

ROYAL BERKSHIRE FIRE AUTHORITY



COMMITTEE	AUDIT AND GOVERNANCE COMMITTEE
DATE OF MEETING	11 MARCH 2019
SUBJECT	ANNUAL REPORT ON GOVERNANCE
LEAD OFFICER	KATIE MILLS, HEAD OF CORPORATE SERVICES
A&GC CHAIRMAN	COUNCILLOR IAIN MCCRACKEN
EXEMPT INFORMATION	NONE
ACTION	FOR RECOMMENDATION TO THE FIRE AUTHORITY ON 26 JUNE 2019

1. **EXECUTIVE SUMMARY**

- 1.1 To consider the Annual Report on Governance detailing Member Attendance and Allowances in 2018/19 for submission to the Fire Authority on 26 June 2019.

2. **RECOMMENDATION**

- 2.1 **NOTE** the report and amend where necessary,
- 2.2 **RECOMMEND** that the Fire Authority:
- 2.2.1 **NOTE** Members' Allowances received for the period of June 2018 – February 2019;
- 2.2.2 **NOTE** the 2018/19 attendance record of Royal Berkshire Fire Authority Members (2.2.1 and 2.2.2 will be updated to the end of May 2019).

3. **REPORT**

Audit and Governance Committee Chairman's Report

- 3.1 We have had an extremely busy year. At the start of the year, we learned that Royal Berkshire Fire and Rescue Service (RBFRS) would be in the second tranche of the HMICFRS Inspection. The Senior Leadership Team (SLT) and officers have been working tirelessly throughout the year in preparation for the inspection, held in January 2019. Audit and Governance Committee received regular updates and met HMICFRS Service Liaison Lead Keith Carruthers at the December 2018 meeting. We await the award of

the inspection graded judgement later in the year and whatever the outcome, RBFRS supported by Royal Berkshire Fire Authority (RBFA) will continue to provide the best fire and rescue service for the people of Berkshire.

- 3.2 We have received substantial assurances from our internal auditors on Risk and Governance and Capital Investment Strategy. As part of the latter audit, internal auditors reviewed the Closedown of Capital Projects lessons learnt risk treatment matrix that was developed and signed off by Closedown Capital Projects Task and Finish Group. The auditors stated the following on their Internal Audit Report dated 11 December 2018. *'The actions and risk treatments framework implemented by RBFRS were well designed and fully complied with. These risk treatments were developed through the lessons learnt reports of the HQ and Wokingham Fire Station Capital projects and appeared appropriate and proportionate to mitigate the risk identified'*
- 3.3 I would like to congratulate RBFRS officers and RBFA Members, in particular the Closedown Capital Projects Task and Finish Group for their hard work during the year.
- 3.4 The external auditors presented the audit planning report to Audit and Governance Committee in December 2018. The report set out 2018/19 audit strategy and the scope used to provide an audit opinion on whether the financial statements of RBFA give a true and fair view of the financial position as at 31 March 2019.
- 3.5 We approved the publication of the 2017/18 Annual Governance Statement in accordance with the principles of the CIPFA/SOLACE 'Delivering Good Governance in Local Government Framework' (2016 edition) (The Framework) and approved the 2017/18 Statement of Accounts and Audit Letter.
- 3.6 We have continued to receive regular updates on the Emergency Service Mobile Communications Programme (ESMCP) and the delivery of the Emergency Services Network (ESN) due to replace the current Airwave provision. The Committee has requested a representative from ESMCP National Programme Team to attend a future meeting in 2019/20 to discuss the technology in greater depth and issues around the shift in the programme deadlines.
- 3.7 The Committee has made practical changes to the content of the quarterly performance report making it a more user-friendly document for the public to read. The key highlights to name a few in Quarter 2 were:
- Safe and well visits to those at risk of having a fire and being injured as a result have continued to exceed the target by 214 visits
 - The Community Safety Project Team, set up in response to the Grenfell Tower fire, have returned to working within the Hubs. During their 18 months the team have inspected 156 properties, set up MOU's with local authorities for joint inspections and found 10 high rise buildings with Aluminium Composite Material (ACM) cladding which are being managed in accordance

with the interim measures as defined by Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government (MHCLG)

- Wholetime crew turn out times have improved by 13.1 percentage points over the past 12 months and narrowly missed the target of 90% by 0.4%

3.8 The Member Development Strategy and Action Plan has embedded into business as usual in relation to scheduled Control Visits at Thames Valley Fire Control Service (TVFCS) and in-house courses delivered by officers, for example Understanding the Financing of the Fire Authority. I for one, look forward to receiving the Member Development Annual Report later on in this agenda.

Governance

3.9 The Committee is responsible for Governance, annually reporting on the number of complaints against Members, its remit is also to review the Members' Code of Conduct, Fire Authority Constitution and monitor Members' Allowance and Attendance. No changes were made to the Scheme of Allowances during the year, however a 2% increase to the 2019/20 Member Scheme of Allowance (effective from 1 April 2019) has been approved by the Fire Authority.

Complaints received against Members

3.10 I am pleased to report that for the third year running there have been no complaints received against Members this year.

3.11 The Committee will be aware that RBFA is required to appoint Independent Person(s) in order to fulfil the requirements under section 28 of the Localism Act 2011. Our Independent Persons David Comben and Roger Penfold remain on standby as and when required to investigate Member complaints alongside the Monitoring Officer, Graham Britten. The Independent Persons are currently in the second year of their four-year appointment.

3.12 On behalf of RBFA, the Audit and Governance Committee would like to thank them for their availability and support during the year.

Member Allowances

3.13 Member Allowances for the period of June 2018 – Feb 2019 are shown in **Appendix A**ⁱ. An update on these figures will be made to RBFA at its annual meeting on 26 June 2019.

Member Attendance

3.14 The Attendance of RBFA Members for the Municipal Year 2018/19, is shown in **Appendix B** of this report. The appendix includes all meetings up to the 28 February 2019.ⁱⁱ Like Member Allowances these attendance figures will be updated and reported to RBFA at its annual meeting which will be a

complete annual look at Member Allowances and Attendance in 2018/19 (from 28 June 2018 to 31 May 2019).

- 3.15 Attendance this year has generally been good, no meetings were inquorate, and all business was able to be conducted. Most absences have been due either to a meeting clash or a holiday, and apologies, when received have generally been in good time.

4. CONTRIBUTION TO STRATEGIC COMMITMENTS

- 4.1 Commitment 5 – We will ensure that Royal Berkshire Fire and Rescue Service provides good value for money.

5. FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

- 5.1 The Member Allowances and expenses (Appendix A) outline the cost to the Fire Authority.

6. LEGAL IMPLICATIONS

- 6.1 There are no legal implications in this report.

7. EQUALITY AND DIVERSITY IMPLICATIONS

- 7.1 There are no Equality and Diversity implications in this report.

8. RISK IMPLICATIONS

- 8.1 There are no risk implications in this report.

9. CONSISTENCY WITH DUTY TO COLLABORATE

- 9.1 None for the purpose of this report.

10. PRINCIPAL CONSULTATION

- 10.1 Consultation has been undertaken with the Chief Fire Officer, Chief Finance Officer and Monitoring Officer.

11. BACKGROUND PAPERS

- 11.1 Fire Authority 10 October 2017

12. APPENDICES

- 12.1 Appendix A – Member Allowances

- 12.2 Appendix B – Member Attendance

13. CONTACT DETAILS

13.1 Councillor Iain McCracken, Chairman Audit and Governance Committee

13.2 Fayth Rowe, Democratic Support Lead 0118 938 4611

13.3 Katie Mills, Head of Corporate Services 0118 938 4605

ⁱ 22 Fire Authority Members basic and special responsibility allowances are reflected in Appendix A. The appointment and removal of two Members were made during the Municipal Year.

ⁱⁱ West Berkshire Council appointed Councillor Jackson-Doerge at the beginning of the Municipal Year (26 June 2018) and changed their appointment to Councillor Jeff Brooks (3 July 2018) in order for their appointment to be based on political balance rules. For the same reasons, Royal Borough of Windsor and Maidenhead changed their original appointment from Councillor Bicknell to Councillor Werner (11 December 2018). The Fire Authority at its meeting on 25 February 2019 noted the termination of Councillor Bicknell's appointment on 28 February 2019 and noted the appointment of Councillor Werner from 1 March 2019.