>To be completed by Business Support</i>
Name of activity: (i.e. change, policy, procedure, project)	Firewatch update/enhancement
Directorate/department:	Corporate Services
Name of department head/policy owner/project lead:	Tony Vincent
Name(s) of person(s) completing this assessment:	Tony Vincent
Date of commencement of assessment:	8 th March 2022
Dates of Review: (please complete the review log at time of each review)	Click or tap here to enter text.

1. What is/are the aims/purpose and intended outcomes of the activity you are assessing?

To ensure Firewatch is developed in line with evolving business needs without adversely impacting departmental revenue budgets.

2. Who is/may be affected by the activity, and how? Consider applicants, service users, members of the public, RBFRS employees, partner organisations etc.

Please refer to the completion guidance.

Has any consultation taken place with those who may be affected in order to inform this assessment?

All RBFRS staff who routinely or occasionally use the Firewatch suite of application functions.

Information

3. What information is already available that tells you what impact the activity has/will have on people? Consider quantitative and qualitative data, consultation, research, complaints etc. What does this information tell you?

Please list any policies that are related or referred to as part of this assessment.



Is there any equality data relating to this activity? Please also consider any further data that may inform your assessment i.e. consultations, complaint data, external research. Please refer to the central register to identify any related existing EIAs.

Please describe any additional research undertaken to inform this assessment.

These sources of information will be used to inform your assessment of the activity.

Each specific project will need an equality impact assessment based on needs, scope and audience.

4. What impact may this activity have on the following groups?

Assessment of impact on groups in **bold** is a legal requirement, but it is important to consider the potential impacts of your activity on all of the following groups to ensure that your activity does not have unintended consequences.

	Neutral Impact	Positive Impact	Negative Impact	Please provide detail of potential impact(s), including any relevant evidence from the information section above:
Sex (Men and Women)	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	No worse than neutral impact as each specific project will require an EIA on planned outcomes
Race (All Racial Groups)	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	No worse than neutral impact as each specific project will require an EIA on planned outcomes
Disability (Mental, Physical, and Carers of Disabled people)	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	No worse than neutral impact as each specific project will require an EIA on planned outcomes.
Religion or Belief	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	No worse than neutral impact as each specific project will require an EIA on planned outcomes



	Neutral Impact	Positive Impact	Negative Impact	Please provide detail of potential impact(s), including any relevant evidence from the information section above:
Sexual Orientation (All diverse sexual orientations)	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	No worse than neutral impact as each specific project will require an EIA on planned outcomes
Pregnancy and Maternity (Includes new mothers and those returning to the workplace)	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	No worse than neutral impact as each specific project will require an EIA on planned outcomes
Marital Status (Married and Civil Partnerships)	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	No worse than neutral impact as each specific project will require an EIA on planned outcomes
Trans People (Includes non-binary identities and all other diverse gender identities/expressions)	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	No worse than neutral impact as each specific project will require an EIA on planned outcomes
Age (People of all ages)	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	No worse than neutral impact as each specific project will require an EIA on planned outcomes
People in different family circumstances (including those with caring responsibilities)	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	No worse than neutral impact as each specific project will require an EIA on planned outcomes
People in different social circumstances (including socio-economic factors i.e. poverty and isolation)	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	No worse than neutral impact as each specific project will require an EIA on planned outcomes



	Neutral Impact	Positive Impact	Negative Impact	Please provide detail of potential impact(s), including any relevant evidence from the information section above:
Different employee groups (including consideration of on-call staff, grades, contract status. Also consider non-employee groups i.e. casual workers, volunteers)	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	No worse than neutral impact as each specific project will require an EIA on planned outcomes
Other – this may include consideration of other factors as relevant to the activity such as unemployment, homelessness, urbanisation, rurality, health and wellbeing implications. Please see completion notes for further guidance.	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	No worse than neutral impact as each specific project will require an EIA on planned outcomes

5. What further research or consultation is needed to check the impact/potential impact of the activity on different groups? If needed, how will you gather additional information, and from whom? Please refer to the EIA guidance.

None

Summary of Assessment

6. Taking account of the assessment above, have any negative and/or disproportionate impacts been identified? If so, what amendments will you make to the activity?

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Appendix D Royal Berkshire Fire and Rescue Service



No negative impacts identified.



7. After these amendments (if any) have been made, is/will there still be a negative impact on any group?

Yes

No

If No, go to section 9.

If Yes, please explain:

Click or tap here to enter text.

8. Can commencing or continuing the activity without further amendment be justified? If so, how? Please refer to the guidance documents for further information.

Click or tap here to enter text.

9. How can you ensure that any positive or neutral impact is maintained?

Capture ongoing feedback from user community on a regular basis.

10. How will you monitor the impact of the activity in future? Please identify timelines and responsible owner for monitoring, including detail of links to project/service plans if relevant.

Each project funded from this source will require an individual Equality Impact Assessment.



Action Plan

Following the assessment, please complete the action plan below.

Action Plan Owner: n/a	Commencement date: n/a	Sign off date: n/a Please ensure all actions are completed before sign-off.
----------------------------------	----------------------------------	------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------

As a result of conducting this assessment, what actions are proposed to remove or reduce any negative impact identified? n/a

Action Plan				
Identified Impact:	Recommended Actions:	Responsible Lead:	Target Completion Date:	Completion Date:
Click or tap here to enter text.	Click or tap to enter a date.			
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Review Log

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Click or tap to enter a date.	Click or tap here to enter text.	Click or tap here to enter text.
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Click or tap to enter a date.	Click or tap here to enter text.	Click or tap here to enter text.

Admin

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Check this box if you have undertaken research as part of this assessment that may be of use to others in completing other equality impact assessments:

Append this equality impact assessment as necessary to project reports, business cases and other documents as relevant to governance routes.

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ROYAL BERKSHIRE FIRE AUTHORITY REPORT

COMMITTEE	AUDIT & GOVERNANCE COMMITTEE
DATE OF MEETING	23 MARCH 2022
SUBJECT	CIPFA FINANCIAL MANAGEMENT CODE REPORT
LEAD OFFICER	CONOR BYRNE, HEAD OF FINANCE AND PROCUREMENT
LEAD MEMBER	N/A
EXEMPT INFORMATION	N/A
ACTION	FOR NOTE

1. EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

- 1.1 The Chartered Institute of Public Finance and Accountancy (CIPFA) has published a financial management (FM) code which the Authority needs to demonstrate compliance with from 2021/22.
- 1.2 The attached document demonstrates how the Authority has complied with the Code during the first year of operation.

2. RECOMMENDATION

The Committee is requested to:

- 2.1 **NOTE** the contents as presented in the CIPFA FM Code report (**Appendix A**).

3. REPORT

- 3.1 In 2019/20 CIPFA announced the introduction of a new code, the FM code, which sets out for the first time the standards of financial management for local authorities.
- 3.2 **Appendix A** details the six principals established, the associated seventeen standards and how the Authority is meeting these at the end of the first year.

4. CONTRIBUTION TO STRATEGIC COMMITMENTS

- 4.1 Commitment 5 – We will ensure that Royal Berkshire Fire and Rescue Service provides good value for money.

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5. FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

5.1 There are no direct financial implications from this report.

6. LEGAL IMPLICATIONS

6.1 There are no legal implications arising directly from this report. The FM code is not statutory and does not currently have legislative backing, although it is likely that CIPFA will pursue this.

7. EQUALITY DIVERSITY AND INCLUSION IMPLICATIONS

7.1 N/A

8. RISK IMPLICATIONS

8.1 The purpose of the FM code is to help mitigate future financial risk and ensure financial sustainability.

9. CONSISTENCY WITH DUTY TO COLLABORATE

9.1 N/A

10. PRINCIPAL CONSULTATION

10.1 No issues for statutory officers.

11. BACKGROUND PAPERS

11.1 None

12. APPENDICES

12.1 Appendix A – CIPFA FM Code Report 2021/22

13. CONTACT DETAILS

13.1 Conor Byrne – Head of Finance and Procurement
Email: byrnec@rbfrs.co.uk
Tel: 0118 938 4720

CIPFA FINANCIAL MANAGEMENT CODE

Report 2021/22





» BACKGROUND

The Chartered Institute of Public Finance and Accountancy (CIPFA) published The Financial Management Code (FM Code) in October 2019. The first full year of compliance is 2021/22.

The FM Code provides guidance for good and sustainable financial management in local authorities, giving assurance that authorities are managing resources effectively.

The FM Code requires authorities to demonstrate that the processes they have in place satisfy the principles of good financial management, which is an essential part of ensuring that public sector finances are sustainable.

The FM Code identifies risks to financial sustainability and introduces a framework of assurance. This framework is built on existing successful practices and sets explicit standards of financial management.

Complying with the standards set out in the FM Code is the collective responsibility of elected members, the chief finance officer and their professional colleagues in the senior leadership team. Complying with the FM Code will help strengthen the framework that surrounds financial decision making.

The FM Code builds on elements of other CIPFA codes, such as The Prudential Code for Capital Finance, the Treasury Management in the Public Sector Code of Practice and the Code of Practice on Local Authority Accounting in the United Kingdom.

By following the essential aspects of the FM Code, local authorities are providing evidence to show they are meeting important legislative requirements.

» PRINCIPLES OF GOOD FINANCIAL MANAGEMENT

The FM Code establishes an approach based on six principles of good financial management:

1. Organisational Leadership

Demonstrating a clear strategic direction based on a vision in which financial management is embedded into organisational culture.

2. Accountability

Based on medium term financial planning, driving the annual budget process, supported by effective risk management, quality supporting data and whole life costs.





3. Transparency

At the core of financial management, using consistent, meaningful and understandable data, reported frequently, with evidence of periodic officer action and elected member decision making.

4. Professional Standards

Promoted by the leadership team, with adherence evidenced.

5. Assurance

Recognised as an effective tool, mainstreamed into financial management, including political scrutiny and the results of both external audit, internal audit and inspection.

6. Long-Term Sustainability

At the heart of all local services' financial management processes, evidenced by the prudent use of public resources.

» FINANCIAL MANAGEMENT STANDARDS

The CIPFA Financial Management Code translates these principles of good financial management into 17 standards. These standards are split into seven areas. The standards address the aspects of an authority's operations and activities that must function effectively if financial management is to be undertaken robustly and financial sustainability is to be achieved.

The financial management standards are designed to be sufficiently flexible so that they are relevant to the needs of the diverse range of authorities across the local government sector and to the varying circumstances in which these authorities operate and challenges that they face.

The detailed financial management standards set out in the FM code, and how the Authority is meeting these is shown in the table below:





Section	Financial Management Standard	Assessment of Current Position
	The responsibilities of the chief finance officer and leadership team	
A	The leadership team is able to demonstrate that the services provided by the authority prove value for money	<p>Value for Money is one of the areas assessed as part of the external audit process. No significant weaknesses have been identified in the 2020/21 work completed to date. No areas of concern were identified in prior year audits. Detailed business cases for large projects are reviewed by SLT, and Members as appropriate.</p> <p>Budget setting papers are presented to Fire Authority in February each year. In year performance is monitored monthly and reported to Members quarterly. Blue light collaboration is a key consideration for all projects and opportunities are utilised whenever possible, with numerous examples available.</p> <p>Appropriate use of national and regional procurement contracts and frameworks can also be demonstrated.</p>
B	The authority complies with the CIPFA <i>Statement on the Role of the Chief Finance Officer in Local Government 2016</i>	<p>The Head of Finance and Procurement is the Section 151 Officer and Chief Financial Officer. The post forms part of the Senior Leadership Team of the Authority.</p> <p>The post holder has overall responsibility for the finance function, helping to shape and deliver the Medium Term Financial Plan and Strategic Asset Investment Framework.</p> <p>The post holder is a fully qualified accountant with significant experience of Local Government. The wider Finance team contains four other fully qualified accountants, and others who are at varied points of their studies. All officers are offered continued professional development and encouraged to attend technical training.</p> <p>The Authority has contracts in place for specialist financial services to assist the finance team in meeting their statutory requirements - technical accounting, treasury management, financial management and planning and taxation.</p>
	Governance and financial management style	
C	The Leadership team demonstrates in its actions and behaviours	The Authority has an approved scheme of delegation, Finance and Contract



	responsibility for governance and internal control.	<p>regulations in place, which are regularly reviewed.</p> <p>Regular reviews of the Corporate Risk Register are undertaken by SLT.</p> <p>The Authority has in place a formal governance structure that is appropriate to the way in which it operates. This includes relevant committees and reporting lines, terms of references and conduct, including provision for scrutiny of decisions taken. The Authority has in place a formal scheme of delegation, which sets out which individuals or committees are entitled to make which decisions.</p> <p>Internal Audit works to an agreed plan, which is based on a robust analysis of the Authority's governance, risk management and internal control arrangements, the environment within which it operates and the risks and challenges that it faces.</p>
D	The authority applies the CIPFA/SOLACE <i>Delivering Good Governance in Local Government: Framework (2016)</i>	<p>The Annual Governance Statement is reviewed and approved annually by Members, and details how we meet the core principles of good governance.</p> <p>The internal audit function is provided under a contract with an external provider, ensuring independence and impartiality of reporting.</p>
E	The financial management style of the authority supports financial sustainability	<p>The budget setting papers refreshed and presented to Members annually include a four year Medium Term Financial Plan (MTFP) and a fifteen year Strategic Asset Investment Framework (SAIF). Financial sustainability is a fundamental aspect of both of these documents, and the Authority's wider financial plans and performance.</p> <p>The MTFP includes prudent estimates of funding available and budget growth required over the medium term and appropriate levels of contingencies and reserves required based on an assessment of risks it faces.</p> <p>The longer terms funding implications of the required investment in our assets is detailed in the SAIF. The different phases of the required investment over the time period are identified, and the associated funding sources and challenges.</p>
	Medium to long-term financial management	
F	The authority has carried out a credible and transparent financial resilience assessment	<p>The budget papers outline the key assumptions regarding the revenue and capital budget. In line with the requirement of the Code of Practice these assumptions have been deemed to be prudent.</p> <p>As part of the budget setting process, the level of reserves are reviewed to</p>



		ensure they are robust, in light of the assessment of financial risks that the Authority is exposed to. The Authority's Reserves Policy outlines resources that have been set aside to enable the Authority to set a robust MTFs, based on possible risks identified.
G	The authority understands its prospects for financial sustainability in the longer term and has reported this clearly to members.	<p>The MFTP is based on a four year period and is presented to Members as part of the budget setting papers annually. These clearly detail Council Tax revenue expectations, usage of reserves and the associated assumptions made and possible risks.</p> <p>The Authority's Reserve Policy is also presented as part of the budget setting papers and demonstrates the planned prudent retention of reserves to manage risks over the medium term.</p> <p>The SAIF details the different phases over the fifteen year period, those that have been funded and those that require an appropriate source of funding to be identified.</p>
H	The authority complies with the CIPFA Prudential Code for Capital Finance in Local Authorities.	<p>Management of the Authority's debt is governed by the Treasury Management Strategy and Prudential Indicators which aim to ensure the Authority's capital expenditure plans are prudent, affordable and sustainable.</p> <p>The Authority's Finance team work closely with the appointed Treasury Advisors, utilising their expert knowledge to formulate borrowing an investment plans based on the latest financial advice.</p> <p>The Authority's Treasury Management Strategy and Prudential Indicators comply with the requirements of the Prudential Code and are presented to Members as part of the budget setting papers. Half yearly and year end Treasury Reports are presented to Members detailing performance.</p>
I	The authority has a rolling, multi-year medium-term financial plan consistent with sustainable service plans.	<p>The Authority's Medium Term Financial Plan is based on a four year period with indicative budget allocations for future years which underpins annual service planning for departments. This is updated annually, and presented to Members as part of the budget setting papers.</p> <p>Updates on the latest information and assumptions in respect of funding, costs and risks are provided as required.</p>
	The annual budget	
J	The authority complies with its statutory obligations in respect of	The Authority sets a balanced budget and complies with the requirement in



	the budget setting process	relation to the S151 Officer statement (s25) on the robustness of the budget and the adequacy of reserves.
K	The budget report includes a statement by the Chief Finance Officer on the robustness of the estimates and a statement on the adequacy of the proposed financial reserves	The Authority sets a balanced budget and complies with the requirement in relation to the S151 Officer statement (s25) on the robustness of the budget and the adequacy of reserves.
	Stakeholder engagement and business cases	
L	The authority has engaged, where appropriate, with key stakeholders in developing its long-term financial strategy, medium term financial plan and annual budget.	Member briefing sessions are held in the build up to the annual budget setting meeting each February, detailing key issues and implications. Wider stakeholder engagement with members of the public is completed via an annual Council Tax consultation, where residents are encouraged to give their views on proposed changes. Consultations are also regularly held on key projects, with stakeholder engagement desired.
M	The authority uses an appropriate documented option appraisal methodology to demonstrate the value for money of its decisions.	Detailed business cases for large projects are reviewed by SLT, and approved by Members. The identification of options and their appraisal are a key part of this, with value for money a key consideration for any projects approved.
	Monitoring financial performance	
N	The Leadership team takes action using reports enabling it to identify and correct emerging risks to its budget strategy and financial sustainability.	Regular reviews of the Corporate Risk Register are undertaken by SLT. Emerging and growing risks are subject to challenge, with preventative measures implemented wherever possible. The financial impact of such risks will be quantified and addressed as part of the monthly budget monitoring process, which is presented to Members quarterly. If such risks demand action in the form of additional budget allocations, then this will be addressed in year by SLT where appropriate or as part of the following years budget setting process.
O	The Leadership team monitors the elements of its balance sheet that pose a significant risk to its financial sustainability.	The Authority have specific earmarked reserves and maintains an appropriate General Fund balance to mitigate the main financial risks should they ever crystallise.



		<p>Daily cash flow monitoring and forecasting is maintained, with aged debts managed and chased accordingly.</p> <p>Regular reviews of reserve levels and planned usage are completed by the Section 151 officer, and Treasury performance reports are presented to Members bi-annually to update on investment and debt levels.</p>
	External financial reporting	
P	<p>The Chief Finance Officer has personal and statutory responsibility for ensuring that the statement of accounts produced by the local authority complies with the reporting requirements of the Code of Practice on Local Authority Accounting in the United Kingdom.</p>	<p>The Statement of Accounts is prepared on an annual basis in accordance with the Accounts and Audit Regulations 2015, and the Code of Practice on Local Authority Accounting in the United Kingdom (the local authority accounting Code). The CFO personally certifies the annual Statement of Accounts indicating their personal and statutory responsibility.</p> <p>The Authority's leadership team and the CFO are aware of the CFO's responsibilities in terms of the preparation of the annual financial statements and the finance team produce an annual closing timetable, circulated to all staff, to ensure that the Authority meets its obligations in regard to the production of its financial statements.</p> <p>The Authority has consistently received an unqualified audit opinion from the external auditors.</p>
Q	<p>The presentation of the final outturn figures and variations from budget allows the Leadership team to make strategic financial decisions</p>	<p>The outturn report at the end of each financial year identifies variances from budget allocations and is supported by appropriate explanations outlining the reasons why. These supplement the in-year monitoring reports presented to Members quarterly.</p> <p>The outturn report is presented and reviewed by both SLT and Members, with the associated bottom line impact on the wider Reserves position of the Authority considered and approved.</p> <p>The Statement of Accounts includes a reconciliation to the Comprehensive Income and Expenditure Statement that shows the link between the statutory accounts and the Authority's management account reporting format.</p>

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ROYAL BERKSHIRE FIRE AUTHORITY



COMMITTEE	AUDIT AND GOVERNANCE COMMITTEE
DATE OF MEETING	23 MARCH 2022
SUBJECT	QUARTERLY PERFORMANCE REPORT 2021-22 QUARTER 3 (OCTOBER-DECEMBER 2021)
LEAD OFFICER	BECCA CHAPMAN & SAM FAULKNALL-MILLS
LEAD MEMBER	N/A
EXEMPT INFORMATION	NONE
ACTION	TO NOTE

1. EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

- 1.1 To provide Audit & Governance Committee with an overview of the Royal Berkshire Fire and Rescue Service (RBFRS) third quarter (October-December 2021) performance for the 2021/22 financial year.

2. RECOMMENDATION/S

That the Audit & Governance Committee:

- 2.1 **NOTE** the performance against Service Provision and Corporate Health measures for the targets agreed by the Fire Authority for 2021/22.
- 2.2 **NOTE** the progress made on the four priority programmes.
- 2.3 **NOTE** the position of corporate risk.
- 2.4 **DISCUSS** and **AGREE** any further actions, if appropriate.

3. REPORT

- 3.1 The quarterly performance report supports the Performance Management Framework which provides structure and governance that will enable RBFRS to measure, monitor and manage outputs and outcomes in a timely manner, allowing the organisation to respond and make informed decisions to ensure that statutory obligations and the Fire Authority's Strategic Commitments are successfully delivered.
- 3.2 Following data capture, review and analysis, evidence is reviewed by the Strategic Performance Board (SPB) whose purpose is to lead, support and monitor the effective delivery of the Strategic Objectives by monitoring and reviewing performance across the four Quadrants.

Agenda Item 15

- 3.3 Informed by these processes, key data and highlights have been extracted and reviewed by the Senior Leadership Team (SLT) and are presented in this report for scrutiny at the Audit and Governance committee.
- 3.4 The attached report provides an overview of performance for the third quarter (October-December 2021) performance for the 2021/22 financial year. It reports performance in four key areas:
- 3.5 Quadrant one - Service Provision - This section presents data and information which will allow members to monitor how RBFRS are doing at delivering its statutory obligations and any internal services provided between teams, departments and functions.
- 3.6 Quadrant two - Corporate Health - This section brings together all data, information and measures from across the organisation, which will allow members to monitor how RBFRS are managing key resources, e.g. People and Finance.
- 3.7 Quadrant three - Priority Programmes (IRMP, People Strategy, Strategic Asset Investment Framework and the HRRB Project) - This section will allow members to monitor progress of work designed to deliver a defined outcome which is different to or improves on current working practices, policies and procedures in support of delivering against the strategic commitments and corporate plan 2019-23.
- 3.8 Quadrant four - Corporate Risk - This section groups provides an assessment of corporate risks that may impact on service delivery. This section will also include data and information from audit monitoring and an update on the HMICFRS Action Plan.

4. CONTRIBUTION TO STRATEGIC COMMITMENTS

- 4.1 Commitment 1 – We will provide education and advice on how to prevent fires and other emergencies.
- 4.2 Commitment 2 – We will ensure a swift and effective response when called to emergencies
- 4.3 Commitment 3 - We will provide advice, consultation and enforcement in relation to fire safety standards in buildings.
- 4.4 Commitment 4 – We will seek opportunities to contribute to a broader safety, health and wellbeing agenda, whilst delivering our core functions.
- 4.5 Commitment 5 – We will ensure that Royal Berkshire Fire and Rescue Service provides good value for money.
- 4.6 Commitment 6 – We will work with Central Government and key stakeholders in the interests of the people of Royal Berkshire.

5. FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

- 5.1 This report provides RBFA financial information under the corporate health quadrant.

6. LEGAL IMPLICATIONS

6.1 There are no legal implications arising from this report

7. EQUALITY AND DIVERSITY IMPLICATIONS

7.1 This report provides RBFRS equality and diversity information under the corporate health quadrant.

8. RISK IMPLICATIONS

8.1 This report provides RBFRS corporate risk information under the risk quadrant.

9. CONSISTENCY WITH DUTY TO COLLABORATE

9.1 This report provides information on RBFRS performance measures and targets, as such there are no identified areas for collaboration.

10. PRINCIPAL CONSULTATION

10.1 The Chief Fire Officer was consulted during preparation of this report.

10.2 The Head of Finance and Procurement was consulted on the content of this report.

11. BACKGROUND PAPERS

11.1 Annual Plan 2021/22

12. APPENDICES

12.1 Included with main report.

13. CONTACT DETAILS

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