

ROYAL BERKSHIRE FIRE AUTHORITY



COMMITTEE	AUDIT AND GOVERNANCE COMMITTEE
DATE OF MEETING	23 MARCH 2022
SUBJECT	ANNUAL STATEMENT OF ASSURANCE 2020/21
LEAD OFFICER	KATIE MILLS, HEAD OF CORPORATE SERVICES
LEAD MEMBER	N/A
EXEMPT INFORMATION	NONE
ACTION	NOTE AND AGREE

1. EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

- 1.1 The Fire and Rescue National Framework for England states that the annual Statement of Assurance should:

“...outline the way in which the authority and its fire and rescue service has had regard – in the period covered by the document – to this National Framework, the Integrated Risk Management Plan and to any strategic plan prepared by the authority for that period. The authority must also provide assurance to their community and to government on financial, governance and operational matters”.

- 1.2 The Royal Berkshire Fire Authority Statement of Assurance is structured as such that the headline judgements are made about the adequacy of arrangements associated with financial, governance and operational matters. In addition to which, a judgement is made on adherence to the National Framework.

2. RECOMMENDATION

- 2.1 **NOTE** the summary judgements within the Statement of Assurance for each of the four key areas of Finance, Governance, Operations and delivering the National Framework.
- 2.2 **AGREE** that the RBFA Statement of Assurance 2020/21 be approved.
- 2.3 **AGREE** that the Statement of Assurance will be finalised and re-published by the Director of Corporate Services, following the conclusion of the audit of the Statement of Accounts 2020/21, in consultation with the Chair of the Audit and Governance Committee.

3. REPORT

- 3.1 The internal assessment was conducted by RBFRS officers against the Framework criteria and produced the following summary judgements:
- 3.2 **FINANCIAL** – requirements associated with the appropriate management of financial matters were **fully met** (subject to the conclusion of the external audit of Statement of Accounts 2020/21). Evidence to support this judgement and information on identified areas for improvement are set out in the Statement of Assurance
- 3.2 **GOVERNANCE** – requirements associated with appropriate business practice, high standards of conduct and sound governance were **fully met**. Evidence to support this judgement and information on identified areas for improvement are set out in the Statement of Assurance
- 3.3 **OPERATIONAL** – requirements associated with operational matters were **fully met**. Evidence to support this judgement and information on identified areas for improvement are set out in the Statement of Assurance
- 3.4 **NATIONAL FRAMEWORK** – requirements associated with the Fire and Rescue National Framework for England have been **fully met** as set out in **Appendix E** of the Statement of Assurance. This assessment was based on the judgements set out for financial, Governance and Operational evidence. This is further supported by the independent inspection carried out by Her Majesty's Inspectorate of Constabulary and Fire and Rescue Services.
- 3.5 Further assurance is provided via audit activities as set out in the Statement of Assurance.
- 3.6 Additional assurance on the judgement in relation to the Financial matters, is provided through the annual audit of the Statement of Accounts and receipt of the Annual Audit Letter. The audit has not yet concluded, however, mindful of the internal assurance exercise undertaken, it is proposed that the Statement of Assurance be published with the Financial element being Fully Met. Following the conclusion of the external audit, and subject to an unqualified opinion being issued, any identified areas for improvement will be added to the published Statement of Assurance in consultation with the Chair of the Audit and Governance Committee.
- 3.7 The Annual Statement of Assurance report is at Appendix A.

4. CONTRIBUTION TO STRATEGIC COMMITMENTS

- 4.1 The Statement of Assurance aligns to the Strategic Commitments across a number of financial, governance and operational matters.

5. FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

- 5.1 There are no direct financial implications arising from this report.

6. LEGAL IMPLICATIONS

- 6.1 The Fire and Rescue National Framework, published by the Department of Communities and Local Government in July 2012, introduced the requirement for fire and rescue authorities in England to produce a 'Statement of Assurance' on an annual basis. An updated National Framework was published in May 2018. This maintained the requirement.
- 6.2 Section 21 of the Fire and Rescue Services Act 2004 (FRSA 2004) requires Fire and Rescue Authorities to 'have regard' to the National Framework in carrying out their functions.

7. EQUALITY AND DIVERSITY IMPLICATIONS

- 7.1 There are no direct equality and diversity implications arising from this report.

8. RISK IMPLICATIONS

- 8.1 The Statement of Assurance demonstrates that a Fire and Rescue Service has identified the risks it faces and where appropriate are taking the necessary steps to mitigate them.

9. CONSISTENCY WITH DUTY TO COLLABORATE

- 9.1 The judgement decisions within the report demonstrate RBFRS is working in collaboration with partners.

10. PRINCIPAL CONSULTATION

- 10.1 Statutory Officers and the Senior Leadership Team have been consulted in the preparation of this report.

11. BACKGROUND PAPERS

- 11.1 There are a large number of background documents referenced in the Statement, some of which are available as hyperlinks. Associated documents are not attached with this paper, but can be made available in hard copy or electronic format on request.

12. APPENDICES

- 12.1 Appendix A – Statement of Assurance

13. CONTACT DETAILS

- 13.1 Angela Smith
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