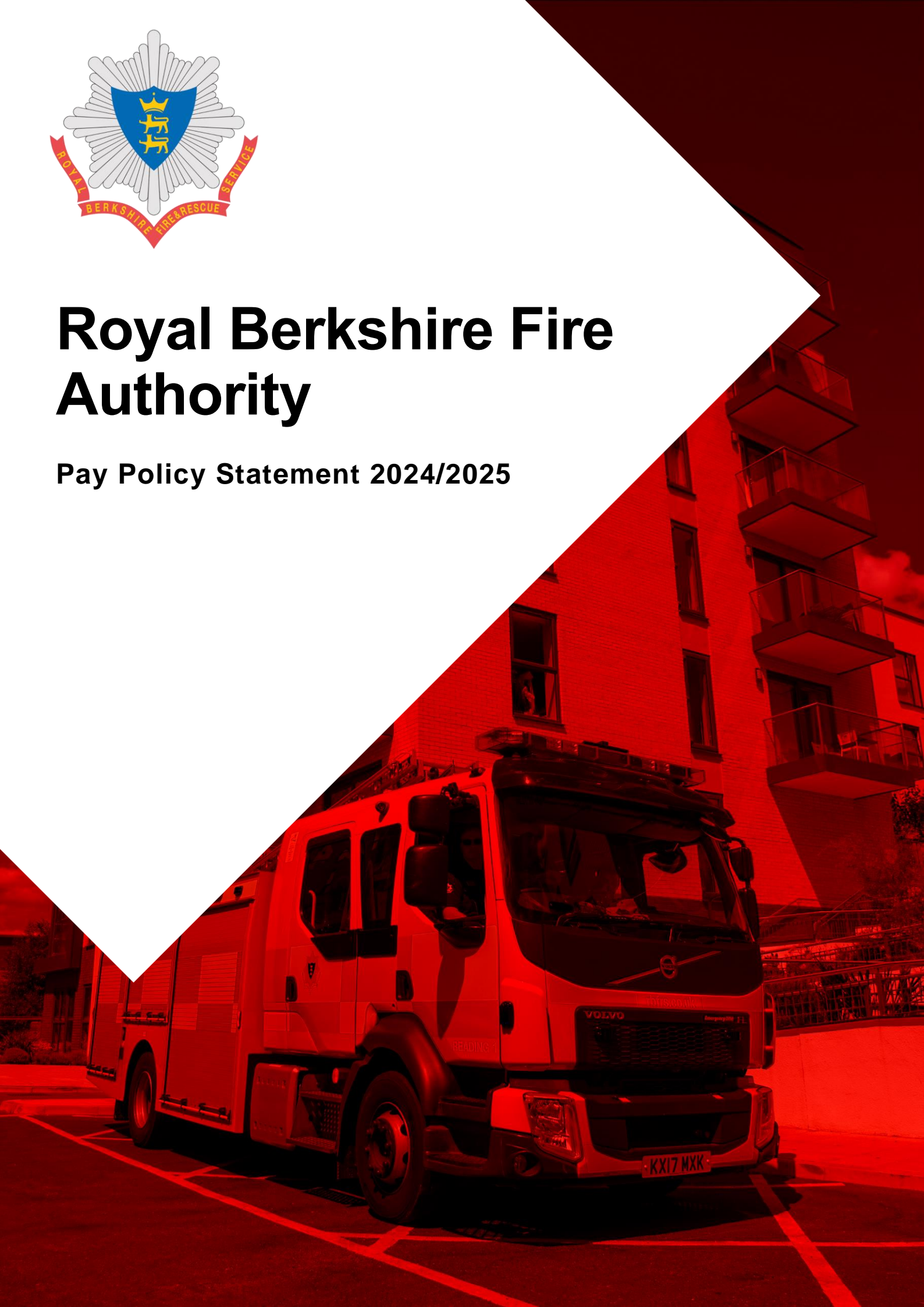




# Royal Berkshire Fire Authority

Pay Policy Statement 2024/2025





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# Introduction

This Pay Policy Statement reflects the Royal Berkshire Fire Authority's (RBFA) long standing Pay and Reward Strategy, which has been in place since its inception in 1998.

It has been formulated to discharge the RBFA's obligation to publish such a statement as required by Section 38 (1) of the Localism Act 2011. The purpose of this statement is to provide transparency with regard to RBFA's approach to setting the pay of its employees by identifying:

The methods by which salaries of all employees are determined;

The detail and level of remuneration of its most senior staff as defined by the relevant legislation;

The detail and level of remuneration for the lowest level of post/employee;

The ratio of pay of the top earner and that of the median earner.

RBFA seeks to balance the need to reward its staff sufficiently to attract, motivate and retain the talented individuals needed to deliver a first class fire and rescue service with the need to ensure that RBFA delivers its strategic commitment of providing good value for money.

This policy statement has been approved by RBFA. It will be subject to review annually and in accordance with new or proposed legislation to ensure that, it remains relevant and effective. Information supplied to inform the Pay Policy Statement will be based on figures available at the time of writing (31 October 2023).

# Royal Berkshire Fire Authority Pay Policy Statement 2024/2025

## Accountability and Decision Making

The Fire Authority is responsible for decision making in relation to the recruitment, pay, terms and conditions and severance arrangements in relation to its' employees subject to the exercise of delegated powers. The Fire Authority has approved the pay ranges for any post in excess of £100,000 per year on appointment.

## Responsibility and Scale

For 2024/2025, RBFA was directly responsible for a budget of £41,974,800 and the employment of 639 staff. The Fire Authority provides services to a total population of 949,700 residents.

## The Fire Authority's Pay Strategy - How is Pay Determined?

The RBFA's overall approach to determining the pay of its employees is to participate in national collective bargaining for fire-fighters and fire control staff through the National Joint Council (NJC) for Local Authority Fire and Rescue Services; for non-operational support staff through the NJC for Local Government Services and for Directors through NJC for Brigade Managers of Fire and Rescue Services. These arrangements account for a total of 459 employees covered by NJC for Local Authority Fire and Rescue Services, 176 employees covered by NJC for Local Government Services and four covered by NJC for Brigade Managers of Fire and Rescue Services.

The pay scale rates for apprentices have been reviewed and remain well in excess of the National Minimum Wage for apprentices as at 1 April 2023.

The RBFA's long term approach to pay and reward has been to continue to support national pay bargaining as the most effective way to manage payroll costs and the challenge of running a fire and rescue service in one of the highest cost-of-living areas outside London.

RBFA does not pay any location allowances related to the cost of living in Berkshire.

There are occasions where the job evaluation scheme and pay grading structure does not take into account market factors such as market pay rates for specialist and technical project roles, or fluctuating demand for skills in the marketplace. It is therefore sometimes necessary to pay a supplement in addition to base salary in order to recruit and retain staff. To this end, a Role

Specific Supplement Policy has been published to ensure RBFA has a fair, transparent and controlled approach to pay. Currently five individuals receive a role supplement.

At times we need ad hoc project work to be completed, which is achieved via Framework arrangements or paid on a casual hourly or day rate as appropriate to the task, duration and/or local market rates.

The Fire Authority also operates an individual Merit Payment Scheme to reward individual employees in any staff group as a result of specific exceptional performance in a one off task, sustained high performance within their normal job, or undertaking temporary additional responsibility where another allowance is not applicable.

## The NJC for Local Authority Fire and Rescue Services

The NJC for Local Authority Fire and Rescue Services currently provides a nationally agreed competence based pay structure of six roles ranging from Firefighter to Area Manager and a parallel, with fewer levels, structure for Fire Control staff. For each role there is a Role Map and National Occupational Standards have been established.

Firefighters begin their careers as trainees for which there is a separate rate of pay. Wholetime Firefighters join under an apprenticeship scheme for which they are paid a trainee rate of pay. On satisfactory completion of initial training they move onto the development rate of pay and undertake a Development and Assessment Pathway (DAP). When they have demonstrated competence against the National Occupational Standards they receive competent pay. A similar structure of development and competent pay rates exists for each role, and for roles from Watch Manager to Area Manager, there are two job sizes at each role level for competent staff, which are based on the scale of the duties and responsibilities of the post. Allocation of posts to roles and job sizes within roles is determined through locally agreed evaluation processes.

For staff on Local Authority Fire and Rescue Services conditions, a two year pay award was agreed in March 2023 equating to a seven percent increase backdated to 1 July 2022 and a five percent increase which took effect from 1 July 2023.

Other elements of pay include:

- ✓ Allowance payments for work undertaken outside the role map
- ✓ Continuous Personal Development (CPD) payments
- ✓ Locally agreed allowance for Area Managers undertaking a Head of Service role
- ✓ An operational allowance for being available to undertake 'Gold' level command
- ✓ Station Manager allowances paid to Watch Based Station Managers

- ✓ A flexible duty allowance paid to officers undertaking duties as part of the flexible duty rota
- ✓ A one-off payment made to members of the Pension Board for attendance at each Pension Board meeting
- ✓ Training allowance for Training Centre Instructors

Full details of the NJC for Local Authority Fire and Rescue Services terms and conditions of service are set out in the Sixth Edition of the NJC Scheme of Conditions of Service and any subsequent updates, Local Agreements reached between the Fire Authority and the Fire Brigades Union and the Fire Authority's Policies.

## The NJC for Local Government Services

The NJC for Local Government Services National Agreement on Pay and Conditions of Service, sets the framework and provides a national pay scale for the pay and conditions of service for the Fire Authority's non-operational support staff.

RBFRS uses the pay ranges identified within the national pay scales, localised to reduce the number of spinal column points (SCP) within each grade and further extended to provide ten pay grades. Posts are allocated to a grade through a process of job evaluation using the HAY job evaluation methodology.

Staff are appointed to a spinal column point (SCP) in the appropriate pay grade and progress subject to satisfactory performance confirmed through an annual appraisal (Performance and Development Review (PDR)), to the top of their pay scale by annual increments on the first of April each year. Based on the outcome of PDRs, there are provisions for the acceleration or stopping of incremental progression. In order to avoid possible claims for age discrimination, there are no more than six SCPs in each grade range.

Fire Safety Inspecting Officers (FSIOs) progress through pay grades as they complete nationally recognised fire safety qualifications. Trainees in Procurement are able to receive increment SCP increases within their Grade subject to the achievement of the relevant examinations in addition to annual increments.

For staff conditioned to the NJC for Local Government Services, a pay award of £1,925 was agreed on 1 November 2023, with those on SCPs above the maximum of the NJC pay spine but graded below deputy chief officer (for RBFRS those SCP 36 and above) receiving a 3.88 per cent pay award. This award was backdated to 1 April 2023.

## Senior Managers' Pay

A new Senior Leadership Team (SLT) structure was put in place with effect from 1 December 2021. This structure retains four positions designated as Chief Fire Officer/Chief Executive (CFO/CEX), Deputy Chief Executive/Director of Corporate Services (DCEX), Deputy Chief Fire

Officer/Director of Operations and Collaboration (DCFO) and Assistant Chief Fire Officer/Director of Service Delivery (ACFO). The ACFO role can be assigned as either operational or non-operational role.

Conditions of service for the CFO/CEX, DCEX, DCFO and ACFO are aligned with those set out in the National Joint Council for Brigade Managers of Fire and Rescue Services Constitution and Scheme of Conditions of Service. The DCEX is aligned to the Joint National Council for Joint Chief Officers of Local Authorities – Constitution, Conditions of Service, and Salaries document; A decision by the CFO on 20 June 2016, aligned the pay award for the non-operational Director (DCEX position) to those set out in the National Joint Council for Brigade Managers of Fire and Rescue Services. The non-operational ACFO role is awarded pay increases in line with the DCEX arrangements.

The CFO/CEX, DCEX, DCFO and ACFO are each placed on a five point pay range set by the Fire Authority:

CFO/ CEX	CO16	£144,858	DCFO/ DCEX	CO11	£116,499	ACFO	CO9	£107,441
	CO17	£149,629		CO12	£120,476		CO10	£110,516
	CO18	£154,413		CO13	£124,450		CO11	£116,499
	CO19	£159,930		CO14	£128,426		CO12	£120,476
	CO20	£165,303		CO15	£140,074		CO13	£124,450

The Chair and Vice-Chair determine where on the agreed pay scale the CFO/CEX is placed, based upon year-end performance appraisals. The RBFA have determined that the CFO/CEX, as Head of Paid Service determines where on the agreed pay scales the Directors are placed based upon year-end performance appraisals.

For staff on Chief Officers of Local Authorities, the NJC for Chief Officers of Local Authorities agreed a four percent pay award effective from 1 July 2022, with a further 3.5 percent increase from 1 January 2023.

In addition the operational CFO/CEX and DCFO are entitled to a vehicle for use in connection with Fire Authority business. Those in these roles are entitled to a Provided Car or receive contributions towards lease cars line with the contributions for other eligible staff as outlined in the Car User Scheme. The non-operational DCEX and ACFO receive a Car Allowance of £1,239 per annum.

The operational Director posts (CFO and DCFO) also receive an additional allowance for providing out of hours operational incident command cover and services based on 10% of the mid-point of the Assistant Chief Fire Officer salary range, currently £11,649 per annum.

There are no other bonuses or additional payments currently made to the Directors. In the event a merit payment is made, details will be included in the annual report to the Management Committee.

Senior Managers' pay (i.e. Grade 7 to 10, Area Managers and Directors) accounts for 6.54% of the total pay bill (which includes all taxable earnings, including base salary, variable pay, allowances and lease car cash value).



# Benefits Other Than Pay

## Pensions

The RBFA offers membership of the Firefighters' Pension Scheme (2015) to newly appointed staff engaged in operational fire-fighting. From 1 April 2022, all operational members in a Firefighters' Pension Scheme became members of the 2015 Firefighters Pension Scheme.

Non-operational support staff and Control Staff are offered membership of the Local Government Pension Scheme (LGPS).

In 2015 most public service pension schemes were reformed. These reforms included 'transitional protection' for people closer to retirement. The Courts have ruled that this directly discriminated against some younger pension scheme members. The Public Services Pensions and Judicial Offices Bill (PSPJO) received Royal Assent on 10 March 2022 and this set out in law HMT's solution to the age discrimination. Secondary legislation came into force on 1 October 2023 which addressed the issues with legacy schemes. The impact on RBFA is significant and will continue to be monitored.

A legal settlement under the Part-Time Workers (Prevention of Less Favourable Treatment) Regulations 2000 allowed certain retained firefighters with service between 1 July 2000 and 5 April 2006 to become members of the pension scheme. Eligible firefighters were asked whether they wanted to join this scheme in an options exercise which took place in 2014-2015. More recently, this judgment was challenged, and the European Court of Justice ruled that service going back to the start of employment could be taken into account. This resulted in a second options exercise allowing eligible retained firefighters to buy pension service as a special member of the Firefighter Pension Scheme 2006, backdated to the start date of their employment. This will also have a significant impact on RBFA.

The respective contributions made by the RBFA and employees who are members of these pension schemes, from 1 April 2023 are as follows (in all cases members are auto-enrolled into the appropriate pension scheme in accordance with legislation in relation to workplace pensions):

Scheme	Employer Contributions	Employee Contribution Bands
2015 FPS (2015 Scheme)	28.8*%	11% - 14.5%
LGPS	14.8**%	5.5% - 12.5%

\* from 1 April 2024 the employer contribution rate will increase to 38.7% following a valuation of the scheme by the Government Actuary's Department (GAD).

\*\* Employer contributions for members of the LGPS scheme are set at 14.8% of annual salary. RBFA also pays an employer annual lump sum to the pension fund of £363,000

## Car Provision

The RBFA offers a Car User Scheme to staff who are required have access to a vehicle to be used in connection with their official duties. A revised Car User Scheme was adopted in May 2023 to ensure a fair and equitable process for determining the provisions for staff across the service. The scheme is in three parts:

### 1. Lease Cars

Lease Cars are available for essential car users meeting the criterial for a lease car as set out in the Car User Scheme. The annual allowance is determined as follows:

#### a. Non-Operational Lease Car Users

The standard allowance for new leases for non-Operational car users is £3,500 per annum. Where the a non-Operational lease car user requires an enhanced vehicle specification specifically related to the requirement of their role which will be not be met by the standard allowance, a dynamic benchmarking exercise will take place in line with the RBFRS Car User Scheme. This exercise generates a real time baseline allowance taking into account the volatility and price fluctuations in the market.

Lease car allowances for non-operational lease car users with leases agreed prior to the adoption of the revised scheme are based on a standard rate of £2,000 per annum and the enhanced rate of £3,500 per annum. The enhanced lease car rate was provided for individuals who need an enhanced vehicle specification specifically related to the requirement of their role. When these leases expire these staff will be eligible for the new scheme.

#### b. Operational Lease Car Users

Operational lease car users are provided a lease car that meets the minimum standard of an appropriate vehicle for their role. The lease car contribution will be based on a dynamic benchmarking exercise undertaken at the time the car is requested in line with the RBFRS Car User Scheme. This exercise generates a real time baseline allowance which meets the required vehicle specification outlined in the Car User Scheme and taking into account volatility and price fluctuations in the market.

Lease car allowances for operational lease car users with leases agreed prior to the adoption of the revised scheme are based on the enhanced rate of £3,500 per annum.

### 2. Provided Cars

Following a change in taxation rules for car users, a Provided Car Scheme is available for Flexible Duty Officers (FDO), Level 4 Officers and Principal Officers as an alternative to a lease

car. The Fire Authority also maintains a pool of provided vehicles for use by other members of staff requiring access to a vehicle as part of their role.

### **3. Car Allowance**

A car allowance of up to £1,239 per annum is payable to those using their own car who meet the criteria of an essential user as outlined in the Car User Scheme but who are not eligible for a lease car.

## **Mileage Rates**

RBFA pays an enhanced mileage rate to Casual and Essential car users above the authorised HMRC rates. Any amount over the HMRC authorised rates are subject to tax and national insurance. The enhanced mileage rates are reviewed on an annual basis and are based on the CPI rate of inflation.

Flexible Duty Officers and Area Managers on the Level 4 rota can claim reasonable incidental mileage when providing cover as part of a 24 hour or weekly operational cover in accordance with their respective operational rotas. Individuals on a continuous duty rota can claim business mileage for all journeys undertaken.

Lease car users are paid mileage based on whatever is higher of the HMRC Advisory rate and the average monthly prices of road fuels. This is reviewed on a monthly basis. Provided car users will reimburse their commuting and incidental mileage at the same rate that lease car user mileage is paid.

## **Cycle to Work Scheme**

RBFA participate in the national "Cycle to Work" scheme through which its employees hire bicycles to use for travelling to and from work.

## **Subscriptions**

Individuals required by RBFA to be members of professional bodies in relation to their duties are reimbursed subscription fees.

## **Uniform**

The RBFA provides uniform clothing for its operational firefighting and control room staff and some Green Book staff engaged in public facing activities such as prevention work, Fire Safety Inspecting Officers and HQ reception staff. A number of other staff are provided with work wear as required for the purpose of their role. In addition, the operational firefighting staff are issued with and required to wear Personal Protective Equipment when undertaking operational duties.

# Employee Assistance Programme

The RBFA provides an employee assistance programme for all its staff.

## Occupational Health Support

The RBFA provides an Occupational Health Service to all its staff which seeks to keep them fit and well to undertake their duties and to ensure their speedy and safe return to work when they are injured or sick.

## Healthcare Provision

Where appropriate and cost effective, the RBFA may pay for physiotherapy, private medical assessment and/or treatment for its staff in order to secure their more rapid return to work following injury or sickness.

RBFA also provides the opportunity for staff to access the Benenden employee healthcare scheme at no direct cost to employees other than tax due on the benefit. This is currently at a cost of £12.80, for those who choose to opt into the scheme. As at 31 October 2023, there were 469 members of the scheme.

## Outplacement Support

In the rare event of employment being terminated on the grounds of redundancy, RBFA may provide appropriate outplacement support to the employee(s) concerned in order to assist them to find alternative employment elsewhere.

# Highest and Lowest Paid Employees

The CFO/CEX is the RBFA's highest paid employee. The policy regarding their remuneration is set out in RBFA's Senior Managers Pay section.

The CFO/CEX is selected by an RBFA Members' Appointment Panel following a comprehensive selection process and national advertising campaign.

## Remuneration Packages (as at 31 October 2023):

Basic Salary and (operational command allowance (per annum)	Total remuneration (including pension contributions and car provision)
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CFO/CEX	£165,303	£227,915.31
Lowest paid employee (excluding Apprentices)	£25,819	£29,640.21
Competent Firefighter	£34,501	£39,434.64

From April 2023, the compulsory government National Living Wage for workers over 23 years of age and over is £10.42 per hour. Please note the National Living Wage is distinct from the Living Wage, which is the level of pay recommended by the Living Wage Foundation, an independent campaign group. In assessing this requirement on current pay arrangements in RBFA it is noted that the lowest paid post to which an employee would be recruited would attract an hourly rate of £11.79 (excluding apprentices on apprenticeship rates of pay).

Given that staff pay and benefits dominate the RBFA budget, the current and anticipated future reductions in RBFA's financial resources mean that these costs are and will continue to be under close scrutiny.

RBFRS has in some cases found it difficult recruit suitable professionally qualified staff through normal channels and in some areas the use of interim agency staff or contractors working outside of IR35 legislation, is in place.

Reviews will be required to ensure appropriate remuneration is in place to attract and retain staff as structures within the Service are examined. Consideration of the total reward available to respond to changing organisational pressures and the linkages between pay and performance and redesigned structures will continue to be explored through organisational change programmes to ensure staff are attracted to, and retained by RBFA. In accordance with our Equality Policy, pay is monitored and reviewed. An equal pay audit was completed during 2022/2023. RBFA has published its Gender Pay Gap report in line with legislation, which can be viewed on the Services' website and also at gov.uk. RBFA also publishes an Ethnicity Pay Gap Report which is available on the Services' website.

## Pay Multiples

The relationship between the rate of pay for the median full time equivalent earnings and the highest paid employee excluding pension, can be described as the pay multiple.

The multiple between the median full time equivalent earnings and the CFO/CEX is 1:4.66.

# Payments on Termination of Employment

## Compensation Policy

The RBFA currently exercises its discretions under the Local Government (Early Termination of Employment), (Discretionary Compensation) Regulations 2006 to enhance statutory redundancy payments by paying one and a half times the Statutory Redundancy Pay Table and waiving the statutory maximum week's pay for calculation of redundancy payments. These discretions only apply to staff who are offered membership of the LGPS, that is Fire Control Staff and non-operational support staff.

Uniformed operational staff at all levels are not currently covered by the Local Government (Early Termination of Employment) (Discretionary Compensation) Regulations 2006 and in the event of redundancy, their compensation is limited to statutory redundancy pay.

## Special Severance Payments

Special Severance Payments (SSPs) are payments made to employees outside of the statutory or contractual payments when leaving employment in public service. SSPs will include any outstanding loans, bursaries or training expenses which are not being repaid by the employee. Payments (or write off of loans which includes bursaries or training expenses) will only be made where there is a convincing case that it is in the interest of the tax payers.

As a public body, the RBFA must demonstrate it has appropriately considered whether making a SSP is an appropriate use of public money, and that payments are consistent with the Public Sector Equality Duties under the Equality Act 2010. Therefore, when an SSP may apply, the case is fully considered and appropriate approvals are sought in line with the scheme of budget delegation before any such payments are made or loans written off.

## Pensions Policy

RBFA has adopted a policy of considering the re-engagement of its retired operational staff subject to certain conditions. In the event that re-engagement of a retiree takes place, their pension payments may be abated (up to 100%) to ensure that they do not earn more in retirement than they did immediately prior to their retirement. This is outlined in the Services' Pensions and Retirement Planning Policy.

# Publication of Pay Statement

Upon approval of the full Fire Authority, this statement will be published on RBFA's web site. In addition RBFA publishes the following details for Directors for the two most recent years in its Annual Statement of Accounts:-

- ✓ Salary including fees and allowances
- ✓ Any sums payable by way of expenses allowance that are chargeable to UK income tax (Benefits in Kind/Car Allowance)
- ✓ Total Remuneration excluding pensions
- ✓ Employer Pension Contributions
- ✓ Total Remuneration including pensions

In addition, RBFA publishes the numbers of employees earning £50,000 and over in bandings of £5,000 and any compensation for loss of employment and any other payments connected with termination

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