

ROYAL BERKSHIRE FIRE AUTHORITY



COMMITTEE	AUDIT AND GOVERNANCE COMMITTEE
DATE OF MEETING	30 JULY 2020
SUBJECT	MEMBERS HANDBOOK CONSTITUTIONAL AMENDMENTS
LEAD OFFICER	GRAHAM BRITTEN, MONITORING OFFICER
LEAD MEMBER	COUNCILLOR TINA MCKENZIE-BOYLE
EXEMPT INFORMATION	NONE
ACTION	FOR DECISION

1. EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

- 1.1 To present members with the proposed amendments to the Members' Handbook for recommendation to the Fire Authority for approval.

2. RECOMMENDATION

That Audit and Governance Committee:

- 2.1 **NOTE** the contents of the report.
- 2.2 **RECOMMEND** that the Fire Authority **AGREE** the proposed amendments to sections of the Members Handbook listed in the report from Appendix A – F to the Fire Authority for approval;
- 2.3 **RECOMMEND** that the Fire Authority **AGREE** to include the Complaints Procedure as part of the Handbook; and
- 2.4 **RECOMMEND** that the Fire Authority **AGREE** the removal of Access to information document from the Handbook, due to Members Access to documents are covered in the Standing Orders (Appendix D).
- 2.5 **RECOMMEND** that the Fire Authority **AGREE** all references to "Chief Fire Officer" in its constitutional documents are changed to "Chief Fire Officer or Chief Executive".

3. REPORT

- 3.1 In January 2020, Internal Auditors gave the Authority substantial assurance on Risk Management and Governance. The review of the Handbook addresses the two low priorities auditors identified in their key findings in relation to Fire Authority and its Committees Terms of Reference. These findings suggested a management action to insert the appointment of Chairman and Vice-Chairman at the first meeting of the year and to include a review process in the documents.
- 3.2 The Fire Authority approved an updated Members Handbook; which included Scheme of Delegation, Constitution, Standing Orders and Terms of Reference at its meeting on 28 June 2017, (minute ref 16).
- 3.3 All sections of the Handbook have been reviewed and transferred on to new Royal Berkshire Fire and Rescue Service (RBFRS) branding on the website. This report recommends amendments to the following sections; Fire Authority and Committees Terms of Reference, Standing Orders and Code of Conduct. This report is also seeking the Committee to include the Complaints Procedure as part of the Handbook.
- 3.4 In addition, the report is seeking the removal of the Access to Information Procedural Rules due to Members access to documents is sufficiently covered in the Standing Orders (Appendix D).
- 3.5 Some of the recommended amendments are made in line with RBFRS People Strategy 2018-2021, and the Key Principles of the National Fire Chief Council's (NFCC) People Strategy namely clarity on the decision-making levels, accountability and processes without unnecessary hierarchy. The suggested amendments aim to make the document more inclusive and improve the overall accessibility in line with equality, diversity and inclusion.
- 3.6 Recommendation 2.5 derives from a decision taken by the Management Committee at its 21 July 2020 meeting in connection with Leadership Succession Planning. This was to ensure that the Authority has the opportunity to consider the widest pool of potential candidates, and for the selection process to be designed to enable applications for either a Chief Fire Officer (CFO) or a 'non-operational' Chief Executive (CEX) role.
- 3.7 A review of Financial and Contract Regulations will be brought to this Committee later in the year.
- 3.8 Outlined in the list below is a summary of the changes made to relevant sections of the Handbook:
- 3.8.1 **Appendices A to C** – Fire Authority and Committees Terms of Reference include the two low priorities from Internal Auditors key findings outlined in 3.1.
- 3.8.2 **Appendix A** – Fire Authority Terms of Reference – Amended policy direction documents presented to the Fire Authority for approval by removing Community Safety Plan due to the Corporate Plan and IRMP documents

encompasses community safety across Berkshire. The removal of Statement of Assurance (which is approved by Audit and Governance Committee). Removal of Strategic Asset Management Plan and insertion of the Strategic Asset Investment Framework (SAIF) and the inclusion of the Reserve Strategy.

- 3.8.3 **Appendix B** – Management Committee Terms of Reference – CO19 changed to include Chief Executive and all other Principal Officers or Directors.
- 3.8.4 **Appendix D** – Standing Orders –SO19 (Petitions) has been updated to reflect petitions may only be made at Fire Authority meetings and not Committee meetings. Review process included in SO123 and SO125 included 'electronic' copy.
- 3.6.4 **Appendix E** – Code of Conduct – included a hyperlink to guidance on how to make a complaint against a Member or Co-opted member (previously this information was not linked to the Code of Conduct document). It is proposed a hyperlink is attached to reference Member / Officer Protocol.
- 3.6.8 **Appendix F** – How to Make a Complaint – suggestion to include this document as part of the Members' Handbook. This document is currently available on the website and recommendation to include as part of Handbook for ease of reference.

4. CONTRIBUTION TO STRATEGIC COMMITMENTS

- 4.1 All sections of the Members Handbook support the Fire Authority's Strategic Commitments, as set out in the Corporate Plan and Integrated Risk Management Plan 2019-2023.

5. FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

- 5.1 The Financial considerations have been outlined in the current Financial and Contract Regulations. A review of the Financial and Contract Regulations will be held and brought to Audit and Governance Committee later in the year.

6. LEGAL IMPLICATIONS

- 6.1 The proposed Appendices A-E will have legal implications but these have been assessed and are deemed applicable.

7. EQUALITY AND DIVERSITY IMPLICATIONS

- 7.1 The Handbook has been updated in line with RBFPS People Strategy 2018-2021 and the Key Principles of the National Fire Chief Council's (NFCC) People Strategy.

8. RISK IMPLICATIONS

- 8.1 Subject to Fire Authority approval the proposed changes would mitigate the risk of not being legally compliant and current.

9. CONSISTENCY WITH DUTY TO COLLABORATE

9.1 Not applicable.

10. PRINCIPAL CONSULTATION

10.1 Chief Fire Officer was consulted during the preparation of the report.

10.2 Head of Finance and Procurement was consulted during the preparation of the report.

10.3 Monitoring Officer is the report sponsor and was consulted during the preparation of this report.

10.4 Head of Corporate Services was consulted during the preparation of this report.

11. BACKGROUND PAPERS

11.1 [Scheme of Delegation Constitution Updates, Fire Authority meeting 28 June 2017.](#)

11.2 Leadership Succession Planning, Agenda Item 9, Tuesday 21 July 2020 Management Committee.

11.3 [RBFRS People Strategy 2018-2021](#)

12. APPENDICES

12.1 Appendix A – Fire Authority Terms of Reference

12.2 Appendix B – Management Committee Terms of Reference

12.3 Appendix C – Audit and Governance Committee Terms of Reference

12.4 Appendix D – Standing Orders

12.5 Appendix E – Code of Conduct

12.3 Appendix F – How to Make a Complaint

13. CONTACT DETAILS

13.1 Fayth Rowe
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