

# ROYAL BERKSHIRE FIRE AUTHORITY



<b>COMMITTEE</b>	<b>AUDIT AND GOVERNANCE COMMITTEE</b>
<b>DATE OF MEETING</b>	<b>28 MARCH 2023</b>
<b>SUBJECT</b>	<b>ANNUAL REPORT ON GOVERNANCE</b>
<b>LEAD OFFICER</b>	<b>PAUL BREMBLE, HEAD OF CORPORATE SERVICES</b>
<b>LEAD MEMBER</b>	<b>COUNCILLOR TRICIA BROWN</b>
<b>EXEMPT INFORMATION</b>	<b>NONE</b>
<b>ACTION</b>	<b>DECISION</b>

## 1. EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

- 1.1 To consider the Annual Report on Governance detailing Member Attendance and Allowances in 2022/23 for submission to the Fire Authority on 8 June 2023.
- 1.2 For the purpose of this report, appendices A and B (Members Allowances and Attendance) are shown from 1 June 2022 to 28 February 2023. As outlined in recommendation 2.2.1 and 2.2.2, the appendices will be updated to the end of May 2023.

## 2. RECOMMENDATION

- 2.1 **NOTE** the report; and
- 2.2 **RECOMMEND** that the Fire Authority:
  - 2.2.1 **NOTE** Members' Allowances received from 1 June 2022 – 31 May 2023;
  - 2.2.2 **NOTE** the 2022/23 attendance record of Royal Berkshire Fire Authority Members from 1 June 2022 – 31 May 2023.

## 3. REPORT

- 3.1 This report will be my first annual report as Chair of Audit and Governance Committee and on behalf of all Members, I would like to congratulate the Service on its recent His Majesty's Inspectorate of Constabulary and Fire and Rescue Service inspection result, which confirmed that our Service is

performing to a high standard. That is not to say, we are to be complacent, which I believe, we have evidenced our willingness to improve and continue our journey as a modern fire and rescue service, looking back on the reports and items discussed at Audit and Government Committee meetings from July 2022 to March 2023.

- 3.2 This year saw the appointment of five out of the six newly appointed Fire Authority Members onto this Committee and they have all had to learn very quickly the role of Audit and Governance Committee, which has resulted in the development of a new Member Development course, Understanding Audit and Governance Committee. This course came as an idea from the Member Development Champion, Councillor Mike Smith and was piloted in early 2023. This new course will be an invaluable tool for new Members going forward.
- 3.3 In July 2022, we received our Internal Audit Progress Report, which gave substantial assurance on the following audits; Value for Money: Effectiveness of the management of pension arrangements by RBFRS, Key financial controls – creditors and Governance and risk management. The audit on Cyber Essentials was advisory and low priority actions recommended by RSM (our auditors) were implemented by management by the end of 2022.
- 3.4 We have received regular updates on Emergency Service Mobile Communications Programme (ESMCP), Pension Board, reviewed Discipline Policy, Pay Policy Statement, Gender and Ethnicity Pay Gap Report, Equal Pay Audit, Annual Statement of Assurance and held officers to account on Quarterly Performance Reports.
- 3.5 Quarterly Performance reports, are set out in four quadrants; Service Provision, Corporate Health, Priority Programmes and Risk providing comprehensive data on the Service's performance and updates on projects and the Corporate Risk register.
- 3.6 The year has been challenging in relation to the impact of the summer heatwave in 2022 on wholetime and on-call appliance availability identified in quarter two performance report (July – September 2023), however officers have continually detailed the processes they have implemented to tackle these. In terms of the quarterly updates received from External Auditors, as a Committee we have continued our pressure on them to sign off the Statement of Accounts (albeit, the delay is due to issues identified by Deloitte in relation to their audit of the Royal County of Berkshire Pension Fund).

### **3.7 Governance**

- 3.7.1 The Fire Authority appointed three new Independent Person (s) and three reserve Independent Person (s) at its Annual meeting in June 2022 for four years. No formal complaints have been received against Members this year. I would like to take this opportunity to thank our Independent Persons who have been on continual standby should they be required to investigate complaints along with our Monitoring Officer, Graham Britten.

### 3.11 **Member Allowances**

Member Allowances for the period of June 2022 – Feb 2023 are shown in **Appendix A**. An update on these figures will be made to Fire Authority on 8 June 2023.

### 3.12 **Member Attendance**

The attendance record of Members for the Municipal Year 2022/23, is shown in Appendix B of this report. The Appendix include all meetings up to the 28 February 2023. Like Member Allowances, these attendance figures will be updated and reported to the Fire Authority in June 2023.

3.13 Member attendance has been good with no meetings being inquorate, and all business being able to be conducted. Committee meeting absences have often been due to Unitary Authority meeting clashes, and apologies, when received, have generally been in good time.

3.14 Appendix B details Committee meeting attendance only (meetings which have been held in public), and does not include Member attendance at Member briefings and events held during the year, for example, Working Groups, Fire Liaison Group meetings, briefings, Armed Forces meetings, Thames Valley Collaboration Steering 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 meetings in 2022/23.

11.2 Members' Scheme of Allowances – February 2023.

**12. APPENDICES**

12.1 Appendix A – Members' Allowances.

12.2 Appendix B – Members' Attendance.

**13. CONTACT DETAILS**

13.1 Fayth Rowe, Democratic Support Lead 0118 938 4611