

# ROYAL BERKSHIRE FIRE AUTHORITY



<b>COMMITTEE</b>	<b>AUDIT AND GOVERNANCE COMMITTEE</b>
<b>DATE OF MEETING</b>	<b>24 MARCH 2025</b>
<b>SUBJECT</b>	<b>MEMBER DEVELOPMENT ANNUAL REPORT AND PROGRESS AGAINST ACTION PLAN</b>
<b>LEAD OFFICER</b>	<b>ANNIE PRATT, HEAD OF CORPORATE SERVICES</b>
<b>LEAD MEMBER</b>	<b>N/A</b>
<b>EXEMPT INFORMATION</b>	<b>NONE</b>
<b>ACTION</b>	<b>NOTE</b>

## 1. **EXECUTIVE SUMMARY**

- 1.1 To receive an Annual Report and to note the progress of the Action Plan on Member Development activities in 2024/25.

## 2. **RECOMMENDATION**

That Audit and Governance Committee:

- 2.1 **NOTE** the Member Development Annual Report;
- 2.2 **NOTE** the progress of the 2024/25 Member Development Action Plan (Appendix A);
- 2.3 **NOTE** 2023-2027 Member Development Strategy (Appendix B), and protocol for Station visits (Appendix C).

## 3. **REPORT**

- 3.1 Between June – September 2024, the Fire Authority appointed seven new Fire Authority Members, appointed Councillor Owen Jeffery as Member Community Safety Champion and Councillor Wendy Griffith as EDI and Cultural Development Lead.
- 3.2 Focus was made towards targeting Member Development courses to new and returning Members appointed into new roles. The majority of returning Members have attended the courses listed in Table One, therefore their learning and development was encouraged by attending formal fire station visits arranged by

Democratic Support Team. In addition, all Members were encouraged to make informal visits to fire stations (protocol for station visits attached at Appendix C).

- 3.3 Appendix A show the progress against 2024/25 Action Plan and Red, Amber, Green (RAG) status has been included to indicate whether actions were completed during the year.
- 3.4 Focus was made on ensuring all Members installed rbfers email accounts on their devices. This was to ensure the safety and security of information leaving the service, which has also meant Members are required to complete Learning Management System (LMS) courses on Cyber Security and Informational Governance (e-learning) on an annual basis. To date, only two Members have completed these courses, therefore Democratic Support will offer workshops in 2025/26. Democratic Support and Intelligence, Risk and Performance Teams are audited on an annual basis by Internal Auditors and they seek evidence that those departments are keeping Members informed and updated on data and security processes.
- 3.5 This year, most courses were condensed to one-hour sessions and held either during lunchtime periods, or early evening as well as being on Microsoft TEAMS to provide greater flexibility in Member attendance. Some sessions were also arranged as hybrid meetings for those Members who wanted to attend in-person. Democratic Support Team will continue to review this when planning training sessions in 2025/26.
- 3.6 Each year, Members are requested to complete an anonymous online survey on Member Development courses / activities attended, and where possible, Democratic Support use survey results to develop courses or activities for the next municipal year. This year, feedback was requested for three course that ran within the year and feedback was received for one course only.
- 3.7 Verbal feedback gave course timings as an issue. Democratic Support adjusted course times to commence at 5.30pm (where possible) and continue to review timings of courses to compliment a positive work / life balance for Members.
- 3.8 Table One shows Member attendance for courses, workshops and station visits held during 2024/25.
- 3.9 *Station Visits* were arranged based on the location of the station and Members Unitary Authority area; therefore, not all 20 Members were targeted to attend a specific fire station.
- 3.10 *Thames Valley Fire Control Service (TVFCS) visit, Safety at Home and Wellbeing* courses were aimed at all Fire Authority Members; however, several Members have attended the above over the years.
- 3.11 All the courses / visits outlined in the Action Plan (Appendix A) are designed to inform Members about various departments of the Service. *Safety at Home* looked at the importance of installing and testing fire alarms in the home, electrical and cooking safety. The *Wellbeing* course focussed on the various organisational initiatives that are in place to improve staff mental health.

- 3.12 EDI was covered in several areas of Members Development. For example, during some station visits, thematic improvements including EDI and contaminants plans were shown. This included improvements to shower facilities, sleeping accommodation and multifaith / community rooms to attract a more diverse workforce.
- 3.13 *Data and Performance Course* is an overview of how the Service manages performance against objectives and priorities set out in the Annual Plan. The course covers Response Standard, Appliance Availability, and project action plans. This course is aimed at Audit and Governance Committee Members.
- 3.14 Greater financial detail on the Service's funding streams, Medium Term Financial Plan (MTFP), Strategic Asset and Investment Framework (SAIF), Treasury Management and budget monitoring was delivered by Head of Finance and Procurement in *Understanding Financing the Fire Authority* course.
- 3.15 Local Government Association (LGA) courses are arranged by the Democratic Support Team. No LGA courses were attended by Members this year. The Democratic Support Team continue to review LGA's list of courses and will signpost Members accordingly.
- 3.16 The Members Workshop covered detail on RBFRS Strategic Commitments and annual objectives as well as updates on CRMP Priority 3 and 6. Risks and priorities and SAIF funding were also discussed. Updates were given by the CFO, the ACFO and the DCFO.

**Table One**

Course title	Number of new members identified to attend	Number of existing members that were identified to attend	Total number of members that attended
Caversham Road Station Visit	4	1	3
Control Visit - 1	6	14	2
Data & Performance Course	2	5	4
EDI Course	7	12	7
Langley Station Visit	4	9	3
New Member Induction	7	0	6
Newbury Station Visit	6	14	4
Safety at Home	7	11	5
Understanding the Financing of the Fire Authority	6	8	2
Understanding the Fire Authority	6	0	1
Wellbeing Course	6	14	5
Members Workshop	6	14	14
Control Visit - 2	5	4	4

#### **4. CONTRIBUTION TO STRATEGIC COMMITMENTS**

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

#### **5. FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS**

5.1 The majority of the Member Development courses and activities have been delivered in-house within existing resources. External courses were provided at a subsidised rate by LGA as Royal Berkshire Fire Authority are members.

#### **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 EDI training forms part of the Member Development Programme.

#### **8. RISK IMPLICATIONS**

8.1 The next round of His Majesty's Inspectorate of Constabulary and Fire & Rescue Services (HMICFRS) inspection will inspect the governance of the Fire Authority. All Members are required to complete all allocated e-learning courses within the allotted time-period. This is to avoid any potential cyber-threat to the organisation, and will assist compliance.

#### **9. SUSTAINABILITY IMPLICATIONS**

9.1 None specified.

#### **10. CONSISTENCY WITH DUTY TO COLLABORATE**

10.1 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.

#### **11. PRINCIPAL CONSULTATION**

11.1 Statutory officers and the Senior Leadership Team have been consulted in the development report.

#### **12. BACKGROUND PAPERS**

12.1 Fire Authority Agenda and Minutes – 27 April 2023, minute reference 89.

#### **13. APPENDICES**

13.1 Appendix A – Member Development Action Plan

13.2 Appendix B – Member Development Strategy 2023-2027

13.3 Appendix C – Protocol for Station visits

**14. CONTACT DETAILS**

14.1 Fayth Rowe, Democratic Support Lead, rowef@rbfrs.co.uk

14.2 Michaela Smith, Democratic Support Assistant, smithmj@rbfrs.co.uk