MINUTES OF THE MEETING OF THE ROYAL BERKSHIRE FIRE AUTHORITY

Held on Monday, 29th June, 2026 at 6.30 pm

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

Members:	*	Councillor Greg Bello	*	Councillor Wendy Griffith
*(*present)*	*	Councillor Dennis Benneyworth	*	Councillor Chetna Jamthe
*(** virtual)*	**	Councillor George Blundell	*	Councillor Owen Jeffery
	*	Councillor Jeff Brooks	*	Councillor Dave McElroy
	*	Councillor Tricia Brown	*	Councillor Tina McKenzie-Boyle
		Councillor Billy Drummond	*	Councillor Mohammed Nazir
	*	Councillor Peter Frewer	*	Councillor Andy NG Siu-hong
	*	Councillor Harjinder Gahir	*	Councillor Neel Rana
	*	Councillor Paul Gittings	*	Councillor Wayne Smith
	*	Councillor Genevieve Gosling	*	Councillor Simon Werner

In Attendance: Becci Jefferies (Head of Human Resources and Learning and Development, HHR&L&D)
Conor Byrne (Head of Finance and Procurement, HF&P)
Daisy Leech (Business Support Officer)
David Crease (Area Manager, Prevention and Protection, AM P&P)
Fayth Rowe (Executive Services Manager)
Graham Britten (Monitoring Officer, MO)
Katie Richards (Assistant Chief Fire Officer, ACFO)
Lukasz Wrona (Head of Business and Information Systems, HBIS)
Mark Antell (Senior Communications and Engagement Officer)
Mark Arkwell (Chief Fire Officer, CFO)
Michaela Smith (Democratic Services Officer)
Paul Brooks (Head of Assets, HoA)
Tim Readings (Area Manager, Policy and Assurance, AM P&A)
Tom Brandon (Area Manager Response and Resilience, AM R&R)

Action

1. ELECTION OF CHAIR FOR 2026/27 MUNICIPAL YEAR

Councillor Gittings opened the meeting as 2025/26 Vice-Chair of Royal Berkshire Fire Authority (RBFA). He requested for nominations for the position of Chair. One nomination was received. Councillor Jeffery nominated Councillor Brooks. Seconded by Councillor Gahir.

There being no other nominations, it was:

RESOLVED that Councillor Brooks be elected Chair of RBFA for the 26/27 Municipal Year.

Councillor Jeff Brooks read the following statement, '*I, Councillor Jeffery Charles George Brooks having been elected to the office of Chair of Royal Berkshire Fire Authority declare that I take that office upon myself and will duly and faithfully fulfil the duties of it according to the best of my judgment and ability'.*

He thanked Members for placing their confidence in him.

2. APPOINTMENT OF VICE-CHAIR FOR 2026/27 MUNICIPAL YEAR

The Chair requested nominations for the position of Vice–Chair. One nomination was received. Councillor Gahir nominated Councillor Gittings. Seconded by Councillor Griffith.

There being no other nominations, it was:

RESOLVED that Councillor Gittings be elected Vice-Chair of the Fire Authority for the 2026/27 Municipal Year.

Councillor Gittings read the following statement, '*I, Councillor Paul Gittings having been elected to the office of Deputy-Chair of Royal Berkshire Fire Authority declare that I take that office upon myself and will duly and faithfully fulfil the duties of it according to the best of my judgment and ability'.*

He thanked Members and said he hoped the Authority have a successful year.

3. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Apologies were received from Councillor Drummond.

Councillor Blundell joined the meeting on-line. Craig Strike, Service Liaison Lead working on behalf of His Majestie's Inspectorate of Fire and Rescue Services was also on-line.

4. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

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

There were no Declarations of Interest received from Officers.

Action

5. MINUTES OF THE MEETING HELD ON 30 APRIL 2026

RESOLVED that the Minutes of the meeting held on 30 April 2026, be approved as a true record and signed by the Chair.

6. 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.

7. RECEIPT OF ANNOUNCEMENTS

The Chair made the following announcements.

Welcome and Farewells

The Chair offered a very warm welcome to Craig Strike, the new Service Liaison Lead working on behalf of His Majestie's Inspectorate of Fire and Rescue Services. The Service is to be inspected again later this Summer - Craig joined this evening as he begins to get to know the Service and the Authority. The Chair said he was confident Craig and his team would be fully supported by officers and be highly impressed by the 'OUTSTANDING' Service we are so very proud of. Welcome Craig.

The Chair welcomed three new Members to the Fire Authority this year: Councillor Harjinder Gahir and Councillor Neel Rana, both from Slough Borough Council, and Councillor Chetna Jamthe from Wokingham Borough Council. Councillor Gahir and Councillor Rana have both served on the Fire Authority before, in municipal year 2024-25.

The Chair bid farewell on behalf of the Authority to three Members – Councillor Dilbagh Parmer, Councillor Zafar Satti and Councillor Rachelle Shepherd-DuBey. Councillor Parmar sat on the Fire Authority in 2025-26 and Councillor Satti for the past two years from 2024-25. Councillor Shepherd-DuBey joined the Fire Authority in 2018 and was Vice-Chair of the Authority in 2022-23. Since 2022 she had been the Armed Forces Honorary Champion, and from 2023 was also Strategic Assets and Sustainability Lead Member. The Chair asked that Councillor Shepherd-DuBey be invited to the next Management Committee meeting. The Chair gave thanks to all three Councillors for their valuable contributions to the Authority and wished them all the best for the future.

Democratic Services Team

Action

Changes to SLT

Nikki Richards, the Royal Berkshire Fire and Rescue Service (RBFRS) Deputy Chief Executive, would be leaving the Service, her last day was last Friday 26 June. Nikki is staying in the Fire Sector and will start a new role as Chief Operating Officer at the National Fire Chiefs Council. Whilst RBFRS will be sorry to see Nikki leave, this is an exciting and well-deserved opportunity, and the Chair asked Members to join him in congratulating her. Nikki gave over 12 years of service to RBFRS holding a range of key roles. During that time, she made a lasting and meaningful contribution to this Service playing a central role in shaping the Service, not just in terms of performance, but in the culture RBFRS are rightly proud of.

The Chair was pleased to confirm that Katie Mills, Director of Service Delivery would move to the Deputy Chief Executive position on a temporary arrangement effective immediately. Katie would ensure continuity of delivery across the enabling functions of the Service and was exceptionally well placed given her current Director role and previous experiences including Head of Corporate Services. The agenda showed that the Service would now commence a process to select both a new deputy Chief Fire Officer and Deputy Chief Executive.

Windsor Fire Safety Prosecution

On Friday, 22 May, Mr Vi Ciong Tang and Ms Ming Zhou, property managers in Windsor, received a 14-week suspended custodial sentence and ordered to pay more than £9,200 for fire safety breaches following a successful prosecution brought by Royal Berkshire Fire Authority. The sentence and fine were issued at Reading Crown Court, after the pair pleaded guilty to eight offences under the Regulatory Reform (Fire Safety) Order 2005. The guilty plea came after an extensive investigation conducted by RBFRS, which found there were a number of serious fire safety deficiencies at a property owned by Mr Tang and Ms Zhou on St Leonards Road in Windsor. The breaches included a lack of a fire detection system, insufficient emergency lighting and inadequate fire doors that would have compromised the means of escape in an emergency. On behalf of the Fire Authority, the Chair thanked the Protection Team, led by Area Manager Dave Crease, whose diligence in conducting inspections and investigations resulted in a successful court case - continuing to robustly ensure appropriate fire safety standards across Berkshire are adhered to.

Slough Arson Conviction

On Monday, 8 June, Mr Harmanpreet Barr from Hayes in West London was sentenced for fraud and arson. The sentence was issued at Reading Crown Court after Mr Barr was found guilty by a unanimous jury on one count each of attempted arson, arson, and fraud by false representation. The guilty verdict came after an investigation, conducted jointly by the Service and Thames Valley Police, deemed the incident that occurred in January 2023 to be deliberate. The incident in question involved Mr Barr attempting to set fire to multiple lorries at a site on Station Road in Slough. Upon finding him guilty, the court sentenced Mr Barr to three years in prison. On behalf of the Fire Authority, the Chair thanked the crews who responded to this incident and the Protection Team for conducting thorough investigations, resulting in this successful court case.

Talk Trauma

In May, the Service introduced 'Talk Trauma', a new initiative designed to support members of the public who have witnessed or have been directly involved in a traumatic incident attended by RBFRS. As part of the Talk Trauma initiative, information postcards were created to give to members of the public following incidents. The postcard acknowledges that experiencing reactions after trauma is normal and signposts individuals to a dedicated support webpage, where they can find further information and links to professional services.

This initiative started as an idea put forward and then subsequently led by Martyn Ainsworth, a Firefighter at Newbury Fire Station, who recognised this need for mental health signposting and support, and worked hard to make it possible. The Chair asked Members to join him in congratulating Martyn on this great achievement and for enhancing the protection and support RBFRS give to the communities they serve.

Wholetime Graduation Ceremony

On Friday, 5 June, the Service welcomed 12 new Wholetime Firefighters. After months of rigorous training the cohort demonstrated their new skills in front of their friends and families at the Graduation Ceremony – the first to be held at the new Training Centre facility at Whitley Wood. During their training programme, the recruits upheld a longstanding tradition amongst new cohorts, by completing a fundraising challenge in support of The Fire Fighters Charity. This year, the cohort travelled to The Lexicon in Bracknell where they completed a series of gruelling physical challenges in full fire kit. In total, they raised over £5,000 for The Fire Fighters Charity. The Chair asked Members to join him in congratulating them all on this fantastic achievement. The newest firefighters

have now taken up their postings across the County. On behalf of the Royal Berkshire Fire Authority, welcome to the team.

Save the date - Members Workshop

A workshop for Members will take place on Tuesday, 4 August, providing an opportunity to reaffirm RBFRS' collective commitment to effective Officer-Member engagement and to further strengthen the support provided to Members in fulfilling their scrutiny and assurance roles.

The session would focus on how the Service work together as 'one connected team', discussing the range of opportunities available over the next 12 to 18 months to support Member engagement, including committees, working parties, Lead Member activity, briefings, station visits and Member development. This would include a discussion to understand what is working well, what could be improved, and what learning can be taken from Members' wider local authority experience. The workshop would also include a review and reaffirmation of the Members' Charter – a useful opportunity for new and existing members alike. These workshops are extremely valuable for both Member's and Officers in ensuring we continue to work effectively together for the benefit of the communities the Service serve – the Chair said he looked forward to seeing Members at the session and asked that the Members Charter be circulated to all Members.

Democratic Services Team

Save the date – Annual Awards

RBFRS will be holding the Annual Awards event on Friday 20th November. Members will be invited to celebrate the great work of staff and partners in creating safer, more resilient communities here in Berkshire. The Service remains committed to providing opportunities to recognise and reward staff for their fantastic achievements. The Service have been fortunate to secure a new venue at the Kings Suite in Easthampstead Park Hotel – where the venue hire will be provided free of charge. RBFRS will now be undertaking a sponsorship drive to cover as much of the additional costs, such as catering and the awards, as possible. Any assistance Members can give in spreading the opportunity would be appreciated. The Chair said he looked forward to seeing Members at the event as these are always wonderful events and a reminder of the hard work and dedication of staff that helps deliver the Service RBFRS are rightly proud of.

8. ISSUES ARISING FROM THE AUDIT AND GOVERNANCE COMMITTEE

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

Action

9. QUESTIONS FROM MEMBERS UNDER STANDING ORDER 30

There were no questions from Members under Standing Order 30.

10. NOTICES OF MOTION UNDER STANDING ORDER 44

There were no notices of Motion under Standing Order 44

11. RECOMMENDATIONS OF COMMITTEES

It was **NOTED** that Item 17 (Annual Report on Governance) has been recommended from Audit and Governance Committee on 16 March 2026.

12. APPOINTMENT OF COMMITTEES, LEAD MEMBER, MEMBER CHAMPIONS, WORKING PARTIES AND OUTSIDE BODIES

Graham Britten, Monitoring Officer (MO), introduced the report and advised each Political Group had submitted their nominations for the appointment of Committees, Lead Members, Member Champion, Working Parties and Outside Bodies.

In line with recommendation 2.1 Graham Britten confirmed details of Member nominations for the appointment of Committees as follows:

Table 5

Audit and Governance Committee (9 seats)	1. (Lib Dem) **Councillor Billy Drummond** 2. (Lib Dem) **Councillor Mohammed Nazir** 3. (Lib Dem) **Councillor Chetna Jamthe** 4. (Lib Dem) **Councillor Owen Jeffery** 5. (Lab) **Councillor Harjinder Gahir** 6. (Lab) **Councillor Greg Bello** 7. (Lab) **Councillor Peter Frewer** 8. (Con) **Councillor Dennis Benneyworth** 9. (Con) **Councillor Tina McKenzie-Boyle**

Management Committee (11 seats)	1. (Lib Dem) **Councillor Jeff Brooks** 2. (Lib Dem) **Councillor Simon Werner** 3. (Lib Dem) **Councillor George Blundell** 4. (Lib Dem) **Councillor Andy NG Siu-hong**

	5. (Lab) **Councillor Paul Gittings** 6. (Lab) **Councillor Wendy Griffith** 7. (Lab) **Councillor Tricia Brown** 8. (Con) **Councillor Neel Rana** 9. (Con) **Councillor Wayne Smith** 10. (Con) **Councillor Genevieve Gosling** 11. (Green) **Councillor Dave McElroy**

In line with recommendation 2.2 Graham Britten confirmed the ungrouped Member (Councillor Dave McElroy) be appointed on to the eleventh seat of Management Committee.

Moving on to Member nominations for the Special Responsibility Allowance Roles, Graham Britten confirmed:

- there was one nomination for the Finance Lead, this was for Councillor Jeff Brooks, this was seconded by the Vice-Chair.
- there was one nomination for Collaboration Lead, this was for Councillor Werner, this was seconded by the Chair.
- there was one nomination for Community Risk Management Plan Lead, this was for Councillor Gittings, this was seconded by the Chair.
- there was one nomination for Strategic Assets and Sustainability Lead, this was Councillor Brown, this was seconded by the Vice-Chair.
- there was one nomination for Equality, Diversity, Inclusion and Cultural Development Lead, this was Councillor Griffith, this was seconded by Councillor Frewer.
- there was one nomination for Community Safety Champion, this was Councillor Jeffery, this was seconded by the Chair.
- the Audit and Governance Chair would be decided at the first Audit and Governance meeting on 29 July 2026.
- the Opposition Leader(s) are decided amongst the respective groups.

In line with recommendation 2.3 Graham Britten confirmed the Members listed above be duly appointed to the Special Responsibility Roles as follows:

Table 6

Position	
Chair of Authority	**Councillor Brooks**
Vice-Chair of Authority	**Councillor Gittings**
Finance Lead	**Councillor Brooks**
Collaboration Lead	**Councillor Werner**
Community Risk Management Plan Lead	**Councillor Gittings**

Strategic Assets and Sustainability Lead	**Councillor Brown**
Equality, Diversity, Inclusion and Cultural Development Lead	**Councillor Griffith**
Community Safety Champion	**Councillor Jeffery**

Moving onto other nominations Graham Britten confirmed that:

- there had been three nominations for the two seats on the TVFCS Joint Committee, theses were for Councillors Benneyworth, Councillor Frewer and Councillor Werner. These were seconded by the Councillor Brown.
- there had been four nominations for the two substitute Members for the TVFCS Joint Committee, these were for Councillor Benneyworth, Councillor Nazir, Councillor Smith and Councillor Gittings. These were seconded by the Councillor Gosling.

On being put to the vote, it was resolved that Councillor Frewer and Councillor Werner be appointed as Members for the TVFCS Joint Committee.

On being put to the vote, it was resolved that Councillor Gittings and Councillor Nazir be appointed as substitute Members for the TVFCS Joint Committee.

In line with recommendation 2.4 Graham Britten confirmed the Members listed above be duly appointed to their roles as follows:

Table 7

Position	
TVFCS Joint Committee (2 seats)	**Councillor Frewer and Councillor Werner**
Two substitute Members for TVFCS Joint Committee	**Councillor Nazir and Councillor Gittings**

Graham Britten confirmed the following nominations for the working groups:

- there were nominations for Councillor Gittings, Councillor Griffith, Councillor Brown, Councillor Jamthe, Councillor Benneyworth and Councillor Brooks onto the Efficiency and Investment Working Party. These were seconded by the Chair.
- there were nominations for Councillor Gittings, Councillor Griffith, Councillor Gahir, Councillor McKenzie-Boyle and Councillor Nazir onto the Community Risk Management Plan (CRMP) Working Group. These were seconded by the Chair.
- there were nominations for Councillor Brown, Councillor Bello, Councillor Gahir, Councillor NG Siu-hong and Councillor Smith onto the Estates

Development and Sustainability Working Group. These were seconded by the Chair.

In line with recommendation 2.4 Graham Britten confirmed the Members listed above be duly appointed to their roles as follows:

Table 8

Position	
Efficiency and Investment Working Group - minimum three Members	**Councillor Gittings, Councillor Griffith, Councillor Brown, Councillor Jamthe, Councillor Benneyworth and Councillor Brooks**
Community Risk Management Plan (CRMP) Working Group – minimum three Members	**Councillor Gittings, Councillor Griffith, Councillor Gahir, Councillor Nazir and Councillor McKenzie-Boyle**
Estates Development and Sustainability Working Group - minimum three Members	**Councillor Brown, Councillor Bello, Councillor Gahir, Councillor NG Siu-hong and Councillor Smith**

Graham Britten confirmed:

- there was one nomination for Local Government Association (LGA) Fire Commission representative, this was for Councillor Nazir and was seconded by Councillor Griffith.
- there was one nomination for Local Government Association (LGA) Fire Commission substitute, this was for Councillor Gittings and was seconded by Councillor Griffith.

In line with recommendation 2.4 Graham Britten the Members listed above be duly appointed to their roles as follows:

Table 9

Position	
Local Government Association (LGA) Fire Commission representative (1 seat)*	**Councillor Nazir**
Substitute Local Government Association (LGA) Fire Commission representative *	**Councillor Gittings**

Graham Britten confirmed that there was one nomination for the Honorary Armed Forces Champion, this was Councillor Jeffery, and was seconded by the Chair.

In line with recommendation 2.4 Graham Britten the Member listed above be duly appointed to their role as follows:

Table 10

Position	
Honorary Armed Forces Champion*	**Councillor Jeffery**

**These roles do not attract a special responsibility allowance.*

Graham Britten stated point 2.5 was to note the amended Member Role Descriptions, this was seconded by the Chair.

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

1) It was agreed the nominations received from the Group Leaders onto the Audit and Governance Committee and Management Committee be appointed (**Table 5**); and

2) It was agreed the ungrouped Member (**Table 5**) be appointed onto the Management Committee; and

3) It was agreed the nominations received for Special Responsibility Allowance roles in **Table 6** be approved; and

4) It was agreed nominations received for the appointments listed in **Tables 7 – 10** be approved; and

5) The Role Descriptions for Royal Berkshire Fire Authority Members (attached as Appendix C) be noted.

13. APPOINTMENT OF INDEPENDANT PERSONS

Graham Britten, Monitoring Officer (MO), introduced the report and advised the item required the Authority to approve the appointments of three independent persons following an appointment process overseen by West Berkshire Council. The three nominees held the position for four years and had agreed to continue their role for another four years. The independent persons were Lindsey Appleton, Alan Penrith and Mike Wall MBE.

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

On being put to the vote, it was **RESOLVED** to approve that the following persons be re-appointed to serve as Independent Persons for the Authority until the Annual Meeting in 2030:

(a) Lindsey Appleton
(b) Alan Penrith
(c) Mike Wall MBE

14. LEADERSHIP SUCCESSION PLANNING

Mark Arkwell (Chief Fire Officer, CFO) explained the item arose from the recent CFO selection process, which created the need to appoint a replacement Deputy Chief Fire Officer. In addition, the Deputy Chief Executive position would become vacant effective from July following Nikki Richard's appointment to the position of Chief Operating Officer with National Fire Chief's Council (NFCC).

Becci Jefferies (Head of Human Resources and Learning and Development, HHR&L&D) advised the report recommended establishing a task and finish group, comprising the three group leaders, to support the CFO with recruitment of the two vacancies. The Management Committee's Terms of Reference included responsibility for selecting, on behalf of the Authority, the deputy to the Chief Fire Officer/Chief Executive. The current RBFRS Senior Leadership Team model was under review and subject to consultation, and the outcome of said consultation would inform the recruitment and selection requirements.

The Chair moved the recommendations, and it was seconded by the Vice-Chair.

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

1) **AGREE** that a cross-party Task and Finish Group, as proposed in Appendix A, be established to work with the CFO/CEX to oversee the process; and

2) **AGREE** that the Members of the Task and Finish Group act as the Members' Appointment Panel for DCFO process and appointment to the DCEX position subject to the outcomes of consultation.

15. ANNUAL REPORT

Katie Mills (Assistant Chief Fire Officer, ACFO) presented the Annual Report for 2025/26 and explained the report covered progress in delivering the commitments of the Fire Authority as set out in the Corporate Plan, the CRMP and the Annual Plan. The Fire Authority's six strategic commitments were guided by four overarching principles and the Authority approved annual corporate measures covering key service provision and corporate health.

Action

There was an increase in the number of emergency incidents responded to in 2025/26, whilst the response standard remained broadly consistent with the previous year. The standard was exceeded for three consecutive months from February to April, the first time this had been achieved in three years, and RBFRS continued to perform above the England average for response times. RBFRS did not attend 54.9% of automatic fire alarms, a significant improvement on 2024/25, with the time saved redeployed to risk-critical operational activity. The number of Safe and Well visits and fire safety audits also increased.

In 2025/26, RBFRS transformed its protection function to remain fit for purpose and respond to the changing regulatory landscape, delivering significant improvements at reduced cost.

RBFRS made significant improvements to service capability in 2025/26, including major investment in the redeveloped Training Centre, welcomed 12 new firefighters and began training for a further 12 apprentices. Focus remained on on-call recruitment and retention, with progress to be reported to Management Committee.

The Authority strengthened frontline capability through the rollout of three new fire appliances, incorporating the latest technology and supporting staff wellbeing. Work progressed on new staff development, finance and payroll systems.

Good progress was made in delivering the culture plan, including reviewing key development programmes, introducing MyPath, rolling out e-learning and reviewing the personal development review process.

In relation to sustainability, public sector decarbonisation work began at five locations, sustainability reporting was integrated into the Service, and proposals were developed to support staff education and more sustainable procurement. The April 2025 HMICFRS inspection report rated eight of the eleven areas inspected as good, with the remaining three rated adequate, providing assurance that the Service was performing well and making steady progress in areas for improvement.

RBFRS continued to work collaboratively with partners and celebrated the 10-year anniversary of Thames Valley Fire Control which demonstrated the value of strong partnership working.

The Service was deeply affected by the tragic loss of firefighters Jenny Logan and Martyn Sadler, and member of the public Dave Chester, at the Bicester Motion fire in May 2025. The incident was particularly felt in Berkshire, where Martyn had served for more than 15 years, and RBFRS continued to honour his legacy.

The Chair thanked Katie Mills for her presentation, adding it was a good piece of work and RBFRS should be proud of the content.

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

On being put to the vote, it was **RESOLVED** that the Annual Report prior to external publication be noted.

16. ANNUAL PLAN

Katie Mills (ACFO) presented the 26-27 Annual Plan - the final year of the current corporate plan and community risk management plan.

Investment in people remained central to the plan, supported by effective communication, engagement and technology. Further development and early delivery of the Authority's Efficiency and Productivity Plan would also support value for money in the context of future financial pressures.

A key priority of the plan was the development of the next CRMP for consultation in 2027, supporting integrated service delivery, effective targeting of risk and assurance to the public. Operational focus would remain on risk-critical activity, including business safety, risk visits, operational training, evaluating emergency response improvements and delivering the on-call action plan.

Following the protection review, RBFRS would review its prevention function, target Safe and Well activity with partners, and peer review protection to support learning and development.

Cultural development would continue through organisational learning, leadership development and delivery of the health, safety and wellbeing strategy and EDI action plan. The Service would focus on strengthening two-way communication, feedback and senior leader visibility to support engagement and decision-making. The staff development system would continue to be implemented alongside further investment in equitable facilities, dignified workspaces, and a new Digital, Data and Technology Strategy.

RBFRS would progress key data and technology projects, including the Thames Valley Fire Control replacement programme and a new risk management solution, while continuing to work with Thames Valley partners.

Ambitious plans would support the sustainability agenda, estate, fleet and equipment, including the refurbishment of Langley Fire Station and feasibility studies for improvements at five further stations.

The proposed 2026/27 corporate measures would be monitored by Audit and Governance Committee and were largely consistent with the previous year. Minor amendments related to improved reporting accuracy, with two new measures proposed to support delivery of the Efficiency and Productivity Plan.

Assurance on delivery of the Annual Plan would be provided through Lead Members and Member Champion, performance reporting, the audit programme, management of the corporate risk register and the forthcoming inspection.

The Vice-Chair welcomed the content of the plan, noting the complex work ahead and the shared commitment to progressing delivery and maintaining a culture of continuous improvement.
The Chair added the Corporate Measured detailed within the plan were strong and asked about data relating to outturn against 25/26 targets. Katie Mills confirmed the data could be found within the annual report at the back of the paper.

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

On being put to the vote, it was **RESOLVED** that the Fire Authority Annual Plan 2026/27 (Appendix A) and Corporate Measures (Appendix B) be approved for publication.

17. ANNUAL REPORT ON GOVERNANCE – TO INCLUDE MEMEBR ATTENDANCE, ALLOWANCE AND EXPENSES

Katie Mills (ACFO) stated the annual report on governance served as the Audit and Governance Committee Chairs annual report and included an update on key areas of scrutiny in 25/26. These included the management of pension schemes, the annual audit programme, the emergency services mobile communications programme and the authority's financial management arrangements. Also included in the report was member attendance, development and expenses.

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

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

1) Members' Allowances received from 1 June 2025 – 31 May 2026 be noted; and

2) 2025/26 attendance record of Royal Berkshire Fire Authority Members from 1 June 2025 – 31 May 2026 be noted; and

3) Member Development Annual Report be noted.

18. DALER ROWNEY PRESENTATION

Tim Readings (Area Manager, Policy and Assurance, AM P&A), gave the Daler Rowney presentation and stated that Thames Valley Fire Control Service

received a call from 999 at 3.10pm. on 25th May about an automatic fire alarm (AFA) at the Daler Rowney site on Peacock Lane in Bracknell.

As the Daler Rowney site was flagged as high risk, an appliance was automatically mobilised to investigate the AFA, demonstrating the effectiveness of the Authority's AFA policy risk controls. Risk information and a response plan were available to crews via mobile data terminals. The first appliance arrived in under five minutes, and additional resources were quickly requested. Early decisions focused on life safety, crew safety, command arrangements, site access and protecting nearby homes. Due to the scale, complexity and potential impact, a major incident was declared at 5.01pm.

The tactical plan addressed significant hazards, including chemicals, gas cylinders, high voltage electricity, industrial gas and asbestos. The priority was to extinguish the fire quickly to reduce risk to the community and firefighters. Additional resources were deployed to prevent fire spread towards nearby homes on Butler Drive, where there was an immediate risk to life, with the smoke plume then becoming the next greatest risk.

Environmental risks from the smoke plume and water runoff were managed using site risk information, including interceptors and a concrete bund. A hazardous materials officer completed an environmental risk assessment, the Environment Agency attended, and a Met Office plume model was used with UKHSA scientists to assess potential contamination. Crews also worked in challenging hot weather conditions.

At the height of the incident, 15 fire engines and several specialist vehicles were deployed. Mutual aid from neighbouring fire and rescue services and Berkshire Lowland Search and Rescue helped maintain fire cover across Berkshire and sustain operations. The fire was extinguished overnight, with some inaccessible hotspots remaining in heavily damaged areas.

The incident was de-escalated by the Tactical Coordinating Group at 9.20pm. on 25 May following successful firefighting operations. The major incident declaration was later rescinded as resources reduced, the response phase ended and the incident moved into recovery.

The response phase was led by blue light agencies before transitioning to a local authority-led recovery phase. The Recovery Coordinating Group, involving key partner agencies, oversees environmental monitoring, remediation and public health advice, supported by a multi-agency media coordination cell and resident web portal hosted by Bracknell Forest Council.

Following residents' concerns, UKHSA advised that the public health risk from debris remained low, although cement asbestos debris should be removed to minimise exposure. Daler Rowney notified the Environment Agency of fire water runoff and has been working under its guidance. Contaminated water entering the surface water system and some environmental impact had been identified and are being closely monitored.

	Action
Further meetings with Thames Water and the Environment Agency were taking place to ensure environmental impacts were addressed, with remaining contaminated fire water contained and safely removed. Around 2 million litres of water were used during firefighting operations.	
RBFRS would undertake a structured debrief, alongside a planned Thames Valley Local Resilience Forum multi-agency debrief, to identify learning and strengthen future response. Outcomes would be reported to the Audit and Governance Committee for public scrutiny.	
Speaking on behalf of Bracknell residents, Councillor Frewer thanked Tim Readings, the crews and all those involved in the incident and its aftermath, noting that their skill and bravery prevented a very serious incident from becoming a deadly one. He added that a well-attended public meeting had been held, with no negative comments made about the Service.	
The Chair thanked Councillor Frewer for his comments and asked that Tim Readings provide feedback at a future Fire Authority meeting on multi-agency learning process.	AM Policy and Assurance
In response to a question from Councillor McKenzie-Boyle about contamination in the area, Tim Readings replied that post incident monitoring was carried out by the local authority with advice from the UKHSA who carried out extensive sampling around the area, and although he had not seen any results, he would investigate this and feedback. Councillor McKenzie-Boyle also thanked Tim Reading for his contact with Bracknell Forest Council about the incident.	AM Policy and Assurance
The Chair thanked Tim Readings for the presentation and gave his thanks to all involved in the incident.	
19. FORWARD PLAN	
RESOLVED that the Forward Plan be noted.	
20. MINUTES OF THE STANDING COMMITTEES	
RESOLVED that it be noted the Minutes of recent meetings were published on RBFRS website.	
21. DATE OF THE NEXT MEETING	
Thursday 12 November 2026, 6.30pm at RBFRS Headquarters, Newsham Court, Pincents Kiln, Calcot, Reading RG31 7SD.	
(The meeting concluded at 19:44)	