

ROYAL BERKSHIRE FIRE AUTHORITY



COMMITTEE	MANAGEMENT COMMITTEE
DATE OF MEETING	8 OCTOBER 2024
SUBJECT	SUSTAINABILITY STRATEGY 2024 - 2029
LEAD OFFICER	PAUL BROOKS, HEAD OF ASSETS
LEAD MEMBER	COUNCILLOR RACHELLE SHEPHERD DUBEY
EXEMPT INFORMATION	NONE
ACTION	TO NOTE AND AGREE

1. EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

- 1.1 This report is a covering document to apprise the Management Committee of the Royal Berkshire Fire and Rescue Service (RBFRS) Sustainability Strategy 2024-2029.
- 1.2 RBFRS recognises the climate emergency and the social and economic issues that are creating an impact both globally and locally. This recognition has culminated in the production of the inaugural RBFRS Sustainability Strategy, which aims to be credible and deliverable.
- 1.3 The strategy is aligned with the corporate vision, and it supports the aims and key objectives of the organisation. More specifically it supports one of the Fire Authority’s strategic commitments namely, *Sustainability: We are committed to ensuring that we provide a financially sustainable Service and take meaningful action to help address the climate emergency.*
- 1.4 RBFRS outlines its commitment to sustainability through four strategic themes. These themes provide a framework which builds on action already undertaken by RBFRS in these areas and prioritises aspects where we can have the greatest impact and action on the climate emergency in order to set the conditions for a more sustainable future. The themes are:
 - Our people
 - Guardianship
 - Consumption reduction
 - Decarbonisation

- 1.5 The strategy is supported by an RBFRS Sustainable Development Policy Statement that is to be jointly signed by the RBFA Chair and the RBFRS Chief Fire Officer.

2. RECOMMENDATION

That the Management Committee:

- 2.1 **NOTE** the RBFRS Sustainability Strategy 2024-2029; and
- 2.2 **AGREE** the RBFRS Sustainable Development Policy Statement for co-signature by the RBFA Chair and RBFRS Chief Fire Officer.

3. REPORT

- 3.1 A credible and deliverable RBFRS Sustainability Strategy is essential to articulate how we aim to action and implement a more sustainable fire and rescue service to support the RBFRS strategic 'Commitment 5 – Sustainability'. This inaugural RBFRS Sustainability Strategy has its foundations in the signing of the Emergency Services Environment and Sustainability Group Charter by RBFA on 15 February 2023 (minute reference 69).
- 3.2 The climate emergency is forcing fire and rescue services to adapt quickly to an escalating threat, requiring more resources, advanced training, and comprehensive strategies to protect lives, property, and the environment. There are several key challenges, including increased frequency and intensity of wildfires and increased risk of flooding, putting strain on resources and wellbeing.
- 3.3 The strategy has been developed with active stakeholder engagement across the organisation and it is aligned with the corporate vision, and supports the strategic aims and key objectives of the organisation:
- Fire stations at the heart of communities
 - Capacity, capability and resilience
 - One team working collaboratively for the people we serve
- 3.4 There are many definitions of sustainability, this is due to the myriad elements that it covers. Sustainability is often associated only with the environment, but its development covers far more issues and has been summarily defined in RBFRS workshop sessions as, "*creating resilient communities, taking action to be environmentally friendly and ensuring we are financially stable*".
- 3.5 Defining 'net zero' is equally complex, with the UK's broader definition referring to the balance between the amount of greenhouse gases emitted into the atmosphere and the amount removed or offset. For the purposes of this strategy, net zero carbon has been defined as:

"The carbon emissions associated with operational energy consumption across the estate and fleet are zero or negative on an annual basis. Most of

the fuel and power is supplied from on-site and off-site renewable energy sources, with any remaining carbon balance offset.”

- 3.6 RBFRS outlines its commitment to sustainability through four strategic themes. These themes provide a framework which builds on action already undertaken by RBFRS in these areas and prioritises aspects where we can have the greatest impact and action on the climate emergency in order to set the conditions for a more sustainable future:
 - 3.6.1 **Our People.** Collaborating with the stakeholders to promote sustainability and empower the sector, community and teams to reduce the impacts and create a sustainable future.
 - 3.6.2 **Guardianship.** Support and create a safer community by reducing wildfires, flooding and contaminants to protect the community and environment.
 - 3.6.3 **Consumption Reduction** – Conserve scarce natural materials through the reduction of RBFRS consumption.
 - 3.6.4 **Decarbonisation** – Reduce the amount of carbon emissions produced by RBFRS and to prevent additional carbon emissions affecting the climate.
- 3.7 To ensure credibility, wider alignment and a holistic approach, the production of the strategy has included mapping our current activities to the UN Sustainable Development Goals (UN SDGs). The SDGs are useful because they were created to standardise targets for governments to meet, addressing the urgent environmental, political and economic challenges that are prevalent in today's society.
- 3.8 During the development of the strategy, staff from all departments were given the opportunity to identify their current progress towards sustainability and where they would like to be in the next 5 years. This important piece of consultation has resulted in a draft non-committal officer level roadmap for development over the coming months which can be split into deliverable projects ranging from quick wins to larger scale investments.
- 3.9 From a governance and reporting perspective, Progress will be reported internally monthly to the Estate Management Group and Senior Leadership Team (SLT), quarterly to the RBFA Members' Estate Development and Sustainability Working Group and six-monthly to the RBFA Management Committee. External reporting will be via the RBFRS Annual Report to update external stakeholders on our performance over the year. Progress will also be continually monitored by the RBFRS Sustainability Co-ordinator, and a meeting held quarterly with key internal stakeholders to review practical progress.

4. CONTRIBUTION TO STRATEGIC COMMITMENTS

- 4.1 **Sustainability.** We are committed to ensuring that we provide a financially sustainable Service and take meaningful action to help address the climate emergency.
- 4.2 **People.** We will support our staff by providing a safe and inclusive environment for them to thrive in, building a diverse organisation that is engaged with, and accessible to, our communities.

5. FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

- 5.1 There are no immediate financial implications associated with the strategy, although procuring sustainable technologies might increase costs in the future. Where practicable, the aim is to manage inflationary risk within the financial headroom of the SAIF and revenue budgets.

6. LEGAL IMPLICATIONS

- 6.1 There are no legal implications arising from this report.

7. EQUALITY AND DIVERSITY IMPLICATIONS

- 7.1 We are committed to promoting equality, diversity, and inclusion (EDI) for all our employees and the wider community. An equality impact assessment has been raised to cover the development and implementation of this strategy. EDI has been and will continue to be, a core part of the development of every sustainability related initiative.

8. RISK IMPLICATIONS

- 8.1 If RFBRs does not have an appropriate strategy in place for sustainability, there is a risk of not meeting UK Government and internationally agreed targets.

9. CONSISTENCY WITH DUTY TO COLLABORATE

- 9.1 Opportunities using collaboration with partners and other FRS to develop and deliver sustainability initiatives will always be explored and exploited if beneficial.

10. PRINCIPAL CONSULTATION

- 10.1 The Chief Fire Officer, Deputy Chief Fire Officer and Head of Finance and Procurement were consulted during preparation of this report.
- 10.2 The RBFA Lead Member for Strategic Assets and Monitoring Officer were consulted during preparation of this report.

11. BACKGROUND PAPERS

11.1 Emergency Services Sustainability Charter – Fire Authority Agenda and Minutes, Item 14, 15 February 2023.

12. APPENDICES

12.1 RBFRS Sustainability Strategy 2024-2029 – Appendix A

12.2 RBFRS Sustainable Development Policy Statement – Appendix B

13. CONTACT DETAILS

13.1 Paul Brooks, Head of Assets (Estates, Fleet & Equipment),
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