

# ROYAL BERKSHIRE FIRE AUTHORITY



<b>COMMITTEE</b>	<b>AUDIT AND GOVERNANCE COMMITTEE</b>
<b>DATE OF MEETING</b>	<b>31 MARCH 2021</b>
<b>SUBJECT</b>	<b>MEMBER DEVELOPMENT ANNUAL REPORT AND ACTION PLAN</b>
<b>LEAD OFFICER</b>	<b>KATIE MILLS, DIRECTOR OF CORPORATE SERVICES</b>
<b>LEAD MEMBER</b>	<b>COUNCILLOR PAULINE HELLIAR-SYMONS</b>
<b>EXEMPT INFORMATION</b>	<b>NONE</b>
<b>ACTION</b>	<b>NOTE</b>

## **1. EXECUTIVE SUMMARY**

- 1.1 To receive an Annual Report on Member Development activities in 2020/21.
- 1.2 The 2020-23 Member Development Action Plan (Appendix A) set out the progress of courses and activities held during the year, aimed at all Fire Authority Members to successfully achieve the three-year Member Development Strategy (Appendix B).
- 1.3 This report is seeking the Committee to note 2020/21 Member Development activities.

## **2. RECOMMENDATION**

That Audit and Governance Committee:

- 2.1 **NOTE** the Member Development Annual Report;
- 2.2 **NOTE** the progress of the 2020/23 Member Development Action Plan (Appendix A), and
- 2.3 **NOTE** the results of the Member Development Survey (paragraphs 3.12 – 3.14).

## **3. REPORT**

- 3.1 On 24 October 2019, the Fire Authority approved 2020-23 Member Development Strategy, which is aligned to the Corporate Plan and Integrated Risk Management Plan 2019-23.

- 3.2 In 2020/21, the Fire Authority had one new Member Appointment; Councillor Ted Plenty stood down as Fire Authority Member and was replaced by Councillor Harjinder Minhas from Slough Borough Council. Councillor Minhas received her Member Induction with the Chief Fire Officer, Head of Finance and Procurement and Director of Corporate Services.
- 3.3 In October 2020, 1:1 meetings were held between Group Leaders and members of their Groups to capture their vast skills and to identify whether the development opportunities offered as part of the action plan covered specific needs. In addition, Members were asked to complete a skills questionnaire which formed the basis of their 1:1 meeting.
- 3.4 Fifteen Members attended 1:1 with their Group Leaders. An analysis was held on the skills questionnaires received. This highlighted that two Members wished to have unconscious bias training included in the Member Development activities. The Healthy Organisation and Wellbeing course includes a section on Equality, Diversity and Inclusion (EDI). In addition, the EDI Forum was extended to the wider Fire Authority and received a positive uptake from Members. We are currently looking at how the EDI training offer can be expanded to include unconscious bias as an element of the wider training programme in 2021/22.
- 3.5 Member Development courses and activities have become embedded as business as usual. Adjustments were made to ensure courses were impacted as little as possible by the COVID-19 pandemic and, as a result, all courses outlined in Table 1 were completed remotely using WebEx.
- 3.6 Courses attended in the 2020/21 Municipal Year required Members to complete a feedback form at the end of each session, to further capture comments to improve the course content. Overall, Members were satisfied with the courses and content provided.
- 3.7 We were unable to deliver Mod.Gov training, but instead provided Members with training and guidance documents to use with the tablet devices supplied by Royal Berkshire Fire and Rescue Service (RBFRS), for virtual meetings. This was critical in ensuring we continued business as usual for Fire Authority, Committee meetings and Member Development.
- 3.8 Table 1 illustrates Member course attendance between 2019/20 and 2020/21. There has been a slight increase in course attendance, one reason could be the courses were all virtual sessions which possibly made them more accessible around other Member commitments.
- 3.9 As part of the annual survey, we have asked Members whether they wish to have the option to continue with virtual sessions when COVID-19 restrictions have eased. Paragraphs 3.12 – 3.14 detail the results of the survey.

**Table 1**

<b>Course Title</b>	<b>Facilitators</b>	<b>Attendance 2019/20</b>	<b>Attendance 2020/21</b>
1:1 with Group Leaders	Group Leaders Cllrs Dudley, Gittings and Shepherd- DuBey	14	15
Thames Valley Fire Control Visit	TVFCS	5	11
Understanding the Financing of the Fire Authority	RBFRS	Cancelled	6
Healthy Organisation and Wellbeing	RBFRS	5	6
Safety at Home and Understanding Safe and Well Visits	RBFRS	6	6
Understanding the Fire Authority Core Skills (maximum 2 Members per session)	RBFRS	3	6
New Member Induction	RBFRS	1	1
Local Government Association (LGA) course/webinars	LGA	2	1

- 3.10 The Action Plan (Appendix A) outlines the progress of the courses and activities held during the year. In 2021/22, subject to COVID-19 restrictions, Democratic Support will focus on the continued delivery of activities.
- 3.11 Members were asked to complete a Member Development Survey between 1 March – 10 March 2021. The survey was looking back on the courses attended and asked Members whether they thought 1:1 meetings with their Group Leaders were useful, frequency of courses held were right and asked for suggestions on future courses or activities.
- 3.12 16 out of 20 Fire Authority Members completed the survey. The results are as follows:
- Nine out of 16 felt Member Development was impacted by the COVID-19 pandemic, due to unable to attend in person, in line with government guidelines / restrictions.
  - Three out of 16 Members suggested a new course/activity is implemented. One suggested water rescue, and two suggested EDI – unconscious bias training.
  - 15 out of 16 said their attendance on courses in 2020/21 have extended their knowledge of the fire and rescue service and the issues that affect the fire sector.
  - When asked to select the number which represents Members understanding of the issues affecting RBFRS in order to help make Fire Authority decisions (1 being low and 5 being high)
    - Three out of 16 selected 3

- Eight out of 16 selected 4
- Five out of 16 selected 5
- 11 out of 16 completed the skills questionnaire and 10 found it useful.
- All 16 found 1:1 meetings with Group Leaders useful.
- 15 stated they prefer a mix of remote and face to face Member Development sessions, subject to COVID-19 restrictions.
- 14 out of 16 said the frequency of courses was about right. 2 out of 16 said too frequent.

3.13 On analysis of the 2020/21 Member Development Survey Results, and in line with the Member Development Action Plan, Democratic Support will continue to look for ongoing opportunities to work in partnership with partners to deliver relevant training and development opportunities for Members. As stated in 3.4, we will look to expand our EDI training offer to include an element on unconscious bias. Subject to COVID-19 restrictions, a briefing will be arranged on station for Members on the water rescue.

3.14 In 2021/22 and subject to the membership of the Fire Authority after local elections, refresher courses will be developed tailored for Members that have attended courses over the Member Development Strategy period to date.

#### **4. CONTRIBUTION TO STRATEGIC COMMITMENTS**

4.1 All Strategic Commitments are supported by the Member Development Programme.

#### **5. FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS**

5.1 A number of training and development activities were provided via WebEx by RBFRS officers.

#### **6. LEGAL IMPLICATIONS**

6.1 None specified.

#### **7. EQUALITY AND DIVERSITY IMPLICATIONS**

7.1 Equality, Diversity and Inclusion training forms part of the Member Development Programme.

#### **8. RISK IMPLICATIONS**

8.1 None specified.

#### **9. CONSISTENCY WITH DUTY TO COLLABORATE**

9.1 As outlined in the Member Development Strategy, we will continue to identify opportunities to work with partners to deliver the Member Development programme where possible.

**10. PRINCIPAL CONSULTATION**

10.1 Statutory officers and the Senior Leadership Team have been consulted in the development report.

**11. BACKGROUND PAPERS**

11.1 2020/23 Member Development Strategy.

**12. APPENDICES**

12.1 Appendix A – Member Development Action Plan

12.2 Appendix B – Member Development Strategy 2020-2023

**13. CONTACT DETAILS**

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