



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

Monday, 22nd April, 2024

At

6.30 pm

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

For further information regarding this meeting, please contact:

Committee Team

0118 938 4611

E-Mail at committeeteam@rbfrs.co.uk

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



MEETING: Royal Berkshire Fire Authority Meeting

DATE AND TIME: Monday, 22nd April, 2024 at 6.30 pm

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

S U M M O N S

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

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

GRAHAM BRITTEN
Monitoring Officer

To: Members of the Royal Berkshire Fire Authority:

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

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

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AGENDA

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

Purpose:

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

- 3. Minutes of the meeting held on 15 February 2024 (Pages 7 - 18)**

Recommendation:

That the Minutes of the meeting and any recorded actions held on 15 February 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

Purpose:

To note no recommendation from committees were received.

10. Annual Plan 2024/25 (Pages 19 - 58)

Purpose:

To approve the Annual Plan 2024/25 for publication (Appendix A).

11. RBFRS Sustainability Programme: Phase 1 (Pages 59 - 70)

Purpose:

To approve capital expenditure budget of £1.77 million for delivery of the 'RBFRS Sustainability Programme Phase 1' as set out in the SAIF, and note the contents of the report.

12. 2024/25 Corporate Calendar (Pages 71 - 76)

Purpose:

To agree 2024/25 Corporate Calendar dates of Fire Authority and Committee meetings.

13. Lead Member and Champion Annual Reports (Pages 77 - 126)

Purpose:

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

- a) Budget and Income Generation Lead - Councillor Mike Smith
- b) Collaboration Lead – Councillor Simon Werner
- c) Community Risk Management Plan Lead – Councillor Paul Gittings
- d) Strategic Assets and Sustainability Lead – Councillor Rachelle Shepherd-DuBey
- e) Equality, Diversity and Inclusion Champion – Councillor Morag Malvern
- f) Community Safety Champion – Councillor Wendy Griffith
- g) Safety, Health, Fitness and Wellbeing Champion – Councillor Owen Jeffery

h) Honorary Armed Forces Champion – Councillor Rachelle Shepherd- DuBey

14. Forward Plan (*Pages 127 - 128*)

Recommendation:

That the Forward Plan be noted.

15. Minutes of the Standing Committees

Recommendation:

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

16. Date of the Next Meeting

Monday 24 June 2024, 6.30pm at RBFRS Headquarters, Newsham Court,
Pincents Kiln, Calcot, Reading RG31 7SD.

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MINUTES OF THE MEETING OF THE ROYAL BERKSHIRE FIRE AUTHORITY



Held on Thursday, 15th February, 2024 at 6.30 pm

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

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

In Attendance: Wayne Bowcock (Chief Fire Officer, CFO)
 Paul Bremble (Head of Corporate Services, HCS)
 Graham Britten (Monitoring Officer, MO)
 Paul Brooks (Head of Assets, HoA)
 Conor Byrne (Head of Finance and Procurement, HF&P)
 Lucy Greenway (Senior HR Adviser)
 Katie Mills (Assistant Chief Fire Officer, ACFO)
 Nikki Richards (Deputy Chief Executive, DchEX)
 Christian Riley (Communications and Engagement Officer)
 Fayth Rowe (Democratic Support Lead, DSL)
 Jo Watts (Communications and Engagement Lead)
 Lukasz Wrona (Head of Business and Information Systems, HBIS)

Observers: Kathryn Richardson (HMICFRS Liaison Service Lead) - *virtual*
 Jess Taylor (Public)

37. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Apologies were received from Councillors Brown, Dar, Shah and Werner.

38. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

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

Action

39. MINUTES OF THE MEETING HELD ON 8 NOVEMBER 2023

There were no recorded actions.

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

40. 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.

41. RECEIPT OF ANNOUNCEMENTS

Passing of Wayne Brown, Chief Fire Officer of West Midlands Fire and Rescue Service

It is with great sadness that we learnt of the passing of Wayne Brown, Chief Fire Officer of West Midlands Fire and Rescue Service. Wayne dedicated his life to the fire service, having served 28 years in London Fire Brigade before joining West Midlands Fire and Rescue Service in 2019.

The Service has offered its condolences to Wayne's family, friends and colleagues at West Midlands Fire and Rescue Service.

On behalf of Royal Berkshire Fire Authority, the Chair expressed his deepest condolences to Wayne's loved ones, friends and colleagues. The Fire Authority observed a minute's silence as a sign of respect.

Culture Update

At the beginning of the year, the Independent Culture Review into South Wales Fire and Rescue Service was published. Since then, the Senior Leadership Team has been reviewing the report to ensure any relevant learning is captured.

As the report is very comprehensive and detailed in nature, we want to make sure that we balance taking the appropriate time to thoroughly review it in order to identify the relevant learning for the Service.

The Senior Leadership Team (SLT) will ensure this learning is fed back into the Service and the plans that underpin Royal Berkshire Fire and Rescue Service (RBFPS) culture and values. The Chair assured Members that he would update as SLT continue to explore this report and its implications on both the Service and the sector.

Incident in Reading

Following an incident that occurred in Reading, the Chair updated Members on some of the outstanding work undertaken by several crews. On the evening of 1 February, firefighters from Caversham Road, Wokingham Road, Whitley Wood and Theale were sent to an incident on Southcote Road, Reading alongside one Officer. There they discovered a fire on the first and second floor of a block of flats.

Firefighters rescued five people using smoke hoods and placed them into the care of South-Central Ambulance Service before extinguishing the fire. The use of smoke hoods allowed crews to evacuate residents through areas of the building affected by smoke and into clear air.

The Chair congratulated the fire crews who acted decisively to ensure that this incident did not become a tragedy. The speed, efficiency and professionalism of their response was reflective of the quality of Service provided in Berkshire.

January Floods

Following a period of heavy rain at the start of January, the Service was called to respond to severe flooding caused by Storm Henk across the County. Working alongside partners, our teams dealt with a series of challenging incidents, including flooding in properties, water rescues and evacuations. Areas in West Berkshire and around Wraysbury were particularly hard hit and firefighters worked closely with Local Authorities, Berkshire Lowland Search and Rescue, and Blue Light Partners to support those worst affected.

During the flooding, Thames Valley Fire Control Service (TVFCS) also played a key role in supporting our response. Control Staff operated a triage system for calls and ensured that incidents were filtered and responded to in an effective manner.

The Chair thanked everyone who supported the response to the floods. The collective efforts of everyone involved in the response to the adverse weather highlights how our teams work well together.

Recruitment of New Wholetime Apprentices

Throughout the winter, the Service has been hard at work recruiting the next generation of firefighters in Berkshire. Earlier this month, we welcomed 18 new Wholetime Firefighter Apprentices. These Apprentices began their journey to becoming firefighters back in the summer and underwent a rigorous selection process before being chosen to join the Service.

Currently, our newest cohort of recruits are away on a training course at the Fire Service College in Gloucestershire. However, they will return to Berkshire next month to complete the final few weeks of their training, before graduating in early May.

Over the Christmas period, we also launched another wholetime recruitment drive. These applicants are now going through the selection process, and I look forward to welcoming the successful candidates in the near future.

On behalf of the Authority, the Chair thanked everyone who worked hard in supporting the recruitment and training of our newest recruits and requested Members to join him in wishing our new Apprentices the best of luck as they embark on the first steps of their new careers.

Launch of Summer Internship Scheme

The Service has recently began recruiting our next cohort of interns as part of our Summer Internship Scheme. Now in its third year, the Scheme aims to encourage young people who may not have considered a career in the Fire and Rescue Sector to explore some of the many roles available to them.

The Service is looking for five interns who are 18, live in Berkshire and from groups that are underrepresented in our Service to join the Scheme for five weeks in the summer, from Thursday, 4 July to Friday, 9 August.

Each intern will have the opportunity to gain valuable real-world work experience and transferable skills that they can take with them into their future careers or academic pursuits. During the Programme, interns will take part in learning and development workshops to enhance their skills, as well as visits to fire stations across the County.

The application window is open until Sunday, 25 February and I would like to express my best wishes to those who are applying for this year's Scheme.
Post meeting note: applications were extended to Sunday, 24 March 2024 and age range was widened to 17 -18 year olds.

Member Development Survey

23/24 Member development survey will be circulated to Members and will be held from 16 February (tomorrow) until 23 February 2024.

All Members were encouraged to complete within the above timeframe. The results from the survey will be fed back to Member Development Working Party and Audit and Governance Committee.

42. ISSUES ARISING FROM THE AUDIT AND GOVERNANCE COMMITTEE

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

43. QUESTIONS FROM MEMBERS UNDER STANDING ORDER 30

There were no questions from Members under Standing Order 30.

44. NOTICES OF MOTION UNDER STANDING ORDER 44

There were no notices of Motion under Standing Order 44.

45. RECOMMENDATIONS OF COMMITTEES

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

46. BUDGET 2024/25

Councillor Mike Smith, Budget and Income Generation Lead reported he had met with Budget Working Party (BWP) and Conor Byrne, Head of Finance and Procurement over a period of five months. He stated specific elements of the budget was the planning of the Authority's viable financial future to provide prudent investment, sustainable growth and value for money. He confirmed he fully supported the recommendations of the report and highlighted the following:

- 2.99% Council Tax increase from last year – providing value for money per household at £81.31 per household.
- Balanced budget of just under £46 million which was an 5.5% increase (excluding pension adjustments).
- Budget pressures
- Savings and efficiencies
- 10 additional Firefighters
- Strategic Asset Investment Framework (SAIF) – new Training Centre, refurbishment to Langley and Slough Fire Stations, mostly funded by the Dee Road sale.
- Limited borrowing under the Authority's self-imposed limit of 2.5% of finance costs to net revenue stream.

Starting with the Medium-Term Financial Plan (MTFP), Conor Byrne; Head of Finance and Procurement (HF&P) reported the recommended increase to council tax precept for 2024/25 by the maximum permissible by government was 2.99%. He stated the increase equated to £2.36 per annum for a Band D household, which was below the current rate of inflation. It was assumed the precept will increase to 1.99% in subsequent years.

The Authority's total funding was £45.964 million which was an increase from the draft Budget total given to Management Committee on 6 February 2024. The income from Council Tax was £29.891 million.

Conor Byrne reported the funding projection of Revenue Support Grant will increase year on year and the Funding Guarantee was based on a minimum increase 4% equating to £770K.

Moving on to efficiencies and savings, Conor Byrne reported the Service had identified £565K worth of savings in 2024/25. In referring to the Authority's budget pressures he reported $\frac{3}{4}$ of the revenue budget account for the Green and Grey Book pay awards, and pay awards are assumed to be 3.75% in 2024/25 (above the precept of 2.99%).

In relation to station budget pressures, the recruitment of additional 10 firefighters should reduce overtime costs. Staff turnover had increased over the past year, leading to increased training and recruitment costs.

Over the past decade employee contribution costs of firefighter pension schemes had increased. Employer contributions for firefighters pension scheme will increase to 37.6% up from 28.8% of salary at an additional cost of £1.3 million in 2024/25. The government has confirmed they will provide grant funding in 2024/25 to cover this additional cost but has provided no guarantee of funding thereafter.

Additional revenue funding of capital had been added to the budget for 2024/25 to fund shorter life assets. The ratio of financing costs to the revenue budget remains affordable.

In answer to Councillor Jeffery's question about the Firelink Grant reduction, Conor Byrne reported the government made a decision to reduce this grant by 20% per annum over a five-year period.

The Chair thanked Conor Byrne, Councillor Smith and BWP. He stated he was keen to support additional 10 firefighters as it would provide increased resilience and flexibility to the Service. He acknowledged the pressure on losing staff to other FRSs.

In reference to pages 31 and 32 of the Budget report, Councillor Helliard-Symons commented on the extra firefighters, ICT upgrades and safe and well visits. She urged all Members to ensure their Councils notified the Service of any vulnerable members of their community.

The Vice-Chair thanked Conor Byrne and BWP for compiling this budget, as it represented good value for money. He referenced recent incidences in Reading and commended the work of the crews and urged Members to lobby government on Settlement Funding to provide a level of certainty.

On introducing the Efficiency & Productivity Plan, Councillor Smith reported as part of the Authority's income generation, £30K will be received from renting service houses, reduction in prevention stock items will save £49K due to changes in what we do, (as safe and well visits were targeted to those who

deem high risk). There are also £142K worth of savings on contractual expenditure on contracts and on improved ways of working, all of which total £565K.

Conor Byrne reported focus will be made on productivity of operational staff, for example, how the Service respond to Automatic Fire Alarms (AFA's), the deployment of new technologies and streamlining processes.

Introducing the Strategic Asset Management Framework (SAIF), Councillor Smith listed the staff morale boost from the Authority's investment on equipment and buildings. Namely, the new training centre, upgrade to Slough and Langley fire stations, invest to save products and efficiency gains from ICT.

Conor Byrne reported the SAIF sets out the Authority's capital projects over a 10-year period which will improve the fabric and reduce the carbon footprint of the Service's buildings.

The Chair reflected on how the estate had changed over the years, in particular newer stations like Theale, Hungerford and Crowthorne and added soon the Service will receive a fit for purpose training centre.

In discussing the Treasury and Investment Strategy, Councillor Smith stated the need to ensure the security of the sum invested and investment returns within an ethical framework.

Councillor Smith reported approximately £10 million will be spent in 2024/25 on capital expenditure, 70% of which will be funded from the sale of the Dee Road fire station site. The rest will come from revenue with very little borrowing. Financing costs to net revenue streams were under what the Authority had set.

In response to a question from the Chair, Conor Byrne confirmed the Service anticipates an interest rate reduction over the next year. In referring to page 72, the table showed the anticipated capital expenditure over the next 4 years and page 73 showed the historic debt. The graph on page 74 showed the liability benchmark of the future borrowing needs will increase from 2025/26. Page 75 showed the investments falling by nearly half in 2024/25. Page 76 detailed the estimates of the increase in debts from £8.9 million in 2022/23 (actual) to £13.9 million in 2027/28 (estimate) over the next 4 years. The capital programme over the next 4 years was ambitious but affordable.

Councillor Smith presented the Reserves policy. He stated at the end of 2022/23 the Service had a revenue deficit of £733K funded from the Budget Contingency Reserve. This reserve was replenished in 2023/24 by £573,000 from the Revenue Account. As of 31st March 2024, it had been predicted the Authority will have £15 million in all reserves but will halve over the coming year.

Conor Byrne reported Section 25, Local Government Act 2003 requires reserves to be maintained and adequate for the medium-term.

In response to the Vice-Chair, Conor Byrne confirmed 45-week maternity pay had been incorporated into the budget.

In discussing Fees and Charges, Councillor Smith reported there was a 4% uplift from last year due to inflation.

In terms of Thames Valley Fire Control Service (TVFCS) budget, Conor Byrne reported it was presented to the TVFCS Joint Committee and stated the revenue budget will increase by 8.9% in 2024/25, due in part to prior-year pay awards and employee contributions. The proposed capital expenditure was budgeted at £665K. Lastly, Thames Valley FRS partners contribute £50,000 each into the renewal fund, required to pay for system renewals.

The Chair moved recommendations 2.1 – 2.8 and it was seconded by Councillor Smith. On being put to the vote.

It was unanimously **RESOLVED** that:

- 1) An increase in the precept of 2.99% for 2024/25 by adopting the formal resolution in Appendix A be approved;
- 2) The Medium-Term Financial Plan in Appendix B be approved;
- 3) The Efficiency and Productivity Plan in Appendix C be approved;
- 4) The Strategic Asset Investment Framework (SAIF) in Appendix D be approved;
- 5) The Prudential Indicators, Treasury Strategy and Investment Strategy in Appendix E be approved;
- 6) The Reserves Policy in Appendix F be approved;
- 7) The fees and charges for 2024/25 as set out in Appendix G be approved;
- 8) The TVFCS revenue and capital budgets for 2024/25 as set out in Appendix H, as well as the Authority's 2024/25 contribution of £50,000 to the TVFCS Renewals Fund be approved.

47. AUTOMATIC FIRE ALARM CONSULTATION

Paul Bremble outlined the report was seeking Members approval to commence a 10-week public consultation on unwanted fire signals. He added, the reduction of unwanted fire signals was a national drive from the Home Office, as well as His Majesty's Inspectorate of Constabulary and Fire and Rescue Service (HMICFRS) on their recent inspection of Royal Berkshire Fire and Rescue Service (RBFRS) had also identified they wanted the Service to reduce this type of incident to increase productivity.

Priority 5 of the Community Risk Management Plan (CRMP) was centred around how the Service intends to develop our Fire Protection service to support the

resilience of businesses. Data had shown 45% of callouts were made to this incident type and 99.3% of these calls no action was required.

Officers had researched 20 FRSs policies on their attendance at unwanted fire signals and found their responses varied. Paul Bremble reported Automatic False Alarms (AFAs) cause disruption to crews training, safe and well visits and planned tasks, all which have to be rescheduled impacting other work. He reported prevention activities would increase on the reduction of AFAs.

The consultation include three options, option 3 would bring the Service in-line with the national average of 39%. There was no proposal to change callouts to domestic / residential properties.

As requested, additional information had been included into the consultation document following feedback from Management Committee on 6 February 2024. In response to a comment from the Chair, Paul Bremble confirmed all three options in the consultation document would be considered.

Councillor Helliard-Symons requested for the Service's preferred option to be removed from the paper. She then commented on the devastating consequences on school fires and suggested the following wording is included to the consultation document '*and to schools between 6pm and 8am*'. The proposal was seconded by Councillor McKenzie-Boyle.

The Chair stated he felt the above wording from Councillor Helliard-Symons could have been suggested prior to the Fire Authority meeting, however he will put her proposals to the Fire Authority for vote. The Vice-Chair reported Councillor Helliard-Symons comments were addressed in the consultation document following Management Committee and felt the specific comments made could also reflect comments made by consultation respondents. He suggested for the wording to be included when the Fire Authority examine the consultation results and for it to be voted on then.

Councillor Stedmond expressed he was concerned the public may not be aware of the proposals that the Service will no longer attend school AFAs and stated, several schools do not have sprinkler systems installed. A discussion was held on potential arson attacks in schools as well as the absence of sprinkler systems.

Councillor Smith asked how many AFA callouts to schools did the Service receive. He clarified to Members that the proposed consultation was about reducing AFA calls and added, the Service would always attend callouts to fires.

Councillor Reynolds requested for the consultation to be sent specifically to schools for their response.

Wayne Bowcock, Chief Fire Officer (CFO) thanked Members for their comments and stated in relation to the installation of sprinkler systems in schools he reported parents, teachers, pupils/ students would feel more confident knowing

HCS

their buildings had this resource and requested Members to lobby their respective Local Authority departments to install sprinklers in every school.

Members concurred with the statement and although they acknowledged continual budget pressures in schools, they reported they would lobby for sprinklers in all schools, not just new builds.

On putting Councillor Helliar-Symons proposed wording to the consultation to the vote, 4 voted for, and 11 against.

Unanimously **RESOLVED** that:

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

48. PAY POLICY STATEMENT

Lucy Greenway, Senior HR Adviser, stated the Service are required to prepare a Pay Policy Statement each financial year and that the Statement included information on remuneration of all staff. The data was recorded as at 31 October 2023.

She stated several amendments were made to the 2024/25 Pay Policy Statement including pensions legislation with legacy Firefighter Pensions Schemes, a second options exercise for retained Firefighters, employer contribution rates for the Firefighters Pension Scheme, car users in line with changes to the Car User Scheme, enhanced mileage rates for casual, essential and lease car users and finally incidental mileage claims for Flexible Duty Officers, Level 4 Officers and those on a continuous duty rota.

The Chair commented on a typo on page 49. Lucy Greenway reported it should read 2023/24 and it would be amended prior to publication.

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

Unanimously **RESOLVED** that the draft Pay Policy Statement for 2024/25 be approved.

49. CODE OF CONDUCT CONSULTATION

Graham Britten, Monitoring Officer (MO) stated the Authority's Code of Conduct Consultation relates to the publication of a report by the Committee on Standards in Public Life (CSPL) in January 2019 into Local Government Ethical Standards.

The CSPL report made several recommendations, some aimed at central government, others at local government. The Democratic Support Lead undertook a benchmarking exercise of the Authority's ethical governance framework against the CSPL's report's recommendations. The Authority adopted the CSPL recommendations to adopt the Local Government Association (LGA) Model Code of Conduct for Members; and that the code be reviewed annually and where possible consider the views of the public and other stakeholders.

The report sets out the results of the Authority's second annual consultation, however little feedback/ responses were received. The recommendation from Audit and Governance Committee was seeking the Authority to note consultation feedback and approve that the consultation be held every three years.

Unanimously **RESOLVED** that:

- 1) The outcome of the second annual consultation on the RBFA Member Code of Conduct be noted; and
- 2) It be approved the RBFA Member Code of Conduct Consultation be held every three years, subject to any proposed updates for which the draft Code of Conduct document will be consulted upon sooner.

50. FORWARD PLAN

RESOLVED that the Forward Plan be noted.

51. MINUTES OF THE STANDING COMMITTEES

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

52. DATE OF THE NEXT MEETING

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

(The meeting concluded at 8:05pm)

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ROYAL BERKSHIRE FIRE AUTHORITY REPORT



COMMITTEE	FIRE AUTHORITY
DATE OF MEETING	22 APRIL 2024
SUBJECT	ANNUAL PLAN 2024/25
LEAD OFFICER	PAUL BREMBLE; HEAD OF CORPORATE SERVICES
LEAD MEMBER	N/A
EXEMPT INFORMATION	NONE
ACTION	FOR DECISION

1. EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

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

2. RECOMMENDATION

2.1 **APPROVE** the Annual Plan 2024/25 for publication (Appendix A)

3. REPORT

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

3.2 The Strategic Commitments were reviewed at the January members workshop and updated to align with feedback from the Authority.

Agenda Item 10

- 3.3 The Plan will be available on the intranet to provide a single access point for all staff to assist with planning and decision-making. In addition, it will be published on the RBFRS website for the public.
- 3.4 The Plan is linked to our service planning and the contents are reflected in our performance management and quarterly reporting processes.
- 3.5 The component parts of the Annual Plan are:
 - 3.5.1 Delivery of the Annual Objectives
 - 3.5.2 Strategic Commitments
 - 3.5.3 Priority Programmes
 - 3.5.4 People Strategy Objectives
 - 3.5.5 Risk and Assurance
 - 3.5.6 Corporate Measures
- 3.6 The Plan includes nine Strategic Commitments for the 2024-25 year. The first six of these reflect the Strategic Commitments agreed in the Corporate Plan and CRMP. There are a further three commitments added to include areas relating to how we deliver our service.
- 3.7 The Annual Plan proposes some changes to our Corporate Measure targets this year. These changes are the result of our maturing understanding of risk in our communities and evaluation of our current practice.
- 3.8 These changes are summarised in Annual Plan 24-25 Measures Supporting Paper (Appendix B).

4. CONTRIBUTION TO STRATEGIC COMMITMENTS

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

- 4.7 People: We will support our staff by providing a safe and inclusive environment for them to thrive in, building a diverse organisation that is engaged with, and accessible to, our communities.

5. FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

- 5.1 The Annual Plan is set with reference to the financial strategy.

6. LEGAL IMPLICATIONS

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

7. EQUALITY AND DIVERSITY IMPLICATIONS

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

8. RISK IMPLICATIONS

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

9. CONSISTENCY WITH DUTY TO COLLABORATE

- 9.1 The Annual Plan includes objectives relating to Collaboration.

10. PRINCIPAL CONSULTATION

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

11. BACKGROUND PAPERS

- 11.1 Corporate Plan and Community Risk Management Plan 2023-27

12. APPENDICES

- 12.1 Appendix A – Annual Plan 2024-25
- 12.2 Appendix B – Annual Plan 24-25 Measures Supporting Paper

13. CONTACT DETAILS

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Programme Office and Inspection Manager
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Royal Berkshire Fire and Rescue Service Annual Plan

2024-2025



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Introduction

Royal Berkshire Fire and Rescue Service (RBFRS) provides Prevention, Protection and Response services across the County of Berkshire. There are 16 fire stations across the County of Berkshire, ranging from Langley and Slough in the East to Lambourn and Hungerford in the West. They serve a diverse population of just under 959,000, 24 hours a day, 365 days a year.

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

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

Our Purpose and Vision

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

The [RBFRS Vision](#) is to work together as one team for the communities we serve. In order to fulfil our Vision, it is vital that our staff work in a safe, supportive and inclusive environment. We continue to drive towards creating a Service that reflects the communities it serves, although we recognise that there is more work required to achieve this goal.

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

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

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



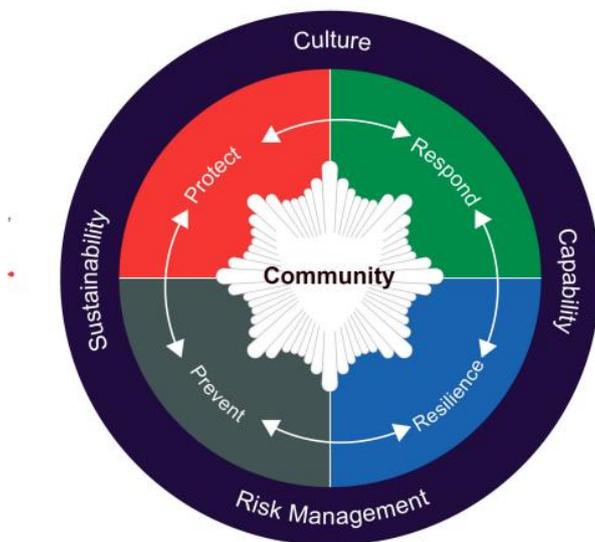
Delivery of our Objectives

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

Our priority programmes are developed to run over 2-3 years with focus on scoping activities for delivery. Our plan for 24/25 shows our continued focus on those long-term activities.

Heads of Service produce a Service Plan to assist in the management of day-to-day business. Service Plans include both business as usual and project activity and help to predict the resource levels, both for individual activities, and for the Service as a whole.

The delivery of Service Plans is further supported by individual employee objectives which are agreed with every member of staff and set out how each member of staff will help towards achieving the organisational goals.





Strategic Commitments 2024-2025

In order to achieve the Strategic Commitments we have made to the people of Royal Berkshire, our plan for 2024-2025 sets out how we will achieve these and highlights areas of focus. These are aligned to our overarching principles: Sustainability, Culture, Capability and Risk Management.

This is further supported by our Corporate Measures which are directly aligned to our plan and our core duties and responsibilities.

Principle: Risk Management

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

Principle: Sustainability

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

Principle: Culture

- **People:** We will support our staff by providing a safe and inclusive environment for them to thrive in, building a diverse organisation that is engaged with, and accessible to, our communities.
- **Culture:** We will continue to embed our One Team culture, to ensure it is visible both within and outside the service to inspire trust, confidence and pride amongst our staff and within our communities.



Principle: Capability

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



Our Priority Programmes

Community Risk Management Planning - Key Deliverables

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

In 2024/25, our key CRMP deliverables will include:

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

- We will implement our Integrated Service Delivery Strategy through our Service Plans, ensuring that risks are managed the most effective way, utilising Response, Prevention and Protection
- We will develop our capability to respond to incidents involving alternative fuel sources, such as lithium-ion batteries. Ensuring our approach is linked with the National approach.
- We will develop our wildfire capability to respond to the impact of climate change.

Priority 2: We will develop a Risk Based Prevention Programme, in collaboration with partner agencies, to target those most vulnerable and at risk from emergency incidents.

- We will use our evidence base to identify who is at most risk in our communities, to ensure our resourcing is targeted in the most effective and efficient way.
- We will continue to work with our partner agencies to ensure high quality referrals for the most vulnerable.

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

- Clearly define the response capability requirements as it relates to reasonable and foreseeable risk within Royal Berkshire. Including:
- Incident Command Structure resource (Lvl 2-3)



- Special skills/equipment capability and capacity relating to risks as identified with the CRMP
- Evaluate the availability and deployment of frontline response assets to improve services to the public.

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

- We will develop our new Risk-Based Inspection Programme following the evaluation in 2023/24, to ensure we are targeting the premises with the greatest risk.
- We will continue to use our call challenge policy to reduce the burden of AFA's on the commercial buildings.
- We will implement the outcomes of our AFA consultation.

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

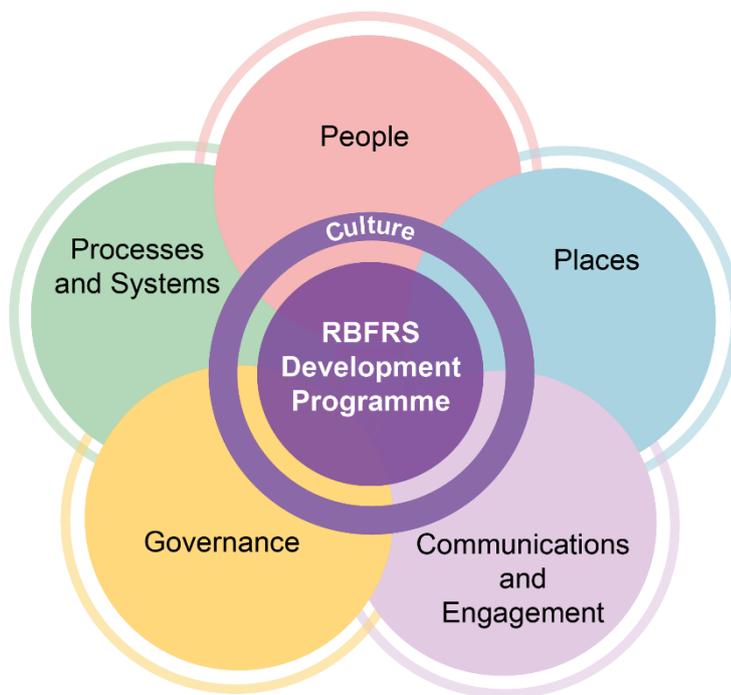
- We will implement and evaluate the change to understand the benefits of integrating our wholetime and on-call availability to achieve our baseline service provision of 14 frontline appliances.



RBFRS Development Programme – Key Deliverables

The RBFRS Development Programme is an organisational development programme that seeks to create and develop our culture through five key pillars:

1. People
2. Places – Our Working Environment
3. Processes and Systems
4. Governance
5. Communication and Engagement



The Service supports employees every year to develop through their PDR process. The RBFRS Development Programme is designed to support the Organisation to undergo the same development.

To organise this development, five pillars have been identified. To achieve organisational development, culture will be directly affected (positively or negatively).

The culture of any organisation is not static, but continuously evolves due to changes internally and externally. The Programme, supported by the five pillars, has been created to enable us to positively develop our culture, creating mutually beneficial improvements across the five areas identified and our culture.



Each pillar will have a number of different delivery mechanisms. In some cases, there will be a core strategy with additional work streams, whilst others may include task and finish activities.

This work will be managed through a programme structure and Programme Board to ensure robust management and transparent reporting on progress through communications channels and reporting.

People

- Ensure workforce planning leads to the right people, in the right positions, with the skills required, including considering how to identify and manage potential.
- Continue to work to manage sickness absence and attendance.
- Define and deliver the 2024/25 requirements of the RBFRS Development programme action plan.
- Deliver the 2024/25 requirements of the [Equality, Diversity, and Inclusion \(EDI\) Objectives and Action Plan](#).
- Launch our People Strategy 2024-2027

Place – Our working environment

- Deliver the 2024/25 requirements of the [Strategic Asset Investment Framework](#).
- Deliver the 2024/25 requirements of the Environmental Sustainability Action Plan including significant adaptations to estates and equipment.
- Continued investment in our estate to improve the equality of facilities and to provide dignified workplaces.
- Implement a revised policy and new ways of working for the control and monitoring of fireground contaminants.
- Initiate work to build the new Training Centre facilities in an environmental and financially sustainable way.

Processes and Systems

- Develop a new ICT Strategy
- Review and improve our own IT disaster recovery arrangements to ensure we utilise all resources available to continue delivering vital services to our communities.
- Improve our cyber resilience in response to increased threat levels in support of developing a robust organisational security policy.



- Progress changes to our systems including greater integration to improve ease of use, productivity, and data intelligence.
- Deliver the 2024/25 requirements of the [Efficiency and Productivity Plan](#).
- Develop our understanding of the productivity and effectiveness of our workforce.

Structure

- Proactively engage with and respond to relevant and emerging policy, legislation and regulation, and monitor this through the Corporate Risk Register.
- Continue to engage with the development and implementation of professional [Fire Standards for fire and rescue services in England](#) and ensure approved Standards are prioritised.
- Embed our approach to evaluating our work, ensuring our services are evidence-based.

Communications and Engagement

- Publish our Communications and Engagement Strategy 2024-2027.
- Continue to develop ways people can offer suggestions, supporting continuous improvement and utilise communications channels to ensure feedback is delivered on suggestions – closing the loop on all feedback.
- Deliver against the Communications and Engagement Strategy Action Plan for 2024/25, which includes:
 - Review our internal and external communications channels to ensure we are accessible to all, progressing our commitment to be an inclusive workplace and Service for our communities.
 - Increase opportunities to bring together teams and leaders from across the Service and provide opportunities for workforce engagement.
 - Utilise new technology and channels to reach our key stakeholders.
 - Provide clear, strategic direction and support on communications matters affecting the Service.



Thames Valley Collaboration Programme

Effective working relationships with other partners enable us to better serve communities based on local risks whilst striving for cost effective methods. Our objectives support our duty to collaborate, and the delivery of these objectives are overseen through the Thames Valley Governance Structure. The supporting [documentation](#) is published on our website.

Our annual collaboration objectives are:

- Continue to support the Thames Valley Forensic Fire Scene Investigation Unit (TVFFSIU) towards ISO17020 accreditation.
- Work with our blue light partners to deliver on the recommendations from the Manchester Arena Inquiry to drive improvement in the Thames Valley.
- Deliver operational alignment and improved ways of working, including the use of technology, in how Thames Valley Fire and Rescue Services deliver Incident Command Support.
- Maximise use of operational effectiveness using technology by enhancing our Command Support software and making incident and risk information more accessible during the incident.
- Continue to provide resources to support the key work of the Thames Valley Local Resilience Forum
- Evaluate the collaborative cross border mobilisation arrangements following the Breathing Apparatus rollout.



People Strategy

The purpose of our People Strategy 2024-2027 is to create a professional, flexible workforce that is diverse in thought and representation that can create safer more resilient communities by preventing incidents, protecting homes and businesses and responding to emergencies.

The People pillar of the RBFRS Development Programme has been developed to deliver the People Strategy objectives and co-ordinate and provide visibility on our response to the recent cultural reviews across the Fire and Rescue sector and the resulting national recommendations.

This work will be managed through a programme structure and Programme Board to ensure robust management and transparent reporting on progress.

The People Strategy objectives are:

- We are one team and we all contribute to the delivery of our services to the public, all staff should feel safe to come to work and maintaining public trust and confidence is essential. How we work together is important, we will maintain our zero tolerance to harassment, bullying and we extend that to include victimisation. We will increase ways to make staff feel safe and provide tools and support to help staff to speak out. We will review and further embed the use of behavioural competencies making it easier to understand and more widely use.
- We will seek to attract and retain a professional, talented and diverse workforce. We will work with employees and rep bodies to ensure our estate can support all staff equally and we will increase the flexibility of How, When and Where staff, ensuring we balance the needs of the individual with managing risk to the community.
- We will increase the diversity of our operational workforce by 100%* in the next 3 years to better reflect the communities we serve. We recognise that diversity is not just related to gender and ethnicity, we want to improve diversity of thought and experience ensuring we are an inclusive employer for all this will help improve equality of access to services for all our communities. (* baseline staff data Jan 2024)
- We will empower our staff to develop, grow and understand their role in the organisation. We will recognise good performance, and effectively manage poor performance. We will create pathways for career progression for all staff groups and develop tools to manage talent.
- We recognise the value of the on-call Duty system. We will change our processes and procedures to make it easier to attract and retain more people to support this way of working which will enable us to better manage risk across Berkshire.



- We will continue to invest in leadership across the organisation. We will increase opportunities to bring together leaders from across the Service to close the gaps and improve levels of trust. We will share leadership experience and learning widely inside and outside the sector.
- Developing and maintaining skills and knowledge across our operational workforce is a priority. We will increase the variety of training delivery methods available to make it easier to access resources. We will improve tracking tools for learners and increase capacity to provide greater assurance that learning objectives are being met.
- Health, Safety and Well-being remain a priority for us. We will work with staff, representative bodies and experts, to implement our new Safety, Health and well-being strategy to deliver safe and healthy people, places and processes.

Sustainability Commitment

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

The estate contributes 65% of the Authority's direct (Scope 1 and 2) carbon output (c1,524 tCO₂ per year) so, investment is being made to reduce the negative impact our buildings have on the environment. Estate strategic planning has included the production of estate heat decarbonisation plans to enable the first significant steps for the Authority achieve its Net Zero Carbon agenda by investment in sustainability initiatives at sites in the portfolio.

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



Risk and Assurance

Corporate Risk Register

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

Each risk, including one-off project risks, is scored on a Matrix (1-25) and recorded on the Risk Register. All strategic risks, and any project or service plan risks with a current score of 17 or above, are escalated to the Corporate Risk Register, monitored monthly by the Senior Leadership Team and reported to the Audit and Governance Committee on a quarterly basis. One or more treatments will be identified to minimise the likelihood or impact of the risk and the risk will be reviewed regularly to monitor progress.

The Organisational Risk Management Policy does not address health and safety risk or community risk. These are addressed separately through both occupational health and safety management and the CRMP Programme. Further detail and information on the CRMP process can be found in the [Corporate Plan and CRMP 2023-2027](#).

A summary of the Corporate Risk Register is available in the quarterly Strategic Performance Report and updated on a quarterly basis at rbfrs.co.uk.



Audit Plan

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

Our Internal Annual Audit Plan is developed in collaboration with our auditors, RSM, and approved by the Audit and Governance Committee. Each audit is linked to a risk on our Corporate Risk Register. In addition, the following audits are performed on an annual basis to provide assurance around the effectiveness of internal controls:

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

Statement of Assurance

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



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

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

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

Progress on the areas for improvements identified by HMICFRS in the 2023 report published have been incorporated into our plans and we continue to work to deliver the necessary changes. Progress and assurance on these take place in our Programme Board and are reported through our Strategic Performance Board. The published inspection report for RBFRS can be found [online](#).

RBFRS will be inspected again during 2024. The Inspection report will highlight any areas for improvement and potentially, causes for concern. Until HMICFRS have completed their inspection and published the report, these are unknown and so action plans to work on these will need to be scheduled into our planning and may affect our priorities and delivery of our Annual Plan.

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

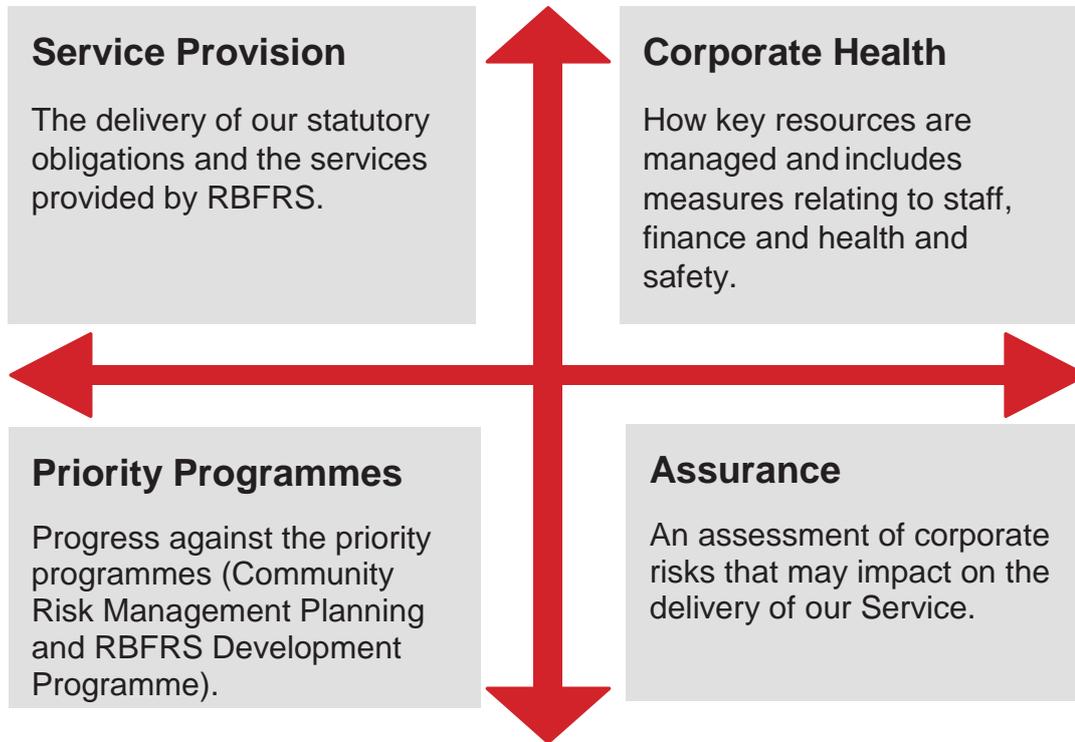
Programme Board

Our priority projects are overseen by the Programme Board. The primary focus of the Programme Board in 2024-2025 will be to oversee the delivery of programmes and projects of strategic importance including, but not limited to, the [CRMP](#) and the Development Programme.

Performance Management

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

Reporting is structured into four quadrants:





Corporate Measures

Service Provision

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

	Measure	2023/24 Target	2024/25 Target
1	Number of fire deaths	0	0
2	Number of non-fatal fire casualties	34 max	31 max
3	Number of deliberate primary fires	135 max	125 max
4	Number of deliberate secondary fires	244 max	233 max
Prevention			
5	Increase the number of Referrals for Safe and Well Visits received from our partners	10%	10%
6	Percentage of Safe and Well referrals, where there has been a threat or incidence of arson, completed within 48 hours	100%	100%
7	Percentage of Very High Risk Safe and Well Referrals completed within 72 hours	35%	40%
8	Percentage of High Risk Safe and Well Referrals completed within 14 days	50%	57%
Protection			
9	Percentage of Fire Safety Audits of premises identified as High or Very High Risk in our Risk-Based Inspection Programme completed in timescale.	NA (new)	Monitor



10	Percentage of Fire Safety Audits with a 'Broadly Compliant' result	60% max	60% max
11	Percentage success when cases go to court	80%	80%
12	Percentage of statutory fire consultations completed within the required timeframes	95%	95%
Response			
13	Percentage of occasions where the first fire engine arrives at an emergency incident within 10 minutes from time the emergency call was answered	75%	75%
14	Percentage of wholetime frontline pumping appliance availability	99%	97.4%
15	Percentage of hours where there is adequate crewing of on-call frontline pumping appliances (based on 24/7 crewing)	50%	50%
16	Percentage of time that 14 or more pumping appliances are available	NA (new)	100%
Resilience			
17	Percentage of visits to Very High, High and Medium Operational Risk sites completed in timescale	100%	100%
18	Number of Service Delivery Hub exercises completed	12	12
Efficiency			
19	Percentage of Automatic Fire Alarm calls where RBFRS did not attend	30% (min)	30% (min)
Customer Experience			
20	Percentage of respondents experiencing a domestic fire satisfied with the service received	100%	100%



21	Percentage of respondents experiencing a commercial fire satisfied with the service received	95%	95%
22	Percentage of respondents satisfied with the Fire Safety Audit service they received	90%	90%
23	Percentage of respondents satisfied with the Safe and Well service received	100%	100%
24	Number of complaints received	Monitor	Monitor
25	Number of compliments received	Monitor	Monitor



Corporate Health

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

	Measure	2023-24 Target	2024-25 Target
Human Resources and Learning & Development			
26	Percentage of working time lost to sickness across all staff groups	5% (max)	5% (max)
27	Percentage of eligible staff with Personal Development Reviews	100%	100%
28	Number of formal grievances	Monitor	Monitor
Health and Safety			
29	Number of RIDDOR accidents and diseases	Max 4	Max 4
Finance and Procurement			
30	Percentage of spend subject to competition	85%	85%
31	Compliant spend as a percentage of overall spend	100%	100%
Freedom of Information			
32	Number of Information Commissioner assessments finding that the Service has breached Information Rights Legislation (Freedom of Information Act, Environmental Regulations or Data Protection Legislation)	0	0

Definitions of measures are available in Appendix A.



Measure Definitions

Service Provision

	Measure	2024/25 Target	Definition/ Rationale
1	Number of fire deaths	0	The number of deaths that occur as the result of a fire, even when the death occurs weeks or months later.
2	Number of non-fatal fire casualties	31 max	The number of non-fatal casualties requiring hospital treatment that occur as a result of a fire. The target is a 10% reduction on the five-year average.
3	Number of deliberate primary fires	125 max	The total number of primary fires that have been started deliberately. The target is a 5% reduction on the five-year average.
4	Number of deliberate secondary fires	233 max	The total number of secondary fires that have been started deliberately. The target is a 5% reduction on the five-year average.
Prevention			
5	Increase the number of Referrals for Safe and Well Visits received from our partners	10%	We receive referrals from other agencies for individuals at risk from fire in their homes. These referrals are a high-quality source of information about those at risk in our communities.
6	Percentage of Safe and Well referrals, where there has been a threat or incidence of arson, completed within 48 hours	100%	Safe and Well Referrals are risk assessed, with each category of risk having an expected timescale for completion. Cases where there is a threat of arson are the highest risk.
7	Percentage of Very High-Risk Safe and Well Referrals completed within 72 hours	40%	Safe and Well Referrals are risk assessed, with each category of risk having an expected timescale for



			<p>completion. Very High-Risk referrals have a timescale of 72 hours.</p> <p>Over the duration of the CRMP period (2023 to 2027) we aim to bring the proportion completed in timescale up to 50%</p>
8	Percentage of High Risk Safe and Well Referrals completed within 14 days	57%	<p>Safe and Well Referrals are risk assessed, with each category of risk having an expected timescale for completion. High-Risk referrals have a timescale time of 14 days.</p> <p>Over the duration of the CRMP period (2023 to 2027) we aim to bring the proportion completed in timescale up to 70%</p>
Protection			
9	Proportion of Fire Safety Audits conducted against premises identified as High or Very High-Risk in our Risk-Based Inspection Programme	Monitor	<p>A Fire Safety Audit is carried out to enforce the Regulatory Reform Order (RRO) 2005. Our Risk-Based Inspection Programme targets the riskiest premises in the county for inspection. Fire Safety Audits can also result from complaints or can be carried out after an incident or for training purposes. This measure allows us to monitor how our resources are being targeted at risk.</p>
10	Percentage of Fire Safety Audits with a 'Broadly Compliant' result	60% max	<p>The percentage of completed Fire Safety Audits carried out in commercial premises, where the result was 'Broadly Compliant' (satisfactory) and no further action or follow-up was required. If we are successfully targeting our resources at the riskiest properties, we would expect to see a high percentage that are not 'Broadly Compliant'.</p>
11	Percentage success when cases go to court	80%	<p>RBFRS prosecute serious cases following Fire Safety Audits. A successful outcome at court is a finding or admission of guilt.</p>



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



			support staff are required to ensure understanding of the risk is up to date.
18	Number of Service Delivery Hub exercises completed	12	Service Delivery Hub-level operational exercises are an important part of ensuring RBFRS is prepared for incidents that might occur through testing our planning assumptions, guidance and site-specific response plans.
Efficiency			
19	Percentage of Automatic Fire Alarm calls where RBFRS did not attend	30% (min)	In some circumstances we are able to seek confirmation before attending an Automatic Fire Alarm Call, enabling us to be more efficient.
Customer Experience			
20	Percentage of respondents experiencing a domestic fire satisfied with the service received	100%	A customer feedback questionnaire is sent to those who have experienced a dwelling fire asking about their satisfaction and experience with the service they received from RBFRS.
21	Percentage of respondents experiencing a commercial fire satisfied with the service received	95%	A customer feedback survey of business owners/ managers who have experienced a fire in their commercial premises asking about their satisfaction and experience with the service they received from RBFRS.
22	Percentage of respondents satisfied with the Fire Safety Audit service they received	90%	A customer feedback questionnaire is sent to business owners/ managers who have had a full fire safety audit, asking about their satisfaction and experience with the service they received from RBFRS.
23	Percentage of respondents satisfied with the Safe and Well service received	100%	A customer feedback questionnaire is sent to a sample of individuals who have received a Safe and Well Visit and asks about their satisfaction and experience with the service they received from RBFRS.



24	Number of complaints received	Monitor	The number of complaints made to RBFRS about any aspect of our service or staff.
25	Number of compliments received	Monitor	The number of compliments received by RBFRS about any aspect of our service or staff.

Corporate Health

	Measure	2024-25 Target	Definition/ Rationale
Human Resources and Learning & Development			
26	Percentage of working time lost to sickness across all staff groups	5% (max)	This measure looks at sickness across the whole organisation and the percentage of time lost, based on the number of working hours available to the organisation.
27	Percentage of eligible staff with Personal Development Reviews	100%	This measure reflects the percentage of eligible employees who have had a Personal Development Review meeting. Eligible staff are those who have completed their initial probation period, before the end of the PDR period and who have not been absent for over 50% of the reporting period. Employees moving within the Organisation to new roles on trial or probation periods will still be eligible for a PDR.
28	Number of formal grievances	Monitor	The number of formal grievances raised by staff under the Grievance, Bullying and Harrassment Policy.
Health and Safety			
29	Number of RIDDOR accidents and diseases	Max 4	RIDDOR (Reporting of Injuries Diseases and Dangerous Occurrences Regulations) are more serious injury accidents and diseases.



Finance and Procurement			
30	Percentage of spend subject to competition	85%	<p>This measure looks at all items of expenditure over £10k as RBFA must obtain quotes or tenders for all these purchases.</p> <p>This excludes statutory payments such as local authority charges or HMRC.</p>
31	Compliant spend as a percentage of overall spend	100%	<p>This measure calculates the supplier spend that is in a compliant contract as a percentage of the total spend to external bodies and suppliers (as per RBFA contract regulations).</p>
Freedom of Information			
32	Number of Information Commissioner assessments finding that the Service has breached Information Rights Legislation (Freedom of Information Act, Environmental Regulations or Data Protection Legislation)	0	<p>RBFRS are required to conform to Data Protection and Freedom of Information legislation. The Information Commissioner is responsible for determining compliance and issuing advice or penalties. This measure includes only incidents where there is a finding of a breach (not complaints which are subsequently dismissed).</p>



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Annual Plan 2024-25

Rationale for Amendments to Measures and Targets

Introduction

The Annual Plan 2024-25 includes amended targets for some of our Corporate Measures. These changes are the result of our maturing understanding of risk in our communities and evaluation of current performance.

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

Corporate Measure 2 – Number of Non-Fatal Fire Casualties

Last year we changed this target to a 10% reduction on the five year average. We have updated this with the most recent data (up to Q3 23-24) to set the target for 2024-25 at 31 against the five year average of 34.

Corporate Measures 3 and 4 – Number of Deliberate Fires (Primary and Secondary)

Last year we changed these targets to a 5% reduction on the five year average. In proposing this target, we also considered how we perform compared with other Fire and Rescue Services – our rate for both categories of Deliberate Fires are well below average.

We have updated this with the most recent data (up to Q3 23-24) to set the targets for 2024-25 at:

Deliberate Primary Fires: 125 against a five year average of 131.

Deliberate Secondary Fires: 233 against a five year average of 245.



Corporate Measures 7 and 8 – Safe and Well visits in timescale (Very High and High)

Last year we developed incremental improvement targets for these measures in the context of our intent over the four year period of our new CRMP and Corporate Plan. These incremental targets are below. We feel these balance stretch with achievability.

Priority Level	2022-23 Performance	2023-24 Target	2024-25 Target (proposed)	2025-26 Target (proposed)	2026-27 Target (proposed)
Very High (72 hrs)	25.5%	35%	40%	45%	50%
High (14 days)	44.3%	50%	57%	64%	70%

Corporate Measure 9 - Percentage of Fire Safety Audits conducted of premises identified as High or Very High Risk in our Risk-Based Inspection Programme completed in timescale.

This measure replaces the previous one which monitored the proportion of all audits conducted which were of Very High and High Risk premises. We found that this measure was not easy to understand. As our RBIP matures, we are better able to set clear timescales for inspection and the new measure monitors our performance against these. We have proposed that we monitor this measure this year before introducing an evidence-based target next year when the findings of our evaluation of RBIP will be fully implemented.

Corporate Measure 14 – Percentage of wholetime pumping appliance availability.

We propose amending the target for this measure from 99% to 97.4%. This measure was introduced two years ago and we are now able to set our target based on our historic performance.



Corporate Measure 16 – Percentage of time where 14 or more pumping appliances are available.

This is a new measure which will allow us to monitor our CRMP commitment to ensure the availability of a minimum of 14 appliances at all times, across wholetime and on-call. We propose a 100% target for this measure.



Additional Information

Home Office Incident Type Definitions

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

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

Primary fires are split into four sub-categories:

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

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

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

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

Secondary fires are generally small outdoor fires, not involving people or property. These include refuse fires, grassland fires and fires in derelict buildings or vehicles, unless these fires involved casualties or rescues, or five or more pumping appliances attended, in which case they become primary fires.



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

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

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

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

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

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ROYAL BERKSHIRE FIRE AUTHORITY REPORT



COMMITTEE	FIRE AUTHORITY
DATE OF MEETING	22 APRIL 2024
SUBJECT	RBFRS SUSTAINABILITY PROGRAMME: PHASE 1
LEAD OFFICER	PAUL BROOKS, HEAD OF ASSETS
LEAD MEMBER	COUNCILLOR SHEPHERD-DUBEY
EXEMPT INFORMATION	NONE
ACTION	FOR DECISION

1. EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

- 1.1 The Authority is committed to reducing the impact of the organisation’s operations on the environment and reducing its carbon footprint. The estate contributes 65% of the Authority’s carbon output (1,524 tCO₂ per year) so, recognising there is a global climate emergency, investment is needed to reduce the negative impact our buildings have on the environment.
- 1.2 Estate strategic planning has included the production of estate heat decarbonisation plans (HDP) using specialist consultants, which was funded by central Government using the Low Carbon Skills Fund (LCSF) in 2023. The outcome of these HDPs has enabled the development of the first significant steps for the Authority to achieve its Net Zero Carbon agenda by investment in sustainability initiatives at 11 of the 17 sites in the portfolio.
- 1.3 This report provides context and an update on estate sustainability planning and seeks approval to spend £1.77M to deliver phase 1 sustainability projects as set out in the Strategic Asset Investment Framework (SAIF) as approved by the Authority in early 2024.
- 1.4 Notably, the SAIF expenditure will be significantly offset by the Salix Public Sector Decarbonisation Scheme funding (PSDS), a central Government grant of £927,845, recently awarded for five of our most energy inefficient fire stations. The grant funding process involves repayment in arrears, so the programme team need full budgetary assurance to support due diligence when entering into contractual commitments and the like. Over the course of two years, PSDS funding for these projects will amount to £927,845, reimbursed in stage payments.

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- 1.5 Regular updates will be provided to Members and Officers via the Estates Development and Sustainability Working Group, Estates Development Group and the Service Programme Board.

2. RECOMMENDATION

- 2.1 It is recommended that the Fire Authority:

2.1.1 **APPROVE** a capital expenditure budget of £1.77 million for delivery of the 'RBFRS Sustainability Programme Phase 1' as set out in the SAIF.

2.1.2 **NOTE** that the above budget includes two distinct, but accountably connected, elements:

- Public Sector Decarbonisation Scheme (PSDS) grant funds of £927,845, administered on behalf of the UK Government by Salix
- RBFRS contributory funds of £842,155

2.1.3 **NOTE** that the PSDS element is on a cost recovery basis in arrears, which will lead to additional cash outflows in the short-term before reimbursement has been received.

3. BACKGROUND

- 3.1 The Authority is committed to reducing the impact of the organisation's operations on the environment and reducing its carbon footprint as confirmed in the signing of the Emergency Services Environment and Sustainability Group Charter' by the Fire Authority in February 2023. The estate contributes significantly to the overall environmental impact of a business, so 'Planet Mark' consultants¹ were commissioned in 2022 to complete a baseline study with results indicating our buildings contribute 65% of the Authority's carbon output (1,524 tCO₂ per year).

- 3.2 Noting the above, strategic planning was augmented in 2023 by the production of estate HDP using specialist consultants Faithful + Gould (now Atkins Realis²). This work was funded by central Government using the LCSF administered by Salix. The outcome of the work was a roadmap to help the Authority achieve its 'Net Zero' (NZ – see paragraph 3.4 for a definition) carbon ambitions by 2050, in line with the UK Government target, at 11 of the 17 sites in the portfolio. Notably, the 11 sites selected for the roadmap were prioritised on annual energy usage, fossil fuel utilisation for heating, building age and condition of the buildings (including the current and ongoing maintenance costs). Priority 1 sites are the only properties that currently qualify for PSDS funding applications. The 11 priority sites are:

- **Priority 1 (the subject of funding requested in this paper):**
 - Langley
 - Newbury
 - Reading: Caversham Road (accommodation annexe)
 - Reading: Wokingham Road
 - Whitley Wood (fire station)

¹ <https://www.planetmark.com/>

² <https://www.atkinsrealis.com>

- Priority 2:
 - Ascot
 - Bracknell
 - Lambourn
 - Maidenhead
 - Windsor
 - Slough

(Refer to **Appendix 1** for further details on sites and projects included within the RBFRS Sustainability Programme.)

3.3 It should be noted that forecasted benefits predominantly focus on Scope 1 and 2 emissions³ and the decarbonisation of heat – this is a necessary delineation as Scope 3 emissions are very complex and less related to the estate.

3.4 ‘Net Zero’ for the Authority will be formally defined and globally agreed in the emerging RBFRS Sustainability Strategy, but for the purposes of this report and the programme, Net Zero Carbon has been defined as:

“The carbon emissions associated with operational energy consumption across the estate are zero or negative on an annual basis. Most of the fuel and power is supplied from on-site and off-site renewable energy sources, with any remaining carbon balance offset.”

4. **REPORT**

4.1 Building on the successful LCSF grant bid and production of HDPs for the estate, RBFRS worked further with Atkins Realis during 2023 to develop a credible bid for funds from the PSDS Phase 3c scheme. Atkins Realis was commissioned via the NFCC’s National Decarbonisation Procurement Project, which is sponsored by RBFRS’ Deputy Chief Fire Officer. The RBFRS PSDS bid was submitted via the Salix application portal on 07 November 2023.

4.2 The bid process was complex and required a high level of diligence to assure Salix that RBFRS understood their estate and how to best meet the criteria and outcomes required to secure PSDS funding. RBFRS was one of only three Services to be approved for funding in the 23/24 PSDS Phase (3c). The process resulted in RBFRS receiving notification of a successful bid and full grant offer of £927,845 on 20 February 2024.

4.3 The PSDS grant funding focusses on eligible technologies to reduce energy demand and remove fossil fuels. Out of the 11 previously described sites, 5 were identified as the highest priority and in qualifying scope for the PSDS / SAIF combined funding (see **Table 1**). Improvement projects will be delivered using a ‘whole package’ approach⁴ to ensure the highest energy efficiency and carbon reduction is achieved to meet the minimum outcomes expected by Salix.

4.4 Salix will fund 52% percent of this project with RBFRS effectively ‘match funding’ at 48%. The residual 6 sites will be addressed within the wider sustainability programme as set out in the SAIF for 2026-2029. In the interim, further projects

³ <https://www.nationalgrid.com/stories/energy-explained/what-are-scope-1-2-3-carbon-emissions>

⁴ This approach sees a single professional consultancy (i.e., Atkins Realis) managing the entire project process from inception to completion and at least one-year of aftercare / contract administration.

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such as LED lighting and Solar PV will be implemented at the priority 2 sites using SAIF budgets to improve energy efficiency and continue to reduce our carbon output.

Site	Floor area (m ²)	Total carbon Saved (tCO ₂ e)	Priority PSDS / RBFRS
Ascot	400	6	2 - RBFRS
Bracknell	720	35	2 - RBFRS
Caversham Rd	1,191	61	1 - PSDS
Lambourn	183	10	2 - RBFRS
Langley	774	43	1 - PSDS
Maidenhead	1,144	35	2 - RBFRS
Newbury	832	38	1 - PSDS
Slough	1,103	51	2 - RBFRS
Whitley Wood	1,864	48	1 - PSDS
Windsor	223	6	2 - RBFRS
Wokingham Rd	409	21	1 - PSDS
	Total	354	

Table 1 – RBFRS Sustainability Programme priority 1 and 2 sites.

4.5 In the interests of consistency of approach, delivery coherence and to assist with realisation of benefits, it is proposed to deliver the priority 1 and 2 sites as a programme of work under a single governance umbrella. This will also support due diligence and facilitate robust cost control ensuring we get the most from our funds.

4.6 Technologies included in the programme are:

- Air source heat pumps
- Building fabric upgrades (loft Insulation, cavity wall, double/triple glazed windows)
- LED lighting
- Solar PV systems
- Building management systems (BMS)

4.7 **Financial position.**

4.7.1 The overall funding and forecasting position is in **Table 2**. It should be noted that the forecasted figures are what RBFRS' PSDS bid is predicated on and are as agreed with Salix.

Year 1:	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Salix contribution £167,014 • RBFRS Contribution £294,952 	
Breakdown	
Design and engineering	£171,098
Project management fees	£171,098
Other project costs	£119,770
Subtotal 1	£461,966
Year 2:	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Salix contribution £760,831 • RBFRS Contribution £441,824 	
Breakdown	
Main equipment capital costs	£499,806
Installation and commissioning	£309,324
Contingency	£153,988
Enabling measures	£239,537
Subtotal 2	£1,202,655
Grand total	£1,664,621
Grand total (rounded up per the SAIF)	£1,770,000

Table 2 – Combined PSDS / RBFRS Sustainability Programme funding and forecast.

4.7.2 The estimated payback period based on the RBFRS contribution of £842,155 is 9.4 years using data provided in the Salix PSDS support tool.

4.8 **Procurement strategy.** Echoing the programme approach covered earlier in the report, Atkins Realis has been commissioned via a separate public regulatory compliant framework to manage the programme ensuring there is a professional project management thread through each of the projects, including aftercare contract administration to cover warranty and defect liability periods. Project delivery contractors will be procured by competitive tenders, with complementary activities or technologies bundled where possible to reduce risk and seek best value. Langley Fire Station will have special attention as there is a pre-agreed SAIF refurbishment project over 2024-26 that will be subject to further Management Committee approval later this year. The intention for Langley is that a separate consultancy will be commissioned to act as the principal professional project manager taking the lead role liaising and co-ordinating with Atkins Realis to reduce the risk of conflict or nugatory work.

4.9 **Programme milestones.** Based on progress to date and current forecasting, the project milestones within the programme are in **Table 3**.

Milestone	Completion date	Days of contingency included in each step
Project approval	01/04/2024	5
Designs initiated	01/04/2024	10
Detailed designs completed	01/09/2024	10
Invitation to tender	01/01/2025	20
Tender processes complete	01/04/2025	20
Orders placed	01/05/2025	20

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Works in progress on site	01/06/2025	30
Completed on site	01/01/2026	60
Final commissioning	31/03/2026	60
Completion date	31/03/2026	Total 235

Table 3 – Combined PSDS / RBFRS Sustainability Programme Milestones.

4.9 **Contingency days.** The contingency days in Table 3 are not consecutive as several elements of the project run in parallel with a view to maximising concurrent activity and reducing programme risk.

5. **NEXT STEPS**

- 5.1 The programme team will formally stand up with a pre-start meeting week commencing the 08 April 2024. A key outcome of the meeting is to finalise the project delivery structure and ensure RBFRS will meet the targets as set out in the milestone breakdown, whilst achieving a high level of monitoring and reporting assurance.
- 5.2 Year 1 of the programme focuses primarily on design and planning to reach RIBA Stage 4 by the end of August 2024. Key stakeholders will be updated on progress directly by written reports and via the RBFRS Estate Development Group and the member's non-executive Estate Development and Sustainability Working Group.
- 5.3 Engagement with the Distribution Network Operator (DNO) is a key component to respective project's success. During the PSDS application process, Atkins Realis submitted early engagement enquiries to the DNO, and this process will be picked back up as a priority following the pre-start meeting. Early engagement is critical to allow time for the DNO to confirm the electrical capacity on our sites and endorse the grid upgrades to facilitate the new heat pumps that are being installed.

6. **CONTRIBUTION TO STRATEGIC COMMITMENTS**

- 6.1 **Commitment 5: Sustainability.** We will ensure that we provide a financially sustainable and environmentally friendly service to our communities.
- 6.2 **Commitment 6: People.** We will support our staff by providing a safe and inclusive environment for them to thrive in, building a diverse organisation that is engaged with, and accessible to, our communities.

7. **FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS**

- 7.1 PSDS funding amounts to £927,845 while the Authority is contributing £842,155.
- 7.2 The capital expenditure budget, which Members are being asked to approve, is in line with the provision in the SAIF for this programme of works.

8. LEGAL IMPLICATIONS

8.1 Appropriate legal advice will be sought on procurement, planning and construction aspects if required.

9. EQUALITY AND DIVERSITY IMPLICATIONS

9.1 An equality impact assessment (EIA) will be completed as part of the project process for each site and will be a requirement for any project that requires planning consent.

9.2 A key project outcome for the related Langley SAIF project remains to improve the equality of facilities for current and future staff groups.

10. RISK IMPLICATIONS

10.1 Early engagement will be conducted with local planning authorities to de-risk planning consent applications. Any delays to the processes will be mitigated as required if the risk matures.

10.2 Early engagement will be conducted with the DNO to de-risk critical infrastructure requirements. Any delays to the processes and supply limitations will be mitigated as required if the risk matures.

10.3 Despite a high degree of confidence in the planning work with Atkins Realis and Salix, a cost overrun remains marginally possible, particularly when considering a volatile inflationary environment. This will be mitigated by inclusive project management and diligent cost control.

11. SUSTAINABILITY IMPLICATIONS

11.1 Sustainability implications are seen as wholly positive with the PSDS grant award and the RBFRS contribution's projects supporting our sustainability agenda. Using the latest technology and design methodology such as effective insulation, low energy lighting and low carbon systems (solar, heat pumps, etc) will reduce our carbon footprint and our energy bills.

12. CONSISTENCY WITH DUTY TO COLLABORATE

12.1 Opportunities to collaborate with partners, including other FRS neighbours have been discounted for this programme.

12.2 According to the CAPE (Climate Action Plan Explorer)⁵ website that collates UK Council Climate Action Plans in a single database, four of the six constituent councils have declared a climate emergency:

Reading	26 February 2019
Royal Borough of Windsor & Maidenhead	26 June 2019
West Berkshire	2 July 2019

⁵ <https://cape.mysociety.org/>

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Wokingham

18 July 2019

12.3 According to the database, of the remaining two, Bracknell and Slough councils have both adopted Climate Action Plans.

13. PRINCIPAL CONSULTATION

13.1 The Chief Fire Officer, Deputy Chief Fire Officer and Head of Finance and Procurement were consulted during the preparation of this report.

13.2 The Member for Strategic Assets and the Monitoring Officer were consulted during the preparation of this report.

14. BACKGROUND PAPERS

14.1 [Strategic Asset Investment Framework \(rbfrs.co.uk\)](http://rbfrs.co.uk)

14.2 [RBFRS Heat Decarbonisation Plan 2023](#)

14.3 [Database of council climate action plans](#)

APPENDICES

Appendix 1 – RBFRS Sustainability Programme Additional Context April 2024.

Appendix 2 – Technologies Implemented in Heat Decarbonisation Priority 1 Projects.

CONTACT DETAILS

Paul Brooks, Head of Assets (Estates, Fleet & Equipment) brooksp@rbfrs.co.uk

Sophie Fox, Capital Projects Sustainability Co-ordinator foxs@rbfrs.co.uk

Appendix 1 – RBFRS Sustainability Programme Additional Context April 2024

A1. As a result of the heat decarbonisation roadmap produced by professional consultants Atkins Realis, RBFRS has developed a 5-year sustainability programme to deliver the initiatives set out in the Fire Authority report dated 09 April 2024.

A2. Projects included within the current wider sustainability programme are as listed below with more detail in **Table A1**:

- Heat decarbonisation priority 1 projects (5 sites)
- LED lighting priority 2 project (6 sites)
- Solar PV priority 2 project (up to 6 sites)
- Heat decarbonisation priority 2 projects (6 sites)

Station	HDP	Projects to be delivered	Funded by	Timescales
Ascot	Included	Heat Decarbonisation Priority 2	RBFRS SAIF	2026/27
Bracknell	Included	- LED Lighting Priority 2 - Solar PV priority 2 - Heat Decarbonisation Priority 2	RBFRS SAIF	- 2024/25 - 2025/26 - 2026/27
Caversham Road Main station	Included	LED priority 2	RBFRS SAIF	2024/25
Caversham Road (Annexe)	Included	Heat Decarbonisation Priority 1 (See appendix 2 for specifics)	Salix PSDS	2024-2026
Lambourn	Included	- LED lighting priority 2 - Solar PV Priority 2	RBFRS SAIF	- 2024//25 - 2025/26
Langley	Included	Heat Decarbonisation Priority 1 (See appendix 2 for specifics)	Salix PSDS	2024-2026
Maidenhead	Included	Solar PV Priority 2	RBFRS SAIF	2025/26
Newbury	Included	Heat Decarbonisation Priority 1 (See appendix 2 for specifics)	Salix PSDS	2024-2026
Slough	Included	Solar PV Priority 2	RBFRS SAIF	2025/26
Whitley Wood	Included	Heat Decarbonisation Priority 1 (See appendix 2 for specifics)	Salix PSDS	2024-2026
Windsor	Included	LED priority 2	RBFRS SAIF	2024/25

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Station	HDP	Projects to be delivered	Funded by	Timescales
Wokingham Rd	Included	Heat Decarbonisation Priority 1 (See appendix 2 for specifics)	Salix PSDS	2024-2026
Theale	Not Included – new building	N/a	N/a	N/a
Crowthorne	Not Included – new building	N/a	N/a	N/a
Hungerford	Not Included – new building	N/a	N/a	N/a
Wokingham	Not included	LED Priority 2	RBFRS SAIF	2024/25
Mortimer	Not Included	Heat decarbonisation Priority 2	RBFRS SAIF	2026/27
HQ	Not included	- LED priority 2 - Solar PV priority 2 - Heat decarbonisation priority 2	RBFRS SAIF	- 2024/25 - 2025/26 - Tbc

Table A1.1 – RBFRS Estate Sustainability Programme, Project and Site Breakdown.

- A3. There are 6 sites that have not been included in the HDP; Theale, Hungerford and Crowthorne have been built to a high standard with sustainability elements embedded into the design and construction, so they do not require any additional investment yet. Wokingham, Mortimer and HQ did not meet the criteria to be included in the HDP due to their usage and current heating systems but will be included in further surveys and investigations when scoping the rest of the project.

Appendix 2 – Technologies Implemented in Heat Decarbonisation Priority 1 Projects

The five sites that have been identified for the Heat Decarbonisation Priority 1 will all receive a boiler replacement and heating system upgrade to an air source heat pump as per the conditions of the Salix funding grant. The use of an air source heat pump system removes the need for conventional fossil fuel sources.

The projects are being delivered as a ‘whole package’ approach, including additional building fabric and efficiency measures to support the new heating systems' effectiveness as detailed in **Table A2**.

Building	Technology - Work Type	Energy	Fuel Cost (p/kWh)	Annual kWh Pre-project	Annual kWh Post-project	Annual kWh Savings	% kWh Savings	Estimated Project Cost	Annual Financial Impact	Payback in Years	Annual Direct Carbon Savings (tonnes)	Annual Indirect Carbon Savings (tonnes)
Wokingham Road Fire Station	Cavity wall insulation	Gas	8.52	101,046	75,851	25,195	25%	£6,550	£2,147	3.05	4.60	
Wokingham Road Fire Station	Double glazing with metal or plastic frames	Gas	8.52	75,851	73,763	2,088	3%	£12,520	£178	70.38	0.38	
Wokingham Road Fire Station	Roof insulation	Gas	8.52	73,763	68,521	5,242	7%	£11,431	£447	25.59	0.96	
Wokingham Road Fire Station	Variable speed drives	Electricity	26.70	42,174	40,482	1,692	4%	£4,130	£452	9.14		0.15
Wokingham Road Fire Station	BEMS - remotely managed	Gas	8.52	68,521	61,669	6,852	10%	£12,000	£584	20.56	1.25	
Wokingham Road Fire Station	LED - new fitting	Electricity	26.70	40,482	39,063	1,419	4%	£5,761	£379	15.21		0.06
Wokingham Road Fire Station	Solar PV	Electricity	26.70	39,063	26,523	12,540	32%	£19,200	£3,348	5.73		0.61
Newbury Fire Station	Cavity wall insulation	Gas	8.52	169,013	136,475	32,538	19%	£9,611	£2,772	3.47	5.94	
Newbury Fire Station	Double glazing with metal or plastic frames	Gas	8.52	136,475	121,609	14,866	11%	£95,880	£1,267	75.70	2.71	
Newbury Fire Station	Roof insulation	Gas	8.52	121,609	111,391	10,218	8%	£23,760	£871	27.29	1.87	
Newbury Fire Station	Variable speed drives	Electricity	26.70	86,965	84,879	2,086	2%	£5,093	£557	9.14		0.18
Newbury Fire Station	BEMS - remotely managed	Gas	8.52	111,391	100,252	11,139	10%	£29,946	£949	31.55	2.03	
Newbury Fire Station	LED - new fitting	Electricity	26.70	84,879	81,691	3,188	4%	£18,740	£851	22.02		0.14
Newbury Fire Station	Solar PV	Electricity	26.70	81,691	56,041	25,650	31%	£38,400	£6,849	5.61		1.24
Langley Fire Station	Cavity wall insulation	Gas	8.52	185,100	166,257	18,843	10%	£4,583	£1,605	2.85	3.44	
Langley Fire Station	Double glazing with metal or plastic frames	Gas	8.52	166,257	152,575	13,682	8%	£76,832	£1,166	65.91	2.50	
Langley Fire Station	Roof insulation	Gas	8.52	152,575	141,044	11,531	8%	£23,328	£982	23.74	2.11	
Langley Fire Station	Variable speed drives	Electricity	26.70	64,264	64,099	165	0%	£404	£44	9.14		0.01
Langley Fire Station	BEMS - remotely managed	Gas	8.52	141,044	126,940	14,104	10%	£23,994	£1,202	19.97	2.57	
Langley Fire Station	LED - new fitting	Electricity	26.70	64,099	61,954	2,145	3%	£8,709	£573	15.21		0.10
Langley Fire Station	Solar PV	Electricity	26.70	61,954	36,304	25,650	41%	£60,600	£6,849	8.85		1.24
Caversham Station Annexe	Cavity wall insulation	Gas	8.52	137,240	124,641	12,599	9%	£3,407	£1,073	3.17	2.30	
Caversham Station Annexe	Double glazing with metal or plastic frames	Gas	8.52	124,641	123,438	1,203	1%	£7,736	£102	75.48	0.22	
Caversham Station Annexe	Roof insulation	Gas	8.52	123,438	123,438	-	0%	£0	£0		-	
Caversham Station Annexe	Variable speed drives	Electricity	26.70	64,264	63,422	842	1%	£2,056	£225	9.14		0.07

Building	Technology - Work Type	Energy	Fuel Cost (p/kWh)	Annual kWh Pre-project	Annual kWh Post-project	Annual kWh Savings	% kWh Savings	Estimated Project Cost	Annual Financial Impact	Payback in Years	Annual Direct Carbon Savings (tonnes)	Annual Indirect Carbon Savings (tonnes)
Caversham Station Annexe	BEMS - remotely managed	Gas	8.52	123,438	111,094	12,344	10%	£11,966	£1,052	11.38	2.25	
Caversham Station Annexe	LED - new fitting	Electricity	26.70	63,422	62,360	1,062	2%	£4,310	£283	15.21		0.05
Caversham Station Annexe	Solar PV	Electricity	26.70	62,360	47,530	14,830	24%	£22,200	£3,960	5.61		0.72
Whitley Wood Fire Station	Cavity wall insulation	Gas	8.52	134,478	115,352	19,126	14%	£5,043	£1,630	3.09	3.49	
Whitley Wood Fire Station	Double glazing with metal or plastic frames	Gas	8.52	115,352	99,926	15,426	13%	£38,640	£1,314	29.40	2.82	
Whitley Wood Fire Station	Roof insulation	Gas	8.52	99,926	99,926	-	0%	£0	£0		-	
Whitley Wood Fire Station	Variable speed drives	Electricity	26.70	280,072	276,638	3,434	1%	£8,385	£917	9.14		0.30
Whitley Wood Fire Station	BEMS - remotely managed	Gas	8.52	99,926	89,934	9,993	10%	£23,932	£851	28.11	1.82	
Whitley Wood Fire Station	LED - new fitting	Electricity	26.70	276,638	275,364	1,274	0%	£5,172	£340	15.21		0.06
Whitley Wood Fire Station	Solar PV	Electricity	26.70	275,364	219,434	55,930	20%	£83,400	£14,933	5.58		2.71
		Totals	525.9	4,048,775	3,659,880	388,896	NA	£707,719*	£60,752	NA	43.26	7.64

* **Note** – the estimated project costs were indicative and accurate at the time of the application and there might slight discrepancies in totals due to rounding up or down.

Table A2.1 – Building fabric and efficiency measures.

Site Name	Technology - Work Type	Make	Model	Heating Solution Configuration	System to Supply Space Heating, DHW or Both	Heating Emitter Type	Heating Equipment, Installation, and Commissioning £	Additional Measures £ e.g. Emitters, Distribution £	Electrical Infrastructure £	Total Cost of Low Carbon Heating Measure ¹
Wokingham Road Fire station	Air source heat pump (air to water)	Mitsubishi	CAHV-R450YA-HPB	Standalone	Space Heating and DHW	Radiators	£97,836	£19,250	£24,500	£141,586
Newbury Fire Station	Air source heat pump (air to water)	Mitsubishi	CAHV-R450YA-HPB	Standalone	Space Heating and DHW	Radiators	£195,000	£35,150	£42,000	£272,150
Langley Fire Station	Air source heat pump (air to water)	Mitsubishi	CAHV-R450YA-HPB	Standalone	Space Heating and DHW	Radiators	£140,000	£35,816	£31,500	£207,316
Caversham Road Annexe Building	Air source heat pump (air to water)	Mitsubishi	CAHV-R450YA-HPB	Standalone	Space Heating and DHW	Radiators	£94,000	£19,184	£21,000	£134,184
Whitley Wood Fire Station	Air source heat pump (air to water)	Mitsubishi	CAHV-R450YA-HPB	Standalone	Space Heating and DHW	Radiators	£151,250	£18,920	£31,500	£201,670
						Totals	£678,086	£128,320	£150,500	£956,906²

* **Notes:**

1. Whilst the same ASHP models are being used, the total system costs vary considerably per site due to the enabling works required.
2. The estimated project costs were indicative and accurate at the time of the application and there might slight discrepancies in totals due to rounding up or down.
3. Direct carbon savings for ASHP is circa 80 - 90t CO2e per year, so total carbon savings expected to be in the region of 130t CO2e.

Table A2.2 – Heating systems upgrades.

ROYAL BERKSHIRE FIRE AUTHORITY REPORT



COMMITTEE	FIRE AUTHORITY
DATE OF MEETING	22 APRIL 2024
SUBJECT	2024/25 CORPORATE CALENDAR
LEAD OFFICER	PAUL BREMBLE, HEAD OF CORPORATE SERVICES
LEAD MEMBER	N/A
EXEMPT INFORMATION	NONE
ACTION	DECISION

1. EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

- 1.1 Members are asked to agree Corporate Calendar dates of Fire Authority and Committee meetings during 2024/25.

2. RECOMMENDATION

That the Fire Authority:

- 2.1 **AGREE** 2024/25 Corporate Calendar dates.

3. REPORT

- 3.1 On an annual basis, Royal Berkshire Fire Authority (RBFA) Members are asked to approve its Corporate Calendar. This report is presented to April Fire Authority following approval of unitary authorities' Council and committee meeting schedules.
- 3.2 The Democratic Support Team has worked closely with Berkshire unitary authorities to avoid meeting clashes with full Council and Fire Authority meetings, although difficult to completely achieve due to possible in-year changes to council meetings.
- 3.3 Appendix A is aligned to municipal calendar of meetings (May 2024 to May 2025).

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- 3.4 At the time of writing, the proposed Fire Authority and Committee meetings dates in Appendix A, do not clash with full Unitary Authority Council meetings, however, this will be reviewed throughout the year.
- 3.5 All Fire Authority and Committee meetings listed will be held in public, except for Member workshop dates which have been included for transparency. Five Management Committee and four Audit and Governance Committee meetings have been scheduled however, subject to business need, additional meetings or workshops may be programmed into the Calendar, as required.
- 3.6 It is inevitable, Fire Authority Members will have clashes with their respective Unitary Authority committee meetings and Fire Authority committee meetings during the year. Members are reminded to arrange substitutes wherever possible to ensure that the meeting is quorate in line with SO110 of RBFA Standing Orders.
- 3.7 Audit and Governance Committee will continue to monitor the attendance of Members on an annual basis and will feedback 2024/25 attendance figures to the Fire Authority in June 2025.
- 3.8 In 2024/25, Thames Valley Fire Control Service (TVFCS) Joint Committee meetings will be hosted and held at Royal Berkshire Fire and Rescue Service (RBFRS) Headquarters, Newsham Court, Pincents Kiln, Calot, Reading RG31 7SD. All meetings are held in public, and agendas published on rbfrs website. Joint Committee meeting dates were agreed by current (23/24) Members of the Joint Committee.
- 3.9 Subject to Member approval, 2024/25 Fire Authority and Committee meeting dates will be subsequently added to Members calendars following Fire Authority annual meeting on 24 June 2024, when Members appointments to committees have been made.

4. CONTRIBUTION TO STRATEGIC COMMITMENTS

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

5. FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

- 5.1 Member Allowances and reimbursement of travel expenses has been identified as a financial implication. An annual review of Member Allowances and expenses is monitored by Audit and Governance Committee and will be presented to Royal Berkshire Fire Authority in June 2025.

6. LEGAL IMPLICATIONS

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

7. EQUALITY AND DIVERSITY IMPLICATIONS

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

8. RISK IMPLICATIONS

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

9. CONSISTENCY WITH DUTY TO COLLABORATE

9.1 Not applicable.

10. PRINCIPAL CONSULTATION

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

11. BACKGROUND PAPERS

11.1 None.

12. APPENDICES

12.1 Appendix A- 2024/25 Corporate Calendar.

13. CONTACT DETAILS

13.1 Fayth Rowe, Democratic Support Lead 07500 991975.

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Royal Berkshire Fire Authority & Committee Meetings - 2024/25

	Start time	Venue								2025			
			June	July	August	September	October	November	December	January	February	March	April
Fire Authority	6.30 pm	HQ	24	9 Workshop		12 Workshop		13		21 Workshop	19		17
Management Committee	6.30 pm	HQ		22			8		4		10		7
Audit and Governance Committee	6.30pm	HQ		16			21			30		24	
Thames Valley Fire Control Service Joint Committee	2.00pm	RBFRS HQ		8		18 - Workshop			12			17	

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Appendix A

ROYAL BERKSHIRE FIRE AUTHORITY REPORT



COMMITTEE	FIRE AUTHORITY
DATE OF MEETING	22 APRIL 2024
SUBJECT	LEAD MEMBER AND MEMBER CHAMPION ANNUAL REPORTS
LEAD OFFICER	N/A
LEAD MEMBERS	COUNCILLORS SMITH, WERNER, GITTINGS, SHEPHERD-DUBEY, MALVERN, GRIFFITH AND JEFFERY
EXEMPT INFORMATION	NONE
ACTION	TO NOTE

1. EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

1.1 To note Annual Reports up to April 2024 received from Lead Members and Member Champions.

2. RECOMMENDATION

That the Fire Authority:

2.1 **NOTE** the reports.

3. REPORT

3.1 The attached appendices A-H detail the Annual Reports from the following Lead Members and Member Champions.

- a) Budget and Income Generation Lead Member – Councillor Mike Smith.
- b) Collaboration Lead Member – Councillor Simon Werner.
- c) Community Risk Management Plan (CRMP) Lead Member – Councillor Paul Gittings.

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- d) Strategic Assets and Sustainability Lead Member – Councillor Rachelle Shepherd-DuBey.
- e) Equality, Diversity, and Inclusion (EDI) Member Champion – Councillor Morag Malvern
- f) Community Safety Member Champion – Councillor Wendy Griffith
- g) Safety, Health, Fitness and Wellbeing Champion – Councillor Owen Jeffery
- h) Armed Forces Honorary Member Champion – Councillor Rachelle Shepherd - DuBey

3.2 The 2023/24 Member Development Champion, Councillor Owen Jeffery presented [Member Development Annual Report and Progress Against Action Plan](#) to Audit and Governance Committee at its meeting on 28 March 2024, Item 7.

4. CONTRIBUTION TO STRATEGIC COMMITMENTS

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

5. FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

- 5.1 Please refer to individual reports as to whether there are any financial implications.

6. LEGAL IMPLICATIONS

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

7. EQUALITY AND DIVERSITY IMPLICATIONS

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

8. RISK IMPLICATIONS

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

9. CONSISTENCY WITH DUTY TO COLLABORATE

- 9.1 Please refer to individual reports.

10. PRINCIPAL CONSULTATION

- 10.1 None for the purpose of this report.

11. BACKGROUND PAPERS

- 11.1 Member Development Annual Report and Progress against Action Plan – Audit and Governance Committee on 28 March 2024.

12. APPENDICES

- 12.1 Appendix A - Budget and Income Generation Lead Member- Councillor Mike Smith
- 12.2 Appendix B - Collaboration Lead Member – Councillor Simon Werner
- 12.3 Appendix C - Community Risk Management Plan Lead Member – Councillor Paul Gittings
- 12.4 Appendix D - Strategic Assets and Sustainability Lead Member – Councillor Paul Gittings
- 12.5 Appendix E - Equality, Diversity, and Inclusion (EDI) Member Champion – Councillor Morag Malvern
- 12.6 Appendix F Community Safety Champion – Councillor Wendy Griffith
- 12.7 Appendix G - Safety, Health, Fitness and Wellbeing Champion – Councillor Owen Jeffery
- 12.8 Appendix H – Armed Forces Honorary Member Champion – Councillor Shepherd-DuBey

13. CONTACT DETAILS

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- 13.1 Budget and Income Generation – Conor Byrne (Head of Finance and Procurement) byrnec@rbfrs.co.uk
- 13.2 Collaboration – Jim Powell (Area Manager, Collaboration and Policy) powellj@rbfrs.co.uk
- 13.3 Community Risk Management Plan – Paul Bremble (Head of Corporate Services) bremblep@rbfrs.co.uk
- 13.4 Strategic Assets and Sustainability – Lukasz Wrona (Head of Business and Information Systems) wronal@rbfrs.co.uk and Paul Brooks (Head of Assets) brooksp@rbfrs.co.uk
- 13.5 Equality, Diversity and Inclusion (EDI) - Becci Jefferies (Head of Human Resources and Learning and Development) jefferiesb@rbfrs.co.uk
- 13.6 Community Safety – Dave Crease (Area Manager Response and Resilience) creased@rbfrs.co.uk
- 13.7 Safety, Health, Fitness and Wellbeing - Becci Jefferies (Head of Human Resources and Learning and Development) jefferiesb@rbfrs.co.uk
- 13.8 Armed Forces – Paul Bremble (Head of Corporate Services) bremblep@rbfrs.co.uk

Budget and Income Generation

Summary

We have set a net revenue budget for 2024/25 of just under £46 million with a further £7.3 million of capital being invested in our estates, equipment and IT in the next year. This includes ordering new appliances, building a new training facility and refurbishment our stations at Langley and Slough.

Our reserves are healthy and where we have funds for investment, we are doing so in an ethical manner and against a range of prudent safeguards. We will not be borrowing any money in the next year.

We have included a small increase in the numbers of fire fighters to improve resilience in our crewing model and also enhancements to our HR function to deal with increasingly complex pensions matters. We are also embarking on an efficiency and productivity drive which will be enabled via better IT systems.

We will always put sound management of our financial resources at the heart of our thinking and the forward look is both secure and robust from a funding perspective.

Budget opportunities and constraints

By the end of the 2022/23, the massive effects of inflation resulting from the Central Government actions in September 2022 began to be felt in earnest. Whilst the headline figures for consumer inflation are reducing, recently down to 3.4%, in October 2022, it was 11.1%. Many contracts have inflation escalators and many business cost items like labour, utilities and fuel are still well above the headline consumer rates.

The main increase in core revenue comes from the increase in the Council tax base; there were 3,200 additional band D properties created over the previous year (a 1% increase in the base). The increase is based on these properties paying council tax and what increase the Authority applies to the precept. Many disparate Government grants are being consolidated with the net result of an overall reduction in their support.

Early budget thinking for the year 2024/25 was based on hoping that a further £5/household would be allowed. Had that been so, then the precept would have

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Appendix A
raised some £1,818k. In the event, through the Local Government Policy Statement in early December, a significant constraint was RBFRS being capped at 2.99% which raised the lesser amount of £858k. This led to an initial projected deficit of £1,441k for the Budget Working Party to deal with – clearly some significant pressure at that time.

The second major constraint on the RBFRS budget is the annual pay Award which is negotiated at a national level. Budget figures from both Green and Grey Book awards are assumed to be 3.75% but this may prove to be an underestimate, and should that be so, then to maintain a balanced budget, any shortfall will have to come from Reserves.

Over recent years, the complexities of the various Pension Schemes have really caused a large amount of additional administrative work within the relatively small Human Resources team, and going forward, this is not going to reduce. Therefore, it is recognised that additional resources are required to manage these issues.

The application of the Lean Resourcing model has been reviewed and recognised that running at very lean crewing levels has resulted in significantly increased overtime costs that were well over the budgeted values. This is exacerbated by the high numbers of staff retiring or transferring to other Services. Therefore, it was a key budget input that an additional ten firefighters are to be added to the workforce – this is additional to the numbers coming through the apprenticeship scheme and allowed-for normal churn.

The Budget working party fought hard to keep these two essential increases in the workforce included in the final version, especially as the projected reduction in overtime would balance a significant element of the costs.

Further work has resulted in the publication of the Efficiency and Productivity Plan that covers the next three years. The Royal Berkshire Fire and Rescue Service has an excellent track record in delivering efficiencies; indeed, His Majesty's Inspectorate of Constabulary and Fire and Rescue Services has issued his second inspection report of our Service which states, *"We are pleased to see that the Service has identified savings and investment opportunities to improve the service to the public or generate further savings."*

The Efficiency and Productivity Plan has been drawn up with the express purpose of maximising the resources available to support the Fire Authority's purpose and

vision. The Plan also incorporates wider fire sector objectives ~~As per the~~ with Government to deliver 2% on pay efficiencies and an increase in productivity of 3% by 2024/25.

Income Generation Review

Aside from the various Central Government payments and grants that are many and various – often varying year to year and many with a degree of uncertainty - an important element of finances is the income generated closer to home. The following table indicates the contribution, which is not insignificant:

During the current financial year, the Authority is anticipated to generated income as shown in the table below.

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Appendix A

Income 2023/24	£000
Support service costs recharged to TVFCS partners	248
Rental and running costs charged to TVP (Newsham Court)	51
Rental and running costs charged to TVP (Hungerford FS)	11
Running costs charged to TVP (Theale FS)	24
SCAS – Licences to occupy	25
Telecommunication mast income	97
Investment Properties	6
Interest	722
Cross border income	298
Secondment income	134
Total	1,616

Reserves and investment

A key element of the health of the finances are the state of the Reserves. At the beginning of the year we had total reserves of £15.2 million, boosted by the sale of the Dee Road premises which provided nearly £6.3 million. During the year several key projects have been initiated including the placing of orders for 8 new Appliances to be delivered in phases over the next three years. This will continue the modernisation of our fleet which had been the second oldest in England. Placing these orders secures both large elements of the price and build slots. It also means we will have a standardised fleet and this should result in various on-going savings.

All of the remainder of the Dee Road receipts will be spent this coming year on projects including major refurbishment at Langley and Slough plus the new Training Centre at Whitley – these two latter projects are already underway. And there will be significant investment in the IT infrastructures which are key to realising the efficiency improvement plus substantial Invest-to-Save projects that will improve the sustainability of the entire operation including various renewable energy projects and LED lighting with typical returns better than 20% per annum.

We have also replenished the Budget Contingency Reserve which was used in the previous year to balance the accounts – this is now back to the 3% of the revenue budget.

As a simple statement, RBFRS are not planning on borrowing any money in the next financial year.

In the previous year, the following principles were approved by the Authority and have been adhered to this year:

- Maintain the General Reserve at current levels or 5% of the revenue budget.
- Maintain the Budget Contingency Reserve at 3% of Revenue Budget.
- Maintain at least £1m in the Development Fund to take advantage of joint ventures / major invest to save initiatives.
- Use capital receipts to fund long-term enhancements to our estate.

Treasury management

The Authority is required to operate a balanced budget, which broadly means that cash raised during the year will meet cash expenditure. Part of the treasury management operation is to ensure that this cash flow is adequately planned, with cash being available when it is needed.

Surplus monies are invested in low-risk counterparties or instruments commensurate with the Authority's low risk appetite, providing adequate liquidity initially before considering investment return.

Investment strategy

The Authority has always adopted a prudent approach to both its investment and borrowing strategies with the aim of providing the Authority with financial freedom even in times of volatility.

The Authority's investment strategy has always been to firstly ensure the security of the sum invested, then consider portfolio liquidity and only after that to consider the yield generated. In other words, the Authority has sought to achieve the optimum return on its investments without taking too much risk.

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Our investment decisions are within CIPFA guidelines and we are doing so in an ethical framework that was first introduced in 2023/24. A further refinement for 2024/25 means including countries that considered by the UK's largest charity fund manager, Churches, Charities and Local Authorities Investment Management Limited (CCLA), in their counterparty list of countries in addition to the ones that appear on the Freedom House list.

Acknowledgment

As a final word, none of this would have been possible without the diligence and hard work from Conor Byrne and his team and in particular, their willingness to find solutions and tackle pressures in a positive and calm approach. In addition, the Budget Working Party worked extremely well with cross party representation, united in the common aim of setting a robust and secure budget for the RBFRS.

Cllr Mike Smith, Budget and Income Generation Lead

Collaboration

Review

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

The elected members of the Steering Group have supported officers in delivering year two objectives of the collaboration partnerships [five year plan](#). This has seen the successful implementation of replacement Breathing Apparatus sets across the Thames Valley which will bring a number of benefits in terms of efficiency and effectiveness. Officers are currently evaluating these benefits which should see a reduction in fire engine mobilisations to cross border incidents, which will result in both financial savings and a more effective approach to managing risk by maintaining fire engine availability ensuring we maximise the safety of the residents of Royal Berkshire.

RBFRS has made significant progress in support of a Thames Valley wide data sharing project known as 'Thames Valley Together'. This project has been driven by the Thames Valley Violence Reduction Unit and will help RBFA meet its statutory obligations under the [Serious Violence Duty](#). Data sharing and intelligence is fundamental to planning meaningful interventions to deliver good outcomes for our communities in relation to both violence reduction and fire safety.

Thames Valley FRS have come together to review the recommendations of the [Manchester Arena Inquiry \(Volume 2\)](#) and a combined FRS working group was formed. Throughout 2023/24, these teams have been working through a wide range of actions relating to these recommendations including policy review and new equipment and training, with a particular focus on specialist officer capabilities and a new mass casualty triage tool. These improvements will ensure the service is well prepared to support victims should a similar event occur in our county.

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Appendix B

The three Thames Valley Fire Services are also working together to align how they respond to Automatic Fire Alarms (AFA) and in February 2024, RBFA members agreed to [consult](#) on a range of options to reduce the numbers of false alarms it attends. This coincides with a [consultation](#) being undertaken by Oxfordshire FRS and Buckinghamshire FRS have commissioned a project to seek similar outcomes.

Work continues on existing multi-year projects including the development of a joint Forensic Fire Scene Investigation Unit (FFSIU) with our colleagues in Thames Valley Police in order to meet the substantial demands required by new legislative and regulatory requirements. Following a 'soft launch' on 20 March 2023 the team are moving closer to the pre-accreditation stage.

The Incident Command Support project has delivered a number of improvements to aligned ways of working that support effective and safe resolution of incidents. This includes looking at how the service can improve the way it manages the flow of information between fire control and the incident ground and this work will continue into 24/25.

Ongoing and looking forward

Work on the existing projects described above will continue into 24/25. However, aligned to the five year plan themes there are a number of new initiatives that will be considered over the coming year.

Firstly, services will consider a proposal around the procurement and use of Body Worn Video. FRS National Operational Guidance recommends considering their use and they are mentioned in the Manchester recommendations. This capability can provide a number of benefits for frontline service delivery personnel and phase one of the project will deliver a business case to enable services to make an informed decision whether to adopt this capability.

Secondly, officers will consider a proposal to develop a Thames Valley wide Operational and Technical Communications strategy. The purpose of this piece of work is to support a joined-up approach to how services will plan for and make the best use of operational technology to ensure it is fit for the future and provides an effective Response to emergencies. This will include looking at how Thames Valley

Fire Control can support the public to use mobile phone video technology to send video of incidents directly into the control room, helping control staff to make informed mobilising decisions.

Lastly, TVFRS will consider commissioning a scoping exercise to look at how it can make the most efficient and effective use of its operational training resources across the Thames Valley.

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

Cllr Simon Werner, Collaboration Lead Member.

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Community Risk Management Plan (CRMP)

Review

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

At the Fire Authority meeting in April 2023, Royal Berkshire Fire Authority agreed the Corporate Plan and Community Risk Management Plan for 2023- 2027. The plan sets out the direction of travel for the Service over the next four years and has been a significant undertaking for the service in assessing the risks within Berkshire and to determine priorities for managing those risks. The plan set out the Fire Authority's strategic commitments to the communities of Berkshire and the priorities for the next four years.

On the 6th of May 2023, the coronation of King Charles took place in Westminster Abbey, this culminated in a live concert in Windsor Castle on the 7th May 2023. The service were called upon as part of a multi-agency response referred to as Golden Orb to support these events.

Our Response teams supported the coronation by providing both Strategic and Tactical command for fire over the two days. Operational crews were held on standby near the castle to provide immediate response to incidents should it had been required.

I am pleased to say the coronation went off without any incidents and I would like to thank the service for the work that was carried out over this period.

On the 5th of April 2023 our crews attended a serious house fire in Erleigh Road Reading. The crews worked hard and rescued four people from the fire, including three children. However, despite their efforts two adults later died in hospital as a result of their injuries. Our thoughts go out to the families and my thanks to the crews for their efforts on the night.

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Appendix C

Following the fire, Wokingham Road White Watch were welcomed into the Aisha Masjid & Islamic Centre in Earley where they worked with the Muslim community to raise awareness of fire safety in the home. During this they were able to reach approximately 600-700 members of the community and gathered 43 referrals for Safe and Well visits. Our West hub team was supported by colleagues from the central hub to ensure the post fire follow up could be prioritised.

In January 2024, the county saw widespread flooding effecting many areas. The service supported with the evacuations of houses in Wraysbury and the protection of vital infrastructure assets from flooding in the county. As well as many rescues from vehicles trapped by flooding. The service worked with partners in the Local Resilience Forum to support both our service and neighbouring services that saw a similar level of demand.

Officers managed this difficult period and continued to keep members informed of the measures that were being put in place across the county.

We are all proud of our exacting Response Standard of arriving at emergency incidents within 10 minutes of the call being fielded, on 75 percent of occasions.

For the year to date, at the end of Quarter three, we have achieved this on 73 percent of occasions, so a slight shortfall on the target.

There are a number of factors behind this, mainly around the increased incident demand which is now exceeding pre-pandemic levels. The profile of the incidents has also changed with a higher proportion of calls being false alarms and special service calls.

The number of Automatic Fire Alarms the service attended continues to remain high, 2071 at the end of Quarter Three (2023/24). I am pleased to announce that as a Fire Authority we are currently in consultation with the public on how to reduce this in order that they are less disruptive for businesses and the service. This is positive progress against one of our CRMP priorities and I look forward to the outcome of that consultation in June 2024.

Up until the end of Quarter Three, 3197 Safe and Well Visits have been completed for those individuals that have been referred to the service from our partner agencies that make them at higher risk of death in the event of an accidental dwelling fire. This is an increase of 13% for this period of the year to-date and reflects positive progress. We have completed 96.9% of statutory fire consultations within the required timeframes up until Quarter 3. This is above our target of 95%. I am pleased to report this positive progress against two CRMP commitments.

A number of Strategic Asset projects form part of the Community Risk Management Plan. Further detail will be provided on these by the Lead Member for Strategic Assets. However, I'm pleased to note the positive implementation of enhanced water rescue capability in the East of the County, Slough Fire station. The introduction of this capability will improve the safety of the public in an area that we know has had serious incidents in the past involving flooding and water rescues. This contributes to one of our priorities in the CRMP in meeting the changing profile of risk due to climate change.

Looking forward

This coming year will see the launch of our new Integrated Service Delivery Strategy, this strategy will show how our Prevention, Protection, Response and Resilience will work together to reduce the risks in the county highlighted in our CRMP. This strategy will be presented to the Fire Authority for agreement in June. The year ahead will see another busy year for the service and I would like to thank them for their hard work and dedication to the people of Berkshire.

Cllr Paul Gittings, Community Risk Management Lead Member

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Strategic Assets & Sustainability - 2023-24 Lead Member Annual Report

Assets (Estates, Fleet & Equipment)

Context

There has been much change within the Assets service during 2023-24, taking opportunity from managerial staff turnover and set against a backdrop of a complex and congested business-as-usual programme whilst sustaining momentum with strategic planning activities. Notably, to support fresh thinking, an independent professional review was completed of the Facilities and Property Capital Projects sections and a decision taken to combine them into a single function within the Assets service. This approach puts responsibility for all the strategic assets of Estates, Fleet and Equipment (including Supplies, but less ICT) into a single area of responsibility, thereby improving consistency and quality of service, whilst realising some efficiencies and cashable benefits. A critical enabler for this approach to succeed has been the recruitment of a professionally qualified senior leader, which was achieved in November 2023.

Estates – Facilities, Property Capital Management and Sustainability

Review

Integrating the Facilities and the Property Capital Management sections commenced in November 2023, including co-location of the workplace and a team building event, culminating in the appointment of an Estate Manager on 25 March 2024. This new role is key to galvanising integration, facilitating positive change and professionalising the function to realise yet more benefits.

The Facilities team also benefitted from the appointment of a permanent fulltime Facilities Manager from 11 March 2024 along with regularising a number of temporary changes in the organisation to reduce uncertainty and help improve focus. Under new leadership, the team can continue to develop and evolve their working practices to provide a customer focussed and efficient service underpinned by assured compliance. This ethos will be supported by the professional soft services providers (principally waste and cleaning) and hard services provider (planned preventative maintenance) that have had contracts re-tendered or refreshed over

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Q3/Q4 of 2023/24. Notably, the previously reported NFCC-led collaborative cleaning contract procurement did not progress satisfactorily so RBFRS ran their own competition – this was a considerable piece of work for busy teams, including sterling support from Procurement colleagues. Whilst great progress has been made in developing some parts of the estate in recent years, there is still much more work needed and this continues to drive demand across the facilities function.

The Property Capital Management team has flexed over most of the year to deal with their own long term resource gaps, with team members stepping up as required to lead on project planning and delivery, along with real estate management. The resourcing churn started to settle from January 2024 with the return of a key officer in the team. The team has also benefitted from professional multi-disciplinary consultant support to plan and deliver projects – this support is critical to help guarantee successful outcomes and to ensure RBFRS is not exposed to unnecessary risks around compliance, liability, health and safety or the like.

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

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

A range of EDI and contamination improvements have been carried out across the estate, including providing better facilities such as upgrading dormitories and showering areas, and improvements to better control contamination. Slough in particular has had a significant amount of work done to meet optimum EDI standards and to help make the buildings more sustainable with better insulation and installation of LED lighting, along with improved water rescue facilities.

Sustainability planning work increased in tempo during the 2023/24 year; building on the carbon footprint benchmark assessment the previous year, heat decarbonisation plans have been completed for the estate portfolio. This work fed into a comprehensive bid for Public Sector Decarbonisation Scheme (PSDS) funding with a grant of £0.927M being awarded in March 2023. The SAIF includes additional funding to combine with the grant totalling £1.77M to help transform five of our least energy efficient stations.

The Whitley Wood Training Centre has had urgent repairs completed to the firehouse facility to ensure continuity of training, although more work will be needed to keep this critical capability operational. The major project to redevelop the training centre has progressed well with detailed planning consent submitted to the local planning authority in December 2023 and a decision expected by end-April 2024. Communications with all stakeholders has been a key activity within the project and the Management Committee approved funding at the February 2024 meeting.

Ongoing and looking forward

Over the coming year under the new leadership and organisational arrangements, the Estates team will be aiming to continue to drive forward a highly customer focussed approach to support the wider organisation and to deliver its objectives within a safe and comfortable workplace. This will be underpinned by development of improved process and procedures and assured compliance. Better team integration and increased collaboration will ensure that initiatives result in improved and sustainable working environments for our personnel by achieving the estates development objectives that are outlined within the SAIF.

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The SAIF, which was approved by Members in February 2024, sets out the outline plan for estates development for the coming years. The focus of the team will be to deliver these projects (subject to the required approvals) over 2024-25. The priority projects will be:

- Completion of the new Whitley Wood Training Centre by March 2025 (subject to planning)
- Completing the improvement works at Slough fire station by end-May 2024
- Installing LED lighting across much of the estate by end-March 2024
- Planning in 2024 to deliver the joint PSDS/SAIF sustainability projects for completion by 31 March 2026.

The existing 5-year Property Asset Management Strategy covers the period 2020 – 2025, but the opportunity will be taken in 2024 to refresh it and convert it to an Estate Strategy with an increased focus on sustainability and asset management.

Fleet & Equipment

Review

The focus for fleet over 2023-24 has been to continue to consolidate the excellent progress in transforming our front-line appliance fleet and other specialist vehicles which have been delivered in the preceding years. Since 2017, 19 new front line pumping appliances have been delivered into service with the Thames Valley Fire and Rescue Services working together to design and procure a standard fire appliance that carries an aligned inventory of equipment. White fleet vehicles have been on-boarded as they are made available through the procurement process, with blue light fitting and other modifications now a well embedded process using the Hants & Isle of Wight FRS Joint Working Agreement (JWA). The Service's first electric vehicles (cars and small vans) have been receipted and deployed, with mixed feedback on their performance – the key is to ensure they are driven correctly and used for the right function, which has been communicated widely now. The mild hybrid engine response cars previously reported on are performing well, with three more awaiting delivery and fit out – these were due March 2024, but due to current global supply chain issues, lead times for vehicles remain significantly increased.

Notably, one flexible duty officer has taken on a full electric vehicle with positive feedback on efficacy and performance to date. The JWA was due for renewal by end-March 2023, but for operational and business continuity reasons it has been extended for a further 12 months on a flexible basis.

With the continued support of the Fire Authority, the Strategic Asset Investment Framework (SAIF) was approved by Members in February 2024. This makes provision for the next phase of vehicle renewals and replacements. The intention is to continue developing the fleet, building on from the progressive and successful approach taken thus far.

On the equipment front, the Service has now fully transitioned to 'Interspiro' breathing apparatus equipment after the completion of a competitive tender process during 2022/23. The new equipment has been designed with firefighter health, safety and welfare in mind and has brought innovations such as full telemetry, wireless communications, and personal issue facemasks to our staff. The equipment is identical across the Thames Valley, further aligning our operational response with the goal of reducing the number of operational resources that need to be deployed to an incident where cross border resources are used. A notable new capability introduced in 2023 is battery operated cutting equipment for vehicle and other rescue use. The equipment procurement process included rigorous research and trials resulting in highly capable and easy to operate tools that will reduce noise on site and offer a high degree of portability for frontline firefighters.

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

Ongoing and looking forward

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The CRMP projects and objectives will help clarify strategic asset requirements, to support and inform our future procurement needs for special appliances and operational equipment, along with informing the fleet strategy, which was due for renewal in 2023, but will now be produced prior to the HMICRS inspection in 2024. This coming year will include resetting the requirements for the Fleet JWA to ensure best value for money to the Service along with concluding the previously mentioned workwear project. Sustainability will continue to be thread throughout the planning process, to include increasing the use of hybrid, plug-in hybrid EVs and pure EVs where practicable along with horizon scanning the market and sector for alternative fuel options like synthetic fuel. The overall objective remains the creation of a sustainable rolling procurement plan to ensure that RBFRS has fit for purpose fleet and equipment.

Information and Communication Technology (ICT)

Review

In accordance with the RBFRS' ICT strategy, the strategic funding model for ICT has continued to shift away from perpetual licensing of software into subscription-based services. Echoing last year there has been a myriad of events and initiatives across the ICT domains, with continual progress across this landscape. Core projects this period have largely been associated with refresh of hardware assets, notably the first phase of laptop replacement including multi-functional devices, which will allow to better leverage our systems and further move away from paper, tablets for operational officers to support further digitisation of processes, and operational communications devices such as Mobile Data Terminals (MDTs), station end and fireground radios.

Key systems' migrations and upgrades have been successfully completed, including migration of all departments' data to SharePoint enabling migration of RBFRS server infrastructure to the cloud and removal of systems necessary to manage it on premise. The move continues to enhance opportunities awarded to the organisation by retaining its data within one ecosystem, paving the way for further consolidation and increased automation. A significant amount of work has been done to establish

a path to migrating our core systems to the cloud enabling the project to go ahead in 2024/25.

Systems supporting HR, crewing, assets, and prevention and protection systems have all received upgrades and improvements aimed at reducing the effort required to complete common and repetitive processes, with desktop and mobile apps developed and more benefits to be realised during the coming months. Those already include further developments leveraging existing systems to digitise activities related to operational assets and routine asset checks, or digitised ways of reporting defects.

Notably, the procurement of a station-end mobilising system used to mobilise crews to incidents at each station has been completed. Its function is critical to enabling crews to mobilise by analysing signals coming from Thames Valley Control, displaying incident related information and sounding the alarm, printing incident information, as well as performing a number of other automated actions including opening doors on the path to the appliance bay and the bay door itself. The specification chosen prepares the Service for migration away from PSTN telephony, currently used as a backup route for mobilising signals and which has been announced end-of-life and is currently planned for switch off by Openreach at the end of 2025.

Paired with access control equipment, our newly refreshed station-end system will continue to support the crews behind the scenes by providing appropriate information on the way to the incident or guarding against contamination of “clean” areas following a return.

Ongoing and looking forward

Completion of the network infrastructure refresh, second phase of replacing our laptops and desktops, replacement of service’s mobile phones, systems consolidation and automation will be a key focus for next year.

A major project associated with our core server estate will be a delivery of the on premise-server to cloud migration. This is a key project for the service and one which

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will further improve the resilience of our core asset as well as our business continuity arrangements.

In line with these activities, a new system of deploying laptops and desktops will be introduced reducing the 'hands-on' effort of engineers to the necessary minimum in support of improving our productivity and efficiency.

Efforts to leverage newly enabled functionalities within Microsoft 365 will continue as systems are reviewed at key points in their lifecycle. Cross-department collaboration efforts will increase to support staff's engagement with technology already available. This includes completion of the rollout and expanding the utilisation of recently developed asset management functionality to other areas of the organisation. Finalising Thames Valley Fire Control Service's mobilising and communication equipment refresh project will ensure continued reliability of the solution.

Cllr Rachelle Shepherd-DuBey

Lead Member for Strategic Assets and Sustainability

Equality Diversity and Inclusion Member Champion Report 2023/2024

Work has continued across the Service in 2023/2024 to promote Equality, Diversity, and Inclusion (EDI). Progress and activities against our EDI objectives from the past 12 months are outlined below.

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

2023/24 saw two rounds of wholtime firefighter apprentices start in service. In Q2 8 apprentices started their training with a further 18 starting their training in Q4. Of these 26 that started, 19% were female, 12% were from an ethnic minority background currently underrepresented within the service and 4% stated they had a disability.

Have a Go days were run in April and May which had a total of 37 attendees across the four sessions.

Q3 saw the introduction of an extensive positive action programme ahead of recruitment opening this programme included four online sessions about the role of a firefighter where attendees heard about the role from operational firefighters and from our Head of Learning and Development about the training process. A further four online sessions were offered breaking down the various stages of the recruitment process and provided tips and tricks on how to write a supporting statement. The next lot of sessions were a tour of a fire station with a drill demonstration from crews, the drills ranged from RTC to ladder drills to give individuals an insight into some of the tasks carried out as part of the role. Four of these sessions were ran across the county. Finally, five Have a Go days were hosted across the county to give individuals the opportunity to try out the physical tests required at recruitment. Feedback of the sessions was really positive. Over 100 people registered their interest with 67 individuals attending at least one of the sessions. 38 of those went on to apply in the current recruitment process. A full evaluation is being completed to help shape our positive action offer for 2024/25.

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The Summer Internship completed its second year of the scheme in Q2. Five interns aged 16 and 17 from ethnic minority groups currently underrepresented in the service joined the service for five weeks over summer. Each intern spent one week with Business Support, Programme Office, Facilities, Enforcement and Collaboration and Policy and had the opportunity to visit operational fire stations across the county.

This year the Service had two matches for the Leonard Cheshire Change 100 Programme who joined the Service for three months in the summer, one intern was matched with the Communications and Engagement Team and another matched with the Data and Performance team. A third was requested for the Learning and Development Team but an appropriate match was not found.

Our recruitment processes are constantly being reviewed to ensure they are inclusive and accessible. Our equality monitoring questions have been reworded to be more inclusive and promote disclosure. For example, there is now an option to “self-describe” so individuals can type their own answers rather than fitting themselves into one of the set answers. Adjustments are now offered at every stage of the recruitment process including application, interview, group exercise (where relevant) and appointment, this is clearly communicated to candidates throughout.

Our Candidates' Guidance to Interview was also reviewed providing candidates with more information on the types of adjustments we could make as well as providing further information as to what to expect during interview, including photos of the interview space so candidates know what to expect. This aimed to decrease some anxiety that individuals may experience when coming for an interview.

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

In Q1 the Services new Equality, Diversity, and Inclusion Coordinator started allowing a refocus on EDI related workstreams across the service.

The Equality, Diversity and Inclusion Action Plan was reviewed and new plan for 23/24 was introduced following approval from the EDI Steering Group.

Collaboration and partnership work have also been critical to the progress of the EDI agenda over this period. Memberships with the Business Disability Forum and Inclusive Employers have been maintained and renewed. Both memberships provide access to learning opportunities and learning resources that are promoted to staff through communication channels. In addition, these memberships provide RBFRS with consultative support on EDI and Disability related measures.

RBFRS has continued to participate in and maintain representation on several sector and regional networks including the Five Shires Collaboration, the Neurodiversity and Training Group and AFSA (Asian Fire Service Association) South Region Forum.

Policies continue to be reviewed to include gender neutral language, and Equality Impact Assessments (EIAs) are included for all new and revised policies. More widely, EIAs are undertaken for activities including procurement, projects, and new equipment. Guidance and training are available to staff undertaking assessments and a register of all EIAs enables transparency, access to research and data and the sharing of learning. EIAs support organisational decisions. The EIA guidance and LMS package was reviewed and updated in Q3 to further support staff to complete high quality EIAs.

Both the Gender Pay Gap Report and Ethnicity Pay Gap Report have been produced and published externally as per previous years. It is not mandatory for RBFRS to complete The Ethnicity Pay Gap Report however we continue to voluntarily report on these figures.

In Q4 the service submitted their Disability Confident Leader for Revalidation following the end of the first 3 years of validation.

A review of the HMI spotlight review and the LFB Culture Report were undertaken and considered alongside the renewed vision and purpose which was launched at the all-staff conferences in June. Following a gap analysis of the LFB report an action plan was implemented and led to the development of the RBFRS Development Programme.

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The Service amended its Green Book Annual Leave Policy to include the provision of flexible bank holidays. This offer allows for individuals to swap statutory public holidays for other time off to observe religious holidays such as swapping Easter Monday to take Eid off.

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

Colleagues across the Service have engaged with members of the community in several forums to promote the activities and services we provide.

Local safety plans have been designed to incorporate equality considerations whilst continuing to identify risk at a local level and target prevention and protection activity appropriately. This has included an increasing awareness of individuals and groups in the community who are less likely to engage with our services and activities.

This year the Service attended three Pride events across the county including Reading, Newbury and the first Bracknell Pride to engage with our local LGBTQ+ community.

Engagement with more vulnerable and underrepresented communities continues on a hub level. An example of some of the work throughout the year including:

- Red Watch Slough attending the VIP launch of Visit my Mosque at the Jamia Masjid Islamic Centre in Slough.
- A crew from Bracknell attended Bracknell Forests first Cultural Day which focussed on a blend of culture and community cohesion.
- Wokingham Road White Watch attended the Aisha Masjid & Islamic Centre in Earley where they worked with the Muslim community to raise awareness of fire safety in the home. During this time, they were able to reach 600-700 passers-by and were invited to have dinner at the head table. This work also resulted in a further 43 safe and well referrals from the community.

- Crews from Caversham Road visited student halls and interacted with the Polish community putting up language posters in key locations.
- Promotion of services to the deaf community by actively seeking out contacts and requesting targeted social media requesting social media posts containing BSL (British Sign Language).
- Prevention delivered a fire safety talk to the Nepalese Community with the help of an interpreter.
- Crews in central Hub supported with the Wokingham homeless count and engaged with the homeless to provide important fire safety advice.
- EDI Coordinator attended the Celebrating Diversity event in the East of Berkshire providing the opportunity to connect with individuals from diverse local communities including the Sikh community.
- Continued visits to refugee hotels across the county to give fire safety advice.
- Attendance at Bracknell Fun Fest which was an opportunity to engage with foster carers supporting immigrant children.

Meetings have been held with relevant staff across the organisation to understand how we can better capture work carried out within the community and events that we attend to ensure better information is captured on who we are targeting to ensure Equality of Access to all. This work will then allow us to identify groups that we may not currently be working with.

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

To support the creation of an inclusive environment, staff understanding and awareness of EDI a number of articles and webinars are shared on various topics including LGBTQ+ history month, Neurodiversity and Black History Month amongst others. A comms calendar is created annually which marks the celebration and awareness days throughout the year that the Service celebrates.

Personal stories from staff within the organisation have been shared such as an article published highlighting the impacts microaggressions have on an individual.

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As part of our membership with the Business Disability Forum and Inclusive Employers the service has access to learning opportunities and webinars throughout the year. The upcoming webinars are posted on Viva Engage platforms for individuals to sign up. Webinars have included Neurodivergent Contributions in the Workplace, international Day of the Elimination of Racial Discrimination, Understanding and Challenging Islamophobia and many more.

This year the EDI Network had a review with a name change and updated Terms of Reference to further promote best practice sharing. At the end of March, the EDI Network had its first in person event.

This year the service hosted three All Staff Conferences to launch our new vision and purpose the day started with talks from members of our SLT about the vision and a space for questions with the afternoon focussing on Active Bystander Training from Active Bystander UK.

We continue to review and implement policies and guidance where necessary. For example, our Line Managers Guidance for supporting staff celebrating Ramadan was reviewed and expanded to include more detail ahead of Ramadan in 2024. The Maternity, Paternity, Shared Parental and Adoption Policy was updated to include the increase in paid leave entitlement for fertility treatment and to include information on statutory shared parental pay.

A large focus area for us within the Service this year has been support for Neurodivergent individuals. A Neurodiversity Handbook was created and made available on the staff intranet which received positive feedback from members of staff across green and grey book. The handbook has now been created in a hard copy format and is available across all stations and HQ.

New accessible bathroom signage was designed and has now been added to all accessible toilets across RBFRS sites and includes braille. In addition, new signage has been created for gender neutral showers and toilets on stations which is currently being rolled out.

The organisation celebrated National Inclusion Week in Q2 which saw HQ staff come together for a Potluck Lunch to celebrate individuals' cultures, feedback of the

event was positive with staff requesting it to be a regular occurrence moving forwards.

Looking Ahead

Looking ahead to the 2024/25 year we will be introducing EDI and Cultural Awareness training to all staff across the organisation. In addition to new LMS packages on Bullying and Harassment, Allyship and Inclusive recruitment as well as a refresh of our existing Equality, Diversity, and Inclusion E-Learning packages.

The Summer Internship will run for its third and final year of the pilot scheme throughout July and August. Spaces have been advertised for five interns aged 17 or 18 who will work across our Business Support, Programme Office, Facilities, Training and Development, IT and Information Governance teams as well as attending operational fire stations across the county.

The Service will also continue to engage with partners including the Five Shires Collaboration and AFSA to support the delivery of this work, particularly regarding establishing informative measures for benchmarking. We will also be expanding our positive action activities to occur on a more regular basis following the evaluation of the Discover a Career as a Firefighter sessions that happened before Christmas.

A refresh of the upcoming years EDI Action Plan is being completed with focus areas including equality data and Neurodiversity.

Cllr Morag Malvern, EDI Member Champion

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Community Safety 2023/24 - Year Review

Royal Berkshire Fire Authority's mission is to serve the people of Royal Berkshire. To support this, through its Corporate Plan, the Authority has made three strategic commitments to the people of Berkshire relating to Community Safety.

- **Prevention.** We will reduce the risk to our communities through our partnership duties and prevention education activities, ensuring that our services are accessible to all.
- **Protection.** We will support those with responsibility for premises to understand their duties in ensuring the safety of all people using buildings covered by the Building Safety Act 2022 and Regulatory Reform (Fire Safety) Order 2005, whilst ensuring that our services are accessible to all.
- **Resilience.** We will ensure our resilience and work with our partners to promote and build resilience in the communities we serve.

Under the Fire and Rescue Services Act 2004, a fire and rescue authority must make provisions to promote fire safety in its area. Under the Regulatory Reform (Fire Safety) Order 2005, fire and rescue authorities must enforce the provisions of that Order and any regulations made under it in relation to premises for which the enforcing Authority is enforcing. This report will provide an overview of community safety activity undertaken by Royal Berkshire Fire and Rescue Service (RBFRS) in 2023/24. In January 2023, His Majesty's Inspectorate of Constabulary and Fire and Rescue Services issued the second inspection report for Royal Berkshire Fire and Rescue Services (RBFRS). As part of this report, RBFRS was rated 'good' at 'preventing fires and other risks' and 'protecting the public through fire regulation'.

Prevention

In the new financial year of 2023, Service Delivery Managers reviewed the current method of S&W delivery and moved to a partner referral model. By working closer with our current partners and, developing new relationships with agencies and working with vulnerable community members, we focused on developing our referral process, recognising vulnerabilities being addressed by our partners had an intrinsic

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link to vulnerability and risk of a fire in the home. The intention of this was to have a greater focus on risk, with the aim of increasing referrals from partners.

The Adult at Risk Programme (ARP) is a course provided by RBFRS to support partner referrals and identify those most at risk in the community from a fire in the home. The training provided covers all areas of home fire safety and teaches professionals to spot and minimise risk with the people they support within their homes. It further details how to refer residents who would benefit from a Safe and Well visit provision in the home to the RBFRS. Professionals are also made aware of their responsibility to refer these residents to us, and an emphasis is placed on professionals working together.

Service Delivery Teams remain committed to ongoing development work with our partners to ensure we receive high-quality referrals to support this model. Recent incidents and post-incident reviews with our partners have already identified some improvements, such as confirmation of learning and certification for our courses, ongoing support/revalidation packages and rebranding the training to allow for consideration of young people at risk of fire in the home.

Working with our partners, including unitary authorities and Thames Valley Police, as part of Community Safety Partnerships (CSP) and Anti-Social Behaviour meetings, we have shared information to help reduce deliberate fires. This work has allowed us to build a picture of problematic locations, understand trends, and undertake proactive, targeted campaigns to support local communities where deliberate fires have been an issue. The CSP has also been an effective vehicle in developing water safety partnerships, which has seen a growing commitment from partners to support and engage in water safety activities.

Our Safety Education Team (SET) has worked to develop school packages and support operational crews in delivering water and road safety lessons to pupils across Berkshire. The SET has also reviewed and improved our Fire Cadet schemes, a youth initiative for 12 to 16-year-olds. It is run by firefighters, staff, and volunteers with support from the Service's Safety Education Team. Fire Cadets participate in practical and theoretical fire and rescue service activities, including hose drills, breathing apparatus procedures and fire safety awareness sessions. The

scheme teaches young people essential life skills such as self-discipline, confidence, and leadership.

In addition to this work with local partners, prevention teams have recognised an opportunity to deliver fire prevention awareness on a national level by producing a training package for Occupational Therapists. Over 43 thousand occupational therapists in the UK work across all ages and settings, from hospitals, communities, schools, and prisons and across physical disabilities, mental health, and learning disabilities. Therefore, they are well-placed to help reduce the risk of fires in the community.

Raising awareness of the risk from fires in the home with this profession ensures we target those most at risk. The NFCC Home Fire Safety Committee has recently endorsed the package, which the Royal College of Occupational Therapy (RCOT) will present to its members and host as a continual professional development package.

Protection

We have evaluated our Risk-Based Inspection Programme (RBIP) methodology to refine the targeting of our regulatory activity further in the areas of most significant risk. This allows us to focus our resources where they are most needed. Protection teams have been working collectively and across Hubs to help each other address high-risk premises identified by the RBIP methodology. The continued improvement in focus on very high and high-risk premises is evidenced through Service performance reporting mechanisms.

Protection teams have continued to provide advice and guidance to businesses. This is achieved through initiatives such as Business Safety Week, proactive seasonal activities, i.e., the Christmas Shops Campaigns, the introduction of Live On-Line Business Fire Safety Sessions, and continuing business as usual fire safety work.

Protection teams have also been working alongside external partners and agencies to address existing and emerging risks, i.e., the Home Office, local authorities, housing management agencies, CQC, and the NHS. This collaborative work helped

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to address challenges such as Asylum Hotels/Dispersal Housing and maintain partnership focus in areas such as Houses of Multiple Occupancy (HMOs).

Joint visits with Operational Staff are commonplace and provide a mutual understanding of risks presented by various premises. This work further supports our One-Team Culture and Ethos, and in turn, through effective and informed communication, we keep Berkshire safer.

[The Fire Safety \(England\) Regulations 2022](#) have been introduced as an important step towards implementing the recommendations of the Grenfell Tower Inquiry Phase 1 report. The Regulations were introduced under Article 24 of the Fire Safety Order and came into force on 23 January 2023. RBFRS have had a good response from building owners who are required to provide information to the fire service under the new regulations.

Resilience - Ongoing and looking forward

Following the recent Community Risk Management Plan (CRMP) 2023-2027 consultation. We have begun developing our strategies relating to Prevention and Protection together with proposals for developing the services we deliver to ensure we effectively use our resources to target risk. The proposals include creating a risk-based prevention programme to help us identify those at greatest risk from fires in the home and the evolution of our risk-based inspection programme to include a broader range of interventions to address risk.

[The building safety act](#) was introduced to create a lasting generational change and set out a clear pathway for the future on how residential buildings should be constructed and maintained. The Building Safety Regulator (BSR) is the new regulatory body responsible for overseeing the new regime and giving expert advice to local regulators, landlords and building owners, the construction and building design industry, and residents.

RBFRS appointed two new Fire Safety Inspecting Officers to contribute to the work of the Building Safety Regulator and Corporate Aims of the Fire Authority by enforcing fire safety legislation by auditing and advising on the fire safety measures in existing premises, planned structures and events.

As outlined in legislation under the Police, Crime, Sentencing and Courts (PCSC) Act 2022, as a specified Authority, we have a legal and moral obligation to collaborate with partners and plan to prevent and reduce serious violence.

Royal Berkshire Fire and Rescue Service (RBFRS) is committed to achieving the [Serious Violence Duty](#) (SVD) requirements through a collaborative approach to preventing and reducing serious violence.

With our partners, we have developed local area SVD strategies that represent each area's unique needs and risks. We will continue to support this work and contribute through collaboration and effective partnership working.

We intend to understand the issues and local needs properly, addressing the risk factors that increase the likelihood of somebody becoming an offender or a victim of serious violence. Through our Community Safety Partnership (CSP), we intend to strengthen existing partnership arrangements to meet our communities' specific needs in preventing and reducing serious violence.

Cllr Wendy Griffith, Community Safety Member Champion

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Health, Safety and Wellbeing Champion report 2023/24

Review

A significant body of work has been undertaken to address the area for improvement around absence / attendance procedures identified at the last HMICFRS inspection. Focus groups were held with managers to help inform the policy review and shape a series of line manager workshops. These focused on reiterating how to correctly manage absence to ensure consistent application of the policy. Additionally, an end-to-end review of the absence management process has helped identify where technology can make the process more efficient. Improvements are anticipated to be implemented in 2024/25.

Health, safety and wellbeing performance continues to be monitored by the Health Safety and Wellbeing Committee, which meets four times per year.

The Sickness Working Group continue to monitor absence data and identify trends that can be addressed through various avenues such as training, health, promotion or policy revisions. The group also analyses external information on workplace health to identify best practice.

Several considerations and initiatives continue in the health and wellbeing area to reduce sickness absence and improve wellbeing. Some highlights include:

- All staff were offered a free flu vaccination. For TVFCS staff and Safe and Well Technicians, this was via a voucher with reimbursement through the expenses mechanism for all other staff. This was to avoid wastage due to unused vouchers that has been observed in previous years.
- The HSE Stress Indicator Tool was used to identify potential workplace stressors amongst middle managers. Results were published on Siren and shared with appropriate workstreams for example the FDO review. The findings around bullying and harassment lead to a CFO message during Anti

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Bullying Week 2023 reiterating the Service's zero tolerance stance on the matter.

- Communications campaigns have included Men's Health Week, World Alzheimer's Month, World Menopause Day, Movember and Talk Money Week.
- Two opportunities to join the Cycle to Work scheme, attracted 16 applications.

Fitness testing is due in April and October each year and high performance continues to be maintained. 98.3% pass rate was achieved in April 2023, and 98.4% in October 2023. Individuals not achieving the standard are supported by their line manager, Watch or Senior PES and Wellbeing Manager to improve their fitness within set timeframes.

The Benenden Employee Healthcare scheme has been in place for seven years. At the end of 2023/24 479 employees were a member of the scheme, which provides quick access to diagnostic services, treatment and physiotherapy when the waiting list on the NHS is too long. Significant effort has been made in promoting the ways Benenden can help employees - physiotherapy and diagnostic services continue to be the most well utilised services. During the past year there has been an increase in the usage of the GP24/7 helpline as pressure on NHS capacity increases.

Health Partners have been delivering Occupational Health for RBFRS since March 2017. A project was commissioned with their Workplace Adjustment Service to produce guidance for managers on reasonable adjustments for operational and TVFCS roles with neurodiversity. The adjustments were considered in the context of the safety critical environment these roles operate in.

The Employee Assistance Programme, currently provided by Health Assured, continues to be a key pillar of our wellbeing support available to staff. The various ways to access the service are regularly promoted. Usage is routinely monitored, and the highest levels of monthly usage have been observed this year. Most calls relate to mental health. The Service is aware of a BBC news article into a potential investigation into Health Assured by the British Association for Counselling and

Psychotherapy (BACP) around their processes and practices. Allegations raised in the news article included calls from vulnerable people not always being handled correctly, limiting call times and the number of people referred for counselling. Health Assured have provided reassurance that they would cooperate with any investigation and that they are committed to clinical excellence. At the time of writing BACP have not yet initiated an investigation as suggested by the media. Regular contact with Health Assured is maintained and updates on the matter requested.

The HR Case Officer promotes all the supports available to managers and ensures that they are being used effectively to manage sickness absence.

All manager guides have been reviewed and rebranded as a Manager Toolkit, which has been promoted during the line manager workshops. These along with Core Skills training empower managers to reduce sickness absence in their areas. The effectiveness of all initiatives combined is tracked through sickness absence data over time.

Mental health continues to be an area of focus for the Service and implementation of the mental health action plan is well underway. Development in this period include:

- Development and delivery of a new mental health awareness training course. Since October 2023 322 members of staff have received the training.
- A new trainer has been identified for the Managing Mental Health training; 9 managers have received this training this year. A total of 191 managers have been trained to date.
- Support for national awareness campaigns throughout the year including Mental Health Awareness Week, International Suicide Prevention Day, World Mental Health Day and Time to Talk Day. Each of these highlights a different aspect of mental health and signposts to appropriate sources of support, available through RBFRS and externally.
- Work continues to highlight the associations between protected characteristics and the impact on wellbeing for example Carers Week.

There are over 60 Blue Light Champions across the Service, with more station-based personnel volunteering. The sustained effort of these volunteers will have a

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positive impact on challenging stigma around mental health and creating a culture where people can talk openly about mental health in the workplace.

Continued support and advice on health and safety matters is given to managers on a broad range of issues, for example, risk assessment completion, workplace issues, accident investigation and health and safety training requirements.

Health and safety policies and procedures are routinely reviewed, and also in response to updated guidance or learning from internal and external sources.

RBFRS continue to take an active role in the NFCC South-East Health and Safety Group and the Fire and Rescue Risk Group under the auspices of Fire and Rescue Indemnity Company* (FRIC)

The Contaminants Working Group, established in 2020 to respond to the independent report 'minimising firefighter exposure to toxic fire effluents – interim best practice', completed by the University of Central Lancashire, commissioned by the Fire Brigade's Union, continues to make good progress in this area. Building on the LMS training introduced last year, on 1st December, the following new measures went live: zoning of our fire stations, using a traffic light system; a web form to track exposure to potential contaminants; and the new Contamination Prevention and Management Policy. Additional work wear has also been procured so that staff have sufficient clean clothing to change in to, as well as standby bags for crews to transport their kit to other stations. Briefing sessions to explain the new measures to watches and support staff were delivered prior to them coming into force. An opportunity was given to ask questions during these sessions, and these formed the basis of FAQ's on the topic. As part of the Estates Development Programme, work is continuing around our station facilities to ensure the layout is optimal for managing the risk of contaminants amongst other factors. This includes providing external storage bins for contaminated clothing and outdoor decontamination areas, which are being rolled out across the service. Members of the Working Group are also contributing to both regional and national work on this issue.

We are in the third year of our three-year contract with People Safe, providing our higher risk lone workers such as those who are public facing, or remote, such as Safe and Well Technicians, with equipment which enables them to call for urgent assistance should they need it.

To ensure the safety of our buildings, workplace inspections, which include a review of the site fire risk assessment, continue to be undertaken by Workplace Managers in April and October. We work with our colleagues in the Facilities Team on the findings of these.

In the past year, a number of health and safety courses have been delivered. Three IOSH (Institution of Occupational Safety and Health) Managing Safely courses and eight refresher courses. These courses are attended by all grey and green book line managers.

New starters are provided with essential health and safety information as part of their induction to the service.

We continue to support the musculoskeletal health and safety of all our office based new starters through our on-line risk assessment and training software. A specific module for working at home has also been distributed, for those who worked at home during the pandemic, and those who continue to work in a hybrid way. Any injuries that are required to be reported to HSE under the Reporting of Injuries, Diseases and Dangerous Occurrences Regulations (RIDDOR**), are also monitored by our Strategic Performance Board, which also meets quarterly. All safety events are investigated, and measures taken to address any recommendations for improvement. Trend analysis is also undertaken.

**FRIC was formed in 2015 when a group of fire and rescue authorities identified a gap in the market for a set of products that combined the benefits of insurance with those of risk and financial pooling. Members work together to improve risk management by following best practice and sharing learning, with any financial savings being used for the benefit of the Member authorities.*

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***RIDDOR injuries are those that have to be reported to the Health and Safety Executive due to their more serious nature or because the injured party was not able to carry out their normal work for more than 7 days.*

As Health, Safety and Wellbeing Member Champion I have regularly attended the quarterly Health, Safety and Wellbeing Committee meetings. I am continually impressed by the depth and breadth of work undertaken in this area to ensure all staff can safely and effectively carry out their duties.

I also had the opportunity to observe the physical tests for potential firefighters. This was very informative, and I can see how they directly relate to the role for which candidates were applying.

Looking forward

The Health, Safety and Wellbeing Strategy runs until 2025, so a review and revision of this document will be on the agenda for 2024/24.

We will continue the delivery of the mental health awareness training to all staff and beyond the initial training, establish a regular programme to provide the input to all new starters. This will ensure that all staff are aware of signs and symptoms in themselves and colleagues and the sources of support available.

Through ongoing monitoring of usage and feedback we will ensure our wellbeing provisions are suitable and sufficient for the needs of our staff. We will respond with appropriate initiatives to our trends in absence and any societal pressures that arise for our staff.

The Contaminants Working Group will review and respond to new research and information as it becomes available, continuing to adapt and evolve the way we manage the potential risk.

Cllr Owen Jeffery, Safety, Fitness and Wellbeing Champion.

Armed Forces Honorary Member Champion Report 2023/24

Introduction

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

As a service and authority we are currently in receipt of the Armed Forces Covenant Gold award, the highest award available, in recognition of our ongoing support of the Armed Forces Community.

Work has continued throughout 2023/2024 to demonstrate our commitment to our Armed Forces community, supported by our Armed Forces Champion, Area Manager Paul Bremble, alongside other members of the service. Progress and activities are outlined below.

Review of the Year

Royal County of Berkshire Civilian Military Partnership Board

I am pleased to say that in October 2023 we held the Royal County of Berkshire Civilian Military Partnership Board meeting at the Fire Authority Headquarters here in Calcot. This Board has been established to build on the individual working relationships between the six unitary authorities, Royal Berkshire Fire and Rescue Service, civilian agencies and the military community in Berkshire.

At the meeting the partnership reaffirmed their pledge to support the military community of Berkshire. Cllr Knowles from RBWM was voted in as the new chair for the board.

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The Lead Officers group has been constructed to support the work of the Royal County of Berkshire Civilian Military Partnership Board and our staff continue to support this partnership.

Armed Forces Veterans' Hubs

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

Attendance at the Newbury event was particularly impressive with a number of organisations attending, as well as an increased veteran attendance. As our relationships with organisations such as the Royal British Legion (RBL) and local councils continues to grow we are hopeful attendance and visibility will also continue to increase.

Armed Forces Week

Armed Forces Week was supported across the Service and Fire Authority in June 2023. Communications officers posted content online every day for the week to show our ongoing support and commitment to the Armed Forces community. A veterans' hub event was held to coincide with Armed Forces Week at Maidenhead Fire Station, attended by CFO Wayne Bowcock and a number of veterans organisations.

Commemorative Events

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

role as Contingent Commander for the Civilian Services Contingent, he will take up this role in 2024.

Lord-Lieutenant's Awards Ceremony

DCFO Mark Arkwell attended the Lord-Lieutenant's Awards Ceremony, the ceremony is a formal event that recognise individuals in the Reserve and Cadet Forces, who have demonstrated the volunteer ethos in build relationships in the local community.

Looking Ahead

In 2023, RBFRS will continue to demonstrate its advocacy of the Armed Forces Covenant and support for HM Armed Forces and its veterans. This will be achieved by initiating and continuing the following work streams:

Royal County of Berkshire Civilian Military Partnership Board

Following the board meeting this year, the board will meet again in April to develop plans on how we can work as a partnership to support veterans in the county

Armed Forces Veteran's Hub Events

RBFRS will continue to host events for Armed Forces Veterans. The next event will be held in May 2024.

Commemorative Events

We will ensure that the Service and Authority commemorates key dates throughout the year that remember the sacrifice by HM Armed Forces personnel, past and present, who have made the ultimate sacrifice to ensure our safety and security. This will also once again include supporting Armed Forces Week in June 2024 and Armistice Day.

Paul Bremble will be stepping down as his role as Armed Forces Officer for the service and I welcome Paul Brooks as his replacement going forward. Paul brings his experiences from his military service and his connections in the armed forces, to

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support our continuation of the Armed Forces Covenant award and our support for veterans.

Cllr Rachelle Shepherd-DuBey, Armed Forces Honorary Member Champion

ITEM	DECISION BODY	NEXT REPORTING DATE	REPORTING FREQUENCY	RECOMMENDED ACTION	LEAD OFFICER	LEAD MEMBER	PART I / II
Integrated Service Delivery Strategy	Fire Authority	24.06.24	Ad-hoc	Agree	ACFO	N/A	Part I
AFA Consultation results	Fire Authority	24.06.24	Ad-hoc	Agree	AM C&P	N/A	Part I
Annual Report on Governance - to include Member attendance, allowances and expenses	Fire Authority	24.06.24	Annual	Note	HCS	A&GC Chairman	Part I
Annual Report	Fire Authority	24.06.24	Annual	Note	HCS	N/A	Part I
TVFCS Joint Committee Annual Report 2023/24	Fire Authority	24.06.24	Annual	Note	AM (C&P)	Collaboration Lead	Part I
Appointment of Committees, Lead Members and Member Champions and Outside Bodies 2024/25	Fire Authority	24.06.24	Annual	Appoint	MO	N/A	Part I
Appointment of Chair / Vice-Chair 2024/25	Fire Authority	24.06.24	Annual	Appoint	MO	N/A	Part I
Appointment of Chairman and Vice-Chairman	TVFCS Joint Committee	08.07.24	Annual	Agree	MO	N/A	Part I
Quarterly Performance Report/Budget Monitoring	TVFCS Joint Committee	08.07.24	Bi annual	Note	AM C&P and HF&P	N/A	Part I
Chairman's Annual Report	TVFCS Joint Committee	08.07.24	Annual	Note	AM C&P	N/A	Part I
Pensions Board Annual update	A&GC	16.07.24	Annual	Note	HHR&L&D and Pension Board Chair	N/A	Part I
Lease changes	A&GC	16.07.24	Ad-hoc	Note	HF&P	N/A	Part I
Internal Audit report	A&GC	16.07.24	Quarterly	Note	HF&P	N/A	Part I
External Audit Report	A&GC	16.07.24	Annual	Note	HF&P	N/A	Part I
Q4 Performance Report	A&GC	16.07.24	Quarterly	Note	Data, Performance and Risk Manager	N/A	Part I
Annual Outturn	Management Committee	22.07.24	Annual	Note	HF&P	N/A	Part I
LED Lighting Project - Priority 2 Sites	Management Committee	22.07.24	Ad-hoc	Agree	HoA	Strategic Assessts and Sustainability Lead	Part I
CRMP Priority 6	Management Committee	22.07.24	Ad-hoc	Agree	HCS	CRMP Lead	Part I
Langley Business Case	Management Committee	22.07.24	Ad-hoc	Agree	HoA	N/A	Part II
Q4 Appliance Availability	Management Committee	22.07.24	quarterly	Note	AM (R&R)	N/A	Part I
Culture Development Update	Management Committee	08.10.24	Ad-hoc	Note	CFO	Chair	Part I
Budget Monitoring Q1	Management Committee	08.10.24	Annual	Note	HF&P	Budget and Income Generation Lead	Part I
Appliance Availability Q1	Management Committee	08.10.24	quarterly	Note	AM (R&R)	N/A	Part I
External Audit report	A&GC	21.10.24	Quarterly	Note	HF&P	N/A	Part I
Internal Audit report	A&GC	21.10.24	Annual	Note	HF&P	N/A	Part I
Internal assessment of effectiveness within discipline	A&GC	21.10.24	Ad-hoc	Agree	HHR&L&D	N/A	Part I
Statement of Accounts	A&GC	21.10.24	Annual	Agree	HF&P	N/A	Part I
Statement of Assurance 22/23	A&GC	21.10.24	Annual	Note and Recommend	HCS	RBFA Chairman and A&GC Chairman	Part I
Q1 Performance Report	A&GC	21.10.24	Quarterly	Note	Data, Performance and Risk Manager	N/A	Part I
Annual Treasury Report and Mid-year report	Fire Authority	13.11.24	Annual	Note	HF&P	Budget and Income Generation Lead	Part I
Budget Monitoring Q2	Management Committee	04.12.24	Annual	Note	HF&P	Budget and Income Generation Lead	Part I
Appliance Availability Q2	Management Committee	04.12.24	quarterly	Note	AM (R&R)	N/A	Part I
Quarterly Performance Report/Budget Monitoring	TVFCS Joint Committee	12.12.24	Bi annual	Note	AM C&P and HF&P	N/A	Part I

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