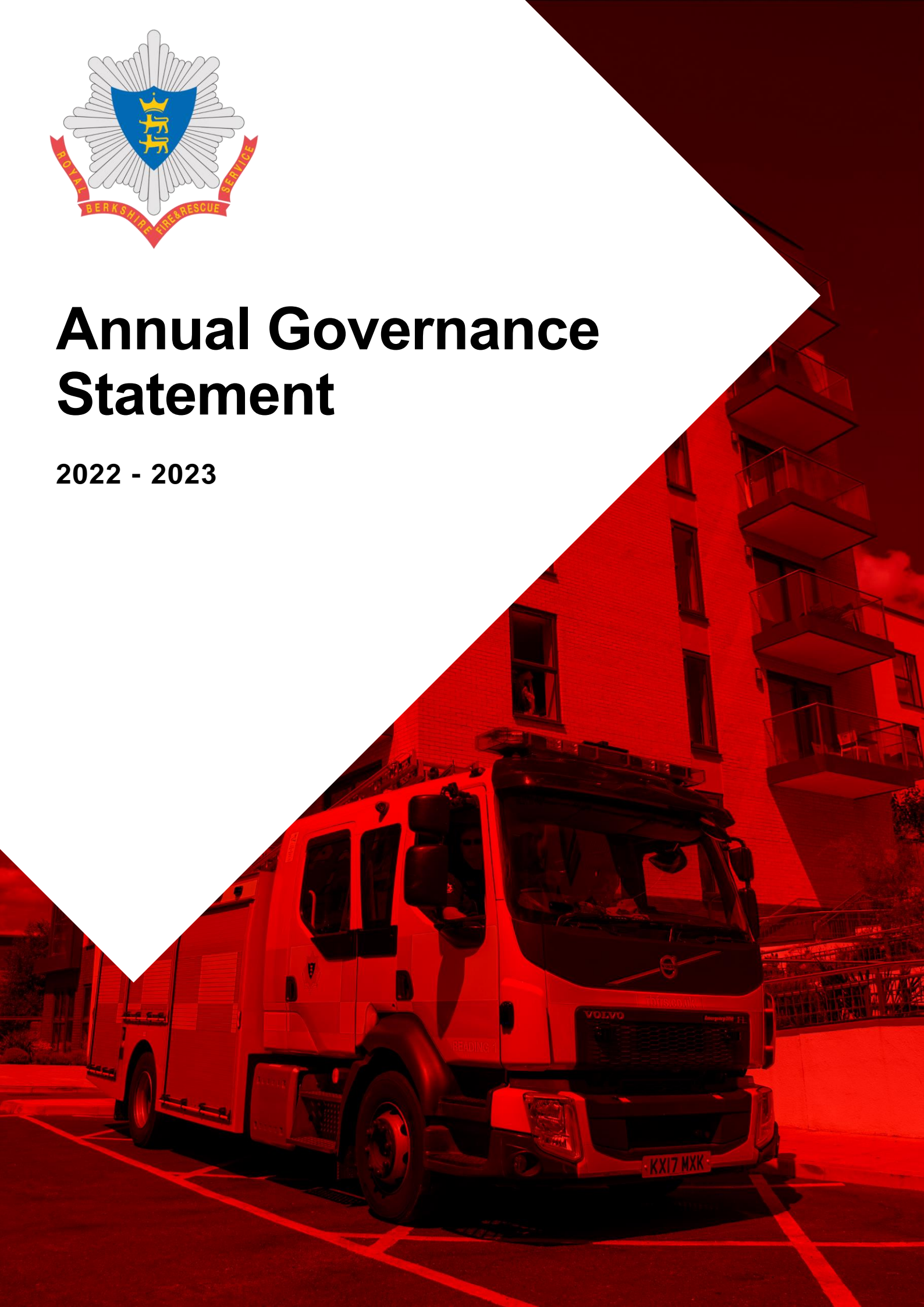




Annual Governance Statement

2022 - 2023





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We will consider the request and get back to you. For more information on accessibility at Royal Berkshire Fire and Rescue Service, please read our [Accessibility Statement](#).

Scope of responsibility

Royal Berkshire Fire Authority (the Authority) is responsible for ensuring that its business is conducted in accordance with relevant legislation and standards and that public money is both safeguarded and properly accounted for. It also has a duty under the [Local Government Act 1999](#), to make arrangements to secure continuous improvement in the way in which its functions are exercised, having regard to a combination of economy, efficiency and effectiveness.

In discharging this overall responsibility, the Authority is responsible for putting in place proper arrangements for the governance of its affairs, facilitating the effective exercise of its functions, use of its resources and including arrangements for the management of risk and the maintenance of an effective internal control environment

The Authority has approved and adopted a code of corporate governance which is consistent with the principles of the Chartered Institute of Public Finance and Accountancy/Society of Local Authority Chief Executives and Senior Managers (CIPFA/SOLACE) '*Delivering Good Governance in Local Government: Framework*' (2016 edition). This statement explains how the Authority has complied with the Framework and meets the requirements of [Regulation 6\(1\) of the Accounts and Audit Regulations 2015](#), which requires all relevant bodies to prepare an Annual Governance Statement.

The Authority also reviews and reports its compliance with the CIPFA Financial Management Code (FM Code) which is designed to support good practice in financial management and allow the Authority to demonstrate that it is financially sustainable. The FM Code came into force on 1 April 2021. Local authorities are required to prepare an Annual Governance Statement in order to report publicly on the extent to which they comply with their own code of governance, which in turn is consistent with the good governance principles in the Framework.

This includes how they have monitored and evaluated the effectiveness of their governance arrangements in the year, and on any planned changes in the coming period. The process of preparing the governance statement should itself add value to the effectiveness of the governance and internal control framework. The Annual Governance Statement is intended as a valuable means of communication. It enables an authority to explain to the community, service users, tax payers and other stakeholders its governance arrangements and how the controls it has in place to manage risks of failure in delivering its outcomes.

The overall aim is to ensure that:

- » Resources are directed in accordance with agreed policy and according to priorities;
- » There is sound and inclusive decision-making; and
- » There is clear accountability for the use of those resources in order to achieve desired outcomes for service users and communities.

Purpose of the Governance Framework

The Governance Framework comprises the systems, processes, cultures and values by which the Authority is directed and controlled. It enables the Authority to monitor the achievement of its strategic objectives and to consider whether those objectives have led to the delivery of appropriate and cost-effective services.

The system of internal control is a significant part of that Framework and is designed to manage risk to a reasonable level. It cannot eliminate all risk of failure and can, therefore, only provide reasonable and not absolute assurance of effectiveness. The system of internal control is based on an ongoing process designed to identify and prioritise risks in relation to the achievement of the Authority's policies, aims and objectives; to evaluate the likelihood of those risks being realised and the impact should they be realised.

The Governance Framework has been in place within the Authority for the year ended 31 March 2023, and up to the date of approval of the Statement of Accounts.

The Governance Framework

The governance measures in place reflect the seven principles of good governance set out in the CIPFA/SOLACE *'Delivering Good Governance in Local Government: Framework'* (2016 edition) as set out below.

Core Principle A: Behaving with integrity, demonstrating strong commitment to ethical values and respecting the rule of law

The Constitution of the Authority establishes the roles and responsibilities of Members of the Authority and its Committees, together with officer functions. It includes details of delegation arrangements. The Constitution is kept under review to ensure that it is fit for purpose. Proposed changes are overseen by the Audit and Governance Committee. The Audit and Governance Committee's views on the suitability of any changes are reported when they are presented to the full Fire Authority for approval.

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The Constitution also contains procedure rules, standing orders and financial regulations that define how decisions are taken and where authority lies for decisions. The statutory roles of the Chief Fire Officer/Chief Executive, Monitoring Officer and Chief Financial Officer are described together with their contributions to provide robust assurance on governance and that expenditure is lawful and in line with approved budgets and procedures. The influence and oversight of these posts is supported by the post-holders' membership of the Senior Leadership Team.

A local Members' Code of Conduct for all Members was agreed by the Authority in April 2022 and a further public consultation held in December 2022 to ensure our community still supported the code of conduct. A Register of dis-closable pecuniary interests for each Member is reviewed annually and published on the Authority's website. This is further supported by [Protocol on Member and Officer Relations](#) which sets out respective obligations and expectations. If a member of the public

In the event of an allegation being made that a Member has breached the Authority's Code of Conduct, The [Complaints Procedure](#) related to members of the Fire Authority is available on the RBFRS website.

The role of Monitoring Officer is fulfilled as part of a collaborative arrangement with Buckinghamshire and Milton Keynes Fire and Rescue Authority. This arrangement has been in place since 2017/18 and has proved to be effective in ensuring suitable discharge of this responsibility.

All employees are bound by the Employee Code of Conduct and provides a framework for the behaviour, decisions and actions of employees. It is based on the national Core Code of Ethics for Fire and Rescue Services in England and supports a consistent approach to ethics and behaviours across RBFRS. The Employee Code of Conduct also sets out the requirement for the declarations of interests and for employees to register offers or acceptance of gifts and hospitality. The [Officer Register of Gifts and Hospitality](#) is publicly available on the RBFRS website.

His Majesty's Inspectorate of Constabulary and Fire and Rescue Services (HMICFRS) are due to publish their findings on their review of values and culture in the Fire Service. We are awaiting publication and will review the contents for action.

A Grievance, Bullying and Harassment Policy, Complaints Procedure, Whistle Blowing Policy and Anti-Fraud, Bribery and Corruption Policy are maintained and kept under review, providing the opportunity for members of the public and staff to raise issues when they believe that appropriate standards have not been met. Regular updates on complaints received and their resolution is presented to the Audit and Governance Committee via the quarterly performance report.

The Local Pension Board is set up under the auspices of [The Public Service Pensions Act 2013](#). The Board exists to assist the Fire Authority in its role as Scheme Manager; to secure compliance with the various firefighter pension scheme regulations and other legislation relating to governance and administration of the scheme; secure compliance with requirements imposed by the Pensions Regulator. A six monthly report is provided to the Audit and Governance Committee.

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We are committed to [data protection and processing personal data](#) in line with the requirements of the UK GDPR and the Data Protection Act 2018. It also sets out the process by which data incidents are recorded and investigated, and where appropriate, reported.

Royal Berkshire Fire Authority is committed to the highest possible standards of integrity, openness and accountability. The Authority recognises that sound systems of public accountability are vital to effective management and to protecting the public funds entrusted to it. The Anti-Fraud, Bribery and Corruption Policy outlines the Authority's commitment to creating an anti-fraud culture and maintaining high ethical standards in its administration of public funds.

RBFRS Whistleblowing policy outlines arrangements to give staff confidence to challenge and report allegations of inappropriate behaviour and gives the authority the means to investigate such reports. There is the opportunity to use Say So, who are an organisation RBFRS has engaged to confidentially report workplace concerns.

Core Principle B: Ensuring openness and comprehensive stakeholder engagement

The [Corporate Plan and Community Risk Management Plan \(CRMP\) 2019-23](#), sets out the contribution the Authority will make to its mission; serving the people of Royal Berkshire. It is linked to the Budget, ensuring that the aspirations in the plan are realistic in the context of funding constraints placed upon the Authority.

The Corporate Plan and Community Risk Management Plan is agreed following consultation with the public, staff and stakeholders. The Authority has consulted on and agreed its CRMP Consultation Principles, which are published within the Corporate Plan and Community Risk Management Plan.

A new Corporate Plan and Community Risk Management Plan covering 2023-2027 was consulted on from January 2023 with plans to present the consultation outcomes to the Fire Authority in April 2023. If agreed, this will then be published on our website.

A Consultation Strategy is in place which underpins all consultation activity and we work with the Consultation Institute to ensure best practice is followed. Details of our [previous public consultations](#) are available on our website. All consultations are supported by a communication and engagement plan aimed at engaging our stakeholders.

In 2022/23, we undertook a [Budget and Council Tax Consultation](#) prior to setting the 2023/24 budget. Our [Equality, Diversity and Inclusivity Objectives 2022-2026](#) have been published on our website and underpin our engagement activity.

Whilst the Corporate Plan spans a four-year period, it is reviewed annually. An [Annual Plan](#) is produced and published on the website for each of those four years, setting out Annual Objectives together with Corporate Measures. Each Unitary Authority area also has a dedicated annual [Local Safety Plan](#), which sets out localised risk and how resources will be targeted to meet that risk.

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An [Annual Report](#) is published on our website taking account of matters that have arisen during the last 12 months and reporting on performance for that period.

Corporate Measures that are set annually via the Annual Plan are internally monitored through the Strategic Performance Board prior to reporting via the Audit and Governance Committee. Any strategic projects are managed through the Programme Board, with our Priority Programmes being reported to the Audit and Governance Committee via the [Quarterly Performance Reports](#). In addition to publishing the Quarterly Performance Reports, we publish key performance information on our website on a monthly basis. Our website also contains a '[Transparency and Governance](#)' section publishing financial and staff information which includes the Council Tax Leaflet, procurement card transactions and payments over £500. We work closely with our neighbouring Fire and Rescue Services, notably through long standing collaboration with Thames Valley partners and the wider Thames Valley Local Resilience Forum. These partnerships and collaborative activities allow us to share our understanding of risk and contribute to wider regional risk reduction. We actively seek collaborative opportunities, such as sharing the facilities in our fire stations with Thames Valley Police and South Central Ambulance Service, joint procurement arrangements and our joint Thames Valley Fire Control Service. Working together leads to greater resilience and increases our efficiency and effectiveness. The governance arrangements are set out in the [Thames Valley Emergency Services Collaboration Five Year Plan](#), together with a [Thames Valley Collaboration Register](#), and are publicly available on our website.

Meetings of [the Fire Authority and its committee meetings](#) are accessible to the public and dates are published on the website, including the minutes and decisions taken at those meetings. The Authority appoints two members to the Thames Valley Fire Control Service Joint Committee and papers are published on the website for these meetings.

[Standing orders](#) are published outlining the rules for the operation of Authority and committee meetings. The [Scheme of Delegation](#) sets out those decisions which can only be taken by the authority or the audit and Governance committee and those which can be taken by the Chief Fire Officer/chief Executive.

Core Principle C: Defining outcomes in terms of sustainable economic, social and environmental benefits

The Corporate Plan and CRMP provides a clear vision and formal statement on the organisation's purpose and intended outcomes, including how we will manage our resources to achieve those outcomes. Our Community Risk Management Plan sets out how we will safely and effectively manage risk across our Prevention, Protection and Response activities. Our Consultation Principles set out that we will consult with a wide range of stakeholders, including the public, on any changes that will have a material impact on the performance of the services we provide.

The [Strategic Asset Investment Framework](#), sets out our intent for the management and investment in our capital assets which include our buildings, fleet and ICT, underpinning the Corporate Plan and Integrated Risk Management Plan. We monitor the delivery of our corporate strategies and report on these through our Audit & Governance Committee.

The Organisational Risk Management Policy sets out our approach to the identification and management of risk which may impact on our ability to provide our services. The Corporate Risk Register is reviewed on a four weekly basis by the Senior Leadership Team, and is reported to the Audit and Governance Committee.

The Service's intention is to support wider Government sustainability and environmental targets. In addition to ordering the Service's first alternative fuelled vehicles, a piece of work has been commissioned to undertake an organisational carbon footprint assessment. Once complete, the information will be used to inform future strategies so that the organisation can set out its direction to becoming more sustainable and environmentally friendly. Governance structures have been set up to enable us to progress actions and the Authority has signed up to the Emergency Services Environmental and Sustainability Group.

A key element to the revenue budget setting process is ensuring the long-term sustainability of the organisation, taking into account the current pressures, risks and challenges that the Service faces.

Core Principle D: Determining the interventions necessary to optimise the achievement of the intended outcomes

The Fire Authority meetings approximately three times per year with separate committee meetings for Audit and Governance and Management committee. In accordance with the Scheme of Delegation, all relevant items for decision are taken to the appropriate and relevant committee for scrutiny and approval.

Medium to long-term planning is informed by the [Medium Term Financial Plan](#), which sets out the financial strategy for the Authority. This enables the Authority to understand likely future challenges, and ensure its strategic planning is realistic.

Where necessary, appropriate action is identified to mitigate potential financial risk. This is further supported by the Authority's [Efficiency Plan](#), which was refreshed as part of the budget setting process for 2023/24. Savings of £1.384m will be delivered between 2023/24 and 2025/26.

Our Performance Management Framework sets out how we will manage performance to ensure organisational aims and objectives are achieved. This Framework sets out how we will measure and monitor performance and where and when the organisation will manage performance. This is further supported by the Organisational Risk Management Policy as set out above.

The Authority will inform the public about changes we intend to make, or would like the public's views on, and then engage in a process of public consultation. This enables assessment of feedback from our Communities and partners on our options. Responses are analysed and then presented to the Fire Authority.

Core Principle E: Developing the Authority's capacity, including the capability of its leadership and the individuals within it

A key theme of the Corporate Plan and Community Risk Management Plan is Capacity, Capability and Resilience. Our vision outlines our capability commitments and that we value and invest in developing our people to ensure we can deliver the best possible service.

A new People Strategy is in development and the timeline on this has been extended. The themes will remain the same and will enable our staff to be the best public servants they can be, creating a workforce that can deliver an efficient and effective service.

The Authority has developed a new Member Development Strategy which is in draft and due for review at Fire Authority in April 2023. This strategy will be further supported by a Member Development Action Plan.

The training needs of Members and officers are identified through appraisal and review processes. Appropriate training is made available to ensure that individuals are able to undertake their current roles effectively and that they have the chance to develop to meet their, and the Authority's, needs.

There is a Leadership Development Programme in place for supervisory and middle- managers, with the Senior Leadership Team developed through coaching and external leadership development courses.

Our Behavioural Competency Framework has leadership at its core and is directly linked to our Employee Code of Conduct and Equality and Diversity and Inclusion Objectives. Our performance development review structure is aligned to the framework.

Our Workforce Planning Group allows us to monitor our workforce profile, as well as anticipate future workforce needs for capacity and capability and plan accordingly.

The health and wellbeing of colleagues is a priority and our Health, Safety and Wellbeing Strategy and Action Plan supports our staff, with a particular focus on Mental Health.

Independent assurance is provided by His Majesty's Inspectorate of Constabulary and Fire and Rescue Services (HMICFRS) across the three pillars of 'effectiveness', 'efficiency' and 'people'. In June 2019, the first inspection report for Royal Berkshire Fire and Rescue Services was issued in which it said the Service was performing to a high standard in these areas and was graded as 'good' in all three pillars. HMICFRS inspected RBFRS during 2022 with the final report published in January 2023. RBFRS was graded as 'good' in all three pillars. Progress on the areas for improvements identified by HMICFRS are reported through our Strategic Performance Board.

Since the introduction of the Fire Standards Board, we have been an active and engaged participant in the development of the new fire standards and in ensuring that we are fully compliant with all of the published professional standards for fire and rescue services.

Core Principle F: Managing risks and performance through robust internal control and strong public financial management

The Authority ensures that the Service has appropriate governance arrangements in place and that risk and performance are being effectively managed. As set out above, there is a Performance Management Framework and Organisational Risk Management Policy which sets out how this is achieved.

The Authority has ownership of the strategic risks of the Service and is responsible for monitoring and challenging risks and actions appearing on the Corporate Risk Register. This responsibility for risk and performance management is delegated by the Authority to the Audit and Governance Committee.

The Head of Finance and Procurement is appointed as the Chief Finance Officer and ensures the sound administration of the financial affairs of the Authority, as required by the statutory duties associated with section 112 of the Local Government Finance Act 1988 and the Accounts and Audit Regulations 2015. The Chief Financial Officer is required to adhere to professional standards set by CIPFA.

Until October 2015, the Authority's insurance was arranged through a consortium of nine fire and rescue authorities. These fire and rescue authorities are now members of the [Fire and Rescue Indemnity Company Ltd \(FRIC\)](#). The company commenced trading in November 2015 and now has 13 member authorities. The Authority's risk protection arrangements are provided through the pooled funds of the company. The aims of the Company are twofold: to reduce risk to the Authority by driving up standards, for example, by adopting best practice in relation to driving standards and also to reduce the cost to the Authority of its risk protection arrangements over the longer-term.

The Audit and Governance Committee provides independent assurance to the Authority and scrutinises the performance of our service and reviews audit reports from internal and external auditors and also approves the statement of accounts.

Management Committee receives quarterly budget monitoring reports.

Core Principle G: Implementing good practices in transparency, reporting and audit to deliver effective accountability

Data is published on the website in accordance with the Local Government Transparency Code to promote openness and accountability through reporting on local decision-making, public spending and democratic processes.

The Authority has a designated statutory Data Protection Officer (DPO) that reports through the Authority's Senior Information Risk Owner (SIRO) which is the Deputy Chief Executive/Director of Corporate Services. Both the DPO and SIRO ensure legal compliance with data protection requirements.

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The Authority publishes on the website monthly listings of all procurement card expenditure and payments over £500 that have been made. A contracts register is also maintained and published detailing businesses with whom we have official agreements and supplies regular services.

The [Pay Policy](#) has been approved by the Authority and is subject to review annually. It is produced in accordance with new or proposed legislation to ensure that it remains relevant and effective. The Pay Policy Statement for 2023-24 has been approved by the Authority.

In addition to publishing the [Gender Pay Gap Report for 2022](#), on our website. The Authority, also published an [Ethnicity Pay Gap Report for 2022](#) which goes further than the statutory Gender Pay Gap report and gives clearer and more extensive information regarding how individuals are paid at RBFRS and how individual pay elements are distributed across the various protected groups. An Equal Pay Audit was undertaken in 2022 with outcomes reported to the Authority in January 2023.

An annual [Statement of Assurance](#) is produced to formally confirm to Government, stakeholders and the communities we serve, the adequacy of arrangements for the effective management of financial, governance and operational matters in RBFRS. The Statement confirms the extent to which the requirement of the Fire and Rescue National Framework for England have been met.

The Audit and Governance Committee undertakes the scrutiny function within the Authority and provides a robust challenge to the Authority. The Committee reviews performance and risk within the Authority, initiating reviews where it considers performance could be improved.

The Authority's Internal Audit Service is carried out by external contractors appointed under contract. The appointed Internal Auditor (RSM) is required to provide an annual independent and objective opinion to the Authority on risk management, governance and the control environment. The annual Audit Plan is agreed by the Audit and Governance Committee and in 2022/23 RSM undertook the following audits:

Audit	Assurance Level
Health and Safety	Reasonable assurance
Facilities Management	Reasonable assurance
Grenfell actions plans	Substantial assurance
Firefighter Pension Administration	Substantial assurance
Payroll provider	Substantial assurance
Key Financial Controls	Substantial assurance

Review of Effectiveness

The Authority has responsibility for conducting, at least annually, a review of the effectiveness of its governance framework, including the system of internal control. The review of effectiveness is informed by the work of the senior managers within the Authority who have responsibility for the development and maintenance of the governance environment, the Internal Auditors' (RSM) annual report, and by the findings and reports issued by the external auditors and other review agencies and inspectorates.

The Authority has an Audit and Governance Committee with responsibility for monitoring and reviewing the risk, control and governance processes and associated assurance processes to ensure internal control systems are effective and that policies and practices are in compliance with statutory and other regulations and guidance.



Significant Governance Issues Addressed in 2022/23

The following provides a progress report against the significant governance issues identified in the last Annual Governance Statement.

Governance matter identified	Action taken in 2022/23	Lead Officer	Target Date
HMICFRS The Service is being inspected as part of tranche 3 of the inspection programme with formal inspection activity commenced in early 2022. Fieldwork is scheduled to take place in spring-summer 2022, with the dates to be confirmed by HMICFRS.	<p>During 2022/23, RBFRS continued to work towards its HMICFRS Action Plan and this is monitored through the Strategic Performance Board and Audit and Governance Committee.</p> <p>HMICFRS completed their inspection with the fieldwork completed in July 2023. The final report was published in January 2023 and an action plan associated with areas for improvements is being updated and reviewed as a result.</p> <p>We will remain focused on delivering the existing HMICFRS Action Plan to completion. The inspection activity and any findings will be considered in the development of the Annual Plan and Service Plans.</p>	Nikki Richards	Closed
Built Environment The Built Environment Programme will remain an area of focus in 2022/23, with ongoing additional	An external audit was completed by RSM and the work completed substantially assured.	Mark Arkwell	Closed



<p>financial pressures this creates for the Fire Authority. Work was delivered to ensure the Authority appropriately responded and learnt from the findings of the Grenfell Tower Inquiry. Alongside this, the risk posed by High Risk Residential Buildings remains a significant national challenge and forms part of the national Fire Chiefs Council Building Risk Review Programme. The Authority will continue to contribute towards this national programme as well as build on the work already undertaken locally to address the challenges posed by the High Risk Residential Buildings with the Service, where appropriate, making full use of its statutory powers to drive remediation of those buildings.</p>	<p>The Programme was closed down in December 2022 with open actions transferred to the appropriate departments for completion.</p> <p>An end of programme status report was developed and published following closure.</p>		
<p><u>Pay Award</u> The 2022/23 Budget was set on the basis that there would be a 2.5% pay award for both green and grey book staff.</p>	<p>The pay award for Grey Book staff was 7%. For Green Book staff it was a lump sum increase of £1,925 in almost all cases. This created significant budgetary pressure which were offset partly by one-off rebates from business rates appeals.</p> <p>The £5 increase in the precept for 2023/24 has been partly used to provide on-going funding for the impact of this unbudgeted pay award and future projected pay awards.</p> <p>Unfortunately, the macro economic situation has worsened and inflation rates have compounded budget pressures. Coupled with anticipated cost of living pay increase requests and rising costs anything above the budgeted pay award of 4% for green book staff in 2023/24 will be difficult to fund.</p>	<p>Conor Byrne</p>	<p>February 2023</p>



<p><u>Development of a new People Strategy</u></p> <p>Our people are our most important asset and the current People Strategy ran until 2021. Our new People Strategy will continue our journey of improvement and support our staff to be the best public servants they can be, creating a workforce that can deliver excellence to our communities.</p>	<p>Following staff engagement, the timelines for the development of our new People Strategy have been extended. A key theme of the Corporate Plan and Community Risk Management Plan is capacity, capability and resilience.</p> <p>Our vision outlines our commitments to capability, and culture. Monitor for publication of the HMICFRS values and cultures report.</p>	<p>Nikki Richards</p>	<p>December 2023</p>
<p><u>New Community Risk Management Plan</u></p> <p>Our CRMP and corporate plan runs to 2023 and requires a review to ensure our future plans are relevant to our communities and reflect an ever changing world. Our CRMP model is required to deliver an effective and efficient service for the people of Berkshire.</p> <p>A new plan is needed which will require significant resource and capacity to review and build to meet risk and the needs of our communities. Our new CRMP will continue our journey of improvement and could change how we deliver the service.</p>	<p>A Programme of work was undertaken during 2022 to develop a new Corporate plan and CRMP.</p> <p>A thorough review of risk and the needs of our communities was undertaken and a public consultation completed to understand our staff and community views on the proposals.</p> <p>The consultation completed in March 2023 and the proposals and outcome of the consultation will be reviewed by the Fire Authority in April 2023.</p>	<p>Nikki Richards</p>	<p>April 2023</p>
<p><u>Refresh of Strategic Documents</u></p> <p>Implementation of Phase One of the Strategic Asset Investment Framework continues, the lack of funding for Phase Two remains an issue for the Fire Authority.</p>	<p>Lobbying of MPs and Government will continue to highlight the need for financial support to renew our assets to enable the Authority to deliver an efficient and effective service to the public.</p> <p>The Authority's new Efficiency Plan and refreshed Strategic Asset Investment Framework has been</p>	<p>Wayne Bowcock</p>	<p>Closed</p>



	developed during 2022/23 and approved by the Fire Authority. These have been published on our website.		
<p>Funding</p> <p>The Authority’s funding position going into 2023/24 is one of extreme volatility due to both the uncertain political and economic uncertainty at a national level. This uncertainty means that it is increasingly difficult to predict the outcomes of the financial settlements received from central Government which will determine the financial parameters within which the Authority will have to operate.</p>	<p>Monitor central Government funding updates and proactively lobby local MP’s for further clarity and support.</p> <p>Scenario planning will highlight the implications of a financial settlement that requires expenditure cuts to balance the budget.</p>	Wayne Bowcock	February 2023
<p>Pensions</p> <p>The pensions landscape remains complex with technical policy and secondary legislation associated with the Sargeant case still to be finalised. During the 2022/23 year RBFRS continued to support those due to retire and most affected by the pension situation through the adoption of the Fire Authority agreed approach for those classed as ‘immediate detriment’.</p> <p>The legislation in respect of the O’Brien/Matthews case and how retained duty system staff should be treated is also not finalised and preparation for, and the required activities in response to implementation will create significant additional workload pressure for the Service and the administrator in the same time frame.</p>	<p>RBFRS will continue preparation of data and records for when regulations come in to force by taking account of emerging guidance and increasing pension knowledge by working together with the pension administrator and across the sector to ensure effective management of pension arrangements.</p> <p>Recruitment of firefighters will be scheduled to meet workforce needs.</p> <p>Quarterly updates to A&G Committee will provide oversight of the emerging issues.</p>	Becci Jefferies	February 2023



<p>Responding to the changes in pension regulations and ensuring the workforce is resourced appropriately remains a priority</p>			
<p><u>Workforce</u></p> <p>Our people are our most important asset and the current People Strategy runs until 2021. Linked to the cost of living crisis, workforce retention is being impacted and we are experiencing a high percentage of staff in development. This will also impact internal costs and capacity.</p> <p>Our new People Strategy will continue our journey of improvement and support our staff to be the best public servants they can be, creating a workforce that can deliver excellence to our communities. It will also allow the Service to consider longer-term strategy for ways of working.</p>	<p>We will undertake a staff engagement programme to inform the development of our new strategy.</p> <p>Continue to ensure our workforce planning takes account of forecasted changes and requirements.</p>	<p>Becci Jefferies</p>	<p>February 2023</p>
<p><u>Sustainability</u></p> <p>Increasing expectations that organisations should consider sustainability. It is our intention to support the wider Government sustainability and environmental targets. A strategy needs to be set out so the organisation can set its direction towards becoming more sustainable and environmentally friendly.</p>	<p>Review outcomes of the organisational carbon footprint assessment to produce future strategy.</p> <p>Expansion of the Authority role of the Lead member to Strategic Asset and sustainability.</p>	<p>Andy McLenahan</p>	<p>February 2023</p>
<p><u>Government White Paper, Fire Reform and PCCs</u></p> <p>A consultative White Paper was published in 2022, setting out the Government’s reform agenda in</p>	<p>The Authority considered the White paper and its proposals when published and responded to the consultation.</p>	<p>Wayne Bowcock</p>	<p>February 2023</p>



<p>relation to fire and exploring specific proposals on fire governance in more detail, including whether ex</p> <p>The Fit for the Future initiative partnership between the National Employers (England) (NE England), the Local Government Association (LGA) and the National Fire Chiefs Council (NFCC) ran a consultation process during 2020 and are committed to moving forward work in 2022 across 11 areas for improvement across the breadth of Fire and Rescue services.</p>	<p>Any additional impacts from the wider Fire Reform Agenda will also have significant impacts across all areas of RBFRS activity and will require consideration.</p> <p>This will continue to be monitored.</p>		
<p><u>Cyber security threat</u></p> <p>There is increasing use of and movement to cloud based IT services. With the increased circumstances of remote working there is additional pressure on those services. There have been increased incidences and threats of ransomware attacks and the potential for the risk of cyber-attacks to increase in frequency.</p>	<p>We continue to focus resources in this area and we have commissioned audits of our systems to test for vulnerabilities. A controlled “phishing attack” to evaluate any gaps in training which need addressing has been completed and will continue with testing on a regular basis.</p> <p>RBFRS Disaster Recovery plan has been reviewed and necessary changes implemented wherever possible. Further adjustments are being rolled out to improve service’s resilience to attacks and/or their potential consequences.</p>	<p>Lukasz Wrona</p>	<p>February 2023</p>



Significant Governance Issues to be addressed in 2023/24

In addition to the significant issues in action, the following significant governance issues have been identified as new or continuing for 2023/24:

Governance matter identified	Action taken in 2023/24	Lead Officer	Target Date
<p><u>Pay Award</u> The 2023/24 Budget was set on the basis that there would be a 4% green book pay award.</p> <p>Gold book conditions pay award has not yet been agreed</p>	<p>The Authority will need to closely monitor ongoing negotiations, and possible budget pressures that will occur should the agreed pay award be in excess of the 4% budgeted for.</p> <p>Pay award for Gold book conditions of service for FRS Principle Officers i.e. ACO to CFO yet to be agreed and outcomes to be monitored.</p>	Conor Byrne	February 2024
<p><u>Development of a new People Strategy</u> Our people are our most important asset and the current People Strategy ran until 2021. Our new People Strategy will continue our journey of improvement and support our staff to be the best public servants they can be, creating a workforce that can deliver excellence to our communities.</p>	<p>Following staff engagement, the timelines for the development of our new People Strategy have been extended. Our new Corporate Plan and Community Risk Management Plan will look to support the People Strategy and outlines our plans to develop the service over the four years.</p> <p>Our new vision outlines our commitments to capability, and culture.</p> <p>Implementation of the outcomes of staff engagement will be a focus for the coming year.</p>	Nikki Richards	December 2023



<p><u>New Community Risk Management Plan</u></p> <p>Our CRMP and corporate plan runs to 2023 and requires a review to ensure our future plans are relevant to our communities and reflect an ever-changing world. Our CRMP outlines how we will manage the risk from Fire and rescue related incidents.</p> <p>Our new CRMP will continue our journey of improvement and could change how we deliver the service.</p>	<p>The CRMP public consultation completed in March 2023 and the proposals and outcome of the consultation will be reviewed by the Fire Authority in April 2023.</p>	<p>Nikki Richards</p>	<p>April 2023</p>
<p><u>Funding</u></p> <p>The Authority's funding position going into 2023/24 is one of extreme volatility due to both the uncertain political and economic uncertainty at a national level. This uncertainty means that it is increasingly difficult to predict the outcomes of the financial settlements received from central Government which will determine the financial parameters within which the Authority will have to operate.</p>	<p>Monitor central Government funding updates and proactively lobby local MPs for further clarity and support.</p> <p>Scenario planning will highlight the implications of a financial settlement that requires expenditure cuts to balance the budget.</p>	<p>Wayne Bowcock</p>	<p>February 2024</p>
<p><u>Pensions</u></p> <p>The pensions landscape remains complex with technical policy and secondary legislation associated with the Sargeant case still to be finalised. During the 2022/23 year RBFRS continued to support those due to retire and most affected by the pension situation through the adoption of the Fire Authority agreed approach for those classed as 'immediate detriment'.</p>	<p>RBFRS will continue preparation of data and records for when regulations come in to force by taking account of emerging guidance and increasing pension knowledge by working together with the pension administrator and across the sector to ensure effective management of pension arrangements.</p> <p>Recruitment of firefighters will be scheduled to meet workforce needs.</p>	<p>Becci Jefferies</p>	<p>February 2024</p>



<p>The legislation in respect of the O'Brien/Matthews case and how retained duty system staff should be treated is also not finalised and preparation for, and the required activities in response to implementation will create significant additional workload pressure for the Service and the administrator in the same time frame.</p> <p>Responding to the changes in pension regulations and ensuring the workforce is resourced appropriately remains a priority</p>	<p>Quarterly updates to A&G Committee will provide oversight of the emerging issues.</p>		
<p><u>Workforce</u></p> <p>Our people are our most important asset and the current People Strategy ran until 2021 and a new one is under development.</p> <p>A key theme of the Corporate Plan and Community Risk Management Plan is Capacity, Capability and Resilience.</p> <p>Linked to the cost of living crisis, workforce retention is being impacted and we are experiencing a high percentage of staff in development and developing and maintaining skills and knowledge across the operational workforce is a priority. This will also impact internal costs and capacity.</p> <p>Our new People Strategy will continue our journey of improvement and support our staff to be the best public servants they can be, creating a workforce that can deliver excellence to our communities. It</p>	<p>We will review the outcomes of our staff engagement and implement the outcomes.</p> <p>Continue to ensure our workforce planning takes account of forecasted changes and requirements. Options are being explored related to incentivised retention.</p> <p>The implementation of our CRMP priorities is subject to Fire Authority approval.</p> <p>The launch of a new vision and purpose with four headlines of culture, capability, sustainability and risk management. The publication of the HMICFRS on values and culture will enable us to consider the findings and look at across our organisation in line with our vision.</p>	<p>Becci Jefferies</p>	<p>February 2024</p>



<p>will also allow the Service to consider longer-term strategy for ways of working.</p>			
<p><u>Sustainability</u></p> <p>Increasing expectations that organisations should consider sustainability. It is our intention to support the wider Government sustainability and environmental targets. A strategy needs to be set out so the organisation can set its direction towards becoming more sustainable and environmentally friendly.</p>	<p>Review outcomes of the organisational carbon footprint assessment to produce future strategy. Expansion of the Authority role of the Lead member to Strategic Asset and sustainability. Review of internal governance structure to support sustainability</p>	<p>Andy McLenahan</p>	<p>February 2024</p>
<p><u>Government White Paper, Fire Reform and PCCs</u></p> <p>A consultative White Paper is due to be published in 2022, setting out the Government’s reform agenda in relation to fire and exploring specific proposals on fire governance in more detail, including whether ex</p> <p>The White paper for fire reform was published for public consultation in Q1 2022. The outcomes are awaited.</p> <p>The Fit for the Future initiative partnership between the National Employers (England) (NE England), the Local Government Association (LGA) and the National Fire Chiefs Council (NFCC) ran a consultation process during 2020 and are committed to moving forward work across 11 areas for</p>	<p>The Authority considered the White paper and its proposals when published and responded to the consultation.</p> <p>Any additional impacts from the wider Fire Reform Agenda will also have significant impacts across all areas of RBFRS activity and will require consideration.</p> <p>This will continue to be monitored.</p>	<p>Wayne Bowcock</p>	<p>February 2024</p>



<p>improvement across the breadth of Fire and Rescue services.</p>			
<p><u>Cyber security threat</u></p> <p>There is a heightened threat of cyber incidents which has been linked to recent geo-political issues. National Cyber Security Centre warns that organisations should consider this level of threat to become a new norm, forcing organisation to ensure their cyber defences are adequately improved.</p> <p>With the increased circumstances of remote working there is additional pressure on ensuring the services required to facilitate it are adequately protected. There have been increased incidences and threats of ransomware attacks and the potential for the risk of cyber-attacks to increase in frequency.</p>	<p>This is an on-going challenge and needs vigilance. We will continue to focus resources in this area and continue to work with our external partners to commission audits of our systems to test for vulnerabilities.</p> <p>We will review technology required to protect our systems from cyber incidents and adjust accordingly to meet the highest level of protection available to RBFA's systems.</p> <p>We will continue to review and adjust our IT Disaster Recovery plans in response to changing cyber threat patterns and operational needs.</p> <p>We will continue to educate and train our staff to recognise and appropriately handle cyber security risks.</p> <p>An ongoing action plan is being developed.</p>	<p>Lukasz Wrona</p>	<p>March 2024</p>
<p><u>IT General Controls</u></p> <p>A review of arrangements governing the operations of our technology estate highlighted inconsistencies in approach resulting from significant changes within the service in recent years. It is important to understand and address those inconsistencies as they may have an impact on the effectiveness of our IT and security controls in place to ensure</p>	<p>We will work with the findings of IT General Controls audit to address the risks identified in the physical estate.</p> <p>We will review the policies and processes governing the delivery and consumption of technology within the service addressing inconsistencies and aligning with appropriate guidance.</p>	<p>Lukasz Wrona</p>	<p>March 2024</p>



<p>technology appropriately and securely supports the service in delivering its' statutory duties.</p>	<p>We will focus our effort on ensuring the value of IT and Security training is appreciated amongst our staff and increase the proportion of staff who maintain an appropriate level of competence. This will lead to a reduction of risk to our IT estate.</p>		
<p><u>Legislation and legal changes</u></p> <p>There are a number of bills proposing changes to employment law. The Service will need to consider the impact of any emerging legislation on ways of working and the workforce and how we need to respond to it.</p> <p>The Telecommunications Act potentially changes the dynamic of our negotiating position in relation to the income we can generate from telecommunication masts. The Service will need to mitigate the impacts as far as possible.</p> <p>Under Building Safety Act 2022 (BSA), the HSE is the named Building Safety Regulator (BSR) in England. Fire Safety (England) Regulations 2022 (FSER) came into force and were an important step towards implementing the recommendations of the Grenfell Tower Inquiry Phase 1 Report.</p> <p>The new Regulations brought these changes into force and sit alongside the Fire Safety Act amendments to the Fire Safety Order.</p>	<p>Emerging and ongoing legislation will be monitored for impacts and how we will respond to them.</p> <p>The Service will need to mitigate the impacts of the Telecommunications Act as far as possible and will be monitored.</p> <p>The service will continue to develop an action plan in response to these changes. RBFRS has also recently employed five new Fire Safety Inspectors with two being directly related and attached to the Building Safety Regulator.</p>	<p>Becci Jefferies</p> <p>Andy McLenahan</p> <p>Jess James</p>	<p>March 2024</p> <p>March 2024</p> <p>March 2024</p>



<p>The new FSER imposed new duties on the responsible persons (RP) for multi-occupied residential buildings and requires them to take specific actions depending on the height of their buildings.</p>			
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Conclusion

The Authority will monitor the governance issues identified in this Statement through its performance and risk management arrangements. This ensures regular review and scrutiny of the issues identified by the Senior Leadership Team and the Authority.

Signed:

Date:

Chair of Audit and Governance Committee for Royal Berkshire Fire Authority

Signed:

Date:

Chief Fire Officer and Chief Executive



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