



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

Wednesday, 19th February, 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

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



MEETING: Royal Berkshire Fire Authority Meeting

DATE AND TIME: Wednesday, 19th February, 2025 at 6.30 pm

VENUE: Lynda Kenyon Suite
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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

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AGENDA

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

Purpose:

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

- 3. Minutes of the meeting held on 13 November 2024 (Pages 7 - 18)**

Recommendation:

That the Minutes of the meeting and any recorded actions held on Wednesday 13 November 2024 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

Recommendation:

To note that:

- Items 12 (New Contract Standing Orders and Revised Financial Regulations) and 13 (Pay Policy Statement 2025/26) have been recommended from Audit and Governance Committee on 30 January 2025.
- Items 10 (Annual Budget 25/26 and Council Tax Precept) and 11 (2025/26 Scheme of Allowance Review) have been recommended from Management Committee on 10 February 2025.

10. Annual Budget 25/26 and Council Tax Precept *(To Follow)*

Purpose:

To agree the Annual Budget 25/26 and Council Tax Precept.

11. 2025/26 Scheme of Allowance Review *(Pages 19 - 36)*

Purpose:

To approve the Scheme of Member Allowances Annual Review.

12. New Contract Standing Orders and Revised Financial Regulations *(Pages 37 - 96)*

Purpose:

To agree the Contract Standing Orders and revised Financial Regulations.

13. Pay Policy Statement 2025/26 *(Pages 97 - 116)*

Purpose:

To agree the Pay Policy Statement 2025/26.

14. CRMP Priority 6 Evaluation *(Pages 117 - 142)*

Purpose:

To note the CRMP Priority 6 evaluation.

15. Enabling Remote Attendance and Proxy Voting at Local Authority meetings Consultation *(Pages 143 - 154)*

Purpose:

To note the Enabling Remote Attendance and Proxy Voting at Local Authority meetings Consultation.

16. Forward Plan *(Pages 155 - 156)*

Recommendation:

That the Forward Plan be noted.

17. 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/>

18. Date of next meeting

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

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MINUTES OF THE MEETING OF THE ROYAL BERKSHIRE FIRE AUTHORITY



Held on Wednesday, 13th November, 2024 at 6.30 pm

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

Members:
(*present)

- | | |
|--------------------------------------|------------------------------|
| * 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 |
| * Councillor Rachelle Shepherd-DuBey | * Councillor George Blundell |
| * Councillor Peter Frewer | * Councillor Zafar Satti |
| | * Councillor Harjinder Gahir |
| | * Councillor Paul Gittings |

- In Attendance:** Mark Arkwell (Deputy Chief Fire Officer, DCFO)
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 Bremble (Head of Corporate Services, HCS)
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)
Jo Watson (Communications and Engagement Lead)
Hazel Anderson-Turner (Organisational Development, OD)
Ellie Wilde (Technical Program Manager, TPM)

Action

1. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Apologies of absence were received from Councillors Tina McKenzie Boyle, Zafar Satti and Greg Bello.

Councillors Dennis Benneyworth and Peter Frewer attended this meeting virtually.

2. 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.

3. MINUTES OF THE MEETING HELD ON 12 SEPTEMBER 2024

RESOLVED that the Minutes of the meeting held on 12 September 2024, be approved as a true record and signed by the Chair.

4. 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.

5. RECEIPT OF ANNOUNCEMENTS

HMICFRS Inspection Concludes

His Majesty's Inspectorate of Constabulary and Fire & Rescue Services (HMICFRS) has now concluded the recent Inspection into Royal Berkshire Fire and Rescue Service (RBFRS).

The Inspection which spanned several weeks, known as 'Round 3', inspected how effective and efficient RBFRS is, by asking the following questions:

- How effective is the FRS at keeping people safe and secure from fire and other risks?
- How efficient is the FRS at keeping people safe and secure from fire and other risks?
- How well does the FRS look after its people?

The Chair thanked everyone that was involved in showcasing the fantastic work of the Service. The outcome of the inspection will be published during summer 2025.

Remembrance Service

Remembrance services were held across the County and UK last weekend to commemorate the contribution of British and Commonwealth military and civilian servicemen and women involved in the two world wars and later conflicts. RBFRS teams observed the national two-minute silence.

The Chief Fire Officer, Wayne Bowcock attended the National Service of Remembrance last weekend in his role as Civil Service Contingent Commander. Each year, the Contingent Commander nominate volunteers. This year he nominated William Fox to represent RBFRS.

On Sunday 10 November the Union Flag was flown at full mast across our sites as the Service honoured those who made the ultimate sacrifice to protect our freedom on Remembrance Day and Remembrance Sunday.

The Chair stated he attended Newbury Remembrance Sunday Parade and Service with Tom Brandon, Area Manager Response and Resilience and laid a wreath at the War Memorial site in Newbury on behalf of the Service.

Officers attended Remembrance Sunday events in Sandhurst, Bracknell, Theale, Reading, Windsor, Earley, Wokingham, Slough, Crowthorne and Sunningdale.

Firefighters on duty paraded in full fire kit outside of their station, and those at Newsham Court observed a two-minute silence on Monday 11 November (Armistice Day), led by Paul Brooks; Head of Assets.

The Chair thanked all those that attended Remembrance Sunday events on behalf of the Authority and Service and asked all Members and Officers present to join him in two-minute silence as a tribute to all those that have made the ultimate sacrifice.

Letter from Rt Hon Diane Johnson DBE MP, Minister of State for Policing, Fire and Crime Prevention

The Chair, Cllr Jeff Brooks and Chief Fire Officer, Wayne Bowcock received a letter from Rt Hon Diane Johnson DBE MP, Minister of State for Policing, Fire and Crime Prevention expressing she was encouraged by the Service's final outstanding task of Grenfell Tower Inquiry Phase 1 recommendation.

This work was with Thames Valley partners to test and implement the preferred technical solution to enable fire survival guidance information to be recorded and displayed at the incident ground.

She commended the Service's drive and determination to learn and improve since the Grenfell Tower incident and stated it was vital the Service continued in this same vein when working towards completing Phase 2 recommendations. The Fire Minister stated she was confident RBFRS would meet the challenge.

She stated she was still in the process of working out the governance and monitoring of Phase 2 recommendations with colleagues across government and sector partners including National Fire Chiefs Council and gave her assurance that the process would be clear and consistent for FRSs. The way

forward would be communicated as soon as she was able to.

She finally gave her commitment to improve resilience and work with all stakeholders across the fire and rescue sector to inform policy and further develop national standards.

Sustainability Strategy

In response to the ongoing Climate Emergency, the Service has now published its first Sustainability Strategy.

The new Strategy was developed with Mortice Consulting, a firm that specialise in providing specialist sustainable solutions for cultural, heritage and public sector organisations.

Working with Mortice, the Strategy captured work that has already happened within the Service, using these milestones to shape tangible and measurable targets for the future.

The Chair thanked Paul Brooks and Sophie Fox, as well as our partners at Mortice, for their work in bringing the Strategy to life. He informed Members the new Sustainability Strategy was available on rbfrs website.

Wholetime Firefighter Graduation

On Friday, 1 November, the Chair and several Fire Authority Members attended the latest Wholetime Firefighter Apprentice Graduation Ceremony.

18 Wholetime Firefighters were welcomed into the Service who, after months of training, were able to show off their skills in front of their friends and families at Maidenhead Fire Station.

As with previous cohorts of Wholetime Firefighter Apprentices, the Graduates organised a fundraiser in support of The Fire Fighters Charity. Apprentices each rowed 38.5 miles, the length of the River Thames in Berkshire, on rowing machines at the Lexicon in Bracknell. In total, they raised more than £3,000 for The Fire Fighters Charity. The Chair asked members to join him in congratulating them all on this fantastic achievement.

Following the Graduation Ceremony, the Apprentices have now taken up their station placements across the County.

The Fire Fighters Charity Clothing anniversary

Many of our fire stations have clothing collections bins outside them. These bins allow members of the public to donate old clothing that is sold off in bulk to communities around the world to raise funds for The Fire Fighters Charity.

This year marks the 10th year in which the Service has had clothing bins at fire stations, in that time, we have raised more than £110,000 for the Charity through clothing donations.

This incredible sum, which was raised by the sale of roughly 551 tonnes of donated clothes, stands testament to the generosity of our communities who have given away their old clothes in support of the Charity.

The Chair highlighted Lambourn, which donated the most and raised £17,891 from 87 tonnes worth of clothing over the last decade. He thanked everyone who has donated their old clothing over the last 10 years. The money raised from these donations has and continues to support the incredible work undertaken by The Fire Fighters Charity.

Arctic Fire Angels

Two of our members of staff will shortly be taking part in an expedition to Northern Sweden alongside the Fire Angel Foundation.

Members may already be aware of the Fire Angel Foundation, which is made up of women from fire services across the country. Earlier this year, they made national news when they travelled to the South Pole.

Ellece Ott, Resourcing Adviser, and Jo Herring, Firefighter, will both be joining the Fire Angel's next arctic expedition in February 2025, where they will travel to Umea in Sweden before hiking several hundred kilometres north.

The Fire Angels Foundation is aimed at providing extraordinary experiences for young women with an aim to build confidence and develop leadership skills.

The Chair wished Ellece and Jo all the best for their adventure next year.

RBFRS Emails

As of Sunday, 1 December, the Service will only be contacting Fire Authority members via their RBFRS email accounts.

As part of this change, all meeting invites will now be sent to rbfrs email account instead of your local authority email addresses.

To assist Democratic Support in the planning of future meetings, please make sure your rbfrs calendars are up to date.

Member Development course Feedback

Member development courses have been underway since July 2024. If you have

attended any courses or stations visits since July, please complete the electronic feedback form.

Democratic Support uses feedback from Members to review courses and make changes as required.

Paul Bremble Retirement

The Chair extended his best wishes to Paul Bremble, Head of Corporate Services, who will be leaving us in December. Paul's 30-year Fire and Rescue Service career started in May 1994, with Oxfordshire Fire and Rescue service. He worked at various stations in Oxfordshire, and in various roles, for 28 years.

Paul moved to RBFRS in September 2022 on secondment as Head of Corporate Services, which then became a permanent role.

On behalf of the Authority, he thanked Paul for his Service, both here in Berkshire and in Oxfordshire.

M4 – Closed from 9pm

The M4 will be closed on 13 November 2024 [tonight] from 9pm to 6am – the Chair stated he will endeavour to finish the meeting before 9pm to ensure Members and Officers that use this motorway can get home.

6. ISSUES ARISING FROM THE AUDIT AND GOVERNANCE COMMITTEE

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

7. QUESTIONS FROM MEMBERS UNDER STANDING ORDER 30

There were no questions from Members under Standing Order 30.

8. NOTICES OF MOTION UNDER STANDING ORDER 44

There were no notices of Motion under Standing Order 44.

9. RECOMMENDATIONS OF COMMITTEES

There were no recommendations of Committees.

10. CULTURAL DEVELOPMENT PRESENTATION

Nikki Richards (Deputy Chief Executive, DChEx) and Hazel Anderson-Turner (Organisational Development, OD) presented their findings of Royal Berkshire Fire and Rescue Service (RBFRS) response to its Culture Plan. Nikki Richards reported the Fire Authority had signed up to the Culture Plan via its Member Charter.

Nikki Richards stated the plan was aligned to RBFRS' vision of creating safer and more resilient communities and core values embedded in the National Fire Chief Council (NFCC) Code of Ethics.

Hazel Anderson-Turner (OD) stated she had spoken to nearly 100 RBFRS employees and found that generally staff want to do well, do things properly and want to excel within the organisation. Whilst recent high profile culture reports have highlighted issues within some fire and rescue services, she stated she heard positive stories and said the plan was an opportunity to rebalance the service, helping everyone to understand how they can contribute to the culture. She said staff care deeply about their work, take pride in what they do and felt supported from colleagues and line managers during challenging times. However, stated they sometimes felt disconnected during the decision-making process.

Hazel Anderson-Turner explained the five components of the plan were People, Places, Communications & Engagement, Structure & Governance, Process & Systems. The Culture Plan was a three-year plan aligned to the Community Risk Management Plan (CRMP) timeframe. The next steps for the plan were for it to be presented to the Senior Leadership Team (SLT) [20 November 2024] and to middle managers at Leadership Forum meetings in January and February 2025.

The Chair requested for the circulation of the presentation slides to Members. In answer to an additional question from the Chair, Nikki Richards reiterated the Culture Plan was a three-year plan, it will commence in January 2025 and further milestones will be presented to the Fire Authority.

DSL

In referring to recent controversial Fire and Rescue Culture reports, the Vice-Chair queried whether RBFRS Culture Plan would be linked to HMI inspection recommendations when it is published. Nikki Richards reported that a gap analysis had been produced in response to recent FRS Culture reports and that as a Service we will continue to build upon Inspection results.

Wayne Bowcock (Chief Fire Officer, CFO) added there had been a lot of focus on culture within the fire sector. He stated culture was a topic RBFRS have continually been looking into for over a decade and thanked all those who were involved in this work.

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

The Chair reported a consultation by UK Government had been launched seeking Councillors, public and local authorities' response on remote attendance and proxy voting at meetings. The consultation deadline was on 19 December 2024. The report was recommending a cross-party working group to hold a single meeting to formulate a response to the consultation. In addition, the Chair requested members submit their views to Democratic Support to be included in the overall response. The Authority's response to the consultation will be presented at the next Fire Authority meeting.

The Vice-Chair stated a cross-party working group was a good approach and asked whether all local authorities were contributing to this consultation. The Chair suggested the Vice-Chair contact Reading Borough Council Monitoring Officer to find out whether they were providing feedback to this consultation.

Councillor Timlin added that members of the public as well as Councillors can provide their feedback on this consultation.

In answer to a question from the Vice-Chair, Fayth Rowe (Democratic Support Lead, DSL) said that the appendix detailing the consultation information would be sent to all members of the Fire Authority after the meeting. In response to Councillor Jeffery, Wayne Bowcock (Chief Fire Officer, CFO) reported all Member comments sent to Democratic Support Team would be passed onto the working group for consideration.

The Chair made an amendment to recommendation to include delegated authority also be given to the Vice-Chair and the leader of the Conservative group. This was seconded by Councillor Drummond.

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

1) The establishment of a cross-party task and finish group of no more than 7 Members to respond to the Government's Consultation on Enabling Remote Attendance and Proxy Voting at Local Authority meetings by 19 December 2024 be **AGREED**.

2) It be **AGREED** that delegated Authority be given to the Chair, Vice Chair and Conservative Group Leader on the final consultation response on behalf of the Fire Authority.

3) It be **NOTED** that Royal Berkshire Fire Authority's response to the consultation will be presented at the next Fire Authority meeting in February 2025.

12. PRODUCTIVITY AND EFFICIENCY PLAN

The Efficiency and Productivity (E&P) Plan update was introduced by Nikki Richards (Deputy Chief Executive, DChEx) and Ellie Wilde (Technical Program Manager, TPM).

Nikki Richards explained the plan was managed through Productivity Board and overseen by Katie Mills (Assistant Chief Fire Officer, ACFO) and explained the report sets out the use of the Transition Fund to support the delivery of current projects within the E&P Plan. In addition, several projects identified within the E&P Plan directly contribute to managing and mitigating identified corporate risks.

Ellie Wilde started with the refreshed ICT Strategy and discussed how benefits were being managed and success measured. She outlined the significant progress in the Service's adoption of Microsoft 365 and the introduction to use Microsoft Power Bi (a data visualisation platform). She thanked her colleague Madeline Kabir, Microsoft 365 specialist for all her good work in this area. She then discussed the benefits tracker stating that of the 30 benefits logged, six have been delivered. In providing further benefit examples, she stated the solution implemented in place of Coaching Culture will generate £10K per annum in savings, the new course booking system will result in a saving of 60 working days per annum and Copilot (AI-powered digital assistant) designed to aid with meeting tasks and activities. Using Copilot could reduce meeting tasks by 50%. The planned finance system replacement includes increased productivity, with time savings targeted equivalent to circa £50K per annum. She concluded progress will be reported back to the Productivity Board monthly, with a half yearly update being presented to the Fire Authority.

The Chair thanked Nikki Richards and Ellie Wilde for their presentation and stated that AI was being used in social care at West Berkshire Council. The Chair asked for confirmation of what finance system had been secured. Conor Byrne (Head of Finance and Procurement, HF&P) confirmed TechnologyOne and stated the contract was awarded last week and RBFRS were one of seven fire and rescue services using this package.

Councillor Jeffery said he was concerned that support for the current financial system ends in December 2024, and that this was a tight timescale. Conor Byrne (HF&P) replied that although the end-of-life date for the current system was next month, software support will be provided by Datel until 2029. He added that the procurement process for the system replacement began 18 months ago, and multiple investigations were carried out before reaching a decision.

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

RESOLVED that:

- 1) It be **NOTED** that the progress against delivery the commitments made in the Efficiency and Productivity Plan 2024-27 and the use of the Transformation Fund to support the delivery of this programme.
- 2) It be **AGREED** that six monthly progress updates against the Authority's Efficiency and Productivity Plan updates be provided to the Management Committee.

13. ANNUAL TREASURY REPORT AND MID-YEAR REPORT

Conor Byrne (Head of Finance and Procurement, HF&P) provided an update on the Annual Treasury Report and Mid-Year Report.

He stated that Treasury Management in local Government during 2023/24 and 2024/25 is regulated by the CIPFA Code of Practice on Treasury Management. He confirmed performance as detailed in the Treasury Report for 23/24 was in line with Prudential indicators and approved by the Fire Authority at the budget meeting in February 2023. He added that the Fire Authority’s investment strategy had evolved for 2024/25 and is now based on a widened criterion. Investment income in 2023/24 totalled £786K with first-half year interest of £270K and projected investment income of £733K for 2024-25. Borrowing remained at £8.9million, with interest on loans standing at £333K.

The Chair highlighted that the interest received was greater than the interest paid on borrowing which isn’t always the case for unitary authorities.

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

RESOLVED that:

- 1) The Annual Treasury Report for 2023/24 be **NOTED**; and
- 2) The Mid-Year Treasury Management Update for 2024/25 be **NOTED**.

14. THAMES VALLEY FIRE CONTROL SERVICE (TVFCS) JOINT COMMITTEE ANNUAL REPORT 2023/24

Mark Arkwell (Deputy Chief Fire Officer, DCFO) explained the collaborative partnership of the Thames Valley Fire Control Service (TVFCS) Joint Committee was nearing its 10-year anniversary. The partnership continues to perform a highly effective function and saves Thames Valley Fire and Rescue Services £1 million per year. This year saw the recruitment of a new Watch Manager, a hardware refresh, other technical enhancements and a well-managed budget. Future changes include the introduction of Multi-Agency Incident Transfer (MAIT) software and recommendations following the Grenfell Tower Inquiry. He thanked the MAIT national lead Jim Powell for driving this forward.

In response to the Chair’s query relating to the budget, Conor Byrne reported this was due to the delay in the pay awards. Each partner was invoiced for costs and the budget monitoring for TVFCS was presented to Management Committee in July 2024.

Councillor Jeffery asked a question about incident performance levels. Wayne Bowcock (Chief Fire Officer, CFO) reported call handling times were subject to scrutiny and dynamic mobilising – extracting all possible information from the caller to aid swift mobilisation.

The Chair and Councillor Frewer stated how impressed they were with Control and strongly advised all members visit Control to see the work that is done there.

The Chair moved the recommendation, and it was seconded by Councillor Griffith.

RESOLVED that:

- 1) The Thames Valley Fire Control Service (TVFCS) Joint Committee Annual Report 2023/24 be **NOTED**.

15. ANNUAL REPORT ON GOVERNANCE

The Annual Report on Governance was delivered by Paul Bremble (Head of Corporate Services, HCS), and confirmed the report included member allowances and attendance at meetings. The HMI inspection carried out in 2022 resulted in areas for improvement and an action plan was agreed. Throughout the year, Audit and Governance Committee received updates and information from Pension Board, Pay Policy Statement, Gender and Ethnicity Pay Gap, Internal and External Audit updates and signed off the Statement of Accounts for 2020 and 2021.

He reported the increase to member allowances was in-line with Green Book pay award during the year, and stated member attendance at meetings for 2023-24 was positive. On behalf Audit and Governance Committee Chair, he thanked all committee members for their involvement and support.

The Chair stated he was pleased with member attendance figures.

Councillor Brown asked whether Member skill-based training was tracked. Fayth Rowe (Democratic Support Lead, DSL) confirmed this was reported annually as part of Annual Review of Member Development each March.

Councillor Timlin queried the timings of Committee meetings as some were held during school holidays and requested whether this could be avoided in future. Fayth Rowe (DSL) confirmed it was challenging for Democratic Support to avoid all school holidays. For example, the February Budget meeting is usually held during half-term at the request of Berkshire Unitary Authorities to avoid clashes with their Budget meetings (usually held in last week of February).

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

RESOLVED that:

- 1) The Annual Report on Governance be **NOTED**; and
- 2) The Members' Allowances received from 1 June 2023 – 31 May 2024 be **NOTED**; and

- 3) The 2023/24 attendance record of Royal Berkshire Fire Authority Members from 1 June 2023 – 31 May 2024 be **NOTED**.

16. FORWARD PLAN

RESOLVED that the Forward Plan be noted.

17. MINUTES OF THE STANDING COMMITTEES

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

18. DATE OF NEXT MEETING

Wednesday 19 February 2025, 6.30pm at RBFRS Headquarters, Newsham Court, Pincents Kiln, Calcot, Reading RG31 7SD.

(The meeting concluded at 8.12pm)

ROYAL BERKSHIRE FIRE AUTHORITY REPORT



COMMITTEE	FIRE AUTHORITY
DATE OF MEETING	19 FEBRUARY 2025
SUBJECT	2025/26 SCHEME OF ALLOWANCE REVIEW
LEAD OFFICER	GRAHAM BRITTEN, MONITORING OFFICER
LEAD MEMBER	N/A
EXEMPT INFORMATION	NONE
ACTION	DECISION

1. EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

- 1.1 This report is a recommendation from Management Committee on 10 February 2025. The report is an update to the 2025/26 Member Scheme of Allowance.
- 1.2 The Local Authorities (Members’ Allowances) (England) Regulations 2003 regulations 10 and 19 (2) require the Authority to make a Scheme of Allowances before the beginning of the financial year; and, before it makes it, to have regard to the recommendations made by Independent Remuneration Panels of its constituent councils.

2. RECOMMENDATION

That Fire Authority:

- 2.1 **NOTE** the report;
- 2.2 **APPROVE** that 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);
- 2.3 **APPROVE** that 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);
- 2.4 **NOTE** that 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).

Agenda Item 11

3. REPORT

3.1 On an annual basis the Authority is required to adopt a Scheme of Members' Allowance prior to the start of the financial year. The Authority's Scheme of Allowance is indexed to National Joint Council (NJC) for local government services pay agreement for staff employed under 'Green Book' terms and conditions.

3.2 Each year, the NJC negotiates a pay agreement and on 22 October 2024, a 2.5% agreement was reached on rates of pay applicable from 1 April 2024 for 2024/25. Attached as appendix B is the National Joint Council for local government services letter. It states:

'All locally determined pay points above the maximum of the pay spine but graded below deputy chief officer, should be increased by 2.50 per cent, in accordance with Green Book Part 2 Para 5.41.'

3.3 This report is seeking Members to approve the NJC 2.5% rates negotiated on 22 October 2024 be applied to the Scheme of Allowances effective from 1 April 2025 (Appendix A) as stated in paragraph MA 14 of the Scheme of Allowances below.

'MA14. The Basic, Special Responsibility and Co-optees' Allowances shall be adjusted annually in line with percentage allowance increase agreed by the NJC for Local Government Services. Adjustment of the allowance shall take effect from the beginning of the financial year for the year the index is applied to staff.'

Independent Remuneration Panels (IRPs)

3.4 There are six Independent Remuneration Panels (IRPs) in the Royal County of Berkshire, which make Scheme of Allowance recommendations to Bracknell Forest Council, Reading Borough Council, Royal Borough of Windsor and Maidenhead, Slough Borough Council, West Berkshire Council and Wokingham Borough Council. Each Unitary Authority IRP recommendations have been reviewed for the purpose of this report. Links have been provided in paragraph 12 from each IRP recommendation in Berkshire.

3.5 Bracknell-Forest, Reading, Slough, Wokingham and West Berkshire Councils Scheme of Allowance are indexed to the annual percentage salary increase for local government staff. Royal Borough of Windsor and Maidenhead Council's Scheme of Allowance are updated annually in line with the average pay increase given to Royal Borough employees (and rounded to the nearest pound as appropriate).

4. CONTRIBUTION TO STRATEGIC COMMITMENTS

4.1 Resilience: We will ensure we are resilient and work with our partners to promote and build resilience in the communities we serve.

5. FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

5.1 The current budget for Members' Allowances (Basic and Special Responsibility Allowances) is estimated to be in the region of £102k. Costs will be incurred in publishing a notice that the Authority has made a Scheme of Members' Allowances in a Berkshire newspaper. The cost is estimated to be in the region of £400.

- 5.2 An Independent Review of the Scheme of Allowances is held every four years. The last independent review was held in September 2023 by South East Employers. The next Independent Review of the Scheme of Allowances will be held in 2027/28.

6. LEGAL IMPLICATIONS

- 6.1 This report is in accordance with the Local Authorities (Members' Allowances) (England) Regulations 2003 Regulations 10 and 19 (2) which require the authority to make a scheme of allowances before the beginning of the financial year; and, before it makes it, to have regard to the recommendations made by the Independent Remuneration Panels of its constituent councils.

7. EQUALITY AND DIVERSITY IMPLICATIONS

- 7.1 The Authority's Scheme of Members' Allowances does not include any element for meeting costs incurred by a Member who has to arrange care in order to carry out their function as a Member of the Fire Authority. The Local Authorities (Members' Allowances) (England) Regulations 2003, exclude the Authority from including such a provision in its Scheme. All RBFA Members have been appointed by one of the six Unitary Authorities in Berkshire and are entitled to claim "dependent carers' allowances" from their appointing authority.

8. RISK IMPLICATIONS

- 8.1 No risk implications have been identified.

9. SUSTAINABILITY IMPLICATIONS

- 9.1 No sustainability implications have been identified.

10. CONSISTENCY WITH DUTY TO COLLABORATE

- 10.1 Not applicable.

11. PRINCIPAL CONSULTATION

- 11.1 The Chief Fire Officer, Chief Finance Officer and Senior Leadership Team were consulted during the preparation of this report. The Monitoring Officer is the report sponsor.

12. BACKGROUND PAPERS

- 12.1 [Bracknell Forest Council members Allowances Scheme](#)
- 12.2 [Reading Borough Council – Constitution of the Council May 2024 – amended October 2024](#)
- 12.3 [Royal Borough of Windsor and Maidenhead Council – A Review of Members' Allowances June 2022](#)
- 12.4 [Slough Borough Council Members' Allowances Scheme](#)
- 12.5 [West Berkshire Council – Report of Independent Remuneration Panel June 2024](#)

Agenda Item 11

- 12.6 [Wokingham Borough Council meeting – Thursday 21 January 2021 – Review of Members' Allowances by the IRP](#)

13. **APPENDICES**

- 13.1 Appendix A – 2025/26 RBFA Scheme of Allowances.
- 13.2 Appendix B – October 2024 - National Joint Council for local government services letter.

14. **CONTACT DETAILS**

- 14.1 Fayth Rowe, Democratic Support Lead rowef@rbfrs.co.uk
- 14.2 Michaela Smith, Democratic Support Assistant smithm@rbfrs.co.uk

SCHEME OF ALLOWANCES

April 2025



MEMBERS ALLOWANCES SCHEME

INTRODUCTION

The Royal Berkshire Fire Authority, in exercise of the powers conferred by the Local Authorities (Members' Allowances) (England) Regulations 2003, hereby makes the following scheme:

NAME AND DURATION

- MA1. This scheme may be cited as the Royal Berkshire Fire Authority Members' Allowances Scheme.
- MA2. **This scheme shall have effect for the financial year 2025/26.** The Scheme may be amended at any time by resolution of the Authority.

BASIC ALLOWANCE

- MA3. A **Basic Allowance** at a rate of £2,913.05¹ per annum shall be paid to each member in monthly instalments.
- MA4. For the avoidance of doubt, 'Member' in this context means a person appointed to the Authority under the provisions of the Royal Berkshire Fire Service Combination Scheme.
- MA5. The Basic Allowance is intended to recognise the time commitment of Members including calls on their time at meetings with officers and constituents. It is also intended to cover incidental costs such as the use of Members' homes.
- MA6. Where a Member's term of office does not extend throughout a complete year, the amount payable shall be pro rata to the number of days during which his/her term of office subsists.

¹ Indexed to local government percentage allowance increase agreed by NJC on 22 October 2024.

SPECIAL RESPONSIBILITY ALLOWANCE

MA7. A **Special Responsibility Allowance** shall be paid in monthly instalments to those Members who hold the special responsibilities in relation to the Fire Authority, in recognition of the additional duties and time commitment such positions entail. These Special Responsibility Allowances are specified in Schedule 1.

Schedule 1

Position	Special Responsibility Allowance ²
Chair of Authority	£14,566.28 (was £14,211)
Vice-Chair of Authority	£7,282.63 (was £7,105)
Chair of Committees	£4,369.58 (was £4,263)
Lead Members	£4,369.58 (was £4,263)
Opposition Group Leaders	£2,913.05 (was £2,842)
Member Champions	£1,456.53 (was £1,421)
RBFA Chair of Thames Valley Joint Committee (if applicable)	£2,913.05 (was £2,842)
Co-optees' Allowance	£159.90 (was £156) per meeting

MA8. Where a Member holds one of the above positions for part of a year, the amount payable shall be pro rata to the number of days he/she holds that position.

MA9. A Member may not receive more than one Special Responsibility Allowance at any one time. Therefore, a Member holding more than one of the positions of special responsibility must notify the Monitoring Officer to the Authority in writing which Special Responsibility Allowance he/she wishes to be paid.

CO-OPTEEES' ALLOWANCE

MA10. The Co-opted Independent Person (s) shall be entitled to receive a payment of **£159.90** per meeting.

MA11. Independent Persons are entitled to receive only the allowances under this scheme for the duties they undertake on behalf of the Fire Authority.

² Indexed to local government percentage allowance increase agreed by NJC on **22 October 2024**.

SCHEDULE 2 – APPROVED DUTIES

MA12. Members and the Independent Persons shall be entitled to claim travelling and subsistence allowances for the following duties:

- (1) Meetings of the Authority, committees and task and finish groups formally convened by the Monitoring Officer, including (a) seminars, etc. to which all Members have been invited and (b) cases where a Member is invited and officially notified to attend a meeting of a committee of which they are not a Member;
- (2) formal briefings by the Chief Fire Officer/ Chief Executive or other officers, provided Members of at least two political groups have been invited to attend;
- (3) on-site inspections or visits authorised in advance by the Authority or a committee;
- (4) official and courtesy visits undertaken by the Chair of the Authority or, in the case of a particular visit, such other Member may ask to represent him/her.
- (5) attendance as an officially appointed representative of the Authority on any other body, including a committee, sub-committee or working party of that body, or a further body to which that body has appointed the representative provided there is a connection with the functions of the Authority;
- (6) attendance at outside conferences, courses, seminars and like meetings, subject to prior approval by the Authority or a committee, or by the Monitoring Officer or Chief Fire Officer/Chief Executive after consultation with the Chair or Vice Chair;
- (7) attendance at medal presentation ceremonies and other events of a public relations nature to which Members of the Authority have been formally invited;
- (8) subject to the provisions of the Local Authorities (Members' Allowances) (England) Regulations 2003, such other duties for the purpose of or in connection with the discharge of the functions of the Authority as the Authority may from time to time determine;
- (9) attendance at meetings with officers of the Service where a Member has been formally invited in his/her capacity as reference holder;
- (10) visits to Fire and Rescue Service premises undertaken as part of a planned programme;

MA13. The amounts of allowances paid by the Authority are set out in paragraphs MA3 and MA7.

INDEXATION OF ALLOWANCES

- MA14. The Basic, Special Responsibility and Co-optees' Allowances shall be adjusted annually in line with percentage allowance increase agreed by the NJC for Local Government Services. Adjustment of the allowance shall take effect from the beginning of the financial year for the year the index is applied to staff.
- MA15. The rates of travel allowances shall be the same as those approved by the HMRC (HM Revenue and Customs) and shall be adjusted and take effect in line with alterations made from time to time by the HMRC.
- MA16. The rates of subsistence allowances shall be the same as those agreed for officers of Royal Berkshire Fire and Rescue Service.
- MA17. The Chief Finance Officer shall have delegated power to approve the adjustment in accordance with paragraphs MA15 and MA16 above.

RENUNCIATION OF ALLOWANCES REPAYMENT

- MA18. A Member may, by notice in writing given to the Monitoring Officer, elect to forego, assign or transfer all or part of their entitlement to an allowance under this scheme.

CLAIMS

- MA19. Basic, special responsibility and co-optees' allowances do not need to be claimed.
- MA20. Claims for travelling and subsistence must be made on the approved form. Expenses claims should be made monthly. Claims submitted after three months from the date of expenditure occurred will not be accepted, except in exceptional circumstance and approved in writing by the Chief Finance Officer.
- MA21. Where re-imbursment of travelling and subsistence is being claimed, receipts should be attached to the claim form.
- MA22. All expenses can be claimed on one form (except Basic and Special Responsibility Allowances which are paid automatically).
- MA23. Time and place of departure may be from work, it does not have to be a home to home journey but claims must show clearly where you are travelling from and to. Completed forms should be sent to Democratic Support who will forward them to the Payments Section following approval.

Agenda Item 11

Appendix A

MA24. Allowances are paid at the end of each month. The usual payment date is the last working day of the month. To ensure payment is received by the end of the month, claims should be submitted **by the 7th of each month**.

SCHEDULE 3 - TRAVELLING AND SUBSISTENCE ALLOWANCES

MA25. Councillors are entitled to receive payments for travelling and subsistence for the purpose of performing approved duties.

MA26. The cost to the Authority of the use of public transport for medium and long distance journeys may often be less than the cost of a Member's use of a private car. There is an expectation that before making medium or long distance journeys Members will consider the cost to the Authority as well as the convenience of the mode of transport. Where public transport is available, convenient, and cheaper, a Member may choose to use his or her own private vehicle but the total amount claimed for mileage shall not exceed the ordinary standard public transport fare.

MA27. For travel by a Member in his/her own private car or one provided for his/her use, the rate shall be that [approved HMRC](#) (HM Revenue and Customs).

MA28. Claims for expenses should only be made when actually incurred, i.e. rail/bus, taxis, hotel accommodation. Receipts must be provided.

MA29. The rates of subsistence allowances shall be the same of those agreed for officers of Royal Berkshire Fire and Rescue Service. Copies of the rates agreed for officers of Royal Berkshire Fire and Rescue Service are available from Democratic Support committeeteam@rbfrs.co.uk

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National Joint Council for local government services

Employers' Secretary
Naomi Cooke

Trade Union Secretaries

Mike Short, UNISON
Sharon Wilde, GMB

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**To: Chief Executives in England, Wales and N Ireland
(to be shared with Finance Director and HR Director)
Regional Employer Organisations
Members of the National Joint Council**

22 October 2024

Dear Chief Executive,

LOCAL GOVERNMENT SERVICES PAY AGREEMENT 2024

Employers are encouraged to implement this pay award as swiftly as possible.

Agreement has been reached on rates of pay applicable from **1 April 2024** (covering the period 1 April 2024 to 31 March 2025). The new pay rates, each increased by £1,290 per annum, are attached at **Annex 1**.

All locally determined pay points above the maximum of the pay spine but graded below deputy chief officer, should be increased by 2.50 per cent, in accordance with Green Book Part 2 Para 5.4¹.

The new rates for allowances, uprated by 2.50 per cent, are set out at **Annex 2**.

Joint work

It has been agreed that there will be joint discussions on how the NJC can capture gender, ethnicity and disability pay gap information that will be of most benefit to the sector.

Backpay for employees who have left employment since 1 April 2024

If requested by an ex-employee to do so, we recommend that employers should pay any monies due to that employee from 1 April 2024 to the employee's last day of employment.

When salary arrears are paid to ex-employees who were in the LGPS, the employer must inform its local LGPS fund. Employers will need to amend the CARE and final pay figures (if the ex-employee has pre-April 2014 LGPS membership) accordingly.

¹ The Green Book Part 2 Para 5.4 provides that posts paid above the maximum of the pay spine but graded below deputy chief officer are within scope of the NJC. The pay levels for such posts are determined locally, but once fixed are increased in line with agreements reached by the NJC.

Agenda Item 11

Appendix B

Further detail is provided in [section 15 of the HR guide](#) and the [Backdated Pay Award FAQs](#), which are available on the [employer resources section](#) of www.lgpsregs.org.

Yours faithfully,

*Naomi
Cooke*

Naomi Cooke

M. R. Short

Mike Short

Sharon Wilde

Sharon Wilde

SCP	01-Apr-23		01-Apr-24	
	per annum	per hour	per annum	per hour
1	<i>Deleted wef 01 Apr 23</i>			
2	£22,366	£11.59	£23,656	£12.26
3	£22,737	£11.79	£24,027	£12.45
4	£23,114	£11.98	£24,404	£12.65
5	£23,500	£12.18	£24,790	£12.85
6	£23,893	£12.38	£25,183	£13.05
7	£24,294	£12.59	£25,584	£13.26
8	£24,702	£12.80	£25,992	£13.47
9	£25,119	£13.02	£26,409	£13.69
10	£25,545	£13.24	£26,835	£13.91
11	£25,979	£13.47	£27,269	£14.13
12	£26,421	£13.69	£27,711	£14.36
13	£26,873	£13.93	£28,163	£14.60
14	£27,334	£14.17	£28,624	£14.84
15	£27,803	£14.41	£29,093	£15.08
16	£28,282	£14.66	£29,572	£15.33
17	£28,770	£14.91	£30,060	£15.58
18	£29,269	£15.17	£30,559	£15.84
19	£29,777	£15.43	£31,067	£16.10
20	£30,296	£15.70	£31,586	£16.37
21	£30,825	£15.98	£32,115	£16.65
22	£31,364	£16.26	£32,654	£16.93
23	£32,076	£16.63	£33,366	£17.29
24	£33,024	£17.12	£34,314	£17.79
25	£33,945	£17.59	£35,235	£18.26
26	£34,834	£18.06	£36,124	£18.72
27	£35,745	£18.53	£37,035	£19.20
28	£36,648	£19.00	£37,938	£19.66
29	£37,336	£19.35	£38,626	£20.02
30	£38,223	£19.81	£39,513	£20.48
31	£39,186	£20.31	£40,476	£20.98
32	£40,221	£20.85	£41,511	£21.52
33	£41,418	£21.47	£42,708	£22.14
34	£42,403	£21.98	£43,693	£22.65
35	£43,421	£22.51	£44,711	£23.17
36	£44,428	£23.03	£45,718	£23.70
37	£45,441	£23.55	£46,731	£24.22
38	£46,464	£24.08	£47,754	£24.75
39	£47,420	£24.58	£48,710	£25.25
40	£48,474	£25.13	£49,764	£25.79
41	£49,498	£25.66	£50,788	£26.32
42	£50,512	£26.18	£51,802	£26.85
43	£51,515	£26.70	£52,805	£27.37

NB: hourly rate calculated by dividing annual salary by 52.143 weeks (which is 365 days divided by 7) and then divided by 37 hours (the standard working week)

Part 3 Paragraph 2.6(e) Sleeping-in Duty Payment:

1 April 2024
£41.78

**RATES OF PROTECTED ALLOWANCES AT 1 APRIL 2024
(FORMER APT&C AGREEMENT (PURPLE BOOK))**

Paragraph 28(3) Nursery Staffs in Educational Establishments - Special Educational Needs Allowance

1 April 2024
£1,491

Paragraph 28(14) Laboratory / Workshop Technicians

City and Guilds Science Laboratory Technician's Certificate Allowance:

1 April 2024
£243

City and Guilds Laboratory Technician's Advanced Certificate Allowance:

1 April 2024
£175

Paragraph 32 London Weighting and Fringe Area Allowances £ Per Annum

Inner Fringe Area:

1 April 2024
£1,013

Outer Fringe Area:

1 April 2024
£706

Paragraph 36 Standby Duty Allowance - Social Workers (1)(a)(i) Allowance - Per Session

1 April 2024
£33.63

FORMER MANUAL WORKER AGREEMENT (WHITE BOOK)

Section 1 Paragraph 3 London and Fringe Area Allowances £ Per Annum

Inner Fringe Area:

1 April 2024

£1,013

Outer Fringe Area:

1 April 2024

£706

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ROYAL BERKSHIRE FIRE AUTHORITY



COMMITTEE	FIRE AUTHORITY
DATE OF MEETING	19 FEBRUARY 2025
SUBJECT	NEW CONTRACT STANDING ORDERS AND REVISED FINANCIAL REGULATIONS
LEAD OFFICER	CONOR BYRNE – HEAD OF FINANCE AND PROCUREMENT
LEAD MEMBER	COUNCILLOR JEFF BROOKS
EXEMPT INFORMATION	N/A
ACTION	DECISION

1. EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

1.1 This report is a recommendation from Audit and Governance Committee on 30 January 2025. The report sets out the proposed new Contract Standing Orders and revised Financial Regulations. The proposed updates include compliance with legislative changes and sound governance in line with best practice.

2. RECOMMENDATION

That Fire Authority:

2.1 **APPROVE** the new Contract Standing Orders as set out in **Appendix A**; and

2.2 **APPROVE** the amended Financial Regulations as set out in **Appendix B**.

3. REPORT

3.1 It is good practice to review and update the Authority’s Contract Standing Orders and Financial Regulations on a regular basis.

3.2 The Contract Standing Orders have been completely rewritten to comply with Applicable Public Procurement Legislation, including the Procurement Act 2023 while the Financial Regulations have been amended to reflect the current governance structure.

Agenda Item 12

3.3 The main changes are set out below.

Contract Standing Orders

- 3.3.1 The Authority's current Contract Standing Orders comply with the Public Contract Regulations 2015. The Procurement Act 2023 replaces the 2015 Regulations and comes into force on 24 February 2025. In order to comply with the Act, the Authority's current Standing Orders have been completely rewritten and are attached as **Appendix A**.
- 3.3.2 Procurement objectives have changed under the Act. Previous drivers required contracting authorities to treat economic operators equally and without discrimination, and to act in a transparent and proportionate manner, all of which derived from European Directives. This contrasts to the objectives of the Act where key considerations and objectives for contracting authorities now include delivering value for money, maximising public benefit and acting and being seen to act with integrity. These changes reflect one of the motivations behind the Act which is to achieve greater flexibility in the procurement process.
- 3.3.3 An example of this greater flexibility is that rather than having to use prescriptive procurement procedures, it is up to the contracting authority to decide whether to use an open procedure or another kind of competitive procedure of its choice. Similarly, contracting authorities will be able to make changes to the terms of a procurement even after it has been started but before certain key deadlines, such as prior to the deadline for submitting tenders in an open procedure. There is even flexibility in selecting award criteria (which itself will change with contracts being awarded based on the new "most advantageous tender" rather than the "most economically advantageous tender"). Contracting authorities will be entitled to refine award criterion during a competitive procedure provided they have catered for that in the tender notice or tender documents and the refinement would not have allowed previously excluded suppliers to progress in the procurement.
- 3.3.4 The Act introduces several new requirements for publishing notices throughout the procurement lifecycle from planning through to contract expiry. This is with a view to increasing transparency, but this may make aspects of the overall process more administratively burdensome particularly during the life of a contract. Examples include: planned procurement notices and preliminary market engagement notices (replacing PIN notices under the current regime); pipeline notices; transparency notices on the direct award of a contract; mandatory contract change notices; and termination notices on the termination of a public contract.
- 3.3.5 Contracting authorities may award contracts to the bidder who submitted the 'most advantageous' tender, being the tender which best meets the award criteria in light of the assessment methodology. This is awarded based on a competitive tendering procedure, which is either a single-stage procedure without a restriction on who can submit tenders (like the current open procedure); or such other competitive procedure that the Authority considers

appropriate (this is a procedure which can be designed by the contracting authority).

- 3.3.6 A competitive procedure other than an open procedure gives scope for greater flexibility. While we will have greater flexibility to design our own procedures, this could lead to increased risk of legal challenge if suppliers are dissatisfied with the procurement process or outcomes.
- 3.3.7 There are increased abilities to directly award contracts in certain circumstances including at the direction of a Minister of the Crown if considered necessary to “protect human, animal or plant life or health, or protect public order or safety”.
- 3.3.8 The Act contains provisions on excluded and excludable suppliers and how they should be dealt with by contracting authorities. The list of grounds for mandatory exclusion of suppliers is broadly similar to the current regime, with the addition of new offences such as theft, corporate manslaughter and competition law infringement. In relation to discretionary exclusion grounds, the current regime provides that prior poor performance should be considered where there has been a breach of contract which resulted in a serious repercussion such as termination or damages. This is extended in the Act to cover poor performance and where the supplier has not improved their performance despite being given the opportunity to do so. Another point of difference is that suppliers can be excluded by reference to the status of their associated suppliers and subcontractors, not just their own performance.
- 3.3.9 The Act also introduces a central debarment list on which a Minister of the Crown may enter the name of a supplier who is an excluded or excludable supplier, which, as above, may be based on previous poor performance. Suppliers on the list will be debarred from applying for public contracts for a specified period but may apply for their removal from the list if there has been a material change in circumstances.
- 3.3.10 There is a new requirement to publish key performance indicators where a contracting authority must set and publish at least three key performance indicators (unless the authority considers that the supplier's performance could not appropriately be assessed by reference to key performance indicators). There is a value threshold to this requirement and there are some other exceptions, including for framework agreements. Where key performance indicators are published, at least once every twelve months, the contracting authority then has obligations to assess the supplier's performance against these key performance indicators, and to publish information relating to that assessment.
- 3.3.11 Finally, the Act extends the implied rights that contracting authorities have to terminate public contracts. The grounds now include where a supplier has become an excluded or excludable supplier; and subject to certain pre-conditions, a sub-contractor of the supplier is an excluded or excludable supplier.

Financial Regulations

- 3.4 The changes to the Financial Regulations (**Appendix B**) relate to updated references to the current governance structure, policies, strategies and plans.

4. CONTRIBUTION TO STRATEGIC COMMITMENTS

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

5. FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

- 5.1 Both the Contract and Financial Regulations establish internal controls to ensure that all the Authority's business is conducted in ways that ensure value for money.

6. LEGAL IMPLICATIONS

- 6.1 The new Contract Standing Orders comply with the Procurement Act 2023 and all regulations and legislation that cover public sector procurement.

7. EQUALITY AND DIVERSITY IMPLICATIONS

- 7.1 In terms of treatment, the Procurement Act 2023 requires contracting authorities to treat suppliers the same unless a difference between the suppliers justifies different treatment which does not put a supplier at an unfair advantage or disadvantage.
- 7.2 The Act also includes an obligation to consider and remove barriers faced by small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs) to ensure a more inclusive procurement process.

8. RISK IMPLICATIONS

- 8.1 Adherence to the Contract Standing Orders will reduce the financial and legal risk of incorrect award and ensure better management of contracts and suppliers.
- 8.2 Adherence to the Financial Regulations will reduce the risk of financial loss.

9. SUSTAINABILITY IMPLICATIONS

- 9.1 The Procurement Act 2023 introduces a change in how contracts are awarded. The "most advantageous tender" (MAT) criterion replaces the previous "most economically advantageous tender" (MEAT) approach. This shift allows for a broader consideration of factors beyond price, including environmental impact.

10. CONSISTENCY WITH DUTY TO COLLABORATE

- 10.1 The Contract Standing Orders include a requirement for all suitable procurement activity to be carried out in conjunction with partners and actively work in support of national fire reform procurement programme.
- 10.2 The Thames Valley Fire and Rescue Services already operate a joint procurement work plan and work collaboratively with the national procurement programme.

11. PRINCIPAL CONSULTATION

- 11.1 Officers consulted in the preparation of this report include:
- 11.2 The Monitoring Officer
- 11.3 Chief Fire Officer

12. BACKGROUND PAPERS

- 12.1 Existing Contract and Financial Regulations
- 12.2 Fire Authority Scheme of Delegation

13. APPENDICES

- 13.1 Appendix A – Contract Standing Orders
- 13.2 Appendix B – Financial Regulations

14. CONTACT DETAILS

- 14.1 The Contact details of the report author are:
Conor Byrne - Head of Finance and Procurement
Email: byrnec@rbfrs.co.uk

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Contract Standing Orders

To be issued on Procurement Act go-live date,
currently 24 February 2025

CONTRACT STANDING ORDERS

1.1	Background	4
1.2	Governing Legislation	4
1.3	Application of the Standing Orders (Regulated Procurements)	5
1.4	Excluded/Exempted Contracts (Not Regulated)	5
1.5	Procurement Objectives	6
1.6	Roles & Responsibilities	6
1.7	Separation of Duties	7
1.8	Conflicts of Interest	7
1.9	Procurement Strategy	8
1.10	Procurement Policy & Social Value	8
1.11	Partnership Arrangements	8
1.12	Corporate Contracts	8
1.13	Use of Consultants	8
1.14	Working with SMEs	9
1.15	Excluding Suppliers & Subcontractors	9
1.16	Identifying Opportunities	9
1.17	Contracts Register	9
2.	PROCUREMENT – PLANNING, DESIGN, TIMINGS & DOCUMENTATION	10
2.1	Overview	10
2.2	Contract Types and Regimes	10
2.3	Contract Durations	10
2.4	Estimating Contract Values	10
2.5	Duty to Consider Lots	11
2.6	Thresholds	11
2.7	Risk Assessments	13
2.8	Preliminary Market Engagement	13

2.9	Routes to Market	14
2.10	Legal Considerations	14
2.11	Procurement Programme	15
3.	PROCUREMENT DOCUMENTATION	16
3.1	Overview	16
3.2	Notices	16
3.3	Instructions	16
3.4	Due Diligence / Standard Selection Questionnaire/ Conditions of Participation	17
3.5	Award Criteria (Evaluation Methodology)	17
3.6	Form of Tender	17
3.7	Document Format	18
4.	PROCUREMENT PROCESS & CONTRACT MANAGEMENT	19
4.1	Procurement Launch	19
4.2	Process Management	19
4.3	Evaluation Process	19
4.4	Negotiations	20
4.5	Preferred Supplier Identification & Assurance	20
4.6	Award Decisions and Approvals	20
4.7	Award Governance	20
4.8	Supplier Notifications	20
4.9	Standstill Period & Contract Notices	21
4.10	Contract Execution (Thresholds/Approval)	21
5.	CONTRACT MANAGEMENT	22
5.1	Overview	22
5.2	Meetings & Performance Management	22
5.3	Contract Modifications	22

Agenda Item 12

Appendix A

5.4	Termination	22
5.5	Notices	22
6.	OTHER PROCUREMENT CONSIDERATIONS	24
6.1	Waivers & Exemption Approvals	24
6.2	Collaborative Procurements	25
6.3	Purchase Cards	25
6.4	Community Right of Challenge	25
6.5	Disposal of Goods & Assets	25
7.	GLOSSARY	26

1. Procurement Overview

1.1 Background

- 1.1.1 In these Contract Standing Orders, the Contracting Authority refers to Royal Berkshire Fire Authority.
- 1.1.2 These Standing Orders set out how the Contracting Authority will contract its various requirements and how suppliers wishing to work for the Contracting Authority can access those opportunities.
- 1.1.3 Public sector procurement is the process of acquiring goods, services and works as needed to deliver our services.
- 1.1.4 Depending on the nature of the procurement, the value, and any specific social interests that the contract may attract, the procurement process must be designed to facilitate competition, optimise quality, and deliver value for money across the whole life cycle of the contract.
- 1.1.5 To ensure delivery of the above, all procurements must be carried out within a specific legal framework and based on principles of equal treatment, transparency, and non-discrimination.

1.2 Governing Legislation

- 1.2.1 The Local Government Act 1972 section 135 requires Public Bodies to have Standing Orders for how they enter into contracts. These Contract Standing Orders set out how the Contracting Authority will deliver against this obligation.
- 1.2.2 All Procurements for Contracts, by Contracting Authority staff or members (including where managed by an external organisation or public body on the Contracting Authority's behalf), MUST comply with these Contract Standing Orders, the Contracting Authority's Financial Regulations, Applicable Public Procurement Legislation and all other relevant UK legislation; with 'applicable' relating to the date on which the procurement is commenced/advertised, the Framework/Dynamic Market was established or where no competitive process is required, a purchase order is raised.
- 1.2.3 Where there is a discrepancy between these Standing Orders and the Applicable Public Procurement Legislation Officers are to comply with the legislation.
- 1.2.4 Where there is a conflict between the Applicable Public Procurement Legislation and any other relevant legislation (as identified during procurement planning) the Monitoring Officer must be consulted immediately to carry out a legal, project risk assessment.
- 1.2.5 The Contracting Authority will comply with Procurement Policy Notes (PPNs) and the National Policy Procurement Statement (NPPS).
- 1.2.6 Non-compliance with any of these Standing Orders may constitute grounds for disciplinary action.

1.3 Application of the Standing Orders (Regulated Procurements)

- 1.3.1 These Contract Standing Orders govern:
- (a) any contract for the supply of goods, services or works, (not exempt/excluded under 1.4 below) (for pecuniary interest) regardless of value;
 - (b) using Frameworks or Dynamic Purchasing Systems, or Dynamic Markets;
 - (c) collaborative procurements;
 - (d) consultancy requirements;
 - (e) equipment hires or lease through rental agreements; and
 - (f) disposal of assets.

1.4 Excluded/Exempted Contracts (Not Regulated)

- 1.4.1 These Standing Orders do not apply to contracts that are classified as excluded/exempted, as defined by the Applicable Public Procurement Legislation; including but not limited to:
- (a) Contracting Authority to Contracting Authority (Subsidiary) arrangements, vertical or horizontal – subject to approval by the Monitoring Officer, e.g.
 - (i) Vertical - The Contracting Authority exercises a parent or similar control or joint control with other Contracting Authorities on the entity as it does with its own departments, the entity carries out more than 80% of its activities for the controlling Contracting Authorities and there is no private sector money in the entity.
 - (ii) Horizontal - Contracting Authority to Contracting Authority co-operation to achieve objectives which the Contracting Authorities have in common, through an arrangement that is solely for the public interest, and no more than 20% of the activities envisaged by the arrangement are intended to be carried out for reasons other than for the purposes of their public functions.
 - (b) Subject matter exemptions:
 - (i) Certain types of legal advice, e.g. relating to judicial proceedings and/or dispute resolution
 - (ii) Certain types of financial advice, e.g. funding or financing arrangements, investment services
 - (iii) Employment contracts
 - (iv) Purchases made at public auction or of goods sold due to insolvency
 - (v) Land contracts (including leases, licences, and transfers)

- (vi) Grants of money, these cannot be contracts as there is no consideration and they are not services required to be delivered by the Authority

1.4.2 Any other arrangements excluded by the Applicable Public Procurement Legislation.

1.5 Procurement Objectives

1.5.1 Procurement aims and objectives cover not only those objectives set out in the Applicable Public Procurement Legislation, but also those set out in the NPPS and the Contracting Authority's own procurement policies; these objectives should be used to determine the contract specific outcomes to be achieved by a specific procurement during the planning process.

1.5.2 These objectives may include, but not be limited to, all or any of the following and their inclusion should be informed by and tailored to the subject matter of the contract (legal, technical and commercial requirements).

- (a) Delivering Value for Money
- (b) Maximising public benefit (such as delivering Social Value)
- (c) Sharing Information
- (d) Equal Treatment (non-discrimination), unless justified.
- (e) Removing Barriers for Small and Medium Enterprises SMEs
- (f) Acting (and being seen to act with) integrity and accountability
- (g) Fair and transparent (effective) competition

1.6 Roles & Responsibilities

1.6.1 The Procurement Manager (and function) is responsible for all procurement processes and compliance, including; ownership of the Project Launch Document and approvals, procurement option appraisals and process design, procurement training, procurement process management (including responsibilities for all notices up to the publication of the Contract Award Notice, ownership of the e-tendering portal, ownership and provision of all procurement templates (including Contracting Authority's standard form contracts), completion/approval of procurement template and reports, and oversight of all activities relating to waivers, contract modifications or termination.

1.6.2 The Contract Manager is responsible for supporting the planning for and management of all contracts (regardless of how they are procured); specifically, feeding into procurement documents relating to contract management requirements, managing all applications for waivers, exemption or modification requests, owning the contract register (ensuring

Agenda Item 12

Appendix A

that information is kept up to date and that copies of contracts are attached) and forward planning for re-procurement of cyclical requirements (including writing specifications for the goods or services to be procured), supporting Procurement Officers with contract management including financial and quality performance reporting, ensuring compliance with the Contracting Authority's Governance requirements, publication of all mandatory and optional notices as required post the publication of the Contract Award Notice, ensuring all contracts subject to the Gateway Process report in accordance with the stated procedures.

- 1.6.3 The Head of Service is responsible for all pre-procurement governance and budgetary approvals, overseeing all technical document creation (including specifications), organising any legal documents that are required, supporting all stages of the procurement process, co-ordinating the resourcing of tender evaluation and moderation sessions, completing any procurement related reports and any pre-contract governance requirements and working with the Procurement Manager to finalise contracts in accordance with these Standing Orders, relevant procurement legislation and other associated legislation.
- 1.6.4 The Monitoring Officer is responsible for all legal decisions and activities, whether delegated to legal representatives or being actioned on behalf of the project team.

1.7 Separation of Duties

- 1.7.1 As part of the commitment to transparency, accountability, and service integrity, an individual that conducts a procurement, raises a purchase order, or requests a waiver cannot also approve one.
- 1.7.2 All requests and approval/awards therefore should be raised by one individual and approved by a different individual.

1.8 Conflicts of Interest

- 1.8.1 Public Procurement Legislation, as part of ensuring that all processes are managed fairly and with integrity, requires all individuals (Officers and Members) and suppliers involved in any stage of the contract life cycle to both identify/disclose and mitigate any perceived, potential and/or actual conflicts of interest.
- 1.8.2 Compliance with this requirement will include carrying out a conflict-of-interest assessment whenever anyone new becomes involved in the procurement, approval process and/or contract management.
- 1.8.3 All conflict-of-interest assessments must be recorded on a Conflicts-of-Interest Register and kept under review during the whole life cycle of the contract. The assessment must also include details of any mitigations taken/to be undertaken to mitigate potentially unfair outcomes, e.g. use of ethical wall agreements, use of alternative evaluators, etc.

- 1.8.4 The Procurement Manager will own the Register and in conjunction with the Monitoring Officer and Head of Finance and Procurement advise on appropriate mitigations and risks.

1.9 Procurement Strategy

- 1.9.1 The Contracting Authority will maintain a Procurement Strategy that sets out the principles for designing and delivering procurement.
- 1.9.2 Officers are required to align their procurements to this Strategy, with guidance available from the Procurement Manager.

1.10 Procurement Policy & Social Value

- 1.10.1 The Contracting Authority is committed to delivering social value through its procurements, this being in consideration of the Applicable Public Procurement Legislation, the Public Sector (Social Value) Act 2012 and associated Procurement Policy Notes relating to delivering social value.
- 1.10.2 The Contracting Authority's commitments relate, where possible, to creating opportunities to support the local economy, local jobs, training opportunities, as well as ensuring the wellbeing of both the staff and the communities in which we work.
- 1.10.3 Where Social Value is included within a procurement, it must be related to the subject matter of the contract and must not increase costs.

1.11 Partnership Arrangements

- 1.11.1 When the Contracting Authority enters into an arrangement with partner Contracting Authorities for the purchase of goods or services the relevant Head of Service must liaise with the Procurement Manager before commencing a new procurement for similar/ additional requirements to ensure that those arrangements are not breached or cause relationship problems across the Contracting Authorities partners.

1.12 Corporate Contracts

- 1.12.1 Where the Contracting Authority establishes a number of corporate contracts, such as for stationery or training, Officers must liaise with the Procurement Manager before carrying out a separate/additional procurement for such requirements.

1.13 Use of Consultants

- 1.13.1 Where the Contracting Authority requires the technical input of industry experts/consultants to either resource and/or manage a procurement or inform a specification, or deliver a particular process, Officers are required to ensure the following is applied:
- (a) The service is for a discrete (or multiple discrete) piece of work and/or is not backfilling a Contracting Authority post.

Agenda Item 12

Appendix A

- (b) The consultants are procured in accordance with these Standing Orders.
- (c) The consultant is experienced in and fully understands all Applicable Public Procurement Legislation and agrees to be bound by it.
- (d) There is a clear specification of requirements and responsibilities set out for the appointment, including adherence to these Standing Orders and relevant legislation and that this is documented in the form of contract used.

1.14 Working with SMEs

- 1.14.1 The Contracting Authority is committed to making contracting opportunities accessible to all interested suppliers; and where appropriate (and not disproportionate to do so) remove barriers to SMEs participating in the procurement.
- 1.14.2 Officers, when designing a procurement, must consider the use of lots, encouraging consortia bids, structuring the documents to be SME friendly, and setting financial participation thresholds to the minimum needed to manage performance risk/failure.

1.15 Excluding Suppliers & Subcontractors

- 1.15.1 The Contracting Authority may exclude suppliers where they or one of their proposed subcontractors have exhibited behaviours that are unacceptable to the Contracting Authority.
- 1.15.2 Details of when and for what (mandatory and discretionary grounds) a supplier may/must be excluded is contained in the Applicable Public Procurement Legislation.

1.16 Identifying Opportunities

- 1.16.1 All advertised procurements must be advertised initially on the Central Digital Platform in line with Applicable Public Procurement Legislation. They will also be advertised on and managed through the Contracting Authority's e-tendering Portal.
- 1.16.2 Suppliers wishing to bid for Contracting Authority contracts should register on both the Central Digital Platform and the referenced e-tendering portal.

1.17 Contracts Register

- 1.17.1 All current contracts are included on the Contracting Authority's online Contract Register. This includes details of current suppliers, contract values, and the current contract expiry dates along with details of any options to extend.
- 1.17.2 The online Contract Register is to be updated with details of new contracts.

2. Procurement – Planning, Design, Timings & Documentation

2.1 Overview

- 2.1.1 The activities detailed in this section apply where the spend is not exempted from these Standing Orders under Section 1.4 above.
- 2.1.2 No procurement may proceed without the completion of the Procurement Launch Document (PLD) by Officers, which provides evidence that they have considered all of the planning, documentation and process considerations detailed in these Standing Orders and that they have all the required approvals in place.

2.2 Contract Types and Regimes

- 2.2.1 All spend must be classified by type and regime before a procurement process can be designed; this is due to different types and regimes having different financial thresholds and obligations. The types and regimes are set out below.
- 2.2.2 Types - Goods (supplies or products), Services (labour, consultants, or technical resources); or Works (Construction Projects).
- 2.2.3 Regimes - Utilities (gas, electricity, water); Light Touch (legal services); Concession (supplier risk/ paid by service users), Exempt/Excluded (not covered).

2.3 Contract Durations

- 2.3.1 Before a procurement process can be designed/commenced, Officers need to decide both the initial and maximum contract durations (including any optional extension) and what might be the justification to apply those extensions.
- 2.3.2 Depending on the value and nature of the contract being procured, the duration may be limited by the Applicable Public Procurement Legislation. Officers must check with Procurement Manager before finalising the decision.

2.4 Estimating Contract Values

- 2.4.1 The estimated contract value must include all monies that could be paid over the maximum life span of the contract (or Framework/ Dynamic Market), to the successful tenderer(s) regardless of the source; e.g., all planned and potential costs, additional requirements, fees/commissions, contract extensions and/or participation costs plus any contingencies, whether funded by the authority, other grants or paid by service users. The total must also include VAT.
- 2.4.2 This value must not be artificially inflated or disaggregated as it will feed into various decisions, including route to market, and assessing whether a supplier has the capacity to deliver the contract.

Agenda Item 12

Appendix A

- 2.4.3 The above calculated value, calculations and assumptions must be documented in the Procurement Launch Document.

2.5 Duty to Consider Lots

- 2.5.1 When considering the above, Officers must consider the use of lots and the potential benefit of working with (local) SMEs (e.g., reduce overhead costs, local knowledge, public benefit) with the opportunity to achieve economy of scale discounts, manage market uncertainty, and the potential contract management benefits of appointing a single supplier.
- 2.5.2 In considering how to make opportunities accessible to SMEs, Officers must ensure that they do not disaggregate, or sub-divide like of similar requirements purely for the sole purpose of avoiding the rules for above threshold public contracts. They must also ensure that the process for removing barriers for SMEs, does not unfairly advantage them.

2.6 Thresholds

- 2.6.1 Procurement Thresholds are determined by category and sector (regime); they determine which routes to market are available and what rules must be followed.
- 2.6.2 The Thresholds come from the Applicable Public Procurement Legislation (and updated by Procurement Policy Notes) and are based on the Government Procurement Agreement (GPA); these values are updated every other year.
- 2.6.3 The rules and available routes to market are determined by whether the estimated contract value is deemed to be 'Above Threshold' (Covered Procurements/ Public Contracts) or 'Below Threshold.'
- 2.6.4 The following table sets out possible routes to market based on the estimated value of the contract (which, for Above Threshold Procurements, includes VAT).

Table 1 – Threshold Procurement Processes

Total Contract Value	Process	Person Responsible for Process	Contract Award Recommendation and Contract Authorisation
£0 - £10,000	One quotation. Best practice to receive a written quotation.	In line with Officer delegated spending limits.	Not required – PO Only
£10,001 - £100,000	Competitive process to be followed: three quotes, frameworks – open or closed, DPS, or open tender process	Head of Service with the Procurement Team	Signatures required <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Head of Service 2. Head or Deputy Head of Finance and Procurement 3. Director or Chief Fire Officer / Chief Executive
£100,001 up to the relevant thresholds as set out in the Applicable Public Procurement Legislation	Competitive process to be followed: frameworks – open or closed, DPS, open tender process	Head of Service (or Director for works contracts) with the Procurement Team	Signatures required <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Head of Service 2. Head or Deputy Head of Finance and Procurement 3. Director or Chief Fire Officer / Chief Executive 4. Management Committee approval required for contracts over £1 million
Upwards from the relevant thresholds as set out in the Applicable Public Procurement Legislation	Frameworks – Open or Closed, DPS, Dynamic Market or open tender process or competitive flexible procedure	Director with the Procurement Team	Signatures required <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Head of Service 2. Head or Deputy Head of Finance and Procurement 3. Director or Chief Fire Officer / Chief Executive 4. Management Committee approval required for contracts over £1 million

Agenda Item 12

Appendix A

- 2.6.5 Regardless of the minimum obligations, Officers may choose (or may be instructed by the Procurement Manager) to conduct a procedure in line with a higher level, including one which is for Above Threshold/ Covered Procurement; including issuing a Tender Notice to invite interested suppliers to submit a tender/participate in the procurement.
- 2.6.6 The Procurement Manager may also mandate such a process where the estimate contract value is very close to the relevant Threshold, or the contract is high profile/of public interest, or where it is a condition of the funding that a specific process must be applied.

2.7 Risk Assessments

- 2.7.1 Officers are required to carry out a risk assessment as part of the project initiation and planning process, and at the very least, in the following situations:
- (a) where the procurement is of strategic importance to the Authority and/or Above Threshold (a Covered Procurement),
 - (b) is establishing a new Framework or Dynamic Market with multiple suppliers,
 - (c) includes a Special Purpose Vehicle,
 - (d) is for a contract duration in excess of five years,
 - (e) includes design liabilities and/or collateral warranties,
 - (f) involves intellectual property,
 - (g) involves a significant Health & Safety consideration,
 - (h) is likely to be subject to significant inflation risks, or
 - (i) where the spend relates to substantial direct awards or contract extensions that carry risks under the Applicable Public Procurement Legislation.
- 2.7.2 The outcome of the risk assessment must both be:
- (a) documented in the Procurement Launch Document as it will feed into the process design and governance/approval process; and
 - (b) added to the Corporate Risk Register where appropriate.

2.8 Preliminary Market Engagement

- 2.8.1 Officers are required as part of designing both the Competitive Tendering Procedure and the Associated Tender Documentation to consider running a Preliminary Market Engagement Event. Such events should be used where a contract has been assessed as high value, high profile, complex or specialist in nature, the market is saturated, made up of SMEs, or is suitable for a consortia delivery model; or as otherwise directed by the Procurement Manager. The decision and reasons are to be recorded in the Procurement Launch Document and the Tender Record.

- 2.8.2 Where a Preliminary Market Engagement Event is to be used, it must be advertised using an appropriate notice, and the Contracting Authority must take reasonable steps to ensure that participants at the event do not have an unfair advantage in the subsequent procurement; this to be achieved by undertaking a Conflict-of-Interest Assessment and documented in the Tender Record.
- 2.8.3 All information shared before, during or after a Preliminary Market Engagement Event must also be included within the subsequent associated Tender Documents.

2.9 Routes to Market

- 2.9.1 The minimum process/route to market is determined by the category and value.
- 2.9.2 The Contracting Authority has decided that procurements should be let in accordance with Table 1.
- 2.9.3 Where using a framework Officers must comply with the framework rules.

2.10 Legal Considerations

- 2.10.1 Contracts
- (a) All contracts must be completed either in hardcopy or electronically before contract commencement.
 - (b) The contract may be a standard form, an amended standard form, a bespoke/ project specific contract, or a set of Heads of Terms; and these may be provided either in a finalised or draft form (depending on the route to market being used).
 - (c) The Procurement Manager, taking advice from the Monitoring Officer where required, is responsible for determining the appropriate form of contract and this must be documented in the Procurement Launch Document as it will feed into various aspects of the process design.
 - (d) The agreed form of contract must be made available to suppliers as part of the associated tender documents before they are required to submit a price/ tender.
- 2.10.2 Bonds & Guarantees
- (a) The Procurement Manager, taking advice from the Monitoring Officer and the Head of Finance and Procurement, will consider the appropriateness of requesting a Performance Bond and/or a Parent Company Guarantee where there are concerns about the financial performance of the tenderer.
 - (b) Where a bond or guarantee is deemed necessary this should be in a form acceptable to the Contracting Authority.

Agenda Item 12

Appendix A

2.10.3 Non-Procurement Legislation

- (a) The design of any procurement must take into account all relevant legislation; as it applies to the Contracting Authority, the project, and the supply chain.
- (b) In the event that there is an incompatibility identified between two or more relevant pieces of legislation this must be escalated to the Monitoring Officer for advice and a decision on how to manage the conflict.

2.11 Procurement Programme

- 2.11.1 Officers will also need to plan for and include time to comply with the Contracting Authority's approvals and reporting requirements, this being particularly significant where a procurement is of strategic importance and/or is to be monitored through the Gateway Process.
- 2.11.2 Officers should work with the Head of Service to create a procurement programme against which resource requirements can be managed.
- 2.11.3 Indicative timescales for different types of approvals are set out in the Contracting Authority's Forward Plan of meetings.

3. Procurement Documentation

3.1 Overview

- 3.1.1 The procurement documentation required will depend on the selected route to market as well as the stages and the activities to be completed.

3.2 Notices

- 3.2.1 The publication of various notices is a legal requirement both to create effective competition and ensure transparency in the spending of public funds. The most commonly used notices and reasons for use are detailed below.
- 3.2.2 An Early Market Engagement Notice – A notice inviting suppliers to engage in an Early Market Engagement Event.
- 3.2.3 A Tender Notice – A notice inviting suppliers to submit a tender or a request to participate – minimum 25 days (unless urgency).
- 3.2.4 Procurement Termination Notices – used to inform the market that the Contracting Authority is terminating the procurement/not making an award.
- 3.2.5 The Contracting Authority may also be required to publish other notices in relation to their plans, events, and/or other decisions depending on the Applicable Public Procurement Legislation.

3.3 Instructions

- 3.3.1 Officers must ensure that they effectively and transparently communicate with all suppliers regarding the Competitive Tendering Procedure. This could include excluding suppliers, notifying conditions of participation and what is required from suppliers at each stage to enable them to progress.
- 3.3.2 Procedural rules, including how the Contracting Authority will manage clarification, incomplete tenders or other matters must be communicated to suppliers.
- 3.3.3 In addition, communications must make clear whether there is scope to modify the procurement after the Tender Notice has been published (this also needs to have been stated in the Tender Notice).
- 3.3.4 Details of how suppliers should communicate with the Contracting Authority during the procurement process and the various rounds/ activities must also be communicated.

3.4 Due Diligence / Standard Selection Questionnaire/ Conditions of Participation

- 3.4.1 It is essential that the Contracting Authority only appoint suppliers to deliver public sector contracts that are deemed suitable (meet the legal, ethical, and social standards) as set out in the Applicable Public Procurement Legislation.
- 3.4.2 Equally, it is important to check that they have the capability, capacity, and experience needed to deliver the specific technical requirements and this must be checked regardless of the value of the contract. Note that this can only be as a discrete/separate stage where the contract is over a specific value for the specific category.
- 3.4.3 When procuring works, this capability, capacity, and experience assessment should, where appropriate, be based on the Common Assessment Standard either in full or in a modified version which as a minimum, meets the requirements of the Selection Questionnaire to be used for non-works procurements.

3.5 Award Criteria (Evaluation Methodology)

- 3.5.1 Officers are required to design and effectively communicate the evaluation/assessment methodology that will be applied to the tender responses submitted by suppliers.
- 3.5.2 This must include detailing whether the assessment methodology will be based on lowest price (where permitted), price per quality point or a price to quality ratio. In each case, the following will apply:
 - (a) For quality and social value - the detailed questions include specific response guidance, the scoring methodology/matrix, and the importance/weighting to be applied to each question.
 - (b) For Price – details on how the value will be calculated and how it will be evaluated (e.g. the weighting allocated to the price as a whole or parts therein or divided by the quality score).
- 3.5.3 Once the Tender Notice has been published, this Award Criteria cannot be amended unless specifically allowed for in the Tender Notice or the amendment is not substantial, and the change is implemented before the last chance to submit tenders as per the Applicable Public Procurement Legislation.

3.6 Form of Tender

- 3.6.1 All Suppliers will be required to sign a disclaimer when submitting their tender, specifically relating to their conduct during the procurement process, their adherence to the conditions of tendering, the acceptance of the contract terms and their agreement to hold their price open for a specific amount of time.

3.7 Document Format

- 3.7.1 All documentation and communication will be issued and returned electronically. The documents may, therefore, be issued as an attachment in Microsoft or Adobe formats (unless otherwise explicitly stated) or built into and answered in the e-tendering portal.

4. Procurement Process & Contract Management

4.1 Procurement Launch

- 4.1.1 The Contracting Authority is required to publish a full set of procurement/ Associated Tender Documents when it publishes the Tender Notice.
- 4.1.2 Suppliers can access these opportunities on the Central Digital Platform and the Procurement Portal.

4.2 Process Management

- 4.2.1 All competitive procedures must be managed through the Contracting Authority's e-tendering Portal, including all of the following activities.
 - (a) Communication with Suppliers
 - (i) All communication with suppliers should be, as far as practicable, be via electronic means, e.g. the e-tendering portal.
 - (b) Clarifications
 - (i) The Contracting Authority reserves the right to clarify any omissions, ambiguities, or errors as part of its procurement procedure.
 - (ii) All clarifications (by suppliers and the Contracting Authority) must be raised and managed through the e-tendering portal.
 - (iii) Where a supplier asks a question, the questions and responses must be shared with all suppliers; an exception being where the supplier specifies that the question is commercially sensitive, and the Contracting Authority accepts this.
 - (iv) Where, as part of the evaluation process, the Contracting Authority identifies something that appears erroneous, needs to be clarified or was omitted, this must also be raised through the e-tendering portal.
 - (v) A record of all clarifications must be maintained.

4.3 Evaluation Process

- 4.3.1 The Contracting Authority will identify a team of suitably qualified and experience persons (SQEP) to carry out individual evaluations of their allocated question(s) in accordance with the Conditions of Participation/Award Criteria questions as set out in the procurement documentation. All evaluators will then be required to attend a moderation session.
- 4.3.2 At the appropriate points in the procurement, the Contracting Authority must check the supplier's (and their supply chain's) suitability to deliver the contract. Where a supplier is assessed as Excluded or Excludable (mandatory or discretionary exclusion grounds) the supplier will/may not be permitted to continue within the process.

- 4.3.3 At the Conditions of Participation stage, depending on the route to market, the Contracting Authority may limit the number of suppliers to invite through to the next round, depending on how the Competitive Tendering Procedure has been designed.
- 4.3.4 Additionally, at intermitted tender stages, the Contracting Authority may, through evaluation, limit the number of suppliers to invite through to the next round.
- 4.3.5 At Award Stage, in all covered procurements, the quality evaluation will be carried out by members of the panel independently of each another before coming together for moderation. Price evaluation will be carried out by the Procurement Team.
- 4.3.6 The Contracting Authority has the right (but is not obliged) to seek clarification on the submissions as part of the evaluation process. Where this prerogative is utilised, all suppliers will be treated equally.

4.4 Negotiations

- 4.4.1 Negotiations will only be permitted where this is expressly stated in the procurement documentation, and this will be carried out in compliance with the stated process.
- 4.4.2 If a supplier attempts to negotiate a contract post award, where this is not permitted, the Contracting Authority may disregard the supplier and award the contract to the next ranked compliant supplier.

4.5 Preferred Supplier Identification & Assurance

- 4.5.1 Once a preferred supplier has been identified, the supplier suitability checks referenced above must be refreshed to ensure that they are still a suitable (not excluded) supplier.

4.6 Award Decisions and Approvals

- 4.6.1 Throughout the life of the procurement, all decisions must be documented in a Project Tender Record, including the recommendation to award. This includes where a Direct Award is made.

4.7 Award Governance

- 4.7.1 Before suppliers can be notified of the recommendation, the decision to award must be approved in accordance with the Contracting Authority's scheme of delegation (and depending on value/risk, in accordance with a Gateway process) as stated in Table 1.

4.8 Supplier Notifications

- 4.8.1 Once the recommendation is approved, and before the Contract Award Notice is published, the Contracting Authority will collate and provide each supplier with an Assessment Summary (supplier feedback).

Agenda Item 12

Appendix A

- 4.8.2 This summary must include the scores and the reason for those scores, for each of the award criteria, in consideration of the assessment methodology as set out in the procurement/associated tender documents. Unsuccessful suppliers must also be provided with the same information relating to the successful supplier.

4.9 Standstill Period & Contract Notices

- 4.9.1 For all Above Threshold/ Covered Procurements, the Authority must apply a standstill period before entering into the contract (excluding Utilities, Light Touch or contracts awarded under a Framework, in which cases a standstill period is optional).
- 4.9.2 A Contract Award Notice must be published in accordance with Applicable Public Procurement Legislation.
- 4.9.3 Additionally, where required under the Applicable Public Procurement Legislation, the Contracting Authority may be required to publish a Contract Details Notice within 30 days of entering into the contract.

4.10 Contract Execution (Thresholds/Approval)

- 4.10.1 All contracts must be signed or executed in accordance with the rules as set out in Table 1:
- 4.10.2 A record of the contract and a copy of all executed contracts must be added to the Contract Register (with physical copies of contracts executed as a deed stored securely).
- 4.10.3 Works – must be executed as a deed, regardless of value.
- 4.10.4 All contracts over £1,000,000 will bear the common seal of the Authority.
- 4.10.5 A contract may be awarded by the approved Officer in accordance with Table 1 if there has been compliance with these Standing Orders and the Authority's Financial Regulations and a fully signed Contract Recommendation Award has been completed for any purchases over £10,000.
- 4.10.6 No Officer below Head of Service can award a contract over £10,000.
- 4.10.7 Tenders for contracts over £1,000,000 require a business case to be approved by Management Committee before the tender process is finalised. A tender price up to 5% more than the business case can be accepted by Officers if budget provision exists. If the final tender award is between 5% and 10% greater than the business case figure, agreement has to be sought from the Chair of the Fire Authority before awarding. Any variance greater than 10% would need the approval of Management Committee.

5. Contract Management

5.1 Overview

- 5.1.1 Contracts must be managed in accordance with Applicable Public Procurement Legislation.

5.2 Meetings & Performance Management

- 5.2.1 The Contract Manager will set up a series of meetings to kick off, administer and manage delivery of the contract. These meetings will as a minimum monitor and report on the following:

- (a) Supplier & Supply Chain Suitability – ensure that the Contracting Authority is not contracting directly or indirectly with unsuitable (Excluded/ Excludable) suppliers.
- (b) Key Performance Indicators – delivery against the agreed criteria.
- (c) Contract Performance – e.g. satisfactory delivery of the contract.
- (d) Contracting Authority Payment Performance –the Contracting Authority is required to pay the Supplier within 30 days of receiving a valid/undisputed invoice.
- (e) Supplier Payment Performance - the Supplier is required to pay their supply chain within 30 days of receiving a valid/undisputed invoice.
- (f) Supplier Contracts – the supplier is required to enter into a legally binding agreement with suppliers on whom they are relying on to meet the technical, legal, or financial conditions of participation.
- (g) Modifications – all modifications to a contract must be documented, along with the value and justification.

5.3 Contract Modifications

- 5.3.1 All modifications must be managed in accordance with the contract and in compliance of what is permitted under the Applicable Public Procurement Legislation.

5.4 Termination

- 5.4.1 In the event that any performance requirements are not being met, the Contracting Authority may terminate the contract in accordance with the stated contract clauses. Where required, this to be reported in accordance with Applicable Public Procurement Legislation.

5.5 Notices

- 5.5.1 Where required under Applicable Public Procurement Legislation, the Contracting Authority may be required to publish a notice. The notices that may be required include the following:

Agenda Item 12

Appendix A

- (a) Contract Performance Notice – used to report on KPIs and whether the contract is being delivered to the required standards.
- (b) Payment Compliance Notice – used to publish the Contracting Authority's payment performance.
- (c) Contract Modification Notice – used to publish details of a proposed modification to a contract where there is an increase or decrease in the estimated contract value over a specific value.
- (d) Contract Termination Notice – used where the Contracting Authority terminates a contract in full.

6. Other Procurement Considerations

6.1 Waivers & Exemption Approvals

- 6.1.1 Where an Officer seeks to deviate from the requirements of this document a waiver must be completed and approved in accordance with the following rules.
- 6.1.2 Competitive quotes or tenders are not required where any of the following apply:
- a) effective competition is prevented due to government control;
 - b) the supply or service is unique to a single supplier such as proprietary or patented goods or is deemed necessary due to the requirements of operational alignment and there is no satisfactory alternative;
 - c) the service or works are of a specialist nature and can only be carried out by one supplier;
 - d) the emergency requirements are brought about by events that could not have reasonably been foreseen;
 - e) if the goods or services are not procured there is a risk of danger to life or property or a major impact on the Authority or the public;
 - f) the market is such that effective competition does not exist and it can clearly be demonstrated that the proposed award represents best value for the Authority.
- 6.1.3 A waiver of up to £50,000 must be approved by the Head or Deputy Head of Finance and Procurement, Head of Service and a Director or Chief Fire Officer/Chief Executive, using the standard waiver form which is to be retained by the Head or Deputy Head of Finance and Procurement.
- 6.1.4 Waivers over £50,000 and up to £100,000 must be approved by the Head or Deputy Head of Finance and Procurement, Director or Chief Fire Officer/Chief Executive and the Monitoring Officer.
- 6.1.5 Waivers of more than £100,000 up to the relevant thresholds as set out in the Procurement Act 2023 can only be approved by the Management Committee.
- 6.1.6 Waivers are not permitted over the relevant thresholds although the Procurement Act does permit exceptions in very limited circumstances: Schedule 2 – Exempted contracts.
- 6.1.7 The totals above refer to aggregate spend with a supplier and are only inclusive of VAT for the purpose of applying the relevant thresholds as set out in the Procurement Act 2023.
- 6.1.8 Where a contract is awarded under a waiver and is over £30,000, including VAT, a Notice must be published in accordance with Applicable Public Procurement Legislation.

Agenda Item 12

Appendix A

- 6.1.9 Where an Officer deems that the proposed expenditure is exempt from these Standing Orders, the Officer must complete a procurement exemption form regardless of value and/or category/sector. The Procurement Manager must approve this.

6.2 Collaborative Procurements

- 6.2.1 Where the Contracting Authority is required under its own powers or at the request of a partner authority to procure on its behalf, those procurements must comply with Applicable Public Procurement Legislation and other relevant legislation more generally.
- 6.2.2 Each Contracting Authority must comply with its own Standing Orders with regards to financial, procurement and delegated authority requirements; and then equally, its own scheme of delegation for contract signing.
- 6.2.3 The Policing and Crime Act 2017 places a duty on police, fire and emergency ambulance services to seek opportunities to collaborate where it is efficient or effective to do so.
- 6.2.4 The Procurement team will review all new procurement requirements, ensuring that all opportunities to collaborate with partner organisations are exploited where they offer benefits to the Authority and collaborate with partners to develop new joint contracts.

6.3 Purchase Cards

- 6.3.1 The Contracting Authority operates a purchase card facility; these are used where it is not efficient to add a supplier to the finance system. Purchase cards may not be used as a means to disaggregate or bypass these Standing Orders.

6.4 Community Right of Challenge

- 6.4.1 Section 81 of the Localism Act 2011 permits relevant bodies to submit expressions of interest to provide Authority services.

6.5 Disposal of Goods & Assets

- 6.5.1 Where the Contracting Authority has goods or assets that are no-longer required these are to be disposed of in accordance with the Contracting Authority's Financial Regulations.

7. GLOSSARY

Term	Meaning of Term
Approved Dynamic Market	A Dynamic Market approved for use by the Procurement Team
Approved Framework	A Framework (including Open Frameworks) approved for use by the Procurement Team
Assessment Summary	<p>A letter detailing the outcome of the assessment of any Tenders received.</p> <p>For the winning Supplier it will include their scores and reasons for those scores against each of the published Award Criteria.</p> <p>For all losing Suppliers, the letter will include their scores and the reason for those scores against each of the published Award Criteria and the same information for the winning Supplier.</p>
Award Criteria/ Assessment Methodology	<p>Criteria set in accordance with section 23 of the Procurement Act 2023 against which Tenders may be assessed for the purpose of awarding a Public Contract. These criteria must:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • relate to the subject-matter of the Contract, • be sufficiently clear, measurable, and specific, • not break the rules on technical specifications in section 56, and • be a proportionate means of assessing Tenders, having regard to the nature, complexity, and cost of the Contract. <p>Where there are several criteria, their weighting or relative importance must be stated.</p> <p>Officers are also required to describe how the Tenders will be assessed (a scoring matrix), and the document must state whether failing to meet a specific score could amount to a Supplier being excluded from the procurement.</p>
(Regulated/ nominated) Below Threshold Procurement	A procurement which is below the Covered Procurement threshold and not exempt from the Procurement Act 2023. PPN-11_23-New-Thresholds.pdf (publishing.service.gov.uk)
Best Value	The Best Value Duty relates to the statutory requirement for a local authority as defined in Part 1 of the Local Government Act 1999 to “make arrangements to secure continuous improvement in the way in which its functions are exercised, having regard to a combination of economy, efficiency and effectiveness”.
Breach of Contract	Failure to meet any of the conditions of the Contract.

Agenda Item 12

Appendix A

Capital Expenditure	Expenditure involving the acquisition or enhancement of fixed assets with a long-term value to the Authority, such as land, buildings, and major items of plant, equipment, or vehicles.
Capital Programme	The programme of Capital expenditure agreed by Fire Authority.
Categories	Where establishing a dynamic market, the Authority may divide the DM into categories (Lots/ specialism) to facilitate access by SMEs and drive effective competition.
Central Digital Platform (CDP)	The Central Digital Platform will be where all UK Contracting Authorities publish information relating to procurement. It is also the place where identifiers are recorded and/or issued and for suppliers to input their commonly used information.
Closed Framework	A framework that opens for competition, one or more bidders are appointed and then the framework is closed for any new submissions for a period of time.
Code of Conduct	The code of conduct binding on all Officers of the Authority.
Common Assessment Standard	A standardised pre-qualification questionnaire (PQQ) for the construction sector. It aims to streamline the construction procurement process by providing a unified set of questions for assessing suppliers.
Competitive Flexible Procedure	This is a multi-staged procurement which can include: a discrete Conditions Of Participation stage, limiting Suppliers (following the SQ or other assessments), one or more Tender rounds (and intermediate assessments), refinement of the Award Criteria, modification of the Tender procedure, interaction with the Suppliers (e.g., negotiations, presentations, site visits) and then following a final submission, there is a potential to finesse the submission and subsequent staged awards – all of this being subject to what was specified in the Invitation to Tender document.
Competitive Selection Process	A procurement process where all the Suppliers on the Framework (or a specific Lot) are invited to submit a Tender in line with the Framework rules and in line with the Specification for the Contract to be let, and the Specification of the Framework.
Competitive Tendering Procedures	This includes the Open Procedure and the Competitive Flexible Procedure
Concession Contracts	A Contract for the supply, for pecuniary interest, of works or services to an Authority where — <ul style="list-style-type: none"> a. at least part of the consideration for that supply is a right to exploit, and b. under the Contract the Supplier is exposed to a real operating risk. (It may also be paid for by service users rather than the Authority).

<p>Conditions Of Participation</p>	<p>These are conditions that a Supplier must satisfy if the Supplier is to be awarded the Contract.</p> <p>These conditions must be a proportionate means of assuring that a Supplier has:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • the legal and financial capacity to perform the Contract, or • the technical ability to perform the Contract.
<p>Conditions of Tendering</p>	<p>The rules/conditions by which a competitive procurement process will be conducted, and with which a Supplier must comply if they are not to be excluded from the procurement process.</p>
<p>Conflict Assessments</p>	<p>An assessment that has been carried out by the Authority and in which it identifies all and any potential or actual conflicts and the actions taken/to be taken to mitigate them to ensure equal treatment.</p>
<p>Conflict of Interest</p>	<p>The Act requires Contracting Authorities to identify and keep under review actual and potential conflicts of interest.</p> <p>Contracting Authorities must also mitigate conflicts of interest and address circumstances which they consider are likely to cause a reasonable person to wrongly believe there to be a conflict or potential conflict of interest ('perceived conflict of interest').</p>
<p>Contract</p>	<p>An agreement to be made/concluded in writing between the Authority and a Supplier for a specific set of requirements.</p> <p>For a low value contract, this may be made by way of raising a Purchase Order (PO) and attaching the Authority's standard PO terms and conditions.</p>
<p>Contract Award Notice</p>	<p>A notice that is published on the Central Digital Platform and that informs the market of and intent to award and where a Mandatory Standstill Period (or Voluntary Standstill Period) is required. This notice initiates that Standstill Period.</p> <p>There is a different form of notice for below and above threshold procurements.</p>
<p>Contract Change Notice</p>	<p>For Contracts let under the Procurement Act 2023, this is a notice that must be published before a Contract modification is applied in accordance with Section 75.</p> <p>For Contracts let under the Public Contracts Regulations 2015, a modification notice must be published where a modification is made under Regulation 72(b) or 72(c).</p>
<p>Contract Details Notice</p>	<p>A notice that confirms that the Contract has been entered into in accordance with Section 53 of the Procurement Act 2023. There is a different form of notice for below and above threshold procurements.</p>
<p>Contract Management</p>	<p>Contract Management is the active management of the relationship between the Authority and the Supplier over the term of the Contract for the provision of services, goods or works to a set of agreed standards.</p>

Agenda Item 12

Appendix A

Contract Management Notices	<p>For Contracts valued over £5 million, under the Procurement Act 2023, the Authority is required to publish KPIs and an assessment of performance against those KPIs.</p> <p>In addition, the Authority must publish a poor performance notice where the Supplier has breached a Public Contract and that breach has resulted in termination, partial termination, award of damages, or a settlement agreement; or the Authority considers that a Supplier is not performing a Public Contract to the Authority's satisfaction (even if the Supplier is not in breach of the contract); and having been given a proper opportunity to improve performance has failed to do so.</p>
Contract Managers/ Contracting Officer	An Officer with responsibility for conducting the purchasing processes for the purchase of works, goods or services on behalf of the Authority and that manages the resultant Contract and ensures day-to-day activities are conducted in accordance with its terms and conditions.
Contract Modification	<p>For Contracts let under the Procurement Act 2023, this is a modification permitted under Section 74 and Schedule 8 of the Act or is not a substantial modification or is a below-threshold modification.</p> <p>For Contracts let under the Public Contracts Regulations 2015, this is a modification permitted under Regulation 72.</p>
Contracts Standing Orders (CSOs)	The key document which sets out the Authority's principles of procurement, roles and responsibilities, contract procedure rules and processes involved in purchasing services, goods, and works contracts.
Contract Register	A register of the Authority's Contracts that exceed £5,000, excluding VAT, made publicly available via the Authority's website.
Contract Value	<p>The estimated total monetary value of a Contract over its full duration and any extensions or potential variations. (N.B. not just the annual value.)</p> <p>Where the duration of a Contract is indeterminate, this will be taken to be the estimated value of the Contract over a period of four years.</p>
Covered Procurement	An above threshold procurement that is intended to result in a Public Contract. PPN-11 23-New-Thresholds.pdf (publishing.service.gov.uk)
Data Protection Act 2018	The legislation that controls how personal information is used by organisations, businesses, and/or the Government.
Dialogue	A discussion between the Authority and Suppliers about any aspect of the procurement.
Direct Award	The award of a Contract without a competitive process.
Discretionary Exclusion Grounds	These are set out in Schedule 7 of the Procurement Act 2023.
Dynamic Market	A list of Suppliers who have met the published conditions of membership and are eligible to submit a Tender against a competition let under the market. These markets can be set up to purchase any requirements that

	the Authority may wish to purchase and require the use of the competitive flexible procedure to award the Contract.
E-Procurement System	A system for the end-to-end tendering process. Both suppliers and buyers submit and respond to tenders electronically.
Equalities Act 2010	Protects individuals from various forms of discrimination and harassment relating to disability, age, gender, religion/belief, and sexuality.
Estimated Contract Value	The value being estimated by the Authority for the entire possible scope (including any optional extras) and duration (including any possible extensions) of the potential contract requirements including all other options, premiums, fees etc as may become due under the contract.
Excludable Supplier	<p>An Excludable Supplier is a Supplier to whom a discretionary exclusion ground applies, and such exclusion ground circumstances are continuing/likely to occur again; or they are on the debarment list by virtue of a discretionary exclusion ground.</p> <p>Tenders from excludable Suppliers may be disregarded in any Competitive Tendering Process (PA s.26(2)) and Contracting Authorities may exclude an Excludable Supplier from participating in a Competitive Flexible Procedure (PA s.27(1)(b)).</p> <p>The Authority may also terminate a Contract with a Supplier who becomes an excluded Supplier after the award of the Contract or where one of their sub-Contractors is an excludable Supplier and they fail to replace them when instructed.</p>
Excluded Supplier	An Excluded Supplier is a supplier to which a mandatory exclusion ground applies and the circumstances giving rise to the application of that exclusion ground are likely to occur again; or the supplier is on the debarment list by virtue of a mandatory exclusion ground.
Exempt Contracts	The kind of Contract listed in Schedule 2 of the Procurement Act 2023.
Financial Regulations	The Authority's rules relating to financial procedures.
Framework	Frameworks help public sector buyers to procure goods and services from a list of pre-approved suppliers, with agreed terms and conditions and legal protections.
Freedom of Information Act	Freedom of Information Act 2000 is an act defining the ways in which the public may obtain access to government-held information.
Gateway Process.	This is a structured review and assurance framework designed to ensure that major projects and programmes are well-managed and deliver value for money.
Head of Service	An Officer of the Authority employed to manage and lead a particular service area.
Invitation to Tender (IIT)	The document that invites Suppliers to submit a Request to Participate or a Tender in response to a Tender Notice. It must include clear instructions of what is required, a description of the procurement process, the Conditions

Agenda Item 12

Appendix A

	of Tendering, and the Award Criteria/ Assessment Methodology as a minimum.
Key Performance Indicator (KPIs)	A factor or measure against which a Supplier's performance of a Contract can be assessed during the life cycle of the Contract.
Light Touch Regime	These are Contracts/procurements which cover Health, Social Care, Community Service, legal and Education related requirements.
Lots	Splitting the goods, services or works to be supplied into more than one Contract to make them accessible to SMEs with the aim of promoting effective competition.
Mandatory Exclusion Grounds	Schedule 6 of the Procurement Act 2023 sets out the grounds for mandatory exclusions.
MAT	<p>Most Advantageous Tender –</p> <p>Is the Tender that the Authority considers—</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> a. Satisfies the Authority's requirements, and b. Best satisfies the Award Criteria when assessed against them
Member	An elected Member to the Fire Authority
Monitoring Officer	The statutory officer responsible for the legal governance of the Authority.
National Policy Procurement Statement (NPPS)	National procurement policy statement outlining the strategic priorities for public procurement.
Negotiation	A discussion between the Authority and a Supplier with a view to improving the content of Tenders.
Open Framework	A scheme of Frameworks where the initial Framework is open for three years or less, and the subsequent Frameworks cannot last for more than five years before it must be re-opened. The maximum overall term being eight years.
Open Procedure	This is a single stage procedure where any interested Supplier can submit a Tender; and a Supplier's suitability, capacity and capability and their Tender response are all evaluated together.
Performance Bond	A performance bond is issued to the Authority as a guarantee against the failure of the Supplier to meet the obligations of the Contract. A performance bond is usually issued by a bank or an insurance company.
Pipeline Notice	The annual notice to be published by Contracting Authorities to inform the market of the Contracts to be procured/awarded in the coming reporting period. It is only relevant for Contracting Authorities that will pay more than £100 million under relevant contracts in the coming financial year.
Preliminary Market Engagement	This can be used for the purpose of developing the Authority's requirements and approach to the planned procurement.

Presentation, Demonstration	A meeting with a Supplier where they present their proposed delivery methodology or demonstrate a specific element/product within their proposal to aid the Authority in understanding the proposed solution and how it meets the Specification.
Procurement Card	A corporate credit card used for low value purchases.
Procurement Legislation Guidance	The guidance issued by the Cabinet Office that is to be considered in the development and delivery of the procurement process. Procurement Act 2023 - Guidance documents - GOV.UK (www.gov.uk) Procurement policy notes - GOV.UK (www.gov.uk)
Procurement Thresholds	The values that determine the available routes to market.
Procurement Launch Document (PLD)	Document that outlines the key steps and requirements for initiating a procurement process.
Public Contract	This is a contract that is above the relevant threshold (for goods, services and works) and which is not an exempted contract.
Public Services (Social Value) Act 2012	The Act that places a requirement to consider the economic, environmental, and social benefits of the procurement.
Procurement Policy Notes	Documents that provide guidance on best practices for public sector procurement. They are issued by Government bodies, such as the Cabinet Office and Crown Commercial Service in the UK, to help public sector organisations and suppliers understand and comply with procurement regulations and policies.
Purchase Order	A commercial document issued by the Authority to a seller, specifying the types, quantities and agreed prices for products or services the Authority intends to purchase.
Quotation	The provision of a price to deliver the Authority's requirements (may include a method statement too), without the conduct of a formal (advertised) procurement process.
Relevant Public Sector Legislation	Including but not limited to <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Local Government Act 1988 Part II, • Local government Act 1999, • Local Government Act 2000, • Local Government (Contracts) Act 1997 • Equalities Act 2010 • TUPE 2006 • Localism Act 2011 • Small Business, Enterprise, and Employment Act 2015 • Modern Slavery Act 2015 • The Public Services (Social Value) Act 2012 • Local Government Transparency Code 2015 • The Health and Safety at Work etc. Act 1974

Agenda Item 12

Appendix A

Relevant Procurement Legislation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Public Contracts Regulations 2015 or Concession Contracts Regulations 2016 Procurement Act 2023, Procurement Regulations 2024 Provider Services Regime 2023 where the procurement relates to health care services.
Request to Participate	The submission of a response to the Conditions of Participation published with a Tender Notice where these Conditions of Participation are a discrete stage in a Competitive Flexible Procedure.
Sensitive Commercial Information	Information that constitutes a trade secret or would be likely to prejudice the commercial interests of any person if it were published or otherwise disclosed.
Site Visit	A visit to an office, or project location to aid a Supplier in understanding the Contract requirements/specification and to aid in putting in an effective and compliant Tender.
Specification	The document that sets out the Authority's specific requirements for a specific contract/project.
SMEs	Small and Medium Enterprises – fewer than 250 employees and annual turnover not exceeding approximately £50 million.
Standstill Period	<p>A period of eight working days commencing on the day that the Contract Award Notice was published on the Central Digital Platform.</p> <p>Mandatory for all Covered Procurements other than for the following exceptions, for which a Voluntary Standstill Period of eight working days may still be applied.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Direct Award Award under a Framework Award by reference to a Dynamic Market A light touch Contract
Suppliers	Economic operators, tenderers, bidders, contractors (or subcontractors), third party organisations supplying goods, services or works to the Authority.
Tender Notices	An invitation issued by the Authority to Suppliers to submit proposals or bids to provide goods or services.
Tender Record	A record of all decisions made during the life of a Covered Procurement.
Tender Rounds	Initial, intermediate, and/or final Tender stage, in a Competitive Flexible Procedure.
Treaty State Supplier	A Supplier that is entitled to the benefits of an international agreement (part of the WTO or other formal arrangement).
Utilities Contracts	A Contract for the supply of goods, services or works wholly or mainly for the purpose of a utility activity (gas, electricity, water).
Value for Money	The balance of quality and price deemed representative of the Most Advantageous Tender



Financial Regulations

February 2025

Agenda Item 12

Appendix B

1.	Introduction	3
1.1	Overview	3
1.2	The Scope of the Financial Regulations	3
1.3	The Purpose of Financial Regulations.....	3
1.4	Awareness of Financial Regulations.....	4
1.5	Non-compliance with Financial Regulations	4
1.6	Review and Amendment of the Financial Regulations	4
2.	Financial Accountability and Management	5
2.1	Overview	5
2.2	The Fire Authority and its Committees	5
2.3	Statutory Officers.....	5
2.4	Senior Leadership Team (SLT)	5
2.5	All Managers and Officers with Financial Responsibilities	6
2.6	Other financial accountabilities	6
i	Budget Virements	6
ii	Reserves	6
iii	Accounting Policies, Records and Returns.....	6
iv	Annual Statement of Accounts	6
v	Grants and Other External Contributions.....	7
vi	Pensions.....	7
vii	Disposals and Capital Receipts	7
3.	Financial Planning	7
3.1	Overview	7
3.2	Policy Framework	8
3.3	Corporate Plan and Community Risk Management Plan (CRMP).....	9
3.4	Medium Term Financial Plan and Strategic Asset Investment Framework.....	9
3.5	Budget Setting	9
i	Budget Format.....	9
ii	Guidelines	9
iii	Revenue Budget Preparation	10
iv	Capital Budget Preparation	10
3.6	Budget Monitoring and Control	10
i	Monitoring and Reporting	10

ii	Virements	11
3.7	Maintenance of General Fund Balance and Reserves	11
4.	Risk Management and Control of Resources	11
4.1	Overview	11
4.2	Risk Management.....	12
4.3	Internal Control.....	12
4.4	Audit Requirements	12
4.5	Prevention of Fraud and Corruption	13
4.6	Separation of Duties.....	13
4.7	Assets.....	13
4.8	Investments and Treasury Management	14
4.9	Staff.....	14
5.	Systems and Procedures.....	14
5.1	Overview	14
5.2	Systems.....	14
5.3	Devolved Budget arrangements	15
5.4	Procurement.....	15
5.5	Income, Expenditure and Debt Recovery	15
5.6	Payroll	15
5.7	Taxation.....	16
5.8	Stocks, stores and inventories.....	16
5.9	Leases.....	16
5.10	Information technology systems	16
6.	External Arrangements	17
6.1	Overview	17
6.2	Partnerships	17
6.3	External Funding	17
6.4	Work for Third Parties.....	18
6.5	Local Authority Companies and Community Interest Companies.....	18
6.6	Sponsorship and Advertising	18

Agenda Item 12

Appendix B

1. Introduction

1.1 Overview

Financial Regulations set out the regulatory framework within which the financial affairs of the Authority operate; they apply to all of the Authority's activities. The Regulations identify responsibilities in full but can be summarised as follows:

- Major financial decisions, including setting the annual revenue and capital budgets, must be taken by the Members of the Authority, as advised by the Chief Finance Officer.
- The Authority requires the Chief Fire Officer / Chief Executive and their staff to take day-to-day responsibility for financial management of the Service. Expenditure must be regularly monitored to ensure that it stays within approved budgets.
- The Chief Finance Officer and the Monitoring Officer have statutory responsibilities and should be consulted on significant issues or where Members or Officers have any doubt about the correctness of a possible action.
- Members, as advised by the Chief Finance Officer, Monitoring Officer and Chief Fire Officer / Chief Executive, are responsible for reviewing significant risks to the Authority and for ensuring strategies are in place to deal with them.
- Payments, including to staff, can only be made through arrangements approved by the Chief Finance Officer.
- All partnership arrangements must take account of appropriate financial and legal matters.

1.2 The Scope of the Financial Regulations

The regulations and procedures apply to all staff (including temporary staff) and Members of the Authority. They identify the financial responsibilities of Members, the Chief Fire Officer / Chief Executive, the Monitoring Officer, the Chief Finance Officer and other Officers with financial responsibility.

Members and Officers should maintain a written record of any decision-making that has been delegated to members of staff, including seconded staff. When decisions have been delegated or have been devolved to other bodies or responsible officers, references to Members or Officers in the Regulations should be read as referring to them.

1.3 The Purpose of Financial Regulations

Financial Regulations control the way the Fire Authority manages its business. They clarify responsibilities and provide a framework for decision-making. Where there are specific statutory powers and duties, the Financial Regulations seek to ensure that these are duly complied with as well as setting out best professional practices and processes for all activities and decisions of the Fire Authority, its Committees and staff.

Rather than acting as a barrier to action they should be viewed as providing the framework within which action can be taken, setting out best practice throughout the Authority and ensuring a high quality of financial information, enabling better decision making and improved service delivery.

1.4 Awareness of Financial Regulations

The Chief Fire Officer / Chief Executive is responsible for ensuring that all staff with financial responsibilities are made aware of and have access to these Regulations.

Managers are responsible for ensuring that all staff in their departments are aware of the existence and content of the Authority's Financial Regulations and other internal regulatory documents and that they comply with them.

All members and staff have a general responsibility for taking action to provide for the security of the assets under their control and for ensuring that the use of these resources is legal, is properly authorised, provides value for money and achieves best value.

The Chief Finance Officer is responsible for issuing advice and guidance to underpin the Financial Regulations that Members, Officers and others acting on behalf of the Authority are required to follow.

1.5 Non-compliance with Financial Regulations

Failure to comply with these Regulations and any accompanying financial instructions may have the following consequences:

- For staff, these Regulations supplement the code of conduct for employees, so a breach will normally be considered a disciplinary offence that will invoke disciplinary procedures (and can lead to dismissal).
- For Members, these Regulations supplement the code of conduct for Members, so a breach may be reported to the Monitoring Officer, which may lead to sanctions being imposed upon the Member.
- For the Authority, there is an overriding duty to secure value for money by conducting its business in an economic, efficient and effective manner. Failing to comply with the Regulations will have wider implications which could result in the misuse or waste of funds received from taxpayers and the Government.

These Regulations provide clarity about the financial accountabilities of everyone acting on behalf of the Authority, individually or as a whole. To conduct its business efficiently, the Authority needs to ensure that it has sound financial management policies in place and that they are strictly adhered to.

1.6 Review and Amendment of the Financial Regulations

The Chief Finance Officer is responsible for reviewing the Financial Regulations and their amendment from time to time and will submit any additions or changes necessary to the Audit and Governance Committee for approval. The Audit and Governance Committee will

Agenda Item 12

Appendix B

then recommend such amendments to the Fire Authority for adoption. The Chief Finance Officer is also responsible for reporting, where appropriate, breaches of the Financial Regulations to the Authority.

2. Financial Accountability and Management

2.1 Overview

Financial management covers all financial accountability in relation to the running of the Service, including the policy framework and budget.

2.2 The Fire Authority and its Committees

The roles of the Fire Authority and its Committees are set out in their [Terms of Reference](#)

2.3 Statutory Officers

There are certain duties for which the Authority is required to appoint 'Statutory Officers' and assign responsibilities to those individuals. Their responsibilities are set out in legislation:

- the Chief Fire Officer / Chief Executive – as set out in the Local Government and Housing Act 1989 (s4) and listed in RBFA [Scheme of Delegation](#);
- the Monitoring Officer – as set out in the Local Government and Housing Act 1989 (s5) and listed in RBFA [Scheme of Delegation](#) and
- the Chief Finance Officer – as set out in the Local Government Finance Act 1988 (s112) and listed in [RBFA Scheme of Delegation](#).

2.4 Senior Leadership Team (SLT)

Members of SLT are responsible for ensuring that Authority Members are advised of the financial implications of all proposals and that the financial implications have been agreed by the Chief Finance Officer.

It is the responsibility of SLT members to consult with the Chief Finance Officer and seek approval on any matter liable to affect the Authority's finances before any commitments are incurred.

2.5 All Managers and Officers with Financial Responsibilities

All managers are responsible for complying with the Financial Regulations within their service area and for the training of staff to enable them to comply with these Regulations.

Managers are individually responsible for the proper financial management of resources allocated to their service area through the budget making process and for the identification of income arising from activities within their operational areas. Good financial management requires managers to be responsible for the control of staff and the security, custody and management of assets including plant, equipment, buildings, materials, cash and stores. Officers who have been issued with fuel cards or procurement cards must use these in line with policy and failure to do so will be viewed as a disciplinary matter.

Managers, in consultation with the Chief Finance Officer, may delegate responsibilities to their staff. These shall be clearly documented and reviewed. The manager will be responsible for ensuring that all staff are adequately trained prior to delegation, to carry out these roles. The competence of staff in these matters should be assessed as part of the Authority's performance management framework.

2.6 Other financial accountabilities

i Budget Virements

The Chief Finance Officer is responsible for agreeing procedures for virements of expenditure between budget headings.

Directors and Heads of Service are responsible for agreeing in-year virements within delegated limits with the Chief Finance Officer or Deputy.

ii Reserves

The Chief Finance Officer is responsible for the management and reporting of the reserves position and movements in year-end balances.

iii Accounting Policies, Records and Returns

The Chief Finance Officer is responsible for selecting accounting policies and ensuring that they are applied consistently. In addition, the Chief Finance Officer shall determine the accounting procedures and records for the Authority. Accounting and other related records must be retained for periods which comply with relevant legislation.

iv Annual Statement of Accounts

The Chief Finance Officer is responsible for ensuring that the annual Statement of Accounts is prepared and certified in accordance with the Chartered Institute of Public Finance and Accountancy's *Code of Practice on Local Authority Accounting*.

Agenda Item 12

Appendix B

v Grants and Other External Contributions

The Fire Authority is responsible for agreeing additional budgets over and above the approved budget for the year. Directors have delegated responsibility for ensuring that any funding conditions are compatible with the aims and objectives of the Authority prior to acceptance of the grant. Directors have delegated responsibility for agreeing additional expenditure budgets with grant funding in consultation with the Chief Finance Officer and the Monitoring Officer. The Chief Finance Officer or Deputy must sign off all grant applications.

The Chief Finance Officer or Deputy must examine and certify where required any submission, estimate or claim for payment of a grant by a Government Department or funding from any other body. Officers responsible for the administration of such grants, funds and spending associated with them must ensure compliance with the conditions of the grant/funding.

The Chief Finance Officer or Deputy must examine and certify all financial returns to government departments or other bodies.

vi Pensions

It is the responsibility of Officers preparing to outsource or insource activities of the Fire Authority that involve the transfer of pension rights and liabilities to notify the Chief Finance Officer of any proposal prior to substantive negotiations taking place with third parties.

In consultation with the Chief Finance Officer the full cost and implication of the transfer of pension rights and liabilities must be disclosed in the financial appraisal that is prepared in relation to the outsourcing proposal.

The Chief Finance Officer must be consulted about and approve revised pension arrangements before formal agreements are made.

vii Disposals and Capital Receipts

All receipts from the sale of assets which were originally purchased from capital financing will be treated as capital receipts and must be notified to the Chief Finance Officer or Deputy. The Chief Finance Officer or Deputy must be notified of all proposed disposals of assets. All assets with a value over £3,000 must be disposed of by competitive quotations, by auction or by other means, such as land swaps, that have been approved by the Chief Finance Officer and demonstrate value for money. The three Statutory Officers must approve and oversee the process that will be used to dispose of land and buildings.

3. Financial Planning

3.1 Overview

The Authority is responsible for approving its policy framework and budget. In terms of financial planning the key elements are:

- Annual Revenue Budget
- Medium-Term Financial Plan
- Strategic Asset Investment Framework
- Efficiency and Productivity Plan
- Treasury Management Strategy and Prudential Borrowing Limits
- Reserves Strategy

3.2 Policy Framework

The policy framework comprises the following documents of the Authority:

- Corporate Plan and Community Risk Management Plan (CRMP)
- Strategic Risk Register
- Medium-Term Financial Plan
- Strategic Asset Investment Framework
- Efficiency and Productivity Plan
- Treasury Management Strategy and Prudential Borrowing Limits
- Reserves Strategy

These documents are underpinned by supplementary strategies:

- Property Strategy
- Fleet Strategy
- ICT Strategy
- Information Governance Strategy
- Equipment Strategy
- People Strategy
- Sustainability Strategy

They are also supplemented by other policies with financial implications:

- Anti-fraud, Bribery and Corruption Policy
- Whistle blowing Policy

Agenda Item 12

Appendix B

- Contract Standing Orders
- Procurement Card Policy
- Code of Conduct

In addition, there are procedure notes supporting the correct usage of the Financial System and financial training is available from the Finance and Procurement Department.

3.3 Corporate Plan and Community Risk Management Plan (CRMP)

These plans must be consistent with the Authority's Medium-Term Financial Plan and Strategic Asset Investment Framework.

3.4 Medium Term Financial Plan and Strategic Asset Investment Framework

The Chief Finance Officer is responsible for producing the Medium-Term Financial Plan and Strategic Asset Investment Framework each year in consultation with the Lead Member for Finance before being presented to the Authority for approval. Both documents should be clearly linked to the Corporate Plan and the Community Risk Management Plan and be consistent with the Treasury Management Strategy and Reserves Strategy. The Audit and Governance Committee may wish to review the assumptions underpinning the Medium-Term Financial Plan and Strategic Asset Investment Framework to provide assurance to the Fire Authority concerning the robustness of the Authority's financial plans.

3.5 Budget Setting

i Budget Format

The Chief Finance Officer will determine the general format of the Medium-Term Financial Plan and the Annual Budget. These documents should include planning assumptions, an identification of major financial risks to the Authority and proposed taxation levels (precept) as well as the nature and level of contingency funds and reserves.

The Annual Revenue Budget presented to the Fire Authority (including the use of reserves where appropriate) must balance to ensure the Authority does not commit to expenditure that it cannot fund.

The precept must be notified to the collecting authorities by the end of February in respect of the ensuing financial year.

ii Guidelines

The Chief Finance Officer will issue guidelines for the preparation of the annual Revenue Budget and Strategic Asset Investment Framework. These will take account of:

- legal requirements;
- the Community Risk Management Plan (CRMP);
- medium-term financial planning prospects;
- available resources;
- spending pressures;
- best value, efficiency savings and relevant government guidelines;
- other internal policy documents.

iii Revenue Budget Preparation

It is the responsibility of the Senior Leadership Team and other budget holders to provide relevant information to the Finance team to ensure budget estimates reflect agreed Service Plans.

iv Capital Budget Preparation

The Chief Finance Officer is responsible for setting out the Authority's capital requirements and associated costs. Provision for capital expenditure is shown in the Authority's Strategic Asset Investment Framework which is refreshed on an annual basis in consultation with the Lead Member for Strategic Assets and Sustainability for subsequent approval by the Authority. This will include advice to the Authority in setting an affordable borrowing limit and an assessment of the impact of capital expenditure on the Prudential Indicators as required by the Prudential Code (the CIPFA professional code of practice for local authorities in taking investment and borrowing decisions).

Financial provision in the Strategic Asset Investment Framework does not give authority to spend on capital projects. Provision is only converted into a capital budget once a business case has been approved by Management Committee.

3.6 Budget Monitoring and Control

i Monitoring and Reporting

It is the responsibility of Heads of Service and cost centre managers to control and monitor income and expenditure within their area. They should also take any action necessary to avoid exceeding their budget allocation. The Chief Finance Officer is responsible for providing appropriate financial tools to enable budgets to be monitored effectively.

Each month, in accordance with the budget monitoring timescales set out by the Chief Finance Officer, cost centre managers must provide the Chief Finance Officer with budget monitoring information. This will include proposed actions to address any variances against budget together with a forecast of projected outturn at the year end.

Agenda Item 12

Appendix B

The Chief Finance Officer is responsible for submitting quarterly reports to the Management Committee on the budget position for both revenue and capital expenditure. Financial performance information will also be provided to the Audit and Governance Committee as part of the Quarterly Performance Report.

ii Virements

A virement does not create additional overall budget liability. It is a transfer of budget provision either within or between budget headings and can be used as an effective tool to assist in managing budgets effectively within a cash limit.

Directors or Heads of Service and the Chief Finance Officer are responsible for agreeing in-year virements. The Chief Finance Officer or deputy and the Head of Service must sign-off all virements.

The Management Committee is required to approve a virement if:

- it involves a change in policy;
- it results in expenditure on new capital projects;
- the Chief Finance Officer requires it.

3.7 Maintenance of General Fund Balance and Reserves

It is the responsibility of the Chief Finance Officer to advise the Authority on prudent levels of reserves.

It is incumbent on the Authority to review the level of reserves each year before deciding the level of Council Tax. Reserves are maintained as a matter of prudence. They enable the Authority to provide for unexpected events and thereby protect it from overspending, should such events occur. Reserves for specific purposes may also be maintained.

The Chief Finance Officer will provide Management Committee with a year-end reserves position to show movements to and from earmarked reserves and the General Reserve.

4. Risk Management and Control of Resources

4.1 Overview

It is essential that robust, integrated systems are in place and maintained for identifying and evaluating all significant operational and corporate risks to the Authority. This should include the proactive participation of all those associated with planning and delivering services.

4.2 Risk Management

The Management Committee is responsible for approving a Corporate Risk Management Policy statement and strategy and for reviewing the effectiveness of risk management, after considering recommendations from the Audit and Governance Committee.

The Chief Fire Officer / Chief Executive is responsible for preparing the Authority's Corporate Risk Management Policy and for promoting it throughout the Authority. The Chief Fire Officer / Chief Executive is responsible for maintaining the Corporate Risk Register, which will be reviewed by the Audit and Governance Committee.

The Senior Leadership Team is responsible for identifying and reporting corporate risks of the Authority to the Management Committee and for monitoring and reviewing corporate risks on a regular basis. The Audit and Governance Committee is responsible for reviewing the Corporate Risk Management Policy and is also responsible for providing assurance on the robustness of the governance processes around risk management.

All managers are responsible for identifying and reporting to the Chief Fire Officer / Chief Executive risks in their area which need to be included on the Corporate Risk Register and for risk management within their areas of responsibility.

The Chief Finance Officer is responsible for advising the Authority on insurance matters and for ensuring that proper insurance cover exists.

4.3 Internal Control

Internal Control refers to the systems of control implemented by management to help ensure achievement of the Authority's objectives in a way that promotes economic, efficient and effective use of resources. In addition, the systems of control ensure that the Authority's assets are kept secure, and interests are protected.

The Chief Finance Officer is responsible for advising on effective systems of internal control. These arrangements must ensure compliance with all relevant statutes and regulations and other relevant statements of best practice. They should ensure that public funds are properly safeguarded and used economically, efficiently and in accordance with statute.

It is the responsibility of Directors and Heads of Service to establish sound arrangements for planning, appraising, authorising and controlling their operations in order to achieve continuous improvement, economy, efficiency and effectiveness and for achieving their financial performance targets.

4.4 Audit Requirements

The Accounts and Audit Regulations 2015 require the Authority to undertake an adequate and effective internal audit of controls. A review of the effectiveness of the system of internal audit should be conducted at least once a year and the findings considered as part of the consideration of the system of internal control, referred to above.

The Authority must also publish an approved Annual Governance Statement, prepared in accordance with proper practices, with its Statement of Accounts.

Agenda Item 12

Appendix B

The Internal Audit function is outsourced. The Internal Auditors comply with all of the relevant codes and standards.

The Internal Auditors have the authority to enter land or any premises used by the Authority at any time and have access to all Authority correspondence, systems, documents, books, property or other records related to the Authority's business. The Chief Finance Officer shall be entitled to receive an explanation to establish the correctness of any matter under examination.

The external auditor audits and certifies the Statement of Accounts and provides a value for money judgment.

The Authority may be subject to audit, inspection or investigation by external bodies who have statutory rights of access.

The Chief Finance Officer should be notified immediately of any financial irregularities or suspected irregularities, or any circumstances which may suggest the possibility of irregularities in any of the Authority's functions. Any investigation should be undertaken in accordance with the Authority's Anti-Fraud, Bribery and Corruption Policy and Whistleblowing Policy.

4.5 Prevention of Fraud and Corruption

The Chief Finance Officer is responsible for the development and maintenance of the Authority's Anti-Fraud, Bribery and Corruption Policy. The Deputy Chief Executive / Director of Support Services is responsible for the Authority's Whistleblowing policy.

Directors and Heads of Service are responsible for establishing and implementing effective controls to help prevent and/or detect incidents of fraud or corruption, for addressing key business risks, for ensuring that staff are aware of their responsibilities and that they comply with the Authority's Anti-Fraud, Bribery and Corruption Policy, and for creating an environment where all staff feel able to raise any concerns they may have.

4.6 Separation of Duties

Financial procedures must be established whenever possible to ensure separation of duties. This means different members of staff should undertake different parts of a sequence of activities in order to ensure that no one individual authorises an entire series of transactions.

4.7 Assets

Directors and Heads of Service should ensure that records and assets are properly maintained and securely held by a method approved by the Chief Finance Officer. They should also ensure that contingency plans for the security of assets and continuity of service in the event of disaster or system failure are in place.

All vehicles and any other assets (purchased individually or as a group) that have a value over £7,000 should be capitalised and entered onto the fixed asset register.

4.8 Investments and Treasury Management

The Chief Finance Officer is responsible for the arrangements for managing the Authority's cash flow, its borrowing activities and its lending activities, in accordance with policies agreed by the Authority.

The Chief Finance Officer shall undertake Treasury Management activities in accordance with the CIPFA Code of Practice on Treasury Management in the Public Services.

Before the start of each financial year the Chief Finance Officer will prepare a report on the Treasury Management Strategy for approval by the Authority. The Chief Finance Officer will also report to the Authority on the performance of the Treasury Management function.

The Chief Finance Officer will maintain the Treasury Management Policy Statement setting out the framework for Treasury Management within the Authority.

4.9 Staff

The Senior Leadership Team is responsible for controlling staffing levels by:

- advising the Authority on the budget necessary in any given year to cover estimated staffing levels;
- adjusting staffing to a level which can be funded within approved budget provision and varying the level as necessary within that budget constraint in order to meet changing operational needs;
- the proper use of agreed recruitment procedures.

5. Systems and Procedures

5.1 Overview

Sound systems and procedures are essential to an effective framework of accountability and control.

5.2 Systems

The Chief Finance Officer is responsible for the operation of the Authority's accounting systems, the form of accounts and the supporting financial records.

Any changes made by Directors and Officers to the existing financial systems or the implementation of new systems must be approved by the Chief Finance Officer prior to any new developments or changes.

Agenda Item 12

Appendix B

Directors and Heads of Service are responsible for the proper operation of financial processes in their own departments. Any changes to agreed financial procedures by Directors and Officers to meet their own specific service needs must be agreed in advance with the Chief Finance Officer.

Directors and Heads of Service should ensure that their staff receive relevant financial training that has been approved by the Chief Finance Officer.

5.3 Devolved Budget arrangements

The Chief Finance Officer will agree standards, systems and procedures for all budget-holding officers within the Service and the Chief Fire Officer / Chief Executive will ensure that all budget-holding officers are accountable to the Chief Finance Officer on all financial matters.

5.4 Procurement

Directors, Heads of Service and cost centre managers must ensure that the Authority obtains value for money from procurement and that all procurement is in compliance with the Authority's Contract Standing Orders.

5.5 Income, Expenditure and Debt Recovery

The Chief Finance Officer is responsible for the payment of all accounts.

As part of the overall control framework of accountability and control, the Chief Finance Officer is responsible for specifying procedures for ordering, making payments and for collecting income.

Directors, Heads of Service and cost centre managers must ensure that all income due to the Authority is identified and charged correctly in accordance with the Authority's current charging policy. They must also ensure that all income due to the Authority is collected in a timely manner. It must also be receipted properly and banked.

Directors and Heads of Service are responsible for ensuring compliance with procedures set out by the Chief Finance Officer on ordering, making payments and for collecting income.

The Chief Fire Officer / Chief Executive in consultation with the Chief Finance Officer has delegated authority to write off debts of up to 0.05% of the annual Authority revenue budget where there is no prospect of recovery. Debt write-offs of up to 0.1% of the budget can be authorised by the Chief Fire Officer / Chief Executive in consultation with the Chief Finance Officer and the Monitoring Officer. All write-offs must be logged and will be subject to scrutiny by both internal and external audit. Debt write-offs above these levels must be approved by Management Committee.

5.6 Payroll

The Deputy Chief Executive / Director of Support Services and Chief Finance Officer or Deputy are responsible for accurately notifying the payroll bureau of all salary payments,

including payments for overtime, allowances to members and pensions. The Chief Finance Officer is responsible for ensuring that robust controls are in place.

5.7 Taxation

The Chief Finance Officer is responsible for advising the Senior Leadership Team and officers with financial responsibilities on all taxation issues that affect the Authority in the light of guidance issued by appropriate bodies and relevant legislation.

The Chief Finance Officer is responsible for maintaining the Authority's tax records, making all tax payments, receiving tax credits and submitting tax returns by the due date as appropriate.

5.8 Stocks, stores and inventories

Inventories shall be kept by the relevant Heads of Service of:

- items of operational equipment
- stock items of non-operational equipment or clothing

The Chief Finance Officer is responsible for maintaining proper security of stock items and should aim to achieve the maximum utilisation of such assets in the provision of services.

The advice of the Chief Finance Officer or Deputy must be sought for the disposal of stock items.

5.9 Leases

Any cost centre manager seeking to put in place lease arrangements must seek the advice of the Chief Finance Officer or Deputy. All leases must comply with the Authority's Contract Regulations.

5.10 Information technology systems

Directors and Heads of Service must ensure that, where appropriate, IT and other systems are registered in compliance with data protection legislation. Directors and Heads of Service must also ensure that staff are aware of their responsibilities under any access to information legislation.

The Chief Fire Officer / Chief Executive must ensure there is a corporate approach to systems development in line with the IT and e-government strategy.

6. External Arrangements

6.1 Overview

There are and will continue to be requirements to work collaboratively to increase the efficiency of the Authority's activities. The Authority provides a distinctive leadership role for the community and brings together the contributions of the various stakeholders.

6.2 Partnerships

The Management Committee is responsible for approving partnership arrangements and joint working initiatives with other local public, private, voluntary and community sector organisations to address local needs.

The Monitoring Officer and Chief Finance Officer are responsible for promoting and maintaining the same high standards of conduct with regard to financial administration in partnerships that apply throughout the Authority. They must also consider the overall corporate governance arrangements and legal issues when contracts are being arranged with external bodies.

The Chief Finance Officer must ensure that the accounting arrangements to be adopted relating to partnerships and joint ventures are satisfactory and that the risks have been fully appraised before agreements are entered into with external bodies.

The Senior Leadership Team members are responsible for:

- ensuring that appropriate approvals are obtained before any negotiations are concluded in relation to work with external bodies;
- ensuring all partnerships entered into are evaluated and contribute to the achievement of the Authority's objectives;
- ensuring that appropriate insurance arrangements are in place;
- ensuring that such agreements and arrangements do not impact adversely upon the services provided by the Authority;
- ensuring that all arrangements comply with any prevailing partnership policy;
- ensuring that such agreements and arrangements have been properly risk-assessed and linked to the Risk Register.

6.3 External Funding

The Chief Finance Officer is responsible for ensuring that all funding notified by external bodies is received and properly recorded in the Authority's accounts.

The Chief Finance Officer must be consulted on the financial and probity implications of all projects involving funding from external sources.

In promoting or committing the Authority to any projects which will receive some external funding Directors must consult with the Chief Finance Officer, where:

- the acceptance of that new grant or contribution would result in costs being incurred prior to receipt; and/or
- the additional cost commitment exceeds the approved budget for the current or future years.

All funding received from external bodies or associated parties must be properly recorded in the Authority's accounts. Key conditions of funding and any statutory requirements must be understood and followed. Any match-funding requirements must be given due consideration prior to entering into long-term agreements and future revenue budgets must reflect those requirements.

6.4 Work for Third Parties

The Senior Leadership Team is responsible for approving the arrangements for any officer wishing to work for third parties or external bodies that derives from the position they hold in RBFRS, subject to any advice provided by the Chief Finance Officer and the Monitoring Officer. In the case of Directors working for third parties or external bodies, approval should be sought from the Chair of the Audit and Governance Committee.

6.5 Local Authority Companies and Community Interest Companies

Prior to the Authority, or any Officer on behalf of the Authority, taking an interest (e.g. membership, shareholding or directorship) in a company, advice should be sought from the Monitoring Officer and the Chief Finance Officer.

Any clauses required by the Chief Finance Officer and/or the Monitoring Officer to safeguard the Authority's position must be included in the company's constitutional documents.

6.6 Sponsorship and Advertising

Prior to entering into any sponsorship arrangements, formal approval should be sought from the Senior Leadership Team which in turn has sought advice from the Chief Finance Officer and the Monitoring Officer. This advice should also be sought for services in-kind arrangements where no or little money changes hands.

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ROYAL BERKSHIRE FIRE AUTHORITY REPORT



COMMITTEE	FIRE AUTHORITY
DATE OF MEETING	19 FEBRUARY 2025
SUBJECT	ROYAL BERKSHIRE FIRE AUTHORITY – PAY POLICY STATEMENT 2025/2026
LEAD OFFICER	LUCY GREENWAY, SENIOR HR ADVISER
LEAD MEMBER	N/A
EXEMPT INFORMATION	NONE
ACTION	APPROVE THE RBFA PAY POLICY STATEMENT 2025/2026

1. EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

- 1.1 This report is a recommendation for Fire Authority approval from Audit and Governance Committee on 30 January 2025.
- 1.2 Section 38 (1) of the Localism Act 2011 requires the Royal Berkshire Fire Authority to prepare and publish a Pay Policy Statement each financial year. This statement includes information on remuneration for all staff as defined by the Act.

2. RECOMMENDATION

That the Fire Authority:

- 2.1 Approve the Pay Policy Statement for 2025/2026 (Appendix A) for publication subject to any further recommendations considered appropriate.

3. REPORT

- 3.1 Sections 38 to 43 of the Localism Act 2011 require that relevant authorities in England prepare a Pay Policy Statement for each financial year. Pay Policy Statements must be approved by a meeting of the full Fire Authority and subsequently published.

Agenda Item 13

- 3.2 Amendments to the Pay Policy Statement for the Royal Berkshire Fire Authority (RBFA) for the forthcoming year (2025/2026) is drafted (Appendix A) taking into account guidance issued by the Department of Communities and Local Government Transparency Code 2014 and the Local Transparency Publishing Organisational Information guidance provided by the Local Government Association in 2015.
- 3.3 With the exception of standard annual updates to the budget, 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, it has only been necessary to include a small number of updates. These are detailed below.
- 3.4 Inclusion of information on the on-call allowances payable to staff conditioned to the NJC for Local Authority Fire and Rescue Services.
- 3.5 Minor update to the car provision section relating to generating a baseline lease car allowance to take into account a policy amendment.
- 3.6 Minor update to the section relating to staff uniform.

4. CONTRIBUTION TO STRATEGIC COMMITMENTS

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

5. FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

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

6. LEGAL IMPLICATIONS

- 6.1 This report is prepared to enable Royal Berkshire Fire Authority to meet its obligations under Sections 38 to 43 of the Localism Act 2011 and the Local Transparency Code 2015 and in accordance with issued Government guidance.

7. EQUALITY AND DIVERSITY IMPLICATIONS

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

8. RISK IMPLICATIONS

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

9. SUSTAINABILITY IMPLICATIONS

- 9.1 None

10. CONSISTENCY WITH DUTY TO COLLABORATE

10.1 N/A

11. PRINCIPAL CONSULTATION

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

11.1 Monitoring Officer

11.2 Head of Finance and Procurement

11.3 Chief Fire Officer

12. BACKGROUND PAPERS

12.1 Localism Act 2011

12.2 Openness and Accountability in Local Pay, Guidance under Section 40 of the Localism Act, February 2012, Department for Communities and Local Government.

12.3 Openness and Accountability in Local Pay, Guidance under Section 40 of the Localism Act, February 2013, Supplementary Guidance, Department for Communities and Local Government.

12.4 Hutton Review of Fair Pay in the Public Sector: Final Report, March 2011

12.5 Pay Policy and Practice in Local Authorities – A guide for Councillors, Local Government Association (January 2013) issued November 2013 to Local Authority Chairs

12.6 Local Government Transparency Code 2014 – Department for Communities and Local Government, October 2014.

12.7 Local Transparency Publishing Organisational Information - Local Government Association 30 November 2015

13. APPENDICES

13.1 Appendix A – Royal Berkshire Fire Authority Pay Policy Statement 2025/2026

14. CONTACT DETAILS

14.1 Lucy Greenway, Senior HR Adviser (Organisational Development),
07585 991606

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Royal Berkshire Fire Authority

Pay Policy Statement 2025/2026



Contents

»»	Introduction	4
»»	Royal Berkshire Fire Authority Pay Policy Statement 2025/2026	5
	Accountability and Decision Making	5
	Responsibility and Scale	5
	The Fire Authority's Pay Strategy - How is Pay Determined?	5
	The NJC for Local Authority Fire and Rescue Services	6
	The NJC for Local Government Services	7
	Senior Managers' Pay	8
	Benefits Other Than Pay	9
	Pensions	9
	Car Provision	10
	Mileage Rates	11
	Cycle to Work Scheme	11
	Subscriptions	11
	Uniform	12
	Employee Assistance Programme	12
	Occupational Health Support	12
	Healthcare Provision	12
	Outplacement Support	12
	Highest and Lowest Paid Employees	12
	Remuneration Packages (as at 31 October 2024)	13
	Pay Multiples	14
	Payments on Termination of Employment	14



Compensation Policy	14
Pensions Policy	14
Publication of Pay Statement	15

Introduction

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

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

The methods by which salaries of all employees are determined;

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

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

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

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

This policy statement has been approved by RBFA. It will be subject to review annually and in accordance with new or proposed legislation to ensure that, it remains relevant and effective. Information supplied to inform the Pay Policy Statement will be based on figures available at the time of writing (31 October 2024).

Royal Berkshire Fire Authority Pay Policy Statement 2025/2026

Accountability and Decision Making

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

Responsibility and Scale

For 2024/2025, RBFA was directly responsible for a budget of £45,963,000 and the employment of 671 staff. The Fire Authority provides services to a total population of just under 959,000 residents.

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

The RBFA's overall approach to determining the pay of its employees is to participate in national collective bargaining for fire-fighters and fire control staff through the National Joint Council (NJC) for Local Authority Fire and Rescue Services; for non-operational support staff through the NJC for Local Government Services and for Directors through NJC for Brigade Managers of Fire and Rescue Services. These arrangements account for a total of 481 employees covered by NJC for Local Authority Fire and Rescue Services, 186 employees covered by NJC for Local Government Services and four covered by NJC for Brigade Managers of Fire and Rescue Services.

The pay scale rates for apprentices have been reviewed and remain well in excess of the National Minimum Wage for apprentices as at 1 April 2024.

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

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

There are occasions where the job evaluation scheme and pay grading structure does not take into account market factors such as market pay rates for specialist and technical project roles, or fluctuating demand for skills in the marketplace. It is therefore sometimes necessary to pay a

supplement in addition to base salary in order to recruit and retain staff. To this end, a Role Specific Supplement Policy has been published to ensure RBFA has a fair, transparent and controlled approach to pay. Currently one individual receives a role supplement.

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

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

The NJC for Local Authority Fire and Rescue Services

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

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

For staff on Local Authority Fire and Rescue Services conditions, a four percent pay award was agreed and took effect from 1 July 2024.

As part of the 2024 pay agreement, the NJC for Local Authority Fire and Rescue Services amended the Grey Book Retained Duty System (RDS) retainer fee. From 1 January 2025 the annual retainer for an employee providing full cover (at least 120 hours per week) is 15% of annual basic pay. The annual retainer for employees providing cover for less than 120 hours per week is applied as follows:

- ✓ Up to and including 30 hours per week, 5%
- ✓ from 31 hours per week and up to and including 60 hours per week, 7.5%
- ✓ from 61 hours per week and up to and including 90 hours per week, 10%
- ✓ from 91 hours per week and up to and including 119 hours, 12.5%

Other elements of pay include:

- ✓ Allowance payments for work undertaken outside the role map
- ✓ Continuous Personal Development (CPD) payments
- ✓ Locally agreed allowance for Area Managers undertaking a Head of Service role
- ✓ An operational allowance for being available to undertake 'Gold' level command
- ✓ Station Manager allowances paid to Watch Based Station Managers
- ✓ A flexible duty allowance paid to officers undertaking duties as part of the flexible duty rota
- ✓ A one-off payment made to members of the Pension Board for attendance at each Pension Board meeting
- ✓ Training allowance for Training Centre Instructors

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

The NJC for Local Government Services

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

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

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

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

On-call allowances are paid for staff in ICT and Fleet who are required to provide cover on a rota basis as part of their terms and conditions of employment.

For staff conditioned to the NJC for Local Government Services, a pay award of £1,290 was agreed on 22 October 2024, with those on RBFRS SCPs 38 and above, receiving a 2.5 per cent pay award. This award was backdated to 1 April 2024.

Senior Managers' Pay

A new Senior Leadership Team (SLT) structure was put in place with effect from 1 December 2021. This structure retains four positions designated as Chief Fire Officer/Chief Executive (CFO/CEX), Deputy Chief Executive/Director of Corporate Services (DCEX), Deputy Chief Fire Officer/Director of Operations and Collaboration (DCFO) and Assistant Chief Fire Officer/Director of Service Delivery (ACFO). The ACFO role can be assigned as either operational or non-operational role.

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

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

CFO/ CEX	CO16	£149,203	DCFO/ DCEX	CO11	£119,994	ACFO	CO9	£110,664
	CO17	£154,118		CO12	£124,090		CO10	£113,832
	CO18	£159,045		CO13	£128,184		CO11	£119,994
	CO19	£164,728		CO14	£132,279		CO12	£124,090
	CO20	£170,262		CO15	£144,276		CO13	£128,184

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

For staff on Chief Officers of Local Authorities, the NJC for Chief Officers of Local Authorities agreed a four percent pay award effective from 1 January 2024.

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

The operational Director posts (CFO and DCFO) also receive an additional allowance for providing out of hours operational incident command cover and services based on 10% of the mid-point of the Assistant Chief Fire Officer salary range, currently £11,999 per annum.

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

Senior Managers' pay (i.e. Grade 7 to 10, Area Managers and Directors) accounts for 6.56% of the total pay bill (which includes all taxable earnings, including base salary, variable pay, allowances and lease car cash value).

Benefits Other Than Pay

Pensions

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

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

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

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

The respective contributions made by the RBFA and employees who are members of these pension schemes, from 1 April 2024 are as follows (in all cases members are auto-enrolled into the appropriate pension scheme in accordance with legislation in relation to workplace pensions):

Scheme	Employer Contributions	Employee Contribution Bands
2015 FPS (2015 Scheme)	37.6%	11% - 14.5%
LGPS	14.8*%	5.5% - 12.5%

* Employer contributions for members of the LGPS scheme are set at 14.8% of annual salary. RBFA also pays an employer annual lump sum to the pension fund of £377,000

Car Provision

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

1. Lease Cars

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

a. Non-Operational Lease Car Users

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

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

b. Operational Lease Car Users

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

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

2. Provided Cars

Following a change in taxation rules for car users, a Provided Car Scheme is available for Flexible Duty Officers (FDO), Level 4 Officers and Principal Officers as an alternative to a lease car. The Fire Authority also maintains a pool of provided vehicles for use by other members of staff requiring access to a vehicle as part of their role.

3. Car Allowance

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

Mileage Rates

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

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

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

Cycle to Work Scheme

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

Subscriptions

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

Uniform

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

Employee Assistance Programme

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

Occupational Health Support

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

Healthcare Provision

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

RBFA also provides the opportunity for staff to access the Benenden employee healthcare scheme at no direct cost to employees other than tax due on the benefit. This is currently at a cost of £12.80, for those who choose to opt into the scheme. As at 31 October 2024, there were 502 members of the scheme.

Outplacement Support

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

Highest and Lowest Paid Employees

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

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

Remuneration Packages (as at 31 October 2024)

	Basic Salary and (operational command allowance (per annum)	Total remuneration (including pension contributions and car provision)
CFO/CEX	£170,262	£238,252.17
Lowest paid employee (excluding Apprentices)	£25,819	£29,640.21
Competent Firefighter	£37,675	£43,062.53

From April 2023, the compulsory government National Living Wage for workers over 21 years of age and over is £11.44 per hour. Please note the National Living Wage is distinct from the Living Wage, which is the level of pay recommended by the Living Wage Foundation, an independent campaign group. In assessing this requirement on current pay arrangements in RBFA it is noted that the lowest paid post to which an employee would be recruited would attract an hourly rate of £12.26 (excluding apprentices on apprenticeship rates of pay).

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

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

Reviews will be required to ensure appropriate remuneration is in place to attract and retain staff as structures within the Service are examined. Consideration of the total reward available to respond to changing organisational pressures and the linkages between pay and performance and redesigned structures will continue to be explored through organisational change programmes to ensure staff are attracted to, and retained by RBFA. In accordance with our Equality Policy, pay is monitored and reviewed. An equal pay audit was completed during 2022/2023 with a further audit scheduled to take place in the latter quarters of 2024/2025. RBFA has published its Gender Pay Gap report in line with legislation, which can be viewed on the Services' website and also at gov.uk. RBFA also publishes an Ethnicity Pay Gap Report which is available on the Services' website.

Pay Multiples

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

The multiple between the median full time equivalent earnings and the CFO/CEX is 1:4.61.

Payments on Termination of Employment

Compensation Policy

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

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

Special Severance Payments

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

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

Pensions Policy

RBFA has adopted a policy of considering the re-engagement of its retired operational staff subject to certain conditions. In the event that re-engagement of a retiree takes place, their pension payments may be abated (up to 100%) to ensure that they do not earn more in retirement

than they did immediately prior to their retirement. This is outlined in the Services' Pensions and Retirement Planning Policy.

Publication of Pay Statement

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

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

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

ROYAL BERKSHIRE
FIRE AND RESCUE SERVICE

-  RoyalBerksFRS
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-  rbfrs.co.uk

ROYAL BERKSHIRE FIRE AUTHORITY REPORT



COMMITTEE	FIRE AUTHORITY
DATE OF MEETING	19 FEBRUARY 2025
SUBJECT	CRMP PRIORITY SIX EVALUATION
LEAD OFFICER	KATIE MILLS, ASSISTANT CHIEF FIRE OFFICER
LEAD MEMBER	COUNCILLOR PAUL GITTINGS
EXEMPT INFORMATION	NONE
ACTION	FOR NOTE

1. EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

1.1 The Fire Authority agreed its Community Risk Management Plan (CRMP) in April 2023. The CRMP set out six priorities for the efficient and effective management of community risk.

In September 2024, Priority Six of the CRMP was implemented. At that time, it was agreed that the implementation would be subject to a three-month evaluation to assess its impact. The evaluation seeks to understand whether Priority Six has fulfilled its intended objectives and explore any associated impact on the Service’s response model.

2. RECOMMENDATION

That the Fire Authority:

- 2.1 **NOTE** Priority Six of the Community Risk Management Plan has been implemented; and
- 2.2 **NOTE** the three-month evaluation report setting out the impact of the implementation.

3. REPORT

3.1 The Fire Authority’s CRMP identified six priorities for 2023-27, to support the efficient and effective management of risk. Priority Six states that:

Agenda Item 14

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

It also states that:

'We will continue to maintain our Response Standard of the first fire appliance arriving at the incident within 10 minutes on 75% of occasions.'

We recognise that we are entrusted with public money and have a duty to spend it wisely. In order to ensure we provide our services efficiently we will seek to ensure we deliver good value for money.'

The intention of Priority Six is to confirm the Fire Authority's commitment to maintaining the number of frontline fire appliances in Royal Berkshire. It also seeks to ensure appropriate, risk-based decisions are taken when considering how to use resources and assets most effectively and efficiently. This includes on-call response teams.

- 3.2 Improvements to the efficient management of resources, such as those associated with Priority Six are intended to enable the Service to deliver a more resilient and sustainable response model. Priority Six is intended to support investment in our response model, to help mitigate the pressures on fire appliance availability through the addition of 10 firefighter posts.
- 3.3 The objectives of Priority Six and anticipated benefits are set out in **Appendix A**, together with a full evaluation of the first three months of implementation. The evaluation will be supported by a presentation at Fire Authority.

4. CONTRIBUTION TO STRATEGIC COMMITMENTS

- 4.1 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.

5. FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

- 5.1 Priority Six is intended to support reinvestment into frontline services. The financial implications are set out in **Appendix A**.

6. LEGAL IMPLICATIONS

- 6.1 The legal duties and responsibilities of the Fire Authority are set out in **Appendix A**.

7. EQUALITY AND DIVERSITY IMPLICATIONS

- 7.1 An Equality Impact Assessment was undertaken to support the implementation of Priority Six.

8. RISK IMPLICATIONS

- 8.1 The Service must ensure it has a resilient and sustainable response model in the delivery of its statutory duties. There is a risk the Service is currently over reliant on Pre-Arranged Overtime (PAOT) in delivering its baseline response model to meet the foreseeable risk identified in the CRMP. There is increasing evidence that despite the significant increases in PAOT, this is insufficient to ensure sustainable delivery of the baseline response provision. This is explored further in **Appendix A**.
- 8.2 The impact of Priority Six in supporting the effective management of risk, particularly in relation to the Response Standard and the baseline provision of 14 fire appliances is set out in the evaluation report.
- 8.3 There has previously been opposition raised by the FBU on the implementation of Priority Six. The FBU was invited to participate in the Response Resourcing Group (RRG) which has been monitoring the implementation of Priority Six and the evaluation has been shared with the FBU. Discussions have remained active and ongoing.

9. SUSTAINABILITY IMPLICATIONS

- 9.1 None identified.

10. CONSISTENCY WITH DUTY TO COLLABORATE

- 10.1 None identified.

11. PRINCIPAL CONSULTATION

- 11.1 Corporate Plan and Community Risk Management Plan 2023-27 Consultation
- 11.2 Senior Leadership Team
- 11.3 Fire Authority April 20223 & September 2024
- 11.4 Fire Liaison Group

12. BACKGROUND PAPERS

- 12.1 Corporate Plan and Community Risk Management Plan 2023-27
- 12.2 CRMP Evidence Base
- 12.3 Fire Authority Agenda and Minutes, 27 April 2023
- 12.4 Member Update: Community Risk Management Plan Priority Six and Operational Resource Management Policy – 12 September 2024

Agenda Item 14

13. **APPENDICES**

13.1 Implementing CRMP Priority Six: Investing in Service Delivery Evaluation

14. **CONTACT DETAILS**

14.1 Katie Mills, Assistant Chief Fire Officer – millsk@rbfrs.co.uk



Implementing CRMP Priority Six: Investing in Service Delivery

February 2025



1. EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

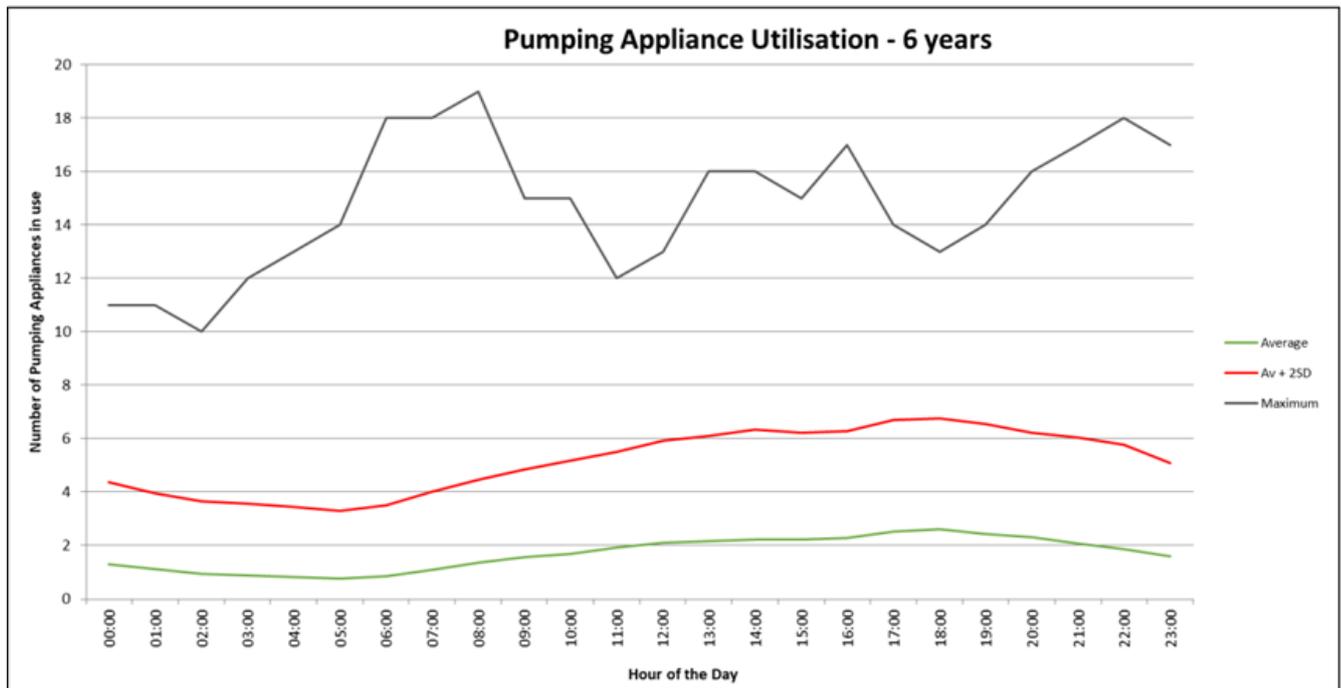
In September 2024, Priority Six of the Royal Berkshire Fire Authority's Community Risk Management Plan (CRMP), was implemented. At that time, it was agreed that the implementation would be subject to a three-month evaluation to assess its impact, which would be reported to Fire Authority in February 2025. The evaluation seeks to understand whether Priority Six has fulfilled its intended objectives and explore any associated impact on the Service's Response Model.

2. ROYAL BERKSHIRE FIRE AUTHORITY'S LEGAL DUTIES

2.1 Royal Berkshire Fire Authority (RBFA) has a number of legal duties which includes, as set out in the Fire and Rescue Act 2004, the requirement to **secure the provision of the personnel, services and equipment that efficiently meet all normal requirements**. The Fire and Rescue National Framework for England requires RBFA, through its Community Risk Management Plan, to outline the allocation of its resources to effectively manage risk, whilst ensuring efficient and effective use of its resources and providing value for money in discharging its statutory duties.

3. COMMUNITY RISK MANAGEMENT PLAN

- 3.1 RBFA consulted on its CRMP, and following consideration of the consultation feedback, was finalised and approved by the Authority in April 2023. The CRMP covers the period 2023-27.
- 3.2 The CRMP is supported by an Evidence Base which summarises the detailed risk analysis that has been used to develop our CRMP. The Evidence Base sets out that, based on an analysis of risk and the utilisation of our fire appliances (historic incidents), as long as key locations are covered, we should be able to meet our expectations of fire cover in normal operating conditions, with a minimum baseline provision of 14 fire (pumping) appliances.
- 3.3 To provide an illustration of this analysis, the chart below shows the utilisation of our pumping appliances by hour of the day over the past six years. This takes into account not just the number of incidents, but the number of appliances we needed to manage them. The chart shows the average number of appliances used at each hour of the day, the maximum (which could only relate to one incident), and a measure of 'normal range' – which tells us what number of appliances was sufficient most of the time. The chart shows clearly the difference between appliances needed at night and during the day. The chart shows that the majority of the time, we have up to seven pumping appliances in use.



3.4 Our **normal conditions** of operation are the incidents (and false alarms) we manage in our communities on a day-to-day basis and those risks which, whilst less common, are still normal and to be expected (e.g. larger incidents). We know from experience, and our risk analysis, that there will be some days when the demand for a response to incidents is significantly higher than on others. These circumstances include some large incidents that require us to deploy multiple resources to one location or because there are multiple incidents happening at the same time (known as spate conditions). Spate conditions are commonly caused by challenging weather events such as heatwaves, flooding, high winds or snow. Although these risks are normal, they are unusual, and we set specific expectations around our response in these conditions.

3.5 When demand is **beyond normal**, this means that we will need to request assistance to support our Service. These conditions are caused by particularly large incidents, or periods of spate conditions that are very unusual. We have long standing arrangements in place with neighbouring fire and rescue services to support each other during these periods, ensuring we can provide an ongoing response to incidents. These arrangements are known as reinforcement schemes, or more commonly as mutual aid. When the scale of an incident or spate conditions is so severe that it outstrips mutual aid arrangements, such as during regional or national storms, or where an incident is very large or requires specialist technical support, we can call upon national assets to support our deployment. These national resilience assets are continuously available and provide specialist capabilities, personnel and resources which enhance our ability to respond effectively to large-scale or critical incidents. Those incidents may be natural disasters, industrial accidents or terrorist attacks.



4. IMPLEMENTING PRIORITY SIX

4.1 The Fire Authority's CRMP identified six priorities for 2023-27, to support the effective management of risk. Priority Six states that:

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

It also states that:

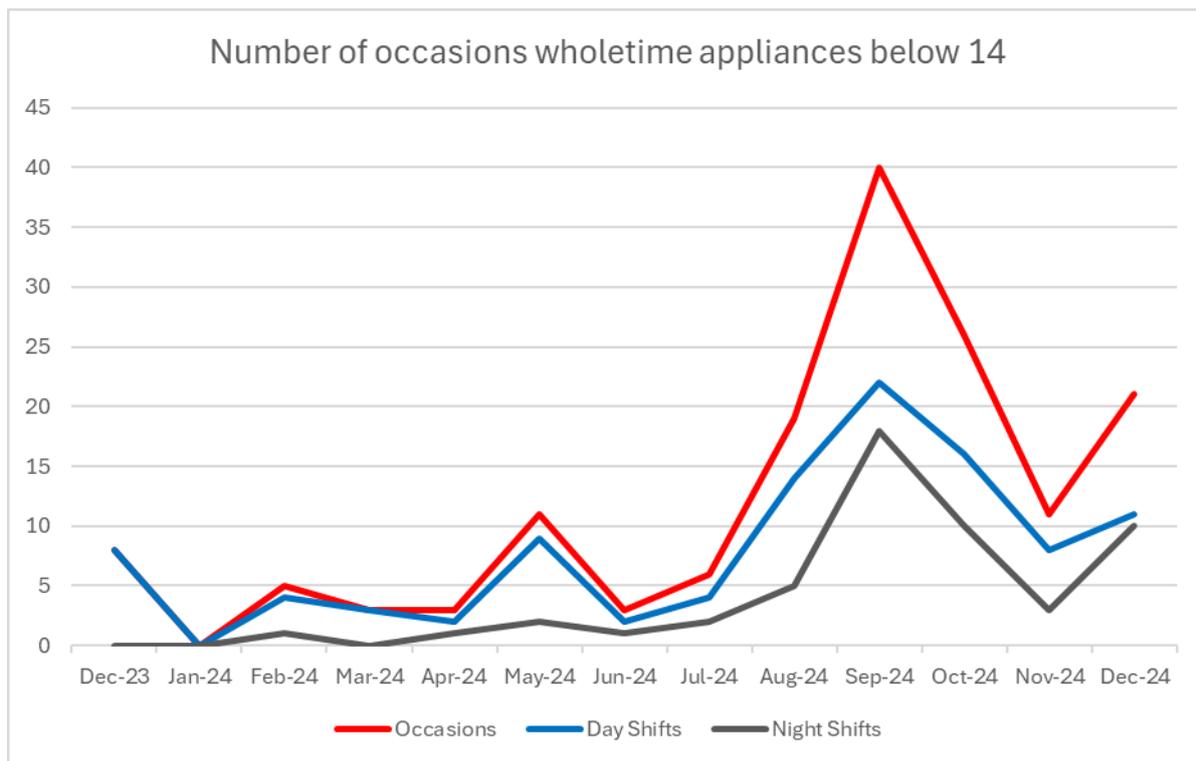
'We will continue to maintain our Response Standard of the first fire appliance arriving at the incident within 10 minutes on 75% of occasions.'

'We recognise that we are entrusted with public money and have a duty to spend it wisely. In order to ensure we provide our services efficiently we will seek to ensure we deliver good value for money.'

4.2 Prior to the current CRMP, the Service had stated its aim to maintain a minimum availability of 14 wholetime appliances with five on-call appliances providing additional cover and resilience.

4.3 The intention of Priority Six is to confirm the Fire Authority's commitment to maintaining the number of frontline fire appliances in Royal Berkshire. It also seeks to ensure appropriate, risk-based decisions are taken when considering how to use resources and assets most effectively and efficiently. This includes an improved use of our on-call response teams.

4.4 Improvements to the efficient management of resources, such as those associated with Priority Six, are intended to enable the Service to deliver a more resilient and sustainable response model. This intent recognises that the frequency at which wholetime appliances are being degraded is increasing due to a number of factors that are impacting on appliance availability. The graph below illustrates the number of occasions that we have been operating below 14 wholetime appliances in the last year. The availability of appliances will be explored further in section six.



4.5 Priority Six is intended to support investment in our response model, to help mitigate pressures on appliance availability through the addition of 10 firefighter posts.

4.6 Priority Six was consulted on as part of the CRMP public consultation. Feedback from the public consultation included 411 respondents, of which 78.8% were in overall agreement with Priority Six. Of these respondents, 116 of these were employees of the Service, with 83.6% in agreement with Priority Six.

4.7 The CRMP Evidence Base outlined the anticipated impact to the Service’s Response Standard. This identified the likely impact of utilising an on-call appliance as part of the 14 baseline to be a 1% reduction in the Service’s Response Standard performance, if applied both day and night.

4.8 The modelling methodology predicts realistic worst-case scenarios, and this information was included in the public consultation.

4.9 During the development of the CRMP, the Service’s most recent full year’s data, at the time, showed that the response standard performance in year 2021-22 was 77.2%. At night only, the response standard performance was 79%.

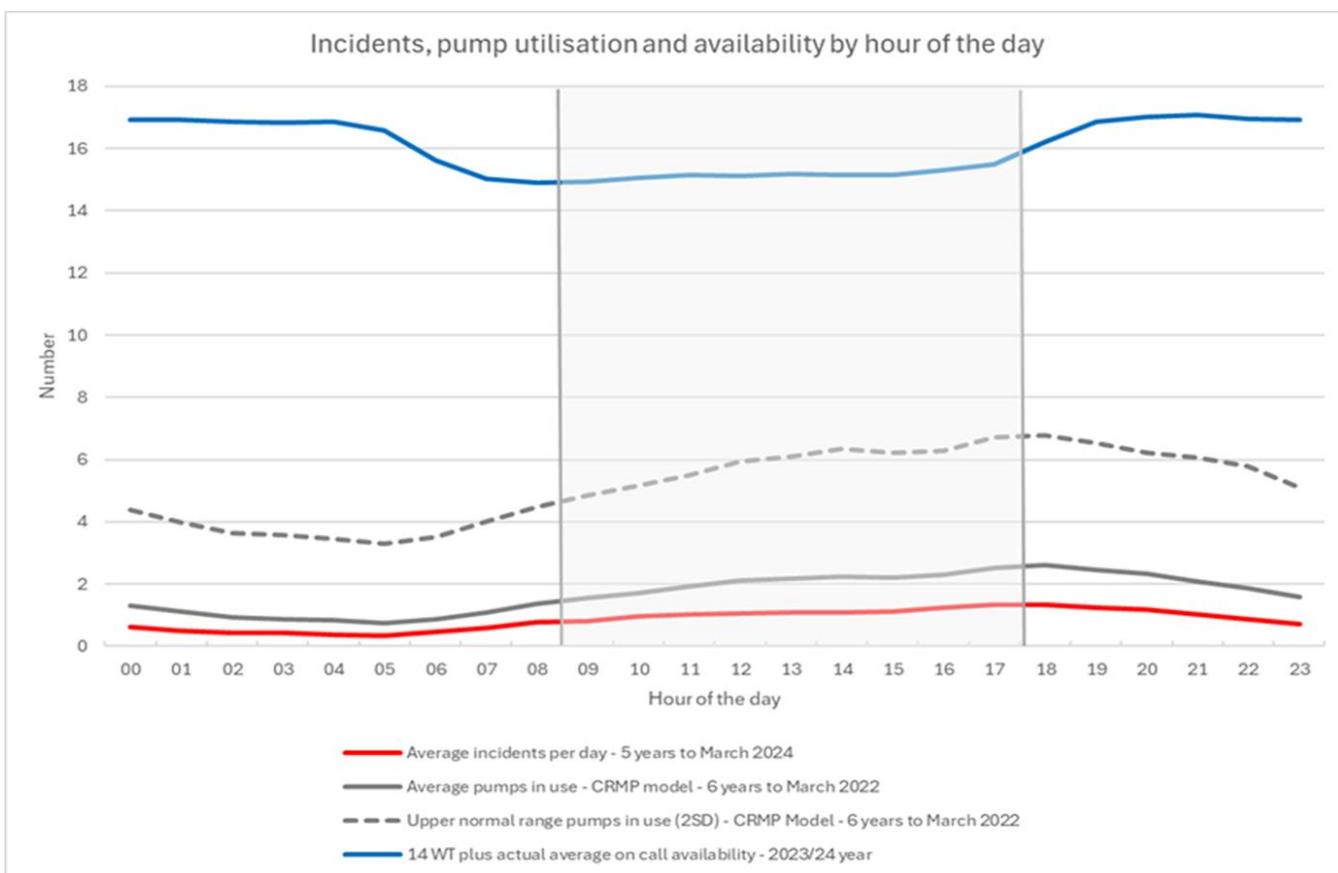
4.10 Prior to implementing Priority Six the Service revisited more recent Response Standard performance, including the most recent full year’s data of 23/24. It showed that performance for day and night was 72.3% with 75.6% at night only.

4.11 The original Priority Six assumption was that the change would apply to both day and night periods. However, following the review of more recent Response Standard



performance this has been adjusted to apply at night only. The anticipated impact to the Response Standard performance is expected to be minimal, with a **theoretical maximum of 0.6%**, suggesting the Authority’s response target of 75% would still be achieved. It should be noted that there are a wide range of factors that impact the Response Standard performance, such as volume of incidents, weather and traffic conditions etc.

4.12 Central to the delivery of Priority Six, is the Operational Resource Management Policy (ORMP). The key change to the Policy was to reduce the use of pre-arranged overtime (PAOT) on occasions when crewing numbers are insufficient to support the availability of the 14th wholetime appliance. This only applied at night and when there is no known or foreseeable increased risk profile across Berkshire. This approach recognised the increased availability of on-call units at night, which on average is more than double that of the day, and the reduced incidents per hour for the same period as demonstrated by the chart below.



4.13 The ORMP was subject to extensive consultation with representative bodies and staff, with several adjustments made to the finalised Policy in response to the feedback received from the Fire Brigades Union.

4.14 The policy change implemented to deliver Priority Six was as follows:

We will not pay pre-arranged overtime to crew above 13 wholetime appliances on occasions when the following applies:



- *We have 14 fire engines or more in Berkshire (minimum of 1 on-call)*
- *It only applies on a night shift when average incident rates per hour are lower*
- *There is no known or foreseeable increase in risk profiles – as determined by local managers*

4.15 To further safeguard against impacts to the Service's Response Standard performance, the degradation guidance within the ORMP has been strengthened to support local managers when considering which fire appliance should be made unavailable first, where sufficient wholetime crew are not available. This follows feedback received from the FBU. The addition clarifies the 'need to minimise the impact of degradation on operational performance against the Response Standard'. In practice, this would mean that the second fire appliance based at Slough would normally be the first to be made unavailable. Further, it sought to provide assurances that wholetime fire stations should not be left without an immediately available fire engine, at night, because of Priority Six.

5. ANTICIPATED BENEFITS

5.1 As a result of implementing Priority Six, there are a number of anticipated benefits. These include:

Reinvestment into frontline services

5.2 The Service has an obligation to ensure it uses public money in an appropriate way and in the best interests of the public. The Service has consistently overspent on its PAOT budget for several years, despite significant increases in budget allocation. The cost of operational PAOT has increased from £635,000 in 2017 to £1,188,000 in 2024. This expenditure peaked in 2023 at £1,503,000.

5.3 The changes to the ORMP, are anticipated to result in a reduced expenditure of circa £156,000pa, as identified in the Fire Authority's 2023-2026 Efficiency and Productivity Plan. Changes such as these enable the Fire Authority to reinvest this saving into more frontline personnel and provide a more resilient and reliable response resource model. For example, the anticipated saving is intended to part offset the costs of the additional 10 wholetime firefighter posts, introduced by the Authority this year. Following recruitment and training, the additional 10 firefighters were posted to stations in November 2024.

5.4 Whilst Priority six will help us manage our resources more effectively to maintain our baseline provision of 14 appliances, the Authority's priority, through the release of resources achieved through the reduction of PAOT, is to reinvest this into the resilience of its wholetime crewing arrangements, reducing the number of occasions when appliances are not available.

Compliance with National Conditions of Service



5.5 The scheme of conditions of service (sixth edition), also known as the 'Grey Book', is a nationally agreed document that represents the national terms and conditions of employment for uniformed employees in the Fire and Rescue Service. It is the product of joint consultation and negotiation between representatives of Fire and Rescue Authorities and recognised trade unions, such as the FBU.

5.6 The 'Grey book' clarifies conditions relating to the use of PAOT. Section 4.26 states:

'Pre-arranged overtime will not be used to make up any planned shortfall in the overall staffing levels set out in the fire and rescue authority's Integrated (Community) Risk Management Plan'

5.7 The Service has a responsibility to ensure it is compliant with these conditions, as well as safeguard individual's welfare from working excessive hours.

5.8 In line with condition 26, the Service should avoid the excessive use of PAOT to support its response model as described in our CRMP. The Service is at risk of becoming over-reliant on PAOT. The changes associated with Priority Six reduces the reliance on PAOT and is in keeping with Grey Book conditions.

Welfare of staff

5.9 The Service supports the continued use of PAOT and recognise its importance to our staff and the delivery of our response model. However, the Service has a responsibility to ensure our staff are not working excessive hours that may impact their mental and physical health. The Service monitors this information and has started to identify a growing trend of staff working excessive hours. Changes within the ORMP will reduce the number of occasions when PAOT is available for some periods, however it remains confident their will continue to be ample PAOT opportunities available for staff that wish to benefit from it.

On-call staff value and recognition

5.10 On-call staff have previously expressed that they feel undervalued or that their commitment is insufficiently recognised, as they are not considered within the 14 fire appliance baseline response model.

5.11 On-call staff will continue to be a key capability for both immediate emergency response and resilience across our response requirements.

5.12 It is anticipated that by improving the recognition and use of our on-call teams this may help attraction and retention and provide additional opportunities to develop and maintain competence.

6. KEY FINDINGS

6.1 The changes made to the ORMP were implemented on 16 September 2024. The Fire Authority requested a three-month update on the impact of implementing Priority Six. For the purposes of this report the evaluation period is 16 September – 15 December 2024.



Enacting Priority Six

- 6.2 During that period, **Priority Six was enacted on sixteen occasions**. Meaning for 16 night shifts, an on-call appliance was designated to act as the 14th appliance. The total number of night shifts during this period was ninety-one.
- 6.3 There was an additional 13 night shifts where wholetime crewing was below 14 appliances, in which Priority Six could have been enacted, but an on-call appliance was not available for the entire shift.
- 6.4 The decision was taken early in the implementation period only to enact Priority Six if one on-call appliance was available for the entire night shift. Whilst it was recognised that this would impact the number of times Priority Six could have been enacted, the decision was taken to support staff during the initial implementation phase to assist in embedding the changes to the policy. It was confirmed that this would be reviewed as part of the three-month evaluation.
- 6.5 During the evaluation period, there were a further eight shifts where more than one on-call appliance was available for an entire night shift. For example, this means that if an appliance was available from two or more of our on-call stations for part of a single night shift, but the collective availability amounted to an entire shift, a 14th appliance was always available.
- 6.6 It is worth noting that on-call availability for Quarter Three, the period in which the implementation mostly fell, was 24%. This is lower than Quarter One (34.1%) and Quarter Two (35.5%). This Quarter was particularly impacted by the retirement and sickness of key operational staff, alongside this period typically being one during which on-call leave is higher. The availability of on-call stations is particularly sensitive and the loss of availability/operational qualifications through the departure of a single individual can have a significant impact on availability. Had the availability of on-call been higher, as it has typically been in previous quarters, there may have been greater opportunity to enact Priority Six.
- 6.7 There were also a further five occasions when Priority Six was planned to be enacted but the availability of on-call staff changed. Of these five occasions, four resulted in us not being able to secure PAOT to maintain 14 appliances. However, this requires further exploration in this evaluation as it is part of a broader issue with the take up of voluntary PAOT.
- 6.8 Local managers have made decisions not to invoke Priority Six due to heightened risk, which is supported by the ORMP.
- 6.9 Useful context to the evaluation is Corporate Measure 16, which measures the percentage of shifts we had 14 or more appliances available. In Quarter Three, at night when Priority Six applies, we had 14 or more appliances on 90.2% of occasions.

Impact on Response Standard



6.10 At this stage, the Response Standard performance continues to follow that of 2024, suggesting Priority Six has not materially impacted performance. However, this will continue to be monitored closely with further analysis undertaken when the sample size is greater to ensure the validity of conclusions reached.

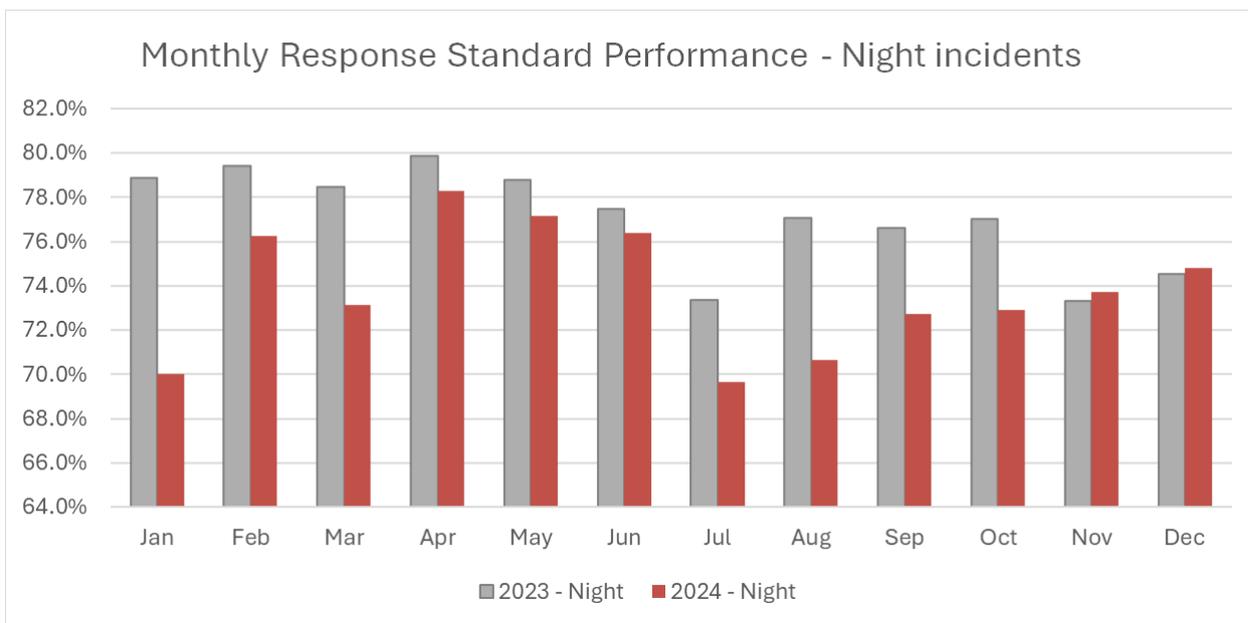
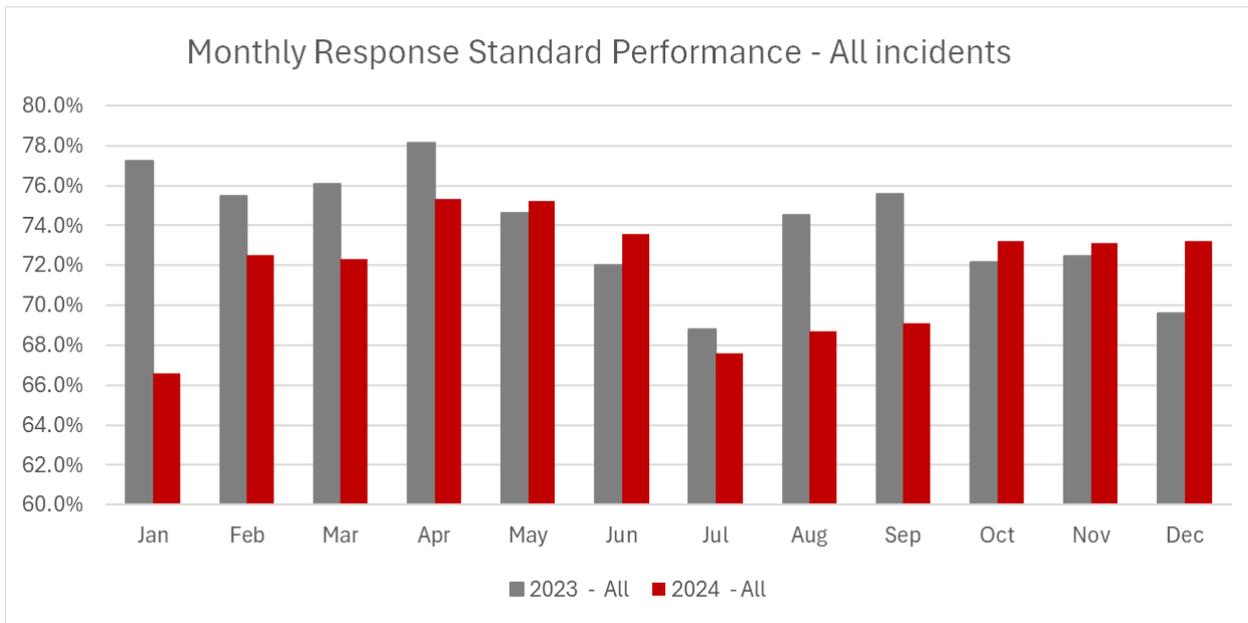
6.11 In evaluating the impact on the Response Standard, a significant degree of caution needs to be applied to the conclusions drawn from data at this stage due to the limited evaluation period.

6.12 The table below sets out the incident numbers and Response Standard performance for the evaluation period comparing 2023 to 2024.

	2023 Response Standard	2023 Incidents	2024 Response Standard	2024 Incidents
All shifts	71.7%	2088	71.9%	1820
Night shifts only	75.0%	1146	72.9%	977
Day shifts only	67.8%	942	70.8%	843

6.13 The table above shows that performance against the Response Standard during the implementation period was similar to the same period the previous year. At night, performance was around two percentage points worse in 2024 than in 2023. During the day, performance has improved, although is lower than night-time performance.

6.14 We know the Response Standard varies considerably over the course of a year and, in general, our 2024 performance has been worse than 2023. The charts below show the difference by month for all incidents, and for those on night shift. These illustrate that our performance in 2024 has been generally worse than in 2023, and that night shift performance was impacted more in the earlier part of the year, with November and December as the only months where performance at night was better than in 2023.

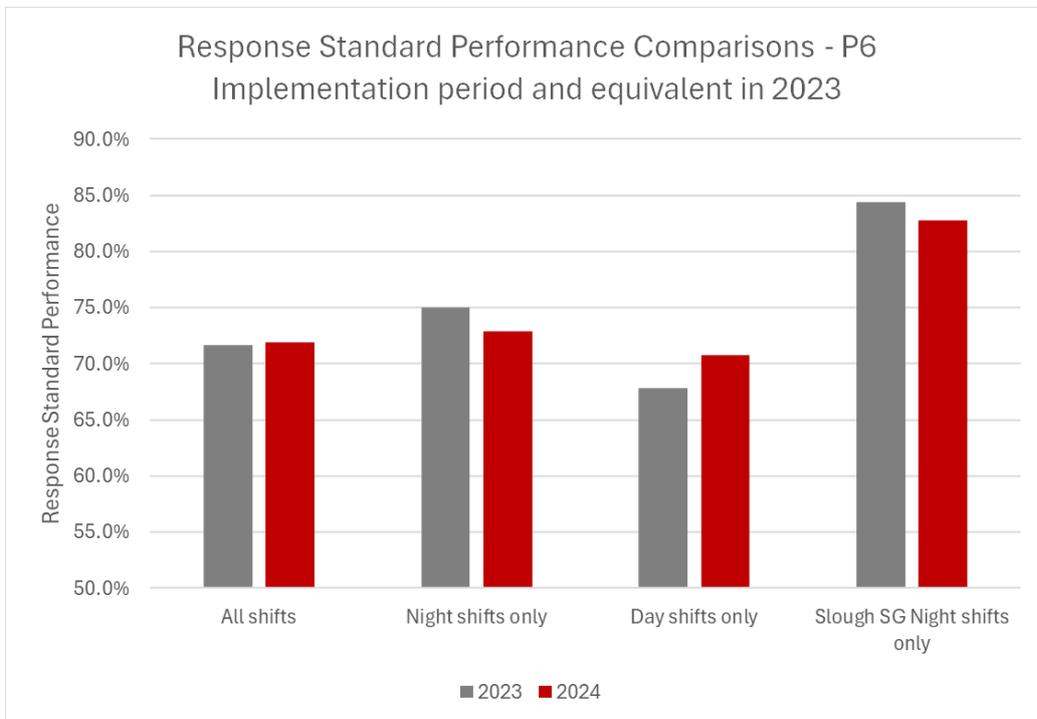
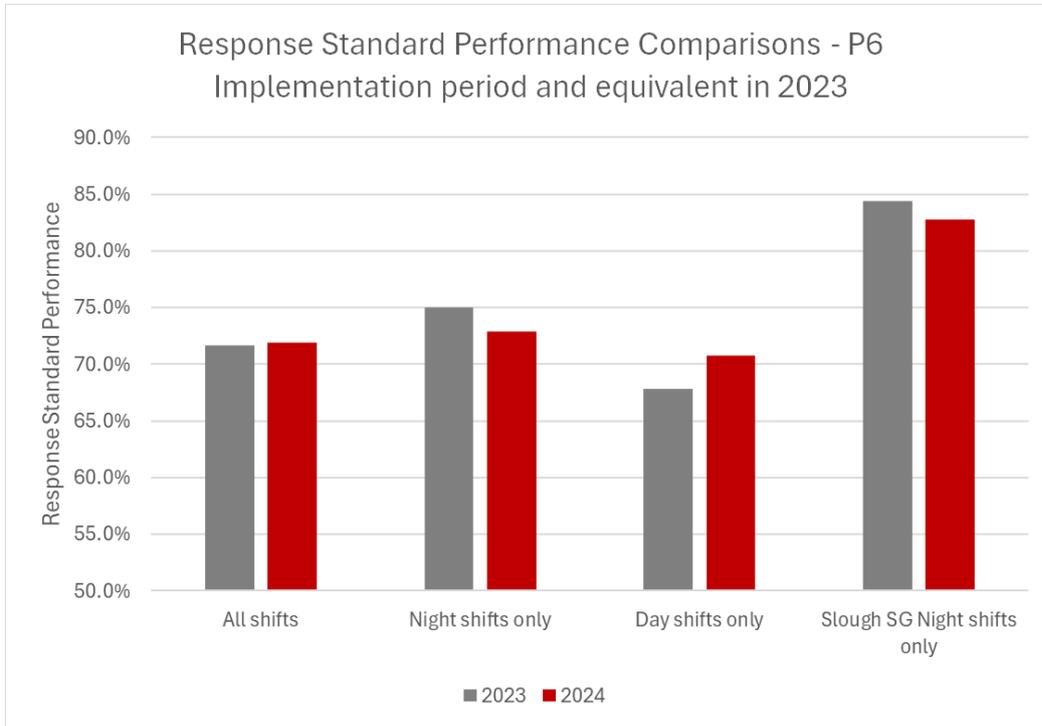


6.15 If the fall in performance at night is due or partially due to Priority Six, we would expect to see a heightened effect in the geographical areas directly impacted by the degradation. For almost all of the shifts in question, this was Slough. The table below shows the Response Standard performance in Slough at night for the implementation period, and the same period the previous year.

	2023 RS	2023 Incidents	2024 RS	2024 Incidents
Slough Station Ground Night Shifts Only	84.4%	135	82.8%	128



6.16 This shows that there is a difference between the performance at incidents on Slough station ground of 1.6 percentage points between the two years. This is a smaller difference than that seen for the county as a whole (2.1 percentage points) and suggests that the worsening performance is not due to Priority Six. The chart below shows these figures graphically.





6.17 It is also possible to compare the performance specifically on shifts where Priority Six was activated with performance on shifts where it was not activated. The table below shows the response standard on the 16 night shifts where Priority Six was implemented compared with those night shifts where it was not.

Night Shifts Only	Response Standard
Priority Six Shifts	71.6%
Non-Priority Six Shifts	73.2%

6.18 The table suggests poorer performance on Priority Six shifts, but this may be due to the very small number of shifts where Priority Six was enacted, and the wide variation we see in Response Standard performance due to a number of different factors. Response Standard performance, depending on these factors, can vary significantly between shifts.

6.19 It should also be noted that the changes to the Automatic Fire Alarm policy was implemented on 20 September 2024. This is subject to a separate evaluation and the impact of these changes on the Response Standard need to be understood in the context of the evaluation of Priority Six, particularly in relation to day versus night performance.

Reinvestment in frontline services

6.20 The potential reduction in PAOT as a result of Priority Six was estimated to be £156k. Over the three-month evaluation period, the implementation of Priority Six should have reduced our PAOT spend by **£17,667**. This includes £2,751 of PAOT that was honoured as of 16 September but would not have been required. As a result of implementing Priority Six, £673 was incurred in critical detachments which has been deducted from the total reduction.

6.21 The Reduction in PAOT equates to 38 shifts in total and is broken down into 33 Firefighter shifts and five Crew Manager shifts with all figures based on competent rates of pay. The calculation only includes the Crew Manager rate when global crewing drops to 54.

6.22 During the implementation period, there were two occasions when Priority Six was invoked, and PAOT was paid unnecessarily. If these two occasions had not occurred, an additional £1,161 reduction in PAOT would have been achieved.

6.23 To support the initial implementation, it was agreed we only enacted Priority Six if we had one on-call appliance available for an entire shift. The intention had always been to enact Priority Six as long as we had on-call cover for an entire shift, meaning it could have been made up of one or more on-call appliances. However, it was felt important to support staff through the initial stages of the change by simplifying the process. Had we implemented Priority Six as originally intended, the additional reduction in PAOT would have been **£8,640**, meaning the total reduction in PAOT spend would have been **£26,307**, meaning the potential reduction in spend over the course of a year could be in excess of £100k. Following this evaluation, it is recommended that we enact Priority Six, as long as



on-call appliances are available to cover an entire shift, meaning cover could be provided by one or more on-call stations.

- 6.24 There are a number of variables that impact on the amount of PAOT spend, and depending on those variables, it remains possible that the total anticipated reduction could be achieved. Further ongoing monitoring will be required to understand the impact of this change over the course of the next year.
- 6.25 The reduction in PAOT is being used to support the investment into the 10 additional firefighter posts. By adding these posts to the establishment, there should also be a further reduction in PAOT spend. In the Efficiency and Productivity Plan 2024/25, this was estimated to be in the region of £163k. As these posts were deployed in November 2024, it is too soon to determine the effect this will have on PAOT spend. This anticipated reduction in PAOT was to further support the part funding of the 10 additional posts.
- 6.26 In evaluating the implementation of Priority Six, we have explored options for how we could further reduce excessive PAOT spend for reinvestment into our response model. During the implementation period, there have been 14 night shifts where on-call appliances have been available for the majority of the night shift, being short of covering the shift by three hours or less.
- 6.27 Recognising that the incident rate per hour is lower during the night, a potential option is to implement Priority Six if the majority of the shift is covered by on-call. As incident rates are lower towards the end of a night shift, we have calculated the impacted this could have had if on-call was available between 6pm and 6am-8am. Based on the three-month period, the additional impact would have been as follows:

On-Call Shift Availability	No. of Occasions	Reduction in PAOT
18:00 - 8:00	3	£4,770
18:00 - 7:00	7	£9,885
18:00 - 6:00	14	£17,596

- 6.28 Whilst we have explored these options, it is not recommended these be implemented. The primary intent of Priority Six is to support the provision of 14 appliances, whilst increasing the resilience of our response model in the longer-term. To reduce the expected shift cover would not support the CRMP objectives.

Degradation of appliances

- 6.29 As part of the ORMP, guidance is provided on how to manage the appliance availability if we fall below 14 wholetime appliances. This ensures the availability of critical assets and that fire cover is maintained in key locations. The Policy sets out the order in which appliances should be degraded to ensure minimal impact of the Authority’s Response Standard and maintain fire cover. The order in which the first four appliances would be degraded, based on this, would be:



1. Slough Second Pump
2. Windsor
3. Ascot
4. Wokingham Road

6.30 The Authority's short-term priority, through its CRMP, is to ensure the response model is resilient through the maintenance of its baseline provision of 14 appliances at all times. Longer-term, through improved use and management of its resources, is to ensure the resilience of its wholetime crewing model to support the availability of all 14 wholetime appliances, mitigating the need to degrade appliances unless in exceptional circumstances.

6.31 Prior to implementation, the guidance in the ORMP was strengthened following feedback from the FBU to be explicit that the primary factor in deciding which appliance to degrade would be the Response Standard. This was to mitigate the risk of a wholetime station being left without cover as a result of Priority Six. This means it would **normally** be Slough's second pump which is unavailable if wholetime crewing is at 13 available appliances.

6.32 Midway through the implementation period, further clarification was issued to local managers to confirm that the Response Standard was the primary factor to consider when determining which appliance to degrade. However, there are instances when it was sensible to consider degrading an alternative appliance based on risk and the policy supports pragmatic decision making, whilst recognising our primary concern is speed of response and fire cover. This clarification was issued in response to feedback from our staff post implementation, particularly from those based at Slough Fire Station.

6.33 On 15 occasions, it was Slough's second pump that was degraded as a result of enacting Priority Six. There was one occasion when local managers took a risk-based decision to degrade the Windsor appliance, instead of Slough's second appliance. This was due to a Met Office Weather Warning for flooding.

6.34 Priority Six's intent is to effectively manage resources to assure the baseline provision of 14 appliances. The anticipated reduction in PAOT spend (£156k), would be utilised to part fund the addition of 10 new firefighter posts. The addition of these posts, was intended to reduce the occurrence of wholetime appliances being degraded through the uplift in station-based establishment. In the longer-term, this should limit the impact of reduced availability on Slough's second appliance, as the first appliance to be degraded, during both day and night shifts, and ensure it is consistently on the run except in exceptional circumstances.

6.35 With the addition of the 10 firefighter posts, the station-based establishment increased to 334. When the 10 additional firefighters joined stations in November 2024, this took the number of personnel substantively based on stations temporarily to 342 in that month. Throughout the course of the year the actual number of personnel substantively assigned to stations fluctuates and is monitored via our workforce planning processes to keep the number as close to our establishment as possible. This means on occasion we

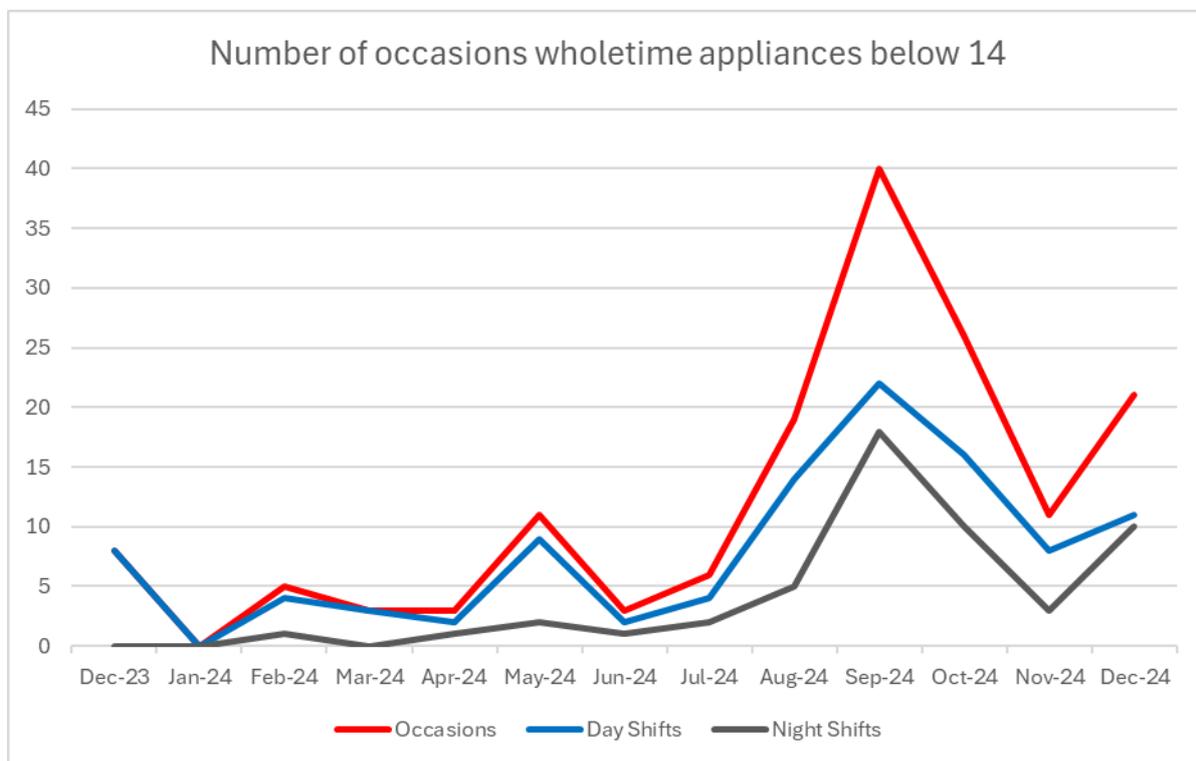


may be below or above 334 (324 prior to November 2024) depending on our recruitment cycle and leaver profile.

6.36 Our establishment number is designed to have a number of extraction factors built into it. When the original establishment number was determined several years ago, there would have been allowances made for extraction factors including leave, sickness levels and training. However, if these extraction factors fluctuate above the assumptions made in determining the optimum station-based establishment (also referred to as the Ridership Factor), this will mean that the required number of personnel to maintain 14 wholtime appliances will not be available.

6.37 The impact of these extraction factors has been changing in recent years. As an example, in Quarter Two 2018/19, the percentage of station-based working time lost to sickness was 4.96%. When compared to the same Quarter in 2024/25, it was 8.17%. We also know the development profile of our workforce has changed significantly in recent years with a higher percentage of our operational workforce in development, placing greater demands on training and exercising. The increased burden of these extractions is putting our response model under greater pressure, meaning the maintenance of wholtime appliance availability is becoming increasingly challenging.

6.38 Priority Six was intended to support investment in our response model to mitigate these pressures. Now that the 10 additional firefighter posts have been added to our establishment, it allows us to better understand the impact this has had on the resilience of our response model and whether further steps are required to manage the impact of extractions on the availability of our appliances.



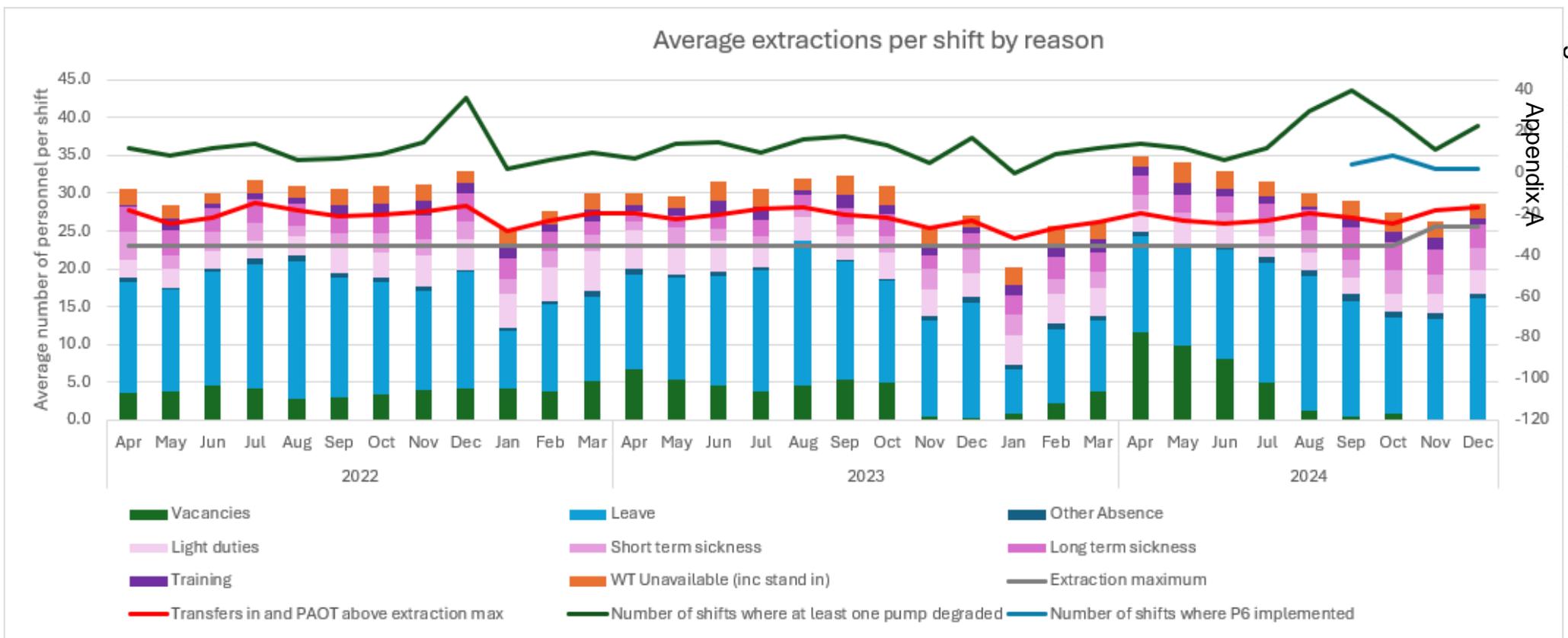


- 6.39 The graph above illustrates the increasing frequency that the number of wholetime appliances have been degraded. This was peaked in September 2024, when a number of extraction factors impacted the availability of wholetime appliances.
- 6.40 The impact of the 10 additional firefighter posts is evident in November 2024, bringing the number of occasions appliances was degraded down in that month. However, in December 2024, there 21 occasions when a wholetime appliances was unavailable. December is typically a month when we see annual leave extractions impacting on our response model to a greater degree.
- 6.41 As further context, during the evaluation period, there were 44 occasions where PAOT was not fulfilled to maintain 14 wholetime appliances. This means, PAOT was offered to our staff but we were unable to get the required voluntary uptake to maintain our required crewing levels. 31 of these occasions occurred during the day, when the likelihood of on-call appliances being available is much lower, and incidents rates per hour is higher.
- 6.42 The impact of extractions on our crewing availability is demonstrated by the graph on page 18. If our extraction factors exceed the grey line, which represents our planned crewing levels based on our establishment, these factors will impact on the availability of our wholetime appliances. The chart demonstrates the frequency in which this is happening and the increasing pressure being created by the extraction factors.
- 6.43 The red line shows the extent we are able to mitigate these pressures through the use of PAOT. Anything above the red line, is a pressure that will result in degradation of appliances.
- 6.44 There are two critical points to conclude from this data. The first is that we are overly reliant on PAOT to support our crewing arrangements, which is currently costing the Authority circa £1.4m per annum. Even after the introduction of 10 additional posts, we see an impact in December 2024, primarily as a result of leave arrangements. Secondly, the use of PAOT is not providing the resilience required to support availability. This is relevant both to the Authority's legal duty to meet the 'normal requirements' to effectively manage risk and compliance with Grey Book Terms and Conditions.
- 6.45 This demonstrates that there is still more do in ensuring the resilience of our response model and the programme established to support the delivery of CRMP Priority Three is prioritising this work from January 2025, with a detailed examination of the extraction factors to understand we can assure the availability of our appliances in the short-term.



Implementing CRMP Priority Six: Investing in Service Delivery

Agenda Item 14



Page 138



7. CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

- 7.1 Priority Six was intended to support the Authority in fulfilling its legal duties, including the requirement to secure the provision of the personnel, services and equipment that efficiently meet all normal requirements, and to outline the allocation of its resources to effectively manage risk, whilst ensuring efficient and effective use of its resources.
- 7.2 Central to this is a response model which supports the baseline availability of 14 appliances at all times to effectively manage risk within the County. The implementation of Priority Six has demonstrated the benefits of counting the on-call availability to accurately reflect the available resources, enabling more effective use of resources.
- 7.3 The 'counting' of on-call availability in its baseline provision also recognises the value the on-call duty system brings to Royal Berkshire Fire and Rescue Service and offers important recognition to our staff.
- 7.4 It is recommended that the ORMP be revised to enable on-call to act as the 14th appliance, as long as an entire night shift is covered by one or more on-call appliances in accordance with the original intent of Priority Six, and to reflect that the implementation period has allowed the change to be embedded in ways of working.
- 7.5 Arguably, the potential impact of Priority Six was somewhat limited during the evaluation period by lower than normal on-call availability. However, it is important to recognise that the on-call system is sensitive to staffing changes and requires on-going close management and given the challenges to wholetime availability, there is more work required to achieve a resilient baseline provision of 14 appliances, supporting the effective management of risk and compliance with national conditions of service.
- 7.6 To ensure the continued focus on improving availability, it is recommended that this be time-critical objective of CRMP Priority Three. CRMP Priority Three intends to:
- Develop our response model to ensure that we are providing the most effective response to incidents within Berkshire, ensuring that it is aligned to risks identified, sustainable and provides value for money.*
- 7.7 The programme to support the delivery of CRMP Priority Three commenced in January 2025, and will provide an immediate focus on improving appliance availability.
- 7.8 Priority Six intended to support the release of resources to invest in strengthening the response model on a long-term basis. The reduction in spend achieved to date, has demonstrated the ability to support this reinvestment in additional firefighter posts, and we will continue to monitor the reduction in PAOT as a result of Priority Six and the increase in establishment. Importantly, the investment in the response model has been evidenced by the deployment of 10 additional firefighters in November 2024.



7.9 Voluntary PAOT will continue to be available to our staff members in support of our response model. This evaluation demonstrates that the required level of PAOT is greater than uptake by our staff, and we need to ensure we are not over reliant on PAOT. Given the pressures on wholetime availability created by the extraction factors, both day and night, this goes beyond Priority Six and will be incorporated into the CRMP Priority Three objectives.

7.10 Importantly, there is no evidence of a material impact on the Response Standard as a result of Priority Six to date. It is recognised that a three-month evaluation provides limited data set on which to validate this finding. However, this will continue to be monitored closely through our ongoing scrutiny of the Response Standard performance and reported to Members via the quarterly Appliance Availability reports to Management Committee.

7.11 It is recommended that ORMP be reviewed based on the FAQs asked during the implementation period and clarifications issued e.g. degradation guidance, to ensure that it is fully understood by local managers. Mindful of the impact extraction factors are placing on wholetime availability, it is recommended that the importance of maintaining the baseline provision of 14 appliances is strengthened in the policy and decision-making of managers.

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ROYAL BERKSHIRE FIRE AUTHORITY REPORT



COMMITTEE	FIRE AUTHORITY
DATE OF MEETING	19 FEBRUARY 2025
SUBJECT	ENABLING REMOTE ATTENDANCE AND PROXY VOTING AT LOCAL AUTHORITY MEETINGS CONSULTATION
LEAD OFFICER	NIKKI RICHARDS, DEPUTY CHIEF EXECUTIVE
LEAD MEMBER	COUNCILLOR JEFF BROOKS, RBFA CHAIR
EXEMPT INFORMATION	NONE
ACTION	NOTE

1. EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

- 1.1 To note Royal Berkshire Fire Authority's (RBFA) response to Enabling Remote Attendance and Proxy Voting at Local Authority meetings consultation by UK Government.
- 1.2 The consultation was open to elected members, local authorities and members of the public. For transparency, attached as Appendix B is the response to the consultation Officers made on behalf of Royal Berkshire Fire and Rescue Service (RBFRS).

2. RECOMMENDATION

That Fire Authority:

- 2.1 **NOTE** RBFA's response to Enabling Remote Attendance and Proxy Voting at Local Authority meetings consultation (Appendix A).

3. REPORT

- 3.1 In October 2024, the UK Government launched a consultation on Enabling Remote Attendance and Proxy Voting at Local Authority meetings. The deadline date for this consultation was on 19 December 2024.
- 3.2 Fire Authority Members agreed at its last meeting on 13 November 2024 to establish a cross-party task and finish group of no more than 7 members to respond to the consultation, minute reference 11. The meeting also agreed delegated authority be given to the Chair, Vice-Chair and Conservative Group Leader on the final consultation response.

Agenda Item 15

- 3.3 The Chair, Councillor Jeff Brooks requested Fire Authority Members to submit their comments on the consultation to Democratic Support for the task and finish group to consider, and for Officers (Chief Fire Officer, Deputy Chief Executive and Head of Corporate Services) to also comment. Two Members submitted comments.
- 3.4 Officers met on 5 December 2024 and in reviewing the consultation document on behalf of RBFA, in line with paragraph 1.2 of this report, it was felt prudent to also submit a response on behalf of RBFRS.
- 3.5 The Task and finish group (RBFA Chair, Councillor Jeff Brooks, Vice-Chair, Councillor Paul Gittings and Conservative Group Leader, Councillor Tina McKenzie-Boyle) met on 10 December 2024. Attached as appendix A and B is the response agreed by the task and finish group and Officers submitted on 18 December 2024.

4. CONTRIBUTION TO STRATEGIC COMMITMENTS

- 4.1 Resilience: We will ensure we are resilient and work with our partners to promote and build resilience in the communities we serve.
- 4.2 Sustainability: We are committed to ensuring that we provide a financially sustainable Service and take meaningful action to help address the climate emergency.
- 4.3 People: We will support our staff by providing a safe and inclusive environment for them to thrive in, building a diverse organisation that is engaged with, and accessible to, our communities.

5. FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

- 5.1 None identified.

6. LEGAL IMPLICATIONS

- 6.1 None identified.

7. EQUALITY AND DIVERSITY IMPLICATIONS

- 7.1 None identified.

8. RISK IMPLICATIONS

- 8.1 None identified.

9. SUSTAINABILITY IMPLICATIONS

- 9.1 None identified.

10. CONSISTENCY WITH DUTY TO COLLABORATE

- 10.1 None identified.

11. PRINCIPAL CONSULTATION

- 11.1 The Chief Fire Officer was consulted during the preparation of this report.
- 11.2 The Head of Finance and Procurement was consulted during the preparation of this report.
- 11.3 The Monitoring Officer was consulted during the preparation of tis report.

12. BACKGROUND PAPERS

- 12.1 Fire Authority agenda and minute reference 11 (13 November 2024).

13. APPENDICES

- 13.1 Appendix A – Members Consultation Response.
- 13.2 Appendix B – Officers Consultation Response.

14. CONTACT DETAILS

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

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Submitted to Enabling remote attendance and proxy voting at local authority meetings
Submitted on 2024-12-18 15:57:42

Scope of this consultation

Ministerial foreword

About this consultation

Personal data

About you

1 In what capacity are you responding to this consultation?

A council body

Local authority type

Please indicate the local authority type:

Fire and Rescue Authority

If other, please specify:

The proposal for remote attendance

2 Do you agree with the broad principle of granting local authorities powers to allow remote attendance at formal meetings?

Yes

3 If you answered 'Yes' to question 2, do you think that there should be specific limitations on remote attendance?

Any formal meeting allowing remote attendance should have at least two thirds of members in physical attendance, Members should only be able to attend council meetings remotely in exceptional circumstances, such as those who are medically or physically unable to attend, or for reasons of local or national emergencies

Add any further comments:

There ought to be an expectation that members will attend meeting in person whenever possible. Major Fire Authority meetings such as Budget and the Annual meeting (AGM) should be quorate in-person. The AGM should be in person, as this enables Councillors to meet their Group Leaders, Senior Officers and to complete constitutional documentation. They would also be able to build in-person relationships, and this would be positive for new Councillors as they would be able to understand our practices and procedures. If Councillors attend remotely, cameras should always be on during the debate.

The proposal for remote attendance

4 If you are an elected member, can you anticipate that you personally may seek to attend some of your council meetings remotely?

Yes

4a If you answered 'No' to question 4, please explain your answer below:

Explain your answer:

4b If you answered 'Yes' to question 4, please indicate below which of the following options best describes your likely pattern of attending meetings remotely:

From time to time

The proposal for remote attendance

5 If you are responding to this consultation on behalf of a council as a whole, what proportion of the council's current elected members are likely to seek to attend council meetings remotely over the course of a year?

6 The government recognises that there may be cases in which it is necessary for councils to hold meetings fully remotely. Do you think there should be limitations placed on the number of fully remote meetings councils should be able to hold?

Not Answered

Add any other comments that you have:

There should be no limitations. Members should be able to attend in person if they wish to or remotely as long as constitutional requirements are maintained – for example ensuring no-one is in earshot when discussing Part II items remotely. We must accommodate everyone's needs. Fully remote meetings should NOT be mandatory.

7 Do you think there are there any necessary procedural measures that would help to ensure a remote or hybrid attendance policy is workable and efficient?

Councils should be required to publish a list of attendees joining the meeting remotely and give notice if a meeting is being held with full remote attendance, Councils should be required to ensure that standard constitutional arrangements are followed for hybrid and fully remote meetings, Councils should be required to make arrangements to ensure restricted items (where a council decision is taken in private to protect confidentiality) are managed appropriately and to require remotely attending members to join from a private location

Add any other comments that you have:

Subject to extenuating circumstances (ill-health) Councillors should have their cameras on to show their presence (visibility) for all the agenda items and to confirm they have heard the content. We feel that any Councillor attending remotely must confirm at the start of the meeting that they are attending from a private location, that they will participate in the debate and vote on all items on the agenda (including Part II items).

The proposal for remote attendance

8 Do you think legislative change to allow councillors to attend local authority meetings remotely should or should not be considered for the following reasons?

It is a positive modernising measure, It would likely increase the diversity of people willing and able to stand for election in their local area, making councils more representative of the communities they serve, Councils would be more resilient in the event of local or national emergencies which prevent in-person attendance

Add any other reasons that it should be considered:

AGM and Budget meeting should be in person, to enable all Councillors to debate and build relationships. This would be positive for new Councillors as they would be able to understand our practices and procedures.

Add any other reasons that it should be considered:

9 In your view, would allowing councillors to attend formal local authority meetings remotely according to their needs particularly benefit or disadvantage individuals with protected characteristics? For example, those with disabilities or caring responsibilities.

It would benefit members

Add any further comments you have on this question:

Hybrid meetings would work but NOT fully remote meetings (please see above answers re AGM/Budget meetings in person).

Proxy voting

10 In addition to provisions allowing for remote attendance, do you consider that it would be helpful to introduce proxy voting?

No

11 If yes, for which of the following reasons which may prohibit a member's participation in council meetings do you consider it would be appropriate?

Add any other reasons:

Care must be taken after the consideration of 2010 Equality act.

12 Are there circumstances in which you feel proxy voting would not be appropriate?

Add your comments:

Proxy voting would not be appropriate as the Councillor would not be present on the night to hear the debate. Therefore, they would not be able to make an informed unbiased decision on the item.

Agenda Item 15

Appendix A

- Meetings of major Committees / Fire Authority to be quorate in-person (Budget meeting and Annual meeting)
- Must have Camera on throughout the meeting
- List of register of attendance to include whether Member attended in-person or remotely
- Not happy with proxy voting – without considering what is said on the night
- Care must be taken after the consideration of 2010 Equality act.

13 If you think proxy voting is appropriate, are there any limitations you think should be placed upon it?

Add your comments:

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Submitted to Enabling remote attendance and proxy voting at local authority meetings
Submitted on 2024-12-18 14:23:56

Scope of this consultation

Ministerial foreword

About this consultation

Personal data

About you

1 In what capacity are you responding to this consultation?

A local government sector body

Local government sector body

Please state which organisation this is a response from:

Organisation:
Royal Berkshire Fire & Rescue Service

The proposal for remote attendance

2 Do you agree with the broad principle of granting local authorities powers to allow remote attendance at formal meetings?

Yes

3 If you answered 'Yes' to question 2, do you think that there should be specific limitations on remote attendance?

Any formal meeting allowing remote attendance should have at least two thirds of members in physical attendance, Members should only be able to attend council meetings remotely in exceptional circumstances, such as those who are medically or physically unable to attend, or for reasons of local or national emergencies, There should be no limitations placed upon councils with regard to setting arrangements for remote attendance of council meetings, up to and including full remote attendance

Add any further comments:

In line with existing governance and we feel Councillors should attend the Annual Meeting (AGM) should be quorate in-person and to enable Councillors to meet their group leaders, senior officers and to complete constitutional documentation.

The proposal for remote attendance

4 If you are an elected member, can you anticipate that you personally may seek to attend some of your council meetings remotely?

I am not an elected member

4a If you answered 'No' to question 4, please explain your answer below:

Explain your answer:

4b If you answered 'Yes' to question 4, please indicate below which of the following options best describes your likely pattern of attending meetings remotely:

Not Answered

The proposal for remote attendance

5 If you are responding to this consultation on behalf of a council as a whole, what proportion of the council's current elected members are likely to seek to attend council meetings remotely over the course of a year?

More than 50% but less than 90%

Agenda Item 15

6 The government recognises that there may be cases in which it is necessary for councils to hold meetings fully remotely. Do you think there should be limitations placed on the number of fully remote meetings councils should be able to hold?

Appendix B

Not Answered

Add any other comments that you have:

There should be no limitations. Members should be able to attend in person if they wish to or remotely as long as constitutional requirements are maintained – for example ensuring no-one is in earshot when discussing Part II items remotely. We must accommodate everyone's needs. Fully remote meetings should NOT be mandatory.

7 Do you think there are there any necessary procedural measures that would help to ensure a remote or hybrid attendance policy is workable and efficient?

Councils should be required to publish a list of attendees joining the meeting remotely and give notice if a meeting is being held with full remote attendance, Councils should be required to ensure that standard constitutional arrangements are followed for hybrid and fully remote meetings, Councils should be required to make arrangements to ensure restricted items (where a council decision is taken in private to protect confidentiality) are managed appropriately and to require remotely attending members to join from a private location

Add any other comments that you have:

Subject to extenuating circumstances (severe health issues) Members need to have cameras on to show their presence (visibility) for all agenda items and to confirm they have heard all the item. We feel that any Councillor attending remotely must confirm at the start of the meeting that they are attending from a private location, that they will participate in the debate and vote on all items on the agenda (including Part II items).

The proposal for remote attendance

8 Do you think legislative change to allow councillors to attend local authority meetings remotely should or should not be considered for the following reasons?

It is a positive modernising measure, It would likely increase the diversity of people willing and able to stand for election in their local area, making councils more representative of the communities they serve, Councils would be more resilient in the event of local or national emergencies which prevent in-person attendance

Add any other reasons that it should be considered:

AGM & Budget meetings should be in person, as this enables Councillors to build relationships, and this would be positive for new Councillors as they would be able to understand out practices and procedures.

Add any other reasons that it should be considered:

9 In your view, would allowing councillors to attend formal local authority meetings remotely according to their needs particularly benefit or disadvantage individuals with protected characteristics? For example, those with disabilities or caring responsibilities.

It would benefit members

Add any further comments you have on this question:

It would benefit members. (free text) Hybrid meetings would work but NOT fully remote meetings. We feel members should attend the AGM in person to meet their group leaders, senior officers and to complete constitutional documentation.

Proxy voting

10 In addition to provisions allowing for remote attendance, do you consider that it would be helpful to introduce proxy voting?

No

11 If yes, for which of the following reasons which may prohibit a member's participation in council meetings do you consider it would be appropriate?

Add any other reasons:

12 Are there circumstances in which you feel proxy voting would not be appropriate?

Add your comments:

No. We are not sure how this would be managed; our concern is how would we know a member's proxy vote was genuine. There are circumstances where proxy voting would not be appropriate, for example proxy voting could reduce member attendance. Often amendments are made to recommendations during a meeting, therefore we are unsure whether the proxy vote should be used on these occasions.

Agenda Item 15

13 If you think proxy voting is appropriate, are there any limitations you think should be placed upon it?

Appendix B

Add your comments:

Often amendments are made to recommendations during a meeting, therefore we are unsure whether the proxy vote should be used on these occasions. In these cases, we feel the proxy vote would be invalid.

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ITEM	DECISION BODY	NEXT REPORTING DATE	REPORTING FREQUENCY	RECOMMENDED ACTION	LEAD OFFICER	LEAD MEMBER	PART I / II
Quarterly Performance Report/Budget Monitoring	TVFCS Joint Committee	17.03.25	Bi annual	Note	AM C&P and HF&P	TVFCS Chair	Part I
TVFCS Call Contract Award	TVFCS Joint Committee	17.03.25	Ad-hoc	Note and Recommend	AM C&P	TVFCS Chair	Part I
Scoping Workshop update	TVFCS Joint Committee	17.03.25	Ad-hoc	Note and Recommend	AM C&P	TVFCSChair	Part I
Lease changes	A&GC	24.03.25	Ad-hoc	Note	HF&P	N/A	Part I
Internal Audit Report	A&GC	24.03.25	quarterly	Note	HF&P	N/A	Part I
External Audit Report	A&GC	24.03.25	quarterly	Note	HF&P	N/A	Part I
Annual Report on Members Development	A&GC	24.03.25	Annual	Note and Recommend	HCS	N/A	Part I
Annual report on Governance / Members attendance and allowances	A&GC	24.03.25	Annual	Note and Recommend	HCS	A&GC Chairman	Part I
Quarter 3 Performance Report	A&GC	24.03.25	Quarterly	Note	Data, Performance and Risk Manager	N/A	Part I
TVFCS Contingency call handling - Contract Award	Management Committee	07.04.25	Ad-hoc	Agree	AM C&P	Cllr Frewer	Part II
Efficiency and Productivity Plan update	Management Committee	07.04.25	Ad-hoc	Note	ACFO	N/A	Part I
Langley Refurbishment - Phase 2	Management Committee	07.04.25	Ad-hoc	Note	HoA	Strategic Assets and Sustainability	Part I
Public Sector Decarbonisation Scheme Uplift	Management Committee	07.04.25	Ad-hoc	Agree	HoA	N/A	Part II
Corporate Calendar 2025/26	Fire Authority	17.04.25	Annual	Agree	HCS	N/A	Part I
Lead Member and Champion Annual Reports	Fire Authority	17.04.25	Annual	Note	Lead Officers	Lead Members	Part I
Annual Plan	Fire Authority	17.04.25	Annual	Agree	HCS	N/A	Part I

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