

ROYAL BERKSHIRE FIRE AUTHORITY



COMMITTEE	AUDIT AND GOVERNANCE COMMITTEE
DATE OF MEETING	23 MARCH 2022
SUBJECT	MEMBER DEVELOPMENT ANNUAL REPORT AND PROGRESS AGAINST ACTION PLAN
LEAD OFFICER	KATIE MILLS, HEAD OF CORPORATE SERVICES
LEAD MEMBER	COUNCILLOR PAULINE HELLIAR-SYMONS
EXEMPT INFORMATION	NONE
ACTION	NOTE

1. EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

- 1.1 To receive an Annual Report and to note the progress of the Action Plan on Member Development activities in 2021/22.

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 (Appendix B)

3. REPORT

- 3.1 The Fire Authority approved its three-year Member Development Strategy (Appendix C) on 24 October 2019. The Strategy is aligned to the Corporate Plan and Community Risk Management Plan 2019-23.
- 3.2 The coming year (2022/23) will be the final year of the three-year Member Development Strategy. A new Strategy and Action Plan will be recommended to this Committee in March/ April 2023, and aligned to the development of the new People Strategy, Corporate Plan and Community Risk Management Plan.
- 3.3 Each year, Members are requested to complete an online survey on Member Development courses / activities attended, and where possible, Democratic

Support use survey feedback to develop courses or activities for the next Municipal year.

- 3.4 In response to feedback received in the last Member Development survey, a review was held on the Healthy Organisation and Wellbeing course, and it was developed to include unconscious bias training, as part of the Equality, Diversity and Inclusion (EDI) module.
- 3.5 We have also responded to Members feedback from the survey on scheduling both face-to-face and online courses throughout 2021/22. However, due to the impact of COVID-19 restrictions, all but one course and fire station visits were held in person. However, we remain committed to this hybrid approach moving forward, where COVID-19 restrictions allow.
- 3.6 This year, a Member survey was conducted between 18 – 24 February 2022, which not only focused on Member Development, but sought responses to questions on the Fire Authority and Royal Berkshire Fire and Rescue Service (RBFRS) more generally, similar to that of the internal staff survey. For the purpose of this report, only Member Development survey responses will be presented. The other elements of the survey will form the basis of Member / Officer Workshop discussions later in the year.
- 3.7 Table One shows Member attendance on courses have reduced in comparison to 2019/20 and 2020/21. This is due to the majority of Members having already attended courses previously over the Strategy period.¹
- 3.8 A targeted approach was applied to Members that had not completed particular courses /activities, as a result all 20 Members attended courses relevant to them or undertook a station visit for the first time.
- 3.9 All of the courses outlined in Table One and courses / activities listed in the Action Plan (Appendix A), are now delivered as part of our business as usual activity. These courses will be reviewed as part of the development of a new Member Development Strategy.
- 3.10 In October 2021, 1:1 meetings were held between Group Leaders and members of their Groups to capture their vast skills and to identify whether development opportunities offered in the action plan covered their specific needs. Members were also asked to complete an updated skills questionnaire which included columns for annual objectives to be set. The skills questionnaire formed the basis of 1:1 meetings.
- 3.11 Courses attended in the 2021/22 Municipal Year required Members to complete an online feedback form at the end of each session. Overall, Members were satisfied with the courses and content provided.

¹ The full list of courses and activities attended as outlined in the action plan is not illustrated in Table 1.

- 3.12 All Fire Authority Members are encouraged to visit their local fire station, which has been emphasised as part of the Member Induction. However, COVID-19 restrictions had prevented informal stations visits.
- 3.13 This year, five formal station visits were arranged by Democratic Support. Three station visits were arranged with Members visiting a station within their relevant Hub areas. Members located within each Hub area (Central, East and West Hubs) visited Bracknell, Maidenhead and Newbury Fire Stations. The Fire Authority in November 2021, was held at its most recently built fire station, Theale Community Fire Station. Members were given the opportunity to tour the station, and meet the crews.
- 3.14 In addition, a number of Members attended Crowthorne Fire Station official reopening event with local dignitaries in October 2021.
- 3.15 Station visits have become a focus in the last six months, due to the number of Members that have completed business as usual courses. Due to the positive feedback received from both Members and staff located at fire stations an increased focus will be on the arrangement of station visits in the next Municipal year, subject to any COVID-19 restrictions.
- 3.16 In the last year, Members attended external courses organised by the Local Government Association (LGA) and Ministry of Defence (MOD). The LGA course was aimed at Audit Committee Chairman and Vice-Chairman, and discussed ways in which Audit Committees can gain maximum assurance that local authorities are managing its services and finances effectively, to deliver more with less. Members attended an MOD masterclass aimed at local authority staff and elected members on the work of Defence Transition Services (DTS) and the Veterans Welfare Service (VWS), to raise awareness of the services available to Service personnel, leavers and their families. Democratic Support will continue to signpost Members to relevant external courses in the coming year.
- 3.17 E-learning courses on Protecting Information and Equality, Diversity and Inclusion was circulated to all Members via email in November 2021. No Member completed these courses and it has since been identified by the Member Development Working Group that reminders for upcoming courses in 2022/23 will be made at Fire Authority and Committee meetings, as outlined in the action plan.
- 3.18 Attendance on internal and external courses are optional. Democratic Support will continue with a targeted approach to attract newly appointed Members and Members to attend courses that they have not completed in the forthcoming year.
- 3.19 Table One illustrates attendance at Member Development activities in 2021/22, and provides a comparison to previous years. The table does not include Member attendance at Member briefings. Four Member briefings were held during the year.

Table One

Course Title	Facilitators	Attendance 2019/20	Attendance 2020/21	Attendance 2021/22
1:1 with Group Leaders	Group Leaders Cllrs Dudley, Gittings and Shepherd-DuBey	14	15	14
Thames Valley Fire Control Visit	TVFCS	5	11	3
Formal Fire Station visits (Bracknell, Maidenhead and Newbury)	RBFRS	N/A	N/A	11
Understanding the Financing of the Fire Authority	RBFRS	Cancelled	6	5
Healthy Organisation and Wellbeing	RBFRS	5	6	3
Modern.Gov App	RBFRS	2	N/A	1
Safety at Home and Understanding Safe and Well Visits	RBFRS	6	6	5
New Member Induction	RBFRS	9	1	2
Local Government Association (LGA) course/webinars	LGA	2	1	1
Member Workshop (s)	RBFRS	12	N/A	15 ²

3.20 The results from the Member Development online survey are attached as Appendix B, and will be used to improve and develop Member Development courses in 2022/23. The survey responses will be used to inform the development of a new Strategy and Action Plan.

4. CONTRIBUTION TO STRATEGIC COMMITMENTS

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

5. FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

² Two Workshops were held in 2021/22 (June 2021 and March 2022). Figure does not include March 2022 Workshop attendance.

5.1 The majority of the Member Development courses and activities have been delivered in-house within existing resources. External courses were provided free of charge.

6. LEGAL IMPLICATIONS

6.1 The Member Development Strategy and Action Plan supports the Fire Authority in discharging its statutory duties.

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 None.

12. APPENDICES

12.1 Appendix A – Member Development Action Plan

12.2 Appendix B – Member Development Survey Results

12.3 Appendix C – Member Development Strategy 2020-2023

13. CONTACT DETAILS

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