

ROYAL BERKSHIRE FIRE AUTHORITY



COMMITTEE	AUDIT AND GOVERNANCE COMMITTEE
DATE OF MEETING	19 JULY 2021
SUBJECT	ANNUAL GOVERNANCE STATEMENT
LEAD OFFICER	KATIE MILLS, DIRECTOR OF CORPORATE SERVICES
LEAD MEMBER	N/A
EXEMPT INFORMATION	NONE
ACTION	FOR DECISION

1. EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

- 1.1 Royal Berkshire Fire Authority (the Authority) is responsible for ensuring that its business is conducted in accordance with relevant legislation and standards and that public money is both safeguarded and properly accounted for. It also has a duty under the Local Government Act 1999 to make arrangements to secure continuous improvement in the way in which its functions are exercised, having regard to a combination of economy, efficiency and effectiveness.
- 1.2 In discharging this overall responsibility, the Authority is responsible for putting in place proper arrangements for the governance of its affairs and facilitating the effective exercise of its functions including arrangements for the management of risk.

2. RECOMMENDATION

- 2.1 **AGREE** the Annual Governance Statement 2020/21.

3. REPORT

- 3.1 The Authority has approved and adopted a code of corporate governance which is consistent with the principles of the CIPFA/SOLACE 'Delivering Good Governance in Local Government: Framework' (2016 edition) (The Framework). The Annual Governance Statement explains how the Authority has complied with the Framework and also meets the requirements of Regulation 6 (1) of the Accounts and Audit Regulations 2015 which requires all relevant bodies to prepare an Annual Governance Statement.

- 3.2 Local authorities are required to prepare an Annual Governance Statement in order to report publicly on the extent to which they comply with their own code of governance, which in turn is consistent with the good governance principles in the Framework. This includes how they have monitored and evaluated the effectiveness of their governance arrangements in the year, and on any planned changes in the coming period.
- 3.3 In February 2021, CIPFA issued guidance on reflecting the challenges from Coronavirus in Annual Governance Statements. In accordance with that guidance, we have included an additional section in the draft Annual Governance Statement 2020/21 to reflect the challenges posed by the unprecedented public health crisis.
- 3.3 The draft Annual Governance Statement is attached as an appendix to this covering report.

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 Annual Governance Statement enables an authority to explain to the community, service users, tax payers and other stakeholders its governance arrangements and how the controls it has in place manage risks of failure in delivering its outcomes. It underpins the medium term financial plan.

6. LEGAL IMPLICATIONS

- 6.1 Regulations 6 (1)(b) and 6 (4)(b) of the Accounts and Audit Regulations 2015 require the approval of an annual governance statement, which must accompany the statement of accounts, and be approved in advance of the approval of the statement of accounts.
- 6.2 The Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government (MHCLG) has put in place revised regulations that came into force on 31 March 2021. The Accounts and Audit (Amendment) Regulations 2021 extend the statutory audit deadlines for 2020/21 and 2021/22 for all local authorities.
- 6.3 To give local authorities more flexibility, the requirement for the public inspection period to include the first 10 working days of June has been removed. Instead, local authorities must commence the public inspection period on or before the first working day of August 2021. This means that draft accounts must be published by 31 July 2021 at the latest.
- 6.4 The publication date for audited accounts has moved from 31 July to 30 September 2021 for all local authority bodies.

7. EQUALITY AND DIVERSITY IMPLICATIONS

7.1 None for the purpose of this report.

8. RISK IMPLICATIONS

8.1 None for the purpose of this report.

9. CONSISTENCY WITH DUTY TO COLLABORATE

9.1 None for the purpose of this report.

10. PRINCIPAL CONSULTATION

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

11. BACKGROUND PAPERS

11.1 None.

12. APPENDICES

12.1 **Appendix A** - Draft Annual Governance Statement

13. CONTACT DETAILS

13.1 Katie Mills, Director of Corporate Services