



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

**Thursday, 17th April, 2025**

**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](mailto:committeeteam@rbfrs.co.uk)

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



**MEETING:** Royal Berkshire Fire Authority Meeting

**DATE AND TIME:** Thursday, 17th April, 2025 at 6.30 pm

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

---

## S U M M O N S

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

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

**GRAHAM BRITTEN**  
Monitoring Officer

---

**To: Members of the Royal Berkshire Fire Authority:**

Councillor George Blundell	Councillor Rachelle Shepherd-DuBey
Councillor Zafar Satti	Councillor Peter Frewer
Councillor Harjinder Gahir	Councillor Paul Gittings
Councillor Mohammed Nazir	Councillor Wendy Griffith
Councillor Greg Bello	Councillor Dave McElroy
Councillor Dennis Benneyworth	Councillor Owen Jeffery
Councillor Tina McKenzie-Boyle	Councillor Wayne Smith
Councillor Jeff Brooks	Councillor Helen Taylor
Councillor Tricia Brown	Councillor Lou Timlin
Councillor Billy Drummond	Councillor Simon Werner

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

For further information regarding this meeting, please contact:

Committee Team  
0118 938 4611

E-Mail at [committeeteam@rbfrs.co.uk](mailto:committeeteam@rbfrs.co.uk)

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



**MEETING:** Royal Berkshire Fire Authority Meeting

**DATE AND TIME:** Thursday, 17th April, 2025 at 6.30 pm

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

## **AGENDA**

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

Purpose:

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

- 3. Minutes of the meeting held on 19 February 2025 (Pages 7 - 18)**

Recommendation:

That the Minutes of the meeting and any recorded actions held on 19 February 2025 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**

No recommendation from Committees were received.

**10. Culture Plan**

Purpose:

To receive a verbal update on the Culture Plan.

**11. Annual Plan (Pages 19 - 56)**

Purpose:

To approve the Annual Plan 2025/26 for publication.

**12. Corporate Calendar 2025/26 (Pages 57 - 62)**

Purpose:

To agree the Corporate Calendar for Municipal year 2025/26.

**13. Lead Member and Champion Annual Reports (Pages 63 - 106)**

Purpose:

To note the Annual Reports from Lead Members and Member Champions below:

- a) Finance Lead - Councillor Jeff Brooks
- b) Collaboration Lead – Councillor Simon Werner
- c) Community Risk Management Plan Lead – Councillor Paul Gittings
- d) Strategic Assets and Sustainability Lead – Councillor Rachelle Shepherd-DuBey
- e) Equality, Diversity and Inclusion Lead – Councillor Wendy Griffith
- f) Community Safety Champion – Councillor Owen Jeffery
- g) Honorary Armed Forces Champion – Councillor Rachelle Shepherd-DuBey

**14. Forward Plan** (*Pages 107 - 108*)

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 30 June 2025, 6.30pm at RBFRS Headquarters, Newsham Court,  
Pincents Kiln, Calcot, Reading RG31 7SD.

---

This page is intentionally left blank

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



Held on Wednesday, 19th February, 2025 at 6.30 pm

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

- Members:**  
(\*present)
- \* Councillor George Blundell
  - \* Councillor Zafar Satti
  - \* Councillor Harjinder Gahir
  - \* Councillor Mohammed Nazir
  - \* Councillor Greg Bello
  - \* Councillor Dennis Benneyworth
  - \* Councillor Tina McKenzie-Boyle
  - \* Councillor Jeff Brooks
  - \* Councillor Tricia Brown
  - \* Councillor Billy Drummond
  - \* Councillor Rachelle Shepherd-DuBey
  - \* Councillor Peter Frewer
  - \* Councillor Paul Gittings
  - \* Councillor Wendy Griffith
  - \* Councillor Dave McElroy
  - \* Councillor Owen Jeffery
  - \* Councillor Wayne Smith
  - \* Councillor Helen Taylor
  - \* Councillor Lou Timlin
  - \* Councillor Simon Werner

- In Attendance:** Wayne Bowcock (Chief Fire Officer, CFO)  
Tom Brandon (Area Manager Response and Resilience, AM R&R)  
Becci Jefferies (Head of Human Resources and Learning and Development, HHR&L&D)  
Graham Britten (Monitoring Officer, MO)  
Paul Brooks (Head of Assets, HoA)  
Conor Byrne (Head of Finance and Procurement, HF&P)  
Nikki Richards (Deputy Chief Executive, DChEx)  
Fayth Rowe (Democratic Support Lead, DSL)  
Michaela Smith (Democratic Support Assistant, DSA)  
Mark Antell (Communications and Engagement Lead)  
Lukasz Wrona (Head of Business and Information Systems, HBIS)  
Lucy Greenway (Senior HR Adviser)  
David Crease (Area Manager, Prevention and Protection, AM P&P)

**19. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE**

Apologies of absence were received from Councillors Zafar Satti and Lou Timlin.

**20. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST**

There were no Declarations of Interest received 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.

**Action**

**21. MINUTES OF THE MEETING HELD ON 13 NOVEMBER 2024**

**RESOLVED** that the Minutes of the meeting held on 13 November 2024, be approved as a true record and signed by the Chair.

**22. 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.

**23. RECEIPT OF ANNOUNCEMENTS**

The Chair made the following announcements.

**Priority 3 Update – Enhancing RBFRS Response Model**

Members will this evening receive a progress update on the implementation of CRMP Priority 6. As this positive change embeds, the Service will now focus on CRMP Priority 3, seeking to further enhance their response model.

This programme of work aims to improve the availability and resilience of the Services' response assets as well as identify ways that the Service can adapt their capabilities to the risks within Royal Berkshire. The work will consider the total response requirements including fire engines, incident command needs and specialist capabilities

The primary objective of the project is to improve the response the Service provide to the public, 24 hours a day, 7 days a week, 365 days of the year

This work is not looking to reduce Service Response budgets or the number of fire engines they provide to the public - this is about enabling the Service to be as effective as it can be.

A programme team led by Group Manager Rob Read is now in place, with oversight provided by Royal Berkshire Fire and Rescue Service (RBFRS) Deputy Chief Fire Officer Mark Arkwell, who is the programme's Sponsor.

This important work will be one of the Service's key focuses over the next two years

Early engagement with stakeholders is already underway, including representative bodies which is being received positively. There will be opportunity for Members to be closely involved in a specific working party in due course – so please watch this space, with regular updates also being provided through this committee and the wider Fire Authority

**Summer Internship Recruitment Open**

The Service has recently began recruiting for the next cohort of Summer Interns.

The Service is looking for four interns who are 18, live in Berkshire and from groups that are underrepresented in the Service to join RBFRS for five weeks in the summer.

The Internship aims to encourage young people who may not have considered a career in the fire and rescue sector to explore some of the many roles available to them.

Each intern will have the opportunity to gain valuable real-world work experience and transferable skills that they can take with them into their future careers or academic pursuits.

The application window is open and available on social media until the beginning of March. The Chair asked Members to spread the word about this exciting opportunity.

**New Wholetime Recruits and Training Centre Update**

This week (17 February), 12 newest Wholetime Firefighter Apprentices have begun their training with the Service. These Apprentices began their journey to becoming firefighters back in the summer and underwent a rigorous selection process before being chosen to join the Service.

These Apprentices will spend a couple of days with RBFRS next week before travelling to the Fire Services College in Gloucestershire to begin their training in earnest.

Returning in April, the Apprentices will be the first cohort of firefighters to train at the new RBFRS Training Centre building at Whitley Wood, which is expected to become operational that month.

The Chair asked Members to join him in welcoming the new Apprentices next week and wished them the best of luck as they embark on the first steps of their new careers.

**Arrival of new fire appliances**

The Service will soon be taking delivery of three brand-new fire appliances, built on Volvo platforms by Emergency One in Cumnock, Scotland.

These state-of-the-art vehicles are part of the aligned Thames Valley series but boast a range of innovative features to enhance firefighter safety and operational efficiency.

Delivery of the new appliances are scheduled in March. They will be allocated to Newbury and Theale fire stations, where crews will undergo comprehensive familiarisation training before they go on the run.

This investment in RBFRS' frontline fleet underscores their commitment to providing firefighters with the best possible tools and equipment to serve the community safely and effectively

### **Arctic Expedition for the Fire Angel Foundation**

Two of RBFRS' staff members are currently on an Arctic expedition to raise money and awareness for a good cause.

Ellece Ott and Joanna Herring are on a week-long hike through the wilderness near Umea, Sweden, with the Fire Angel Foundation.

The Fire Angel Foundation provides extraordinary experiences for young women, offering immersive training for adventurous journeys that builds self-confidence, develops leadership skills, and helps find a sense of belonging.

The Chair wished them all the very best of luck on their adventure.

### **24. ISSUES ARISING FROM THE AUDIT AND GOVERNANCE COMMITTEE**

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

### **25. QUESTIONS FROM MEMBERS UNDER STANDING ORDER 30**

There were no questions from Members under Standing Order 30.

### **26. NOTICES OF MOTION UNDER STANDING ORDER 44**

There were no notices of Motion under Standing Order 44.

### **27. RECOMMENDATIONS OF COMMITTEES**

**RESOLVED** that it be noted

- 1) Items 12 (New Contract Standing Orders and Revised Financial Regulations) and 13 (Pay Policy Statement 2025/26) were recommended from Audit and Governance Committee on 30 January 2025; and

- 2) Items 10 (Annual Budget 25/26, Council Tax Precept and 25/26) and 11 (Scheme of Allowance Review) were recommended from Management Committee on 10 February 2025.

## **28. ANNUAL BUDGET 25/26 AND COUNCIL TAX PRECEPT**

The Chair confirmed after what has been a challenging time, the Service has ended up with a very good budget and expressed gratitude to the people in Berkshire for their feedback in the 'Fiver for Fire' consultation that took place in January 2025. He stated there were a number of savings and cost efficiencies within the budget and projects that will make the Service more efficient.

Conor Byrne (Head of Finance and Procurement, HF&P) started with the Medium-Term Financial Plan (MTFP). He confirmed that the governments Settlement Funding Assessment (SFA) was £13.632 for 25/26. The SFA consisted of three elements – Revenue Support Grant, Business Rates Baseline and Business Rates Top-up Grant and would increase by 1.5% for 2025/26. Other funding areas covered were the Business Rates Grants, Surplus, and Collection Fund surplus. The Council Tax base will grow by 1.3% in 25/26 and is worth £402,000. The £5 increased in the precept will provide an additional £1.863 million and total funding from Council Tax was £32,156 million.

He stated Total funding for the Service from all sources total £47.965 million, which was an increase of 4.35%, just over £2 million compared to the current year.

Budget pressures totalled £2.898 million and was more than the increased funding of £2 million. Pay accounts for over three-quarters of the total revenue budget and awards for Grey and Green book staff this year were assumed to be 2% and would add an additional £821,000 pressure to the budget. Other pay pressures included Employer NI increases, staff moving from training to competent rates of pay after role development and additional on-call costs.

Non pay related pressures included contract renewals, Thames Valley Fire Control Service (TVFCS) running costs, necessary budget bids to maintain Service delivery and the Firelink Grant reduction.

Conor Byrne stated in order to minimise the impact of the above pressures, efficiencies for 2025/26 have been identified and total £517,000.

Within Capital Investment, there was a reduced budget pressure of £380,000 for 2025/26, this was due to a reduction in the budget for Direct Revenue Funding of Capital. Whilst the costs increased from 2026/27, the ratio of financing costs of the revenue budget remained below the Authority's Prudential indicator which has been set at a maximum of 3%.

Setting a balanced budget was the primary objective of the Budget Working Party and Conor Byrne explained the Chair of the Budget Working Party set two further objectives – ensure sufficient resources to continue to provide a high level of service to the public and make provision for that investment in new ways of working and the adoption of new ICT systems.

Conor Byrne concluded that although the proposed budget does meet these objectives, risks including increased pay award costings and increased contractual costs need to be highlighted.

Thanking Conor Byrne for his hard work, the Chair commended the lay out of the budget pack was easy to understand. The Vice-Chair and Councillor Benneyworth echoed the comments made by the Chair. Councillor McElroy stated it was frustrating that the National Insurance grant will not cover the increased costs of National Insurance.

Councillor Werner stated the pay settlement could come in at 3% due to inflation and not the budgeted 2% and asked what would the additional 1% cost the Authority. Conor Byrne confirmed that an extra 1% on the pay award would be an additional cost of £292,000.

In referring to the Efficiency and Productivity Plan, Conor Byrne outlined total savings were £517,000. These included a restructure of the Facilities team to reduce reliance on external contractors, falling utility costs and carbon footprint reduction initiatives, a reduction in the number of apprentice Fire Fighter required, income generation from former Service houses and rental income. Various initiatives estimated productivity gains in 2025/26 of over 4,100 hours and a further 4,704 hours in 2026/27.

The Strategic Asset Investment Framework (SAIF) (Appendix D) sets out the Authority's capital expenditure over the next 10 years and details investments into the stations to reduce the carbon footprint of the Service. £10.5 million will be spent on redevelopments at Wokingham, Langley, Caversham Road, Wokingham Road, Newbury and Whitley Wood Fire Stations. Within ICT, subscription-based services will be used in place of licensing software services. All financing costs of capital projects have been built into the MTFP.

The Chair added over the past 10 years a number of improvements have been made across the sites including building and refreshing Stations and stated further challenges lay ahead with no income or capital receipts available to assist with funding. Councillor Shepherd-DuBey added that savings need to be found in order to fund the required changes. The Vice-Chair agreed with those comments.

In answer to a question from Councillor Jeffery about the switch-off to the Public Switched Telephone Network (PSTN) telephony at the end of 2025, Lukasz Wrona (Head of Business and Information Systems, HBIS) stated the Service would be delivering communications over broadband connectivity which improves the resilience of the internet provision over which the telephony will be

delivered. The Service was confident that this change will provide the level of service that is required for RBFRS 999 responders.

Appendix E - Treasury and Investment Strategy, Conor Byrne confirmed that one of the key purposes of the strategy was to demonstrate there will be sufficient resources to pay for the Authority's capital programme and to show it was affordable. Capital expenditure over the next four years shows that expenditure can be funded through capital receipts, the development fund and direct revenue funding until the end of the current year. After that, the Authority will need to borrow to finance a proportion of its capital programme. Investments will fall from £10.8 million by the end of 2024/25 to £6.4 million by the end of 2025/26 as capital receipts and reserves will be spent on the capital programme. Debt will increase from £8.9 million to £16.9 million over the four-year period of the MTFP, and it is anticipated that the Authority will take out £9 million of new loans and repay £1 million of maturing loans.

The ratio of financing costs to the net revenue stream will increase from 1.71% in 2024/25 to 2.99% in 2028/29. To ensure the programme remains affordable over the medium term the Authority has set maximum limits on this ratio, and it will not rise above 3% over the period of the MTFP.

The Reserves Policy (Appendix F) sets out the Authority's rationale for the level of reserves it holds and how these could be used in forthcoming years.

Conor Byrne confirmed the Transformation Fund will be topped up by the anticipated surplus of £126,000 from the current year's revenue account. Reserve balances, including the Capital Receipts Reserve will decrease by a planned 48%, primarily due to the use of Capital Receipts to fund the Capital Programme. He advised this was an appropriate use of reserves, as it will enhance and renew the operational assets of the Service. In addition, he stated Section 25 of the Local Government Act 2003 states the Chief Finance Officer is obliged to report on the robustness of the proposed financial reserves and reported he believed the reserves will remain adequate over the medium term.

The Chair re-iterated that the Budget Contingency of £1.615 million would allow for the pay award to be over 2% in reference to Councillor Werners question. Councillor Werner stated that although this was a good budget, the use of reserves for revenue items would not be supportable for longer than a year.

The Thames Valley Fire Control Service (TVFCS) Joint Committee recommended that the Authority approve the TVFCS 2025/26 budget and the budget totals £3.007 million, an increase of 4.6% compared to the current year. The main reasons for the increases were the pay award, the increase in the Local Government Pension Scheme deficit payment, and a reduction in staff turnover within TVFCS.

There is a contingency within the TVFCS budget of £150,000 that would cater for any unseen eventualities. An example of this would be the national insurance

increase - it was assumed back in December 2024 that this would be fully compensated for, as of February 2025 this was not the case.

The last part of the Budget was Fees and Charges 2025/26 which Conor Byrne confirmed would increase by 2%.

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

- 1) An increase in the Band D precept of £5 for 2025/26 by adopting the formal resolution in Appendix A be approved; and
- 2) The Medium-Term Financial Plan in Appendix B be approved; and
- 3) The Efficiency and Productivity Plan in Appendix C be approved; and
- 4) The Strategic Asset Investment Framework (SAIF) in Appendix D be approved; and
- 5) The Prudential Indicators, Treasury Strategy and Investment Strategy in Appendix E be approved; and
- 6) The Reserves Policy in Appendix F be approved; and
- 7) The TVFCS revenue and capital budgets for 2025/26 as set out in Appendix G, as well as the Authority's 2025/26 contribution of £50,000 to the TVFCS Renewals Fund be approved; and
- 8) The fees and charges for 2025/26 as set out in Appendix H be approved.

## 29. 2025/26 SCHEME OF ALLOWANCE REVIEW

The Chair stated this item had been recommended by Management Committee.

The Vice-Chair explained that Member allowances were linked to Green Book pay increases and felt that as allowance increases could be seen as a controversial issue, the decision should be made at a national level based on the size of the Authority in question.

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

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

- 1) The 2025/26 Scheme of Allowance Review be noted; and
- 2) The 2.5% uplifted rate of allowances in accordance with annual local government Green Book be applied to Scheme of Allowances effective from 1 April 2025 (Appendix A) be approved; and
- 3) The Scheme of Allowances continues to be indexed to the annual local government Green Book increase for allowances (should any increase be agreed by the National Joint Council (NJC) for Local Government Services in 2025/26) be approved; and

- 4) Recommendations made by each of the six unitary authority Independent Remuneration Panels (IRPs) have been reviewed in line with The Local Authorities (Members' Allowances) (England) Regulations 2003 regulations 10 and 19 (2). (Background papers of each Unitary Authority IRP is located in paragraph 12) be noted.

### **30. NEW CONTRACT STANDING ORDERS AND REVISED FINANCIAL REGULATIONS**

Councillor Brown, Audit and Governance Committee (A&GC) Chair presented the item and explained it had been a challenging year for A&GC due to accounting issues and auditing delays. She confirmed after close scrutinization of both documents (New Contract Standing Orders and Revised Financial Regulations) by A&GC minor amendments were requested which have been subsequently reflected in both documents. She commended Conor Byrne's team for producing both documents to be clear and concise and made a special thanks of appreciation to Conor Byrne and other members of the Senior Leadership Team for open and helpful discussions.

Conor Byrne advised this report was proposing new Contract Standing Orders and revised Financial Regulations.

The Contract Standing Orders, Appendix A, had been completely re-written to comply with the Procurement Act 2023 which comes into force on 24 February 2025. The act introduces greater flexibility into the procurement process.

The objectives of the Act places greater emphasis on delivering value for money, maximising public benefit and being seen to act with integrity. To achieve these objectives, the Act introduces greater flexibility in the procurement process, however, he stated this may lead to increased risk of legal challenge if suppliers were dissatisfied with the procurement process or outcomes. To assist with transparency, the Act introduced new requirements for publishing notices throughout the procurement contract lifecycle which may lead to the administrative process becoming more burdensome.

The Act also strengthens provisions as to when suppliers can be excluded from the procurement process meaning that Authorities would need to closely manage contractual arrangements.

This was a radical overhaul of public procurement process, and it is hoped that this will yield benefits in the medium term. In the short term it will require a large investment in time and resource, to ensure compliance and to limit the risk of legal challenge.

The Financial Regulations have been updated and relate to references to the current governance structure, policies, strategies as tracked changes in Appendix B.

The Chair was reassured that the policy had been completely re-written to comply with new procurement legislation.

Councillor Drummond referencing page 93, point 5.8 asked if there had been any purloining of equipment, and Conor Byrne confirmed there had not.

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

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

- 1) The new Contract Standing Orders as set out in Appendix A be approved; and
- 2) The amended Financial Regulations as set out in Appendix B be approved.

### 31. PAY POLICY STATEMENT 2025/26

Lucy Greenway (Senior HR Adviser) reported RBFRS are required to prepare and publish a Pay Policy Statement each financial year containing information on remuneration for all staff as at 31st October 2024. Apart from standard annual updates to the budget, for example, population of Berkshire, staff figures, pay awards and the pay multiple, it has not been necessary to amend the format of the Pay Policy Statement for 2025/2026. She stated that a small number of updates to the following areas were made to include car provision, on-call allowances and staff uniform.

In response to Councillor Drummond's question on freelance staff, Nikki Richards (Deputy Chief Executive, DChEx) explained that the Service does not recruit freelance or contracting staff for permanent positions. Freelance staff were hired to cover and provide specialist support as and when needed and the cost was estimated at under £200,000 per annum.

The Chair asked for precise figures to be disclosed at the next Fire Authority meeting.

HHR&LRD

The Vice-Chair referencing page 111 of the agenda pack made observations regarding the Cycle to Work Scheme. He said the word 'hire' used in the pack wasn't correct, it should be 'leased'. Becci Jefferies (Head of Human Resources and Learning Development, HHR&L&D) said the contract document does refer to 'hire' but confirmed she would investigate this and amend the document if required.

HHR&LRD

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

On being put to the vote, it was **RESOLVED** that the draft Pay Policy Statement for 2025/2026 (Appendix A) be recommended to the Fire Authority for approval.

## 32. CRMP PRIORITY 6 EVALUATION

Wayne Bowcock (Chief Fire Officer, CFO) presented this report and highlighted the work Katie Mills (Assistant Chief Fire Officer, ACFO) and her colleagues have put into the implementation of Priority 6 (P6). He stated the report was a three-month evaluation on P6.

He stated the Fire Authority has a legal duty to develop a Community Risk Management Plan (CRMP), which sets out how the Authority will use resources to effectively manage risk and ensure the Service provide value for money.

P6 forms part of RBFRS's CRMP and states RBFRS are committed to maintaining 19 frontline fire appliances, with a baseline service provision of 14 frontline fire appliances, utilising wholetime and on-call staff as effectively as possible, through local management.

P6 went live in September 2024 and has been implemented 22 times, resulting in a reduced overtime cost of £22,667. Over the course of the year, it is estimated the saving could be over £100,00. The Service would reinvest that funding into their response model - for example, the 10 additional firefighter posts.

Wayne Bowcock stated there has been no material impact on the Response Standard when comparing against previous quarters of previous years, and the implementation of P6 had put control on overtime spend. Availability stood at 81.3% of shifts with 14 or more appliances available across all shift types in 2024/25 (Q1-Q3).

P6 has performed as the Service predicted and has supported critical investments into frontline arrangements. Performance will continue to be monitored and fed back to the Audit & Governance Committee and Management Committee as well as the Fire Authority. P6 is linked in with Priority 3 (P3). P3 focuses on how the Service can enhance its operational response across the county, and work began on this in January 2025.

The Chair added that the 81.3% detailed within the presentation was an extremely good indicator that RBFRS was achieving their objectives without a reduction to service provision, and that it hopefully provided assurance to the Fire Authority and the Fire Brigades Union.

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

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

- 1) It be noted Priority Six of the Community Risk Management Plan has been Implemented; and

- 2) The three-month evaluation report setting out the impact of the Implementation be noted.

**33. ENABLING REMOTE ATTENDANCE AND PROXY VOTING AT LOCAL AUTHORITY MEETINGS CONSULTATION**

The Chair stated the government consulted on remote attendance and remote voting at meetings. Currently, remote attendance is allowed but a Member is not allowed to vote remotely. A Service response along with a cross-party Fire Authority response was provided to the consultation. The Vice-Chair added they were hopeful the government would allow remote voting with certain restrictions.

It was **RESOLVED** that the RBFA's response to Enabling Remote Attendance and Proxy Voting at Local Authority meetings consultation (Appendix A) be noted.

**34. FORWARD PLAN**

**RESOLVED** that the Forward Plan be noted.

**35. MINUTES OF THE STANDING COMMITTEE**

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

**36. DATE OF NEXT MEETING**

Wednesday 17 April 2025, 6.30pm at RBFRS Headquarters, Newsham Court, Pincents Kiln, Calcot, Reading RG31 7SD.

(The meeting concluded at 8:25 pm)

**ROYAL BERKSHIRE FIRE AUTHORITY REPORT**



<b>COMMITTEE</b>	<b>FIRE AUTHORITY</b>
<b>DATE OF MEETING</b>	<b>17 APRIL 2025</b>
<b>SUBJECT</b>	<b>ANNUAL PLAN 2025/26</b>
<b>LEAD OFFICER</b>	<b>ANGELA SMITH, PROGRAMME OFFICE AND INSPECTION MANAGER</b>
<b>LEAD MEMBER</b>	<b>N/A</b>
<b>EXEMPT INFORMATION</b>	<b>NONE</b>
<b>ACTION</b>	<b>FOR DECISION</b>

**1. EXECUTIVE SUMMARY**

- 1.1 The Annual Plan will provide direction for the organisation for the next year within the context of the Corporate Plan and Community Risk Management Plan (CRMP) 2023-27 and the Culture Plan.
- 1.2 It will define the scope of the organisation’s activities in terms of what it will and will not do. It will match the activities of the organisation to the environment in which it operates so that it maximises opportunities and minimises threats, and will synchronise the organisation’s activities to its resource capacity.

**2. RECOMMENDATION**

- 2.1 **APPROVE** the Annual Plan 2025/26 for publication (Appendix A).

**3. REPORT**

- 3.1 This Plan reflects the Fire Authority’s Strategic Commitments as set out in the Corporate Plan and CRMP, by highlighting the areas of focus for the third year of the 2023-27 period and stating the measures of success and setting associated targets to achieve them. The Annual Plan includes objectives for the Culture Plan and it’s associated pillars for delivery.

## Agenda Item 11

- 3.2 The Strategic Commitments were reviewed and agreed at the January members workshop.
- 3.3 The Plan will be available on the intranet to provide a single access point for all staff to assist with planning and decision-making. In addition, it will be published on the RBFRS website for the public.
- 3.4 The Plan is linked to our service planning and the contents are reflected in our performance management and quarterly reporting processes.

The component parts of the Annual Plan are:

- a) Delivery of the Annual Objectives
  - b) Strategic Commitments
  - c) Priority Programmes – CRMP and Culture Plan
  - d) Sustainability commitment
  - e) Risk and Assurance
  - f) Corporate Measures
- 3.5 The Plan includes nine Strategic Commitments for the 2024-25 year. The first six of these reflect the Strategic Commitments agreed in the Corporate Plan and CRMP. There are a further three commitments added to include areas relating to how we deliver our service.
  - 3.6 The Annual Plan proposes some changes to our Corporate Measure targets this year. These changes are the result of our maturing understanding of risk in our communities and evaluation of our current practice.
  - 3.7 These changes are summarised in Appendix B – Corporate measures update summary.

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

- 4.1 The Annual Plan supports the delivery of all six Strategic Commitments, by setting a clear plan for the year.
- 4.2 Prevention: We will reduce the risk to our communities through our partnership duties and prevention education activities, ensuring that our services are accessible to all.

- 4.3 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.
- 4.4 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.
- 4.5 Resilience: We will ensure we are resilient and work with our partners to promote and build resilience in the communities we serve.
- 4.6 Sustainability: We are committed to ensuring that we provide a financially sustainable and environmentally friendly service to our communities.
- 4.7 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 The Annual Plan is set with reference to the financial strategy.

**6. LEGAL IMPLICATIONS**

- 6.1 There are no legal implications arising from this plan.

**7. EQUALITY AND DIVERSITY IMPLICATIONS**

- 7.1 There are no direct impacts from the Annual Plan. The Plan includes objectives relating to our Equality and Diversity strategy.

**8. RISK IMPLICATIONS**

- 8.1 There are no direct impacts from the Annual Plan.

**9. SUSTAINABILITY IMPLICATIONS**

- 9.1 The Annual Plan has narrative outlining the Authorities commitment to reducing the impact of the organisations operations on the environment and reducing its carbon footprint.
- 9.2 An objective relating to the delivery of the 25/26 Sustainability Strategy has been included under the priority programmes section.

**10. CONSISTENCY WITH DUTY TO COLLABORATE**

10.1 The Annual Plan includes objectives relating to Collaboration.

**11. PRINCIPAL CONSULTATION**

11.1 The Senior Leadership Team, Chief Fire Officer and Chief Finance Officer have been consulted in the preparation of this report.

**12. BACKGROUND PAPERS**

12.1 Corporate Plan and Community Risk Management Plan 2023-27

**13. APPENDICES**

13.1 Appendix A – Annual Plan 2025-26

13.2 Appendix B – Annual Plan 25-26 Measures Supporting Paper

**14. CONTACT DETAILS**

14.1 Angela Smith  
Programme Office and Inspection Manager  
07776 340332



# Royal Berkshire Fire Authority Annual Plan

2025-2026



# Contents

- Introduction 3
- Our Purpose and Vision 3
- Delivery of our Objectives 4
- Strategic Commitments 2025-2026 5
- Our Priority Programmes 7
  - Community Risk Management Planning 7
  - Our Culture Plan 9
  - Thames Valley Collaboration Programme 12
- Sustainability Commitment 13
- Risk and Assurance 14
  - Risk Management 14
  - Audit Plan 14
  - Statement of Assurance 15
  - His Majesty’s Inspectorate of Constabulary and Fire and Rescue Services (HMICFRS) 15
  - Performance Management 15
  - Governance 16
- Corporate Measures 2025-26 18
  - Service Provision 18
  - Corporate Health 20
- Measure Definitions 2025-26 21



# Introduction

Royal Berkshire Fire and Rescue Service (RBFRS) provides Prevention, Protection and Response services across the County of Berkshire. There are 16 fire stations across the County of Berkshire, ranging from Langley and Slough in the East to Lambourn and Hungerford in the West. They serve a diverse population, 24 hours a day, 365 days a year.

Our highly trained fire crews respond to incidents ranging from road and rail accidents to fuel and chemical spills, aviation, and waterway accidents, collapsed buildings, large animal rescues and, of course, fires.

The role of RBFRS within local communities is evolving. As well as responding to incidents, RBFRS provides a wide range of services including safety and Protection advice to our residents and businesses. We work alongside teams in the six unitary authorities of Berkshire, as well as, Thames Valley Police, South Central Ambulance Service (SCAS), Public Health, and other public service providers in Berkshire. In doing so, RBFRS is helping to reduce community risk and contribute to the overall safety of the communities we serve, whilst still providing a value-for-money service to the local taxpayer.

## Our Purpose and Vision

Royal Berkshire Fire Authority's (RBFA) purpose is to create safer more resilient communities by preventing incidents, protecting homes and businesses, and responding to emergencies. RBFA has a set of [Commitments](#) that run from 2023 – 2027 and are regularly reviewed. They explain how we intend to achieve our purpose.

The [RBFRS Vision](#) is to work together as one team for the communities we serve. To fulfil our Vision, it is vital that our staff work in a safe, supportive and inclusive environment, - the core values that underpin Our Culture Plan 2025-2028. This plan sets out the behaviours and principles we are committed to embedding across our Service.

To achieve our purpose and vision, we place the community at the heart of all that we do and deliver the service through our four overarching principles of culture, capability, risk management and sustainability.

We intend to deliver the four quadrants of our public facing work: our Prevention, Protection, Response and Resilience services through our four overarching principles: Sustainability, Culture, Capability and Risk Management.

Royal Berkshire Fire Authority published the [Corporate Plan and Community Risk Management Plan \(CRMP\) 2023-2027](#) which sets out how RBFRS will achieve the Fire Authority's six Strategic Commitments and manage risk in our communities.



# Delivery of our Objectives

The Senior Leadership Team set the objectives for the current year which are aligned to our vision and seeks to complement the work already set out in our Corporate Risk Management Plan (CRMP), strategies and documented in Service Plans. The annual plan is formally agreed by the Fire Authority and published on our website.

Our strategies and priority programmes are developed to run aligned to the period of our CRMP and the plan for 25/26 shows our continued focus on those long-term activities.

Heads of Service produce a Service Plan to assist in the management of the day-to-day business. Service Plans will include both business as usual and project activity and help to predict the resource levels across the service.

The delivery of Service Plans is further supported by individual employee objectives which are agreed with every member of staff during our personal development review process and sets out how each member of staff will help towards achieving the organisational goals.

The Annual Plan reflects not only our strategic priorities but also the values and interventions described in Our Culture Plan, ensuring that the culture we aspire to shapes and support service delivery.





# Strategic Commitments 2025-2026

In order to achieve the Strategic Commitments we have made to the people of Royal Berkshire, our plan for 2025-2026 describes how we will deliver these and highlights the areas of focus. These are aligned to our overarching principles: Risk Management, Sustainability, Culture and Capability. These are checked annually with the Fire Authority and are detailed below.

This is further supported by our Corporate Measures which are directly aligned to our plan and our core duties and responsibilities. Our Corporate Measures are detailed within the annual plan.

In the year of this annual plan, we have identified four key short-medium term priority risks which the organisation is addressing. These will drive the priorities in our annual plan giving consideration to our CRMP objectives and strategies.

## Principle: Risk Management

- **Prevention:** We will reduce the risk to our communities through our partnership duties and prevention education activities, ensuring that our services are accessible to all.
- **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.
- **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.
- **Resilience:** We will ensure we are resilient and work with our partners to promote and build resilience in the communities we serve.

## Principle: Sustainability

- **Sustainability:** We are committed to ensuring that we provide a financially sustainable Service and take meaningful action to help address the climate emergency.

## Principle: Culture

- **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.
- **Culture:** We will continue to embed our One Team culture, to ensure it is visible both within and outside the service to inspire trust, confidence and pride amongst our staff and within our communities.



---

## Principle: Capability

- **Capability:** We will continue to lead and manage RBFRS in accordance with good practice and national professional standards and we will continuously improve, learning from events and holding ourselves to account.
- **Collaboration:** We will continue to explore collaboration opportunities to ensure we deliver effective and efficient services to the people we serve.



# Our Priority Programmes

## Community Risk Management Planning

RBFA is required to produce a CRMP as set out in the Fire and Rescue National Framework for England. The CRMP must consider all foreseeable fire and rescue related risks that could affect our communities. In 2023, we publicly consulted on and published our Corporate Plan and [CRMP for 2023-27](#). This work will be managed through a programme structure and our Portfolio Board to ensure robust management and transparent reporting on progress.

We will continue to target those most at risk through our Adult Referral Programme and support businesses with their responsibilities under the Fire Safety order.

In 2025/26, our key CRMP deliverables will include:

**Priority 1: We will develop our Integrated Service Delivery Strategy to meet the changing profile of risk in Berkshire due to climate change, societal and technological shifts.**

- We will develop our integrated service delivery strategy to ensure that community risks are managed in the most effective way utilising our response, prevention and protection resources.
- We will develop our capability to respond to incidents involving alternative fuel sources, such as lithium-ion batteries and ensure our approach is linked with emerging good practice.
- We will continue to develop our wildfire capability to respond to the impact of climate change.

**Priority 2: We will develop a Risk-Based Prevention Programme to target those most vulnerable and at risk from emergency incidents.**

- We will gather data and set a scope for our risk-based prevention programme. We will use our evidence and understanding of risk coupled with identified good practice to ensure we are able deliver prevention activities to those most vulnerable and at risk from emergency incidents.
- We will incorporate recommendations from our Safe and Well evaluation to improve how we assess risk within the community and prioritise our Safe and Well visits to the most vulnerable members of our community.



**Priority 3: We will develop our response model to ensure that we are providing the most effective response to incidents within Berkshire, ensuring that it is aligned to the risks identified, sustainable and provides value for money.**

- We will better understand our existing crewing arrangements and impacting factors. We will develop, prioritise, and coordinate activity to improve the performance of our current response.
- We will identify and consolidate response requirements including, fire engine availability, incident command and specialist capabilities.
- We will develop options to meet our response requirements and enhance our arrangements to appropriately manage foreseeable risk, as described in our CRMP.
- We will coordinate the delivery of approved and prioritised improvements to our response model.

**Priority 5: We will develop our Fire Protection service to support the resilience of businesses, to ensure the safety of all people using buildings covered by the Fire Safety Act 2021, Building Safety Act 2022, and Regulatory Reform (Fire Safety) Order 2005 to ensure that our enforcement role is effective and clear.**

- We will develop our new Risk-Based Inspection Programme following evaluation to ensure we are auditing premises which present the greatest risk.
- We will demonstrate our commitment to public safety by utilising regulatory powers where appropriate to address buildings deemed unsafe due to non-compliance with the provisions of the Regulatory Reform (Fire Safety) Order 2005 (as amended) and the Fire Safety (England) Regulations 2022. We will engage with the people responsible for the High-Rise Residential Buildings (HRRBs) that have been identified as having unsafe cladding to ensure remediation remains a priority, taking regulatory action where necessary.

**Priority 6: We will maintain 19 frontline fire appliances, and a baseline service provision of 14 frontline fire appliances, utilising our wholetime and on-call staff as effectively as possible, through local management.**

- We will evaluate the change to understand the benefits of integrating our wholetime and on-call availability to achieve our baseline service provision of 14 frontline appliances.



## Our Culture Plan

This section reflects how our culture is interwoven throughout our strategic delivery, underpinning our behaviours, structures, and leadership approach. Cultural alignment is a critical lens through which all programme activity will be designed and assessed.

Our organisation is made up of a group of people who care deeply about making a positive difference within their community.

Whatever our role within the service, we are connected by a deep desire to serve, joined together by our core purpose – to create safer, more resilient communities by preventing incidents, protecting homes and businesses and responding to emergencies.

How we deliver our purpose is important to us. The 'how' is embedded in the culture of our organisation. This is why it feels important that we have a plan which clarifies the culture we aspire to in more detail, which we are calling Our Culture Plan. This plan covers a three-year time period, up until 2028 and contains reflective questions that every single one of us can ask to ensure that we have a positive impact in shaping our culture.

We see our true self coming out on our good days. Within our Culture Plan, we aim to capture these good days and make positive steps forward to increase the number of good days we have.

Over the last year we have spoken to our staff through leadership forums, staff engagement sessions or via surveys to really understand what they think is important for us as an organisation and the three values that come out time and time again are Safe, Supportive and Inclusive.

These values sit alongside the values that we promote in our code of conduct (community, service, integrity, dignity, respect, accountability, professionalism and leadership).

Cultural work does not sit with one person or one directorate, it is a web of activity that together gently nudges the culture towards the way we want it to go.

It is a combination of focused interventions, five strategic 'component parts' and everyday actions that everyone can do to make this an even better place to work.

We have identified five 'component parts', that collectively help shape our culture because they impact our behaviour in different ways. Work in these areas is well underway and we are already starting to see the benefits from the changes that have been introduced.

As part of annual planning, each Directorate will review their service plans against the Culture Plan to ensure that their activities support the development of a safe, supportive, and inclusive working environment.



Our priority projects are managed by various Programme Boards with a Portfolio Board in place to ensure robust management and transparent reporting looking across all our strategy delivery plans and programmes.

In 2025/26, our key Culture Plan programme deliverables will include:

### People

- Continue the rollout out of our Culture Plan and associated action plan to continue towards creating a safe, supportive and inclusive culture.
- Ensure workforce planning leads to the right people, in the right positions, with the skills required, including considering how to identify and manage potential.
- Deliver the 2025/26 requirements of the People Strategy action plan.
- Develop and consult on new Equality, Diversity and Inclusion (EDI) Objectives and deliver the 2025/26 requirements of the [Equality, Diversity, and Inclusion \(EDI\) Objectives](#) and Action Plan.
- Deliver the 2025/26 requirements of the Health, Safety and Wellbeing action plan

### Places



- Deliver the 2025/26 requirements of the [Strategic Asset Investment Framework](#).
- Deliver the 2025/26 requirements of the Sustainability Strategy and associated Sustainability Programme including significant adaptations to estates and equipment.
- Continued investment in our estate to improve the equality of facilities and to provide dignified workplaces.
- Embed new ways of working for the control and monitoring of fireground contaminants.
- Complete the new Training Centre facilities in an environmental and financially sustainable way, including attaining BREAAAM Very Good accreditation.

## Processes and Systems

- Progress our Cloud Migration initiatives improving availability of systems and business continuity arrangements.
- Deliver 2025/2026 requirements from RBFA 2024 – 2027 ICT [Strategy](#).
- Review and further refine our disaster recovery arrangements to ensure we utilise all resources available to continue delivering vital services to our communities.
- Improve our cyber resilience in response to increased threat levels in support of developing a robust organisational security policy.
- Deliver the 2025/26 requirements of the [Efficiency and Productivity Plan](#).
- Deliver our new Staff Development System providing a single point of interaction for all employee journey needs.
- Replace our Finance System employing more automation and streamlining related processes.
- Prepare for and migrate our telephony solution away from PSTN network before it's shut down by BT OpenReach.

## Structure and Governance

- Proactively engage with and respond to relevant and emerging policy, legislation and regulation, and monitor this through the Corporate Risk Register.
- Continue to engage with the development and implementation of professional [Fire Standards for fire and rescue services in England](#) and the areas for improvements following the publication of the HMICFRS report due in Q1 2025/26.

## Communications and Engagement



- Deliver against the Communications and Engagement Strategy Action Plan for 2025/26, which includes:
  - Review our internal and external communications channels to ensure we are accessible to all, progressing our commitment to be an inclusive workplace and Service for our communities.
  - Continue to develop feedback mechanisms and channels to support workforce and community engagement, as well as visibility of our Senior Leadership Team.
  - Utilise new technology and channels to reach our key stakeholders.
  - Provide clear, strategic direction and support on communications matters affecting the Service.

## Thames Valley Collaboration Programme

Effective working relationships with other partners enable us to better serve communities based on local risks whilst striving for cost effective methods. Our objectives support our duty to collaborate, and the delivery of these objectives are overseen through the Thames Valley Governance Structure. The supporting [documentation](#) is published on our website. In support of the strategic commitments and ensuring effective delivery of our response, protection and prevention activities, we will focus on the following areas of collaboration during this annual planning year:

- Continue to support the Thames Valley Forensic Fire Scene Investigation Unit (TVFFSIU) towards ISO17020 accreditation.
- Work with our blue light partners to complete the delivery of the recommendations from the Manchester Arena Inquiry to drive improvement in the Thames Valley.
- Continue to deliver improvements to increase efficiency and effectiveness with regard to incident command support with our Thames Valley Partners.
- Deliver a business case and scope for Command and Control system update.
- Review and re-commit to re-enter a joint working agreement for fleet maintenance with Hampshire and Isle of Wight Fire and Rescue Service.



# Sustainability Commitment

In support of our sustainability principles, and recognising there is a global climate emergency, the Authority is committed to reducing the impact of the organisation's operations on the environment and reducing its carbon footprint. It will do so in a way that supports the United Kingdom's commitment to sustainable development and reducing the effects of climate change by achieving Net Zero by 2050, in line with the UK government target.

The estate contributes 65% of the Authority's direct (Scope 1 and 2) carbon output (c1,524 tCO<sub>2</sub> per year) so, investment is being made to reduce the negative impact our buildings have on the environment. Estate strategic planning has included the production of estate heat decarbonisation plans to enable the first significant steps for the Authority achieve its Net Zero Carbon agenda by investment in sustainability initiatives at sites in the portfolio.

The fleet also contributes significantly to the Authority's carbon footprint, so investment is being made to modernise our fleet with more efficient assets. This includes, where possible, and as technology allows, hybrid vehicles, plug-in hybrid vehicles and fully electric vehicles, to reduce the environmental impact of our operational activities.

Sustainability is not only environmental but also cultural and social. Our work will reflect inclusive principles, ensuring facilities and fleet modernisation support dignified, equitable and accessible workplaces.

In addition to looking at how the service can reduce our carbon footprint through our Estate and Fleet, we will be addressing sustainability in its broader context, looking at economic value, social inclusion and environmental protection. This is captured within our five-year sustainability strategy and will be delivered through an initial one-year sustainability programme, which will aim to embed sustainability more prevalently into our organisational objectives.



# Risk and Assurance

## Risk Management

Achievement of the annual plan is influenced by a number of internal and external factors, which in turn create a level of uncertainty and risk. RBFRS has developed a comprehensive Organisational Risk Management Policy, along with a framework for monitoring and managing risks and uncertainties to ensure that organisational objectives can be achieved.

The Organisational Risk Management Policy does not address health and safety risks or community risk. These are addressed separately through both occupational health and safety management and the CRMP Programme.

The Corporate Risk Register is monitored by the Senior Leadership Team and a summary of the Register is available in the quarterly Strategic Performance Report and updated on a quarterly basis at [rbfrs.co.uk](http://rbfrs.co.uk).

We recognise that a healthy culture strengthens risk management by fostering trust, openness, and psychological safety, which are essential for surfacing issues early and improving resilience.

## Audit Plan

Audits are an important part of providing the Fire Authority and the public with the assurance that the Service is run properly and in ways that have been agreed by our Officers and Members. They demonstrate that the business is conducted in accordance with relevant legislation, Government expectations, good practice and organisational policy.

Our Internal Annual Audit Plan is developed in collaboration with our auditors, RSM, and approved by the Audit and Governance Committee. Each audit is linked to a risk on our Corporate Risk Register and aligned to the four key risks identified supporting prioritisation. The audits list is :

- Payroll Provider - Dataplan
- Risk Management and Governance
- Key Financial Controls
- Cyber Essentials
- Firefighter Pension Administration (WYPF)
- Business Continuity



- Health and Safety – Contaminants
- Equality Impact Assessments
- Procurement Policies and procedures compliance with Procurement Act

## Statement of Assurance

The RBFRS annual [Statement of Assurance](#) is available on the RBFRS website. The Statement is produced on an annual basis to formally confirm to Government, stakeholders and the communities we serve that there are adequate arrangements for the effective management of financial, governance and operational matters in RBFRS. The Statement confirms the extent to which the requirements of the [Fire and Rescue National Framework for England](#) have been met. This includes information about our assurance arrangements regarding Prevention, Protection and Response and how we ensure local and national resilience. Our audit plan for the coming year will contribute towards the evidence for the annual Statement of Assurance.

## His Majesty's Inspectorate of Constabulary and Fire and Rescue Services (HMICFRS)

Independent assurance is provided by His Majesty's Inspectorate of Constabulary and Fire and Rescue Services (HMICFRS) across the three pillars of 'effectiveness', 'efficiency' and 'people'.

HMICFRS inspected RBFRS during 2022 with the final report published in January 2023. RBFRS was graded as 'good' in all three pillars.

Progress on the areas for improvements identified by HMICFRS in the 2023 report published were incorporated into our plans. Progress and assurance on these take place in our Portfolio Board and are reported to Audit and Governance committee through our Strategic Performance Board.

RBFRS was inspected in Q3 2024 with the inspection report due for publication late April 2025. The inspection report will highlight any areas for improvement (AFIs) and potentially, causes for concern. Once HMICFRS have published the report, our AFIs will be reviewed, and action plans created and may affect our priorities and delivery of our Annual Plan. The latest published inspection report for RBFRS can be found [online](#).

For more information on the inspection of Fire and Rescue Services, please visit the [HMICFRS website](#).

## Performance Management

The RBFRS Performance Management Framework provides structure and governance that enables measurement, monitoring and management of outputs and outcomes in a timely manner;

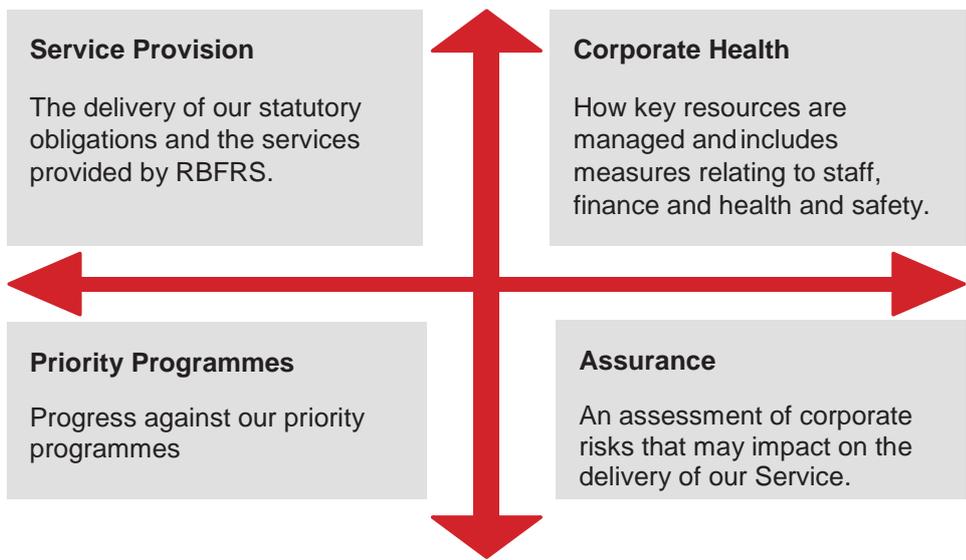


this allows the organisation to respond and make informed decisions to ensure our statutory obligations and the Fire Authority’s Strategic Commitments are successfully delivered.

Performance is scrutinised internally at the Strategic Performance Board and by the Audit and Governance Committee of the Fire Authority.

Ongoing analysis of performance data supports decision-making across the organisation. Management teams review and monitor data and information regularly. The Strategic Performance Board monitors performance in all four quadrants on a quarterly basis. A quarterly Strategic Performance Report is then reviewed by the Senior Leadership Team and scrutinised by the [Audit and Governance Committee](#).

In line with Our Culture Plan, performance indicators will include cultural indicators and feedback from staff on feelings of trust, safety, inclusion and wellbeing.



## Governance

The Fire Authority is a legal body with statutory duties and responsibilities, including the scrutiny of the Service as a whole. The Fire Authority is responsible for setting the strategic direction, policies and priorities of the Service. In addition to full Fire Authority meetings which take place, RBFA has two committees, Audit and Governance Committee and Management Committee. They meet regularly to ensure the proper running of Royal Berkshire Fire and Rescue Service (RBFRS). Further information around our Fire Authority is published on our [website](#).

RBFRS has key internal governance meetings which take place at defined intervals. These meetings range from strategic to operational in purpose and each one has a terms of reference



outlining its purpose and scope. During 2025/26, changes are being made to embed the Portfolio Board and the way we manage and oversee the programme of work.

The strategic governance structure consists of:

- Senior Leadership Team Meeting for decision making
- Portfolio board to monitor and scrutinise our strategy delivery plans and programmes.
- Strategic Performance Board to monitor and scrutinise performance.



# Corporate Measures 2025-26

## Service Provision

Service Provision monitors the service we provide to the public. Performance is monitored in relation to attendance at incidents, types of incidents, Prevention activities and fire safety in commercial buildings.

	Measure	2024-25 Target	2025-26 Target
1	Number of fire deaths	0	0
2	Number of non-fatal fire casualties	31 max	34 max
3	Number of deliberate primary fires	125 max	112 max
4	Number of deliberate secondary fires	233 max	207 max
Prevention			
5	Increase the number of Referrals for Safe and Well Visits received from our partners	10%	5%
6	Percentage of Safe and Well referrals, where there has been a threat or incidence of arson, completed within 48 hours	100%	100%
7	Percentage of Very High Risk Safe and Well Referrals completed within 72 hours	40%	45%
8	Percentage of High Risk Safe and Well Referrals completed within 14 days	57%	64%
Protection			
9	Percentage of Fire Safety Audits of premises identified as High or Very High Risk in our Risk-Based Inspection Programme completed in timescale.	NA (new)	Monitor
10	Number of Fire Safety Audits completed at High and Very High-Risk Premises	New	Measure of Volume
11a	Percentage success when cases go to court	80%	80%
11b	Number of informal actions taken as a result of Protection intervention	New	Measure of Volume



11c	Number of formal actions taken as a result of Protection intervention	New	Measure of Volume
12	Percentage of statutory fire consultations completed within the required timeframes	95%	95%
Response			
13	Percentage of occasions where the first fire engine arrives at an emergency incident within 10 minutes from time the emergency call was answered	75%	75%
14	Percentage of wholetime frontline pumping appliance availability	97.4%	97.4%
15	Percentage of hours where there is adequate crewing of on-call frontline pumping appliances (based on 24/7 crewing)	50%	50%
16	Percentage of time that 14 or more pumping appliances are available	100%	100%
Resilience			
17	Percentage of visits to Very High, High and Medium Operational Risk sites completed in timescale	100%	100%
18	Number of Service Delivery Hub exercises completed	12	12
Efficiency			
19	Percentage of Automatic Fire Alarm calls where RBFRS did not attend	30% (min)	45% (min)
Customer Experience			
20	Percentage of respondents experiencing a fire, fire safety audit or safe and well visit, satisfied with the service received	New (combined measures)	95%
21	Number of complaints received	Monitor	Measure of Volume
22	Number of compliments received	Monitor	Measure of Volume



# Corporate Health

The Corporate Health quadrant monitors the wellbeing of the organisation. Performance is monitored in relation to staffing levels, health and safety and finances within RBFRS, to ensure the organisation is being run safely, efficiently and is cost effective.

	Measure	2024-25 Target	2025-26 Target
Human Resources and Learning & Development			
23	Percentage of working time lost to sickness across all staff groups	5% (max)	5% (max)
24	Percentage of eligible staff with Personal Development Reviews	100%	100%
25	Number of formal grievances	Monitor	Monitor
Health and Safety			
26	Number of RIDDOR accidents and diseases	Max 4	Max 4
Finance and Procurement			
27	Percentage of spend subject to competition	85%	85%
28	Compliant spend as a percentage of overall spend	100%	100%
Freedom of Information			
29	Number of Information Commissioner assessments finding that the Service has breached Information Rights Legislation (Freedom of Information Act, Environmental Regulations or Data Protection Legislation)	0	0
30	Monitoring the annual completion of the mandatory Protecting Information Course	Monitor	95%
31	Reporting of data breaches and near misses to include those that are reported to the ICO	Monitor	0
32	Completing the Data Subject Requests (SARs) within the permitted time frames	Monitor	100%
33	Having a complete set of published Retention Schedules and keeping them up to date and auditing that data is retained in line with retention schedules	Monitor	100%



# Measure Definitions 2025-26

## Service Provision

	Measure	2025-26 Target	Definition/ Rationale
1	Number of fire deaths	0	The number of deaths that occur as the result of a fire, even when the death occurs weeks or months later.
2	Number of non-fatal fire casualties	34 max	The number of non-fatal casualties requiring hospital treatment that occur as a result of a fire. The target is a 10% reduction on the five-year average.
3	Number of deliberate primary fires	112 max	The total number of primary fires that have been started deliberately. The target is a 5% reduction on the five-year average.
4	Number of deliberate secondary fires	207 max	The total number of secondary fires that have been started deliberately. The target is a 5% reduction on the five-year average.
<b>Prevention</b>			
5	Increase the number of Referrals for Safe and Well Visits received from our partners	5%	We receive referrals from other agencies for individuals at risk from fire in their homes. These referrals are a high-quality source of information about those at risk in our communities. Service level measures sit below this which set out targets specific to the Unitary Authority areas, recognising there may be areas where we need to improve and grow our relationships with referrers.
6	Percentage of Safe and Well referrals, where there has been a threat or incidence of arson, completed within 48 hours	100%	Safe and Well Referrals are risk assessed, with each category of risk having an expected timescale for completion. Cases where there is a threat of arson are the highest risk.
7	Percentage of Very High-Risk Safe and Well Referrals completed within 72 hours	45%	Safe and Well Referrals are risk assessed, with each category of risk having an expected timescale for completion. Very High-Risk referrals have a timescale of 72 hours. Over the duration of the CRMP period (2023 to 2027) we aim to bring the



			proportion completed in timescale up to 50%
8	Percentage of High Risk Safe and Well Referrals completed within 14 days	64%	Safe and Well Referrals are risk assessed, with each category of risk having an expected timescale for completion. High-Risk referrals have a timescale time of 14 days. Over the duration of the CRMP period (2023 to 2027) we aim to bring the proportion completed in timescale up to 70%
Protection			
9	Proportion of Fire Safety Audits conducted against premises identified as High or Very High-Risk in our Risk-Based Inspection Programme	Monitor	A Fire Safety Audit is carried out to enforce the Regulatory Reform Order (RRO) 2005. Our Risk-Based Inspection Programme targets the riskiest premises in the county for inspection. Fire Safety Audits can also result from complaints or can be carried out after an incident or for training purposes. This measure allows us to monitor how our resources are being targeted at risk.
10	Number of audits carried out in High or Very High-Risk premises	Measure of volume	The measure of volume sets out the volume of audits undertaken to support our programme of inspecting the highest risk premises. The measure includes audits which may, for a number of reasons, have been out of target (CM09) but still within a short period after. We have retained a service level measure which looks at the compliance levels of our visits to ensure we are targeting our resources at the riskiest properties
11a	Percentage success when cases go to court	80%	RBFRS prosecute serious cases following Fire Safety Audits. A successful outcome at court is a finding or admission of guilt.
11b	Number of informal actions taken as a result of Protection intervention	Measure of Volume	To demonstrate the use of a range of legislative tools available to the Protection Team to support improvements in fire safety and the protection of the public and staff. We will separately monitor the informal actions across different premise types and occupancy



11c	Number of formal actions taken as a result of Protection intervention	Measure of Volume	To demonstrate the use of a range of legislative tools available to the Protection Team to support improvements in fire safety and the protection of the public and staff. We will separately monitor the formal actions across different premise types and occupancy
12	Percentage of statutory fire consultations completed within the required timeframes	95%	Statutory fire consultations have a legally defined timeframe in which they must be completed. Types of consultation include licensing and building regulations.
<b>Response</b>			
13	Percentage of occasions where the first fire engine arrives at an emergency incident within 10 minutes from time the emergency call was answered	75%	This is our Response Standard and looks at the time taken from when the Fire Control Room Operator answers the phone until the time the first fire engine (appliance) arrives at the scene of the incident. We aim to attend 75% of emergency incidents in under 10 minutes.
14	Percentage of wholetime frontline pumping appliance availability	97.4%	This measure shows the percentage of time that our wholetime pumping appliances are available for mobilisation. Reasons for unavailability include mechanical defects and crewing.
15	Percentage of hours where there is adequate crewing on on-call frontline pumping appliances (based on 24/7 crewing)	50%	This is the percentage of hours where there are sufficient qualified firefighters on on-call pumping appliances (fire engines) to enable the appliance to be available. On-call fighters are ready to leave their place of work or home and attend emergencies from the local on-call station.
16	Percentage of time that 14 or more pumping appliances are available	100%	This monitors our CRMP commitment to ensure a minimum of 14 pumping appliances are available and includes wholetime and on-call appliances.
<b>Resilience</b>			
17	Percentage of visits to Very High, High and Medium Operational Risk sites completed in timescale	100%	Operational Risk sites are those locations with particular characteristics (e.g. use, location) that pose a specific or unusual risk to our firefighters and the surrounding communities. Regular



			familiarisation visits by crews and support staff are required to ensure understanding of the risk is up to date.
18	Number of Service Delivery Hub exercises completed	12	Service Delivery Hub-level operational exercises are an important part of ensuring RBFRS is prepared for incidents that might occur through testing our planning assumptions, guidance and site-specific response plans.
Efficiency			
19	Percentage of Automatic Fire Alarm calls where RBFRS did not attend	45% (min)	In some circumstances we are able to seek confirmation before attending an Automatic Fire Alarm Call, enabling us to be more efficient.
Customer Experience			
20	Percentage of respondents experiencing a fire, fire safety audit or safe and well visit, satisfied with the service received	95%	<p>A customer feedback questionnaire/survey is sent to those the service has interacted with:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Those who have experienced a dwelling fire.</li> <li>• Customer feedback survey of business owners/ managers who have experienced a fire in their commercial premises.</li> <li>• Customer feedback questionnaire is sent to business owners/ managers who have had a full fire safety audit.</li> <li>• Customer feedback questionnaire is sent to a sample of individuals who have received a Safe and Well Visit</li> </ul> <p>We ask about their satisfaction and experience with the service they received from RBFRS.</p>
21	Number of complaints received	Monitor	The number of complaints made to RBFRS about any aspect of our service or staff.
22	Number of compliments received	Monitor	The number of compliments received by RBFRS about any aspect of our service or staff.



## Corporate Health

	Measure	2025-26 Target	Definition/ Rationale
Human Resources and Learning & Development			
23	Percentage of working time lost to sickness across all staff groups	5% (max)	This measure looks at sickness across the whole organisation and the percentage of time lost, based on the number of working hours available to the organisation.
24	Percentage of eligible staff with Personal Development Reviews	100%	This measure reflects the percentage of eligible employees who have had a Personal Development Review meeting. Eligible staff are those who have completed their initial probation period, before the end of the PDR period and who have not been absent for over 50% of the reporting period. Employees moving within the Organisation to new roles on trial or probation periods will still be eligible for a PDR.
25	Number of formal grievances	Monitor	The number of formal grievances raised by staff under the Grievance, Bullying and Harassment Policy.
Health and Safety			
26	Number of RIDDOR accidents and diseases	Max 4	RIDDOR (Reporting of Injuries Diseases and Dangerous Occurrences Regulations) are more serious injury accidents and diseases.
Finance and Procurement			
27	Percentage of spend subject to competition	85%	This measure looks at all items of expenditure over £10k as RBFA must obtain quotes or tenders for all these purchases. This excludes statutory payments such as local authority charges or HMRC.
28	Compliant spend as a percentage of overall spend	100%	This measure calculates the supplier spend that is in a compliant contract as a percentage of the total spend to external bodies and suppliers (as per RBFA contract regulations).
Freedom of Information			
29	Number of Information Commissioner assessments	0	RBFRS are required to conform to Data Protection and Freedom of Information



	finding that the Service has breached Information Rights Legislation (Freedom of Information Act, Environmental Regulations or Data Protection Legislation)		legislation. The Information Commissioner is responsible for determining compliance and issuing advice or penalties. This measure includes only incidents where there is a finding of a breach (not complaints which are subsequently dismissed).
30	Monitoring the annual completion of the mandatory Protecting Information Course	95%	RBFRS are required to adhere to Data Protection and GDPR legislation. How to protect the data we use daily is a responsibility that we are audited on with regards to compliance. This measure monitors quarterly compliance of Service Personnel with passing the Protecting Information Course
31	Reporting of data breaches and near misses to include those that are reported to the ICO	0	RBFRS are required to conform to Data Protection and GDPR legislation. This measure monitors the reporting of data breaches and near misses, specifically those that are reported to the Information Commissioners Office
32	Completing the Data Subject Requests (SARs) within the permitted time frames	100%	RBFRS are required to adhere to Data Protection and GDPR legislation. This measure monitors completion of Data Subject Requests (SARs) within the permitted timeframe, 1 month, or 2 months with an agreed extension.
33	Having a complete set of published Retention Schedules and keeping them up to date and auditing that data is retained in line with retention schedules	100%	RBFRS are required to conform to Data Protection and GDPR legislation. This measure monitors compliance to having published, accurate Retention Schedules that are kept up to date and in line with our Records Retention and Disposal Policy.



-  RoyalBerksFRS
-  @RBFRSOfficial
-  RoyalBerkshireFire
-  Royal Berkshire Fire & Rescue Service
-  [rbfrs.co.uk](http://rbfrs.co.uk)

This page is intentionally left blank



# Annual Plan 2025-26

## Rationale for Amendments to Measures and Targets

### Introduction

The Annual Plan 2025-26 includes amended targets for some of our Corporate Measures. These changes are the result of our maturing understanding of risk in our communities and evaluation of current performance.

Key amendments are the removal of our corporate measure “Number of Fire Safety Audits completed at High and Very High-Risk Premises”, we will continue to monitor it at as a service level measure. We have also combined our customer satisfaction survey results into one measure and will continue to report the individual survey results to teams. The other amendments are increases or decreases in line with previously agreed methodology. The change is listed below along with more detail on the rationale.

Further detail setting out the rationale for these proposed changes is below.

CM Reference	Amendment
<b>CM2</b> Number of Non-Fatal Fire Casualties	10% reduction on 5-year average has been calculated with latest data (to Q3 2024/25). Target set to 34 (max) based on rolling average of 38.
<b>CM3</b> Number of Deliberate Primary Fires	5% reduction on 5-year average calculated with data to Q3 2024/25. Target of 112 set based on 5-year average of 118.
<b>CM4</b> Number of Deliberate Secondary Fires	5% reduction on 5-year average calculated with data to Q3 2024/25. Target of 207 set based on 5-year average of 218
<b>CM5</b> Increase the number of Referrals for Safe and Well Visits received from our partners	A lower % set for the service overall but will have separate service level measures for each Unitary to recognise the need to focus improvements in specific locations. Target reduced overall from 10% to 5%.
<b>CM7</b> Percentage of Very High Risk Safe and Well Referrals completed within 72 hours	Agreed methodology applied with increase which was design to balance stretch with achievability. Although not met in 2024/25 the performance has shown a steady improvement. Target increased from 40% to 45%



<p><b>CM8</b> Percentage of High Risk Safe and Well Referrals completed within 14 days</p>	<p>Agreed methodology applied with increase which was design to balance stretch with achievability. Although not met in 2024/25 the performance has shown a steady improvement Target increased from 57% to 64%</p>
<p><b>CM10</b> Percentage of Fire Safety Audits with a 'Broadly Compliant' result</p>	<p>REMOVED – we have reviewed this measure and it is not currently demonstrating the performance as intended. It will be retained and monitored as a service level measure.</p>
<p><b>CM10</b> Number of Fire Safety Audits completed at High and Very High-Risk Premises</p>	<p><b>NEW</b> - Linked to CM09 and focus on auditing the right premises - it will show workload for the quarter alongside the % of those done in target.</p>
<p><b>CM11b</b> Number of informal actions taken as a result of Protection intervention</p>	<p><b>NEW</b> - To demonstrate the activities which are taking place outside of prosecution. We will monitor the make-up of this across different premise types and occupancy</p>
<p><b>CM11c</b> Number of formal actions taken as a result of Protection intervention</p>	<p><b>NEW</b> - To demonstrate the activities which are taking place outside of prosecution. We will monitor the make-up of this across different premise types and occupancy</p>
<p><b>CM19</b> Percentage of Automatic Fire Alarm calls where RBFRS did not attend.</p>	<p>We reviewed the HMICFRS/HO data to establish if it was possible to benchmark to an average for England, however this is currently not challenging enough (due to the current variation in AFA policy methodology). Our 6-month average since implementation is 52.3%. We do not know the impact in the warmer months so it may be prudent to go with a 50% increase which is 45% and review following the evaluation process.</p>
<p><b>CM20</b> Percentage of respondents experiencing a domestic fire satisfied with the service received</p>	<p>REMOVED – we have reviewed this measure and combined with all our survey and customer feedback tools. We will retain the internal reporting on these individually within the relevant assurance and review groups.</p>
<p><b>CM21</b> Percentage of respondents experiencing a commercial fire satisfied with the service received</p>	<p>REMOVED – we have reviewed this measure and combined with all our survey and customer feedback tools. We will retain the internal reporting on these individually within the relevant assurance and review groups.</p>
<p><b>CM22</b> Percentage of respondents satisfied with the Fire Safety Audit service they received</p>	<p>REMOVED – we have reviewed this measure and combined with all our survey and customer feedback tools. We will retain the internal reporting on these individually within the relevant assurance and review groups.</p>
<p><b>CM23</b> Percentage of respondents satisfied with the Safe and Well service received</p>	<p>REMOVED – we have reviewed this measure and combined with all our survey and customer feedback tools. We will retain the internal reporting on these individually within the relevant assurance and review groups.</p>



<b>CM20</b> Percentage of respondents experiencing a fire, fire safety audit or safe and well visit, satisfied with the service received	<b>NEW</b> - We have suggested that due to low return numbers in some areas that we combine these into one corporate measure of 95% and report the individual survey results to the teams as service level measures
<b>CM30</b> Monitoring the annual completion of the mandatory Protecting Information Course	These were introduced in 24/25 and set to “monitor” without targets, the target is now set to 95%
<b>CM31</b> Reporting of data breaches and near misses to include those that are reported to the ICO	These were introduced in 24/25 and set to “monitor” without targets, the target is now set to 0 (zero)
<b>CM32</b> Completing the Data Subject Requests (SARs) within the permitted time frames	These were introduced in 24/25 and set to “monitor” without targets, the target is now set to 100%
<b>CM33</b> Having a complete set of published Retention Schedules and keeping them up to date and auditing that data is retained in line with retention schedules	<b>NEW</b> – This has been set at 100% and will support work by the information governance team on establishing processes with teams to update and audit.



## Additional Information

### Home Office Incident Type Definitions

**Primary fires** are potentially more serious fires that harm people or cause damage to property and meet at least one of the following conditions:

- any fire that occurred in a (non-derelict) building, vehicle or (some) outdoor structures
- any fire involving fatalities, casualties or rescues
- any fire attended by five or more pumping appliances

Primary fires are split into four sub-categories:

- **Dwelling fires** are fires in properties that are a place of residence i.e. places occupied by households such as houses and flats, excluding hotels/hostels and residential institutions; dwellings also includes non-permanent structures used solely as a dwelling, such as houseboats and caravans
- **Other buildings fires** are fires in other residential or non-residential buildings; other (institutional) residential buildings include properties such as hostels/hotels/B&Bs, nursing/care homes, student halls of residence etc; non-residential buildings include properties such as offices, shops, factories, warehouses, restaurants, public buildings, religious buildings etc
- **Road vehicle fires** are fires in vehicles used for transportation, such as cars, vans, buses/coaches, motorcycles, lorries/HGVs etc; 'Road vehicles' does not include aircraft, boats or trains, which are categorised in 'other outdoors'
- **Other outdoors fires** are fires in either primary outdoor locations (that is, aircraft, boats, trains and outdoor structures such as post or telephone boxes, bridges, tunnels etc.), or fires in non-primary outdoor locations that have casualties or five or more pumping appliances attending

**Purpose-built flat/maisonette fires** are split into three sub-categories:

- fires in purpose-built low-rise (1-3 storeys) flats
- fires in purpose-built medium-rise (4-9 storeys) flats
- fires in purpose-built high-rise (10+ storeys) flats

Additionally, the relevant data can be found under the 'property type' variable in the [spreadsheet](#) on the [guidance page](#).

**Secondary fires** are generally small outdoor fires, not involving people or property. These include refuse fires, grassland fires and fires in derelict buildings or vehicles, unless these fires involved



casualties or rescues, or five or more pumping appliances attended, in which case they become primary fires.

**Chimney fires** are fires in buildings where the flame was contained within the chimney structure and did not involve casualties, rescues or attendance by five or more pumping appliances. Chimneys in industrial buildings are not included and are included under primary fires.

**Accidental fires** include those where the motive for the fire was presumed to be either accidental or not known (or unspecified).

**Deliberate fires** include those where the motive for the fire was 'thought to be' or 'suspected to be' deliberate. This includes fires to an individual's own property, others' property or property of an unknown owner. Despite deliberate fire records including arson, deliberate fires are not the same as arson. Arson is defined under the Criminal Damage Act of 1971 as 'an act of attempting to destroy or damage property, and/or in doing so, to endanger life'.

**Late fire calls** are fires attended by an FRS which were known to be extinguished when the call was made (or to which no call was made) and the fire came to the attention of the FRS by other means (e.g. press report or inquest). Such fires are recorded if an attendance is made (even if for inspection only) but are not recorded if no attendance is made.

**Fatal fires** are those that result in at least one fatality that would not have otherwise occurred had there not been a fire.

**ROYAL BERKSHIRE**  
**FIRE AND RESCUE SERVICE**

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

**ROYAL BERKSHIRE FIRE AUTHORITY REPORT**



<b>COMMITTEE</b>	<b>FIRE AUTHORITY</b>
<b>DATE OF MEETING</b>	<b>17 APRIL 2025</b>
<b>SUBJECT</b>	<b>2025/26 CORPORATE CALENDAR</b>
<b>LEAD OFFICER</b>	<b>ANNIE PRATT, HEAD OF CORPORATE SERVICES</b>
<b>LEAD MEMBER</b>	<b>N/A</b>
<b>EXEMPT INFORMATION</b>	<b>NONE</b>
<b>ACTION</b>	<b>DECISION</b>

**1. EXECUTIVE SUMMARY**

- 1.1 Members are asked to agree Corporate Calendar dates of Fire Authority and Committee meetings during 2025/26.

**2. RECOMMENDATION**

That the Fire Authority:

- 2.1 **AGREE** 2025/26 Corporate Calendar dates.

**3. REPORT**

- 3.1 On an annual basis, Royal Berkshire Fire Authority (RBFA) Members are asked to approve its Corporate Calendar. This report is presented to April Fire Authority following approval of unitary authorities' Council and committee meeting schedules.
- 3.2 The Democratic Support Team has worked closely with Berkshire unitary authorities to avoid meeting clashes with full Council and Fire Authority meetings. This is difficult to completely achieve due to possible in-year changes to council meetings.
- 3.3 Appendix A is aligned to municipal calendar of meetings (June 2025 to April 2026).

## Agenda Item 12

- 3.4 At the time of writing, the proposed Fire Authority and Committee meetings dates in Appendix A, do not clash with full Unitary Authority Council meetings, however, this will be reviewed throughout the year.
- 3.5 All Fire Authority and Committee meetings listed will be held in public, except for Member workshop dates which have been included for transparency. Five Management Committee and four Audit and Governance Committee meetings have been scheduled however, subject to business need, additional meetings or workshops may be programmed into the Calendar, as required.
- 3.6 It is inevitable, Fire Authority Members will have clashes with their respective Unitary Authority committee meetings and Fire Authority committee meetings during the year. Members are reminded to arrange substitutes wherever possible to ensure that the meeting is quorate in line with SO110 of RBFA Standing Orders.
- 3.7 Audit and Governance Committee will continue to monitor the attendance of Members on an annual basis and will feedback 2025/26 attendance figures to the Fire Authority in June 2026.
- 3.8 In 2025/26, Thames Valley Fire Control Service (TVFCS) Joint Committee meetings will be hosted and held at Buckinghamshire Fire & Rescue Service HQ, Stocklake, Aylesbury, HP20 1BD.
- 3.9 Subject to Member approval, 2025/26 Fire Authority and Committee meeting dates will be subsequently added to Members calendars following Fire Authority annual meeting on 30 June 2025, when Members appointments to committees have been made.

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

- 4.1 The business undertaken at the meetings proposed within the Calendar will contribute to the delivery of the Strategic Commitments.

### **5. FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS**

- 5.1 Member Allowances and reimbursement of travel expenses has been identified as a financial implication. An annual review of Member Allowances and expenses is monitored by Audit and Governance Committee and will be presented to Royal Berkshire Fire Authority in June 2026.

### **6. LEGAL IMPLICATIONS**

- 6.1 No legal implications were identified for the purposes of this report.

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

- 7.1 There were no equality and diversity implications identified for the purposes of this report.

**8. RISK IMPLICATIONS**

8.1 No risk implications were identified for the purposes of this report.

**9. SUSTAINABILITY IMPLICATIONS**

9.1 There are no sustainability implications arising from this report.

**10. CONSISTENCY WITH DUTY TO COLLABORATE**

10.1 Not applicable.

**11. PRINCIPAL CONSULTATION**

11.1 The Senior Leadership Team and Monitoring Officer were consulted in the preparation of this report.

**12. BACKGROUND PAPERS**

12.1 None.

**13. APPENDICES**

13.1 Appendix A - 2025/26 Corporate Calendar.

**14. CONTACT DETAILS**

14.1 Fayth Rowe, Democratic Support Lead, 07500 991975

14.2 Michaela Smith, Democratic Support Assistant, 07799 287706

This page is intentionally left blank

Meeting	Start time	Venue	2025							2026			
			June	July	August	September	October	November	December	January	February	March	April
Fire Authority	6.30 pm	HQ	30			22 - Workshop		25		20 - Workshop	23		30
Audit and Governance Committee	6.30 pm	HQ		10			20			26		16	
Management Committee	6.30 pm	HQ		14			7		10		10		16

This page is intentionally left blank

**ROYAL BERKSHIRE FIRE AUTHORITY REPORT**



<b>COMMITTEE</b>	<b>FIRE AUTHORITY</b>
<b>DATE OF MEETING</b>	<b>17 APRIL 2025</b>
<b>SUBJECT</b>	<b>LEAD MEMBER AND MEMBER CHAMPION ANNUAL REPORTS</b>
<b>LEAD OFFICER</b>	<b>N/A</b>
<b>LEAD MEMBERS</b>	<b>COUNCILLORS, WERNER, GITTINGS, SHEPHERD-DUBEY, GRIFFITH, BROOKS AND JEFFERY</b>
<b>EXEMPT INFORMATION</b>	<b>NONE</b>
<b>ACTION</b>	<b>TO NOTE</b>

**1. EXECUTIVE SUMMARY**

1.1 To note Annual Reports up to April 2025 received from Lead Members and Member Champions.

**2. RECOMMENDATION**

That the Fire Authority:

2.1 **NOTE** the reports.

**3. REPORT**

3.1 The attached appendices A-G detail 2024/25 Annual Reports from the following Lead Members and Member Champions.

- a) Finance Lead Member – Councillor Jeff Brooks.
- b) Collaboration Lead Member – Councillor Simon Werner.
- c) Community Risk Management Plan (CRMP) Lead Member – Councillor Paul Gittings.

## Agenda Item 13

- d) Strategic Assets and Sustainability Lead Member – Councillor Rachelle Shepherd-DuBey.
- e) Equality, Diversity, Inclusion and Cultural Development Lead Member – Councillor Wendy Griffith.
- f) Community Safety Member Champion – Councillor Owen Jeffery.
- g) Honorary Armed Forces Member Champion – Councillor Rachelle Shepherd-DuBey.

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

- 4.1 Prevention: We will reduce the risk to our communities through our partnership duties and prevention education 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 we are resilient and work with our partners to promote and build resilience in the communities we serve.
- 4.5 Sustainability: We are committed to ensuring that we provide a financially sustainable Service and take meaningful action to help address the climate emergency.
- 4.6 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 Please refer to individual reports as to whether there are any financial implications.

### **6. LEGAL IMPLICATIONS**

- 6.1 Please refer to individual reports as to whether there are any legal implications.

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

7.1 Please refer to individual reports as to whether there are any equality and diversity implications.

**8. RISK IMPLICATIONS**

8.1 Please refer to individual reports as to whether there are any risk implications.

**9. SUSTAINABILITY IMPLICATIONS**

9.1 Please refer to individual reports as to whether there are any sustainability implications.

**10. CONSISTENCY WITH DUTY TO COLLABORATE**

10.1 Please refer to individual reports.

**11. PRINCIPAL CONSULTATION**

11.1 None for the purpose of this report.

**12. BACKGROUND PAPERS**

12.1 None.

**13. APPENDICES**

13.1 Appendix A - Finance Lead Member – Councillor Jeff Brooks.

13.2 Appendix B - Collaboration Lead Member – Councillor Simon Werner.

13.3 Appendix C - Community Risk Management Plan (CRMP) Lead Member – Councillor Paul Gittings.

13.4 Appendix D - Strategic Assets and Sustainability Lead Member – Councillor Rachelle Shepherd-DuBey.

13.5 Appendix E - Equality, Diversity, Inclusion and Cultural Development Lead Member – Councillor Wendy Griffith.

13.6 Appendix F - Community Safety Member Champion – Councillor Owen Jeffery.

13.7 Appendix G - Honorary Armed Forces Member Champion – Councillor Rachelle Shepherd–DuBey.

**14. CONTACT DETAILS**

14.1 Finance – Conor Byrne (Head of Finance and Procurement)  
[byrnec@rbfrs.co.uk](mailto:byrnec@rbfrs.co.uk)

14.2 Collaboration – Tim Readings (Area Manager, Collaboration and Policy)  
[readingst@rbfrs.co.uk](mailto:readingst@rbfrs.co.uk)

## Agenda Item 13

- 14.3 Community Risk Management Plan – Tim Readings (Area Manager, Collaboration and Policy) [readingst@rbfrs.co.uk](mailto:readingst@rbfrs.co.uk)
- 14.4 Strategic Assets and Sustainability – Lukasz Wrona (Head of Business and Information Systems) [wronal@rbfrs.co.uk](mailto:wronal@rbfrs.co.uk) and Paul Brooks (Head of Assets) [brooksp@rbfrs.co.uk](mailto:brooksp@rbfrs.co.uk)
- 14.5 Equality, Diversity and Inclusion (EDI) - Becci Jefferies (Head of Human Resources and Learning and Development) [jefferiesb@rbfrs.co.uk](mailto:jefferiesb@rbfrs.co.uk)
- 14.6 Community Safety – Dave Crease (Area Manager Response and Resilience) [creased@rbfrs.co.uk](mailto:creased@rbfrs.co.uk)
- 14.8 Armed Forces – Paul Brooks (Head of Assets) [brooksp@rbfrs.co.uk](mailto:brooksp@rbfrs.co.uk)

## Finance

### Budget Setting

As Lead Member for Finance and Chair of the Budget Working Party, I am pleased to confirm that the three objectives I set for the 2025/26 Budget were met: firstly, to build a budget that would not only balance for 2025/26 but also for the subsequent three years that make up the period of the Medium-Term Financial Plan (MTFP); next, to ensure that sufficient resources will be available to deliver an even more effective service to the public, and finally to invest in transforming our business processes to deliver future efficiencies.

The funding from Government for 2025/26 was less than expected with the discontinuation of the Services Grant, worth £50,000, as well as the Funding Guarantee Grant which is currently worth £770,000. As a consequence, all Members of the Budget Working Party agreed that it would be necessary to use the flexibility afforded by the Government to increase the band D precept by £5. A public consultation on increasing the precept by this amount was undertaken in January. Overall, there were 400 responses with 75.75% of respondents being in favour of the increase.

Increasing the precept by £5 will permit further improvements on top of the already high standards of service provided to the people of Berkshire. In addition to the increased investment in operational staff training, the 2025/26 Budget is underpinned by a comprehensive investment programme in the Authority's estate, vehicles and equipment. For example, around £4 million is due to be invested in new fire engines in the coming years. We will also invest in IT systems that will deliver more efficient ways of working for our staff which in turn will result in the provision of an even more effective service to the public. Moreover, prudent financial management will provide further opportunities for the Authority to invest in its estate. For example, a brand-new training centre will be delivered in the coming months. We have also been able to invest in the installation of LED lighting across the estate to meet our environmental sustainability objectives – and the implementation of this offers a quick return on investment with minimum resource demand, while contributing to decreased carbon output.

## Agenda Item 13

### Appendix A

Even with the increase of £5 in the precept, Royal Berkshire Fire Authority remains amongst the lowest 25% of precepting fire authorities in the country. It is therefore clear that RBFRS remains a low cost but high-quality Service – providing good value for money to residents.

#### Budget Monitoring

At quarter 3, the forecast underspend for 2024/25 was expected to be £120,000 on a budget of £45.96 million. The impacts of CRMP Priority 6 and the recruitment of ten additional firefighters has had the anticipated effects of increasing resilience and reducing expenditure on overtime.

#### Income Generation Review

Income forecasts for the current year are set out in the table below.

<b>Income – 2024/25</b>	<b>Forecast - £000</b>
Support service costs recharged to TVFCS partners	271
Rental and running costs charged to TVP (Newsham Court)	53
Rental and running costs charged to TVP (Hungerford FS)	11
Running costs charged to TVP (Theale FS)	25
SCAS – Licences to occupy	21
Telecommunication mast income	107
Investment Properties	19
Interest	820
Cross border income	300
Secondment income	122
<b>Total</b>	<b>1,749</b>

#### Looking Forward

The Procurement Act 2023, which came into force on 24 February 2025 establishes a new regulatory framework for the procurement of goods and services. The Procurement

Team has undertaken extensive training on the new Act and is currently providing training and support to key stakeholders to help effectively plan for future procurements. Whilst the Act introduces increased flexibility, it also imposes additional responsibilities on contracting authorities. To aid transparency, there will be new requirements for publishing notices throughout the procurement and contract lifecycle, which may make aspects of the overall process more administratively burdensome.

The macro-economic outlook remains uncertain with inflation expected to increase in the medium term and economic growth weakening. The lack of growth will potentially feed into the Government's multi-year settlement for local government and higher inflation rates will have an impact on wage negotiations and the costs of goods and services.

We do, however, have every confidence that we will continue to manage the Services' budget well and continue to invest in efficiency and productivity improvements as well as providing excellent equipment and training to all of our staff. Our estate – both stations, Headquarters and Training centre will continue to be the best we can provide. The service is well run and continues to provide very good value for money to the people of Berkshire.

Cllr Jeff Brooks, Finance Lead Member

This page is intentionally left blank

## Collaboration

### Review

Emergency Services have a duty to collaborate under the Policing and Crime Act 2017. The Thames Valley Collaboration Group continues to drive activity in this area and much of the collaboration activity is coordinated via the Collaboration Steering Group with political and non-executive leadership representation from across the three Fire and Rescue Services, Thames Valley Police (TVP) and the South Central Ambulance Service (SCAS) and I represent RBFA as lead member in this forum.

The elected members of the steering group have supported officers in delivering year two objectives of the collaboration partnerships [five year plan](#). Initial evaluation of the successful implementation of replacement Breathing Apparatus sets across the Thames Valley indicates that, due to the enhanced interoperability having the same equipment delivers, cross border mobilisations have decreased considerably, resulting in financial savings and a more effective approach to managing risk by maintaining fire engine availability ensuring we maximise the safety of the residents of Royal Berkshire.

Thames Valley fire and rescue services have come together to review the recommendations of the [Manchester Arena Inquiry \(Volume 2\)](#) and have made considerable progress on completing identified actions including implementing a new mass casualty triage tool, known as 'Ten Second Triage'. This has been adopted by all Thames Valley fire and rescue services, further improving interoperability during low frequency/high impact events such as a terrorist attack. The equipment to deliver this capability was jointly procured with Thames Valley Police (TVP) and South Central Ambulance Service (SCAS). SCAS also provided the necessary training to FRS teams, building on existing relationships through delivery of the Immediate Emergency Care programme.

The three Thames Valley fire and rescue services worked together to align how they respond to Automatic Fire Alarms (AFA) and following public consultation RBFRS and OFRS went live with the new protocol in September and October 2024 respectively and BFRS in February 2025. This is a significant step in meeting the area for improvement identified by HMICFRS and initial evaluation indicates RBFRS

## Agenda Item 13

Appendix B  
is likely to achieve the identified benefits by minimising the disruption from attending false alarms, meaning that fire crews can dedicate more time to high priority activities such as delivering safe and well visits and operational training.

The Incident Command Support project has delivered a number of improvements to aligned ways of working that support effective and safe resolution of incidents.

Thames Valley fire and rescue services now all use the South East region aligned Command Support packs. This means that safety critical information is captured and recorded in a consistent way which enables accurate understanding of incident resourcing, structure and dissemination of hazard and risk information.

### Ongoing and looking forward

Work on some the existing projects described above will continue into 25/26 but aligned to the five year plan themes, there are areas of work that will be considered or progressed over the coming year.

At the end of 24/25, considered a proposal around the procurement and use of Body Worn Video. Fire and Rescue National Operational Guidance recommends considering their use and this capability can provide a number of benefits for frontline service delivery staff. RBFRS have indicated a strategic intent to implement this capability and will use 25/26 to identify the funding and resources required to deliver the capability in 26/27.

Secondly, Thames Valley fire and rescue services have commissioned a scoping exercise to look at how it can make the most efficient and effective use of its operational training resources across the Thames Valley. This is a complex piece of work that will continue into 25/26.

Successful collaboration requires good governance and a shared vision of the future. I am confident RBFA and our partners have these elements fully embedded through the 2022-2027 business plan along with strong, mature relationships that will ensure we continue to deliver public value over the coming year.



This page is intentionally left blank

## **Community Risk Management Plan (CRMP)**

I am grateful to have this opportunity to update the Fire Authority on the progress made under our Community Risk Management Plan, over this past year. It has been a busy time for the team, and I am pleased to report on that headway has been made.

At the Fire Authority meeting in April 2023, Royal Berkshire Fire Authority agreed the Corporate Plan and Community Risk Management Plan for 2023- 2027. The plan set out the direction of travel for the Service by clearly stating the Fire Authority's priorities and strategic commitments to the communities of Berkshire for the next four years. As we approach the mid-point of this plan it is timely to consider the progress we have made over the last year.

In April 2024 a detailed report on the exercise of statutory powers was presented to the Management Committee. It is important to note that the Fire Authority affirmed its commitment to delivering a fire and rescue service response to a wide range of incidents in Berkshire, placing the safety of staff and residents at the centre of service delivery. Officers have completed further research to help RBFRS understand the extent of the financial impact of the breadth of this service provision. Our intent is not to reduce this provision, but to provide important intelligence that supports lobbying for funding for the range of vital services we provide.

A further significant step was taken following the conclusion of an important public consultation on our response to automatic fire alarms. A revised call challenge and attendance policy was implemented in September 2024. This change has been collaboratively agreed not only in Berkshire, but across the Thames Valley.

Early indications show a significant reduction in attendances at false alarms. This has freed up valuable resources for genuine emergencies and increased the available time for vital training and crucial public safety initiatives. The impact of these changes will be fully evaluated and reported back to members of the Authority in due course.

## Agenda Item 13

### Appendix C

The CRMP has a focus on understanding, preparing for, and mitigating the impact of our changing climate. The service has responded to 5 named storms so far this year, from Ashley to Éowyn. High winds, heavy rainfall and flooding have significantly impacted residents and communities in Berkshire. Having already increased our provision of water rescue services, RBFRS continues to plan and train for an unfortunately increasing level of demand.

We also continue to develop our capacity to respond to future wildfire events. The summer months of 2024 featured a little less sunshine than hoped for, but during that time the service rolled out a new nationally agreed wildfire training package and revised its wildfire tactical plans. We continue to engage with other fire and rescue services across the southeast of England on the development of wildfire capabilities to help us manage an uncertain future.

In February 2025, Officer's reported on the delivery of CRMP Priority 6. The changes implemented under this priority have demonstrated the Authority's commitment to fulfilling its legal duties, including the requirement to ensure efficient and effective use of its resources.

The implementation of Priority Six has demonstrated the benefits of counting the on-call availability to accurately reflect available resources and recognises the value the on-call duty system brings to Royal Berkshire Fire and Rescue Service. Priority Six has also supported reinvestment in 10 additional wholetime firefighter posts.

I am also proud to announce that a significant body of work has commenced, under the CRMP Priority 3 banner. This workstream will develop our response model to ensure that we are providing the most effective response to incidents within Berkshire, that what we do is sustainable and provides value for money. Initial areas of focus in this Priority workstream include ensuring that fire appliance availability is maximised wherever possible and that the service has a sufficiently robust command structure in place to manage the range and magnitude of emergencies Berkshire may face. This includes ensuring that our provision meets not only normal levels of demand but that it can scale in a resilient manner to meet the needs of larger and more complex emergencies.

It is hoped that improving levels of appliance availability delivered through work in CRMP Priority 3 and through other factors such as the recruitment of 10 additional firefighters will help to bolster the service we provide and ensure improvements in our delivery of fire cover.

I anticipate that this programme of work will extend beyond the current financial year and continue to shape the way we deliver our services to the public into the future, helping build resident and staff safety.

Our vital focus on prevention activities has delivered 3544 Safe and Well Visits in the year up to quarter 3. These have been completed for individuals that have been referred to the service from our partner agencies. These vital visits are aimed at those with a higher risk of death or injury in the event of an accidental dwelling fire.

This is an increase of 13% for this period of the year to-date and reflects positive progress. It is also positive to note that the service continues to deliver 100% of Safe and Well Visits where there has been a threat of arson within 48 hours.

Looking forward, this coming year will see the development of CRMP Priority 3 and the benefits this will bring to service delivery. We will also begin the process of refreshing our community risk evidence base, building on work already undertaken to further refine and enhance our understanding of risk and consequently of the capabilities we need to develop to keep the communities of Berkshire safe. In addition, the service is actively working on developing a People's Panel to engage with vulnerable and at-risk communities. This initiative aims to ensure the voices of those most affected by risk are heard and considered in our planning and decision-making processes.

Furthermore, we are enhancing our collaborative efforts with partners to address climate change. By working together, we aim to develop more effective strategies and solutions to mitigate the impacts of extreme weather events and ensure the resilience of our communities.

Cllr Paul Gittings, Community Risk Management Lead Member

This page is intentionally left blank

## **Strategic Assets & Sustainability - 2024-25 Lead Member Annual Report**

### **Assets (Estates, Fleet & Equipment, Sustainability)**

#### **Context**

The theme of change during 2023-24 settled for a period early this year, but it re-emerged due to unforeseen managerial staff turnover. This change created an opportunity to re-organise both the Estates and Fleet and Equipment teams to improve capability and resilience. This change activity was a challenge when set against a backdrop of a complex and congested business-as-usual programme, whilst concurrently maintaining momentum with strategic planning and strategy development.

However, the benefits to be realised by the changes will pay dividends next year, validating in particular the decision taken in 2023-24 to combine the Facilities and Property Capital Projects sections into a single Estates function. This approach, coupled with responsibility for all the strategic assets of Estates, Fleet and Equipment (including Supplies, but less ICT) and sustainability into a single area of responsibility is improving consistency and quality of service, whilst realising some efficiencies and cashable benefits. Notably, and with a supreme effort, the three underpinning strategies for the Assets service were issued in 2024; Fleet & Equipment Strategy, Property Asset Management Strategy and the inaugural RBFA Sustainability Strategy.

### **Estates – Facilities, Property Capital Management and Sustainability**

#### **Review**

Notwithstanding the benefits being realised, consolidating the Facilities and the Property Capital Management sections into a single Estate function was slowed to some extent by the unexpected departure of the Estate Manager in October 2024, but the workplace co-location of staff has paid dividends. The gap came at a critical time in respect of delivery and strategic planning, but the wider team stepped up well

## Agenda Item 13

### Appendix D

to maintain momentum and reduce risk. A recruitment campaign for a new Estate Manager culminated in a successful appointment being made in March 2025 and we look forward to this key role galvanising integration of the respective sections, facilitating positive change and professionalising the function to improve capability and realise yet more benefits.

Building on the appointment of a permanent fulltime facilities manager last year, a business case was approved to re-organise the Facilities team to deliver cashable benefits as highlighted in the recent RBFA budget report. Amongst other changes, the re-organisation introduced a deputy role to increase resilience and made the in-house Maintenance Support Team a permanent entity thereby increasing their utility and reducing expenditure on some expensive outsourced activities.

Under the new structure, the Facilities Team can continue to develop and evolve their working practices to provide a customer focussed and efficient service underpinned by assured compliance. This will be supported by the professional soft services providers (principally waste and cleaning) and hard services provider (planned preventative maintenance) that will have their contracts extended in Q1 2025/26. Looking ahead, the aim is to rationalise facilities contracts to reduce the number of contract interfaces, whilst seeking better value and improved capabilities, leveraging local suppliers if possible.

The Property Capital Projects Team has continued to flex over most of the year to deal with their own resource gaps, with team members stepping up as required to lead on project planning and delivery, along with real estate management. The return of a key officer role in the team has provided critical leadership and management headroom to re-organise the team and introduce a deputy role to increase resilience and capability. Coupled with this, the importance of sustainability has been recognised with the upgrading of a post to introduce a Sustainability Officer role into the team.

The team has also continued to benefit from professional multi-disciplinary consultant support to plan and deliver projects and other initiatives when agreed and funded. This support is critical to help guarantee successful outcomes and to ensure RBFRS is not exposed to unnecessary risks around compliance, liability, health and

safety or similar. Following on from last year the shift in strategy from large scale construction rebuild projects continues to focus on refurbishment of our existing locations in order to create affordable, sustainable and more immediate improvements areas across our estate. As a reminder, the priority areas of this estate development approach are:

- Improving equality, diversity and inclusion (EDI) – creating facilities that support, encourage and promote a more diverse workforce now and into the future.
- Improving contamination control – addressing the growing risk of contaminants by providing better facilities for decontamination and contamination control.
- Sustainability – making the estate more environmentally friendly by carrying out upgrades and initiatives to reduce our carbon output and realise potential revenue savings by doing so.
- Improving the building fabric – investing in the fabric of the buildings to ensure longevity of our current estate and to provide fit-for-purpose workplaces for our staff.

A range of interim EDI and contamination improvements have been carried out across the estate, including providing better facilities such as upgrading dormitories and showering areas, and improvements to better control contamination. Slough in particular has had a significant amount of work completed to meet optimum EDI standards and to help make the buildings more sustainable with better insulation and installation of LED lighting, along with improved water rescue facilities. Significant works are also planned at Windsor Fire Station, subject to agreeing an affordable and equitable solution.

The Whitley Wood Training Centre re-development has progressed to plan after Management Committee approved funding in February 2024 and local authority detailed planning consent was granted in April 2024. The building will be in use by April 2025 and external works will be completed by July 2025. By demolishing two current buildings and replacing them with one, two-storey modular training and office

## Agenda Item 13

### Appendix D

space, pressure on a heavily used drill and training yard will be reduced, further enhancing working relationships between all site users. The training centre has been designed in such a way as to allow clear zoning for contaminants, whilst also providing a workflow that will reduce the impact of contamination, in both operational and non-operational areas, as far as practicable. The new building also provides facilities that support a more diverse workforce.

The Authority opted for a modular building as it was deemed imperative that the training centre and fire station crews remained operational from Whitley Wood throughout the entire project. The modular construction method meant that much of the build was constructed off site, resulting in a high quality, fit for purpose, modern facility with significantly reduced impact on all site users compared to a traditional build method. This modern construction method also brings reduced environmental impacts, in addition to sustainability features like solar power and electrical vehicle charging points, meaning the building is certified to BREEAM (Building Research Establishment Environmental Assessment Method) 'Very Good'.

Building on the release the RBFA Sustainability Strategy 2024-2029 on 8 October 2024, the team is seeking to make an impact and deliver benefits across all business areas via a 'roadmap', subject to available resources. Active sustainability work in train includes the combined RBFRS / Public Sector Decarbonisation Scheme (PSDS) funded heat decarbonisation programme to help transform five of our least energy efficient stations. A notable success this year has been the replacement of LED lighting at six of our sites, including Newsham Court, which is delivering immediate cashable benefits.

In line with our core objectives for estate improvements, as stated above, and in keeping with the Government's commitment to reduce greenhouse gas emissions, we are incorporating environmental sustainability into all our major rebuild and improvement works.

#### **Ongoing and looking forward**

Over the coming year under the new leadership and organisational arrangements, the Estates team will be aiming to continue to drive forward a highly customer

focussed approach to support the wider organisation and to deliver its objectives within a safe and comfortable workplace. This will be underpinned by development of improved process and procedures and assured compliance. Better team integration and increased collaboration will ensure that initiatives result in improved and sustainable working environments for our personnel by achieving the estates development objectives that are outlined within the SAIF.

The SAIF, which was approved by Members in February 2025, sets out the outline plan for estates development for the coming years. The focus of the team will be to plan and deliver these projects (subject to the required approvals). The priority projects will be:

- Completion of the external works and landscaping of the new Whitley Wood Training Centre by July 2025
- Completion of EDI improvements at Windsor Fire Station
- Design and planning the Langley Fire Station refurbishment, along with procuring a competent contractor for the works and planned completion in 2026
- Deliver the joint PSDS/SAIF heat decarbonisation sustainability projects for completion by 31 March 2026
- Planning for further heat decarbonisation sustainability projects in line with the SAIF
- Planning for electric vehicle charging infrastructure and roof mounted solar array projects in line with the SAIF

The Property Asset Management Strategy and Sustainability Strategy will continue to be reviewed throughout the year.

## **Fleet & Equipment**

### **Review**

A heavily revised Fleet and Equipment Strategy was issued in October 2024, which will underpin activities for the next five years. The focus for fleet over 2024-25 has been to continue to consolidate the excellent progress in transforming our frontline appliance fleet and other specialist vehicles which have been delivered in the

## Agenda Item 13

### Appendix D

preceding years. Since 2017, 19 new front line pumping appliances have been delivered into service with RBFRS, with other Thames Valley fire and rescue services working together to design and procure a standard fire appliance that carries an aligned inventory of equipment. White fleet vehicles have been on-boarded as they are made available through the procurement process, with blue light fitting and other modifications now a well embedded process using the Hampshire & Isle of Wight FRS Joint Working Agreement (JWA). The Service's electric vehicles (cars and small vans) are being well used, with mixed feedback on their performance – the key is to ensure they are driven correctly and used for the right function, which has been communicated widely now. The mild hybrid engine response cars previously reported on are performing well, with three more added to the fleet in 2024. The JWA was due for renewal by end-March 2025, but for operational and business continuity reasons it will be extended on a flexible basis until the new documents are fully agreed.

With the continued support of the Fire Authority, the Strategic Asset Investment Framework (SAIF) was approved by Members in February 2025. This makes provision for the next phase of vehicle renewals and replacements. The intention is to continue developing the fleet, building on from the progressive and successful approach taken thus far.

On the equipment front, the Service has now fully transitioned to 'Interspiro' breathing apparatus equipment after the completion of a competitive tender process during 2022/23. The new equipment has been designed with firefighter health, safety and welfare in mind and has brought innovations such as full telemetry, wireless communications, and personal issue facemasks to our staff. The equipment is identical across the Thames Valley, further aligning our operational response with the goal of reducing the number of operational resources that need to be deployed to an incident where cross border resources are used. A notable success with contaminant protection has seen the Service be one of the first fire and rescue services to roll out much improved smoke hoods to all firefighters, providing increased protection to the neck and head.

The important (non-PPE) Workwear Project has gained momentum over the year with an integrated project team standing up and developing a wide set of requirements based on end user engagement and feedback. The Service took the step to run its own procurement process due to challenges with the national framework approach, which has allowed us to focus on EDI, quality and sustainability to better meet the needs of end users and the Service as a whole. Invitation to tenders were issued in April 2024 and we have an agreed supplier in place to deliver workwear for all users from April 2025 – this timeline allowed for extensive wearer trials to be completed during 2024.

### **Ongoing and looking forward**

The CRMP projects and objectives will help clarify strategic asset requirements, to support and inform our future procurement needs for special appliances and operational equipment. This coming year will include signing of the Fleet JWA, whilst ensuring best value for money to the Service along with concluding the previously mentioned workwear project. Sustainability will continue to be thread throughout the planning process, to include increasing the use of hybrid, plug-in hybrid EVs and pure EVs where practicable along with horizon scanning the market and sector for alternative fuel options like synthetic fuel. The overall objective remains the creation of a sustainable rolling procurement plan to ensure that RBFRS has fit for purpose fleet and equipment.

The Fleet and Equipment Strategy will continue to be reviewed throughout the year.

### **Information and Communication Technology (ICT)**

#### **Review**

The RBFRS ICT strategy for 2024-2027 was issued over the past year, with the SAIF aligned to it. The funding model for ICT has transitioned from perpetual licensing of software to subscription-based services. This shift impacts the SAIF, as RBFRS will no longer need to capitalise on periodic and routine large software update purchases with the expectation that they will last for several years before

## Agenda Item 13

### Appendix D

renewal. Instead, flexible subscriptions to software delivery as a service will require ongoing revenue funding. Consequently, core capital funding requirements going forward will primarily be associated with the refresh and/or expansion of existing hardware, including laptops/desktops, mobile phones, tablets, networks, and operational communications devices such as mobile data terminals (MDTs), Airwave/ESN (emergency services network) devices, station end and fireground radios.

Forecasting new or wholesale software or system replacement projects is challenging and must leverage the technology roadmap and service planning process to maintain a five-year scanning horizon to anticipate system requirements impacting the SAIF. While most such projects will likely rely on subscription-based software or platform delivery, there may still be cases where procurement and implementation costs need to be capitalised, whether for the software or system itself or for associated hardware requirements driven by the change.

Investment aligned with the ICT strategic principles of simplification, automation, and optimisation will support the overall organisational goals of minimising costs in the short to medium term and, more importantly, releasing staff capacity for value-added activities. The 'work smarter' approach will positively impact staff resilience and the overall sustainability of the Service.

For these benefits to be realised, it is imperative to maintain the ongoing refresh of technical resources to fully leverage opportunities in advanced software and systems for the organisation's benefit.

#### **Ongoing and looking forward**

Projects underway include a large-scale migration of core systems to the cloud, improvements in systems responsible for deployment and management of end user hardware as well as significant ICT hardware refresh. In addition, RBFRS Airwave devices are due a refresh and expected to be completed later in 2025/2026.

Taking all of this into account, the capital requirement over the next 10 years for ICT is likely to be approximately £5.3M. It is important to note that expenditure will vary from year to year, as various refresh cycles unwind. 2025/26 will likely require £776,000 as this is expected to be the year new ESN devices are likely to start being introduced and replace our existing Airwave equipment. To mitigate single year costs, refreshes may be brought forward/put back by one year to even out the cost profile, dependant on current equipment performance at that time.

Cllr Rachelle Shepherd DuBey, Strategic Assets and Sustainability Lead Member

This page is intentionally left blank

## **Equality Diversity and Inclusion Member Champion Report 2024/2025**

RBFRS has been actively working to meet its obligations under the Public Sector Equality Duty as outlined in the Equality Act 2010. The primary focus of this duty is to eliminate unlawful discrimination, promote equality of opportunity, and encourage positive relationships between different groups. In 2022, RBFRS set four equality objectives to support the organisation to meet this and the Service has continued to work towards these this past year.

Objective One: Increasing the diversity of staff at all levels - We recognise the value that a diverse workforce brings and will take action to increase the diversity of job applicants, seeking individuals with the right behaviours and skills to help us reflect and engage with our local communities.

### **Wholetime Firefighter Apprentices**

In 2024/2025, the Service welcomed two cohorts of Wholetime Firefighter Apprentices. A total of thirty wholetime apprentices joined the Service, with eighteen joining in Q2 and a further twelve in Q4. Out of these thirty apprentices:

16.5% were female.

6.5% were from ethnic backgrounds currently underrepresented in the Service.

6.5% reported having a disability.

Although there is a long way to go for the organisation to be reflective of the community it serves, these figures reflect the Service's ongoing commitment to fostering a diverse workforce.

### **Positive Action – Recruitment**

RBFRS continued to run the Discover a Career as a Firefighter programme, providing aspiring firefighters to learn more about the role and recruitment process. This included a mix of online and in-person events across the county:

- 12 online “About the Role” sessions with 72 attendees.
- Nine online “About the Recruitment” sessions with 65 attendees.
- 11 Station Tour and Demonstrations with 70 attendees.

## Agenda Item 13

### Appendix E

- 10 Have a Go Days with 65 attendees.

Notably, 23% of the new apprentices recruited in 2024/2025 23% participated in the Discover a Career as a Firefighter programme showing the effectiveness of this engagement in encouraging diverse applicants to apply.

The Summer Internship Scheme successfully completed its third and final year of a three-year pilot scheme in Q2. This year, five interns aged 17 and 18 from ethnic minority groups, which are currently underrepresented in RBFRS, joined the service for a five-week period over the summer. Interns spent time with various departments across Corporate Services, visited operational fire stations across the county and spent time with Prevention and Protection teams. Feedback from the interns and staff has been extremely positive. As a result of this, one of this year's interns applied and has been appointed into a full-time apprenticeship role. Following the three-year pilot the Summer Internship Scheme has been approved to continue annually as part of positive action initiatives.

RBFRS continued its collaboration with the Leonard Cheshire Change 100 Scheme, which focusses on supporting individuals with disabilities or long-term conditions into work. This year, two interns joining the Service for a three-month internship. One intern was matched with the Communications and Engagement team and another with the Procurement team. Participation in this programme continues to prove successful, with previous staff returning to RBFRS in different roles, demonstrating the ongoing commitment to supporting staff with disability and long-term conditions.

#### **Positive Action – Progression**

RBFRS has also focussed on the progression and development of female staff. This year, the Service sent six women from operational and non-operational roles to the Women in the Fire Service (WFS) National Training and Development Weekend at the Fire Service College. This event provided attendees with:

- Workshops to build new skills.
- Networking opportunities with like-minded professionals across the sector.
- Guest speakers and fitness activities.
- WFS AGM and Awards Ceremony.

In addition, RBFRS has secured places for female staff on upcoming WFS Development Programmes, which are designed to help women identify clear and practical steps for enhancing their self-confidence and professional growth. This aligns with the Service's commitment to supporting women's progression, with the goal of fostering an environment where women are empowered to achieve promotions and career growth within the fire service.

Objective Two: Leadership and corporate commitment - We will support our organisational leaders to understand their role in tackling inequalities and demonstrating inclusive behaviours, in line with the Behavioural Competency Framework. This commitment means we will be strong and visible in our leadership and ensure that all staff and members of our local communities have confidence in our commitment to Equality, Diversity, and Inclusion.

#### **Disability Confident Leader Status**

In early 2024/25, RBFRS achieved Disability Confident Leader status for the second time, the highest possible level under the Disability Confident scheme. This award demonstrates RBFRS' ongoing commitment to supporting individual with disabilities, ensuring that the recruitment processes, work practices, and policies are inclusive and accessible. Being recognised as a Disability Confident Leader reinforces our dedication to tackling barriers and promoting equality for disabled people within the organisation.

#### **Collaboration and Partnership Work**

RBFRS recognises that effective collaboration is key to advancing the EDI agenda and meeting the organisation's EDI objectives. As part of the approach, the Service has continued its memberships with the Business Disability Forum and Inclusive Employers. These memberships provide us with access to valuable learning opportunities, resources, and support on EDI and disability-related matters. In addition to offering learning tools to staff, these partnerships also provide consultative support to help us improve practices and stay aligned with EDI best practices.

## Agenda Item 13

### Appendix E

#### **People Strategy**

In response to the scrutiny faced by the fire sector in 2022, the People Strategy roll out and implementation was paused, the organisation took a step back in 2023 to listen to the needs and concerns of the organisation. As a result, the People Strategy was revised and launched in 2024 with a clear focus on creating a professional, flexible workforce that is diverse in thought and representation. The People Strategy aims to ensure that RBFRS can build a workforce that reflects the broad range of skills, experiences, and perspectives needed to create safer, more resilient communities. The revised strategy is underpinned by eight key objectives, each with a detailed delivery plan that will be implemented over the next four years. The delivery of these objectives will help us build a more inclusive, supporting environment for staff and strengthen the organisations capability to meet the evolving needs of the local community.

#### **Our Culture Plan and Behavioural Competency Framework**

In addition to the People Strategy, this year has seen the development and launch of the Culture Plan in line with a review of the overarching Behavioural Competency Framework. Our Culture Plan was based on feedback from groups of staff across the organisation. It was launched at leadership cafe events in January and February. These events saw over one hundred leaders and aspiring leaders from across the organisation engage in conversations about what works with our culture currently and what changes the Service wants to see in the future, to make it an even more safe, supportive, and inclusive environment.

As part of Our Culture Plan, the Behavioural Competency Framework (BCF) is being revised using the conversations captured from the leadership forums, and based upon three values of Safe, Supportive, and Inclusive. The BCF will clarify for us all the behaviours, which demonstrated consistently, will move us even closer to the culture RBFRS wants to be known for.

#### **Neurodiversity Network**

The launch of the Neurodiversity Network in 2024 was another significant development. The network aims to provide a supportive space for neurodivergent employees and allies to come together, share resources, and promote awareness of

the strengths and challenges associated with neurodiversity. The network also serves a key role in advising and consulting on relevant policies and processes ensuring they are neuroinclusive. The network is sponsored by DCFO Mark Arkwell, ensuring senior leadership visibility and commitment to fostering inclusion for neurodivergent staff.

### **Equality Monitoring**

In October, RBFRS took a crucial step towards better understanding the diversity of the workforce by reaching out to all employees to gather up-to-date equality monitoring information. This data collection aims to provide a more accurate and comprehensive picture for the workforce enabling the Service to:

- Identify gaps and disparities within the workforce and recruitment process.
- Facilitate data-driven decision making that supports targeted actions to address inequality.
- Ensure compliance with legal duties under the Equality Act 2010 and Public Sector Equality Duty.

Gathering this data allows us to track progress over time and make informed decisions that enhance the overall inclusivity of RBFRS.

Objective Three: Improving our service delivery by creating strong links with our community - We will connect and communicate with our diverse local community to develop meaningful and sustainable links, which help us to increase our understanding of their needs. We will ensure that we tailor our prevention, protection, and response activities accordingly and target the most vulnerable people with the greatest risk.

### **WBSM EDI Accountability**

The beginning of 2024/25 saw the introduction of the Watch Based Station Manager (WBSM) EDI Accountability. This new accountability aimed to bring a cohesive approach across Service Delivery to EDI and provide more on the ground support to push the EDI agenda. Accountability includes the organising of station activities as well as reporting back to Hub management on what has taken place. This has been embedded into Station Manager objectives as well as hub and station plans. Objectives under the accountability included building long term sustainable

## Agenda Item 13

### Appendix E

relationships with the community supporting us to achieve the Service's EDI objectives.

#### **Civil Unrest**

During the Civil Unrest in the UK in August crews went to visit place of worship to provide support during these uncertain times. As a result of the support provided, incredibly positive feedback has been received and the Service has made new connections with members of the community. This has helped raise awareness of what the fire and rescue service does and in many cases helped to provide public reassurance at an uncertain and worrying time.

The feedback received is a useful reminder of the Services wider role in society and the positive impact we can have. For example, a Hindu Temple in Slough has said: *“On this festival of Raksha Bandhan, we wanted to express our gratitude for the tremendous support and care that all key workers and emergency services personnel have provided to keep us and our communities safe. You have stepped out each and every day, with the sole intent to serve and protect the lives of citizens. This year, like every year before it, the work of our emergency services teams stands out as beacons of hope for us all, for the good in our societies, and as role models for our generations to follow.”*

#### **Community Engagement**

Further efforts have been made across the Service to reach members of the diverse community in Berkshire. Of note,

- Wokingham Green Watch – Loneliness Campaign
- Crowthorne's ongoing Happiness Hubs
- Cross county engagement with the Hong Kong community
- Theale Reds and Reading Rockets SEN and Wheelchair Basketball team.
- Slough White Watch engagement and support for the homeless in Slough with Slough Homeless Concern
- Cross county celebrations for Raksha Bandhan
- Attendance at three Pride events.

These efforts highlight the Service's ongoing commitment to fostering strong relationship with a wide range of community members, promoting safety and

reducing risk through targeted prevention messages. Additionally, this engagement provides a foundation for future recruitment initiatives within diverse communities.

Objective Four: Building on our inclusive culture - We will continue taking action to ensure we have a culture where everyone feels valued and is treated with dignity and respect and support all staff to the creation of an inclusive working environment.

### **EDI and Cultural Awareness Training**

A significant development in this area was the introduction and roll out of the Equality, Diversity and Inclusion and Cultural Awareness training. This full day, in-person course is for all staff and aims to provide staff with a deeper understanding of equality, diversity and inclusion, discrimination, unconscious bias and how these may affect the workplace, culture and identity and its role in both personal and professional lives and finally, ways to create a more inclusive workplace.

Approximately 45% of the organisation will have completed the training by the end of this financial year.

### **Staff Networks**

To further support RBFRS' journey to building an inclusive culture as aforementioned, the Neurodiversity Network was created this year. The Neurodiversity Network meets bimonthly and has provided a dedicated supportive space for neurodivergent employees and allies to come together, share resources, and promote awareness of the strengths and challenges associated with neurodiversity. In addition, the Equality, Diversity, and Inclusion Network continues to operate meeting quarterly to promote and champion Equality, Diversity, and Inclusion across the organisation and in the community. It is a space to promote learning, raise awareness and create tangible change in the EDI space at RBFRS.

### **Station Visits Programme**

The Station Visits programme has been a key initiative in bridging the gap between station-based staff and staff at Headquarters. The programme allows station-based staff to spend a day at HQ to learn more about the role and functions of different departments and how effective joint working helps us achieve the One Team culture. Feedback from those attending has been extremely positive ten watches have now completed the Station Visits Programme.

## Agenda Item 13

### Appendix E

#### **Online Learning**

To further support staff development and understanding of EDI related to matters, all e-learning packages have been reviewed and updated, this includes an Introduction to EDI, EDI for Leaders, and Equality Impact Assessments. New E-learning packages have also been added on key topical areas including Sexual Harassment and Neurodiversity.

In addition, several lunch and learns have been hosted both internally and through the NFCC on EDI related matters including Neurodiversity, Workers Protection Act, Challenging inappropriate behaviour, Black History Month and many more. These have been attended by staff across the Service.

#### **Awareness Raising**

The Service continues to support different celebrations and events throughout the year, raising awareness behind their history and how to support colleagues that are celebrating. The service attended three Pride events across the county in the summer in Bracknell, Wokingham and Reading to show their support for the LGBTQ+ community as well as an opportunity to share important prevention information and information with regards to the roles available within the organisation. Articles have featured on Siren and The Shout to provide further education throughout the year on events such as Gypsy, Roma and Traveller History Month, Eid, Race Equality Week, LGBT History Month, Diwali and many more.

#### **Work With Me**

The Work with Me record was released in June. A Work with Me record is a live reflection of an employee's individual circumstances and how they may impact them in the workplace. The Work with Me can cover but is not limited to, disability or long-term conditions, neurodiversity, caring and family responsibilities, religious beliefs and practices or ways of working. It provides structure and wording to have a conversation with their line manager or team about how their individual circumstances impact them and how best to support them achieve their best at work. This supports steps towards a more inclusive working environment for all.

### **Maternity and Adoption Leave Pay**

At the beginning of the year the Service increased its enhanced maternity and adoption pay with up to 52 weeks full pay inclusive of annual leave, bank holidays and keeping touch days. This is an excellent example of building upon the organisation's inclusive culture and supporting new parents within the organisation.

### Looking Ahead

Looking ahead to 2025/26, RBFRS will be focussing on the review and identification of the organisations Equality, Diversity, and Inclusion objectives for 2026-2030, through consultation with both the community and staff. The Culture Plan will be rolled out as well as the new Behavioural Competency Framework and the actions identified as part of this to continue towards creating a safe, supportive, and inclusive culture.

Following the introduction of the Worker Protection Act, the Service will continue to ensure it is not only meeting legislative requirements of preventing sexual harassment, but ensuring RBFRS is a safe place to work for all. The EDI and Cultural Awareness training will continue to be rolled out to all RBFRS employees.

The Service will continue its involvement with both the Summer Internship and Change100 Internship providing training and employment opportunities from those from underrepresented groups.

Phase two of the Station Visits Programme will begin with a focus on HQ based teams visiting stations to get a wider insight into their roles and what a day in the life looks like for them.

The Service will also continue to engage with the community and focus on long term sustainable relationships to reduce the level of risk in the county, as well as supporting the recruitment of a diverse workforce.

Cllr Wendy Griffith, Equality, Diversity, Inclusion and Cultural Development Lead  
Member

This page is intentionally left blank

## Community Safety 2024/25 - Year Review

The Royal Berkshire Fire Authority is dedicated to serving the people of Royal Berkshire. Through its Corporate Plan, the Authority has made three strategic commitments to enhance Community Safety

- **Prevention.** We will reduce the risk to our communities through our partnership duties and prevention education activities, ensuring that our services are accessible to all.
- **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.
- **Resilience.** We will ensure our resilience and work with our partners to promote and build resilience in the communities we serve.

Under the Fire and Rescue Services Act 2004, fire and rescue authorities must make provisions to promote fire safety in their area. Under the Regulatory Reform (Fire Safety) Order 2005, fire and rescue authorities must enforce the provisions of that Order and any regulations made under it concerning premises for which the enforcing Authority is enforcing. This report will provide an overview of community safety activity undertaken by Royal Berkshire Fire and Rescue Service (RBFRS) in 2024/25.

### Prevention

Last year's Community Safety Champion Report highlighted RBFRS's focus on developing partner referrals for delivering Safe and Well visits, targeting the most vulnerable members of our community. This approach aimed to ensure that we targeted the most vulnerable members of our community. In 2024, we evaluated this strategy to assess its effectiveness in managing risk, particularly regarding Safe and Well visits. The evaluation indicates that referrals effectively manage and help us reach community members who were previously more vulnerable to the risks of fire.

## Agenda Item 13

### Appendix F

Following feedback from His Majesty's Inspectorate of Constabulary and Fire and Rescue Services (HMICFRS), evaluating our prevention work has been a key focus. Improvements include:

**At Risk Programme (ARP).** Formally known as the Adults at Risk Programme (ARP) trains professionals to support community members in reducing fire risk. The training covers home fire safety and teaches professionals how to spot and minimise risks. It also provides details on referring residents for safe and well visits. This year, following feedback from a Safeguarding review, the programme was rebranded to clarify that it supports all household members at risk, not just adults.

**Safety Education.** Extensive stakeholder engagement led to the development of self-led educational packages for Road Safety and Fire Safety. These packages offer flexibility for schools to integrate learning into their curriculum and provide productivity savings for operational crews. They also ensure consistent delivery and confirmation of learning.

**Fire Cadets.** Last year's Fire Cadets Programme successfully engaged 43 young people aged 13 to 17, providing them with valuable skills, confidence, and friendships through weekly sessions and social action initiatives. The programme, which concluded with the graduation ceremony in July 2024, saw an 88% retention rate and introduced new elements to enhance the ceremony's focus on cadets. Key achievements included recruiting new instructors, ordering new PPE, and implementing ADHD and Autism awareness training. The programme also emphasised career opportunities, increasing the cadet age range, and developing a new Crew Manager role. Additionally, safeguarding training and collaboration with police cadets were introduced to address serious violence. The programme's positive impact was reflected in good attendance, rapport among cadets and instructors, and widespread support from the service and community.

**Collaboration.** Teams within the hubs have worked hard to reduce primary and secondary fires by sharing incident information through Community Safety Partnerships with the police and Anti-Social Behaviour teams. This collaborative approach has helped identify trends and prompt action from neighbourhood policing teams to address anti-social behaviour, including fire setting.

**Protection**

Hub Protection teams have continued to audit the Very High and High-risk buildings identified on our Risk-Based Inspection Programme (RBIP). Last year's evaluation enabled us to implement audit schedules based on risk and has allowed teams to plan more effectively. These audits ensure compliance with the Regulatory Reform (Fire Safety) Order 2005 (as amended) and the Fire Safety (England) Regulations 2022, maintaining safe environments for people to live and work. Where non-compliance is identified, our Fire Safety Inspectors (FSIs) engage with the responsible parties to ensure necessary steps are taken. Significant breaches result in a formal enforcement notice prohibiting the use of premises. This action has resulted in two successful prosecutions this year.

In addition to auditing RBIP premises, Fire Safety Inspectors (FSIs) maintain regular engagement with responsible parties for buildings with interim measures due to unsafe cladding or compartmentation issues. These buildings require additional measures to be in place to support an effective evacuation in the event of a fire. FSIs oversee progress, and we have created automated visit schedules for operational crews to familiarise themselves with the associated operational risks, ensuring effective response and firefighter safety during incidents.

This year, RBFRS began supporting the Building Safety Regulator (BSR) in assessing applications for Building Assessment Certificates for high-rise buildings. The BSR aims to improve fire safety standards in high-rise buildings, and our FSIs use their skills and local knowledge to support multidisciplinary teams in these assessments.

**Ongoing and looking forward.**

As detailed CRMP objectives, we will develop a Risk-Based Prevention Programme aimed at targeting the most vulnerable and at-risk from emergency incidents. By gathering data and setting a scope for the programme, we will leverage our evidence and understanding of risk, along with identified good practices, to deliver effective prevention activities. Additionally, we will incorporate recommendations from our Safe and Well evaluation to enhance our risk assessment within the community and prioritise Safe and Well visits to those vulnerable members of the community.

## Agenda Item 13

### Appendix F

This year, MHCLG has reaffirmed its commitment to making buildings safer by removing unsafe cladding from High-Rise buildings. Progress is ongoing, with teams collaborating with responsible parties to review plans and timelines. In Q1 2025/26, Homes England will launch a new database for regulators to assess buildings between 11 to 18 metres in height for unsafe cladding and facilitate remediation. Given the larger volume of these buildings compared to High-Rise stock, this will be a significant task for regulators and will take several years to complete. Protection teams will continue to engage in this effort, understanding their role and collaborating with other regulators to achieve the best outcomes.

Cllr Owen Jeffery, Community Safety Member Champion

## **Armed Forces Honorary Member Champion Report**

### **Introduction**

I am pleased to be able to present this report as the Armed Forces Member Champion for Royal Berkshire Fire Authority. In February 2018, Royal Berkshire Fire and Rescue Service (RBFRS) and Royal Berkshire Fire Authority (RBFA) signed the Armed Forces Covenant, to formally pledge its support to members of the Armed Forces community. The Armed Forces Covenant (AFC) is a pledge that we acknowledge and understand that those who serve or who have served in the armed forces and their families should be treated with fairness and respect in the communities, economy, and society they serve with their lives.

As a service and authority we also currently hold the Employer Recognition Scheme (ERS) Gold award, the highest award available, in recognition of our ongoing support of the Armed Forces community.

Work has continued throughout 2024/2025 to demonstrate our commitment to our Armed Forces community, supported by our Armed Forces Champion, Paul Brooks, who is former Armed Forces, alongside other members of the service. Progress and activities are outlined below.

### **Review of the Year**

#### **Royal County of Berkshire Civilian Military Partnership Board (RCBCMPB)**

I am pleased to say that we continue to fully support the RCBCMPB at officer and member level and we have attended meetings over the past year at Victoria Barracks (Windsor) and Maidenhead Town Hall, with interim meetings held virtually. This Board has been established to build on the individual working relationships between the six unitary authorities, Royal Berkshire Fire and Rescue Service, civilian agencies and the military community in Berkshire.

At the meetings the partnership reaffirmed their pledge to support the military community of Berkshire. Cllr Knowles from RBWM remains the chair for the Board.

## Agenda Item 13

### Appendix G

The 'Lead Officers Group' has been constructed to support the work of the RCBCMPB and our staff continue to support this partnership.

#### **Armed Forces Veterans' Hubs**

As part of Royal Berkshire Fire Authority's commitment to supporting members of the Armed Forces community, we continue to host Armed Forces Veterans' Hubs at our stations throughout the county. The Armed Forces Veterans' Hub has been designed to offer a place for veterans to come together and meet organisations who can provide them with advice or support. Three hub events have been held in the last 12 months, at Crowthorne Fire Station, Maidenhead Fire Station and Newbury Fire Station.

Attendance by veterans at the events has been less than expected, but interest grew through the year and there are now several supporting organisations attending, as well as an increased veteran attendance. As our relationships with organisations such as the Royal British Legion (RBL), South East Reserve Forces and Cadets Association (SERFCA) and local councils continues to grow, we are hopeful attendance and visibility will also continue to increase.

#### **Armed Forces Week**

Armed Forces Week was supported across the Service and Fire Authority in June 2024. Communications officers posted content online every day for the week to show our ongoing support and commitment to the Armed Forces community. To promote support for the Armed Forces, members of RBFA members and RBFRS officers were encouraged to support planned events across the county of Berkshire.

#### **Commemorative Events**

The Service and Fire Authority Members attended a number of local commemorative events throughout the year in remembrance of HM Armed Forces personnel past and present who have made the ultimate sacrifice to ensure our safety and security. Officers attended a number of memorial services on Remembrance Day and CFO Wayne Bowcock attended the Cenotaph on Remembrance Day in his new role as Contingent Commander for the Civilian Services Contingent. Notably this year, the

Service also supported several 'D-Day 80' commemorative events across the county.

### **Lord-Lieutenant's Awards Ceremony**

Paul Brooks attended the Lord-Lieutenant's Awards Ceremony held at the Royal Military Academy Sandhurst in October 2024. The ceremony is a formal event that is sponsored by SERFCA to recognise individuals in the Reserve and Cadet Forces, who have demonstrated the volunteer ethos in building relationships in the local community.

### **English Veteran Awards**

RBFRS was delighted to have been a contender in the 'Employer of the Year' category at the English Veterans Awards. The awards are open to all military veterans that are doing great things in England, along with Reservists that are going above and beyond and those companies that go the extra mile to support or recruit from the veterans' community. Councillor Rachelle Shepherd-DuBey, Paul Brooks and officers of the RBFRS Armed Forces Group attended the awards ceremony on 23 October 2024, at the De Vere Wokefield Estate, near Reading, where the category winners were selected by a panel of judges. Whilst we were unsuccessful this time, it was an honour to be nominated and shortlisted and our congratulations went to all those recognised by the awards for their work with the Armed Forces community.

### **Looking Ahead**

In 2025, RBFRS will continue to demonstrate its advocacy of the Armed Forces Covenant and support for HM Armed Forces, its veterans and families. This will be achieved by initiating and continuing the following workstreams.

### **Employer Recognition Scheme (ERS) Gold Re-validation**

We will work closely with SERFCA and actively seek re-validation of the prestigious ERS Gold award that we currently hold.

## Agenda Item 13

### Appendix G

#### **Royal County of Berkshire Civilian Military Partnership Board**

Following the board meetings this year, the board will meet again during the coming year to develop plans on how we can work as a partnership to support veterans and their families in the county.

#### **Armed Forces Veterans' Hub Events**

RBFRS will continue to host events for Armed Forces Veterans. Four events are planned at Bracknell Fire Station, Whitley Wood Fire Station, Maidenhead Fire Station and Newbury Fire Station.

#### **Commemorative Events**

We will ensure that the Service and Authority commemorates key dates throughout the year that remember the sacrifice by HM Armed Forces personnel, past and present, who have made the ultimate sacrifice to ensure our safety and security. This will also once again include supporting Armed Forces Week in June 2025 and Armistice Day.

Cllr Rachelle Shepherd-DuBey, Armed Forces Honorary Member Champion

ITEM	DECISION BODY	NEXT REPORTING DATE	REPORTING FREQUENCY	RECOMMENDED ACTION	LEAD OFFICER	LEAD MEMBER	PART I / II
Annual Report	Fire Authority	30.06.25	Annual	Note	HCS	N/A	Part I
Appointment of Chair / Vice-Chair 2024/25	Fire Authority	30.06.25	Annual	Appoint	MO	N/A	Part I
Appointment of Committees, Lead Members and Member Champions and Outside Bodies 2024/25	Fire Authority	30.06.25	Annual	Appoint	MO	N/A	Part I
Annual Report on Governance - to include Member attendance, allowances and expenses	Fire Authority	30.06.25	Annual	Note	HCS	A&GC Chairman	Part I
TVFCS Joint Committee Annual Report 2023/24	Fire Authority	30.06.25	Annual	Note	AM (C&P)	Collaboration Lead	Part I
Appointment of Chair and Vice-Chair	A&GC	10.07.25	Annual	Agree	MO	N/A	Part I
Pensions Board Annual update	A&GC	10.07.25	Annual	Note	HHR&L&D and Pension Board Chair	N/A	Part I
Internal Audit report	A&GC	10.07.25	Quarterly	Note	HF&P	N/A	Part I
External Audit Report	A&GC	10.07.25	Quarterly	Note	HF&P	N/A	Part I
ESMCP verbal update	A&GC	10.07.25	Ad-hoc	Note	AM C&P	N/A	Part I
Q4 Performance Report	A&GC	10.07.25	Quarterly	Note	Data, Performance and Risk Manager	N/A	Part I
Appointment of Chair and Vice-Chair	Management Committee	14.07.25	Annual	Agree	MO	N/A	Part I
Annual Outturn	Management Committee	14.07.25	Annual	Note	HF&P	N/A	Part I
Langley Refurbishment - Phase 2	Management Committee	14.07.25	Ad-hoc	Note	HoA	Strategic Assets and Sustainability Lead	Part I
Priority 3 - Enhancing our Response	Management Committee	14.07.25	Every meeting	Note	DCFO	CRMP Lead	Part I
Sustainability Roadmap update	Management Committee	14.07.25	Ad-hoc	Note	HoA	Strategic Assets and Sustainability Lead	Part I
Q4 Appliance Availability	Management Committee	14.07.25	quarterly	Note	AM (R&R)	N/A	Part I
Recruitment and Retention six Month Update	Management Committee	07.10.25	Ad-hoc	Note	HHR&L&D	N/A	Part I
Budget Monitoring Q1	Management Committee	07.10.25	Annual	Note	HF&P	Budget and Income Generation Lead	Part I
Appliance Availability Q1	Management Committee	07.10.25	quarterly	Note	AM (R&R)	N/A	Part I

ITEM	DECISION BODY	NEXT REPORTING DATE	REPORTING FREQUENCY	RECOMMENDED ACTION	LEAD OFFICER	LEAD MEMBER	PART I / II
External Audit report	A&GC	20.10.25	Quarterly	Note	HF&P	N/A	Part I
Internal Audit report	A&GC	20.10.25	Annual	Note	HF&P	N/A	Part I
Annual Governance Statement	A&GC	20.10.25	Annual	Agree	Programme Office Mgr	N/A	Part I
Statement of Accounts	A&GC	20.10.25	Annual	Note	HF&P	N/A	Part I
Q1 Performance Report	A&GC	20.10.25	Quarterly	Note	Data, Performance and Risk Manager	N/A	Part I
Annual Treasury Report and Mid-year report	Fire Authority	25.10.25	Annual	Note	HF&P	Budget and Income Generation Lead	Part I
Budget Monitoring Q2	Management Committee	10.12.25	Annual	Note	HF&P	Budget and Income Generation Lead	Part I
Priority 3 - Enhancing our Response	Management Committee	10.12.25	Every meeting	Note	DCFO	CRMP Lead	Part I
Appliance Availability Q2	Management Committee	10.12.25	quarterly	Note	AM (R&R)	N/A	Part I