

ROYAL BERKSHIRE FIRE AUTHORITY



COMMITTEE	AUDIT AND GOVERNANCE COMMITTEE
DATE OF MEETING	30 JULY 2020
SUBJECT	ANNUAL REPORT ON GOVERNANCE
LEAD OFFICER	KATIE MILLS, HEAD OF CORPORATE SERVICES
LEAD MEMBER	COUNCILLOR TINA MCKENZIE-BOYLE
EXEMPT INFORMATION	NONE
ACTION	FOR RECOMMENDATION TO THE FIRE AUTHORITY ON 16 NOVEMBER 2020

1. **EXECUTIVE SUMMARY**

- 1.1 To consider the Annual Report on Governance detailing Member Attendance and Allowances in 2019/20 for submission to the Fire Authority on 16 November 2020.

2. **RECOMMENDATION**

- 2.1 **NOTE** the Annual Report on Governance; and
- 2.2 **RECOMMEND** the Annual Report to Fire Authority on 16 November 2020.

3. **REPORT**

- 3.1 This is my first Annual Report as Chairman of Audit and Governance Committee for the Municipal Year 2019/2020. This report was originally scheduled to be presented to the Audit & Governance Committee in March 2020, however, this meeting was subsequently cancelled due to the Government lockdown measures to prevent the spread of COVID-19.
- 3.2 In June 2019, we started the year with the successful judgement from Her Majesty's Inspectorate of Constabulary and Fire & Rescue Services (HMICFRS) on Royal Berkshire Fire and Rescue Service (RBFRS) as:
- **'good'** at effectively keeping people safe and secure, from fire and other risks;

- **'good'** at efficiently keeping people safe and secure, from fire and other risks; and
 - **'good'** at looking after its people
- 3.3 RBFRS had been highlighted in the national report for a number of areas of good practice. The most recent report from HMICFRS published 15 January 2020 ' State of Fire and Rescue: The Annual Assessment of Fire and Rescue Services in England 2019, outlines Her Majesty's Chief Inspector of Fire and Rescue Services' Sir Thomas P Winsor's assessment of the fire and rescue sector, based on inspections carried out between June 2018 and August 2019.
- 3.4 HMICFRS had announced the dates of the next round of inspections to be held early 2021, however due to the COVID-19 pandemic the inspection process has been suspended. Management Committee were provided with an HMICFRS inspection update at their meeting on 21 July 2020, to inform them of a potential COVID-19 Inspection and revised timescales for round two inspections.
- 3.5 I have every confidence in RBFRS, based on the judgement received from the last inspection and the diligent work, performance and level of service provided. In addition to the positive strategic direction of the Fire Authority, I for one have every faith the Service will continue going from strength to strength.
- 3.6 The Audit and Governance Committee has been unable to sign off its 2018/19 Statement of Accounts due to a number of complexities that had transpired during the year. The Committee agreed at its meeting on 27 January 2020, to delegate the approval of the 2018/19 Statement of Accounts, on receipt of the Audit Opinion to the Head of Finance and Procurement in consultation with the Chairman and Vice-Chairman of Audit and Governance Committee.
- 3.7 RBFRS received substantial assurance in each of the audits undertaken by Internal Auditors, RSM to date (2019/2020) namely:
- Business Continuity and Emergency Planning
 - Financial Planning and Long Term Budgeting
 - Risk Management and Governance
 - Firefighter Pension Administration
 - Payroll Provider – Dataplan
 - Key Financial Controls
- 3.8 The Committee continued to receive regular updates on Emergency Services Mobile Communication Programme and in July 2019, Home Office representatives attended a meeting to update Members on the progress. This meeting gave Members the opportunity to voice their concerns on the national programme.

3.9 We continue to receive quarterly performance updates. The Quarter 3 updates key highlights were:

- Since April 2017, we have completed 20,448 Safe and Well visits to individuals at heightened risk of dying in an accidental dwelling fire.
- We have conducted 7,475 Safe and Well checks to individuals at increased risk of having a fire in their home and being injured as a result.
- We have concluded 3,154 full fire safety audits in premises (excluding private dwellings) across Berkshire, ensuring businesses are complying with the Regulatory Reform (Fire Safety) Order 2005 and carrying out enforcement action where required.
- Of the 24 new firefighters appointed following the 2019 campaign, two were female and two BME. This compares to 2018 where zero appointees were female and only one BME.
- Diversity and difference guidance for managers has been created and included in the induction process
- The roll out of Behavioural Competency Framework awareness training has commenced with Middle Managers and the Watch Based Station Managers.
- We successfully prosecuted two 'responsible persons' this quarter, resulting in one fine of over £13,700. The second case has been sent to the Crown Court for sentencing.

3.10 **Governance**

The Constitution is regularly reviewed by the Monitoring Officer and sections recommended for amendment will be brought before this Committee at its meeting in July 2020. It has been reassuring as Chairman of Audit and Governance Committee that sections of the Handbook are kept up to date to ensure that the Fire Authority is compliant.

3.11 No formal complaints have been received against Members this year. I would like to take this opportunity to thank our Independent Person (s) who have been on standby on the event they will be required to investigate complaints along with our Monitoring Officer, Graham Britten. Our Independent Persons, David Comben and Roger Penfold are currently in the third year of their four-year appointment under section 28 of the Localism Act 2011.

3.12 **Member Allowances**

Member Allowances for the period of June 2019 – May 2020 are shown in **Appendix Aⁱ**.

3.13 **Member Attendance**

The Attendance of RBFA Members for the Municipal Year 2019/20, is shown in Appendix B of this report. The appendix includes all meetings up to the 31 May 2020. Members are asked to note Committee meetings and the Fire Authority were cancelled in March and April 2020 due to the pandemic.

3.14 Members have been very flexible and accommodating in relation to meeting changes in the year, namely cancellation of Audit and Governance in July 2019 (private meeting was held with Home Office representatives outlined in paragraph 3.6) and the rescheduling of the above Committee meeting and an

extraordinary Fire Authority meeting in January 2020. Despite changes to the published Corporate Calendar of meetings, attendance this year has generally been good, no meetings were inquorate, and all business was able to be conducted.

- 3.15 Most absences have been due either to a meeting clash or a holiday, and apologies, when received, have generally been in good time.

4 CONTRIBUTION TO STRATEGIC COMMITMENTS

- 4.1 Commitment 5 – We will ensure that Royal Berkshire Fire and Rescue Service provides good value for money.

5 FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

- 5.1 Appendix A outlines the cost of Member Allowances and expenses to the Fire Authority.

6 LEGAL IMPLICATIONS

- 6.1 There are no legal implications in this report.

7. EQUALITY AND DIVERSITY IMPLICATIONS

- 7.1 There are no Equality and Diversity implications in this report.

8. RISK IMPLICATIONS

- 8.1 There are no risk implications in this report.

9. CONSISTENCY WITH DUTY TO COLLABORATE

- 9.1 None for the purpose of this report.

10. PRINCIPAL CONSULTATION

- 10.1 Consultation has been undertaken with the Chief Fire Officer, Chief Finance Officer and Monitoring Officer.

11. BACKGROUND PAPERS

- 11.1 Audit and Governance Committee, 27 January 2020
- 11.2 Fire & Fire Service – Effectiveness, efficiency and people 2018/19: An inspection of Royal Berkshire Fire and Rescue Service
- 11.3 State of Fire and Rescue: The Annual Assessment of Fire and Rescue Services in England 2019

12. APPENDICES

12.1 Appendix A – Member Allowances

12.2 Appendix B – Member Attendance

13. CONTACT DETAILS

13.1 Fayth Rowe, Democratic Support Lead 0118 938 4611

13.2 Katie Mills, Head of Corporate Services 0118 938 4605
