

ROYAL BERKSHIRE FIRE AUTHORITY REPORT



COMMITTEE	AUDIT AND GOVERNANCE COMMITTEE
DATE OF MEETING	28 JANUARY 2021
SUBJECT	COMPLAINTS, COMMENTS AND COMPLIMENTS POLICY AND PROCEDURE
LEAD OFFICER	KATIE MILLS, HEAD OF CORPORATE SERVICES
LEAD MEMBER	N/A
EXEMPT INFORMATION	NONE
ACTION	FOR DECISION

1. EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

- 1.1 The purpose of the report is for the Audit and Governance Committee to consider the proposed changes to Complaints Policy, which has been revised to include comments and compliments.

2. RECOMMENDATION

- 2.1 That the Audit and Governance Committee **APPROVE** the Complaints, Comments and Compliments Policy and Procedure.

3. REPORT

- 3.1 Royal Berkshire Fire and Rescue Service welcomes and values any form of feedback. Our procedure for handling complaints is captured in our existing Policy, whilst it has been custom and practice to capture and share comments and compliments.
- 3.2 The proposed revision of the Complaints, Comments and Compliments Policy and Procedures formalises our arrangements with regards to the handling of comments and compliments in policy.
- 3.3 The complaints element of the policy has been reviewed and no material changes have been recommended. However, to aid transparency, a complaints definition has been included and greater clarity has been provided on the procedure for handling complaints, for example, in relation to social media.

- 3.4 Our People Strategy sets out our commitment to ensuring that everyone's contribution is valued and positive behaviours are recognised. In formalising the receipt of compliments in policy, we are affirming our commitment to celebrate our staff's achievements.

4. CONTRIBUTION TO STRATEGIC COMMITMENTS

- 4.1 In delivering the Strategic Commitments, the Service is committed to providing the best possible service for our communities, which is underpinned by the Complaints, Comments and Compliments Policy and Procedure.

5. FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

- 5.1 None.

6. LEGAL IMPLICATIONS

- 6.1 As set out in the Terms of Reference of the Audit and Governance Committee under CO26, the Committee has responsibility for the approval of the Authority's policy on external complaints.
- 6.2 The Local Government and Social Care Ombudsman (LG&SCO) is the independent body responsible for investigating complaints made against public bodies where it is alleged that there has been maladministration causing injustice; a failure to provide a service that it was the public body's function to provide; or there was a total failure to provide such a service.
- 6.3 Fire and rescue authorities are specifically included in the list of public bodies within the scope of the LG&SCO by section 25 of the Local Government Act 1974.
- 6.4 However, subject to limited exceptions, complaints will not be investigated by the LG&SCO until a complainant has exhausted a local authority's internal complaints procedure.

7. EQUALITY AND DIVERSITY IMPLICATIONS

- 7.1 The Complaints, Comments and Compliments Policy and Procedure ensures an open and transparent process is applied when handling feedback.

8. RISK IMPLICATIONS

- 8.1 None.

9. CONSISTENCY WITH DUTY TO COLLABORATE

- 9.1 N/A.

10. PRINCIPAL CONSULTATION

- 10.1 The Chief Fire Officer, Chief Finance Officer, Monitoring Officer and Senior Leadership Team were consulted in the preparation of the report.

11. BACKGROUND PAPERS

- 11.1 Complaints Policy and Procedure
11.2 People Strategy

12. APPENDICES

- 12.1 APPENDIX A – Complaints, Comments and Compliments Policy and Procedure

13. CONTACT DETAILS

- 13.1 Katie Mills
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