



**Agenda
for the Meeting
of the
Royal Berkshire Fire Authority**

Thursday, 15th February, 2024

At

6.30 pm

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: Royal Berkshire Fire Authority Meeting

DATE AND TIME: Thursday, 15th February, 2024 at 6.30 pm

VENUE: Lynda Kenyon Suite
RBFRS Headquarters
Newsham Court
Pincent's 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 Royal Berkshire Fire Authority:

Councillor Wendy Griffith	Councillor Tricia Brown
Councillor Dave McElroy	Councillor Jeff Brooks
Councillor Owen Jeffery	Councillor Haqeeq Dar
Councillor Joshua Reynolds	Councillor Paul Gittings
Councillor Ishrat Shah	Councillor Pauline Helliard-Symons
Councillor Robert Stedmond	Councillor Morag Malvern
Councillor Helen Taylor	Councillor Tina McKenzie-Boyle
Councillor Billy Drummond	Councillor Mike Smith
Councillor Peter Frewer	Councillor Rachelle Shepherd-DuBey
Councillor Dennis Benneyworth	Councillor Simon Werner

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

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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 8 November 2023 (Pages 7 - 16)**

Recommendation:

That the Minutes of the meeting and any recoded actions held on 8 November 2023, be confirmed as a correct record and signed by the Chair.

- 4. Petitions and Questions from the Public under Standing Orders 19 and 25**

Purpose:

To receive any questions from members of the public, in accordance with Standing Orders 19 and 25.

- 5. Receipt of Announcements**

Purpose:

To receive any announcements from the Chair or the Chief Fire Officer.

- 6. Issues arising from the Audit and Governance Committee**

Recommendation:

That it be noted that no reports have been referred by the Audit and Governance Committee.

7. Questions from Members under Standing Order 30

Purpose:

To receive any questions from Members under Standing Order 30.

8. Notices of Motion under Standing Order 44

Purpose:

To receive any notices of Motion under Standing Order 44.

9. Recommendations of Committees

Purpose:

To note agenda Items 10 (Budget 2024/25) and 11 (Automatic Fire Alarm Consultation) were recommended from Management Committee on 6 February 2024, and Items 12 (Pay Policy Statement) and 13 (Code of Conduct Consultation) were recommended from Audit and Governance Committee on 24 January 2024.

10. Budget 2024/25 (To Follow)

Purpose:

To agree 2024/25 Budget and Band D Council Tax precept.

11. Automatic Fire Alarm Consultation (Pages 17 - 40)

Purpose:

To agree a 10-week public consultation in March 2024, and agree the draft consultation document.

12. Pay Policy Statement (Pages 41 - 60)

Purpose:

To approve the Pay Policy Statement for 2024/25 (Appendix A).

13. Code of Conduct Consultation (Pages 61 - 76)

Purpose:

To note the outcome of the second annual consultation on the RBFA Member Code of Conduct, and to approve that the consultation be held every three years, subject to any proposed updates.

14. Forward Plan (*Pages 77 - 78*)

Recommendation:

That the Forward Plan be noted.

15. Minutes of the Standing Committees

Recommendation:

To note Minutes of recent meetings were published on RBFRS website
<http://www.rbfrs.co.uk/about-us/fire-authority/fire-authority-meetings/>

16. Date of the Next Meeting

Monday 22 April 2024, 6.30pm at RBFRS Headquarters, Newsham Court,
Pincents Kiln, Calcot, Reading RG31 7SD.

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**MINUTES OF THE MEETING OF THE ROYAL
BERKSHIRE FIRE AUTHORITY**



Held on Wednesday, 8th November, 2023 at 6.30 pm

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

Members:
(*present)

- | | |
|-------------------------------------|--------------------------------------|
| * Councillor Dennis Benneyworth | * Councillor Morag Malvern |
| * Councillor Jeff Brooks | * Councillor Dave McElroy |
| * Councillor Tricia Brown | * Councillor Tina McKenzie-Boyle |
| * Councillor Haqeeq Dar | * Councillor Joshua Reynolds |
| * Councillor Billy Drummond | * Councillor Ishrat Shah |
| * Councillor Peter Frewer | * Councillor Rachelle Shepherd-DuBey |
| * Councillor Wendy Griffith | * Councillor Robert Stedmond |
| * Councillor Paul Gittings | * Councillor Mike Smith |
| * Councillor Pauline Helliar-Symons | * Councillor Helen Taylor |
| * Councillor Owen Jeffery | * Councillor Simon Werner |

In Attendance: Mark Antell (Senior Communications and Engagement Officer)
 Mark Arkwell (Deputy Chief Fire Officer, DCFO)
 Wayne Bowcock (Chief Fire Officer, CFO)
 Paul Bremble (Head of Corporate Services, HCS)
 Graham Britten (Monitoring Officer, MO)
 Conor Byrne (Head of Finance and Procurement, HF&P)
 Ben Cairns (Area Manager, Response and Resilience, AM R&R)
 Matt Houlton (Group Manager, Prevention and Protection, GM P&P)
 Jim Powell (Area Manager, Collaboration and Policy, AM C&P)
 Nikki Richards (Deputy Chief Executive, DchEX)
 Christian Riley (Communications and Engagement Officer)
 Fayth Rowe (Democratic Support Lead, DSL)
 Lukasz Wrona (Head of Business and Information Systems, HBIS)

20. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Apologies were received from Councillors Robert Stedmond, Helen Taylor and Pauline Helliar-Symons.

21. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

Action

Under the Authority's updated Code of Conduct which was adopted in April 2022, Members' Allowances were categorised as 'Non-Registrable Interests'.

The Monitoring Officer confirmed he had granted dispensations to all Members to allow all Members to speak and vote on Agenda Item 12 (Independent Review of Scheme of Allowances).

There were no Declarations of Interest from Members in accordance with the provisions of the Fire Authority's Local Code of Conduct.

There were no Declarations of Interest received from Officers.

22. MINUTES OF THE MEETING HELD ON 8 JUNE 2023

There were no recorded actions.

RESOLVED that the Minutes of the meeting held on 8 June 2023, be approved as a true record and signed by the Chair.

23. PETITIONS AND QUESTIONS FROM THE PUBLIC UNDER STANDING ORDERS 19 AND 25

There were no petitions and questions from the Public under Standing Orders 19 and 25.

24. RECEIPT OF ANNOUNCEMENTS

Bereavements in the Service

The Chair announced the Service had lost two dedicated public servants. Nick Oxborough, Fire Safety Inspecting Officer, passed away following a period of illness. Nick dedicated his career to Royal Berkshire Fire and Rescue Service (RBFRS), serving both on fire stations across the County and as a Fire Safety Inspecting Officer for more than 40 years.

Sadly, we also lost Duncan Morgan-Russell, another Fire Safety Inspecting Officer, late last month. Duncan made a profound contribution to RBFRS in a career of more than 45 years, working in various operational roles and as a Fire Safety Inspecting Officer.

On behalf of the Fire Authority, the Chair offered his deepest condolences to the families and friends of Nick and Duncan following their tragic losses. The Fire Authority observed a minute's silence.

Welcome to new members of the Senior Leadership Team

A warm welcome was made to the Service's newest members of the Senior Leadership Team, Paul Brooks and Ben Cairns.

Paul will join the Service as Head of Assets, a role which combines the two previous Head of Department roles of Estates, Fleet and Equipment and Head of Capital Estates Projects into one larger area of responsibility. He brings with him an exceptional wealth of experience including senior military roles with the Royal Engineers and more recently working as Assistant Director of Assets for the Imperial War Museum (IWM).

Ben has taken up the role of Area Manager for Response and Resilience. Ben joins us from North Yorkshire Fire and Rescue Service, having been with them for 26 years. Ben has held a range of roles within service delivery and most recently completed an assignment as Head of Service Improvement, developing their new Community Risk Management Plan.

Members and Officers workshop

On the 4 October, a Member and Officer workshop was held to discuss the draft Members Charter (which is on tonight's agenda, item 11) and priorities for the Fire Authority for the coming year. It was a very productive meeting and look forward to the next Members workshop which will be held on the 9 January 2024.

AI Summit

Week commencing 30 October, RBFRS operational officers and Thames Valley Fire Control Service (TVFCS) supported the planning of the global AI summit in Bletchley, Oxfordshire.

Chairs engagements

The Berkshire High Sheriff, Simon Muir's Berkshire Judicial Service was held on 13 October at the Minister Church St Mary the Virgin, Reading. On behalf of the Fire Authority, the Chair Councillor Brooks attended the church service, and the theme was Young People and the Law. Uplifting music was provided by young people from Ludgrove School and the Reading Community Gospel choir. He thanked Simon Muir for the invitation.

Andrew Try was appointed as the new Lord-Lieutenant on 23 October. The Chair congratulated him on his appointment and thanked his predecessor, Mr James Puxley for his tenure from 2015 to October 2023.

Wayne Bowcock (Chief Fire Officer CFO) and the Chair attended His Majesty's Inspectorate Constabulary And Fire And Rescue Service (HMICFRS) Chiefs and Chairs meeting on 1 November. The meeting was attended by Chiefs and Chairs across England and received presentations from HMI Roy Wilsher OBE QFSM and NFCC representatives.

Remembrance Day

The Chief Fire Officer will be taking on the role of the National Service Remembrance Civil Service Contingent Commander from 2024.

The Union Flag will be flown at full mast across RBFA sites at the weekend (11/12 November) as the Service honours those who made the ultimate sacrifice to protect our freedom on Remembrance Day and Remembrance Sunday.

RBFRS will be offering those who have served, or are still serving, an opportunity to come together at Newbury Fire Station at our latest Armed Forces Veterans' Hub Event on 9 November between 10:30am and 1:30pm.

Refurbishment of Slough Fire Station

Recently approved by Management Committee, Logic Contract Service Ltd. has been selected as the Contractor to undertake refurbishment works at Slough Fire Station. It is anticipated that these will start on Monday, 20 November, and run through to next summer.

The refurbishment will be carried out in line with our Strategic Asset Investment Framework (SAIF). As such, the project will emphasise extending the life of the Station; introducing 'green' technologies to help reduce energy costs and carbon footprint; attracting a diverse workforce; and better enable our staff to manage the potential risk posed by occupational exposure to contaminants from emergency incidents.

In order to facilitate the refurbishment of Slough Fire Station, an appliance and 24 members of staff have temporarily relocated to Langley Fire Station for the duration of the construction period.

One appliance and the Service's new Water Rescue Unit will continue to operate from Slough Fire Station to ensure that there is no disruption to the Service's response.

Wholetime Graduation

On Friday 10 November, Wholetime Firefighter Apprentices will have completed their initial training, which will be celebrated with a Graduation Ceremony at Newbury Fire Station.

Since joining the Service in the summer, they have spent time at the Fire Training College at Moreton-in-Marsh, Lee Valley White Water Centre and at the Service's Training Centre at Whitley Wood Fire Station. As of next week, each of the Apprentices will join their Watches at fire stations across the County.

As part of the course, the Apprentices organised a charity event to raise money for The Fire Fighters Charity.

To coincide with the Charity's 80th anniversary this year, the Apprentices embraced the '80's theme and decided to each cycle 80km on Saturday, 28 October at the Lexicon in Bracknell. Currently, they have raised over £5,500 and they are still accepting donations.

On behalf of the Authority, the Chair congratulated the Apprentices on both their progress in training and their fundraising efforts.

25. ISSUES ARISING FROM THE AUDIT AND GOVERNANCE COMMITTEE

There were no issues arising from the Audit and Governance Committee.

26. QUESTIONS FROM MEMBERS UNDER STANDING ORDER 30

There were no questions from Members under Standing Order 30.

27. NOTICES OF MOTION UNDER STANDING ORDER 44

There were no notices of Motion under Standing Order 44.

28. RECOMMENDATIONS OF COMMITTEES

RESOLVED that it was noted item 12 (Independent Review of Scheme of Allowances) had been a recommendation from Audit and Governance Committee on 30 October 2023.

29. SERIOUS VIOLENCE DUTY PRESENTATION

Matt Hoults (Group Manager Prevention and Protection) delivered a presentation on Serious Violence Duty. He reported the Duty is part of the Government's programme of work to prevent and reduce serious violence and its success involves sharing information. He stated Serious Violence was best addressed using a public health approach and Community Safety Partnerships, as they have an explicit role in accountability.

Serious Violence Duty was introduced under the Police, Crime, Sentencing and Courts Act 2022. Within the Duty, specified authorities are required to plan and collaborate to prevent and tackle serious violence in their local area. The Duty commenced on 31 January 2023 and specified authorities have 12 months to deliver mandatory requirements.

Specified authorities on delivering the Duty are:

- Police
- Probation Services
- Youth offending teams
- Fire and Rescue Authorities
- Health Authorities
- Local Authorities

The relevant authorities below must consult when developing a local strategy:

- Education
- Prison and /or
- Youth custody authorities

The requirements are for local areas to confirm partnership arrangements to deliver the Duty, agree a local definition of serious violence and produce the following two mandatory products by 31 January 2024.

- Strategic Needs Assessment
- Local Strategy – to be reviewed on an annual basis

The Thames Valley Violence Reduction Unit (TVVRU) has agreed the following:

- Geography for Duty requirements
- Local working definition of serious violence for Thames Valley
- Strategic Needs Assessments (SNA) using the mechanisms that areas have decided upon locally
- Community Safety Partnerships
- Funding to deliver mandatory requirements of the Duty

RBFRS have carried out the following towards the Duty:

- Single Point of Contact for the National Fire and Rescue Service (FRS) response to the Duty.
- Strategic representation through TVVRU Strategy Board.
- Local delivery representation – Community Safety Partnerships
- Serious Violence Duty Working Group
- Recognised partner for Thames Valley Together data project
- Local Safety Plans – partnership response to Serious Violence

Councillor Rachelle Shepherd-DuBey queried how the Duty related to violence against women and girls. Jim Powell (Area Manager Collaboration and Policy AM C&P) reported RBFRS was considering how it would be involved in the wider strategy on violence against women and girls.

The Chair asked for ways in which the Fire Authority were involved in the Duty. Matt Hoults reported the Authority were involved via its existing programme of works in the Safety Education Team.

Wayne Bowcock (CFO) explained the Service contributed to the Duty by Safe and Well referrals for example. He stated all operational staff were trained on Safeguarding of which relevant information would be shared with organisations across the Thames Valley. In terms of the Thames Valley Together Data Partnership, the Service will provide data into this partnership. It would help target areas to carry out Safe and Well visits, making potential victims safer. He added, a lot of the requirements of the Duty will be carried out through Community Safety Partnerships.

For a copy of this presentation contact committeeteam@rbfrs.co.uk

30. MEMBERS CHARTER

Nikki Richards (Deputy Chief Executive DchEX) reported the Members Charter was developed at the recent Member and Officer Workshop on 4 October 2023. Its purpose is to formalise Royal Berkshire Fire Authority's (RBFA) commitment and support of RBFRS vision, by the values and behaviours listed in the Members Charter (Appendix A). She stated that the Members Charter was to be used in addition to the Members Code of Conduct.

A small typo was identified by Councillor Griffith in the Members Charter.

The Chair asked where would the Charter be displayed. Nikki Richards (DchEX) confirmed the Charter would be displayed across the Authority's estate e.g. Fire Station notice boards and Cascade.

31. INDEPENDENT REVIEW OF SCHEME OF ALLOWANCES

Paul Bremble (Head of Corporate Services HCS) reported the last Independent Review on Members Scheme of Allowances was held in 2019. The report was a recommendation from Audit and Governance Committee meeting on the 30 October 2023. The review was recommending an increase in the average number of days of Member commitment on Fire Authority business from 18 days to 19 days. This would make a small increase to the basic allowance of £2,736 with effect from the 1 April 2024.

In referring to Appendix A, Councillor Gittings stated the increase was mid-range in comparison to Member Allowances across local authorities.

On being put to the vote, there was one abstention.

RESOLVED that:

- 1) The findings of the Independent Review of Scheme of Allowances by South East Employers (Appendix A and B) be noted; and
- 2) The 2024/25 Scheme of Allowances (Appendix C) from effect of 1 April 2024, subject to any future indexation that may be applied be approved.

32. PENSION BOARD REPRESENTATIVE

Nikki Richards (DchEx) reported the Local Pension Board is set up under the auspices of The Public Service Pensions Act 2013 and consists of two employer representatives and two staff representatives.

Mark Arkwell (Deputy Chief Fire Officer DCFO) had stepped down as employer representative at Pension Board meetings. The report was seeking the Authority to approve the appointment of Jim Powell (AM C&P) to the Pension Board as an employer representative, replacing Mark Arkwell.

RESOLVED that the appointment of Jim Powell to the Pension Board as an employer representative be approved.

33. ANNUAL TREASURY MANAGEMENT REVIEW 2022/23 AND MID-YEAR TREASURY MANAGEMENT UPDATE 2023/24

Councillor Mike Smith (Budget and Income Generation Lead) presented the Annual Treasury Management Review. In summary, he reported the 2020/21 Statement of Accounts had been signed off at the recent Audit and Governance Committee and stated the signing off of 2021/22 and 2022/23 Statement of Accounts should follow.

There had been delays in the investment of new fleet due to long lead times, and delays in ICT projects due to third party providers. The increase in interest rates had allowed the Authority to increase its investments.

In referring to Mid-Year Treasury Management, he reported the spend as of 30 September 2023 had been low, however, it was to be expected the expenditure on Training Centre re-build will be made in the latter part of the financial year.

The Authority had made £13m in investments and no borrowing will be made this year.

Conor Byrne (Head of Finance and Procurement, HF&P) added the Authority agreed an ethical dimension to its investment strategy by the adoption of Freedom House principles.

Councillor Simon Werner commended the work of Conor Byrne and Councillor Mike Smith.

RESOLVED that:

- 1) The Annual Treasury Report for 2022/23 be noted; and
- 2) The Mid-Year Treasury Management Update for 2023/24 be noted.

34. FORWARD PLAN

RESOLVED that the Forward Plan be noted.

35. MINUTES OF THE STANDING COMMITTEES

RESOLVED that it be noted the Minutes of recent meetings were published on RBFRS website.

36. DATE OF NEXT MEETING

Thursday 15 February 2024, 6.30pm at RBFRS Headquarters, Newsham Court, Pincents Kiln, Calcot, Reading RG31 7SD.

(The meeting concluded at 7.29pm)

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ROYAL BERKSHIRE FIRE AUTHORITY REPORT



COMMITTEE	FIRE AUTHORITY
DATE OF MEETING	15 FEBRUARY 2024
SUBJECT	AUTOMATIC FIRE ALARM CONSULTATION
LEAD OFFICER	PAUL BREMBLE HEAD CORPORATE SERVICES AND JIM POWELL; AREA MANAGER COLLABORATION AND POLICY
LEAD MEMBER	COUNCILLOR PAUL GITTINGS
EXEMPT INFORMATION	NONE
ACTION	FOR DECISION

1. EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

- 1.1 Through the Community Risk Management Plan (CRMP), Royal Berkshire Fire and Rescue Service (RBFRS) sets out how it proposes to deliver services, meet the Strategic Objectives contained in the Corporate Plan and seeks to drive continuous improvement. This journey of improvement has been supported by the inspection programme of His Majesty’s Inspectorate of Constabulary and Fire and Rescue Services (HMICFRS).
- 1.2 False Alarms make up a significant proportion of the incidents RBFRS attend, and this was noted by HMICFRS who concluded that *“the service should ensure it addresses effectively the burden of false alarms (termed ‘unwanted fire signals’).”*
- 1.3 The Fire Authority CRMP set out a priority to address the burden of Automatic Fire Alarms on the service and the public *“We will work with businesses to educate them on their responsibility under the Regulatory Reform (Fire Safety) Order 2005. Fire Safety Order 2005 to reduce the impact of unwanted fire signals (automatic fire alarms) on our operational crews”.*
- 1.4 False Alarms account for 45% of all incidents and 99.3% of Automatic Fire Alarm notifications require no action by the service. Of those that

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were actual incidents, particularly in the premises subject to the consultation, the impact was minor.

- 1.5 The service currently successfully challenges around a quarter of the calls we receive to Automatic Fire Alarms. However, following a consultation in 2022, the subsequent changes that were made had a minimal impact on improving this position.
- 1.6 Attending false alarm calls creates significant disruption to other more risk critical activities and research has shown that by changing the way the service responds to these types of incidents could provide significant benefits to communities and Firefighters.
- 1.7 As these changes represent a variation to the way we deliver our response, the service should consult publicly on any proposals. This paper sets out that proposal, presenting a draft consultation paper (Appendix A) and seeking agreement to take the proposal forward to public consultation.
- 1.8 For the avoidance of doubt, this consultation proposal covers only our response to the Automatic Fire Alarms specified within the consultation document. We will still always maintain our emergency response to 999 calls.

2. **RECOMMENDATION**

That the Fire Authority:

- 2.1 **AGREE** to commence a 10-week public consultation in March 2024, at a specified date to be confirmed at the Chief Fire Officer's discretion, to inform a future decision on how it responds to Automatic Fire Alarms;
- 2.2 **AGREE** to the draft consultation document, subject to delegating responsibility for any minor amendments to the consultation document to the Chief Fire Officer, in consultation with the Chair of the Fire Authority and CRMP Lead Member.

3. **REPORT**

- 3.1 Royal Berkshire Fire Authority (RBFA) recognised the outcomes of the 2022/23 HMICFRS report and the burden that false alarms place on the service by setting out a priority in the Authorities CRMP to 'review our operational response to unwanted fire signals (Automatic Fire Alarms) to reduce the impact on the service and public.'
- 3.2 This proposal will only effect premises that come under the

Regulatory Reform (Fire Safety) Order 2005¹, as they have a responsibility to ensure that they meet these regulations and management of automatic fire alarms is part of that responsibility, ensuring they are managed appropriately.

- 3.3 The service attends around 2,300 alarm related incidents each year with over 99% being false alarms. Attending these types of incidents disrupts essential activities which are undertaken daily by our Firefighters.
- 3.4 These activities enable the service to ensure it manages community risk, through delivering Safe and Well visits to vulnerable people, enabling Firefighters to do more training and to ensure they have the knowledge and understanding of their local risks so that they can respond effectively when there is a real incident.
- 3.5 These activities are carefully planned throughout the year and the disruption caused by false alarms has a compounding effect that can have a significant impact on ensuring both our communities and our Firefighters are safe.
- 3.6 The evidence suggests that by changing the way we respond to some of these incidents, as set out in the consultation document, the service could reduce this disruption and provide more time for those key activities which would have greater benefits for our communities and across the service.
- 3.7 The proposed changes do not offer monetary savings and this has not been a driving factor in developing the proposals. The focus is solely on reducing risk by minimising disruption to those key activities we know will provide the most benefit in keeping people safe.
- 3.8 The proposal and associated information are captured in the draft consultation document at Appendix A.
- 3.9 The proposals were considered by members in a task and finish group that met several times during December 2023 and January 2024. This

¹ Meaning of “responsible person”

3. In this Order “responsible person” means—

- (a) in relation to a workplace, the employer, if the workplace is to any extent under his control;
- (b) in relation to any premises not falling within paragraph (a)—
 - (i) the person who has control of the premises (as occupier or otherwise) in connection with the carrying on by him of a trade, business or other undertaking (for profit or not); or
 - (ii) the owner, where the person in control of the premises does not have control in connection with the carrying on by that person of a trade, business or other undertaking.

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was attended by Cllr Mike Smith, Cllr Billy Drummond, Cllr Haqeeq Dar, Cllr Robert Steadman and Cllr Dennis Benneyworth. The group supported the consultation proposals in principle and recommended it go forward to Management Committee.

- 3.10 This report is subsequently a recommendation from Management Committee at its meeting on 6 February 2024.
- 3.11 Following feedback from members, officers will continue to refine the document ahead of starting the consultation and the recommendation at 2.2 will enable good governance and sign off whilst supporting ambitious delivery timelines.
- 3.12 To ensure RBFA can make the best possible decisions, it is necessary to consult publicly on any changes it makes to its Service Delivery arrangements.
- 3.13 RBFRS is able to build on the positive consultation experiences of recent years and ensure we can reach 'seldom heard' groups within our communities as well as focusing on key stakeholders by conducting a thorough equality assessment and stakeholder analysis.
- 3.14 The service will utilise all its existing and embedded communication channels and provide focused community engagement through the Service Delivery Hubs to ensure we maximise involvement across Royal Berkshire.
- 3.15 The consultation document provides the main focus of the consultation and is supported by a range of underpinning information. This will ensure communities and stakeholders have access to all the relevant information, enabling them to fully consider the proposals and the reasons for them.
- 3.16 In order reach a decision, and implement any subsequent change, officers recommend commencing the consultation in March 2024. The recommendation at 2.1 provides some flexibility on this date should it be required however it is expected that any change in the start date would be minimal.
- 3.17 A full report would be presented to Fire Authority in June 2024, to enable members to conscientiously consider the views of residents when making a decision.
- 3.18 Following the consultation, should members take a decision in June 2024 to change the way we respond to AFAs (Automatic Fire Alarm), the service will conduct a thorough review to evaluate the intended benefits, seeking to capture any findings that would support future action or improvements, reporting back to Fire Authority as appropriate.
- 3.19 It is important to reiterate that this consultation proposal covers only our

response to the AFAs specified within the consultation document. We will still always maintain our emergency response to 999 calls.

4 CONTRIBUTION TO STRATEGIC COMMITMENTS

- 4.1 Prevention - We will reduce the risk to our communities through our partnership duties and prevention activities, ensuring that our services are accessible to all.
- 4.2 Protection - We will support those with responsibility for premises to understand their duties in ensuring the safety of all people using buildings covered by the Building Safety Act 2022 and Regulatory Reform (Fire Safety) Order 2005, whilst ensuring that our services are accessible to all.
- 4.3 Response- We will ensure that our people are trained and resources are located to provide the most effective response and to have a positive impact on incidents in our communities.
- 4.4 Resilience - We will ensure our resilience and work with our partners to promote and build resilience in the communities we serve.
- 4.5 Sustainability- We will ensure that we provide a financially sustainable and environmentally friendly service to our communities.

5 FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

- 5.1 There are no additional financial burdens in delivering the consultation identified at this time. There are likely to be some incidental expenditure, such as printing costs, however this can be made available from existing budgets.

6 LEGAL IMPLICATIONS

- 6.1 There is a legal requirement under Section 7(2)(c) of the Fire and Rescue Services Act 2004 to “make arrangements for dealing with calls for help and for summoning personnel”, in order to discharge its obligations under section 7(1) to extinguish fires in its area and protecting life and property in the event of fires in its area.
- 6.2 The obligations under the Fire and Rescue Services Act 2004 are ‘target duties’ and not actionable, by someone suffering loss, for breach of duty; and the English courts have consistently ruled along the lines that no duty of care arises (save in circumstances where personnel attend and make matters worse).
- 6.3 The principles established are that a fire and rescue authority may be liable where its negligent acts cause physical harm, but owes no positive duties to act to protect others from harm in the absence of a specific voluntary assumption of responsibility [Capital and Counties Plc v](#)

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[Hampshire CC \[1997\] EWCA CIV 3091](#) 'In our judgment the fire brigade are not under a common law duty to answer the call for help and are not under a duty to take care to do so. If therefore they fail to turn up or fail to turn up in time because they have carelessly misunderstood the message, got lost on the way or run into a tree, they are not liable.'

- 6.4 In responding to calls English courts have distinguished the fire and rescue duties from ambulance service obligations as the ambulance service is an arm of the health service which might owe a duty of care in similar circumstances. In [Kent v Griffiths & Ors \[2000\] EWCA Civ 3017 \(3 February 2000\)](#) it was held that it was arguable that, once a 999 call was accepted, a relationship of sufficient proximity was established between the caller and the ambulance service and, whilst the ambulance service operated in difficult circumstances, it was possible that a court would find that it was fair, just and reasonable to impose a duty of care on it.
- 6.5 The legal obligations concerning the requirement to consult and how consultation should be conducted are set out in the 'Legal obligations' section of the consultation document. It defines the requirement to consult on CRMP matters as set out in the Fire and Rescue National Framework for England and describes the common law framework set out in the four [Gunning Principles](#) (R v London Borough of Brent [1985] 84 LGR 168).
- 6.6 Undertaking a public consultation will support the Fire Authority in determining that any future decision is proportionate, appropriate and reasonable.

7 EQUALITY DIVERSITY AND INCLUSION IMPLICATIONS

- 7.1 An initial impact assessment and stakeholder analysis has commenced, building on the consultation in 2022, and this will be developed into a full stakeholder analysis and equality impact assessment prior to the launch of the consultation and any resultant actions will inform the consultation plan.

8 RISK IMPLICATIONS

- 8.1 The analysis of any implications are outlined in the consultation document at Appendix A. Essentially this change represents a low risk to the public and as stated at 3.6 will enable more time for other risk mitigation activity to occur, such as Safe and Well visits.
- 8.2 This proposal will not change the fundamental position that RBFRS will always mobilise resources where there is a confirmed fire.

9 CONSISTENCY WITH DUTY TO COLLABORATE

- 9.1 AFA mobilisations are managed and delivered on behalf of RBFRS by Thames Valley Fire Control Service.

- 9.2 Officers are working with partners in Oxfordshire and Buckinghamshire Fire and Rescue Service to work towards an aligned policy for mobilising to AFAs.

10 PRINCIPAL CONSULTATION

- 10.1 Chief Fire Officer
10.2 Chief Finance Officer
10.3 Monitoring Officer

11 BACKGROUND PAPERS

- 11.1 Automatic Fire Alarm call filtering evaluation - [Minutes of the meeting of Royal Berkshire Management Committee 16 October 2023 \[Minute 25\]](#)
11.2 Automatic Fire Alarm Consultation Results – [Minutes of the meeting of Royal Berkshire Fire Authority 28 April, 2022 \[Minute 69\]](#)

12 APPENDICES

- 12.1 Appendix A – AFA consultation document

13 CONTACT DETAILS

- 13.1 Paul Bremble bremblep@rbfrs.co.uk 07786145153
13.2 Jim Powell powellj@rbfrs.co.uk 077742156644

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Automatic Fire Alarms - 2024

A consultation on proposed changes to the way we respond to false alarms



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Foreword

We are committed to ensuring we provide excellent services to the people of Royal Berkshire.

Our [Community Risk Management Plan](#) (CRMP) sets out key areas of work to reduce risk to people, places the environment and the economy in Berkshire. To do this, we need to prioritise the delivery of our essential services.

False alarms account for 45% of all the incidents we attend and the majority of these are the result of Automatic Fire Alarm systems (AFAs). 99% of these AFA incidents require no action by the Service. False alarms can be caused by several issues, for example, aerosol sprays, cooking fumes or a fire alarm system that hasn't been serviced properly.

Attending false alarm calls creates significant disruption to other more risk critical activities. Changing the way, the Service responds to these types of incidents could provide significant benefits to communities and Firefighters. The proposed changes do not offer monetary savings. Our focus is solely on reducing risk by minimising disruption to key activities.

Therefore, we are asking you to consider three options. For all the options we are consulting you on, we are proposing the same change to how we respond to category A buildings. For category B buildings, we propose a number of options for your consideration.

We will continue to send fire engines to automatic fire alarm notifications at higher risk buildings, where anyone sleeps, such as hotels and care homes, houses, and flats.

Most importantly, we will continue to maintain our emergency response to 999 calls, confirmed fires and to automatic fire alarm notifications from residential homes.

No decisions have been made and your feedback will be vital to the decision-making process. Please take the time to consider the proposed options. Your comments will help inform the decision which will be made by Royal Berkshire Fire Authority on which proposal to adopt.

The consultation will run for 10 weeks from 4 March 2024 until 13 May 2024.



Chair of Royal Berkshire Fire Authority
Councillor Jeff Brooks



Chief Fire Officer and Chief Executive
Wayne Bowcock



Why Are We Consulting?

Our CRMP sets out key areas of work to reduce risk to people, places, the environment, and the economy in Berkshire.

Attending alarm calls creates significant disruption to other more risk critical activities. Changing the way, the Service responds to these types of incidents could provide significant benefits to communities and Firefighters, further improving the service provided to the people of Berkshire.

The proposed changes do not offer monetary savings. The focus is solely on reducing risk by minimising disruption to key activities.

The impact that automatic fire alarm calls have on fire and rescue services has been recognised. It remains clear that there is still the need for significant improved action associated with the management of false alarms.

Nationally (2022-23), 39% of 999 calls to fire and rescue services were false alarms. We want to bring our service in line with, or below, this percentage.

Automatic Fire Alarm Notifications

In Berkshire, false alarms make up 45% of the incidents we attend. Most of these calls come from commercial automatic fire detection systems. We refer to these as automatic fire alarms (AFAs).

In 2022-23 alone, we attended 2,294 AFAs. On 99% of these calls (in the buildings we are consulting on), no action was required by the Service as there was no fire.

The 1% of automatic fire alarm notifications that were confirmed as fires resulted in no injuries or deaths. No significant property damage was caused by these incidents. Attending these types of incidents disrupts the essential daily activities of our Firefighters.

According to the law, Fire and Rescue Authorities (FRA) must make provision for extinguishing fires and for protecting life and property in the event of fires. They must also make arrangements for dealing with calls for help when there is a fire. **There is no legal duty on a FRA to respond to notifications from AFA systems for the purpose of establishing whether there is a fire.**

In non-domestic premises covered by the Regulatory Reform (Fire Safety) Order 2005, the employer, the owner, or someone else who has control of the premises (the 'Responsible Person') must ensure, as far as is reasonably practicable, that the buildings are safe for its occupants in the event of a fire. When an alarm system is fitted, these arrangements include maintenance of the system and providing the actions to be taken if the automatic fire alarm system was activated.

This consultation reflects a change to how we respond to automatic fire alarm calls in the buildings categorised below, where the Responsible Person cannot confirm there is a fire.



We will continue to send fire engines to automatic fire alarm calls at buildings where anyone sleeps, such as hotels and care homes, houses, and flats. We will also **continue to attend fire alarm notifications at** a range of existing known **higher risk sites**. Such as regulated sites and heritage properties.

We will continue to maintain our emergency response to 999 calls, confirmed fires and to automatic fire alarm notifications from residential homes.

<p>45% of all our calls received were false alarms</p>	<p>99% of the automatic fire alarm notifications received are false alarms</p>	<p>1% of automatic fire alarm notifications were confirmed as fires. There were no injuries, deaths, or significant property damage</p>
	<p>We will continue to send fire engines to 999 calls and confirmed fires.</p> <p>We will continue to send fire engines to automatic fire alarm notifications from residential homes.</p>	

Responsible Persons

Responsible Persons/ Building occupiers have legal responsibilities to ensure they manage and maintain their automatic fire alarms.

Building occupiers should consider how to reduce the number of automatic fire alarms and respond in a prompt manner when an automatic fire alarm goes off. This would prevent an unneeded fire engine response, which we know is currently leading to 99% of these calls being false alarms.



Why Do We Want to Reduce Attendance at False Alarms?

Every year, we attend around 2300 false alarms generated by Automatic Fire Alarms. Attending these types of incidents disrupts essential daily activities undertaken by our Firefighters.

Risks

We know that 99% of automatic fire alarm notifications (in the buildings we are consulting on) are false alarms. We need to change the way we respond to automatic fire alarm notifications. If we do not, we are unable to address the following risks:

- We want to carry out more in person fire safety visits to our most vulnerable residents and businesses to help them live and work safely. Every time a fire engine is sent to an automatic fire alarm notification during a visit it disrupts the business, delays us giving vital advice to residents, and increases risk to the public.
- Being called to automatic fire alarm notifications can divert firefighters from real emergencies, potentially putting life and property at risk. Additionally, driving to false alarms under emergency conditions puts our residents at unnecessary risk as well as having an environmental impact.
- If we do not change the way we respond to these false alarms, it will have a longer-term impact on the delivery of critical training. It is essential that our teams can train, exercise, and develop their skills and knowledge to deal with known and emerging risks in our communities. It is vital that we can respond effectively when there is a real incident. Dealing with false alarms regularly disrupts training and exercises.
- Firefighters carry out familiarisation visits at high-risk buildings so that we are well prepared to respond to real incidents. It is a legal duty for firefighters to gather this information. Maintaining up to date risk information helps us minimise the risk to our staff and the public. Attending false alarms disrupts us gathering the information we need and creates unnecessary risk.

Last year, we spent around 2,900 hours responding to false alarms. While this is an indicative figure, we know that attending these types of incidents causes significant disruption to the delivery of our essential services and training. These activities are carefully planned throughout the year and the disruption caused by false alarms has a compounding effect.

We need to change the way we respond to automatic fire alarm notifications to ensure our communities and our Firefighters are kept safe.



How we Currently Respond to Automatic Fire Alarms

Our current policy is that we will send a fire engine to all automatic fire alarm notifications in buildings that are high-risk, occupied buildings. For example, buildings such as care homes, hotels, houses, and flats (where anyone sleeps).

We call-challenge all reports of automatic fire alarm notifications in lower risk buildings that are reasonably assumed to be occupied. Currently, the Service successfully challenges around a quarter of these calls. We will send a fire engine if we cannot contact a person, or if the cause of the alarm is not confirmed by the building occupier. For all automatic fire alarm notification calls, we will always use our discretion. If Fire Control have reasonable doubt about the call, or a cause for concern, they will send a fire engine. We will always send a fire engine to 999 calls and confirmed fires.

We carried out [consultation in 2022](#), about how we challenge calls to Automatic Fire Alarm notifications. The subsequent changes that we made had a minimal impact on the disruption caused by responding to false alarms.

Consultation Categories

We have three proposed options to consult on. These options explain how we plan to reduce our response to automatic fire alarms in the buildings categorised below, addressing the risks identified in this document.

The proposed changes do not offer monetary savings. The focus is solely on reducing risk by minimising disruption to key activities.

We will continue to send fire engines to alarms at higher risk buildings, where anyone sleeps, such as hotels and care homes, houses, and flats, at any time.

We will always send a fire engine to 999 calls, confirmed fires and to automatic fire alarm notifications from residential homes.

We have separated all buildings into categories. This helps us explain how we want to change our response to automatic fire alarm notifications. Detail of the building types in each category are [available on our website](#).



Buildings in category A

	Examples
Commercial non-residential ¹	Shop, office, warehouse
Entertainment	Leisure centre, cinema, theatre
Education non-residential ¹	College, university
Stadium	Sports ground, pavilion, stadium

Buildings in category B

	Examples
Community properties	Library, town hall, museum
Education non-residential ¹	Primary and secondary school
Medical	Doctors' surgery, health centre

¹ Non-residential means no-one sleeps in the building.



Options for Consultation

For all the options we are consulting you on, we are proposing the same change to how we respond to category A buildings. For buildings in category B, we propose different options for your consideration. This is to enable us to reduce the number of unnecessary false alarms attended and disruption caused by these, further improving the service we provide to our residents.

The number of automatic fire alarm notifications in the options below are taken from 2022-2023 data for Berkshire. The hours saved are indicative, but do demonstrate the significant disruption caused by false alarms to the delivery of our essential services and training. The estimated number of productive hours gained are a conservative estimate and do not account for the disruption to our service caused by AFAs. We expect a higher return of productive working hours.

We recognise that the adoption of any of the changes proposed in this consultation poses a low risk to the identified buildings, for example where buildings are unoccupied and a fire occurs, there could be a potential delay in alerting the Fire Service if we do not respond to the initial automatic fire alarm notification. However, we know the data tells us that on 99% of occasions, these calls were false alarms and no action was required by firefighters that attended. This causes significant disruption to the delivery of essential services and training, therefore on balance, and in line with national changes to how all fire and rescue services respond to automatic fire alarms, we recognise that that we need to change the way we respond to automatic fire alarm notifications to ensure our communities and our Firefighters are kept safe.

On this basis, Royal Berkshire Fire and Rescue Service believe that option 3 provides the most benefits to communities and the service itself. This is because it offers the greatest reduction in unnecessary time spent responding to false alarms. It will enable more time to be spent on the critical activities described in the 'Risk' section of this document. This option also presents Fire Control Operators with a streamlined approach with the potential to improve call handling times in Fire Control. We also believe that this will help to futureproof the way the Service responds to these types of alarms. It is for all these reasons that option 3 is the preferred option of the Service.

While this is the preferred option, it is important to note that no decisions have been made yet. We want to hear what you think of our proposals.



Proposed Process



Alarm goes off notifying the Alarm Receiving Centre or Responsible Person



Alarm Receiving Centre/ Responsible Person should notify TVFCS* to confirm the cause of the alarm



TVFCS answers the call and takes the appropriate action



In buildings in category A or B

No fire confirmed or response from Responsible Person



No fire engine is sent



In buildings in category A or B

Fire confirmed

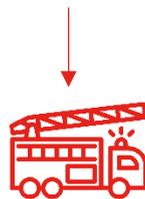


A fire engine is sent



In buildings in category A or B

A person calls 999 because there is a fire



A fire engine is sent



In buildings in category A or B

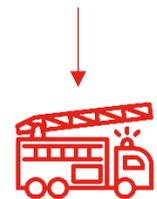
Where the mobilising officer uses operational discretion



A fire engine is sent



In residential homes and other high-risk buildings



A fire engine is sent



Option 1

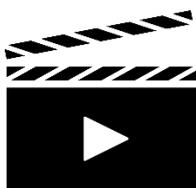
We will **stop automatically sending a fire engine to an automatic fire alarm notification** at buildings in **Category A** when there is no confirmed fire, 24 hours a day, 365 days of the year.

If a fire is confirmed or we receive a 999 call, we will immediately send a fire engine. We will continue to send fire engines to automatic fire alarm notifications from residential homes.

Types of Buildings Affected



Shops



Cinemas



Universities



Sports stadiums

Change Proposed

	<p>Category A buildings We will stop automatically sending a fire engine to an automatic fire alarm notification when there is no confirmed fire</p>	 24 hours a day  365 days
 	<p>We will continue to send fire engines to 999 calls and confirmed fires. We will continue to send fire engines to automatic fire alarm notifications from residential homes.</p>	
<p>Estimated number of automatic fire alarm notifications affected by Option 1</p>		<p>725</p>
<p>Estimated productive hours gained for critical activities</p>		<p>986 hours</p>



Option 2

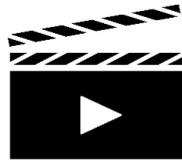
We will stop automatically sending a fire engine to an automatic fire alarm notification at buildings in **Category A** when there is no confirmed fire, 24 hours a day, 365 days of the year. We will stop automatically sending a fire engine to an automatic fire alarm notification at buildings in **Category B** between 9am and 6pm, 365 days of the year, when the buildings are likely to be occupied and therefore the Responsible Person can confirm if there is an emergency response needed.

If a fire is confirmed or we receive a 999 call, we will immediately send a fire engine. We will continue to send fire engines to automatic fire alarm notifications from residential homes.

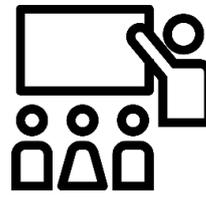
Types of Buildings Affected



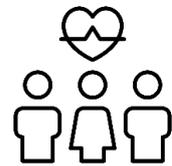
Shops



Cinemas



Schools



Doctors' Surgeries

Change Proposed

	<p>Category A buildings</p> <p>We will stop automatically sending a fire engine to an automatic fire alarm notification when there is no confirmed fire</p>	 24 hours a day 365 days
	<p>Category B buildings</p> <p>We will stop automatically sending a fire engine to an automatic fire alarm notification when there is no confirmed fire</p>	 between 9am and 6pm
 	<p>We will continue to send fire engines to 999 calls and confirmed fires.</p> <p>We will continue to send fire engines to automatic fire alarm notifications from residential homes.</p>	
Estimated number of automatic fire alarm notifications affected by Option 2		810
Estimated productive hours gained for critical activities		1,074 hours



Option 3

We will stop automatically sending a fire engine to an automatic fire alarm notification at buildings in **Category A** when there is no confirmed fire, 24 hours a day, 365 days of the year.

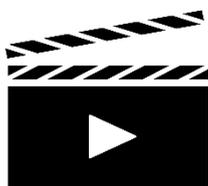
We will stop automatically sending a fire engine to an automatic fire alarm notification at buildings in **Category B** when there is no confirmed fire, 24 hours a day, 365 days of the year.

If a fire is confirmed or we receive a 999 call, we will immediately send a fire engine. We will continue to send fire engines to automatic fire alarm notifications from residential homes.

Types of Buildings Affected



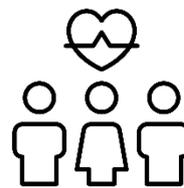
Shops



Cinemas



Schools



Doctors' Surgeries

Change Proposed

	<p>Category A buildings</p> <p>We will stop automatically sending a fire engine to an automatic fire alarm notification when there is no confirmed fire</p>	<p>24 hours a day</p>
	<p>Category B buildings</p> <p>We will stop automatically sending a fire engine to an automatic fire alarm notification when there is no confirmed fire</p>	<p>365 days</p>
	<p>We will continue to send fire engines to 999 calls and confirmed fires.</p> <p>We will continue to send fire engines to automatic fire alarm notifications from residential homes.</p>	
Estimated number of automatic fire alarm notifications affected by Option 3		894
Estimated productive hours gained for critical activities		1,228 hours



How to Have Your Say

The Automatic Fire Alarm consultation will run from 4 March 2024 until 13 May 2024.

No decisions have been made yet. We want to hear what you think of our proposals.

Following the consultation, we will offer a mechanism for all Responsible Persons and Building Owners whose premises falls under the consulted categories the opportunity to request a review by the fire and rescue service.

We are committed to providing all members of our communities with the opportunity to give feedback.

This document is also available in Easy Read, large text, plain text form and a web version.

The web version has been created to be more accessible, easier to search, and can be translated into different languages using the Google Translate tool on RBFRS' website. If anyone would like a hard copy or require assistance with accessing the information in an alternative format, please contact us using any of the methods below.



Responding to the consultation on our website: www.rbfrs.co.uk/consultations



Writing to us at: Royal Berkshire Fire and Rescue Service, Consultation, Newsham Court, Pincents Kiln, Calcot, Reading, Berkshire, RG31 7SD



Emailing us at: consultations@rbfrs.co.uk



Phoning: 0118 938 4331



Following us on social media on X, Facebook, Instagram, YouTube, and LinkedIn



Find out more about us and how we consult

- Visit our website to find out more about [our Service](#).
- Visit our website to find out more about Automatic Fire Alarms and False Alarms
- Visit our website to learn more about [our CRMP and our priorities for the next four years](#).
- To find out more about how we carry out consultations you can read our [Consultation Strategy](#). This helps us to ensure we meet our [legal obligations](#).
- To find out more about how we analysed the data for this consultation, please visit our Methodology document.

Next Steps

Consultation period – The 10-week consultation and engagement with residents, staff and key stakeholders will run from 4 March 2024 until 13 May 2024.

Consultation closure – Consultation closes, and work begins on analysing and compiling the responses into a summary report for decision makers.

Conscientiously consider the results – Royal Berkshire Fire Authority will meet in June 2024 to conscientiously consider the results of consultation and make decisions on the options.

Implement decision – Once the Royal Berkshire Fire Authority has made its decision it will be implemented.

Evaluation – The impact of the decision will be evaluated after a year of implementation and reported back to the Royal Berkshire Fire Authority.

ROYAL BERKSHIRE
FIRE AND RESCUE SERVICE

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

ROYAL BERKSHIRE FIRE AUTHORITY REPORT



COMMITTEE	FIRE AUTHORITY
DATE OF MEETING	15 FEBRUARY 2024
SUBJECT	ROYAL BERKSHIRE FIRE AUTHORITY – PAY POLICY STATEMENT 2024/2025
LEAD OFFICER	LUCY GREENWAY, SENIOR HR ADVISER – ORGANISATIONAL DEVELOPMENT
LEAD MEMBER	N/A
EXEMPT INFORMATION	NONE
ACTION	DECISION

1. EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

- 1.1 This report is a recommendation for Fire Authority approval from Audit and Governance Committee on 24 January 2024.
- 1.2 Section 38 (1) of the Localism Act 2011 requires the Royal Berkshire Fire Authority (RBFA) to prepare and publish a Pay Policy Statement each financial year. This statement includes information on remuneration for all staff as defined by the Act.

2. RECOMMENDATION

That the Fire Authority:

- 2.1 **APPROVE** the draft Pay Policy Statement for 2024/2025 (Appendix A).

3. REPORT

- 3.1 Sections 38 to 43 of the Localism Act 2011 require that relevant authorities in England prepare a Pay Policy Statement for each financial year. Pay Policy Statements must be approved by a meeting of the full Fire Authority and subsequently published.
- 3.2 Amendments to the draft Pay Policy Statement for RBFA for the forthcoming year (2024/2025) is drafted (Appendix A) taking into account guidance issued

Agenda Item 12

by the Department of Communities and Local Government Transparency Code 2014 and the Local Transparency Publishing Organisational Information guidance provided by the Local Government Association in 2015.

- 3.3 Whilst it has not been necessary to amend the format of the Pay Policy Statement for 2024/2025, a number of updates have been included and are detailed below.
- 3.4 Updated section relating to pensions legislation relating to address age discrimination issues with legacy Firefighter pension schemes.
- 3.5 Updated section relating to the second options exercise for retained Firefighters.
- 3.6 Update to information relating to employer contribution rates for the Firefighters pension scheme.
- 3.7 Update of the section on car users in line with changes to the Car User Scheme.
- 3.8 Update of the section relating to enhanced mileage rates for casual, essential and lease car users.
- 3.9 Inclusion of information relating to incidental mileage claims for Flexible Duty Officers, Level 4 Officers and those on a continuous duty rota.

4. CONTRIBUTION TO STRATEGIC COMMITMENTS

- 4.1 Sustainability: We will ensure that we provide a financially sustainable and environmentally friendly service to our communities.

5. FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

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

6. LEGAL IMPLICATIONS

- 6.1 This report is prepared to enable RBFA to meet its obligations under Sections 38 to 43 of the Localism Act 2011 and the Local Transparency Code 2015 and in accordance with issued Government guidance.
- 6.2 The Pay Policy Statement must be approved by the full Fire Authority.

7. EQUALITY AND DIVERSITY IMPLICATIONS

- 7.1 There are no direct equality issues arising from this report.

8. RISK IMPLICATIONS

- 8.1 There are no risk management issues arising from this report.

9. CONSISTENCY WITH DUTY TO COLLABORATE

9.1 N/A.

10. PRINCIPAL CONSULTATION

The following individuals have been consulted in preparation of this report.

- 10.1 Monitoring Officer
- 10.2 Head of Finance and Procurement
- 10.3 Chief Fire Officer

11. BACKGROUND PAPERS

- 11.1 Localism Act 2011
- 11.2 Openness and Accountability in Local Pay, Guidance under Section 40 of the Localism Act, February 2012, Department for Communities and Local Government.
- 11.3 Openness and Accountability in Local Pay, Guidance under Section 40 of the Localism Act, February 2013, Supplementary Guidance, Department for Communities and Local Government.
- 11.4 Hutton Review of Fair Pay in the Public Sector: Final Report, March 2011
- 11.5 Pay Policy and Practice in Local Authorities – A guide for Councillors, Local Government Association (January 2013) issued November 2013 to Local Authority Chairs
- 11.6 Local Government Transparency Code 2014 – Department for Communities and Local Government, October 2014.
- 11.7 Local Transparency Publishing Organisational Information - Local Government Association 30 November 2015

12. APPENDICES

- 12.1 Appendix A – RBFA Pay Policy Statement 2024/2025

13. CONTACT DETAILS

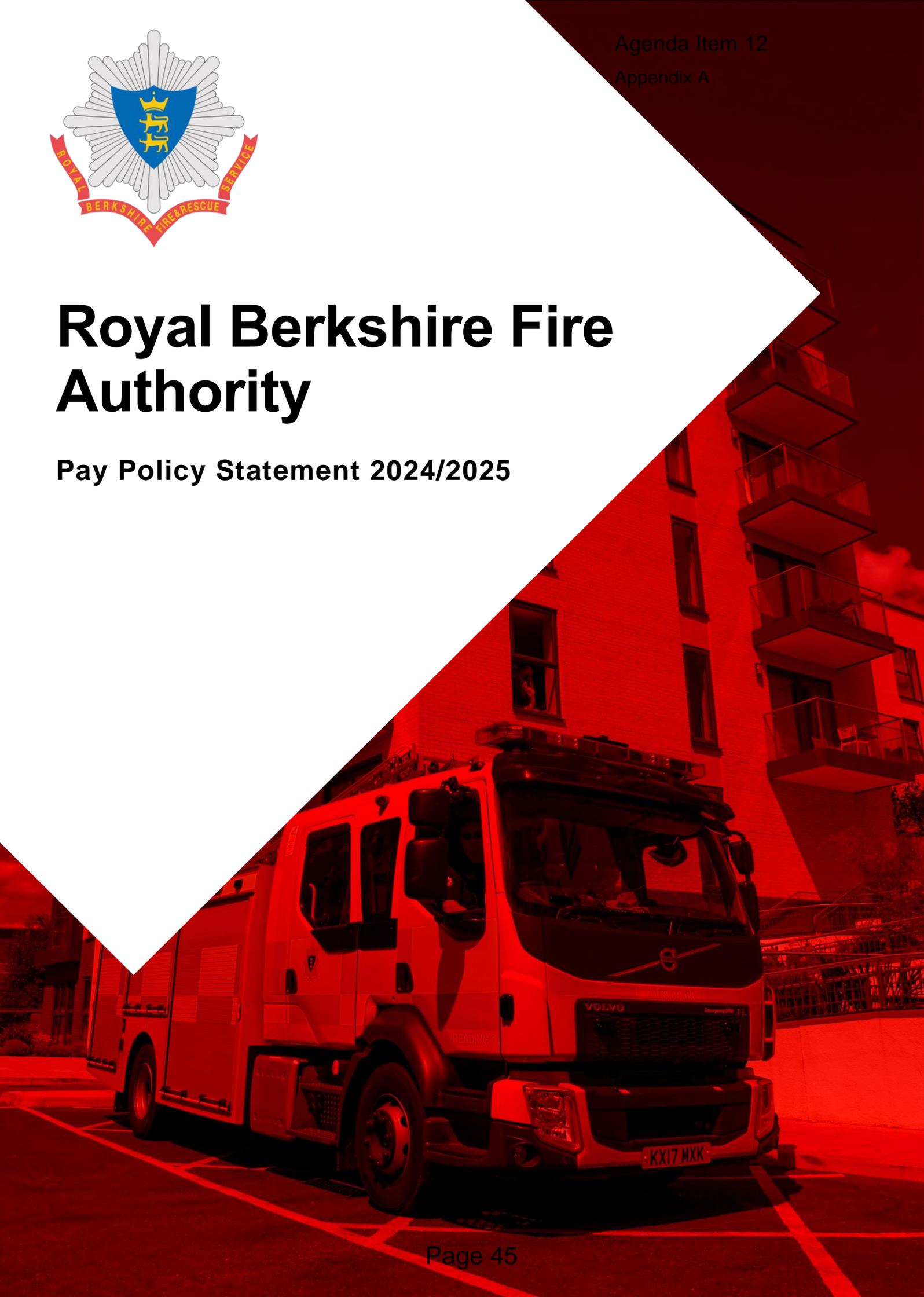
- 13.1 Lucy Greenway
Senior HR Adviser (Organisational Development)
07585 991606

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Royal Berkshire Fire Authority

Pay Policy Statement 2024/2025





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Introduction

This Pay Policy Statement reflects the Royal Berkshire Fire Authority's (RBFA) long standing Pay and Reward Strategy, which has been in place since its inception in 1998.

It has been formulated to discharge the RBFA's obligation to publish such a statement as required by Section 38 (1) of the Localism Act 2011. The purpose of this statement is to provide transparency with regard to RBFA's approach to setting the pay of its employees by identifying:

The methods by which salaries of all employees are determined;

The detail and level of remuneration of its most senior staff as defined by the relevant legislation;

The detail and level of remuneration for the lowest level of post/employee;

The ratio of pay of the top earner and that of the median earner.

RBFA seeks to balance the need to reward its staff sufficiently to attract, motivate and retain the talented individuals needed to deliver a first class fire and rescue service with the need to ensure that RBFA delivers its strategic commitment of providing good value for money.

This policy statement has been approved by RBFA. It will be subject to review annually and in accordance with new or proposed legislation to ensure that, it remains relevant and effective. Information supplied to inform the Pay Policy Statement will be based on figures available at the time of writing (31 October 2023).

Royal Berkshire Fire Authority Pay Policy Statement 2024/2025

Accountability and Decision Making

The Fire Authority is responsible for decision making in relation to the recruitment, pay, terms and conditions and severance arrangements in relation to its' employees subject to the exercise of delegated powers. The Fire Authority has approved the pay ranges for any post in excess of £100,000 per year on appointment.

Responsibility and Scale

For 2024/2025, RBFA was directly responsible for a budget of £41,974,800 and the employment of 639 staff. The Fire Authority provides services to a total population of 949,700 residents.

The Fire Authority's Pay Strategy - How is Pay Determined?

The RBFA's overall approach to determining the pay of its employees is to participate in national collective bargaining for fire-fighters and fire control staff through the National Joint Council (NJC) for Local Authority Fire and Rescue Services; for non-operational support staff through the NJC for Local Government Services and for Directors through NJC for Brigade Managers of Fire and Rescue Services. These arrangements account for a total of 459 employees covered by NJC for Local Authority Fire and Rescue Services, 176 employees covered by NJC for Local Government Services and four covered by NJC for Brigade Managers of Fire and Rescue Services.

The pay scale rates for apprentices have been reviewed and remain well in excess of the National Minimum Wage for apprentices as at 1 April 2023.

The RBFA's long term approach to pay and reward has been to continue to support national pay bargaining as the most effective way to manage payroll costs and the challenge of running a fire and rescue service in one of the highest cost-of-living areas outside London.

RBFA does not pay any location allowances related to the cost of living in Berkshire.

There are occasions where the job evaluation scheme and pay grading structure does not take into account market factors such as market pay rates for specialist and technical project roles, or fluctuating demand for skills in the marketplace. It is therefore sometimes necessary to pay a supplement in addition to base salary in order to recruit and retain staff. To this end, a Role

Specific Supplement Policy has been published to ensure RBFA has a fair, transparent and controlled approach to pay. Currently five individuals receive a role supplement.

At times we need ad hoc project work to be completed, which is achieved via Framework arrangements or paid on a casual hourly or day rate as appropriate to the task, duration and/or local market rates.

The Fire Authority also operates an individual Merit Payment Scheme to reward individual employees in any staff group as a result of specific exceptional performance in a one off task, sustained high performance within their normal job, or undertaking temporary additional responsibility where another allowance is not applicable.

The NJC for Local Authority Fire and Rescue Services

The NJC for Local Authority Fire and Rescue Services currently provides a nationally agreed competence based pay structure of six roles ranging from Firefighter to Area Manager and a parallel, with fewer levels, structure for Fire Control staff. For each role there is a Role Map and National Occupational Standards have been established.

Firefighters begin their careers as trainees for which there is a separate rate of pay. Wholetime Firefighters join under an apprenticeship scheme for which they are paid a trainee rate of pay. On satisfactory completion of initial training they move onto the development rate of pay and undertake a Development and Assessment Pathway (DAP). When they have demonstrated competence against the National Occupational Standards they receive competent pay. A similar structure of development and competent pay rates exists for each role, and for roles from Watch Manager to Area Manager, there are two job sizes at each role level for competent staff, which are based on the scale of the duties and responsibilities of the post. Allocation of posts to roles and job sizes within roles is determined through locally agreed evaluation processes.

For staff on Local Authority Fire and Rescue Services conditions, a two year pay award was agreed in March 2023 equating to a seven percent increase backdated to 1 July 2022 and a five percent increase which took effect from 1 July 2023.

Other elements of pay include:

- ✓ Allowance payments for work undertaken outside the role map
- ✓ Continuous Personal Development (CPD) payments
- ✓ Locally agreed allowance for Area Managers undertaking a Head of Service role
- ✓ An operational allowance for being available to undertake 'Gold' level command
- ✓ Station Manager allowances paid to Watch Based Station Managers

- ✓ A flexible duty allowance paid to officers undertaking duties as part of the flexible duty rota
- ✓ A one-off payment made to members of the Pension Board for attendance at each Pension Board meeting
- ✓ Training allowance for Training Centre Instructors

Full details of the NJC for Local Authority Fire and Rescue Services terms and conditions of service are set out in the Sixth Edition of the NJC Scheme of Conditions of Service and any subsequent updates, Local Agreements reached between the Fire Authority and the Fire Brigades Union and the Fire Authority's Policies.

The NJC for Local Government Services

The NJC for Local Government Services National Agreement on Pay and Conditions of Service, sets the framework and provides a national pay scale for the pay and conditions of service for the Fire Authority's non-operational support staff.

RBFRS uses the pay ranges identified within the national pay scales, localised to reduce the number of spinal column points (SCP) within each grade and further extended to provide ten pay grades. Posts are allocated to a grade through a process of job evaluation using the HAY job evaluation methodology.

Staff are appointed to a spinal column point (SCP) in the appropriate pay grade and progress subject to satisfactory performance confirmed through an annual appraisal (Performance and Development Review (PDR)), to the top of their pay scale by annual increments on the first of April each year. Based on the outcome of PDRs, there are provisions for the acceleration or stopping of incremental progression. In order to avoid possible claims for age discrimination, there are no more than six SCPs in each grade range.

Fire Safety Inspecting Officers (FSIOs) progress through pay grades as they complete nationally recognised fire safety qualifications. Trainees in Procurement are able to receive increment SCP increases within their Grade subject to the achievement of the relevant examinations in addition to annual increments.

For staff conditioned to the NJC for Local Government Services, a pay award of £1,925 was agreed on 1 November 2023, with those on SCPs above the maximum of the NJC pay spine but graded below deputy chief officer (for RBFRS those SCP 36 and above) receiving a 3.88 per cent pay award. This award was backdated to 1 April 2023.

Senior Managers' Pay

A new Senior Leadership Team (SLT) structure was put in place with effect from 1 December 2021. This structure retains four positions designated as Chief Fire Officer/Chief Executive (CFO/CEX), Deputy Chief Executive/Director of Corporate Services (DCEX), Deputy Chief Fire

Agenda Item 12

Appendix A

Officer/Director of Operations and Collaboration (DCFO) and Assistant Chief Fire Officer/Director of Service Delivery (ACFO). The ACFO role can be assigned as either operational or non-operational role.

Conditions of service for the CFO/CEX, DCEX, DCFO and ACFO are aligned with those set out in the National Joint Council for Brigade Managers of Fire and Rescue Services Constitution and Scheme of Conditions of Service. The DCEX is aligned to the Joint National Council for Joint Chief Officers of Local Authorities – Constitution, Conditions of Service, and Salaries document; A decision by the CFO on 20 June 2016, aligned the pay award for the non-operational Director (DCEX position) to those set out in the National Joint Council for Brigade Managers of Fire and Rescue Services. The non-operational ACFO role is awarded pay increases in line with the DCEX arrangements.

The CFO/CEX, DCEX, DCFO and ACFO are each placed on a five point pay range set by the Fire Authority:

CFO/ CEX	CO16	£144,858	DCFO/ DCEX	CO11	£116,499	ACFO	CO9	£107,441
	CO17	£149,629		CO12	£120,476		CO10	£110,516
	CO18	£154,413		CO13	£124,450		CO11	£116,499
	CO19	£159,930		CO14	£128,426		CO12	£120,476
	CO20	£165,303		CO15	£140,074		CO13	£124,450

The Chair and Vice-Chair determine where on the agreed pay scale the CFO/CEX is placed, based upon year-end performance appraisals. The RBFA have determined that the CFO/CEX, as Head of Paid Service determines where on the agreed pay scales the Directors are placed based upon year-end performance appraisals.

For staff on Chief Officers of Local Authorities, the NJC for Chief Officers of Local Authorities agreed a four percent pay award effective from 1 July 2022, with a further 3.5 percent increase from 1 January 2023.

In addition the operational CFO/CEX and DCFO are entitled to a vehicle for use in connection with Fire Authority business. Those in these roles are entitled to a Provided Car or receive contributions towards lease cars line with the contributions for other eligible staff as outlined in the Car User Scheme. The non-operational DCEX and ACFO receive a Car Allowance of £1,239 per annum.

The operational Director posts (CFO and DCFO) also receive an additional allowance for providing out of hours operational incident command cover and services based on 10% of the mid-point of the Assistant Chief Fire Officer salary range, currently £11,649 per annum.

There are no other bonuses or additional payments currently made to the Directors. In the event a merit payment is made, details will be included in the annual report to the Management Committee.

Senior Managers' pay (i.e. Grade 7 to 10, Area Managers and Directors) accounts for 6.54% of the total pay bill (which includes all taxable earnings, including base salary, variable pay, allowances and lease car cash value).

Benefits Other Than Pay

Pensions

The RBFA offers membership of the Firefighters’ Pension Scheme (2015) to newly appointed staff engaged in operational fire-fighting. From 1 April 2022, all operational members in a Firefighters’ Pension Scheme became members of the 2015 Firefighters Pension Scheme.

Non-operational support staff and Control Staff are offered membership of the Local Government Pension Scheme (LGPS).

In 2015 most public service pension schemes were reformed. These reforms included ‘transitional protection’ for people closer to retirement. The Courts have ruled that this directly discriminated against some younger pension scheme members. The Public Services Pensions and Judicial Offices Bill (PSPJO) received Royal Assent on 10 March 2022 and this set out in law HMT’s solution to the age discrimination. Secondary legislation came into force on 1 October 2023 which addressed the issues with legacy schemes. The impact on RBFA is significant and will continue to be monitored.

A legal settlement under the Part-Time Workers (Prevention of Less Favourable Treatment) Regulations 2000 allowed certain retained firefighters with service between 1 July 2000 and 5 April 2006 to become members of the pension scheme. Eligible firefighters were asked whether they wanted to join this scheme in an options exercise which took place in 2014-2015. More recently, this judgment was challenged, and the European Court of Justice ruled that service going back to the start of employment could be taken into account. This resulted in a second options exercise allowing eligible retained firefighters to buy pension service as a special member of the Firefighter Pension Scheme 2006, backdated to the start date of their employment. This will also have a significant impact on RBFA.

The respective contributions made by the RBFA and employees who are members of these pension schemes, from 1 April 2023 are as follows (in all cases members are auto-enrolled into the appropriate pension scheme in accordance with legislation in relation to workplace pensions):

Scheme	Employer Contributions	Employee Contribution Bands
2015 FPS (2015 Scheme)	28.8*%	11% - 14.5%
LGPS	14.8**%	5.5% - 12.5%

* from 1 April 2024 the employer contribution rate will increase to 38.7% following a valuation of the scheme by the Government Actuary’s Department (GAD).

** Employer contributions for members of the LGPS scheme are set at 14.8% of annual salary. RBFA also pays an employer annual lump sum to the pension fund of £363,000

Car Provision

The RBFA offers a Car User Scheme to staff who are required have access to a vehicle to be used in connection with their official duties. A revised Car User Scheme was adopted in May 2023 to ensure a fair and equitable process for determining the provisions for staff across the service. The scheme is in three parts:

1. Lease Cars

Lease Cars are available for essential car users meeting the criterial for a lease car as set out in the Car User Scheme. The annual allowance is determined as follows:

a. Non-Operational Lease Car Users

The standard allowance for new leases for non-Operational car users is £3,500 per annum. Where the a non-Operational lease car user requires an enhanced vehicle specification specifically related to the requirement of their role which will be not be met by the standard allowance, a dynamic benchmarking exercise will take place in line with the RBFRS Car User Scheme. This exercise generates a real time baseline allowance taking into account the volatility and price fluctuations in the market.

Lease car allowances for non-operational lease car users with leases agreed prior to the adoption of the revised scheme are based on a standard rate of £2,000 per annum and the enhanced rate of £3,500 per annum. The enhanced lease car rate was provided for individuals who need an enhanced vehicle specification specifically related to the requirement of their role. When these leases expire these staff will be eligible for the new scheme.

b. Operational Lease Car Users

Operational lease car users are provided a lease car that meets the minimum standard of an appropriate vehicle for their role. The lease car contribution will be based on a dynamic benchmarking exercise undertaken at the time the car is requested in line with the RBFRS Car User Scheme. This exercise generates a real time baseline allowance which meets the required vehicle specification outlined in the Car User Scheme and taking into account volatility and price fluctuations in the market.

Lease car allowances for operational lease car users with leases agreed prior to the adoption of the revised scheme are based on the enhanced rate of £3,500 per annum.

2. Provided Cars

Following a change in taxation rules for car users, a Provided Car Scheme is available for Flexible Duty Officers (FDO), Level 4 Officers and Principal Officers as an alternative to a lease

car. The Fire Authority also maintains a pool of provided vehicles for use by other members of staff requiring access to a vehicle as part of their role.

3. Car Allowance

A car allowance of up to £1,239 per annum is payable to those using their own car who meet the criteria of an essential user as outlined in the Car User Scheme but who are not eligible for a lease car.

Mileage Rates

RBFA pays an enhanced mileage rate to Casual and Essential car users above the authorised HMRC rates. Any amount over the HMRC authorised rates are subject to tax and national insurance. The enhanced mileage rates are reviewed on an annual basis and are based on the CPI rate of inflation.

Flexible Duty Officers and Area Managers on the Level 4 rota can claim reasonable incidental mileage when providing cover as part of a 24 hour or weekly operational cover in accordance with their respective operational rotas. Individuals on a continuous duty rota can claim business mileage for all journeys undertaken.

Lease car users are paid mileage based on whatever is higher of the HMRC Advisory rate and the average monthly prices of road fuels. This is reviewed on a monthly basis. Provided car users will reimburse their commuting and incidental mileage at the same rate that lease car user mileage is paid.

Cycle to Work Scheme

RBFA participate in the national "Cycle to Work" scheme through which its employees hire bicycles to use for travelling to and from work.

Subscriptions

Individuals required by RBFA to be members of professional bodies in relation to their duties are reimbursed subscription fees.

Uniform

The RBFA provides uniform clothing for its operational firefighting and control room staff and some Green Book staff engaged in public facing activities such as prevention work, Fire Safety Inspecting Officers and HQ reception staff. A number of other staff are provided with work wear as required for the purpose of their role. In addition, the operational firefighting staff are issued with and required to wear Personal Protective Equipment when undertaking operational duties.

Employee Assistance Programme

The RBFA provides an employee assistance programme for all its staff.

Occupational Health Support

The RBFA provides an Occupational Health Service to all its staff which seeks to keep them fit and well to undertake their duties and to ensure their speedy and safe return to work when they are injured or sick.

Healthcare Provision

Where appropriate and cost effective, the RBFA may pay for physiotherapy, private medical assessment and/or treatment for its staff in order to secure their more rapid return to work following injury or sickness.

RBFA also provides the opportunity for staff to access the Benenden employee healthcare scheme at no direct cost to employees other than tax due on the benefit. This is currently at a cost of £12.80, for those who choose to opt into the scheme. As at 31 October 2023, there were 469 members of the scheme.

Outplacement Support

In the rare event of employment being terminated on the grounds of redundancy, RBFA may provide appropriate outplacement support to the employee(s) concerned in order to assist them to find alternative employment elsewhere.

Highest and Lowest Paid Employees

The CFO/CEX is the RBFA's highest paid employee. The policy regarding their remuneration is set out in RBFA's Senior Managers Pay section.

The CFO/CEX is selected by an RBFA Members' Appointment Panel following a comprehensive selection process and national advertising campaign.

Remuneration Packages (as at 31 October 2023):

Basic Salary and (operational command allowance (per annum)	Total remuneration (including pension contributions and car provision)
---	--

CFO/CEX	£165,303	£227,915.31
Lowest paid employee (excluding Apprentices)	£25,819	£29,640.21
Competent Firefighter	£34,501	£39,434.64

From April 2023, the compulsory government National Living Wage for workers over 23 years of age and over is £10.42 per hour. Please note the National Living Wage is distinct from the Living Wage, which is the level of pay recommended by the Living Wage Foundation, an independent campaign group. In assessing this requirement on current pay arrangements in RBFA it is noted that the lowest paid post to which an employee would be recruited would attract an hourly rate of £11.79 (excluding apprentices on apprenticeship rates of pay).

Given that staff pay and benefits dominate the RBFA budget, the current and anticipated future reductions in RBFA's financial resources mean that these costs are and will continue to be under close scrutiny.

RBFRS has in some cases found it difficult recruit suitable professionally qualified staff through normal channels and in some areas the use of interim agency staff or contractors working outside of IR35 legislation, is in place.

Reviews will be required to ensure appropriate remuneration is in place to attract and retain staff as structures within the Service are examined. Consideration of the total reward available to respond to changing organisational pressures and the linkages between pay and performance and redesigned structures will continue to be explored through organisational change programmes to ensure staff are attracted to, and retained by RBFA. In accordance with our Equality Policy, pay is monitored and reviewed. An equal pay audit was completed during 2022/2023. RBFA has published its Gender Pay Gap report in line with legislation, which can be viewed on the Services' website and also at gov.uk. RBFA also publishes an Ethnicity Pay Gap Report which is available on the Services' website.

Pay Multiples

The relationship between the rate of pay for the median full time equivalent earnings and the highest paid employee excluding pension, can be described as the pay multiple.

The multiple between the median full time equivalent earnings and the CFO/CEX is 1:4.66.

Payments on Termination of Employment

Compensation Policy

The RBFA currently exercises its discretions under the Local Government (Early Termination of Employment), (Discretionary Compensation) Regulations 2006 to enhance statutory redundancy payments by paying one and a half times the Statutory Redundancy Pay Table and waiving the statutory maximum week's pay for calculation of redundancy payments. These discretions only apply to staff who are offered membership of the LGPS, that is Fire Control Staff and non-operational support staff.

Uniformed operational staff at all levels are not currently covered by the Local Government (Early Termination of Employment) (Discretionary Compensation) Regulations 2006 and in the event of redundancy, their compensation is limited to statutory redundancy pay.

Special Severance Payments

Special Severance Payments (SSPs) are payments made to employees outside of the statutory or contractual payments when leaving employment in public service. SSPs will include any outstanding loans, bursaries or training expenses which are not being repaid by the employee. Payments (or write off of loans which includes bursaries or training expenses) will only be made where there is a convincing case that it is in the interest of the tax payers.

As a public body, the RBFA must demonstrate it has appropriately considered whether making a SSP is an appropriate use of public money, and that payments are consistent with the Public Sector Equality Duties under the Equality Act 2010. Therefore, when an SSP may apply, the case is fully considered and appropriate approvals are sought in line with the scheme of budget delegation before any such payments are made or loans written off.

Pensions Policy

RBFA has adopted a policy of considering the re-engagement of its retired operational staff subject to certain conditions. In the event that re-engagement of a retiree takes place, their pension payments may be abated (up to 100%) to ensure that they do not earn more in retirement than they did immediately prior to their retirement. This is outlined in the Services' Pensions and Retirement Planning Policy.

Publication of Pay Statement

Upon approval of the full Fire Authority, this statement will be published on RBFA's web site. In addition RBFA publishes the following details for Directors for the two most recent years in its Annual Statement of Accounts:-

- ✓ Salary including fees and allowances
- ✓ Any sums payable by way of expenses allowance that are chargeable to UK income tax (Benefits in Kind/Car Allowance)
- ✓ Total Remuneration excluding pensions
- ✓ Employer Pension Contributions
- ✓ Total Remuneration including pensions

In addition, RBFA publishes the numbers of employees earning £50,000 and over in bandings of £5,000 and any compensation for loss of employment and any other payments connected with termination

ROYAL BERKSHIRE
FIRE AND RESCUE SERVICE

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

ROYAL BERKSHIRE FIRE AUTHORITY REPORT



COMMITTEE	FIRE AUTHORITY
DATE OF MEETING	15 FEBRUARY 2024
SUBJECT	CODE OF CONDUCT CONSULTATION
LEAD OFFICER	GRAHAM BRITTEN, MONITORING OFFICER
LEAD MEMBER	COUNCILLOR TRICIA BROWN
EXEMPT INFORMATION	NONE
ACTION	DECISION

1. EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

- 1.1 This report is a recommendation for Fire Authority approval from Audit and Governance Committee on 24 January 2024.
- 1.2 Members are asked to review the results of Royal Berkshire Fire Authority (RBFA) Member Code of Conduct Consultation; and to agree future Code of Conduct consultations are held every three years, or sooner subject to updates made to the document.
- 1.3 The Code of Conduct will continue to be reviewed on an annual basis by the Monitoring Officer and Democratic Support Team.

2. RECOMMENDATION

That the Fire Authority:

- 2.1 **NOTE** the outcome of the second annual consultation on the RBFA Member Code of Conduct; and
- 2.2 **APPROVE** that the RBFA Member Code of Conduct Consultation be held every three years, subject to any proposed updates for which the draft Code of Conduct document will be consulted upon sooner.

3. **REPORT**

- 3.1 On 16 November 2020 (minute reference 34) the Fire Authority approved the Member Code of Conduct be reviewed on an annual basis commencing 2021/22; and where possible take into account the views of the public, community organisations, and neighbouring and appointing authorities following recommendation from the Committee on Standards in Public Life (CSPL).
- 3.2 Following approval by the Audit and Governance Committee at its meeting on 24 January 2022 (minute reference 38), the draft Code of Conduct based on the Local Government Association (LGA) Model Code of Conduct and National Fire Chiefs Council's (NFCC) Core Code of Ethics was subject to a 6-week public consultation.
- 3.3 On recommendation from the Audit and Governance Committee, the Fire Authority approved the adoption of RBFA Code of Conduct at its meeting on 28 April 2022 (minute reference 71).
- 3.4 Two consultations have subsequently been held. The first was held between 28 January–11 March 2022, receiving 44 responses, and the second, from 22 November–13 December 2023 receiving 19 responses.
- 3.5 For the consultation held between 22 November–13 December 2023 Royal Berkshire Fire and Rescue Service (RBFRS) Communications and Engagement Team promoted the consultation across the following social media platforms; X (formerly known as Twitter), LinkedIn, Facebook and Instagram. The total impressions (audience reached) in promoting the consultation across the above social media platforms were:
- Facebook reach total (for the whole consultation period) = 37,575
 - Facebook posts reach (consultation specific) = 1,579
 - X, formerly known as Twitter posts reach (consultation specific) = 2,073
 - X, formerly known as Twitter post engagement (consultation specific) – 45
 - Facebook post interactions (consultation specific) = 11
- 3.6 There was no change to the Members Code of Conduct between both consultation periods. The above figures indicate although the total reach using social media platforms was relatively high, the consultation did not attract a high response rate.
- 3.7 Due to the low response rate, this report is seeking recommendation to the Fire Authority to approve future Code of Conduct consultations are held every three years, subject to recommended changes to the document for which a consultation would be held sooner.
- 3.8 Appendix A shows the results of the consultation and indicate 89.47% (17) answered yes, supporting the behaviours required of councillors, as set out in

RBFA Code of Conduct, when they are publicly representing RBFA on official business, and when using social media.

- 3.9 86.67% (13) answered yes, the expected standards of councillor conduct and the actions that could be taken should an allegation be made, was clear.

4. CONTRIBUTION TO STRATEGIC COMMITMENTS

- 4.1 Resilience: We will ensure we are resilient and work with our partners to promote and build resilience in the communities we serve.
- 4.2 Sustainability: We will ensure that we provide a financially sustainable and environmentally friendly service to our communities.
- 4.3 People: We will support our staff by providing a safe and inclusive environment for them to thrive in, building a diverse organisation that is engaged with, and accessible to, our communities.

5. FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

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

6. LEGAL IMPLICATIONS

- 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.
- 6.2 Royal Berkshire Fire Authority Member Code of Conduct is published on Royal Berkshire Fire and Rescue Service (RBFRS) website.

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

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- 10.1 Monitoring Officer was consulted during the preparation of this report.
- 10.2 Head of Finance was consulted during the preparation of this report.
- 10.3 Senior Leadership Team was consulted during the preparation of this report.

11. BACKGROUND PAPERS

- 11.1 Fire Authority agenda and minutes – 16 November 2020, minute reference 34.
- 11.2 Audit and Governance Committee agenda and minutes – 24 January 2022, minute reference 38.
- 11.3 Fire Authority agenda and minutes – 28 April 2022, minute reference 71.

12. APPENDICES

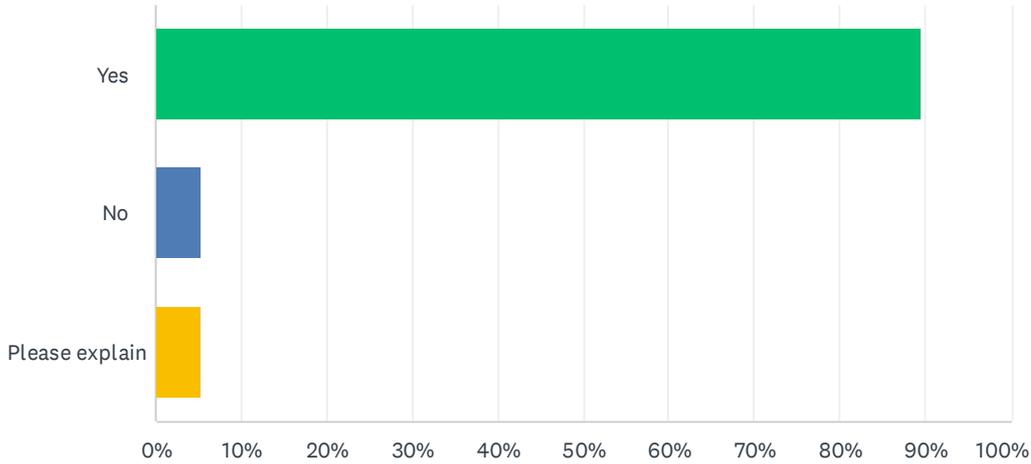
- 12.1 Appendix A – Results of Code of Conduct consultation, December 2023.

13. CONTACT DETAILS

- 13.1 Fayth Rowe, Democratic Support Lead rowef@rbfrs.co.uk

Q1 Do you support the behaviours required of councillors, as set out in the RBFA Code of Conduct when they are publicly representing Royal Berkshire Fire Authority on official business and when using social media?

Answered: 19 Skipped: 0



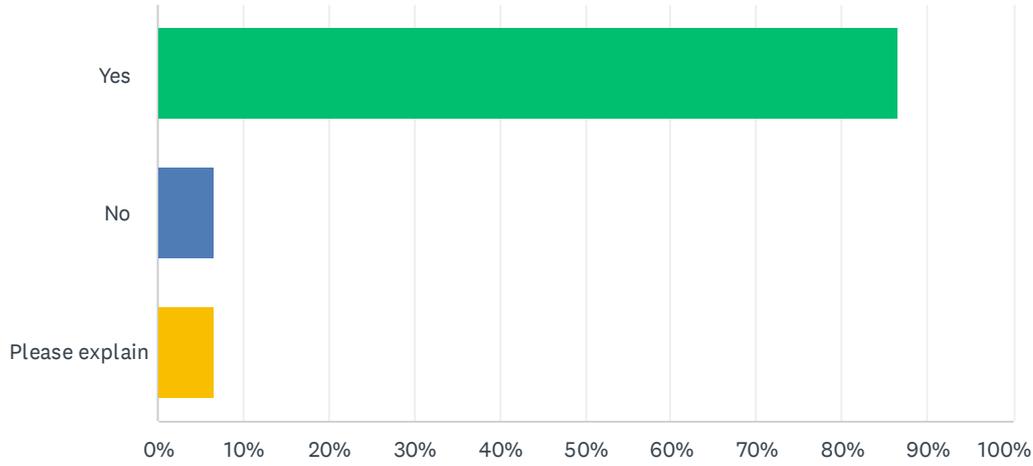
ANSWER CHOICES	RESPONSES
Yes	89.47% 17
No	5.26% 1
Please explain	5.26% 1
TOTAL	19

#	PLEASE EXPLAIN	DATE
1	But it would be nice if they did what the preach	11/22/2023 5:21 PM

Appendix A

Q2 Do you think the expected standards of councillor conduct and the actions that could be taken should an allegation be made, are clear?

Answered: 15 Skipped: 4

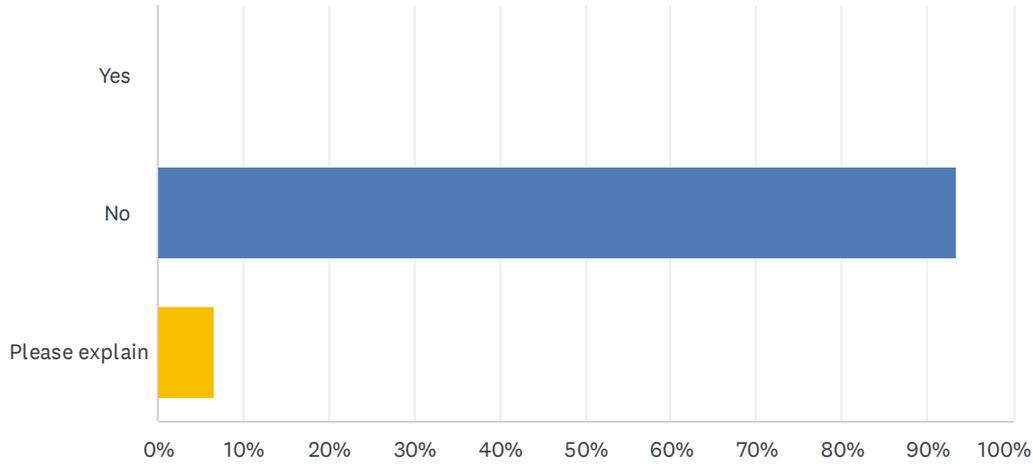


ANSWER CHOICES	RESPONSES
Yes	86.67% 13
No	6.67% 1
Please explain	6.67% 1
TOTAL	15

#	PLEASE EXPLAIN	DATE
1	Councillors do not represent the community in Berkshire	11/22/2023 5:23 PM

Q3 Have you got any other comments you would like to make on the RBFA Code of Conduct?

Answered: 15 Skipped: 4



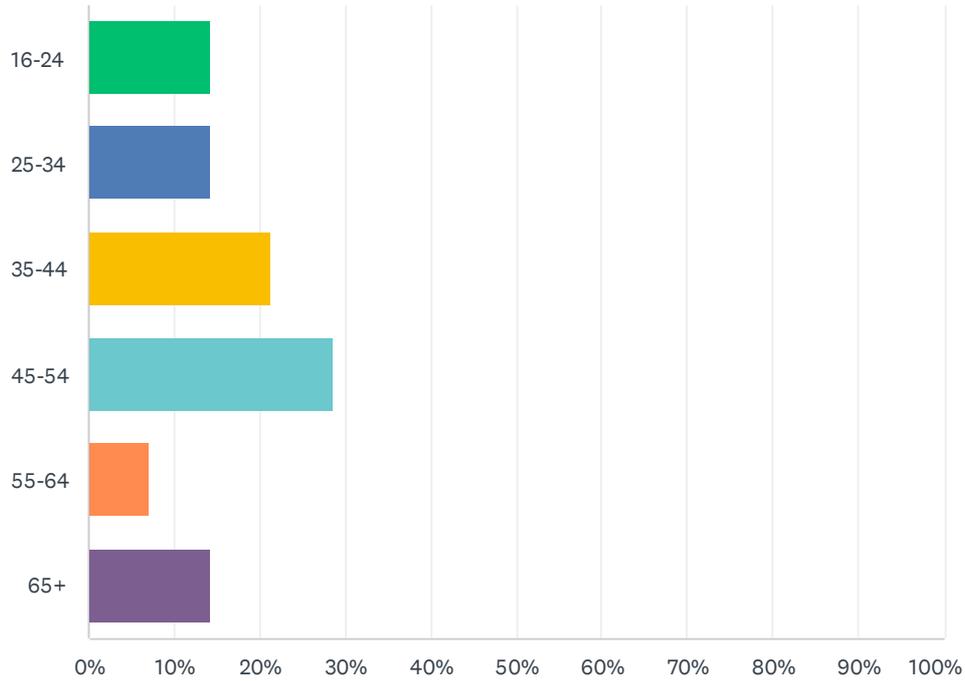
ANSWER CHOICES	RESPONSES
Yes	0.00% 0
No	93.33% 14
Please explain	6.67% 1
TOTAL	15

#	PLEASE EXPLAIN	DATE
1	I just hope they better themselves and help the fire service safe money I feel that all expenses the service pays on them should be communicated as this is part of the budget that could improve the service	11/22/2023 5:26 PM

Appendix A

Q4 What age group do you belong to?

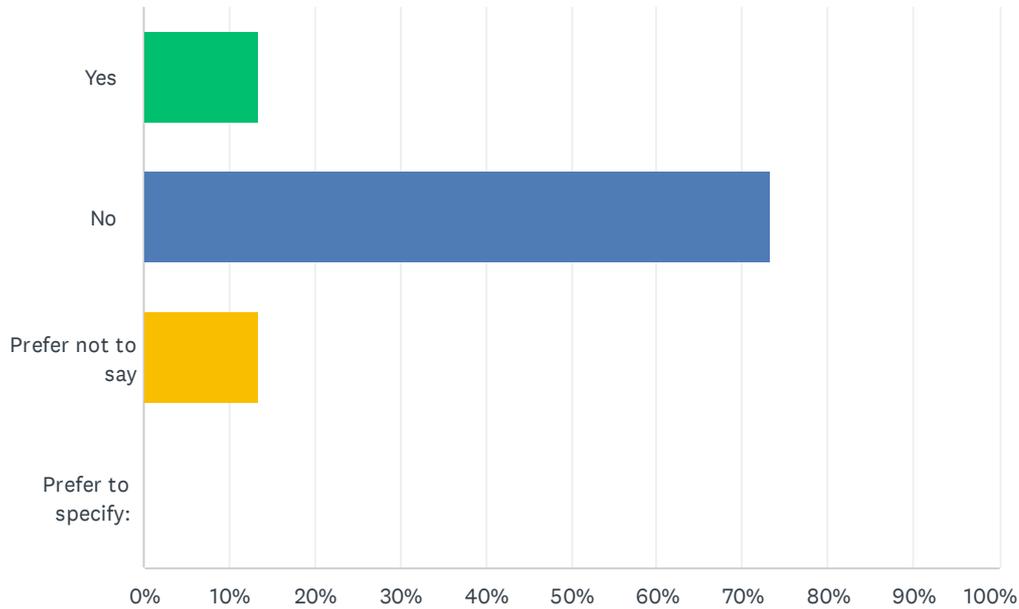
Answered: 14 Skipped: 5



ANSWER CHOICES	RESPONSES
16-24	14.29% 2
25-34	14.29% 2
35-44	21.43% 3
45-54	28.57% 4
55-64	7.14% 1
65+	14.29% 2
TOTAL	14

Q5 Would you consider yourself to have a disability or long-term health condition?

Answered: 15 Skipped: 4

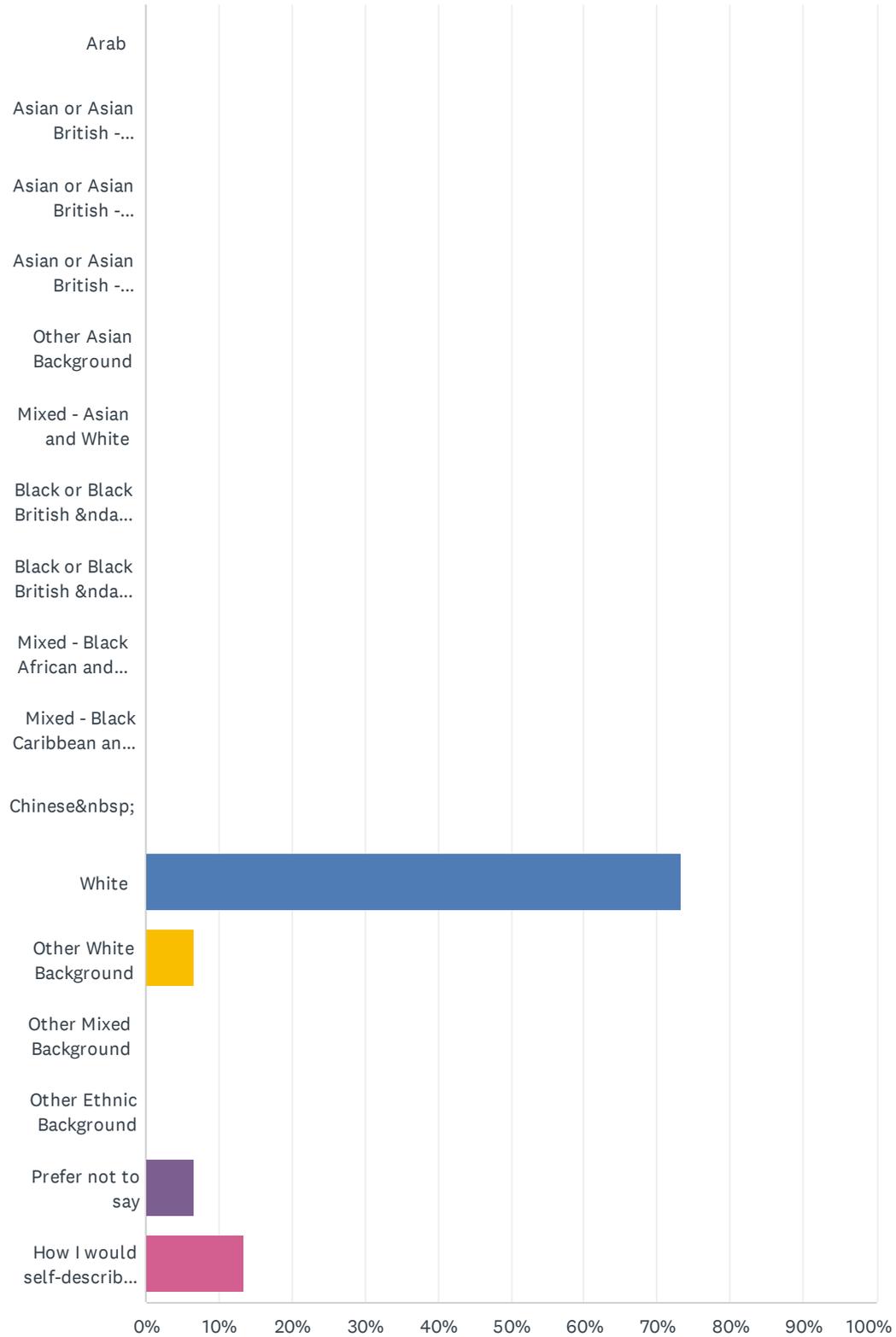


ANSWER CHOICES	RESPONSES
Yes	13.33% 2
No	73.33% 11
Prefer not to say	13.33% 2
Prefer to specify:	0.00% 0
TOTAL	15

#	PREFER TO SPECIFY:	DATE
	There are no responses.	

Appendix A
Q6 How would you describe your ethnic origin?

Answered: 15 Skipped: 4

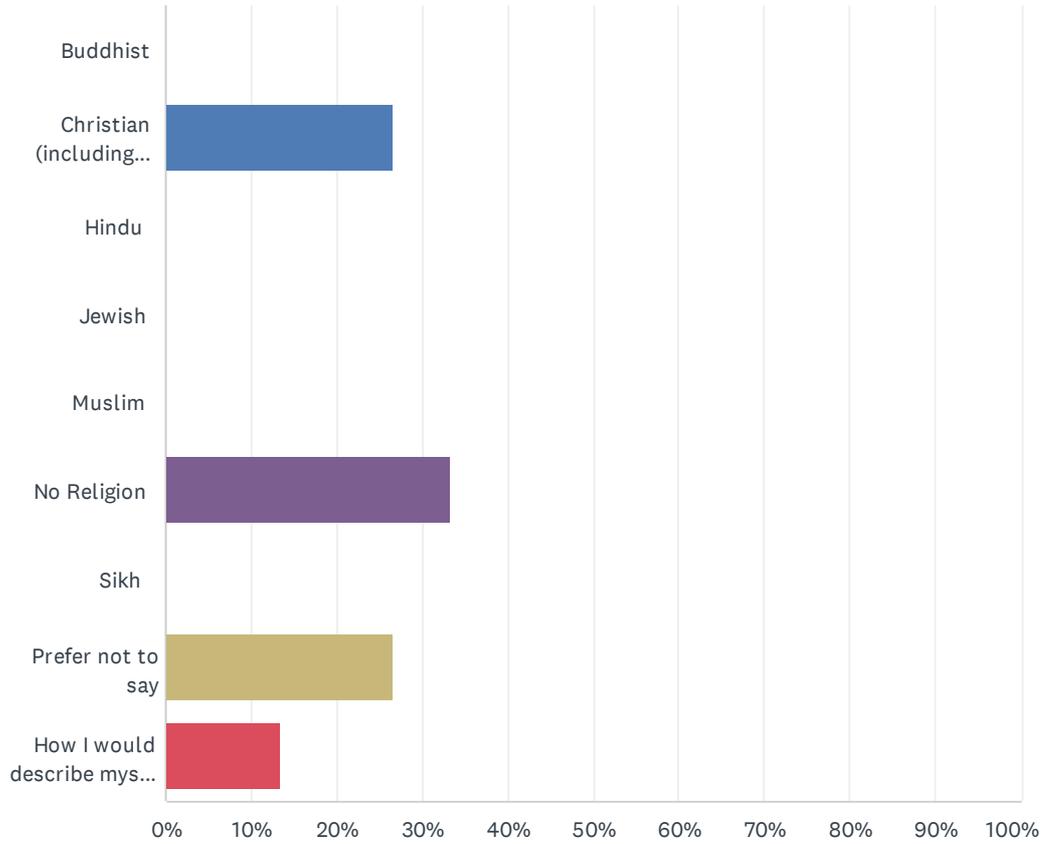


ANSWER CHOICES	Appendix A	ANSSES
Arab	0.00%	0
Asian or Asian British - Bangladeshi	0.00%	0
Asian or Asian British - Indian	0.00%	0
Asian or Asian British - Pakistani	0.00%	0
Other Asian Background	0.00%	0
Mixed - Asian and White	0.00%	0
Black or Black British – African	0.00%	0
Black or Black British – Caribbean	0.00%	0
Mixed - Black African and White	0.00%	0
Mixed - Black Caribbean and White	0.00%	0
Chinese	0.00%	0
White	73.33%	11
Other White Background	6.67%	1
Other Mixed Background	0.00%	0
Other Ethnic Background	0.00%	0
Prefer not to say	6.67%	1
How I would self-describe is not listed here	13.33%	2
TOTAL		15

Appendix A

Q7 What is your religion?

Answered: 15 Skipped: 4

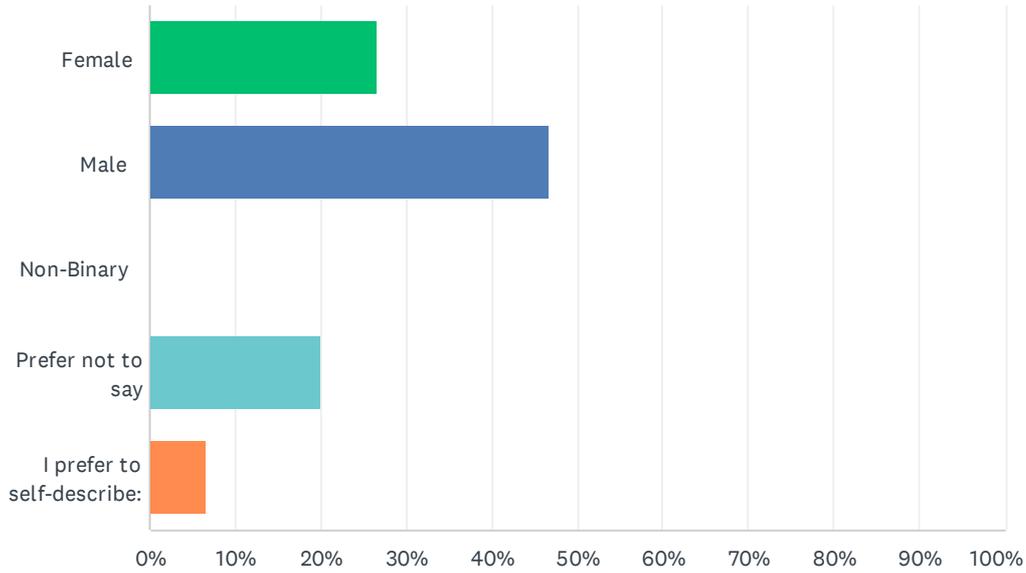


ANSWER CHOICES	RESPONSES	
Buddhist	0.00%	0
Christian (including Church of England, Catholic, Protestant and all other Christian denominations)	26.67%	4
Hindu	0.00%	0
Jewish	0.00%	0
Muslim	0.00%	0
No Religion	33.33%	5
Sikh	0.00%	0
Prefer not to say	26.67%	4
How I would describe myself is not listed here	13.33%	2
TOTAL		15

Appendix A

Q8 What best describes your gender?

Answered: 15 Skipped: 4



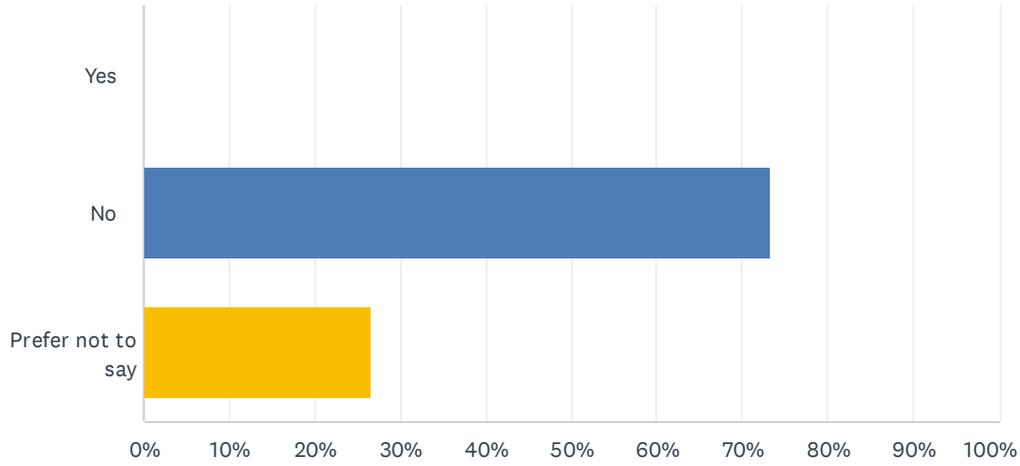
ANSWER CHOICES	RESPONSES
Female	26.67% 4
Male	46.67% 7
Non-Binary	0.00% 0
Prefer not to say	20.00% 3
I prefer to self-describe:	6.67% 1
TOTAL	15

#	I PREFER TO SELF-DESCRIBE:	DATE
1	mmm	11/22/2023 8:27 PM

Appendix A

Q9 Do you consider yourself to be trans?

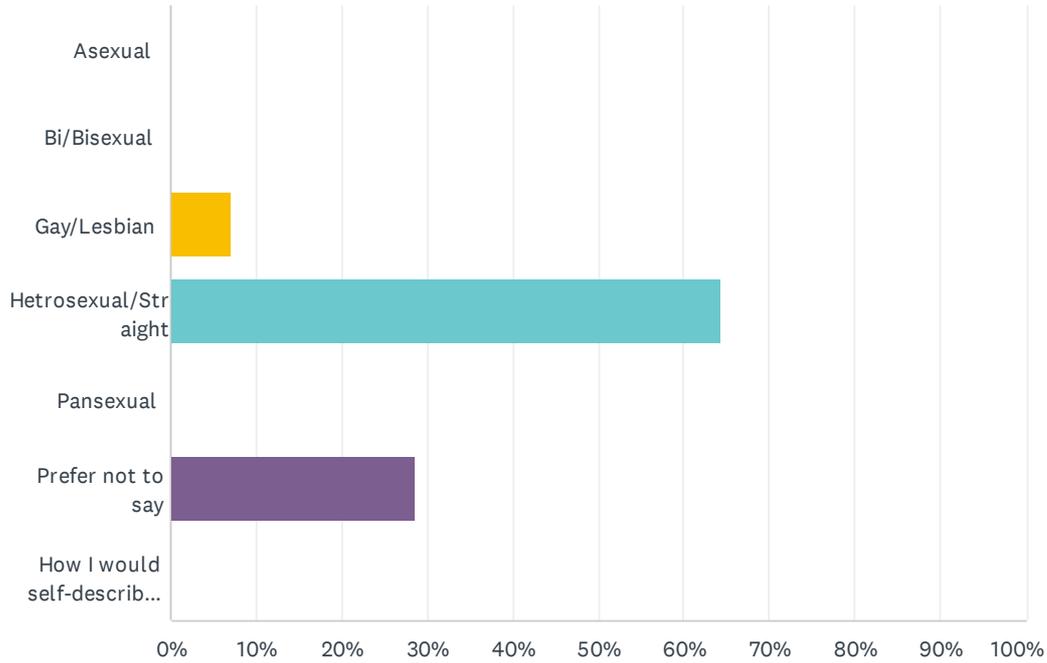
Answered: 15 Skipped: 4



ANSWER CHOICES	RESPONSES	
Yes	0.00%	0
No	73.33%	11
Prefer not to say	26.67%	4
TOTAL		15

Q10 What best describes your sexual orientation?

Answered: 14 Skipped: 5



ANSWER CHOICES	RESPONSES	
Asexual	0.00%	0
Bi/Bisexual	0.00%	0
Gay/Lesbian	7.14%	1
Hetrosexual/Straight	64.29%	9
Pansexual	0.00%	0
Prefer not to say	28.57%	4
How I would self-describe is not listed here	0.00%	0
TOTAL		14

#	HOW I WOULD SELF-DESCRIBE IS NOT LISTED HERE	DATE
	There are no responses.	

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ITEM	DECISION BODY	NEXT REPORTING DATE	REPORTING FREQUENCY	RECOMMENDED ACTION	LEAD OFFICER	LEAD MEMBER	PART I / II
Internal Audit Report	A&GC	28.3.24	Quarterly	Note	HF&P	N/A	Part I
External Audit Report	A&GC	28.3.24	Quarterly	Note	HF&P	N/A	Part I
Annual Report on Members Development	A&GC	28.3.24	Annual	Note and Recommend	HCS	Member Development Champion	Part I
Annual report on Governance / Members attendance and allowances / Code of Conduct annual consultation results	A&GC	28.3.24	Annual	Note and Recommend	HCS	A&GC Chairman	Part I
Quarter 3 Performance Report	A&GC	28.3.24	Quarterly	Note	Data, Performance and Risk Manager	N/A	Part I
CRMP P4 Statutory Duties report	Management Committee	9.04.24	Ad-hoc	Agree	HCS	N/A	Part I
Disciplinary Effectiveness	Management Committee	9.04.24	Ad-hoc	Note	HHR&L&D	N/A	Part I
Corporate Calendar 2024/25	Fire Authority	22.04.24	Annual	Agree	HCS	N/A	Part I
Lead Member and Champion Annual Reports	Fire Authority	22.04.24	Annual	Note	Lead Officers	Lead Members	Part I
Annual Plan	Fire Authority	22.04.24	Annual	Agree	HCS	N/A	Part I
Integrated Service Delivery Strategy	Fire Authority	22.04.24	Ad-hoc	Agree	ACFO	N/A	Part I

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