

ROYAL BERKSHIRE FIRE AUTHORITY



COMMITTEE	AUDIT AND GOVERNANCE COMMITTEE
DATE OF MEETING	31 MARCH 2021
SUBJECT	ANNUAL REPORT ON GOVERNANCE
LEAD OFFICER	KATIE MILLS, DIRECTOR OF CORPORATE SERVICES
LEAD MEMBER	COUNCILLOR TINA MCKENZIE-BOYLE
EXEMPT INFORMATION	NONE
ACTION	DECISION

1. **EXECUTIVE SUMMARY**

- 1.1 To consider the Annual Report on Governance detailing Member Attendance and Allowances in 2020/21 for submission to the Fire Authority on 30 June 2021.

2. **RECOMMENDATION**

- 2.1 **NOTE** the report and amend where necessary,
- 2.2 **RECOMMEND** that the Fire Authority:
- 2.2.1 **NOTE** Members' Allowances received for the period of June 2020 – February 2021;
- 2.2.2 **NOTE** the 2020/21 attendance record of Royal Berkshire Fire Authority Members (2.2.1 and 2.2.2 will be updated to the end of May 2021).

3. **REPORT**

- 3.1 This has been an unprecedented year, of which most of 2020/21 to date, has been spent in restricted measures for our safety against the pandemic. As Chairman of Audit and Governance Committee, I am proud of the achievements and efforts Royal Berkshire Fire Authority (RBFA) and Royal Berkshire Fire and Rescue Service (RBFRS) has made in maintaining its critical core services through its response to COVID-19.

- 3.2 This has also been recognised by the recent inspection by Her Majesty's Inspectorate of Constabulary and Fire and Rescue Services (HMICFRS) in January 2021, which confirmed that RBFRS has '*adapted and responded to the pandemic effectively*'. The next inspection of the Service will take place in the spring - summer 2022, and I have every confidence in the organisation that we will continue to demonstrate our effectiveness in serving the people of Berkshire.
- 3.3 All Committee meetings this year were held remotely, and the fact we were not able to meet in person, did not prohibit us fulfilling our duties defined in our Terms of Reference.
- 3.4 This year, we reviewed and amended a number of constitutional documents namely:
- Fire Authority, Management Committee and Audit and Governance Committee Terms of Reference
 - Standing Orders
 - Member Code of Conduct
 - Financial Regulations
 - Contract Regulations
- 3.5 We have analysed the assumptions for the Medium Term Financial Plan (MTFP) and we have continued to scrutinise the performance of the Service through the Quarterly Performance Reports.
- 3.6 Our Internal Auditors, RSM held remote audits during the year and gave their audit opinion of substantial assurance in all of the audits they carried out thus far, which were:
- Firefighter Pensions Administration
 - Payroll Provider: Dataplan
 - Fleet / Transport Management
- 3.7 RSM will provide their audit opinion on the other audits they carried out on Cyber Essentials, Capital Projects, Key Financial Controls and Risk Management and Governance later on this agenda (31 March 2021).
- 3.8 The most recent update the Committee received on Emergency Services Mobile Communication Programme (ESMCP) informed us that RBFRS Officers was working to the National Programmes timeline for all emergency services to be moved to the Emergency Services Network (ESN) by November 2024, with the Fire Sector being one of the later services to transition. As a Committee, we continue to keep a close eye on ESMCP and continue to ask pertinent questions around the delay of the programme.
- 3.9 **Governance**
As well as the constitutional amendments made to the documents outlined in paragraph 3.4, we carried out our own audit on the Member Code of Conduct based on the 15 best practice recommendations made by the Local

Government Ethical Standards in Public Life. As a result, we agreed to review the Code of Conduct annually. In addition, we agreed the Employee Code of Conduct and received a presentation on the Code of Ethics for Fire and Rescue Services (England), developed in draft as a code of conduct for all fire and rescue services in England. We look forward to receiving the final version in order to adopt and amend the Service's Code of Conduct. We also approved a revised Complaints, Compliments and Comments Policy and Procedure.

3.10 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.

3.11 **Member Allowances**

Member Allowances for the period of June 2020 – Feb 2021 are shown in **Appendix A**. An update on these figures will be made to RBFA at its annual meeting on 30 June 2021.

3.12 **Member Attendance**

The Attendance of RBFA Members for the Municipal Year 2020/21 is shown in Appendix B of this report. The Appendix includes all meetings up to the 28 February 2021. Like Member Allowances, these attendance figures will be updated and reported to RBFA at its annual meeting which will be a complete review of its Member Allowances and Attendance in 2020/21 (from 25 June 2020 to 31 May 2021).

3.13 Member attendance this year has been good, no meetings were inquorate, and all business was able to be conducted. Committee meeting absences have been due either to a meeting clash, and apologies, when received, have generally been in good time.

3.14 Appendix B details Committee meeting attendance only, and does not include Member attendance at other remote meetings and events held during the year, for example, Task and Finish Groups, Working Groups, Steering Groups, Fire Liaison Group meetings and Member Development courses.

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 The Member Allowances and expenses (Appendix A) outline the cost 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 on 29 July and 3 November 2020, and 28 January 2021.

11.2 Scheme of Allowances 2021/22

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