

BUCKINGHAMSHIRE AND MILTON KEYNES FIRE AUTHORITY
BUCKINGHAMSHIRE FIRE AND RESCUE SERVICE

Director of Legal & Governance, Graham Britten
Buckinghamshire Fire & Rescue Service
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Chief Fire Officer and Chief Executive
Jason Thelwell

To: Members of Buckinghamshire and Milton Keynes Fire Authority

7 February 2022

MEMBERS OF THE PRESS
AND PUBLIC

Please note the content of
Page 2 of this Agenda Pack

Dear Councillor

Your attendance is requested at a Meeting of the **BUCKINGHAMSHIRE AND MILTON KEYNES FIRE AUTHORITY** to be held at **THE OCULUS, BUCKINGHAMSHIRE COUNCIL, THE GATEWAY OFFICES, GATEHOUSE ROAD, AYLESBURY, BUCKS, HP19 8FF** on **WEDNESDAY 16 FEBRUARY 2022 at 11.00 AM** when the business set out overleaf will be transacted.

Yours faithfully

Graham Britten
Director of Legal and Governance

Health and Safety: Covid-19

There will be limited facilities for members of the public to observe the meeting in person due to Government and Public Health England guidance. A recording of the meeting will be available after the meeting.

Chairman: Councillor Clarke OBE
Councillors: Bagge, Carroll, Chapple OBE, Christensen, Darlington, Exon, Hall, Hopkins, Hussain, Lambert, Marland, McLean, Rankine, Stuchbury, Waite, Walsh



MAKING YOU SAFER



To observe the meeting as a member of the Press and Public

The Authority supports the principles of openness and transparency. To enable members of the press and public to see or hear the meeting this meeting will be recorded. Please visit:

<https://www.youtube.com/channel/UCWmIXPWAscxl3vIiv7bh1Q>

The Authority also allows the use of social networking websites and blogging to communicate with people about what is happening, as it happens.

Adjournment and Rights to Speak – Public

The Authority may adjourn a Meeting to hear a member of the public on a particular agenda item. The proposal to adjourn must be moved by a Member, seconded and agreed by a majority of the Members present and voting.

A request to speak on a specified agenda item should be submitted by email to gbritten@bucksfire.gov.uk by 4pm on the Monday prior to the meeting. Please state if you would like the Director of Legal and Governance to read out the statement on your behalf, or if you would like to be sent a 'teams' meeting invitation to join the meeting at the specified agenda item.

If the meeting is then adjourned, prior to inviting a member of the public to speak, the Chairman should advise that they:

- (a) speak for no more than four minutes,
- (b) should only speak once unless the Chairman agrees otherwise.

The Chairman should resume the Meeting as soon as possible, with the agreement of the other Members present. Adjournments do not form part of the Meeting.

Rights to Speak - Members

A Member of the constituent Councils who is not a Member of the Authority may attend Meetings of the Authority or its Committees to make a statement on behalf of the Member's constituents in the case of any item under discussion which directly affects the Member's division, with the prior consent of the Chairman of the Meeting which will not be unreasonably withheld. The Member's statement will not last longer than four minutes. Such attendance will be facilitated if requests are made to enquiries@bucksfire.gov.uk at least two clear working days before the meeting. Statements can be read out on behalf of the Member by the Director of Legal and Governance, or the Member may request a 'team's meeting invitation to join the meeting at the specified agenda item.

Petitions

Any Member of the constituent Councils, a District Council, or Parish Council, falling within the Fire Authority area may Petition the Fire Authority.

The substance of a petition presented at a Meeting of the Authority shall be summarised, in not more than four minutes, by the Member of the Council who presents it (as above). If the petition does not refer to a matter before the Authority, it shall be referred without debate to the appropriate Committee.

Questions

Members of the Authority, or its constituent councils, District, or Parish Councils may submit written questions prior to the Meeting to allow their full and proper consideration. Such questions shall be received by the Monitoring Officer to the Authority, *in writing*, at least two clear working days before the day of the Meeting of the Authority or the Committee.

COMBINED FIRE AUTHORITY - TERMS OF REFERENCE

1. To appoint the Authority's Standing Committees and Lead Members.
2. To determine the following issues after considering recommendations from the Executive Committee, or in the case of 2(a) below, only, after considering recommendations from the Overview and Audit Committee:
 - (a) variations to Standing Orders and Financial Regulations;
 - (b) the medium-term financial plans including:
 - (i) the Revenue Budget;
 - (ii) the Capital Programme;
 - (iii) the level of borrowing under the Local Government Act 2003 in accordance with the Prudential Code produced by the Chartered Institute of Public Finance and Accountancy; and
 - (c) a Precept and all decisions legally required to set a balanced budget each financial year;
 - (d) the Prudential Indicators in accordance with the Prudential Code;
 - (e) the Treasury Strategy;
 - (f) the Scheme of Members' Allowances;
 - (g) the Integrated Risk Management Plan and Action Plan;
 - (h) the Annual Report.
 - (i) the Capital Strategy
3. To determine the Code of Conduct for Members on recommendation from the Overview and Audit Committee.
4. To determine all other matters reserved by law or otherwise, whether delegated to a committee or not.
5. To determine the terms of appointment or dismissal of the Chief Fire Officer and Chief Executive, and deputy to the Chief Fire Officer and Chief Executive, or equivalent.
6. To approve the Authority's statutory pay policy statement.

AGENDA

Item No:

1. Apologies

2. Minutes

To approve, and sign as a correct record the Minutes of the meeting of the Fire Authority held on 8 December 2021 (item 2) **(Pages 9 - 22)**

3. Disclosure of Interests

Members to declare any disclosable pecuniary interests they may have in any matter being considered which are not entered onto the Authority's Register, and officers to disclose any interests they may have in any contract to be considered.

4. Chairman's Announcements

To receive the Chairman's announcements (if any).

5. Matters Arising from the Previous Meeting

The Chairman to invite officers to provide verbal updates on any actions noted in the Minutes from the previous meeting.

6. Petitions

To receive petitions under Standing Order SOA6.

7. Questions

To receive questions in accordance with Standing Order SOA7.

8. Committee Matters

Standing Orders for the Authority and its Committees

At a meeting of the Executive Committee on 24 March 2021 the Chairman agreed to a request that an amendment to the Authority's Procedural Standing Orders be put to the Annual Meeting (Minute EX49). The purpose of the requested amendment was for the Chairman to invite officers to apprise a meeting of any updates on actions recorded in the minutes from the preceding meeting.

The relevant Standing Order is SOA 3. This applies to meetings of the Authority and also to meetings of its committees by virtue of SOC 1. Amendments to SOA 3 were approved

by the Authority at its Annual Meeting on 21 June 2021.

During the intervening period it has been proposed that a further amendment is made to SOA 3, so that any updates from officers are taken as the next item after approval of the Minutes and before the declarations of interests.

The proposed alterations to accommodate this are shown underlined; with proposed deletions shown as struck-through.

It is recommended that the following amendments be made to the Standing Orders for the Authority and its Committees:

SOA 3 ORDER OF BUSINESS, AGENDA PROCEDURE AND SUMMONS

1. At the Annual Meeting of the Authority or when a vacancy exists for the post to elect a Chairman and consider the election of a Vice-Chairman.
2. To elect a Member to preside if the Chairman and Vice-Chairman are both absent.
3. To receive any apologies for absence and any changes in Membership since the last meeting of the Authority.
4. To consider and to amend or approve, and the Chairman to sign as a correct record the approved Minutes of the previous meeting.
5. The Chairman to invite officers to provide verbal updates on any actions noted in the Minutes from the previous meeting.
- ~~5-6.~~ Members to declare any disclosable pecuniary interests if these have not been entered onto the Authority's register (where the matter is not a 'sensitive interest') they may have in a particular item to be considered in accordance with section 31 of the Localism Act 2011; and officers to declare any interests they may have in a particular item to be considered in accordance with section 117 of the Local Government Act 1972.
- ~~6. The Chairman to invite officers to provide verbal updates on any actions noted in the Minutes from the previous meeting.~~
7. To receive the Chairman's announcements.
8. To receive petitions in accordance with Standing Order SOA6.
9. To receive questions in accordance with Standing Order SOA7.
10. To dispose of business (if any) remaining from the last meeting.
11. To consider notices of motion in the order in which they were received.
12. To consider statutory and other reports of officers of the Authority.

13. To authorise the sealing of documents.
14. To consider other business, specified on the Agenda.
15. The Order of business may be varied at the meeting at the discretion of the Chairman, but such a variation shall not displace business falling under items 1,2,3,4,5 and 6.
16. No business may be transacted at a Meeting of the Authority or its Committees which is not specified in the agenda for the Meeting unless the Chairman of the Meeting agrees that the item should be considered as a matter of urgency and the reason for urgency shall be specified in the Minutes.
17. At least five clear working days before a meeting of the Authority or any Committee a summons to attend the Meeting, in the name of the Monitoring Officer of the Authority and together with an agenda specifying the business to be transacted, shall be left at or sent by post to the usual place of residence (or such other address as the Member may specify) or, where a Member has given consent for the summons to be transmitted in electronic form to a particular electronic address (and consent has not been withdrawn) sending it in electronic form to that address, of every Member of the body in question, provided that want of service of the summons shall not affect validity of the Meeting.

Background papers: <https://bucksfire.gov.uk/authority/authority-committees-standing-orders/>

Contact Officer: Katie Nellist (Democratic Services Officer) – 01296 744633

9. Recommendations from Committees:

Executive Committee – 9 February 2022

(a) The Prudential Code, Prudential Indicators and Minimum Revenue Provision

“That the Authority be recommended to approve:

1. the Prudential Indicators for 2022/23
2. the Minimum Revenue Provision policy statement”

The report considered by the Executive Committee is attached at item 9(a)
(Pages 23 - 32)

(b) Medium Term Financial Plan (MTFP) 2022/23 - 2026/27

- 1(a) “Note and have due regard to the report and Statement of the Chief Finance Officer (see section 8 of Annex A).
- 1(b) Approve a Council Tax precept of £72.16 for a band D equivalent property (equal to an increase of 9.6p per week) and the revenue budget as set out in Appendix 1.

1(c) Approve the capital programme as set out in Appendix 2.

1(d) Transfer the £600k from the referendum reserve to the revenue contribution to capital reserve.”

The report considered by the Executive Committee is attached at item 9(b)
(Pages 33 - 46)

(c) Members' Allowances

1. “That the Authority be recommended to adopt a Scheme for Members’ Allowances for 2022/23 (**Appendix C**) with either

- a) 0% increase in allowances; or
- b) 1.5% increase in allowances.”

The report considered by the Executive Committee is attached at item 9(c)
(Pages 47 - 102)

10. Her Majesty's Inspectorate of Constabulary and Fire and Rescue Services (HMICFRS) - Buckinghamshire Fire and Rescue Service (BFRS) Inspection Report 2021

To consider item 10 **(Pages 103 - 160)**

11. Pay Policy Principles and Statement 2022/23

To consider item 11 **(Pages 161 - 182)**

12. Treasury Management Strategy 2022/23

To consider item 12 **(Pages 183 - 198)**

13. Armed Forces Covenant

To consider item 13 **(Pages 199 - 202)**

14. Composition of the Authority for 2022/23

To consider item 14 **(Pages 203 - 206)**

15. Date of next meeting

To note that the next meeting of the Fire Authority will be held on Wednesday 15 June 2022 at 11am.

If you have any enquiries about this agenda please contact: Katie Nellist (Democratic Services Officer) – Tel: (01296) 744633 email: knellist@bucksfire.gov.uk



BUCKINGHAMSHIRE AND MILTON KEYNES FIRE AUTHORITY

ROLE DESCRIPTION

LEAD MEMBERS

1. To take a lead role in providing support and constructive challenge to senior officers in the development of strategies and plans and contributing towards the strategic direction of the Authority, within the Authority's overall policy objectives.
2. To act as a 'sounding board' for senior officers on issues within the portfolio, and be supportive in dealing with any problems at a strategic level.
3. To review, in conjunction with senior officers, the service within the portfolio.
4. To keep abreast of related developments and policies at national, regional and local level.
5. To take the lead in reporting to the Authority, one of its committees, or panels on issues within the portfolio.
6. To attend the Overview and Audit Committee, at its request, in connection with any issues associated with the portfolio which is the subject of scrutiny.
7. To act as a spokesperson for the Authority on issues within the portfolio.
8. To represent the Authority on bodies, at events and at conferences related to the portfolio, as appointed by the Executive Committee and to feedback to the Authority any issues of relevance / importance.

(Approved 8 June 2007)



Buckinghamshire & Milton Keynes Fire Authority

MINUTES OF THE MEETING OF THE BUCKINGHAMSHIRE AND MILTON KEYNES FIRE AUTHORITY HELD AT THE OCULUS, BUCKINGHAMSHIRE COUNCIL, ON WEDNESDAY 8 DECEMBER 2021 AT 11 AM.

Present: Councillors Bagge, Carroll, Chapple OBE, Christensen (part), Clarke OBE, Exon, Hall, Hopkins, Hussain, Marland, McLean, Rankine, Stuchbury, Waite and Walsh

Officers: M Osborne (Deputy Chief Fire Officer), G Britten (Director of Legal and Governance), M Hemming (Director of Finance and Assets), A Burch (Station Commander), A Quainton (Health and Safety Manager), K Nellist (Democratic Services Officer)

Remotely: J Thelwell (Chief Fire Officer), S Wells (Head of Prevention, Response and Resilience), S Tuffley (Head of Covid 19 Preparedness and Response), C Bell (Head of Protection, Assurance and Development), A Carter (Head of Technology, Transformation and PMO), E Hilling (Communication, Marketing and Engagement Manager), P Mould (Group Commander)

Apologies: Councillors Darlington and Lambert

Recorded Broadcast:

<https://www.youtube.com/channel/UCWmIXPWAscxpL3vIiv7bh1Q>

The Chairman welcomed everyone to the December Meeting of the Buckinghamshire and Milton Keynes Fire Authority.

The Chairman advised that although members of the public were now allowed to attend and observe in limited numbers, following the meeting a video recording would be uploaded to the Authority's YouTube Channel.

FA24 MINUTES

RESOLVED –

That the Minutes of the meeting of the Fire Authority held on 13 October 2021, be approved, and signed by the Chairman as a correct record.

FA25 DISCLOSURE OF INTERESTS

None.

FA26

CHAIRMAN'S ANNOUNCEMENTS

The Chairman announced that back in the summer this year, a number of operational staff performing the flexi-firefighter role, chose for differing reasons to transfer to other fire and rescue services, thereby creating vacancies. Owing to the adaptative element associated with this particular role, it was imperative that these vacancies were quickly filled, in order to continue the positive contribution this operational role offers to our innovative resourcing model. Through the coordinated efforts of both the Station Commander responsible for flexi-firefighters and Human Resources, a recruitment campaign for both internal and external applicants was launched during August 2021. The campaign attracted 30 applicants, 10 internal and 20 external, the latter being made up of existing wholetime and on-call firefighters from across five different fire services, as well as Royal Air Force (RAF) firefighters. Commencing September 2021, all applicants over a period of two months were required to undergo tests, in order to verify both their technical and practical competences. Those who were successful then progressed to a final interview and medical, which resulted in 10 candidates, split equally between external and internal applicants, being deemed suitable for appointment into the flexi-firefighter role. The success of this campaign has meant the Service has been able to limit the impact caused by losing a number of existing operational staff, whilst also being able to accommodate the internal transfer requests of some of the other flexi-firefighters, wishing to move into alternative operational frontline roles. The five external candidates joined Buckinghamshire Fire and Rescue on the 1 December 2021. They along with some of the internal candidates are currently undertaking an upskilling course, in advance of then being utilised operationally.

At a recent Overview and Audit Committee meeting, some Members expressed a wish to receive their meeting agenda packs electronically only. The Local Government (Electronic Communications) (England) Order 2015 allows for the provision of meetings summonses electronically subject to the consent of the Councillor. Links to the agenda pack are sent out by email; are available on the Buckinghamshire Fire and Rescue Service Website and are also available on Mod.gov. Members receive hard copies for all Fire Authority and Committee meetings but were given the following options in a recent email: to stop receiving hard copy agenda packs for all meetings; to receive a hard copy agenda pack for Fire Authority Meetings only; to receive a hard copy agenda pack for Committee Meetings only or to continue to receive a hard copy agenda pack for all

Fire Authority and Committee meetings. Please can all Members respond to Katie Nellist, with their preference.

FA27

MATTERS ARISING FROM THE PREVIOUS MEETING

The Vice Chairman asked the following question in respect of Minute FA21 of the Authority Meeting on 13 October 2021.

“In connection with the officer’s report about the Authority’s people strategy, I asked questions of the Chief Fire Officer and Deputy Chief Fire Officer about the culture within Buckinghamshire Fire and Rescue Service (BFRS) particularly in light of the horrific events arising from the actions of serving Metropolitan Police officers. I was heartened by the Chief’s responses which are recorded in the Minutes in respect of the acknowledgement of the need to redouble events within the fire and rescue service to ensure that its hard-earned public trust is not tarnished and for services to better reflect the communities which they serve. I am aware that the Home Secretary has commissioned Sir Tom Winsor, Her Majesty’s Inspector of Constabularies and Fire and Rescue Services, to undertake a thematic inspection of the vetting and counter-corruption procedures in policing across England and Wales with a view to strengthening these procedures. May I ask what vetting of firefighters is currently undertaken by BFRS?”

The Deputy Chief Fire Officer advised that BFRS uses Buckinghamshire Council as its ‘umbrella body’ to undertake DBS checks on recruits and 3 yearly renewals for employees. In 2016 BFRS moved to require ‘enhanced DBS’ vetting in order to allow it to obtain details on applicants’ convictions and cautions, both spent and unspent; police reprimands and warnings; and relevant police information. To achieve this was somewhat of an uphill struggle with the umbrella body, as the role of firefighter was not an ‘excepted occupation’ in the Rehabilitation of Offenders Act 1974 (Exceptions) Order 1975, nor was the firefighter’s role a ‘regulated activity’ as defined by the Safeguarding Vulnerable Groups Act 2006. This meant that ‘enhanced DBS checks’ could not be undertaken universally across the fire and rescue sector as a matter of course, nor even the less stringent ‘standard DBS’ checks.

However, enhanced DBS vetting was something that the Chief Fire Officer pushed for, and in which he was supported by the FBU locally, in order to guard and protect the ‘trusted brand’ which enabled close working by our firefighters with vulnerable groups, young people, blue-light partners, and healthcare providers. The costs to BFRS of enhanced DBS checks reduced from £44.00 per check to £40.00 on 1 October 2019, with the 3 yearly update fees being £13.

The Deputy Chief Fire Officer advised that In July 2019, in advance of the National Fire Chiefs Council (NFCC) adopting its Safeguarding

Position Statement, the Chief Fire Officer wrote to the NFCC expressing his disappointment about the lack of progress made by the sector to increase the vetting of its employees. It had been the agreed position over two years' previously in the CFOA National FRS People Strategy 2017/2022 that 'DBS (disclosure and barring) checks for all firefighters needed to become the norm'.

The NFCC Safeguarding Position Statement adopted in 2020 stated that "NFCC endorse[s] the position that basic disclosure checking is used as a minimum to ensure the suitability of staff and volunteers to undertake their roles. The NFCC recommend[s] that the Disclosure and Barring Service is utilised for all roles which bring staff and volunteers into contact with the public. The NFCC encourages Fire & Rescue Services to consider the need for increased level of checks for those roles that are required to carry out specific or regulated activities." The basic DBS certificate contained details of only unspent criminal convictions, conditional and unconditional cautions, or a statement that the individual has no such convictions or cautions. It currently costs £23, the same as a 'standard DBS' check.

The Chief Fire Officer as well requesting the NFCC in July 2019 that its Safeguarding Position Statement be strengthened to endorse 'standard DBS checking' as the minimum requirement, had been lobbying the Home Office to bring forward legislation to amend the Rehabilitation of Offenders Act 1974 (Exceptions) Order 1975 so that vetting procedures for firefighters were strengthened as a matter of course in every fire and rescue service.

The Chief Fire Officer has been supporting the NFCC Strategic Lead for Safeguarding in her submission of a series of businesses cases to the Home Office, the latest version of which was submitted on Wednesday 17 November, which put the case that a change in national legislation was long overdue and should be enacted as soon as possible.

The Chairman asked the Leader of the Labour Group if he was in agreement for a letter to be sent to the Home Office and the NFCC Chairman from the Group Leaders to push for enhanced DBS checks.

The Leader of the Labour Group was in agreement.

The Chairman would also ask the Leader of the Liberal Democrat Group who was not at the meeting.

FA28

RECOMMENDATIONS FROM COMMITTEES:

OVERVIEW AND AUDIT COMMITTEE – 10 NOVEMBER 2021

(A) APPOINTMENT OF EXTERNAL AUDITORS

The Director of Finance and Assets advised Members that this report was being presented to the Authority because it was the requirement

of Public Sector Audit Appointments Limited. The report set out the proposals for appointing the external auditor to the Authority for the five-year period from 2023/24. There were two options, to either opt into the national agreement which the Authority was part of presently or look to undertake a local audit appointment. The recommendation was to opt into the national agreement.

RESOLVED –

To accept Public Sector Audit Appointments' invitation to opt into the sector-led option for the appointment of external auditors to principal local government and police bodies for five financial years from 1 April 2023.

(B) ENVIRONMENT AND CLIMATE ACTION PLAN

The Chairman advised Members that a recommendation from the Overview and Audit Committee was to appoint a Lead Member for climate change. The Chairman nominated the Lead Member for Finance and Assets, Information Security and IT because of the financial issues that climate change might bring and proposed that climate change be added to that Lead Member's responsibilities.

RESOLVED –

1. That the Environment and Climate Action Plan be approved.

It having been proposed and seconded and there being no other nominations it was

RESOLVED –

2. That the Lead Member for Finance and Assets, Information Security and IT be appointed as Lead Member for Finance and Assets, Information Security, IT and Climate Change.

FA29 FINANCIAL STRATEGY 2020-21 TO 2024-25 FIRST ANNUAL UPDATE

The Authority received a presentation from the Director of Finance and Assets who advised Members that this was the first annual update of the Financial Strategy which was approved by the Authority last year.

Starting with progress to date, the activities for the first year included continuing to lobby for an increase in Council Tax Referendum Limits and for other grants to become part of the Settlement Funding Assessment. A Value for Money (VFM) initial review by external providers was undertaken by a company called Proving Services Limited, who had completed this for a number of other fire and rescue services and BFRS was the eighth service to be reviewed. The senior management team completed a number of self-assessment questionnaires, looking at other external reports, customer feedback, trying to gauge economy, efficiency, stakeholder value, to come to an

overall view of the service. There had been a review of the estate footprint and a review of Partnership arrangements would be presented to Members in March 2022. The Portfolio Management Office had been established and the recruitment of a Pensions Officer was complete.

The Director of Finance and Assets advised Members that in terms of second-year activities, there had been a review of the system requirements to either upgrade or replace the main Finance and HR system and it had been decided to continue with the current system because the cost of change would be very high. A review of the budget monitoring and performance reporting arrangements was on-going and a review of the skillset of non-finance staff and elected Members would be undertaken in the last quarter of this financial year.

The Director of Finance and Assets advised that with regard to budget monitoring and performance reporting arrangements, there was a wider review of the framework underway, and this would (amongst other things) bring together the workforce planning and financial reports all in one place.

The Director of Finance and Assets advised that the overall progress to date against the Strategy had been categorised into four key areas covering performance, people, governance and external factors.

The key points of the first annual update were that the funding position had not improved significantly since HMICFRS raised their cause for concern and the three-year Comprehensive Spending Review would hopefully give more certainty. The Council Tax referendum limits were to be announced in the Provisional Local Government Finance Settlement later this month and the outcomes of the settlement would determine how many firefighters and appliances the Authority could afford.

A Member asked why the presentation did not include any financial figures and was advised by the Director of Finance and Assets that this was a strategy rather than a detailed budget. The detailed budget would be presented to the Executive Committee in February to be recommended to the Fire Authority for approval in February.

A Member asked regarding the recruitment and retention of staff mentioned in the presentation and was advised by the Director of Finance and Assets that the recruitment in the strategy referred to finance staff only. The Service was currently recruiting for 18 operational firefighter posts and had shortlisted 23 firefighters for medicals following final interviews.

A Member asked what was intended regarding looking at estates and was advised by the Director of Finance and Assets that this referred

primarily to Unit 7, which was a non-operational building housing stores and the urban search and rescue team. At present, the Authority was not looking to reduce the number of fire stations.

A Member asked with regards to the 'headline increases of circa 3% per year for Local Government announces at Budget 2021' would that actually represent a net reduction to the Service on the basis of National Insurance increases and was advised by the Director of Finance and Assets that it should be a slight increase in real terms.

A Member asked if the referendum reserve contained an amount for campaigning and also how many other fire authorities had actually run referendums and how successful had they been, and was advised by the Director of Finance and Assets that in terms of the referendum reserve, there wasn't specifically an amount set aside for campaigning, the £600k was based on an estimate of the only referendum that has been run recently, for the Bedfordshire Police and Crime Commissioner. It was unsuccessful in its attempts to increase council tax by more than the referendum limit.

The Director of Finance and Assets was not aware of any other services that had held referendums recently and certainly not any fire services.

A Member asked what the Authority's current borrowing position was and was advised by the Director of Finance and Assets that in terms of current borrowing outstanding, it was roughly just under £7m. The Authority did not have a borrowing limit, but it had a prudential limit, so it was whatever was considered affordable and sustainable.

A Member asked about the problems of recruiting staff and was there provision to offer a salary above the market rate, and was advised by the Director of Finance and Assets that there wasn't any specific contingency to do so, but the Authority did have a small number of posts where a market supplement had been applied. It could be built in as part of the budget planning process if necessary.

A Member asked what a flexi firefighter was and was advised by the Deputy Chief Fire Officer that the flexi firefighter role was quite unique in the UK fire and rescue service, it was a firefighter that wasn't allocated to a particular station or watch, but could be used to cover annual leave and sickness on any station.

A Member asked if the Authority was not allowed to put up council tax by £5, what was the quantifiable gap, and was advised by the Chief Fire Officer, that the Authority wouldn't know what the quantifiable gap would be until it received the local government finance settlement. At that point, the Authority would be able to anticipate what the quantifiable gap would be and what measures would have to be taken to bridge that gap.

A Member asked why there were no low, medium or high-risk scenarios in the strategy and was advised by the Director of Finance and Assets that when the Financial Strategy was approved last year, the scenarios were set out within it, and perhaps they should have been repeated in this update, but he would resend them around to Members after the meeting.

A Member asked what a 2% increase was in money terms and also what would the £5 be as a percentage. The Director of Finance and Assets advised that a 2% increase would roughly generate around £300k on council tax and a £5 increase would generate around £1.5m increase. A £5 increase would equate to about an 8% increase in a Band D equivalent.

FA30

BUILDING RISK REVIEW AND PROTECTION UPDATE

Group Commander Mould advised Members that this report was broken down into several areas and was to provide a quarterly update on the Protection Teams progress against the Building Risk Review programme (BRR) and Protection activity. The BRR had progressed well, with returns provided to the Protection Policy Reform Unit (PPRU) against all 57 premises identified within Buckinghamshire and Milton Keynes and the PPRU had confirmed that the programme had been completed for this Service a month ahead of schedule.

Group Commander Mould advised Members that the Service continued to deliver the Protection Uplift Programme, utilising the associated grant funding to deliver improvements in fire safety delivery, response staff knowledge and support wider business engagement. Fire safety training for operational staff had been secured. A pilot was delivered to a dozen Flexi Duty Officers last month, with a second planned for December. Following this and any necessary amendments due to feedback and clarity around the Fire Safety Act 2021, the training would be rolled out to crews. This training would broadly cover relevant legislation and any changes, the built environment and fire safety requirements. Training was due to start in January 2022.

Group Commander Mould advised Members that other areas covered within the report were Business Engagement, Technology, Competency Fire Standards and the Fire Safety Act 2021, which was due to go live in the very near future and an update on the Building Safety Bill's passage towards receiving Royal Assent in Spring – Summer 2022.

A Member asked regarding the pie chart of the initial assessment outcome and what sort of things were not in scope and was advised by Group Commander Mould that the scope of the project was 18 metre plus residential premises, anything below 18 metres was out of scope, including hotels and commercial high-rise premises over 18 metres.

A Member asked if the Authority was a consultee for any buildings over three floors and was advised by Group Commander Mould that the Authority was statutory consultees under the building regulation consultation.

A Member noted that in Appendix 7 it referred to the draft Building Safety Bill and in it, refers to an accountable person rather than a responsible person. What were the differences in these terms; and was advised by Group Commander Mould that the responsible person was identified under the Regulatory Reform Fire Safety Order and the accountable person would be identified under the Building Safety Bill, clarity would be provided when there had been further passage of the Bill.

A Member asked about inspection costs which seemed to be covered by a government grant, was there anything in the legislation that actually puts costs, onto the owners, and was advised by Group Commander Mould that within the Building Safety Bill, there were some processes for reclaiming costs associated directly with work and burdens placed under the Building Safety Bill. The Authority had received a grant to assist with third party accreditation and this was mirrored under the Fire Safety Act which would go live imminently. The National Fire Chiefs Council were continuing to lobby for further grants to support the ongoing costs of accreditation.

Councillor Marland who was the Leader of Milton Keynes Council advised Members that recently Milton Keynes Council had unanimously passed a motion regarding Grenfell, and he had been requested to write to the Secretary of State regarding building control and strengthening building control measures.

The Chairman asked if Council Marland could share the document and letter with Members.

RESOLVED –

That the Building Risk Review and Protection update be noted.

FA31

HEALTH, SAFETY AND WELLBEING ANNUAL REPORT 2020/21

The Lead Member for Health and Safety and Corporate Risk informed Members that he was pleased to be introducing the Health, Safety and Wellbeing annual report for the second year as Lead Member. He advised Members that the Service had responded to the demands of the pandemic with fortitude, implementing robust procedures quickly and efficiently which was evidenced by both the small numbers of positive cases amongst staff and the outcomes of the Health and Safety Executive's Covid spot audits on stations and at headquarters.

The external work carried out by some firefighters, officers and support staff in assisting partner agencies included driving ambulances,

delivering PPE to other organisations, delivering medication and food to those members of the public who were shielding and setting up and running mass vaccination centres, whilst maintaining the core business of the Service throughout. All of which exemplifies the ethos of the Service.

The Lead Member for Health and Safety and Corporate Risk was proud the Health, Safety and Wellbeing statistics continued to demonstrate how importantly the Service treats these matters; however, it should not be complacent and must continue to reduce risks to employees and the public it serves.

The Health and Safety Manager advised that as the Lead Member had said, 2020/21 had required the Service to focus primarily on the response to, recovery from and managing the Covid-19 pandemic as new variants emerge whilst maintaining business as usual. This had proved challenging at times especially during the four lockdowns with non-operational personnel working from home for much of the year and operational personnel being placed at risk of transmission of the virus when serving the community. It was to be noted that cases of Covid-19 within the Service for the year up to 31 March 2021 had been very low at 38 which was testament to the commitment of staff in adhering to the Covid Secure measures in place.

Early in the pandemic the Health and Safety Executive (HSE) went on record stating that, should they receive a complaint from an employee concerned about Covid-19 in their workplace, they would carry out an investigation. To date, the HSE had conducted Covid-19 spot audits at four fire stations and headquarters with excellent outcomes at each. There had been no requirement for any further action and comments received from the inspectors had been favourable.

Throughout the year the Service had assisted partner agencies and local authorities in ways that had never been experienced before. (Driving ambulances, delivering medication and food to those shielding, training care home staff in donning and doffing personal protective equipment and setting up and running mass vaccination centres). Whilst each activity came with its own challenges, the tenacity and commitment of staff ensured participation was a success. As these activities were over and above what staff would normally undertake the Service was cognisant of the potential impacts on both their physical and mental health and wellbeing. An example of how this was managed was by releasing operational staff who had volunteered to drive ambulances from their fire service duties and to provide them with time off prior to them returning. Access to additional trauma support and welfare support networks was also provided.

The HMI conducted a Covid-19 inspection in November 2020; the headline of the report read *“Buckinghamshire Fire & Rescue Service has been praised for the way it is coping with the challenges it faces during the COVID-19 pandemic, and for the positive contribution it is making to its community”*.

The Health and Safety Manager advised that overall, there had been reductions in five of the seven categories which was a considerable improvement in performance compared to last year. Personal injury, vehicle safety events, acts of violence and the number of events that come under the Reporting of Injuries, Diseases and Dangerous Occurrences Regulations (RIDDOR) had all decreased. There has been a significant decrease in the total number of persons injured from 38 in 2019/20 to 24 in 2020/21. Of these, 17 occurred at training events, three during routine activities and four at fires.

With regard to Working Time Regulation breaches, from April 2020 to March 2021 there were 3822 Bank shifts worked and of those there were seven breaches. A breach would occur when a worker does not have a full 24-hour uninterrupted rest break in any seven days or 48 hours in 14 days, or the total of hours worked per week exceeds 84. The Service had implemented a limit on the number of hours worked at 78 per week to build in extra protection against fatigue for staff. This was a significant improvement from the previous year, providing assurance that should the HSE conduct an inspection on the Service there was a robust and effective monitoring process in place.

The Health and Safety Manager advised Members that the pandemic had provided the opportunity for the Service to review its working practices. With support staff working from home, productivity increased as employees did not have to commute into the workplace during lockdown and the systems technology available enabled work to be carried out efficiently. Working from home was not suited to everyone, the lifting of Government restrictions had meant that employees could return to the workplace in a safe and managed way.

Moving forward, the Service was taking the opportunity to explore ways in which people worked and how they prefer to work. This work would inform how hybrid working could be implemented throughout the Service for those groups of staff who were able to work both from home and in the workplace. However, this was not an option for all staff due to the nature of their role. *“Work Evolution- work is what WE make it”* was the strapline for this project which was in its infancy. An update would be provided in next year’s report.

The Chairman and Members gave their thanks to the Health and Safety team and every member of staff for all their hard work during the pandemic.

RESOLVED –

That the health, safety and wellbeing performance as detailed in the Health, Safety and Wellbeing Annual Report for 2020/21 be noted.

(Councillor Christensen left the meeting)

FA32

FIREFIGHTERS CHARITY

Station Commander Burch gave Members a presentation on the Fire Fighters Charity. Living Well Groups had been introduced and offered somewhere to socialise and reminisce with fellow retired members of the fire and rescue service. Back in 2018, the Charity noticed that it was extremely difficult to interact with retired staff who also remained beneficiaries of the charity and so they came up with this very simple concept to bring staff back into a familiar environment and create social opportunity. This was being introduced into the Service with monthly meetings, guest speakers, and access to charity services and refreshments would be provided. The introduction of the Living Well Groups would help support the delivery of agreed objectives set in the 2020-2025 People Strategy and would compliment the ongoing work of the Welfare Officer, improving the communications and support provided to retired members of the fire service community.

Station Commander Burch advised Members that 2020/21 was a challenging year for the Charity due to lack of opportunity to fundraise and the impacts of the pandemic. However, the fundraising update for the first six months of 2021/22 provided positive reading. Event fundraising had increased by 341% and recycling income by 197%. Two key events held were the tunnel to towers event which raised £7,809 and the Chesham to Brighton bike ride which raised £4,376. The figures were broken down into five key areas, events, fire service lottery, fire service regular giving, individual giving and recycling which was predominantly the clothing banks seen on many fire stations.

Projected fundraising income included post incident recognition, where donations had been raised following a large fire at the Kings Head hotel in Stokenchurch. Donations had been raised by the local community and pupils at Stokenchurch Primary School as a means of thanking the hard work and dedication shown by the operational crews. The Authority had agreed to donate £5 for every staff member providing a response to the next Culture Survey which would take place in January 2022. Various fire stations had started planning charity car washes in March 2022 and would be holding charity collections this month.

Station Commander Burch advised that a digital event registration form had been created that would automatically notify the Health and Safety team, Communications team and the Charity Coordinator with details regarding future events that were planned. This approach would

provide support at the planning stage to ensure the appropriate risk assessments were completed, event insurance considered, and a communication plan put in place to maximise the opportunity to raise the profile and outreach of all future fundraising events.

Station Commander Burch highlighted how important the clothing banks were across the different sites in Buckinghamshire. Since 2010 when the first clothing bank was installed, the Service had raised in excess of £188k through clothing recycling which was in excess of 618 tons of clothing. The clothing banks had a performance poster placed on the back, informing the community and staff how much it had generated.

A Member stated that as some of the fire stations in Milton Keynes were inaccessible to members of the public, was it possible to locate the clothing banks on non-fire station sites and was advised by Station Commander Burch that the Charity was extremely supportive of banks being placed on other sites, that would be deemed suitable.

FA33

DATE OF NEXT MEETING

To note that the next meeting of the Fire Authority will be held on Wednesday 16 February 2022 at 11am, at The Oculus, Buckinghamshire Council.

The Chairman closed the meeting at 12.55 PM

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Buckinghamshire & Milton Keynes Fire Authority

Meeting and date: Executive Committee, 9 February 2022

Report title: The Prudential Code, Prudential Indicators and Minimum Revenue Provision

Lead Member: Councillor David Hopkins

Report sponsor: Mark Hemming, Director of Finance & Assets

Author and contact: Marcus Hussey mhussey@bucksfire.gov.uk

Action: Decision.

Recommendations:

That the Executive Committee approve the recommendations below for submission to the Fire Authority.

That the Authority be recommended to approve:

1. the Prudential Indicators for 2022/23
2. the Minimum Revenue Provision policy statement

Executive summary:

This report is being presented as the Prudential Indicators (Appendices A and B) and Minimum Revenue Provision policy statement (Appendix C) are required to be approved by the Fire Authority and to support the Medium-Term Financial Plan (MTFP).

The Authority has already made sufficient revenue provision to cover the repayment of its gross borrowing. However, due to prohibitive penalties the early repayment of this borrowing is not currently an option. The Authority has no plans for additional borrowing in the foreseeable future, according to the current MTFP.

It is recommended that the Authorised Limit for 2022/23 continues to be set at £2m higher than the Operational Limit to allow for the effective management of cashflow.

Financial implications:

The decision on the prudential indicators sets out the financial limits within which the Authority will operate in future years. The minimum revenue provision is a statutory charge against the General Fund, estimated at £47k for 2022/23 (no change from 2021/22). The impact of the Prudential Code will allow the Authority to make

informed choices between revenue and capital financing of procured services, to encourage invest to save schemes and will only allow capital investment to proceed where the Authority can fund projects within prudential limits.

Making sufficient minimum revenue provision ensures that when borrowing matures, cash is available to make the repayment. This ensures that the Authority does not need to borrow additional money to repay existing loans.

Risk management:

The Prudential Code was established to ensure that capital investment plans are affordable, prudent and sustainable, and that treasury management decisions are taken in accordance with good professional practice. The indicators presented here demonstrate that the current plans for capital investment meet these criteria and present an acceptable level of risk to the Authority.

Minimum revenue provision is a statutory charge to the General Fund, which ensures that an Authority has sufficient cash balances to repay borrowing upon maturity, reducing the refinancing risk.

There are no direct staffing implications.

Legal implications:

The Local Authorities (Capital Finance and Accounting) (England) Regulations 2003, SI 2003/3146 make provision for capital finance and accounts under the Local Government Act 2003 requiring the Authority to have regard to the 'Prudential Code for Capital Finance in Local Authorities' when determining, under the Local Government 2003 Act, how much money it can afford to borrow; and require the Authority to determine for the current financial year an amount of minimum revenue provision which it considers to be prudent.

Privacy and security implications:

No direct impact.

Duty to collaborate:

No direct impact.

Health and safety implications:

No direct impact.

Environmental implications:

No direct impact.

Equality, diversity, and inclusion implications:

No direct impact.

Consultation and communication:

No direct impact.

Background papers:

Realignment of Reserve Balances to Facilitate the Medium Term Financial Plan,
Executive Committee, 18 November 2015, agenda item 6:

https://bucksfire.gov.uk/documents/2020/03/181115_exec_committee_papers.pdf/

| Appendix | Title | Protective Marking |
|-----------------|--|---------------------------|
| 1 | Prudential Indicators | |
| 2 | Summary Table of Prudential Indicators | |
| 3 | Minimum Revenue Provision Policy Statement | |

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Appendix 1 – Prudential Indicators

1.0 Indicators for Affordability

1.1 The ratio of financing costs to net revenue stream

This indicator measures the percentage of the net revenue funding used to finance external debt. As no future borrowing is planned and a decision was made to reallocate reserves to reduce the capital financing requirement in 2015/16, the ratio of financing costs to net revenue stream will remain consistently low:

| Indicator | Actual 2020/21 | Estimate 2021/22 | Estimate 2022/23 | Estimate 2023/24 | Estimate 2024/25 |
|--|-------------------|---------------------|---------------------|---------------------|---------------------|
| Ratio of financing costs to net revenue stream | 0.8% | 1.0% | 0.9% | 0.9% | 0.7% |

2.0 Indicators for Prudence

2.1 Gross borrowing and the Capital Financing Requirement

The table below shows gross borrowing and the capital financing requirement (CFR). The Authority should ensure that gross borrowing does not, except in the short term, exceed the CFR. However, due to the reallocation of reserves to reduce the CFR (excluding finance lease) to zero (see Provenance Section & Background Papers) gross borrowing will exceed CFR for the medium to long-term. This situation will exist until borrowing is repaid. Due to early repayment premiums, it is prohibitively expensive to make any early repayments at the current time.

Gross borrowing at the start of 2020/21 financial year was £6.797m. The figures shown below indicate the maximum level of borrowing during the year (i.e. repayments will reduce the limit for the following year):

| Indicator | Actual 2020/21 | Estimate 2021/22 | Estimate 2022/23 | Estimate 2023/24 | Estimate 2024/25 |
|--------------------------------------|-------------------|---------------------|---------------------|---------------------|---------------------|
| Gross borrowing (£000) | 6,797 | 6,797 | 6,797 | 6,177 | 5,177 |
| Capital financing requirement (£000) | 1,590 | 1,543 | 1,496 | 1,449 | 1,402 |

3.0 Indicators for Capital Expenditure

3.1 Capital Expenditure

This indicator shows the expected level of capital expenditure for future years:

| Indicator | Actual 2020/21 | Estimate 2021/22 | Estimate 2022/23 | Estimate 2023/24 | Estimate 2024/25 |
|----------------------------|-------------------|---------------------|---------------------|---------------------|---------------------|
| Capital expenditure (£000) | 4,206 | 2,435 | 2,962 | 1,616 | 1,505 |

3.2 Capital Financing Requirement (CFR)

The CFR reflects the Authority's underlying need to borrow. This figure was reduced down to the level of the finance lease by the reallocation of reserves (see Background Papers). No additional borrowing is planned in the medium term. The CFR should be looked at in relation to gross borrowing, as detailed in Section 2.1:

| Indicator | Actual 2020/21 | Estimate 2021/22 | Estimate 2022/23 | Estimate 2023/24 | Estimate 2024/25 |
|--|-------------------|---------------------|---------------------|---------------------|---------------------|
| Capital financing requirement (underlying need to borrow for a capital purpose) (£000) | 1,590 | 1,543 | 1,496 | 1,449 | 1,402 |

4.0 Indicators for External Debt

4.1 Authorised Limit

This is the maximum limit on borrowing and other long-term liabilities (currently limited to the finance lease at Gerrards Cross). This amount cannot be exceeded without approval from the Fire Authority:

| Indicator | Actual 2020/21 | Estimate 2021/22 | Estimate 2022/23 | Estimate 2023/24 | Estimate 2024/25 |
|---|-------------------|---------------------|---------------------|---------------------|---------------------|
| Authorised limit for borrowing (£000) | 8,797 | 8,797 | 8,797 | 8,177 | 7,177 |
| Authorised limit for other long-term liabilities (£000) | 1,590 | 1,543 | 1,496 | 1,449 | 1,402 |
| Authorised limit for external debt (£000) | 10,387 | 10,340 | 10,293 | 9,626 | 8,579 |

4.2 Operational Boundary

This indicator shows the most likely estimate of debt for future years:

The actual external debt for the year ending 31 March 2021 was **£8.387m**.

| Indicator | Actual 2020/21 | Estimate 2021/22 | Estimate 2022/23 | Estimate 2023/24 | Estimate 2024/25 |
|---|-------------------|---------------------|---------------------|---------------------|---------------------|
| Operational boundary for borrowing (£000) | 6,797 | 6,797 | 6,797 | 6,177 | 5,177 |
| Operational boundary for other long-term liabilities (£000) | 1,590 | 1,543 | 1,496 | 1,449 | 1,402 |
| Operational boundary for external debt (£000) | 8,387 | 8,340 | 8,293 | 7,626 | 6,579 |

5.0 Indicators for Treasury Management

5.1 Adoption of CIPFA's Treasury Management in the Public Services: Code of Practice and Cross-Sectorial Guidance Notes

The aim is to ensure that treasury management is led by a clear and integrated forward treasury management strategy, and a recognition of the pre-existing structure of the Authority's borrowing and investment portfolios.

5.2 Upper limit on fixed interest rate exposures

This indicator shows the Authority’s upper limit of the net exposure to fixed interest rates. Currently all borrowing is at a fixed rate of interest:

| Indicator | Actual 2020/21 | Estimate 2021/22 | Estimate 2022/23 | Estimate 2023/24 | Estimate 2024/25 |
|--|----------------|------------------|------------------|------------------|------------------|
| Upper limit on fixed interest rate exposures | 100% | 100% | 100% | 100% | 100% |

5.3 Upper limit on variable interest rate exposures

This indicator shows the Authority’s upper limit of the net exposure to variable interest rates:

| Indicator | Actual 2020/21 | Estimate 2021/22 | Estimate 2022/23 | Estimate 2023/24 | Estimate 2024/25 |
|---|----------------|------------------|------------------|------------------|------------------|
| Upper limit on variable interest rate exposures | 20% | 20% | 20% | 20% | 20% |

5.4 Maturity structure of fixed rate borrowing

This shows the repayment profile of fixed rate borrowing. All loans are repayable on maturity:

| Indicator | Actual 2020/21 | | Estimate 2021/22 | | Estimate 2022/23 | | Estimate 2023/24 | | Estimate 2024/25 | |
|--|----------------|-------------|------------------|-------------|------------------|-------------|------------------|-------------|------------------|-------------|
| | Lower Limit | Upper Limit | Lower Limit | Upper Limit | Lower Limit | Upper Limit | Lower Limit | Upper Limit | Lower Limit | Upper Limit |
| Maturity structure of fixed rate borrowings | | | | | | | | | | |
| Under 12 months | 0% | 0% | 0% | 9% | 0% | 16% | 0% | 0% | 0% | 0% |
| 12 months and within 24 months | 0% | 9% | 0% | 15% | 0% | 0% | 0% | 0% | 0% | 0% |
| 24 months and within five years | 0% | 15% | 0% | 0% | 0% | 16% | 0% | 19% | 0% | 19% |
| five years and within 10 years | 0% | 24% | 0% | 24% | 0% | 22% | 0% | 27% | 0% | 27% |
| 10 years and within 20 years | 0% | 11% | 0% | 11% | 0% | 0% | 0% | 0% | 0% | 0% |
| 20 years and within 30 years | 0% | 0% | 0% | 0% | 0% | 36% | 0% | 42% | 0% | 42% |
| 30 years and within 40 years | 0% | 41% | 0% | 41% | 0% | 10% | 0% | 12% | 0% | 12% |
| 40 years and above | 0% | 0% | 0% | 0% | 0% | 0% | 0% | 0% | 0% | 0% |

5.5 Total principal sums invested for periods longer than 364 days

The purpose of this indicator is for the Authority to contain its exposure to the possibility of loss that might arise as a result of it having to seek early repayment or redemption of principal sums invested. The Authority currently has no investments over a period longer than 364 days.

| Indicator | Actual 2020/21 | Estimate 2021/22 | Estimate 2022/23 | Estimate 2023/24 | Estimate 2024/25 |
|---|-------------------|---------------------|---------------------|---------------------|---------------------|
| Total principal sums invested for periods longer than 364 days (£000) | 0.00 | 0.00 | 0.00 | 0.00 | 0.00 |

5.6 Credit Risk

The duration of any investment with a counterparty will be restricted as advised by our treasury management advisors. The advisors will base their assessment of credit risk based on credit ratings provided by the major agencies, as well as reviewing credit default swaps (a proxy measure for the markets perceived risk of default).

Appendix 2 – Summary Table of Prudential Indicators

For reference, the following table summarises the key indicators detailed in Appendix 1 in a single table:

| | Indicator | Actual 2020/21 | Estimate 2021/22 | Estimate 2022/23 | Estimate 2023/24 | Estimate 2024/25 |
|---|--|-------------------|---------------------|---------------------|---------------------|---------------------|
| Indicators for Affordability | | | | | | |
| 1.1 | Ratio of financing costs to net revenue stream | 0.8% | 1.0% | 0.9% | 0.9% | 0.7% |
| Indicators for Prudence | | | | | | |
| 2.1 | Gross borrowing (£000) | 6,797 | 6,797 | 6,797 | 6,177 | 5,177 |
| Indicators for Capital Expenditure | | | | | | |
| 3.1 | Capital expenditure (£000) | 4,206 | 2,435 | 2,982 | 1,616 | 1,505 |
| 3.2 | Capital financing requirement (underlying need to borrow for a capital purpose) (£000) | 1,590 | 1,543 | 1,496 | 1,449 | 1,402 |
| Indicators for External Debt | | | | | | |
| 4.1 | Authorised limit for external debt (£000) | 10,387 | 10,340 | 10,293 | 9,626 | 8,579 |
| 4.2 | Operational boundary for external debt (£000) | 8,387 | 8,340 | 8,293 | 7,626 | 6,579 |
| Indicators for Treasury Management | | | | | | |
| 5.2 | Upper limit on fixed interest rate exposures | 100% | 100% | 100% | 100% | 100% |
| 5.3 | Upper limit on variable interest rate exposures | 20% | 20% | 20% | 20% | 20% |
| 5.5 | Total principal sums invested for periods longer than 364 days (£000) | 0.00 | 0.00 | 0.00 | 0.00 | 0.00 |

The actual external debt for the year ending 31 March 2021 was £8.387m. The projected external debt for the year ending 31 March 2021 is £8,340m (both figures include the finance lease liability).

The following indicators are not shown above:

- 5.1 – the Authority has adopted CIPFA’s Treasury Management Code for 2020/21
- 5.4 – details of the maturity structure of fixed rate borrowing
- 5.6 – narrative regarding credit risk

Appendix 3 – Minimum Revenue Provision (MRP) Policy Statement

The two methods for calculating prudent provision are set out below and were approved by members in 2008/09. Regulation 28 of the 2003 Regulations (as amended by regulation 4 of the 2008 Regulations) requires a local authority to calculate for the current financial year an amount of MRP which it considers to be prudent. The Secretary of State recommends that, for the purposes of regulation 4 the prudent amount of provision should be determined in accordance with one of four options, two of which were agreed by members in 2008/09 and are outlined below.

The broad aim of prudent provision is to ensure that debt is repaid over a period that is reasonably commensurate with that over which the capital expenditure provides benefits (asset life).

(a) CFR Method

MRP is equal to 4% of the Capital Financing Requirement (CFR) at the end of the preceding financial years. Since the CFR (excluding finance lease) is now at zero, this method is no longer applicable (for finance leases, the MRP requirement is regarded as met by a charge equal to the element of the rent that goes to write down the Balance Sheet liability).

(b) Asset Life Method

Since 1 April 2008, where capital expenditure on an asset is financed wholly or partly by borrowing or credit arrangements, MRP is to be determined by reference to the life of the asset, based on an equal instalment method. This amount is projected to be nil for 2022/23.

Where assets have been purchased utilising Capital grants or Revenue Contributions no MRP calculation is required. Only assets purchased utilising borrowing require an MRP charge.

The asset life method calculation requires estimated useful lives of assets to be input into the calculations. These life periods will be determined by the Director of Finance and Assets & Treasurer, with regard to the statutory guidance and advice from professional valuers.



Buckinghamshire & Milton Keynes Fire Authority

Meeting and date: Executive Committee, 9 February 2022

Report title: Medium Term Financial Plan (MTFP) 2022/23 to 2026/27

Lead Member: Councillor David Hopkins

Report sponsor: Mark Hemming, Director of Finance and Assets

Author and contact: Asif Hussain, ahussain@bucksfire.gov.uk, 01296 744421

Action: Decision

Recommendations:

- 1(a) Note and have due regard to the report and Statement of the Chief Finance Officer (see section 8 of Annex A).
- 1(b) Approve a Council Tax precept of £72.16 for a band D equivalent property (equal to an increase of 9.6p per week) and the revenue budget as set out in Appendix 1.
- 1(c) Approve the capital programme as set out in Appendix 2.
- 1(d) Transfer the £600k from the referendum reserve to the revenue contribution to capital reserve.

Executive summary:

The main report (Annex A) presents the proposed revenue and capital Medium Term Financial Plan (MTFP) for the financial years 2022/23 to 2026/27. The MTFP is closely linked to the Financial Strategy (update provided in December 2021) which is the link between the organisation's long-term service objectives and its financial capacity. Buckinghamshire Fire and Rescue Service (BFRS) long-term service objectives are set out in the Public Safety Plan (PSP) and Corporate Plan.

The provisional settlement was announced on 16 December 2021 and is included in the funding assumptions. Final confirmation is expected in February 2022. One key change in the provisional settlement this year is that the government proposes to provide the lowest charging quartile of fire and rescue authorities (FRAs) with the flexibility to increase their band D precepts by £5 in 2022/23 without the need to hold a referendum. This is to assist those FRAs in addressing immediate pressures and to maintain a sustainable income baseline for future years. BFRS is included within these 8 FRA's and has the option to increase Council tax precept by £5.

The Service's most recent report (December 2021) by Her Majesty's Inspectorate of Constabulary and Fire & Rescue Services (HMICFRS) noted in its summary, "We are encouraged by the service's work to improve value for money, but we still have concerns about the service's funding model as its limited reserves are being used to supplement funding of its response functions." If the Authority were to approve a £5 increase in precept, this would result in approximately £1.15m additional funding compared to a precept increase of 2%.

The additional funding would predominantly be utilised to recruit additional Firefighters to build its response functions. Furthermore, the Fire Authority would be able to increase the revenue contributions to capital which would build the reserves that are used for funding the capital programme, in the process addressing another concern raised within the HMICFRS report.

Key assumptions are detailed in Section 4 of Annex A and are based on information received to date.

The distribution formulas used to allocate government funding need to be revisited and therefore the Department for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities (DLUHC) have provided a one-year settlement. This will give them the opportunity to review these formulas and ensure they are updated and reflected in future funding allocations. Revenue support grant will increase in line with the change in the Consumer Price Index (CPI) between September 2020 and September 2021. Business rates multiplier will be frozen, but services will be compensated the difference between the freeze and the increase expected in line with Retail Price Index. The exception to this is the pension grant funding, which is a flat-cash settlement.

An additional £822m unringfenced Services grant will be distributed to all tiers of government. This grant is for 2022/23 only and the government will work with the sector on how they distribute this funding from 2023/24 onwards. The funding is in recognition of the range of vital services delivered by all tiers of the government across the country. This grant will be unringfenced with local authorities best placed to understand local priorities. Included within this grant is the funding relating to the increase in costs relating to employer National Insurance contributions which the Government confirmed that they would fully fund for the government sector. Indicative figures published 16 December 2021 show that Buckinghamshire Fire and Rescue Service will receive £0.355m, which has been reflected in the projections presented under the heading Services Grant.

Council tax collection funds were adversely impacted since the start of the Pandemic whereby the tax base reduce by 0.65% in 2021/22. However, the latest projections show a recovery in the collection fund with a projected growth of 2.19% in the tax base.

Uncertainty persists regarding pensions following the ruling in December 2018 that the transitional arrangements introduced for the firefighters' schemes in 2015 were discriminatory. At the employment tribunal hearing on 18 December 2019, it was ruled that the claimants, members of the 1992 and 2006 firefighters' pension schemes, are now entitled to be treated as if they have remained members of their original pension scheme. The Executive Committee have adopted the immediate detriment framework in November 2021 and BFRS are currently processing claims from members who want to be treated as if they remained on their original pension scheme. It is expected that this will increase the longer-term costs of the firefighters' schemes, although it is not yet possible to quantify the impact.

As well as the uncertainty regarding pensions noted above, there is also uncertainty regarding the upcoming Fair Funding Review, Urban Search and Rescue funding and funding for Firelink and Emergency Services Mobile Communications Programme.

This year officers continued with the incremental budgeting approach when developing the budget proposal for 2022/23. The budget setting process was scrutinised by Officers and Members to ensure only proposals which added value for money and in line with the Corporate Plan and PSP priorities were approved.

The revenue budget for 2022/23 and indicative figures for future years are shown in Appendix 1.

It should also be noted that the figures for council tax and business rates are provisional. The statutory deadline for the billing authorities to provide this information to the Authority is 31 January 2022. Any changes to the figures will be presented in a revised Appendix 1 at the meeting.

Appendix 2 shows the latest summary of the capital programme for 2021/22 and approved schemes for the following years.

Appendix 3 provides further detail on the level of council tax chargeable for each band if the Authority accepts the recommendation to increase the band D by £5.

Financial implications: All financial implications are shown in the main body of the report.

Risk management: Management of financial resources is a key risk to the Authority. By projecting forward and monitoring the financial plans, BFRS are in a better position to avoid and mitigate the risk of adverse financial consequences.

Legal implications: The Local Government Act 2003 gives the responsible finance officer, namely the Chief Finance Officer of the Combined Fire Authority under s112 of the Local Government Finance Act 1988, the responsibility to report to Members of the Authority on their assessment of the robustness of the estimates used within the budget and on the adequacy of reserves.

Members must have regard to the report of the Chief Finance Officer in respect of the above and the highlighted associated risks before considering the recommendations as set out in the report.

Privacy and security implications: No direct impact.

Duty to collaborate: No direct impact.

Health and safety implications: No direct impact.

Environmental implications: No direct impact.

Equality, diversity, and inclusion implications: No direct impact.

Consultation and communication: None.

Background papers:

Medium Term Financial Plan (MTFP) 2021/22 to 2025/26 and Revised Appendices, Fire Authority, 17 February 2021:

<https://bucksfire.gov.uk/documents/2021/02/item-7b-mtftp.pdf/>

<https://bucksfire.gov.uk/documents/2021/02/item-7b-revised-appendices-1-and-2.pdf/>

| Appendix | Title | Protective Marking |
|----------------|--|--------------------|
| Annex A | Medium Term Financial Plan 2022/23 to 2026/27 | |
| Appendices 1-3 | Appendix 1 – MTFP Budget Model and Reserves Position Appendix 2 – Capital Programme Summary Appendix 3 – Council Tax Rates | |

Annex A – Medium Term Financial Plan (MTFP) 2022/23 to 2026/27

1. Introduction

- 1.1. The purpose of this report is to present the proposed revenue and capital Medium Term Financial Plan (MTFP) 2022/23 to 2026/27.
- 1.2. The MTFP is closely linked to the Financial Strategy which is the link between the organisation's long-term service objectives and its financial capacity. BFRS long-term service objectives are set out in the Public Safety Plan (PSP) and Corporate Plan. The PSP sets out the strategic approach to the management of risk in the communities BFRS serve. The Corporate Plan sets out how BFRS intend to equip and develop the organisation and its people to meet the challenges faced by the service. The MTFP details the resources available to facilitate these plans.
- 1.3. As part of the Fire Authority's Terms of Reference and MTFP, the Authority reviews and sets a balanced budget each year in line with corporate priorities. The MTFP is expressed as a detailed annual budget for the first year, with outline indicative budgets for the following four years.
- 1.4. Under Section 25 of the Local Government Act 2003 the Chief Finance Officer (as S.112 Chief Finance Officer of the Local Government Finance Act 1988) is required to report to Members on:
 - The robustness of the estimates made for the purposes of the calculations of the budget
 - The adequacy of the proposed financial reserves
- 1.5. The Local Government Act 2003 requires that Members have regard to the report in making their decisions (see section 8).
- 1.6. Section 42A of the Local Government Finance Act 1992 also requires the Authority to have regard to the level of reserves for meeting estimated future expenditure when calculating the net budget requirement.

2. Local Government Finance Settlement 2022 to 2023

- 2.1. The distribution formulas used to allocate government funding need to be revisited and therefore the Department for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities (DLUHC) have provided a one-year settlement. This will give them the opportunity to review these formulas and ensure they are updated and reflected in future funding allocations. Revenue support grant will increase in line with the change in the Consumer Price Index (CPI) between September 2020 and September 2021. Business rates multiplier will be frozen, but services will be compensated the difference between the freeze and the increase expected in line with Retail Price Index. The exception to this is the pension grant funding, which is a flat-cash settlement and expected to be included in future years' (2022/23 onwards) settlement funding assessment and subject to review as part of a future multiple year comprehensive spending review
- 2.2. An additional £822m unringfenced Services grant will be distributed to all tiers of government. The grant is for 2022/23 only and the government will work with the sector on how they distribute this funding from 2023/24 onwards. The

funding is in recognition of the range of vital services delivered by all tiers of the government across the country. This grant will be unringfenced with local authorities best placed to understand local priorities. Included within this grant is the funding relating to the increase in costs relating to employer National Insurance contributions which the Government confirmed that they would fully fund for the government sector. Indicative figures published 16 December 2021 show that Buckinghamshire Fire and Rescue Service will receive £0.355m, which has been reflected in the projections under the heading Services Grant

- 2.3. The pension grant funding, which is a flat-cash settlement will be funded for 2022/23.
- 2.4. As part of this year's announcement, the Government published headline changes in core spending power between 2021/22 and 2022/23 for every authority. The headline change published for Buckinghamshire Fire and Rescue Service was an increase of 4.2%.
- 2.5. This headline increase assumes:
 - That the growth in council tax base between 2021/22 and 2022/23 will be 1.0% (actual increase was 2.19%).
 - That the Authority will increase its Band D council tax in 2021/22 by 1.99%.
- 2.6. However, changes in core spending power are expressed in cash-terms. The annual rate of inflation as of November 2021 was 5.1% (CPI) or 7.1% (RPI). A cash-terms increase of 4.2% in this economic context represents a real-terms decrease in core spending power.
- 2.7. If the two assumptions noted in paragraph 2.5 are updated to reflect the actual increase in the council tax base, and to include the recommendation to increase the Band D council tax by £5, the cash-terms increase in core spending power would be 9.2%. Taking into account the inflation rates noted in paragraph 2.6, this would represent a modest real term increase in core spending power.

3. Council Tax and Business Rates

- 3.1. In publicly declaring core spending power figures, the Government has clearly set an expectation that local authorities will continue to increase council tax every year by the maximum amount permissible.
- 3.2. The difference between a £5 increase in the precept and a 2% precept increase for 2022/23 is just over £1.15m for the year. This is approximately equivalent to the cost of employing twenty-three wholetime firefighters.
- 3.3. Council tax was increased by 1.99% in 2020/21 and by 1.99% in 2021/22.
- 3.4. One key change in the provisional settlement this year is that the government proposes to provide the lowest charging quartile of fire and rescue authorities (FRAs) with the flexibility to increase their band D precepts by £5 for one year only in 2022/23. This is to assist those FRAs in addressing immediate pressures and to maintain a sustainable income baseline for future years. BFRS is included within these 8 FRA's and has the option to increase Council tax by £5.
- 3.5. The Authority currently sets a band D equivalent precept of £67.16 per annum (approx. £1.29 per week). This is significantly below the national average (of

£80.06) and is the second lowest precept of any non-metropolitan combined fire authority.

- 3.6. Council tax chargeable for each band should the Authority resolve to increase the band D by £5 is shown in Appendix 3.

4. Risk Factors in Budget Assumptions

- 4.1. The budget proposed for 2022/23 at Appendix 1 has been compiled by looking in detail at current spending and future plans.
- 4.2. This year officers continued with the incremental budgeting approach when developing the budget proposal for 2022/23. The budget setting process was scrutinised by Officers and Members to ensure only proposals which added value for money and in line with Corporate Plan and Public Safety Plan priorities were approved.
- 4.3. At the time of writing the Authority had not yet received formal written notification of the continuation of the USAR grant for 2022/23, but it is expected imminently. However, the potential discontinuation of USAR funding in future years is a significant financial risk facing the Authority at present.
- 4.4. Uncertainty persists regarding pensions following the ruling in December 2018 that the transitional arrangements introduced for the firefighters' schemes in 2015 were discriminatory. At the employment tribunal hearing on 18 December 2019, it was ruled that the claimants, members of the 1992 and 2006 firefighters' pension schemes, are now entitled to be treated as if they have remained members of their original pension scheme. The Executive Committee have adopted the Local Government Association and Fire Brigade Union formulated immediate detriment framework in November 2021 and BFRS are currently processing claims from members who want to be treated as if they remained on their original pension scheme. It is expected that this will increase the longer-term costs of the firefighters' schemes, although it is not yet possible to quantify the impact.
- 4.5. Areas where budgets have changed significantly from previous years have been subject to a series of challenges by Officers and Members. Risks which have been identified are to be covered from the reserves.
- 4.6. The detailed costings are based on the updated budget requirement including the annual uplift assumptions below:

| | 2021/22 | 2022/23 | 2023/24 | 2024/25 | 2025/26 | 2026/27 |
|-------------------------|---------|---------|---------|---------|---------|---------|
| Pay inflation | 1.5/2% | 2% | 2% | 2% | 2% | 2% |
| Council tax increase | 1.99% | 7.45% | 1.99% | 1.99% | 1.99% | 1.99% |
| Council tax base | -0.65% | 2.19% | 1.6% | 1.6% | 1.6% | 1.6% |
| Business rates tax base | -8% | 2.55% | 2% | 2% | 2% | 2% |

5. Capital

- 5.1. The revenue impact of the capital programme has been factored into the base revenue budget requirement. This includes an annual revenue contribution to capital (RCCO), details of which are shown in Appendix 1.
- 5.2. The table at Appendix 2 details the approved capital programme for 2021/22, the estimated provisional outturn position and any proposed slippage to the programme. Any slippage is then added to the new budget requests for 2022/23 to give a total capital budget requirement of £3m for 2022/23.
- 5.3. The Authority should also take cognisance of the prudential indicators when approving the capital programme (submitted as a separate paper at this meeting).

6. Scrutiny and Challenge Process

- 6.1. All budget changes have been determined based on a series of challenge panels held by officers and then Members during the MTFP process.

7. Adequacy of Reserves

- 7.1. The Reserves Strategy is now incorporated within the Financial Strategy which was approved by the Fire Authority at its meeting on 9 December 2020 (<https://bucksfire.gov.uk/documents/2020/11/item-7c-fire-authority-9-december-2020.pdf/>). There have been no subsequent events that require the level of the General Fund determined at that time to be adjusted at present.
- 7.2. The latest forecast balances and reserves at year-end 2021/22 are:
 - General Fund Balance - £1.5m
 - Earmarked Reserves - £1.3m*
 - Capital Reserves - £2.5m

* The earmarked reserves balance excludes the amount held by Oxfordshire County Council relating to the Thames Valley Fire Control Service.

8. Statement of the Chief Finance Officer

- 8.1. The purpose of this statement is to comply with the requirements of the Local Government Act 2003 whereby the Chief Finance Officer, in the Fire Authority's case the Director of Finance and Assets and Chief Finance Officer, must report on:
 - The robustness of the estimates made for the purposes of the calculations of the budget and;
 - The adequacy of the proposed financial reserves;
 - In recommending the budget to the Authority, Members must have regard to this report when making decisions in connection with which it is made.
- 8.2. Given the level of the General Fund Balance and earmarked reserves available, the prudent approach to the budget setting process for the next financial year and the controls for budget management, it is my conclusion as Chief Finance Officer for the Authority that there is sufficient capacity in the reserves to cope

with the financial risks the Authority faces for 2022/23 and future years and that the methodology applied provides the necessary assurance to the Authority about the robustness of the estimates used in constructing the budget.

Appendix 1 – MTFP Model

The model below is based on the assumptions detailed in Sections 3 and 4 and all significant budget movements have been subjected to Officer and Member scrutiny as noted in Section 6.1. The statutory deadline for the billing authorities to provide Council Tax and business rates information to the Authority is 31 January 2022. Any changes to these figures will be presented in a revised Appendix 1 at the meeting.

| Directorate | 2021/22 £000 | 2022/23 £000 | 2023/24 £000 | 2024/25 £000 | 2025/26 £000 | 2026/27 £000 |
|--|-----------------|-----------------|-----------------|-----------------|-----------------|-----------------|
| Base Budget | 0 | 32,277 | 33,689 | 34,160 | 35,206 | 36,257 |
| Pay Adjustment | 0 | 347 | 463 | 472 | 481 | 491 |
| Inflation Adjustment | 0 | 0 | 100 | 100 | 100 | 100 |
| Corporate Core | 1,605 | -20 | -28 | -45 | 0 | 0 |
| Statutory Accounting & Contingency | 297 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 |
| Delivery, Corporate Development & Planning | 21,922 | 669 | 443 | 400 | 100 | 0 |
| Human Resources | 529 | -6 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 |
| Finance & Assets | 6,140 | 381 | -40 | 0 | -20 | 0 |
| RCCO | 1,784 | 41 | -467 | 119 | 390 | 492 |
| Net Budget Requirement | 32,277 | 33,689 | 34,160 | 35,206 | 36,257 | 37,340 |
| Revenue Support Grant/ Business Rates | -7,801 | -8,000 | -8,147 | -8,294 | -8,456 | -8,618 |
| Services Grant | 0 | -355 | -150 | -150 | -150 | -150 |
| Council Tax Receipts Surplus/Deficit | 33 | -257 | 41 | 0 | 0 | 0 |
| Council Tax Support Grant | -336 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 |
| Fire Specific Grants | -1,123 | -1,110 | -1,115 | -1,120 | -1,125 | -1,130 |
| Council Tax Receipts | -20,729 | -22,759 | -23,581 | -24,434 | -25,318 | -26,234 |
| Pension Grant Funding | -1,208 | -1,208 | -1,208 | -1,208 | -1,208 | -1,208 |
| Use of Reserves | -1,113 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 |
| Total Funding Available | -32,277 | -33,689 | -34,160 | -35,206 | -36,257 | -37,340 |
| Shortfall/(Surplus) for Year | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 |
| Cumulative Savings Requirement | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 |

Appendix 1b – Reserves Position

| Reserves Position | 2021/22 £000 | 2022/23 £000 | 2023/24 £000 | 2024/25 £000 | 2025/26 £000 | 2026/27 £000 |
|--|-----------------|-----------------|-----------------|-----------------|-----------------|-----------------|
| General Fund Balance | -1,500 | -1,500 | -1,500 | -1,500 | -1,500 | -1,500 |
| Other Earmarked Reserves (excluding Control Room Res.) | -1,304 | -1,304 | -1,304 | -1,304 | -1,304 | -1,304 |
| Earmarked Capital Reserves | -2,484 | -4,347 | -4,089 | -4,061 | -4,448 | -5,327 |
| Total | -5,288 | -7,151 | -6,893 | -6,865 | -7,252 | -8,131 |

Appendix 2 – Capital Programme

The table below summarises the capital programme from 2021/22 through to 2026/27 and is based on the revenue contribution to capital levels shown in Appendix 1:

| Capital Programme | 2021/22 £000 | 2022/23 £000 | 2023/24 £000 | 2024/25 £000 | 2025/26 £000 | 2026/27 £000 |
|---------------------------------------|-----------------|-----------------|-----------------|-----------------|-----------------|-----------------|
| Property | 500 | 500 | 500 | 500 | 500 | 500 |
| Hydraulic Equipment | 65 | 65 | 65 | 65 | 65 | 65 |
| Operational Equipment | 90 | 1,155 | 90 | 90 | 90 | 90 |
| Operational Red Fleet Vehicles | 750 | 500 | 750 | 750 | 750 | 750 |
| ICT | 575 | 206 | 211 | 100 | 75 | 75 |
| Slippage (Approved at July 2021 Exec) | 472 | - | - | - | - | - |
| In-year Movements | -50 | - | - | - | - | - |
| Current Year Slippage Forecast | -536 | 536 | - | - | - | - |
| Forecast O/S | 636 | - | - | - | - | - |
| Total Expenditure | 2,502 | 2,962 | 1,616 | 1,505 | 1,480 | 1,480 |
| Funding b/fwd | -2,611 | -2,484 | -4,347 | -4,089 | -4,061 | -4,448 |
| In Year Funding | -2,375 | -4,825 | -1,358 | -1,477 | -1,867 | -2,359 |
| Funding (Available)/Deficit | -2,484 | -4,347 | -4,089 | -4,061 | -4,448 | -5,327 |

Appendix 3 – Council Tax Rates

If the band D equivalent council tax were increased by £5 for 2022/23, the following rates would apply to properties in each band:

| Bands | Proportion of Band D Charge | Per Week (£) | Per Month (£) | Per Year (£) |
|-------|-----------------------------|--------------|---------------|--------------|
| A | 6/9 | 0.92 | 4.01 | 48.11 |
| B | 7/9 | 1.08 | 4.68 | 56.12 |
| C | 8/9 | 1.23 | 5.35 | 64.14 |
| D | 9/9 | 1.38 | 6.01 | 72.16 |
| E | 11/9 | 1.69 | 7.35 | 88.20 |
| F | 13/9 | 2.00 | 8.69 | 104.23 |
| G | 15/9 | 2.31 | 10.02 | 120.27 |
| H | 18/9 | 2.77 | 12.03 | 144.32 |

This would represent an annual increase of £3.34 per annum on a band A, £5 per annum on a band D and £10 per annum on a band H property.

The following table shows the increase in each band (rounded to the nearest pence).

| Bands | Increase Per Week (£) | Increase Per Month (£) | Increase Per Year (£) |
|-------|-----------------------|------------------------|-----------------------|
| A | 0.06 | 0.28 | 3.34 |
| B | 0.08 | 0.33 | 3.88 |
| C | 0.09 | 0.37 | 4.44 |
| D | 0.09 | 0.41 | 5.00 |
| E | 0.12 | 0.51 | 6.12 |
| F | 0.14 | 0.61 | 7.22 |
| G | 0.16 | 0.69 | 8.34 |
| H | 0.19 | 0.84 | 10.00 |

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Buckinghamshire & Milton Keynes Fire Authority

Meeting and date: Executive Committee, 9 February 2022

Report title: Members' Allowances

Lead Member: Councillor Lesley Clarke OBE, Chairman

Report sponsor: Graham Britten, Director of Legal and Governance

Author and contact: Katie Nellist knellist@bucksfire.gov.uk

Action: Decision

Recommendations:

1. That the Authority be recommended to adopt a Scheme for Members' Allowances for 2022/23 (**Appendix C**) with either
 - a) 0% increase in allowances; or
 - b) 1.5% increase in allowances.

Executive summary: The Authority is required to adopt a Scheme of Members' Allowances before 1 April each year and, in so doing, have due regard to the recommendations of the Independent Remuneration Panels of the constituent authorities when considering its own Scheme of Members' Allowances and confirm that it has done so when it gives public notice of the Scheme of Allowances.

The Independent Remuneration Panel of the scheme for Milton Keynes Council undertook a review in November 2021 and this is attached at **Appendix A**.

The Independent Remuneration Panel of the scheme for Buckinghamshire Council undertook a review in January 2020 and this is attached at **Appendix B**.

The Authority agreed at its meeting on 14 December 2011 that the index linking for the period 2012/13 to 2014/15 – for basic and special responsibility (and co-optee) allowances – be the pay award for the Authority's staff on National Joint Council (NJC) for Local Authorities' Fire and Rescue Services, Scheme of Conditions of Service (Grey Book). The application of this index linking had been endorsed annually by the Authority since 2014/15 until 2021/22.

Although there had been a Grey Book 2% pay award effective from 1 July 2020, the Authority agreed in February 2021 to suspend the indexation for the year 2021/22, resulting in a 0% increase in Members' allowances.

The NJC agreed an increase of 1.5% with effect from 1 July 2021 (NJC Circular 4/21, 28 June 2021) for the Authority's staff on National Joint Council (NJC) for Local Authorities' Fire and Rescue Services, Scheme of Conditions of Service (Grey Book).

The draft Scheme of Allowances for 2022/23 is attached at **Appendix C** and shows two options; a 0% increase (suspending the indexation again for the year 2022/23) and a 1.5% increase in line with the NJC Grey Book pay award.

Paragraphs 20 and 21 of the Scheme of Allowances provide that:

“20. The scales for all allowances are maxima and there is no obligation on any Member to claim any or all of the allowances.

21. A Member shall give notice in writing to the Chief Finance Officer that he/she elects to forego any part of his/her entitlement to an allowance under the scheme.”

Financial implications: The current budget for Members’ Allowances (Basic and Special Responsibility Allowances) is £72,780, including National Insurance.

Costs will be incurred in publishing a notice that the Authority has made a Scheme of Members’ Allowances in a newspaper circulating in its area. The cost is estimated to be in the region of £800 (*£745.20 last year*).

Risk management: The recommendation will have no adverse effect on the Authority’s business.

Legal implications: The making or amendment of the Members’ Scheme of Allowances is a function reserved to a meeting of the Authority. An amendment may be made by the Authority in year. Regulation 10(4) of Local Authorities (Members’ Allowances) (England) Regulations 2003 provides that “A scheme may make provision for an annual adjustment of allowances by reference to such index as may be specified by the authority and where the only change made to a scheme in any year is that effected by such annual adjustment in accordance with such index the scheme shall be deemed not to have been amended.”

Privacy and security implications: No issues arising from the recommendations.

Duty to collaborate: The making of a scheme of allowances is the responsibility of each individual authority defined in the Local Authorities (Members’ Allowances) (England) Regulations 2003. The methodology for doing so is prescribed exclusively by those regulations.

Health and safety implications: No issues arising from the recommendations.

Environmental implications: No issues arising from the recommendations.

Equality, diversity, and inclusion implications: The Authority’s Scheme of Members’ Allowances does not include any element for meeting costs incurred by a Member who has to arrange care in order to carry out their function as a Member of the Fire Authority.

The Local Authorities (Members’ Allowances) (England) Regulations 2003 exclude the Authority from including such a provision in its Scheme. However, with the exception of co-opted members, all Members are appointed by either Buckinghamshire Council or Milton Keynes Council and are entitled to claim “dependent carers’ allowances” from their appointing authority. There are currently no co-opted members on the Authority.

Consultation and communication: A notice that the Authority has made a Scheme of Members Allowances will be published in a local newspaper and the updated Scheme of Members’ Allowances can also be inspected at Headquarters, during standard office hours. Copies of the Scheme may be purchased at a cost of £2.50 or downloaded for free at www.bucksfire.gov.uk

Background papers: [CIRCULAR NJC/4/21 Pay Award 2021](#)

| Appendix | Title | Protective Marking |
|----------|--|--------------------|
| A | Milton Keynes Council report of the Independent Panel of Members’ Allowances November 2021 | |
| B | Buckinghamshire Council report of the Independent Panel of Members’ Allowances January 2020. | |
| C | Draft Scheme for Members’ Allowances 2022/23 including for illustrative purposes the 1.5% increase option. | |

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milton keynes council



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**The report of the Independent Remuneration Panel  
appointed to review the allowances paid to Councillors  
of Milton Keynes Council**

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November 2021

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1. INTRODUCTION AND BACKGROUND

- 1.1.1 The Local Authorities (Members' Allowances) (England) Regulations 2003 ("the 2003 Regulations"), as amended, require all local authorities to appoint an independent remuneration panel (IRP) to advise on the terms and conditions of their scheme of councillors' allowances.
- 1.1.2 Milton Keynes Council formally appointed the following persons to undertake this process and make recommendations on its future scheme.

Stewart Bailey – Local resident and Managing Director, Virtual Viewing
Ruby Parmar- Local Resident and Former PWC Director
Mark Palmer – Development Director, South East Employers (Chair)
Clive Parker- Local Resident and former Local Government Officer, provided administrative support to the Panel

- 1.1.3 Our terms of reference were in accordance with the requirements of the 2003 Regulations, together with "Guidance on Consolidated Regulations for Local Authority Allowances" issued jointly by the former Office of the Deputy Prime Minister and the Inland Revenue (July 2003). Those requirements are to make recommendations to the Council as to:

- (a) the amount of basic allowance to be payable to all councillors.
 - (b) the level of allowances and whether allowances should be payable for:
 - (i) special responsibility allowances.
 - (ii) travelling and subsistence allowance.
 - (iii) dependants' carers' allowance.
 - (iv) parental leave and.
 - (v) co-optees' allowance.
- and the amount of such allowances.
- (c) whether payment of allowances may be backdated if the scheme is amended at any time to affect an allowance payable for the year in which the amendment is made.
 - (d) whether adjustments to the level of allowances may be determined according to an index and if so which index and how long that index should apply, subject to a maximum of four years before its application is reviewed.

2. CURRENT SCHEME

- 2.1.1 The last review of councillors' allowances was undertaken by the IRP for the Council in 2017.
- 2.1.2 The Scheme currently provides that all councillors are each entitled to a total basic allowance of £10,924 per annum, with effect from April 2021. In addition, some councillors receive special responsibility allowances for undertaking additional duties.
- 2.1.3 Councillors may also claim the cost of travel and subsistence expenses and for expenditure on the care of children or dependants whilst on approved duties.

3. PRINCIPLES UNDERPINNING OUR REVIEW

3.1 The Public Service Principle

- 3.1.1 This is the principle that an important part of being a councillor is the desire to serve the public and, therefore, not all of what a councillor does should be remunerated. Part of a councillor's time should be given voluntarily. The consolidated guidance notes the importance of this principle when arriving at the recommended basic allowance.¹ Moreover, we found that a public service concept or ethos was articulated and supported by all of the councillors we interviewed and in the responses to the questionnaire completed by councillors as part of our review.
- 3.1.2 To provide transparency and increase an understanding of the Panel's work, we will recommend the application of an explicit Public Service Discount (or PSD). Such a PSD is applied to the time input necessary to fulfil the role of a councillor. Further explanation of the PSD to be applied is given below in section 4.

3.2 The Fair Remuneration Principle

- 3.2.1 Alongside the belief that the role of the elected Councillor should, in part, be viewed as unpaid voluntary service, we advocate a principle of fair remuneration. The Panel in 2021 continues to subscribe to the view promoted by the independent Councillors' Commission:

Remuneration should not be an incentive for service as a councillor. Nor should lack of remuneration be a barrier. The basic allowance should encourage people from a wide range of backgrounds and with a wide range of skills to serve as local councillors. Those who participate in and contribute to the democratic process should not suffer unreasonable financial disadvantage as a result of doing so.²

- 3.2.2 We are keen to ensure that our recommended scheme of allowances provides reasonable financial compensation for councillors. Equally, the scheme should be fair, transparent, logical, simple, and seen as such.
- 3.2.3 Hence, we continue to acknowledge that:
- (i) allowances should apply to roles within the Council, not individual councillors.
 - (ii) allowances should represent reasonable *compensation* to councillors for expenses they incur and time they commit in relation to their role, not *payment* for their work; and
 - (iii) special responsibility allowances are used to recognise the *significant* additional responsibilities which attach to some roles, not merely the extra time required.
- 3.2.4 In making our recommendations, we have therefore sought to maintain a balance between:
- (i) the voluntary quality of a councillor's role.

¹ The former Office of Deputy Prime Minister – now the Department for Communities, Housing and Local Government, and Inland Revenue, *New Council Constitutions: Guidance on Consolidated Regulations for Local Authority Allowances*, London: TSO, July 2003, paragraph 68.

² Rodney Brooke and Declan Hall, *Members' Remuneration: Models, Issues, Incentives and Barriers*. London: Communities and Local Government, 2007, p.3.

- (ii) the need for appropriate financial recognition for the expenses incurred and time spent by councillors in fulfilling their roles; and
- (iii) the overall need to ensure that the scheme of allowances is neither an incentive nor a barrier to service as a councillor.

3.2.5 The Panel also sought to ensure that the scheme of allowances is understandable in the way it is calculated. This includes ensuring the bandings and differentials of the allowances are as transparent as possible.

3.2.6 In making our recommendations, we wish to emphasise that any possible negative impact they may have is not intended and should not be interpreted as a reflection on any individual councillor’s performance in the role.

4. CONSIDERATIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

4.1 Basic Allowance

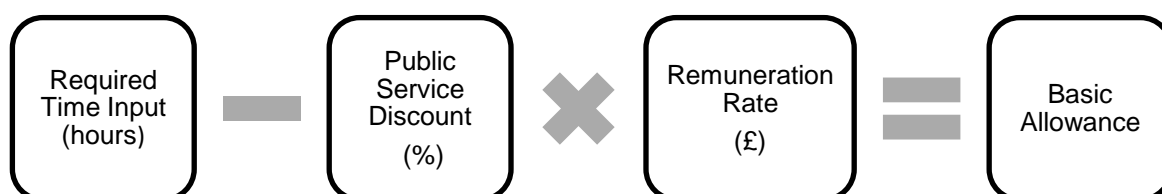
4.1.1 A Council’s scheme of allowances must include provision for a basic allowance, payable at an equal flat rate to all councillors. The guidance on arriving at the basic allowance states, “Having established what local councillors do, and the hours which are devoted to these tasks the local authorities will need to take a view on the rate at which, and the number of hours for which, councillors ought to be remunerated.”³

4.1.2 In addition to the regular cycles of Council and committee meetings, a number of working groups involving councillors may operate. Many councillors are also appointed by the Council to a number of external organisations.

4.1.3 We recognise that councillors are responsible to their electorate as:

- Representatives of a particular ward.
- Community leaders.
- Decision makers for the whole Council area.
- Policy makers for future activities of the Council.
- Scrutineers and auditors of the work of the Council; and
- Regulators of planning, licensing and other matters required by Government.

4.1.4 The guidance identifies the issues and factors an IRP should have regard to when making a scheme of allowances.⁴ For the basic allowance we considered three variables in our calculation: the time required to execute the role effectively; the public service discount; and the rate for remuneration.



4.1.5 Each of the variables is explained below.

³ The former Office of Deputy Prime Minister – now the Department for Housing, Communities and Local Government, and Inland Revenue, *New Council Constitutions: Guidance on Consolidated Regulations for Local Authority Allowances*, London: TSO, July 2003, paragraph 67.

⁴ The former Office of Deputy Prime Minister – now the Department for Communities and Local Government, and Inland Revenue, *New Council Constitutions: Guidance on Consolidated Regulations for Local Authority Allowances*, London: TSO, July 2003, paragraphs 66-81.

Required Time Input

- 4.1.6 We ascertained the average number of hours necessary per week to undertake the role of a councillor (with no special responsibilities) from questionnaires and interviews with councillors and through reference to the relevant information. In addition, we considered further information about the number, range, and frequency of committee meetings.⁵
- 4.1.7 Discounting attendance at political meetings (which we judged to be centred upon internal political management), we find that the average time commitment required to execute the role of a councillor with no special responsibilities is 21 hours per week.

Public Service Discount (PSD)

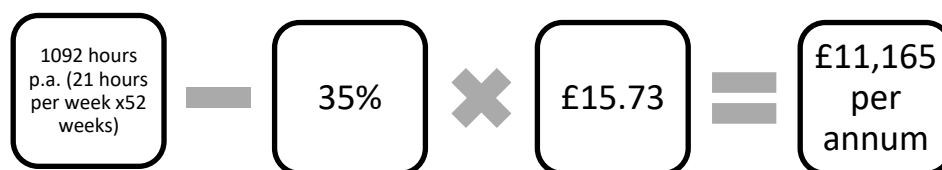
- 4.1.8 From the information analysed, we found councillors espoused a high sense of public duty. Given the weight of evidence presented to us concerning, among other factors, the levels of responsibility, the varied nature of the role, the need for learning and development, and the increasing accessibility and expectations of the public, we recommend a Public Service Discount of 35 per cent to the calculation of the basic allowance. This percentage sits within the mid-range of PSDs applied to basic allowances by councils in the region.

Remuneration Rate

- 4.1.9 After establishing the expected time input to be remunerated, we considered a remuneration rate. We came to a judgement about the rate at which the councillors ought to be remunerated for the work they do.
- 4.1.10 To help identify an hourly rate for calculating allowances, we utilised relevant statistics about the local labour market published by the Office for National Statistics. We selected the average (median), full-time gross⁶ wage per hour for the Milton Keynes Council area £15.73⁷ per hour.

Calculating the basic allowance

- 4.1.11 After determining the amount of time required each week to fulfil the role (21 hours), the level of PSD to be applied (35%) and the hourly rate to be used (£15.73), we calculated the basic allowance as follows:



- 4.1.12 The gross Basic Allowance before the PSD is applied is **£17,177.16**. Following the application of the PSD this leads to a basic allowance of **£11,165.15** per annum.
- 4.1.13 This amount is intended to recognise the overall contribution made by councillors, including their work on council bodies, and ward work and attendance on external bodies.

⁵ The summary responses to the questionnaires are available on request.

⁶ The basic allowance, special responsibility allowance, dependants' carers' allowance, and co-optees' allowance are taxable as employment income.

⁷ The Nomis official labour market statistics: Hourly Pay – Gross median (£) For full-time employee jobs by place of residence: UK December 2020.

4.1.14 We did also note the levels of basic allowance currently allocated by other unitary councils in the South East and part of the Milton Keynes family group of Councils, (see table below and Appendix 3 & 4).

| Council | Unitary Councils: Basic Allowances (£) 2021 ⁸ |
|---|--|
| Brighton and Hove City Council | 13,360 |
| Bedford Council | 10,425 |
| Bolton Council | 11,644 |
| Bracknell Forest Council | 8,697 |
| Buckinghamshire Council | 13,000 |
| Bury Council | 8,947 |
| Coventry City Council | 14,490 |
| Isle of Wight Council | 8,001 |
| Kirklees Council | 14,002 |
| Luton Council | 7,500 |
| Medway Council | 10,733 |
| Milton Keynes Council | 10,924 |
| Peterborough City Council | 10,508 |
| Portsmouth City Council | 11,483 |
| Reading Borough Council | 8,447 |
| Royal Borough of Windsor and Maidenhead | 8,306 |
| Slough Borough Council | 7,779 |
| Southampton City Council | 13,057 |
| Swindon Council | 8,797 |
| Telford Council | 9,703 |
| Thurrock Council | 9,200 |
| Trafford Council | 6,940 |
| Warrington Council | 8,321 |
| West Berkshire Council | 7,697 |
| Wokingham Borough Council | 7,784 |

4.1.15 The Panel wished to ensure the level of basic allowance does not constitute a barrier to candidates from all sections of the community standing, or re-standing, for election as councillors. The Panel was of the view that the 2017 review had begun to make recommendations to ensure that the current basic was in accordance with the principle of fair remuneration and the 2020 review has further enhanced this approach through the introduction of a transparent and clear formula for calculating the Basic Allowance. Such a formula will also assist a future Panel in recommending a Basic Allowance

WE THEREFORE RECOMMEND that the Basic Allowance payable to all members of Milton Keynes Council be £11,165 per annum

⁸ Figures drawn from the South East Employers, Members' Allowances Survey 2021 (October 2021) and the Milton Keynes Council Family Group of Councils.

4.2 Special Responsibility Allowances (SRAs)

- 4.2.1 Special Responsibility Allowances are awarded to councillors who perform significant additional responsibilities over and above the roles and expenses covered by the basic allowance. These special responsibilities must be related to the discharge of the council's functions.
- 4.2.2 The 2003 Regulations do not limit the number of SRAs which may be paid, nor do they prohibit the payment of more than one SRA to any one councillor. They do require that an SRA be paid to at least one councillor who is not a member of the controlling group of the Council. As the guidance suggests, if the majority of councillors receive an SRA, the local electorate may rightly question the justification for this.⁹
- 4.2.3 We conclude from the evidence we have considered that the following offices bear *significant* additional responsibilities:
- Leader of the Council
 - Deputy Leader of the Council
 - Cabinet Members
 - Main Opposition Group Leader
 - Smaller Opposition Group Leader
 - Chair of Scrutiny Management Committee
 - Chairs of Scrutiny Committees
 - Chairs of Task and Finish Groups
 - Chair of Development Control Committee
 - Chair of Licensing Committee
 - Chair of Audit Committee
 - Chair of Standards Committee
 - Chair of a Corporate Parenting Committee
 - Mayor
 - Deputy Mayor
 - Co-Opted Members

One SRA Only Rule

- 4.2.4 To improve the transparency of the scheme of allowances, we feel that no councillor should be entitled to receive at any time more than **one SRA**. If a councillor can receive more than one SRA, then the public are unable to ascertain the actual level of remuneration for an individual councillor from a reading of the Scheme of Allowances.
- 4.2.5 Moreover, the One SRA Only Rule avoids the possible anomaly of the Leader receiving a lower allowance than another councillor. If two or more allowances are applicable to a councillor, then the higher-valued allowance would be received. The One SRA Only Rule is common practice for many councils. Our calculations for the SRAs are based on this principle, which should be highlighted:

WE THEREFORE RECOMMEND that that no councillor shall be entitled to receive at any time more than one Special Responsibility Allowance and that this One SRA Only Rule be adopted into the Scheme of Allowances.

⁹ The former Office of Deputy Prime Minister – now the Department for Housing Communities and Local Government, and Inland Revenue, *New Council Constitutions: Guidance on Consolidated Regulations for Local Authority Allowances*, London: TSO, July 2003, paragraph 72.

The Maximum Number of SRA's Payable

4.2.6 In accordance with the 2006 Statutory Guidance (paragraph 72) the Panel is of the view that the Council should adhere to the principle that no more than 50% of Council Members (30) should receive an SRA at any one time.

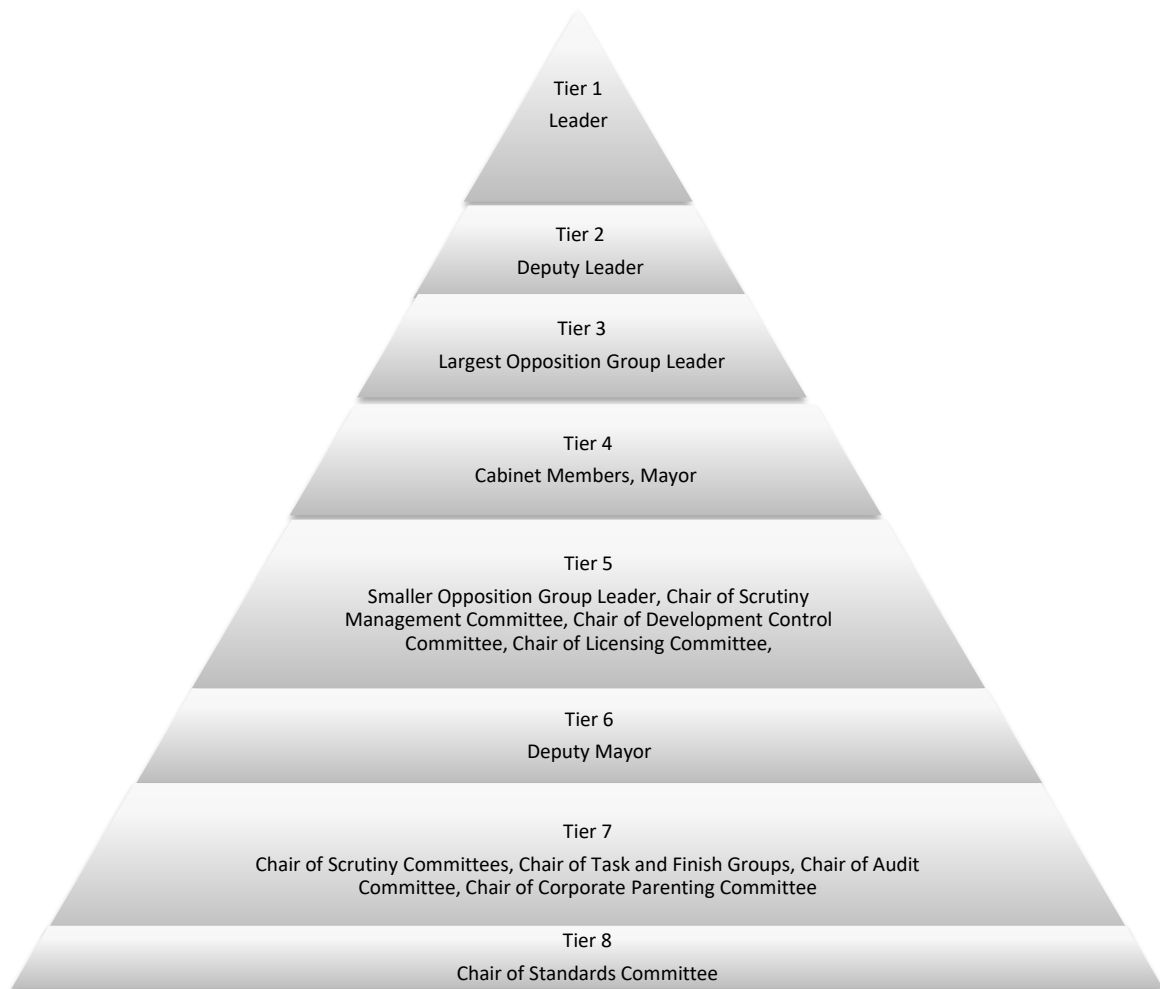
WE THEREFORE RECOMMEND that the Council should adhere to a maximum number of SRA's payable at any one time that does not exceed 50% of Council Members (28 Members).

Calculating SRAs

4.2.7 The Panel supported the criteria and formula for calculating the Leader of the Council allowance based on a multiplier of the Basic Allowance; this role carries the most significant additional responsibilities and is the most time consuming.

4.2.8 We applied a multiplier of the basic allowance to establish the Leader's SRA. Other SRAs are then valued downwards as a percentage of the Leader's allowance. This approach has the advantage that, when future adjustments to the SRAs are required, changing the Leader's SRA will have a proportionate and easily calculable effect on the other SRAs within the scheme.

We grouped together in Tiers those roles that we judged to have a similar level of responsibility. The outline result of this approach is illustrated in a pyramid of responsibility:



4.2.4 The rationale for these eight tiers of responsibility are discussed below.

Leader (Tier One)

- 4.2.9 The Council elects for a four-year term of office a Leader who is ultimately responsible for the discharge of all executive functions of the Council. The Leader is the principal policy maker and has personal authority to determine delegated powers to the rest of the Cabinet. The Leader is also responsible for the appointment (and dismissal) of members of the Cabinet and their respective areas of responsibility.
- 4.2.10 The multiplier we applied to calculate the Leader's SRA is 300% (3 x times) the basic allowance. If the recommended option of a basic allowance with a PSD of 35% is adopted, this results in a Leader's Allowance of £33,495.

WE RECOMMEND that the Leader of the Council should receive a Special Responsibility Allowance of 300% of the basic allowance, £33,495.

Deputy Leader (Tier Two)

- 4.2.11 The Deputy Leader usually acts on the Leader's behalf in their absence. From the information we gathered, we continue to consider this additional responsibility should be reflected in the level of allowance. Therefore, we recommend the Deputy Leader's SRA be set at 50% of the Leader's SRA. If our recommendations concerning the basic allowance and the Leader's SRA are adopted, this results in an allowance of £16,748.

WE RECOMMEND that the Deputy Leader receive a Special Responsibility Allowance of 50% of the Leader's Allowance, £16,748.

Main Opposition Group Leader (Tier Three)

- 4.2.12 From the evidence gathered, including questionnaire responses, face to face interviews and the Council's Role Profiles, we consider the Main Opposition Group Leader to be a significant role and the 2003 Regulations require that the Main Opposition Group Leader receive a Special Responsibility Allowance. The Leader of the Main Opposition Group has to both ensure democratic accountability and the holding to account of the administration but also manage and develop a Group of significant size.
- 4.2.13 Currently the Main Opposition Group Leader receives a Special Responsibility Allowance based on a per Group Member basis, currently £658 per Member. The Panel was of the view that the SRA for the Main Opposition Group Leader should be calculated on the same basis as the other SRA's, a percentage of the Leader's Allowance. Based on the size and complexity of the role the Panel is of the view that the Main Opposition Group Leader should receive an allowance of 45% of the Leader's Allowance, £15,073.

WE RECOMMEND that the Main Opposition Group Leader receive a Special Responsibility Allowance of 45% of the Leader, £15,073.

Cabinet Members and Mayor (Tier Four)

- 4.2.14 Cabinet Members appointed by the Leader of the Council have significant delegated decision-making responsibilities and currently the Cabinet Member Special Responsibility Allowances are based on a pool that is currently capped at a total of £68,666 for Cabinet Members excluding the Leader and Deputy Leader. The 'Pool' cap based on a current six Cabinet Members leads to an allowance of £9,809 per Cabinet Member. However, if the Leader was minded to introduce further Cabinet roles (Maximum of eight Cabinet Members) to respond to new and growing Local Government responsibilities then the 'Pool' cap will lead to the current Cabinet Members allowances been reduced.

4.2.15 The panel was of the view that the current 'Pool' approach to calculating the SRA's for Cabinet Members should be replaced with the same criteria as used for calculating the other SRA's namely a percentage of the Leader's Allowance. The Panel was of the view that this will provide the Leader with greater flexibility to appoint a Cabinet that is best able to respond to the current and future challenges. The panel is therefore of the view that the Special Responsibility Allowance for a Cabinet Member should be 35% of the Leader's Allowance, £11,723.

WE RECOMMEND that a Cabinet Member should receive an allowance of 35% of the Leaders Allowance, £11,723.

4.2.16 The role of Mayor is highly visible across the Council area and undertakes a high number of civic engagements that raise the profile of the Council. The current Mayoral Allowance is in line with that paid to Cabinet Members. The Panel was of the view that the Mayoral Allowance should continue to be at the same rate as a Cabinet Member. We therefore recommend that the role of Mayor continue to be recognised at Tier Four and receive an allowance of £11,723, 35% of the Leader's Allowance.

4.2.16 The Panel was also of the view that in line with all the other Special Responsibility Allowances the Allowance for both the Mayor and Deputy Mayor should be paid on a monthly basis rather than in two equal instalments in June and November.

WE RECOMMEND that the Mayor should continue to receive an allowance in line with the recommendation for a Cabinet Member, 35% of the Leader's allowance, £11,723. WE ALSO RECOMMEND that the allowance for the Mayor and Deputy Mayor should be paid on a monthly basis in line with all the other Special Responsibility Allowances rather than in two equal instalments.

Smaller Opposition Group Leader, Chair of Scrutiny Management Committee, Chair of Development Control Committee and Chair of Licensing Committee (Tier Five)

4.2.17 The Leaders of Smaller Opposition Groups continue to be a role of significant importance and the Panel was therefore of the view that the Leader of the Smaller Opposition Group should receive a Tier Five allowance, 25% of the Leader's Allowance, £8,374. In line with the recommendation made for the SRA for the Main Opposition Group Leader the Panel recommend that the allowance should now be expressed as a percentage of the Leader's Allowance rather than the current position of being based on the number of Members in each group (£658 per Group Member). However, the Panel were also of the view that in order to qualify for a Smaller Opposition Group Leader SRA, the Group size should comprise a minimum of 15% of the Council membership, which is currently 9 Councillors.

4.2.18 The Panel was of the view that Overview and Scrutiny continues to be a pivotal part of the Council's governance arrangements in ensuring internal and external accountability and holding the Cabinet to account. Statutory Guidance published by the then Department for Housing Communities and Local Government further strengthened the role and profile of overview and scrutiny, and this will be reflected in Milton Keynes Council. The Panel therefore recommends that the Chair of the Overview and Scrutiny Management Committee should receive a Tier Five allowance, 25% of the Leader's Allowance, £8,374.

4.2.19 The Development Control Committee continues to have a high impact across the Council area and has a high workload that includes regular site visits and a high number of meetings. The Panel therefore recommends that the Chair of the Development Control Committee should receive a Tier Five allowance, 25% of the Leader's Allowance, £8,374.

4.2.20 The Panel was made aware that the number and frequency of meetings of the Licensing and Regulatory Committee have reduced over the last year's. However, Special Responsibility Allowances are not based only on the frequency of meetings but also, on the complexity of the role. The Panel therefore recommends that the Special Responsibility Allowance for the Chair of the Licensing and Regulatory Committee should also be a Tier Five allowance, 25% of the Leader's Allowance, £8,374.

WE RECOMMEND that the Smaller Opposition Group Leader (subject to the size of the Group comprising 15% of the Council membership), the Chair of the Overview and Scrutiny Management Committee, Chair of the Development Control Committee and Chair of the Licensing Committee should all receive a Tier Five Allowance, 25% of the Leader's Allowance, £8,374.

Deputy Mayor (Tier Six)

4.2.21 The role of Deputy Mayor like that of the Mayor continues to be a high-profile role that has a significant impact across the Council area and a high workload based on the number and frequency of civic engagements. The Panel is of the view that the role of Deputy Mayor should continue to receive an allowance based on 50% of the Mayoral Allowance, £5,862.

WE RECOMMEND that the Deputy Mayor continues to receive a Tier Six Allowance, 50% of the recommended Mayoral Allowance, £5,862.

Chair of Scrutiny Committees, Chair of Task and Finish Groups, Chair of Audit Committee and Chair of a Corporate Parenting Committee (Tier Seven).

4.2.22 Like the Overview and Scrutiny Management Committee the Panel was of the view that the Scrutiny Committees had a highly important role in ensuring accountability, reviewing and developing policy; and this importance should be reflected in the allowance for the Chair of the Scrutiny Committees. The Panel was therefore of the view that the Chair of the Scrutiny Committees should receive a Tier Seven allowance, 15% of the Leader's Allowance, £5,024.

4.2.23 The Panel also recognised the importance of the Task and Finish Groups in undertaking in-depth reviews and investigations in respect of issues deemed of high importance by both councillors, partners and the public. The Panel is therefore of the view that the Chairs of the Task and Finish Groups should receive a pro rata (depending on the length of time the Group is in place) Tier Seven allowance, 15% of the Leader's Allowance, £5,024.

4.2.24 The Audit Committee was recognised as a high-profile committee that had a key role in terms of financial management and effective governance. The Panel was of the view that the Chair should continue to receive a Special Responsibility Allowance but that this allowance should be in line with roles such as Chair of a Scrutiny Committee. The Panel therefore recommends that the Chair of Audit Committee should receive a Tier Seven allowance, 15% of the Leader's Allowance, £5,024.

4.2.25 The Chair of the Corporate Parenting Panel does not currently receive a Special Responsibility Allowance despite the high workload and external impact of the role. The role of corporate parent is a key but often not well recognised role and currently the Panel is not recognised as a formal committee within the governance structure of the Council. During the interviews and within the responses to the questionnaire the important role of the Chair of the Corporate Parenting Panel was highlighted. Only few comparative Councils e.g., Peterborough City Council recognise the role of the Chair of a Corporate Panel/Committee through an allowance. However, the Panel was of the view that the role of Chair of the Corporate Parenting Panel should receive a Tier Seven Special Responsibility Allowance, 15% of the Leader's Allowance, £5,024.

WE RECOMMEND that the Chair of the Scrutiny Committees, Chair of the Task and Finish Groups, Chair of the Audit Committee and Chair of the Corporate Parenting Panel should receive a Tier Seven allowance, 15% of the Leader's Allowance, £5,024. In respect of the allowance for the Chair of the Task and Finish Groups the allowance will be on a pro-rata basis, depending on the length of time the Group is in place.

Chair of Standards Committee (Tier Eight)

- 4.2.26 The Panel recommends that the Chair of the Standards Committee receive a Tier Eight allowance, 10% of the Leader's Allowance, £3,340.

WE RECOMMEND that the Chair of the Standards Committee receive a Tier Eight allowance, 10% of the Leader's Allowance, £3,340.

4.3 Co-optees'/ Independent Persons Allowance

- 4.3.1 An IRP may recommend the payment and level of an allowance for those who serve on the committees or sub-committees of a Council but are not members of the Council. We recognise that in so doing, an element of the contribution made by the co-optees/Independent Persons should be voluntary. We therefore continue to recommend that co-optees of the Council are entitled to an allowance plus travel, subsistence and other expenses in accordance with the scheme applicable to councillors.

WE RECOMMEND that the Co-optees should continue to receive an allowance of £640 per annum. The role will also receive travel, subsistence and other expenses in accordance with the scheme applicable to councillors.

4.4 Travelling and Subsistence Allowance

- 4.4.1 A scheme of allowances may provide for any councillor to be paid for travelling and subsistence undertaken in connection with any of the duties specified in Regulation 8 of the 2003 Regulations (see paragraph 5.10). Similarly, such an allowance may also be paid to co-opted/Independent Persons of a committee or sub-committee of the Council in connection with any of those duties, provided that their expenses are not also being met by a third party.

WE RECOMMEND that travelling and subsistence allowance should be payable to councillors and co-optees in connection with any approved duties. The amount of travel and subsistence payable shall continue to be at the maximum levels payable to council staff in line with HM Revenue and Customs' rates. We propose no changes to the current travel and subsistence allowances.

WE FURTHER RECOMMEND that a travel allowance for electric vehicles should be introduced based on the HM Revenue and Customs' rate of 45p per mile. Finally, a bicycle allowance should also be approved, and both these new rates should be promoted to Councillors.

4.5 Child and Dependant Carers' Allowance

- 4.5.1 The child and dependant carers' allowance should ensure that potential candidates are not deterred from standing for election and should enable current councillors to continue despite any change in their personal circumstances. The current scheme awards reimbursement for Child Care at the rate of the National Living Wage and more specialist care is a rate of £10 per hour, the cost of a Milton Keynes Council Home Help Carer. The current scheme also limits any claim up to a maximum of five hours when undertaking Approved Councillor duties.

- 4.5.2 The Panel is of the view that the Child and Dependant Carers' Allowance should continue to be reimbursed at two rates for basic Childcare and more specialist care. With regards to childcare the Panel recommends that this should be linked to the Real Living Wage as recommended by the Living Wage Foundation, currently £9.50 per hour. This is a single rate that replaces the age-related criteria in the current scheme. With regard to more specialist care the Panel is of the view that this should be reimbursed at the actual cost incurred by the councillor upon production of receipts. In respect of specialist care provision medical evidence that this type of care provision is required should also be provided and approved by an appropriate officer of the Council. The panel further recommends that the five-hour maximum claim in any twenty-four-hour period is removed.

WE THEREFORE RECOMMEND that the Child and Dependant Carers' Allowance should be based on two rates childcare and specialist care. The childcare rate should be linked to the Real Living Wage as recommended by the Living Wage Foundation, currently £9.50 per hour (reviewed on an annual basis). Specialist care should and be based at cost upon production of receipts and in the case of specialist care a requirement of medical evidence that this type of care be required, the allowance should have no daily or monthly maximum claim when undertaking Approved Councillor Duties.

WE ALSO RECOMMEND that the Council should actively promote the allowance to prospective and new councillors both before and following an election. This may assist in supporting greater diversity of councillor representation.

4.6 Parental Leave

- 4.6.1 There is no uniform national policy to support councillors who require parental leave for maternity, paternity, or adoption leave. According to the Fawcett Society (Does Local Government Work for Women, 2018) a *'lack of maternity, paternity provision or support'* is a real barrier for women aged 18-44 to fulfil their role as a councillor.
- 4.6.2 We are of the view that support should be provided for parental leave although we do not wish to stipulate an exact policy/procedure. The Panel is aware that the Local Government Association (Labour Group) has developed a model policy that has been adopted by a growing number of councils across the southeast region.
- 4.6.3 There is no legal right to parental leave of any kind for people in elected public office. However, as a way of improving the diversity of Councillors, the Panel would recommend that the Members' Allowance Scheme should be amended to include provisions that clarify that:
- All Councillors shall continue to receive their Basic Allowance in full for a period up to six months in the case of absence from their Councillor duties due to leave relate to maternity, paternity, adoption shared parental leave or sickness absence
 - Councillors entitled to a Special Responsibility Allowance shall continue to receive their allowance in full for a period of six months, in the case of absence from their Councillor duties due to leave related to maternity, paternity, adoption, shared parental leave or sickness absence
 - Where for reasons connected with sickness, maternity leave, adoption leave, paternity leave or shared parental leave a Councillor is unable to attend a meeting of the Council for a period of six months, a dispensation by Council can be sought in accordance with Section 85 of the Local Government Act 1972

- If a replacement to cover the period of absence under these provisions is appointed by Council or the Leader (or in the case of a party group position the party group) the replacement shall be entitled to claim a Special Responsibility Allowance pro rata for the period over which the cover is provided.
 - If a Councillor stands down, or an election is held during the period when a Councillor is absent due to any of the above and the Councillor is not re-elected or decides not to stand down for re-election, their Basic Allowance any Special Responsibility Allowance will cease from the date they leave office.
- 4.6.4 The Panel is conscious that these provisions do not replicate the LGA policy, but that policy introduces elements that are more akin to employees which in terms of employment legislation does not include Councillors. We feel that our recommendations more simply and adequately reflect the situation relating to Councillors and clarify for them what they can expect. Councillors however may wish to further develop the above recommendations so that they reflect the LGA (Labour Group) policy.
- 4.6.5 The Panel was aware that in July 2019 a decision was taken on Parental Leave Policies for Councillors and that it was recommended that a cross party working group be established to create and agree a parental leave policy and the Panel supports this approach.
- 4.6.6 The Panel would also like to thank the representation undertaken by members of the Fawcett Society and the information and documents provided that assisted the Panel In its recommendations.

WE RECOMMEND that the approach outlined is adopted as a basis of a policy to support parental leave for councillors. Should a policy on Parental Leave for Councillors be approved it should be actively promoted to prospective and current Councillors alongside the Dependants' Carers Allowance. This should form part of a wider 'Be A Councillor' (LGA led initiative) programme led by the Council and supported by political groups; to enhance and further increase the diversity of councillor representation.

4.7 Indexing of Allowances

- 4.7.1 A scheme of allowances may make provision for an annual adjustment of allowances in line with a specified index. The present scheme makes provision for the basic allowance, the special responsibility allowances and Co-optees allowance to be adjusted annually at a rate of 2%. Increasingly, Councils are taking the approach that the increase should be in line with staff salaries. However, the negotiations relating to staff pay increases, often take well into the financial year in question.

WE RECOMMEND that the basic allowance, each of the SRAs and the Co-optees' Allowance be increased annually from April 2023 for a period of up to three years, in line with the percentage increase in staff salaries, from the previous financial year. After this period, the Scheme shall be reviewed again by an independent remuneration panel.

4.8 Revocation of current Scheme of Allowances / Implementation of new Scheme

- 4.8.1 The 2003 Regulations provide that a scheme of allowances may only be revoked with effect from the beginning of a financial year, and that this may only take effect on the basis that the authority makes a further scheme of allowances for the period beginning with the date of revocation.

WE THEREFORE RECOMMEND that the new scheme of allowances to be agreed by the Council be implemented with effect from the beginning of the 2022/23 municipal year, at which time the current scheme of allowances will be revoked.

5. OUR INVESTIGATION

5.1 Background

- 5.1.1 As part of this review, a questionnaire was issued to all councillors to support and inform the review. Responses were received from 14 of the 57 current councillors (25% response). The information obtained was helpful in informing our deliberations.
- 5.1.2 We interviewed ten current councillors using a structured questioning process. We also interviewed two members of the Fawcett Society. We are grateful to all our interviewees for their assistance.

5.2 Councillors' views on the level of allowances

- 5.2.1 A summary of the councillors' responses to the questionnaire are attached as Appendix 2.

6. APPROVED COUNCILLOR DUTIES

- 6.1.1 The Panel reviewed the recommended duties for which allowances should be payable and recommend that no changes be made.

WE THEREFORE RECOMMEND: That no changes are made to the Approved Duties as outlined in the Members' Allowance Scheme.

Mark Palmer (Chair of the Independent Remuneration Panel)
Development Director, South East Employers
November 2021

Appendix 1: Summary of Panel's Recommendations

| Allowance | Current Amount for 2020-21 | Number | Recommended Allowance (35% PSD) | Recommended Allowance Calculation |
|---------------------|----------------------------|-----------|---------------------------------|-----------------------------------|
| Basic (BA) | | | | |
| Total Basic: | £10,924 | 57 | £11,165 | |

| Special Responsibility: | | | | |
|---|-----------------------|---|---------------------|---------------------------|
| Leader of the Council | £31,836 | 1 | £33,495 | 300% of BA |
| Deputy Leader | £15,918 | 1 | £16,748 | 50% of Leader's Allowance |
| Largest Opposition Group Leader | £658 per Group member | 1 | £15,073 | 45% of Leader's Allowance |
| Cabinet Members | £9,809 | 6 | £11,723 | 35% of Leader's Allowance |
| Mayor | £11,672 | 1 | £11,723 | 35% of Leader's Allowance |
| Chair of Licensing & Regulatory Committee | £8,489 | 1 | £8,374 | 25% of Leader's Allowance |
| Chair of Development Control Committee | £8,489 | 1 | £8,374 | 25% of Leader's Allowance |
| Chair of Scrutiny Management Committee | £7,959 | 1 | £8,374 | 25% of Leader's Allowance |
| Smaller Opposition Group Leader | £658 per Group Member | 1 | £8,374 | 25% of Leader's Allowance |
| Chair of Scrutiny Committees | £4,776 | 6 | £5,024 | 15% of Leader's Allowance |
| Chair of Task and Finish Groups | £4,776 | | £5,024 ¹ | 15% of Leader's Allowance |
| Chair of Audit Committee | £5,836 | 1 | £5,024 | 15% of Leader's Allowance |
| Chair of Corporate Parenting Panel | No SRA | 1 | £5,024 | 15% of Leader's Allowance |
| Chair of Standards Committee | £3,183 | 1 | £3,340 | 10% of Leader's Allowance |
| Deputy Mayor | £5,836 | 1 | £5,862 | 50% of Mayor's Allowance |
| Co-opted Members | £640 | | £640 | |

1. Chair of Task and Finish Groups Special Responsibility Allowance to be paid on a pro-rata basis dependent on the length of time the Group is in place.

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Buckinghamshire Council
Report of the Independent Remuneration Panel
9 January 2020

1. Background

- 1.1 Buckinghamshire Council established an Independent Remuneration Panel (the Panel), in order to advise the Council on a scheme of allowances for councillors reflecting the governance arrangements and responsibilities introduced by the Local Government Act 2000.
- 1.2 This report has been prepared by the Panel for Buckinghamshire Council comprising of:
- Hazel Bentall
Nigel Palmer
Dr Bill Reid
Mark Tosh
- 1.3 The Local Authorities (Members' Allowances) (England) Regulations 2003 (the Regulations) apply to local authorities including unitary, district and county councils.
- 1.4 The Regulations require a relevant authority to make a scheme providing for the payment of a basic allowance (BA) to each member of that authority. The BA must be the same for each member of the authority.
- 1.5 A relevant authority's scheme of allowances may also provide for the payment of special responsibility allowances (SRAs) to such members of the authority as have special or additional responsibilities. The specified categories of special or additional responsibilities which may be included in a scheme of allowances include:
- i) Acting as leader or deputy leader of a political group within the authority;
 - ii) Acting as a member of an executive where the authority is operating executive arrangements within the meaning of part 2 of the Local Government Act 2000;
 - iii) Presiding at meetings of a committee or sub-committee of the authority;
 - iv) Representing the authority at meetings of or arranged by any other body;
 - v) Acting as a member of a committee or sub-committee of the authority which meets with exceptional frequency or for exceptionally long periods;
 - vi) Acting as the spokesman of a political group on a committee or sub-committee of the authority; and

- vii) Carrying out such other activities in relation to the discharge of the authority's functions as require of the member an amount of time and effort equal to or greater than would be required of him or her by any of the above mentioned activities.

1.6 SRAs need not be the same and may reflect the different expectations, time and effort involved in particular roles.

1.7 Member allowance schemes may also provide for the payment of a dependent carers' allowance and also for members' travelling and subsistence whilst acting in connection with their duties as a member of the authority.

1.8 Before a relevant authority may make or amend a scheme of allowances it must have regard to recommendations made in relation to the scheme by an independent remuneration panel.

2. Buckinghamshire Council

2.1 Following the parliamentary approval of the Buckinghamshire (Structural Changes) Order 2019, Buckinghamshire Council will come into effect on 1 April 2020 and the current district councils of Aylesbury Vale, Chiltern, South Bucks and Wycombe and Buckinghamshire County Council will cease to exist.

2.2 Elections for the 147 seats on Buckinghamshire Council will be held on 7 May 2020.

2.3 For the period 1 April to 11 May 2020 (11 May 2020 being the date on which the 147 newly elected councillors take office) "the Interim Period", the 202 current members of the five sovereign councils mentioned above will continue as members of Buckinghamshire Council. As the current councils will no longer exist, their respective schemes of members' allowances will cease and allowances will no longer be payable, pursuant to the Regulations.

2.4 Therefore, in addition to making recommendations on a scheme of allowances for the new cohort of councillors to be elected in May, the Panel has also been asked to consider what approach should be taken to the provision of allowances during the Interim Period.

2.5 A scheme for the payment of a BA must be adopted by the Shadow Council for Buckinghamshire Council. It may also adopt a scheme for the payment of SRAs and other allowances. Members must have regard to the recommendations of the Panel in relation to a scheme of allowances before adopting any scheme. Therefore, councillors themselves acting as a relevant authority make the final decision about what allowances are to be available.

2.6 Regulation 20 (2) requires that an independent remuneration panel shall consist of at least three members none of whom:

- (a) Is also a member of an authority in respect of which it makes recommendations or is a member of a committee or sub-committee of such an authority; or
- (b) Is disqualified from being or becoming a member of an authority.

2.7 The four members of the Panel are individuals, none of whom are disqualified from being or becoming a member of a relevant authority.

2.8 The Panel has been asked to formulate recommendations for a scheme of members' allowances for Buckinghamshire Council for the Interim Period.

2.9 The Panel met on 12 November 2019 and 9 January 2020, and corresponded regularly throughout the process through electronic methods.

2.10 The Panel was provided with the following evidence:

- (i) relevant guidance and legislation (Allowances Regulations);
- (ii) benchmarking data of similar sized unitary authorities and current Buckinghamshire Councils' current allowances;
- (iii) information relating to the composition of Buckinghamshire Council;
- (iv) emerging governance structure for Buckinghamshire Council and anticipated roles of members, including the proposed structure and role of scrutiny within the new Council; and
- (v) a summary of the proposed committees included within the governance structure.

2.11 A questionnaire was sent to all of the Shadow Buckinghamshire Councillors seeking views on the average amount of time spent on council business, what level of BA may be appropriate for members of Buckinghamshire Council and other aspects relating to members' allowances. 46 responses were received, although not all respondents provided a response to all of the questions.

2.12 Members of the Shadow Executive provided a proposed scheme for the Panel to consider.

2.13 The Panel was supported by:

Sarah Ashmead, Deputy Chief Executive of Buckinghamshire Council
Cath Whitehead, Head of Legal at Wycombe District Council and Deputy Monitoring Officer for the Shadow Buckinghamshire Council
Mathew Bloxham, Democratic and Electoral Services Manager for Chiltern and South Bucks District Councils (C&SB)
Leslie Ashton, Senior Democratic and Electoral Services Officer for C&SB
Jack Pearce, Democratic and Electoral Services Officer for C&SB

2.14 The Panel recognises and acknowledges that the evidence provided is based upon emerging work in relation to the development of the Constitution and governance structure for Buckinghamshire Council and the best predictions of workloads and roles.

2.15 The Panel had regard to the extent to which the initial 202 members of Buckinghamshire Council may be engaged in the normal business of a relevant authority in the Interim Period and whether proposals for the scheme of allowances should differ in the Interim Period.

2.16 The Panel notes that the reorganisation of the five councils provides a unique opportunity to update the allowances.

3. Recommendations for Interim Period – 1 April to 11 May 2020

3.1 The Panel was advised that there were not any full council meetings scheduled to take place during the interim period. A small number of committees may meet during the interim period in order to deal with any urgent matters, and the Shadow Executive Committee will continue to meet informally and make urgent decisions where required. It is also noted that the pre-election period will have begun prior to 1 April, which may also have an impact upon and limit decision-making activity of the new authority during the Interim Period.

3.2 The Panel noted that there will be an ongoing community representation role for all councillors during the Interim Period. It is further noted that councillors seeking election to the new council will likely be involved in election campaign activities during this period.

3.3 The Panel considers that continuing the payment of a BA in the Interim Period would be in recognition that all councillors will continue to perform their community representation role, whether or not they seek election to the new council.

3.4 The Panel noted that the Shadow Executive would continue to meet informally during the interim period and would very much still be playing a key role in the operation of the new Council, with Shadow Executive Members being responsible for their own specific portfolios.

3.5 Taking account of the anticipated responsibility of the Shadow Executive Committee during this interim period, the Panel considered an SRA should be payable to each member of the Executive, although agreed that the SRA should take into account that key decisions required by the Executive during this period should be minimal.

3.6 The Panel received representations from Members that substitute members of the Shadow Executive would also have a role in deputising and being involved in the transition activities being undertaken by the Shadow Executive. However, on the understanding that there will not be a significant number of meetings and members of the Executive would usually attend all meetings, it is felt that a separate SRA is not warranted.

3.7 The Panel noted that it would not be lawful to continue the existing Councils' allowances schemes as this would lead to different levels of BA being payable which was not permitted in the regulations.

3.8 The Panel recommends to pay a BA to all members of the Shadow Council for the Interim Period based on the representational role only and reflects that all 202 councillors would continue to serve residents taking into account the pre-election period regardless of whether councillors were seeking re-election.

3.9 The Panel would further recommend that in the event of meetings being called in the Interim Period, then councillors should be reimbursed for their travelling expenses and a carer's allowance, if required, which should be payable based on its recommendations for the post-Interim Period at paragraphs 6.4 and 8.3.

3.10 The Panel recommends that during the Interim Period:

(a) The rate of the basic allowance to be paid to members of Buckinghamshire Council shall be set at £360;

(b) An SRA of £600 be paid to Shadow Executive Members;

(c) Travel subsistence to be paid to members in line with the HMRC Mileage Allowance Payments for undertaking official business during the Interim Period;

(d) A dependant carers' allowance be paid to members as set out in paragraph 8.3

4. Recommendations for Buckinghamshire Council BA to come into effect on 11 May 2020

4.1 The Panel carefully considered the benchmarking data provided, the representations put forward by members of the Shadow Executive and responses to the all member questionnaire.

4.2 Views of respondents to the questionnaire suggested a varied level of BA, ranging from remaining at the existing County Council rate to being brought in line with other unitary authorities. Many respondents felt that the BA should be performance based, something the Panel agrees with, however legislation

dictates that the BA must be the same for each such member of an authority and as such we are bound to recommending one BA. Respondents reported a wide ranging number of average hours spent per week on Council business. The working hours ranged from 6 to over 26 hours per week, with the majority reporting spending 16 to 20 hours per week on Council business, this could be explained in part by the wide range of roles performed by those councillors who returned the questionnaire. The majority expected that there would be an increase in the number of hours spent on council business in the new council. The reasons cited included that there would be an increased number of services which the new Council would provide. Other reasons cited included more time spent travelling, and fewer members. Several respondents commented that the expected time and workload would very much depend on the number of committees a Councillor was appointed to, and whether they held any positions with additional responsibility.

- 4.3 The Panel accepted that unitary council services would add significantly to councillors' workload. For example, District Councillors would not be experienced with complex services such as Adult and Children's services, whilst County Councillors may not be experienced with Local Planning and Licensing matters. The complexity of these services will add significantly to the workload of those councillors not used to dealing with strategic cross district services.
- 4.4 It was acknowledged that the BA should be set at a level that would attract people from a broad demographic to stand for election and make the role itself more attractive. This will be of further importance if the Council elects to hold meetings during daytime hours as candidates will want to know that they will be appropriately compensated for their loss of paid working time.
- 4.5 The Panel is aware that the BA is an allowance and not a salary and is offered in recognition of members' time and certain expenses incurred on Council business.
- 4.6 Within the sample of similar sized unitary authorities in the benchmarking data, the BA ranges from £10,500 to £14,472.
- 4.7 The Panel was advised that the electoral ratio figures for the new council state that the average electorate per councillor will be 1:3637 whereas currently it is 1:3102, 1:2302, 1:2402, 1:2958 and 1:10913 for Aylesbury Vale, Chiltern, South Bucks, Wycombe and Buckinghamshire County Council respectively. With the significant changes it would now seem that their existing allowances were not in keeping with unitary authorities.
- 4.8 The Panel is aware that the scheme can be set for a maximum period of four years and that the scheme may be linked to an index. The creation of the new Council makes the task of setting allowances a complex one. The Panel recognised that the Council was about to go through a period of significant change and therefore suggested that allowances be reviewed earlier than four

years. It was suggested that Councillors determine when the early review of allowances takes place, but this was likely to be around one to two years' time. After which a review of allowances could then be undertaken every four years to coincide with the election of new members. The Panel is aware that any proposed changes to an agreed scheme of allowances would be subject to the Council having regard to the recommendations of the Panel. If a review of allowances was not carried out after one year the Panel, having considered representations and data comparisons, recommended the annual indexation of allowances to the Consumer Price Index (CPI) or the locally agreed officers' pay award, whichever is lower.

4.9 The Panel recommends that the rate of the basic allowance paid to members:

(a) Be set at £13,000 per annum

(b) That a review of allowances be undertaken by the Panel at a suitable time determined by councillors to check that the scheme continues to be suitable following a period of significant change for the Council. If a review is not undertaken within one year then the basic allowance is to be adjusted by an amount equivalent to the increase in the officers' annual pay award or by CPI, whichever is lower. As the maximum period a scheme may be linked to an index is four years the Panel must meet to review allowances no later than 2024.

5. Special Responsibility Allowances (SRAs)

5.1 The Panel agreed that in principle a clear justified methodology for calculating SRAs was required. It was recommended that SRAs be based on a proportion of the BA. For example, a multiplier of the BA could be used according to the duties and responsibilities associated with each role. The multipliers for each SRA are shown in paragraph 5.16.

5.2 From the questionnaire responses and Shadow Executive representations, the Leader of the new Council would be expected to establish the priorities, behaviours and values for the Buckinghamshire Council for the forthcoming five years. There are currently five sovereign councils with different cultures and bringing them together into a new organisation will be a significant task. There is a significant responsibility to start the Council in the most positive way. Cabinet Members would need to share significant workloads in order to achieve the objectives of the new council. The Cabinet Members would be responsible for individual decision making within their portfolio. The roles of the Leader and Cabinet Member would likely increase in the foreseeable period, particularly in relation to those equivalent roles in the existing sovereign councils. It was noted that the SRA for the Leader proposed by the Shadow Executive had been based on the complexity of the role and took into account the methodology used by the County Council and Wycombe District Council's which was 3.5 x basic

allowance. An SRA for the Leader is therefore recommended at the level shown in paragraph 5.16.

5.3 The Panel acknowledges that the role of the Cabinet Member was significantly more than committee chairman and the emerging governance structure indicates that they would be making individual key decisions. An SRA for Cabinet Members is therefore recommended at the level shown in paragraph 5.16.

5.4 The Panel understands that the Deputy Leader's workload would be different to that of a Cabinet Member since they would be required to deputise for the Leader. A Deputy Leader may also have responsibility for their own portfolio and individual decision making as well as also deputising for the Leader. Up to two Deputy Leaders may be appointed. The Leader would determine how cabinet roles would be allocated. The Panel therefore agreed to recommend that the SRA for Deputy Leader would depend according to the number of Deputy Leaders appointed and whether or not they had a portfolio. An SRA for Deputy Leader is therefore recommended at the level shown in paragraph 5.16.

5.5 The Panel noted that there could be up to 9 Deputy Cabinet Members and they had specific responsibilities set out in the draft Constitution. This included supporting and assisting Cabinet Members for example by deputising for Cabinet Members. This would involve frequently being in the office, attending meetings and briefings. They may for example be required to attend scrutiny committees to answer questions on policy and decisions made. In practice they would also likely take on a proportion of a Cabinet member's workload and would be involved in stakeholder engagement. Decisions delegated to a Corporate Director would also be made in consultation with a Deputy Cabinet Member, in the absence of a Cabinet Member. The Panel agreed that an SRA for Deputy Cabinet Members was appropriate to reflect the associated duties and responsibility. The Panel recommended the SRA as shown in paragraph 5.16.

5.6 The Panel understands that the civic role of Chairman of the Buckinghamshire Council would be significant and will have important links to other partner organisations. The Chairman will have an important role in managing and presiding over regular Council meetings to ensure that Councillors who are not Cabinet Members or Committee Chairman are able to hold office holders to account. Whilst the Panel are not in favour of paying SRAs to vice chairmen in general, the Vice-Chairman of Council is an exception, as, in addition to deputising for the Chairman at meetings of the Council, they will also fulfil a civic role. It is further recognised that each sovereign Council's Chairmen currently attend a large number of events and the amalgamation of all 5 councils would likely lead to a significantly increased workload. The SRAs recommended for the Council Chairman and Council Vice-Chairman is therefore recommended at the level shown in paragraph 5.16.

5.7 The Panel used the emerging governance structure and Constitution to inform its considerations of other SRAs and understands that the roles would evolve.

The Panel understands that scrutiny is a valuable resource which requires investment and is vital in holding the executive to account. There would be six scrutiny committees each with their own range of service areas. Each one would have similar workloads and responsibilities. It was felt that the workload and responsibility of Scrutiny Committee Chairman would be similar to other Committee Chairman and therefore the respective SRAs should be similar as shown in paragraph 5.16.

5.8 The Panel felt that the Chairman of the Strategic Planning Committee and the five Area Planning Committee Chairmen would have particular responsibilities, require additional time commitment and were publicly high profile Committees. For example, Committee decisions could be significant, high profile, publicly sensitive and often contentious. The SRA recommended is shown in paragraph 5.16.

5.9 The Panel noted that there would be one Licensing Committee with two standing sub committees and in noting the roles and responsibilities therefore agreed to recommended an SRA as shown in paragraph 5.16

5.10 It was noted that although the Chairman of the Pension Fund Committee had specific responsibilities this role would be filled by a Cabinet Member who would receive their own SRA. Similarly, the Chairman of the Pay and Senior Appointments Committee would also be filled by a Cabinet Member who would receive their own SRA. The Panel therefore agreed that there be no SRA for the Chairman of the Pension Fund Committee and the Chairman of the Pay and Senior Appointments Committee.

5.11 After considering the Committee structure, the Committees' associated roles and responsibilities, as detailed in the draft Constitution, the Panel recommended that the Chairman of each of the following Committees each have the same SRA as shown in paragraph 5.16.

- Audit and Governance Committee
- Standards and General Purposes Committee

5.12 Most respondents to the questionnaire advocated that members should only be entitled to claim one SRA regardless of how many SRAs they are entitled to. This is a rule that is common amongst local authority member allowances schemes.

5.13 It was noted that there would be 16 Community Boards and there would be a review of the operation of them early in the new Council's life. It was recommended that an SRA for Chairman of each Community Boards was justified. The recommended level is shown in paragraph 5.16.

5.14 An update on the Community Governance Review was noted, and the SRA for the High Wycombe Town Committee Chairman would therefore remain as shown in paragraph 5.16

5.15 The Panel heard that the role of minority group leaders would be important for the management of the new council. For the purposes of the Regulations a group is more than one member, but there is no requirement for an SRA to be paid to any Group Leader. The Panel considered what number ought to constitute a group for the purposes of the awarding of an SRA and took into account the large size of council membership. The Panel considers that were an allowance to be split proportionally, any registered group's Leader should be entitled to a share to reflect their additional workload.

5.16 The Panel recommends that the following special responsibility allowances be paid in recognition of the additional workload, levels of responsibility and accountability placed upon the following roles:

- **Leader £45,500 (3.5 x BA)**
- **Deputy Leader £26,000 (2 x BA) if they hold a portfolio**
- **Deputy Leader £13,000 (1 x BA) if they do not hold a portfolio**
- **Cabinet Members £19,500 (1.5 x BA)**
- **Deputy Cabinet Members £6,500 (0.5 x BA)**
- **Chairman of the Council £13,000 (1 x BA)**
- **Vice-Chairman of the Council £6,500 (0.5 x BA)**
- **Chairman of Strategic Planning Committee £9,750 (0.75 x BA)**
- **Chairmen of Area Planning Committees £9,750 (0.75 x BA)**
- **Chairman of Licensing Committee £3,900 (0.3 x BA)**
- **Chairman of Audit and Governance Committee £7,800 (0.6 x BA)**
- **Chairmen of the Overview and Scrutiny Committees £7,800 (0.6 x BA)**
- **Chairman of Pension Fund Committee £ nil**
- **Chairman of Pay and Senior Appointments Committee £ nil**
- **Standards and General Purposes Committee £7,800 (0.6 x BA)**
- **Chairman of Community Boards £1,000**
- **Chairman of High Wycombe Town Committee £3,420 (if required)**
- **Group Leaders SRA £17,000 split proportionally dependent upon group size (e.g. Group Leader SRA = £17,000 divide by 147 x number of group members)**

5.17 The Panel further recommends that:

- a) **No SRAs be paid to Vice-Chairmen of Committees with the exception of the Vice-Chairman of Council**
- b) **Members may not receive more than one SRA**
- c) **That a review of allowances be undertaken by the Panel at a suitable time determined by councillors to check that the scheme is suitable following a period of significant change for the Council. If a review is not undertaken within one year then SRAs be adjusted by an amount**

equivalent to the increase in the officers' annual pay award or by CPI, whichever is lower. As the maximum period a scheme may be linked to an index is four years the Panel must meet to review allowances no later than 2024.

6. Travel Allowances

6.1 The Panel notes that each of the relevant councils currently pays approved amounts under HMRC mileage allowance payments (MAPs). Anything payable above MAP approved amounts result in a taxable benefit to the claimant. The Panel further notes that to introduce taxable benefits into the travel allowances scheme would be a disproportionate bureaucratic burden on the authority.

6.2 The MAP approved amounts are currently:

- (a) Car – 45p per mile up to 10,000 and 25p per mile thereafter (including electrically powered);
- (b) Passenger payments – up to 5p per mile per passenger (up to a maximum of four) to be claimed only for passengers who would otherwise be eligible for travelling allowance;
- (c) Motorcycle – 24p per mile (including electrically powered);
- (d) Bicycle – 20p per mile (including electrically assisted e.g. ebike);
- (e) In relation to public transport (including rail and bus) – standard fare; and
- (f) Parking fees – actual cost

6.3 The Panel note and agree with Shadow Executive representations that sustainable methods of transport should be encouraged where possible, including use of electric/hybrid transportation.

6.4 The Panel recommends the travel allowances be paid to members:

(a) In line with MAP for undertaking official business; and

(b) Travelling to the Buckinghamshire Council offices for meetings and official business.

7. Subsistence allowances

7.1 Subsistence allowances includes the costs of:

- (a) Accommodation (if a member is required to stay overnight); and
- (b) Meals and other 'subsistence' while travelling

7.2 The Panel wishes to emphasise that subsistence should be only claimable for undertaking official business outside of the new unitary council area.

7.3 The Panel recommends the following subsistence allowances be paid to members in the case of an overnight stay away from the usual place of residence:

- (i) Breakfast £6.50 (more than 4 hours away before 11am)**
- (ii) Lunch £9 (business journeys entailing working away from normal place of work between 12 and 2pm)**
- (iii) Dinner £11.50 (can be claimed when required to work outside of usual rostered requirements and away from normal place of work after 8.30pm)**

8. Carers' allowance

8.1 The Panel reviewed the carers' allowance currently included in the sovereign councils' allowances schemes and acknowledges the importance of setting this at such a level so as to avoid deterring anyone seeking to become a councillor.

8.2 The Panel considered setting a ceiling, however understood that members would claim only where necessary and the monitoring officer could monitor this.

8.3 The Panel recommends that a dependant carers' allowance (not payable to a member of the claimant's own household) be recompensed at:

(a) An hourly rate equivalent to 100% of the national living wage to be linked to changes at national level (£8.21 as at December 2019) for childcare

(b) An hourly rate of actual cost for adult/elderly/disabled dependent care, to be paid at the discretion of the Monitoring Officer

9. Co-opted Members

9.1 The Panel understands that Buckinghamshire Council will have co-opted members who are members of committees such as the Thames Valley Police and Crime Panel. The Panel recognises these are important roles, but as members shall be receiving a basic allowance, the Panel felt that a separate SRA is not warranted.

10. Foregoing and donating allowances

10.1 The Panel recommends that members may, if they wish, forego all or any part of their entitlement to BA or any SRA by giving notice in writing to the Monitoring Officer of Buckinghamshire Council.

10.2 The Panel also supports any members who wish to donate any of their allowances through a 'Give as you earn' scheme.

10.3 **The Panel recommends that where a member ceases to be a member of Buckinghamshire Council, or ceases to occupy a role attracting an SRA, that the member only receives pro-rata payment for the period that they are entitled to receive an allowance. The authority may require that such part of any allowance as relates to any such period be repaid to the authority where an overpayment is made.**

11. Emerging Governance Structure

- 11.1 The Panel received evidence that the governance structure would continue to evolve over time and that these would be matters for the Buckinghamshire Council and not the shadow council. Specifically, this would include how the culture of the new council would evolve.
- 11.2 The Panel has made its recommendations on the information made available to it as of January 2020 and recognises change will occur as the new Council evolves.
- 11.3 Given that change was likely during the formative years of the Council, the Panel recommends an early review of allowances is undertaken at a time considered appropriate by members. For example, after one or two years following the current review. If the early review takes place after one year then the Council could index link allowances to CPI or the officer's annual pay award, whichever is the lower. Following the early review, a scheme of allowances could then be index linked for up to four years to tie in with the election cycle for the new Council. It is further recognised that following a Boundary Commission review during the first 5 years of the Council, it is likely the number of members would reduce for the elections in 2025, at that point a further review would be necessary to establish how responsibilities would change.

12. Member Performance, Accountability and Transparency

- 12.1 The Independent Remuneration Panel is mindful that a key objective behind the formation of the new unitary Buckinghamshire Council is to realise cost savings and reduce the overall financial burden on the residents of the County. The original unitary business case set a budget of £1,927,000 to cover Members' Allowances, however the Secretary of State's decision to set the number of members at 147 has substantially eroded the targeted savings of £635,000.
- 12.2 The scheme put forward by Members totalled £2,409,420. This provides a saving when compared to the current total of allowances paid by all existing councils. The Scheme recommended by the Panel totals £2,371,220. The actual amount will depend on how roles are actually filled.
- 12.3 The flat rate Basic Allowance scheme in operation allows Members to receive not inconsiderable remuneration by automatic right as they are permitted to receive allowances by simply being a Member. The only legal requirement is that a Member must attend a formal meeting of the Council not less than once every six months.
- 12.4 The Panel is keen to establish the principle of enhanced transparency and accountability for the payment and receipts of allowances by all Members of the Buckinghamshire Council. It is recognised that it is difficult to develop

meaningful performance measures and even more difficult to enforce any such measures but there should be a means to hold Members to account if they are not undertaking the duties that are reasonably expected of them. It may well be a reiterative process that takes time to become effective. The Panel proposes that its recommendations on the scope and levels of allowances should only be accepted as part of a wider package that includes taking up the accompanying recommendations on Member performance. The Panel does not accept that the Council can take up one without the other. It will also be a further means by which the Panel in the future can assess the effectiveness of Members.

- 12.5 The Panel considers that electors would expect that a Member should only be entitled to claim the full basic allowance, or where relevant special allowance, should that Member attend a minimum of, for example, between 50% and 60% of Full Council meetings, Committee meetings or Scrutiny meetings that they are appointed to over each financial year. The Panel recognises that such a measure could only be put into effect through a voluntary claw-back scheme.

Enhancing Performance, Accountability and Transparency

- 12.6 The Panel is convinced of the need to ensure that its recommendations relating to levels of allowances are intrinsically linked to the Council adopting mechanisms to enhance Member performance, accountability and transparency. The mechanisms are presented below in a hierarchical fashion, increasing in severity as one goes down the list.

Publishing Attendance Records

- 12.7 As part of the general statement of performance the Panel believes that remuneration should involve a degree of sharpened accountability by the publication in appropriate forums such as Council web pages, local libraries, and parish halls, etc, of Members' attendance records. The Panel understands that the Buckinghamshire Council does intend to publish attendance records on the website. The Panel recommends that the publication of attendances by Members should include provision for valid absences, such as attending constituent duties, illness and/or representing the Council externally.

Member Statement of Activities

- 12.8 The Panel also recommends that Members have the opportunity to fill in a pro forma on a periodic basis to allow them to give an account of their activities outside the Council, including an analysis of case work that they undertake in their wards, as well as attendance at formal meetings. All Members are likely to have access to a laptop and the Council intranet, with their own webpage, accompanied by appropriate training. It is relatively simple for each Member to write and publish their activity statements on their web page. These activity statements could then be used by electors and other interested parties to

evaluate the performance of Members in areas of activity that cannot be captured by the publication of attendance records.

Member Role Profiles – a Compact with the Electorate

12.9 The Panel recommends that the Council adopt Member Role Profiles. These Role Profiles should form the basis of a role and accountability statement, an increasingly common practice in many authorities. They should be utilised to make explicit the respective roles, duties, responsibilities and competencies expected from Members and post holders. They should contain minimum performance measures that Members are expected to reach such as: the scope and type of committees etc, that a Member is expected to be on, such as a Scrutiny Panel.

- The minimum number of meetings a Member is expected to attend, e.g. at least 50% or 60%?
- That they should be expected to attend an approved duty at least every 3 rather than 6 months so they cannot meet their attendance requirements by frontloading within an intensive period.
- That Members are expected to take part in an individual Training and Development programme with the aim of increasing their own personal skills and capacity. Through the extensive publicity of Members duties and expected inputs, other elected Members and the public can be informed on what is to be expected from being elected.

12.10 To give further effect to the role profiles, a Compact with the Electorate' could be developed which Members are asked to sign. Such compacts are ultimately difficult to enforce but it makes an explicit link between allowances received and a specific set of tasks and duties a Member is expected to undertake. Members cannot claim they did not know what they are expected to do and moreover it provides moral leverage for the rest of the Council to utilise.

Allowance Claw-back Scheme

12.11 Some authorities have a claw back scheme. For legal reasons it has to be adhered to on a 'voluntary' basis. Essentially this mechanism 'fines' a Member if they do not meet a target of attending a set percentage of meetings (often 50-60% or more). It is pointed out that in the few authorities where claw back has been adopted it is rarely invoked and appears to have limited value. Nonetheless, the Panel received evidence that the Council would appreciate having such a mechanism as part of the allowances' scheme even if it has to be

voluntary arrangement. Thus, the Panel recommends the Council adopt a claw back mechanism. As a voluntary process the claw back is probably best implemented through the group system. The Panel also recommends that the minimum standards the Council adopts for claw back to be activated should not be seen as a substitute for non-performance. Members should not be paying the claw back fine as way of circumventing their duties.

12.12 The Panel recommends that the Council puts in place the following measures to enhance performance, accountability and transparency:

- a) The publication of attendance records for Members at Full Council, Committee meetings and Scrutiny committees**
- b) Provision to Members of the opportunity to publish a periodic statement of activities**
- c) Adoption of role profiles for each Member in order to make clear both to the Members and electors what is expected of them**
- d) Introduction of an allowance claw-back scheme.**

13. Town and Parish Council allowances

- 13.1 In addition to considering a scheme for Buckinghamshire Council, the Panel also considered recommendations to Town and Parish Councils across Buckinghamshire.
- 13.2 All Towns and Parishes were contacted by email in September 2019 and invited to submit representations and details of their respective schemes. 24 responses were received.
- 13.3 From the responses received it is evident that many Parish Councils pay no allowances and that the role of a Town or Parish Councillor is very much community based and time spent performing Parish Councillor duties was often viewed as voluntary. There is a wide range of towns and parishes across Buckinghamshire, with large town council's including Aylesbury, Buckingham and Chesham, amongst others through to small, rural, parishes who serve a relatively small electorate.
- 13.4 None of the responses indicate a need for any significant change to any respective scheme, although two respondents did make the panel aware that parishes would likely face increased pressures from services being devolved from Buckinghamshire Council.
- 13.5 The Panel believes that a sensible way to set a scheme would be to base recommended allowances around percentages of the unitary basic allowance which increases on the size of the electorate. This has been an approach used previously.
- 13.6 Towns and Parishes may choose to adopt recommendations for all members, or for the Chairman only. Where all members of a Parish receive a BA, the Chairman could receive a higher amount, up to twice that of the recommended basic allowance.
- 13.7 The Panel wishes to make clear that it is not recommending all towns and parishes pay an allowance to its members but recommends that those who do have regard to the panel's recommendations.
- 13.8 Further, the Panel recommends that Town and Parish Councils pay travel and subsistence allowances at the same rates as Buckinghamshire Council.

13.9 (i) The Panel recommends that where Towns and Parishes choose to implement a scheme of allowances they have regard to the below table. Towns and Parishes may choose to adopt recommendations for all members, or for the Chairman only. Where all members of a Parish receive a BA, the Chairman could receiver an amount up to twice that of the recommended allowance.

| Electorate | % of Unitary Basic (£13,000) | Amount per Councillor £ (up to) |
|------------------------|-------------------------------------|--|
| 0-2500 | 1.5 | £195 |
| 2501 - 5000 | 2.5 | £325 |
| 5001 - 10000 | 3.5 | £455 |
| 10001 - 15000 | 4.5 | £585 |
| 15001 - 20000 | 5.5 | £715 |
| 20001 - 25000 | 6.5 | £845 |
| 25001 and above | 9 | £1,170 |

(ii) The Panel recommends that Towns and Parishes follow the Buckinghamshire Council scheme when setting travel and subsistence allowances.

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**BUCKINGHAMSHIRE AND MILTON
KEYNES FIRE AUTHORITY**

***MEMBERS' SCHEME OF ALLOWANCES
2022/23***

THE BUCKINGHAMSHIRE AND MILTON KEYNES FIRE AUTHORITY

MEMBERS' SCHEME OF ALLOWANCES

Introduction

1. This Scheme is governed by the Local Authorities (Members' Allowances)(England) Regulations 2003 and the Local Authorities (Members' Allowances)(England) (Amendment) Regulations 2003 – “the regulations.”
2. Elected Members of the Buckinghamshire and Milton Keynes Combined Fire Authority may claim basic allowances, special responsibility allowances, travelling allowances and subsistence allowances for approved duties in accordance with the provisions of this scheme.
3. Appointed (non elected) members may claim co-optees allowance, travelling allowances and subsistence allowances for approved duties specified in this scheme.
4. "Year" means the 12 months ending with 31 March.
5. The Scheme has four Schedules attached which are:
 - (a) Schedule 1 - Special Responsibility Allowances
 - (b) Schedule 2 - Payment of Travelling and Subsistence Allowances
 - (c) Schedule 3 - Duties Excluded from the Allowances Scheme
 - (d) Schedule 4 - Rates of Allowances

Creation and Amendment of the Scheme

6. This scheme comes into effect on 1 April 2022.
7. For subsequent changes in basic allowances, special responsibility allowances and co-optees allowances, new rates will be payable from the date the amendment takes effect as set out either in this scheme or the Regulations.

8. The Fire Authority will be responsible for amending the scheme and in doing so will have regard to any recommendations to its constituent councils of the independent remuneration panels set up by them.

Basic Allowances

9. The Fire Authority will pay equally to each Member of the Authority a basic allowance of an amount specified in Schedule 4.
10. Where the term of office of a Member begins or ends in the course of a financial year entitlement will be apportioned in accordance with the Regulations. The apportionment will not take place where a Member's term of office lasts less than one month.
11. Basic Allowances are payable monthly and are subject to tax and national insurance deductions.

Special Responsibility Allowances

12. The Fire Authority will pay each year to the Members of the Fire Authority who have special responsibilities by reason of the office(s) they hold the special responsibility allowances set out in Schedule 1.
13. Where a Member takes up or relinquishes any post that carries a special responsibility allowance in the course of a financial year the entitlement will be apportioned in accordance with the Regulations. The apportionment will not take place where a Member's term of office lasts less than one month.
14. Special responsibility allowances are payable in monthly instalments and are subject to tax and national insurance deductions. Where a Member is eligible for more than one special responsibility allowance (whether payable by the Fire Authority or another authority for Fire Authority duties) only the highest one will be payable, with the exception that a Lead Member may claim one Lead Member's Allowance in addition to one other Special Responsibility Allowance payable.

Approved Duties

15. Travelling and Subsistence Allowances are payable monthly and are only payable to Elected Members of the Fire Authority for the approved duties set out in Schedule 2.

Co-optees Allowance

16. A Co-optees Allowance may be paid to appointed members (i.e. non-Elected Members whether voting or not) for the performance of any approved duty as defined by this document.
17. The allowance will be payable in monthly instalments and are subject to tax and national insurance deductions.

Travelling and Subsistence Allowances

18. The term "Member" for the purpose of travelling and subsistence allowances applies to any person who is a Member of the Fire Authority, or who is a member of any committee, sub-committee or panel of the Fire Authority, and so includes appointed non-elected members of those bodies. The payment of these allowances is dependent upon the performance of an "approved duty" which is an attendance as a member at a meeting, or the carrying on of a duty, set out in Schedule 2.
19. The rates for travel and subsistence allowances are specified in Schedule 4.

Allowances are Maxima

20. The scales for all allowances are maxima and there is no obligation on any Member to claim any or all of the allowances.
21. A Member shall give notice in writing to the Chief Finance Officer that he/she elects to forego any part of his/her entitlement to an allowance under the scheme.

Social Functions and Occasions

22. Elected Members on occasions are invited, or feel it necessary to attend functions, or occasions which have a social element. No allowances are paid to Members of the Fire Authority on these occasions unless the Member is undertaking the performance of a positive duty and one of significant size, e.g. making a speech or distributing prizes when travel and subsistence allowances may be paid. Merely to attend because the member is interested or represents people in the district is insufficient to justify payment of any allowances.

Conference Expenses

23. If attendance at a conference has been approved by the Authority, conference expenses which are obligatory and outside the control of the Member, will be paid in advance on request or will be reimbursed. These expenses will include the conference fee. The actual cost of accommodation, meals and the like, will only be met or reimbursed if it is part of the inclusive charge for the conference or it is a requirement of the conference or its organisers that the Member should stay at a particular hotel.
24. Travel and subsistence allowances are payable where appropriate.

Telephones

25. A mobile phone will be provided to the Chairman of the Fire Authority, with the cost of supply, rental and business calls being met by the Fire Authority.

Avoidance of Duplication

26. A claim for an allowance under this scheme must include, or be accompanied by, a statement signed by the claimant that no other claim has been or will be made for the matter to which the claim relates.

Records of Payments

27. Records of payments made to Members are available for inspection free of charge by any local government elector of the Fire Authority.
28. A person entitled to inspect a record may make a copy of any part of it.
29. Details of total payments made to each Member for allowances under this scheme will be published as soon as practicable after the end of the year to which they relate.

Expense Claims

30. All information requested for the expense claim must be provided, including the number of miles, the locations travelled from and to and the reason for travel. (It is always advisable for Members to make

contemporaneous notes in their diary to assist in the completion of claims).

31. Claims for expenses should only be made when actually incurred, i.e. rail/bus, taxis, hotel accommodation. Receipts must be provided.
32. Claims for the same expenses (mileage, travel and subsistence etc) must not be made from more than one body.
33. Payments for basic and special responsibility allowances will be paid monthly in arrears and travel and subsistence payments will be paid monthly in arrears on the submission of a claim through the HR and Payroll Portal.
34. No claim from a Member for traveling or subsistence allowances which is submitted more than three months after the costs were incurred and no later than the end of April for the preceding financial year will be entertained, except in exceptional circumstances and approved in writing by the Chief Finance Officer.

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SCHEDULE 1

SPECIAL RESPONSIBILITY ALLOWANCES FROM APRIL 2022

Special Responsibility Allowance per annum

| • Position | £ (No Increase) | £ (1.5% increase) |
|---|-----------------|-------------------|
| • Chairman | 12,708 | 12,899 |
| • Vice-Chairman | 4,259 | 4,323 |
| • Chairman – Executive Committee | 5,243 | 5,322 |
| • Chairman – Overview and Audit Committee | 3,434 | 3,486 |
| • Chairman – Human Resources Sub-Committee* | 1,719 | 1,745 |
| • Group Leaders | 3,813 | 3,870 |
| • Lead Members | 3,314 | 3,364 |

*If constituted by the Executive Committee

SCHEDULE 2

PAYMENT OF TRAVELLING AND SUBSISTENCE ALLOWANCES

The duties in this Section have been approved for the payment of travel and subsistence allowances:

- (a) Attendance at a meeting of the Fire Authority;
- (b) Attendance at a meeting of any committee or sub-committee of the Fire Authority;
- (c) Attendance at a meeting of any section, panel, working party or other meeting authorised by the Fire Authority or a committee or sub-committee of the Fire Authority or a joint committee of the Fire Authority and one or more other authorities to which the member has been specifically appointed provided that it is a meeting to which Members of at least two political groups have been invited.
- (d) Attendance at a meeting of an association of authorities of which the Fire Authority is a member and to which the member has been appointed by the Fire Authority to represent it.
- (e) Attendance at ad hoc meetings with other authorities, organisations or bodies authorised by a committee or sub-committee of the Fire Authority, or the Director of Legal and Governance on the advice of the relevant Chairman or Vice-Chairman if this is not practicable.
- (f) Attendance at briefing meetings to which Members of at least two political groups have been invited authorised by a committee or sub-committee of the Fire Authority, or the Director of Legal and Governance on the advice of the relevant Chairman or Vice-Chairman if this is not practicable.
- (g) Attendance at seminars and conferences arranged by the Fire Authority, a committee or sub-committee of the Fire Authority, or the Director of Legal and Governance on the advice of the relevant Chairman or Vice-Chairman if this is not practicable, about any of its functions.
- (h) Attendance at specific visits arranged by the Fire Authority, a committee or sub-committee of the Fire Authority, or the Director of Legal and Governance on the advice of the relevant Chairman or Vice-Chairman if this is not practicable, about any of its functions and where Members of at least two political groups have been invited.

- (i) Attendance at a meeting of any body or authority upon which the member has been appointed by the Fire Authority or a committee or sub-committee of the Fire Authority to represent it.
- (j) Attendance in connection with the discharge of any function of the Fire Authority conferred by or under any enactment and empowering or requiring the Fire Authority to inspect or authorise the inspection of premises.
- (k) Attendance at meetings of bodies where the Fire Authority makes appointments, where the Fire Authority has a major influence at national, regional, county or district level. These bodies are listed below:
- (i) Local Government Association
 - (ii) Fire Commission
- (l) Attendance at any disciplinary, grievance, dismissal or appeals sub-committee or panel.
- (m) The following duties if approved by the Fire Authority or a Committee:
- Attendance at briefing meetings held for the purpose of, or in connection with, the discharge of the functions of the Fire Authority or any of its committees or sub-committees.
 - Attendance at the official opening of new Fire Authority establishments or projects.
 - Attendance by the Chairman and Vice-Chairman of the Fire Authority and of committees at official functions in a representative capacity.
 - Duties undertaken by Chairmen and Vice-Chairmen of the Fire Authority, committees or subcommittees acting in an official capacity.
 - Members' delegations to Government Departments.
 - Town Centre Management Meetings and Parishes.
- (n) Meetings organised by the Chief Fire Officer, Chief Finance Officer or Director of Legal and Governance or their nominated representatives with external bodies or persons to further the business and aims of the Fire Authority which the relevant officer certifies requires the attendance of members on the grounds of urgency which prevents approval being obtained from the Fire Authority, a committee or sub-committee.

Note: In authorising attendances in accordance with the above, no member, official or officer of the Fire Authority shall act in a discriminatory manner reflecting party political preference. Members, officials and officers should take care to ensure that their actions can not be construed as having been discriminatory.

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SCHEDULE 3

DUTIES EXCLUDED FROM THE ALLOWANCES SCHEME

The duties in this Section are those for which the Fire Authority has decided that no allowances will be paid.

- Members' surgeries
- Political activities

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SCHEDULE 4

RATES OF ALLOWANCES

From April 2022 the following rates of allowances will apply

Basic Allowance:

| (No Increase) | (1.5% increase) |
|------------------|------------------|
| £1,272 per annum | £1,291 per annum |

Special Responsibility Allowances:

See Schedule 1

Co-optees Allowance

| (No Increase) | (1.5% increase) |
|----------------|-----------------|
| £318 per annum | £323 per annum |

Travel Allowances (in line with HMRC Mileage Allowance Payments)

(a) Car

The rate for travel by a Member's own private motor vehicle, or one belonging to a member of his/her family or otherwise provided for his/her use, other than a solo motor cycle, shall be 45 pence for the first 10,000 miles and 25 pence for each mile after that.

(b) Motorcycle

The rate for travel by a Member's own motorcycle, or one belonging to a member of his/her family, or otherwise provided for his/her use, shall be 24 pence per mile.

(c) Bicycle

The rate for travel by a Member's own bicycle, or one belonging to a member of his/her family, or otherwise provided for his/her use, shall not exceed 20p a mile.

(d) Public Transport

Members can claim the full cost of travelling on public transport at standard class rates whilst carrying out Approved Duties, provided a valid receipt, bus ticket etc is produced to substantiate the claim.

Subsistence

The rate of subsistence allowance shall not exceed the amounts which can be claimed under the Buckinghamshire Council Members' Allowances Scheme applicable at the time when the cost is incurred.

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Buckinghamshire & Milton Keynes Fire Authority

Meeting and date: Fire Authority, 16 February 2022

Report title: Her Majesty's Inspectorate of Constabulary and Fire and Rescue Services (HMICFRS) – Buckinghamshire Fire and Rescue Service (BFRS) Inspection Report 2021

Lead Member: Councillor Lesley Clarke OBE

Report sponsor: Deputy Chief Fire Officer, Mick Osborne

Author and contact: Area Commander, Simon Tuffley stuffley@bucksfire.gov.uk

Action: Noting.

Recommendations:

That the BFRS HMICFRS round 2 inspection report (appendix 1) be noted.

Executive summary:

The second round of inspections of all 44 fire and rescue services is currently in progress with BFRS having been inspected as part of the tranche one schedule between 24 May 2021 and 9 July 2021.

The inspection methodology remains unchanged since the first round of inspections, covering three pillars (effectiveness, efficiency, and people) against each of which a judgement is given; outstanding, good, requires improvement or inadequate. There is no overall judgement covering service performance.

HMICFRS published the latest BFRS report on 15 December 2021, as part of the first tranche of reports. The report is attached as appendix 1.

The Service was judged:

- Effectiveness- requires improvement
- Efficiency- requires improvement
- People- requires improvement

Depending upon the severity of their findings, HMICFRS may provide suggested areas for improvement, or causes of concern and recommendations. A recommendation will always accompany a cause of concern.

The latest report for this Service identifies 22 areas for improvement, and two causes of concern, accompanied by eight recommendations. Additionally, the previous cause of concern arising from the first round of inspections has been closed and HMICFRS has acknowledged the work undertaken to address key areas from the last report against a landscape of a global pandemic and over a short timeframe.

The report states ‘Since there was a gap of only 18 months between our first and latest inspections and much of the intervening time was overshadowed by the COVID-19 pandemic, it isn’t surprising that many of our findings are like those in our first report. The Service has worked hard to address the cause of concern from our 2019 inspection about whether its resources can meet its unique model of operational response. It has increased its capacity to meet its public safety plan and so this cause of concern has been closed.’

Source: [Buckinghamshire - HMICFRS \(justiceinspectorates.gov.uk\)](https://www.justiceinspectorates.gov.uk/buckinghamshire-hmicfrs/)

Although this inspection has revealed an improvement to our resourcing performance, at the time our resourcing was improved due to various lockdown periods when many staff were either furloughed from their primary employment or not necessarily taking their leave until later in the year. The reported improvement reflects the pandemic period, and the resilience of frontline services remains a key area of focus and priority for the Service over the short and medium term.

The Fire and Rescue Service National Framework for England requires fire and rescue services to give due regard to HMICFRS reports and recommendations. Where recommendations are made, the receiving Service is required to prepare, update and regularly publish an action plan detailing how such recommendations are actioned.

The first cause of concern from round two was issued to the Service by letter on 6 August 2021 (attached as appendix 2) and relates to Prevention activity, under the effectiveness pillar. The letter sets out a requirement that by 30 September 2021, the Service should have plans in place for the following recommendations:

1. An effective system to define the levels of risk in the community.
2. A revision of its Prevention strategy that clearly prioritises the people most at risk of fire and other emergencies, giving focus and direction to specialist teams.
3. The review of systems and processes for dealing with referrals from individuals and partner agencies. This is to make sure they are managed effectively and those referrals with highest identified risk are prioritised.

The Service provided a draft Prevention improvement plan to Her Majesty’s Inspector (HMI) Matt Parr before the September deadline, setting out how BFRS intend to address the issues identified. A routine HMICFRS action plan update, (including the three new recommendations) and an internal Prevention evaluation report (with additional internal recommendations) was also presented to the Overview and Audit Committee on 10 November 2021.

Officers have since met HMICFRS representatives to update progress against these recommendations and HMICFRS are planning to revisit the Service in Spring 2022, with an opportunity to close-off this cause of concern if sufficient progress is demonstrated. This was confirmed in a follow up letter to the Chairman and Chief Fire Officer on 12 January 2022 (attached as appendix 4)

The second cause of concern from round two was issued under the people pillar on 15 December 2021 along with the full report publication, and states that the Service hasn't made enough progress since the last inspection to improve equality, diversity and inclusion.

The Recommendation is that by 31 January 2022, the Service should:

1. give greater priority to how it increases awareness of equality, diversity and inclusion across the organisation
2. make sure it has appropriate ways to engage with and seek feedback from all staff, including those from under-represented groups
3. make improvements to the way it collects equality data to better understand its workforce demographics and needs
4. ensure it has robust processes in place to undertake equality impact assessments, implement and review any actions required
5. be more ambitious in its efforts to attract a more diverse workforce which better reflects the community it serves

Much of the work required to meet the recommendations is included within Buckinghamshire and Milton Keynes Fire Authority's equality, diversity, and inclusion objectives for 2020-2025 which are a range of ambitious and progressive objectives. HMICFRS was provided with evidence of progress against these objectives, including the year-one update presented to the Fire Authority on 16 June 2021, and following a meeting on 7 January 2022 HMICFRS were assured that there has been a continued and significant trajectory of progress in this area, suitable evidence was provided and is being considered by the inspection team to demonstrate that the Service is continuing to deliver its equality, diversity and inclusion objectives therefore meeting the recommendations, continuing to take EDI matters seriously.

HMICFRS does not schedule revisits to close-off causes of concern issued under the people or efficiency pillars. Therefore, this cause of concern will remain in place until the next round of full inspections.

This Service has built an effective relationship with HMICFRS, which it intends to maintain. Matters raised in the report will be addressed through internal governance structures and reported to Members through the Overview and Audit Committee. Following publication of the most recent report, the Service's updated HMICFRS improvement plan will be presented to the 16 March Overview and Audit Committee, and thereafter to each Overview and Audit Committee meeting.

Furthermore, as per requirements set out in the report covering letter to the Chairman and Chief Fire Officer on 14 December 2021, (attached as appendix 3) a copy of the action plan will also be sent to HMI Matt Parr within 56 working days of the report publication; no later than 7 March 2021.

Further to the tranche one inspection report publications on 15 December 2022, Her Majesty's Chief Inspector of Fire and Rescue Services, Sir Tom Winsor also published

his annual assessment of fire and rescue services in England. This report is his third and final report to the Secretary of State.

Notably within his annual assessment, Sir Tom Winsor recognises BFRS to have made significant progress in increasing the numbers of fire safety inspectors, developing risk-based inspection programmes, and ensuring that protection activity is a main strategic priority. The report also recognises that BFRS has been “creative and flexible” in its approach to using on-call firefighters and by introducing a flexi-firefighter contract which enables staff to work more flexible shift patterns.

The annual assessment report can be accessed via the link: [State of Fire and Rescue – The Annual Assessment of Fire and Rescue Services in England 2021 \(justiceinspectorates.gov.uk\)](https://www.justiceinspectorates.gov.uk/state-of-fire-and-rescue-2021/)

Financial implications:

The prioritisation of improvements to address the specific recommendations raised within the causes of concern may introduce additional financial implications, either through reprioritisation of other projects, or through new workstreams.

Consideration will be given to ensure associated costs, both direct and indirect, are fully understood and managed effectively.

FRSs are not funded for the preparation for, HMICFRS inspections, nor is the Service charged. The inspections are funded directly by the Home Office. The Police are top sliced from their government grants to fund the HMICFRS inspections of Police Forces. There has been no indication yet that this might be a future funding model for the inspection of FRSs.

Risk management:

There remain reputational corporate risks to the organisation should we be judged as inadequate. The Service had already taken steps to mitigate this through having extensive internal and external audits of a number of areas of the Service, in addition to the HMICFRS inspections.

Legal implications:

The current Fire and Rescue Service National Framework issued under section 21 of the Fire and Rescue Services Act 2004, to which the Authority must have regard when carrying out its functions, states as follows at paragraph 7.5:

‘Fire and rescue authorities must give due regard to reports and recommendations made by HMICFRS and – if recommendations are made – prepare, update and regularly publish an action plan detailing how the recommendations are being actioned. If the fire and rescue authority does not propose to undertake any action as a result of a recommendation, reasons for this should be given.’

It continues: ‘When forming an action plan, the fire and rescue authority could seek advice and support from other organisations, for example, the National Fire Chiefs Council and the Local Government Association’.

Privacy and security implications:

No privacy or security implications have been identified that are directly associated with this report or its appendices. The respective strands of the improvement plan will undergo Data Protection Impact Screening and full impact assessments will be completed and reviewed where appropriate.

The report and its appendices are not protectively marked.

Duty to collaborate:

Each fire and rescue service is inspected individually. However, the latest report includes findings relating to the Service’s ability to collaborate effectively with partners.

Health and safety implications:

There are no health, safety or wellbeing implications arising from this report.

Environmental implications:

There are no environmental implications arising from this report.

Equality, diversity, and inclusion implications:

The Service has been judged as ‘requires improvement’ in the people pillar, along with a cause of concern and five recommendations relating to equality, diversity and inclusion. All the findings from the HMICFRS round two inspection report will be fully considered and prioritised to ensure continual improvement is established and maintained.

Consultation and communication:

An internal and external communications plan was established in anticipation of the report publication period. Internal briefings and articles were held and published, and responses to the report findings were published externally. External media enquiries were managed through the Service’s communication team.

Background papers:

23 January 2020 - Her Majesty’s Inspectorate of Constabulary and Fire and Rescue Services (HMICFRS) – Buckinghamshire Fire and Rescue Service (BFRS) Inspection Findings Report:

https://bucksfire.gov.uk/documents/2020/03/230120_item_7_hmicfrs_cover_report_23012020_appendix-min.pdf/

12 February 2020 - HMICFRS Inspection Findings Report – Action Plan:

https://bucksfire.gov.uk/documents/2020/03/120220_item12_hmicfrs_inspection_findings.pdf/

22 July 2020- Her Majesty’s Inspectorate of Constabulary and Fire and Rescue Services (HMICFRS) – Buckinghamshire Fire and Rescue Service (BFRS) Improvement Plan Update <https://bucksfire.gov.uk/documents/2020/07/item-18-hmicfrs-bfrs-inspection-improvement-plan.pdf/>

11 November 2020 - Her Majesty’s Inspectorate of Constabulary and Fire and Rescue Services (HMICFRS) –Buckinghamshire Fire and Rescue Service(BFRS) Improvement Plan Update <https://bucksfire.gov.uk/documents/2020/11/item-11-hmicfrs-improvement-plan.pdf/>

17 March 2021 - Her Majesty’s Inspectorate of Constabulary and Fire and Rescue Services (HMICFRS) – Buckinghamshire Fire and Rescue Service (BFRS) round 2 inspections, and COVID-19 report. <https://bucksfire.gov.uk/documents/2021/03/oa-item-13.pdf/>

16 June 2021 - Equality, Diversity and Inclusion Objectives 2020–2025 – Year one update ([Public Pack](#))[Agenda Document for Buckinghamshire & Milton Keynes Fire Authority, 16/06/2021 11:00 \(bucksfire.gov.uk\)](#)

21 July 2021 - Her Majesty’s Inspectorate of Constabulary and Fire and Rescue Services (HMICFRS) – Buckinghamshire Fire and Rescue Service (BFRS) Improvement Plan Update <https://bucksfire.gov.uk/documents/2021/07/oa-item-16-210721.pdf/>

10 November 2021 - Her Majesty’s Inspectorate of Constabulary and Fire and Rescue Services (HMICFRS) –Buckinghamshire Fire and Rescue Service (BFRS) Improvement Plan Update <https://bucksfire.gov.uk/documents/2021/10/oa-item-18-10-11-21.pdf/>

10 November 2021 - Prevention Evaluation - Phase one report 2021 <https://bucksfire.gov.uk/documents/2021/10/oa-item-17-17-10-21.pdf/>

| Appendix | Title | Protective Marking |
|----------|---|-------------------------|
| 1 | Her Majesty’s Inspectorate of Constabulary and Fire and Rescue Services (HMICFRS) – Buckinghamshire Fire and Rescue Service (BFRS) Inspection Report 2021 | Not protectively marked |
| 2 | HMICFRS - BFRS inspection follow up letter, 06 August 2021 | Not protectively marked |
| 3 | HMICFRS Letter to T1 inspected Services - BUF | Not protectively marked |
| 4 | Buckinghamshire Fire and Rescue Service assessment of progress – cause of concern | Not protectively marked |

Fire & Rescue Service 2021/22

Effectiveness, efficiency and people

An inspection of Buckinghamshire Fire and Rescue Service



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About this inspection

This is our third inspection of fire and rescue services across England. We first inspected Buckinghamshire Fire and Rescue Service in June 2019, publishing a report with our findings in December 2019 on the service's effectiveness and efficiency and how it looks after its people. Our second inspection, in autumn 2020, considered how the service was responding to the pandemic. This inspection considers for a second time the service's effectiveness, efficiency and people.

In this round of our inspections of all 44 fire and rescue services in England, we answer three main questions:

1. How effective is the fire and rescue service at keeping people safe and secure from fire and other risks?
2. How efficient is the fire and rescue service at keeping people safe and secure from fire and other risks?
3. How well does the fire and rescue service look after its people?

This report sets out our inspection findings for Buckinghamshire Fire and Rescue Service.

What inspection judgments mean

Our categories of graded judgment are:

- outstanding;
- good;
- requires improvement; and
- inadequate.








Good is our expected graded judgment for all fire and rescue services. It is based on policy, practice or performance that meet pre-defined grading criteria, which are informed by any relevant [national operational guidance](#) or standards.





If the service exceeds what we expect for good, we will judge it as outstanding.







If we find shortcomings in the service, we will judge it as requires improvement.

If we find serious critical failings of policy, practice or performance of the fire and rescue service, we will judge it as inadequate.

Overview

| Question | This inspection | 2018/19 |
|--|---|-----------------------------|
|  Effectiveness |  Requires improvement | Requires improvement |
| Understanding fires and other risks |  Requires improvement | Good |
| Preventing fires and other risks |  Requires improvement | Requires improvement |
| Protecting the public through fire regulation |  Requires improvement | Requires improvement |
| Responding to fires and other emergencies |  Good | Requires improvement |
| Responding to major and multi-agency incidents |  Good | Good |

| Question | This inspection | 2018/19 |
|---|---|-----------------------------|
|  Efficiency |  Requires improvement | Requires improvement |
| Making best use of resources |  Requires improvement | Requires improvement |
| Future affordability |  Requires improvement | Requires improvement |

| Question | This inspection | 2018/19 |
|---|---|----------------------|
|  People |  Requires improvement | Good |
| Promoting the right values and culture |  Requires improvement | Good |
| Getting the right people with the right skills |  Requires improvement | Good |
| Ensuring fairness and promoting diversity |  Requires improvement | Good |
| Managing performance and developing leaders |  Requires improvement | Requires improvement |

HMI summary

It was a pleasure to return to Buckinghamshire Fire and Rescue Service and I am grateful for the positive way the service connected with our inspection. I want to thank the service for working with us by accommodating the virtual approach of this inspection. Inspections would normally be conducted using a hybrid approach but inspecting against the backdrop of the pandemic meant we had to inspect virtually. I also want to recognise the disruption caused by the pandemic. This has been considered in our findings.

Since there was a gap of only 18 months between our first and latest inspections and much of the intervening time was overshadowed by the COVID-19 pandemic, it isn't surprising that many of our findings are like those in our first report.

The service has worked hard to address the cause of concern from our 2019 inspection about whether its resources can meet its unique model of operational response. It has increased its capacity to meet its public safety plan and so this cause of concern has been closed.

We are encouraged by the service's work to improve value for money, but we still have concerns about the service's funding model as its limited [reserves](#) are being used to supplement funding of its response functions.

The service operates an innovative, flexible and graduated approach to operational resourcing, designed to cover low level daily demand and infrequent high risk.

It knows it needs 12 immediately available fire engines to deal with normal daily demand. There are 19 stations throughout the county with 30 fire engines: the leading 12 fire engines are located to deal with typical incidents. The service plans to increase the number of fire engines and staff when needed for an unprecedented incident, or if several incidents happen at the same time.

There are, therefore, a further 18 fire engines in readiness to resource this 1 percent of occasions. These additional crews are available on 'delayed turnout' of 20 minutes, 60 minutes or up to 3 hours and can be called upon to respond to incidents or provide cover arrangements. They have, by design, low availability and although may not cost too much to run on an annual basis, at some stage the little-used stations and fire engines will need capital investment.

Moreover, the daily demand is met by a mixture of current (but reducing) [on-call](#) staff, and [wholetime](#) staff conducting extra 'bank' shifts. We believe it would be a very significant challenge to crew all the additional fire engines it holds should a major incident occur.

The service needs to prioritise how it identifies and works to reduce risk and communicate this to the public. Focus on improving its prevention work is especially important.

Staff are committed to the service and feel pride in the work they do. Many staff, however, feel overworked and under pressure, which negatively affects their productivity and morale. Support for staff, especially under-represented groups, could be better. The service needs to do more to provide a fair, diverse and inclusive place to work.

The service is a valued member of its [local resilience forum](#), through which it worked well with other emergency services and local government to provide support during the COVID-19 pandemic. Its support to vaccination centres and community health agencies continues. It functioned well during the pandemic and did a good job of working with its staff in this difficult period.

We look forward to seeing the service build on the improvements it has already made to address these important areas where work is clearly needed.



Matt Parr

HM Inspector of Fire & Rescue Services

Service in numbers



Response

Buckinghamshire

England

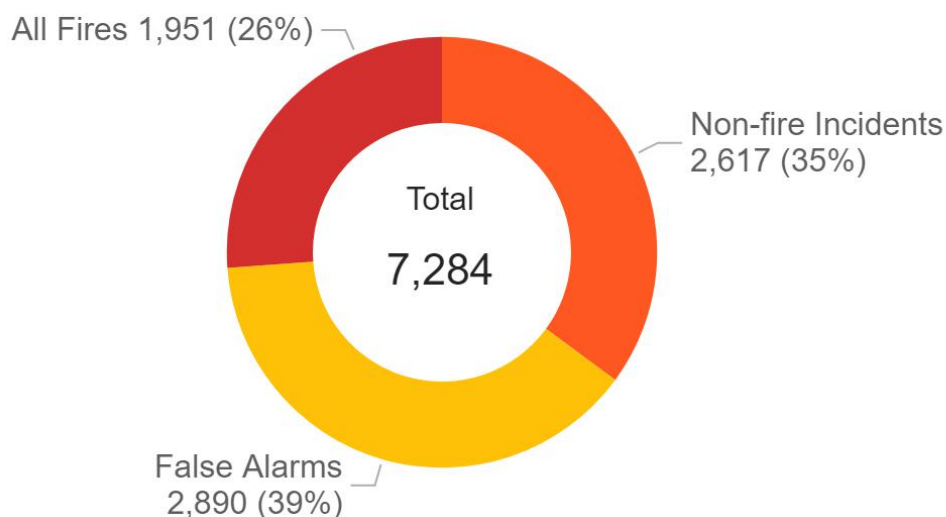
| | | |
|---|--------|--------|
| Incidents attended per 1,000 population Year ending 31 March 2021 | 8.91 | 9.16 |
| Home fire safety checks carried out by fire and rescue service per 1,000 population Year ending 31 March 2021 | 1.02 | 4.47 |
| Fire safety audits per 100 known premises Year ending 31 March 2020 | 1.97 | 2.55 |
| Average availability of pumps Year ending 31 March 2020 | 47.14% | 83.07% |



Cost

| | | |
|---|--------|--------|
| Firefighter cost per person per year Year ending 31 March 2020 | £20.08 | £23.82 |
|---|--------|--------|

Incidents attended in the year to 31 March 2021





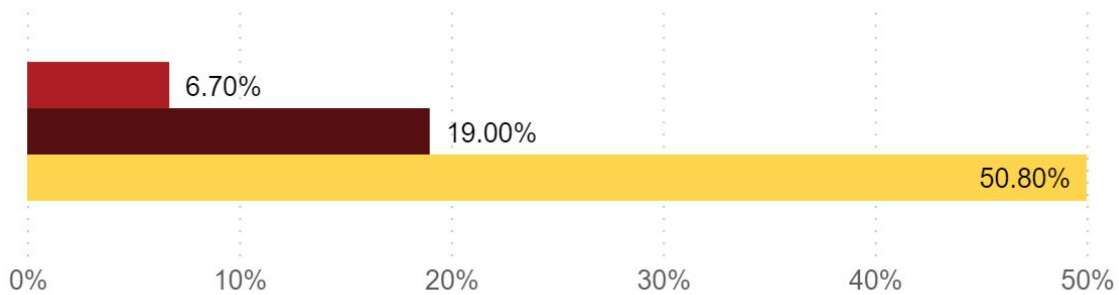
| | | |
|---|---------|--------|
| Five-year change in total workforce 2015 to 2020 | -15.22% | -5.30% |
|---|---------|--------|

| | | |
|---|------|------|
| Number of firefighters per 1,000 population Year ending 31 March 2020 | 0.44 | 0.63 |
|---|------|------|

| | | |
|--|--------|--------|
| Percentage of firefighters who are wholetime Year ending 31 March 2020 | 67.05% | 65.10% |
|--|--------|--------|

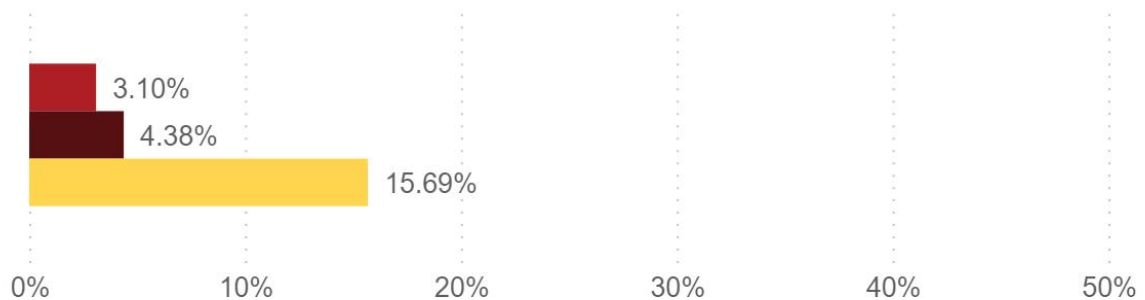
Percentage population, firefighters and workforce who are female as at 31 March 2020

Female ● Firefighters ● Workforce ● Local population



Percentage of population, firefighters, and workforce who are Black, Asian and minority ethnic (BAME) as at 31 March 2020

BAME ● Firefighters ● Workforce ● Local population



For more information on data and analysis throughout this report, please view the [‘About the data’ section of our website](#).

Effectiveness



How effective is the service at keeping people safe and secure?



Requires improvement

Summary

An effective fire and rescue service will identify and assess the full range of foreseeable fire and rescue risks its community faces. It should target its fire prevention and protection activities to those who are at greatest risk from fire, and make sure fire safety legislation is being enforced. And when the public calls for help, respond promptly with the right skills and equipment to deal with the incident effectively. Buckinghamshire Fire and Rescue Service's overall effectiveness requires improvement.

Buckinghamshire Fire and Rescue Service is a small and tightly resourced service. Staff work hard to keep people safe and secure. But the service doesn't have clear processes for prioritising its work. This means that it is not always focused on areas of highest risk and is less effective than it should be.

The service's [integrated risk management plan](#) (for 2020–25) doesn't explore the broad range of community risks in enough detail. The information the plan uses to identify risks is more limited than it used in its previous plans. And for those risks that it does identify, it doesn't lay out what the possible impacts of the risks are or how it intends to use its prevention, protection and response functions to address them. Accordingly, our assessment of this specific area has dropped from 'good' in our previous report to 'requires improvement'.

We are particularly concerned about low productivity in the service's prevention work. Staff in these teams told us that the system used to record their work is not fit for purpose, and we found little evidence of managerial oversight. We are particularly disappointed that the management of fire and wellness visits hasn't improved, given that this was raised in our previous inspection.

The service has an innovative approach for resourcing its response functions. It is based on the risks it has identified in the integrated risk management plan and on extensive research to identify patterns of demand, which it uses its engines and response staff flexibly to meet. It has increased its capacity and the availability of its immediate response fire engines since our first inspection. Accordingly, our assessment of this specific area has improved from 'requires improvement' in our first report to 'good'.

The service has done a good job of anticipating and planning for possible major risks and threats it may face – not just in its own service area, but also in neighbouring areas where it might be asked to respond in an emergency. It works well with the other two Thames Valley fire and rescue services, sharing information up to 10 km across borders, and is a valued member of the [local resilience forum \(LRF\)](#). It regularly carries out planned exercises for major and multi-agency incidents, including mass casualty, mass evacuation, wildfire and flooding.

Understanding the risk of fire and other emergencies



Requires improvement (2019: Good)

Buckinghamshire Fire and Rescue Service requires improvement at understanding risk.

Each fire and rescue service should identify and assess all foreseeable fire and rescue-related risks that could affect its communities. Arrangements should be put in place through the service's prevention, protection and response capabilities to prevent or mitigate these risks for the public.

Areas for improvement

- The service, through regular engagement with its local community, needs to build a more comprehensive profile of risk in its service area.
- The service should make sure its integrated risk management plan is informed by a comprehensive understanding of current and future risk. It should use a wide range of data to build the risk profile and use operational data to test that the risk profile is up-to-date.
- The service should make sure that the aims and objectives of prevention, protection and response activity are clearly outlined in its integrated risk management plan.

We set out our detailed findings below. These are the basis for our judgment of the service's performance in this area.

The service does not consider all of the risks it faces

The service hasn't fully assessed all the risks it faces as part of its most recent integrated risk management plan (IRMP), which it calls its public safety plan. This covers the years 2020–25. When assessing risk, it has only considered limited information from internal and external sources, which hasn't enabled it to build a comprehensive risk profile. For example, its previous plans considered demographic, health and lifestyle data to inform prevention activity. But this was not evident in its latest plan, which only considers information about the built environment and high impact but low frequency emergency events such as flooding. The public safety plan doesn't make it clear how the service intends to reduce the impact of these risks and understand community-level risk, as it does not include any aims for its prevention and protection activity.

The service has undertaken consultation with the public on its latest safety plan, but the returns to this were less than its previous consultations. The service's latest consultation, completed via an independent company, generated 58 online responses. Five focus groups were held to discuss the service's future, attended by 55 people in total. No changes were made to the IRMP following this consultation.

The service could do more to understand community risk

The service's [integrated risk management plan](#) doesn't fully identify the risks to the public, nor how they will be met. For example, the only vulnerability within the population that the service identifies is that the average age of the area's population is increasing. There is no explanation of the possible impact of this, or of the ways the service intends to mitigate the risk in support of this vulnerable group.

It isn't clear from the plan how the service intends to use its prevention, protection and response resources to reduce the risks and threats the community and the service face, either now or in the future. The public safety plan contains limited detail on what action the service plans to take in response to any anticipated change to risk levels in the future.

The service gathers information about the risks its firefighters face in response to incidents

The service collects information about the places and threats it has identified as being at greatest risk for its firefighters when they respond to an incident. The sample of this information that we reviewed was not always accurate and up-to-date. For example, information about short-term domestic risks that potentially put people at a higher risk in case of a fire, like a resident keeping medical cylinders in their home, was out of date or inaccurate. We heard that staff don't always trust the information is up-to-date and therefore don't always use it to inform their response plans.

The site-specific risk information that is collected isn't routinely communicated throughout the service and isn't readily available or understood by all staff. This process needs to be improved so that staff in prevention, protection and/or response roles can access the information they need. For example, the risk database includes information about the same building in different formats and locations. This means that the service can't effectively identify, reduce and mitigate all risks to

both the public, its firefighters and support staff when responding to an incident or conducting site visits.

The service is good at using information from operational incidents attended to improve its understanding of current and past risk

The service records and communicates risk information. It also routinely updates risk assessments and uses feedback from local and national operational activity to inform its planning assumptions. The service has a dedicated central team that conducts routine assessments of its incident response data and its known risks, to ensure its resource planning assumptions and allocations continue to be correct.

The service is ahead of schedule to improve its information about high-rise risk following the Grenfell Tower fire inquiry

During this round of inspections, we sampled how each fire and rescue service has responded to the recommendations and learning from phase one of the Grenfell Tower fire inquiry.

Buckinghamshire Fire and Rescue Service has responded positively and proactively to the lessons learned from this tragedy. The service is on track to having assessed the risk of each high-rise building in its service area by the end of 2021.

It has carried out a fire safety audit and collected and passed relevant risk information to its response teams about buildings identified as high risk and all high-rise buildings using cladding that is similar to the cladding installed on Grenfell Tower. But it doesn't always share this information with its prevention teams. Nor does it routinely make sure that its protection team is aware of new and emerging information about this risk. This means that the service isn't always effectively identifying, reducing and mitigating all the risk associated with high-rise premises.

Preventing fires and other risks



Requires improvement (2019: Requires improvement)

Buckinghamshire Fire and Rescue Service requires improvement at preventing fires and other risks.

Fire and rescue services must promote fire safety, including giving fire safety advice. To identify people at greatest risk from fire, services should work closely with other organisations in the public and voluntary sector, as well as with the police and ambulance services. They should provide intelligence and risk information with these other organisations when they identify vulnerability or exploitation.

Cause of concern

Prevention activity is not a sufficiently high priority for the service, and it is not adequately identifying those most at risk from fire.

Recommendations

By 30 September 2021, the service should have plans in place for:

- an effective system to define the levels of risk in the community;
- the revision of its prevention strategy in order that it clearly prioritises the people most at risk of fire and other emergencies, giving focus and direction to specialist teams; and
- the review of systems and processes for dealing with referrals from individuals and partner agencies. This is to make sure that they are managed effectively and those referrals with highest identified risk are prioritised.

Areas for improvement

- The service should understand the reasons for its decreasing number of prevention visits and consider how it can better target those who are most at risk of fire.
- The service should evaluate its prevention work, so it understands the benefits better.

We set out our detailed findings below. These are the basis for our judgment of the service's performance in this area.

Prevention activity is not a priority for the service

The service's prevention plan isn't clearly aligned with the risks in its IRMP. The prevention plan was developed before the public safety plan and there is no evidence that it has been reviewed since. The plan is high-level and doesn't include details about how it should be delivered by the prevention department and response teams in a joined-up way. Nor does it explain how it will result in a reduction of risk for those most vulnerable to fire and other emergencies.

We are concerned by the decline in the number of prevention visits carried out by the service since 2016. As of March 2020, just prior to the pandemic, the service was carrying out 2.02 visits per 1,000 population, which was well below the national average of 10.17. This problem, which we raised in our previous inspection in 2019, has yet to be addressed. We recognise that much of this time was during the pandemic but the area for improvement remains.

We found that specialist teams and firefighters were unclear about what work they should prioritise and we found little evidence of management oversight of their productivity. The system used to record prevention activity was repeatedly described by staff as not fit for purpose and the information that is used to manage the service's fire and wellness visits is difficult to access and analyse. We are disappointed to see

that the service hasn't changed the way it co-ordinates its fire and wellness visits, which we heard could be improved during the last inspection.

Prevention work happens in isolation and is not well co-ordinated and we found little evidence of relevant information being provided to the service's protection and response functions. For example, although thorough protection activity had been conducted in several of the county's high-rise residential buildings, there had only been 30 domestic fire safety checks (fire and wellness visits) to these buildings. As a result, [vulnerable people](#) and others may not be getting the support they need.

The service hasn't improved its approach to targeting people who are most at risk from fire

The service doesn't have a clear, risk-based approach that enables it to direct prevention activity towards the people most at risk from fire and other emergencies. Although the service has developed a scoring system for incoming referrals to the fire and wellness visit programme, we found evidence that visits aren't consistently being prioritised based on risk. The service identifies its ageing population as a potential risk within its public safety plan, but its risk scoring means that an occupant over the age of 80 who requests a home visit but has no other identified risk will not receive one.

The service has developed local station area action plans, which use a wider set of data to identify areas for targeted prevention work. Despite this, the station area action plans are yet to be implemented throughout the service and it is not clear how they will be co-ordinated and monitored by local management.

The service did well to adapt its prevention activity during COVID-19

We considered how the service adapted its prevention work during our COVID-19 specific inspection in November 2020. At that time, we found it had adapted its public prevention work appropriately. Since then, we are encouraged to find that the service continued to provide face-to-face fire and wellness visits for those most vulnerable to fire, where it was safe and necessary to do so. If this wasn't possible, or if the resident didn't want an in-person visit, telephone advice was provided. The service has recorded those residents who have not been visited, but has not yet decided how to address this. The service staff supporting vaccination and test centres also took the opportunity to speak to people about fire safety.

The service is proactive in identifying and reporting safeguarding concerns

The service is still well connected to the local [safeguarding](#) boards and multi-agency panels. Staff we interviewed told us about occasions when they had identified safeguarding problems. They told us they feel confident and trained to act appropriately and promptly. We saw evidence of training and development plans for recognising and identifying safeguarding concerns and reporting these to the appropriate safeguarding team at the local council. These are well planned and the training is to the appropriate level.

The service could do more to work with others in reducing the risk of fire and other emergencies

The service doesn't routinely exchange information with relevant organisations about people and groups at greatest risk. It works with some local organisations including housing associations, local councils, Thames Valley Police and South Central Ambulance Service, but they are not always approached when they should be to provide support to individuals identified who need it, for example, from mental health services. The service works with these agencies inconsistently and as a result, it isn't using all available opportunities to prevent fires and other emergencies in its communities.

We found examples of where referrals hadn't been made to other organisations where it would have been expected by the service. Referrals that had been made included to the falls team, to the sensory impairment service for a hearing-impaired device, and to the local service that provides telecare equipment. Proactive working with other organisations has reduced since the last inspection, in part due to COVID-19.

The service is now providing less road safety education

The service has identified road-related safety issues by analysing its incident data and comparing it with Thames Valley Police and South Central Ambulance incident information. But we were told that this doesn't currently direct the approach the service takes to delivering road safety education. A joint project between these services has now come to an end, but it resulted in a bespoke role to provide road safety education. The service should do more to support the local approach that it hopes to take.

The service is tackling fire-setting behaviour

The service has recognised an increasing trend in arson within the county and has worked with Thames Valley Police to manage this. Some of this work had to stop due to COVID-19 and there are now fewer members of staff skilled in fire-setter intervention. The service should continue to do more to ensure this activity remains effective.

The service is yet to fully evaluate its prevention activity

We found limited evidence that the service evaluates how effective its activity is or makes sure all its communities get equal access to prevention activity that meets their needs. For example, a draft evaluation report has been developed since the last inspection that includes an initial analysis of prevention activity. We were disappointed to find that the service is yet to fully complete this evaluation or implement any changes from its findings. As a result, the service is missing opportunities to improve what it provides to the public.

Protecting the public through fire regulation



Requires improvement (2019: Requires improvement)

Buckinghamshire Fire and Rescue Service requires improvement at protecting the public through fire regulation.

All fire and rescue services should assess fire risks in certain buildings and, when necessary, require building owners to comply with fire safety legislation. Each service decides how many assessments it does each year. But it must have a locally determined, risk-based inspection programme for enforcing the legislation.

Areas for improvement

- The service should make sure that it uses its increased levels of resources to meet the priorities set out in its risk-based inspection programme.
- The service should make sure it has an effective quality assurance process, so staff carry out audits to an appropriate standard.
- The service should review its response to false alarms (called ‘unwanted fire signals’) to ensure operational resources are used effectively.
- The service should make sure it plans its work with local businesses and large organisations to share information and expectations on how they can comply with fire safety regulations.

We set out our detailed findings below. These are the basis for our judgment of the service’s performance in this area.

The service has done a good job of increasing its number of qualified staff

The service has increased its number of qualified protection staff from 10 in March 2019 to 19 at the time of our inspection. This enables the service to provide the range of audit and enforcement activity needed, both now and in the future.

Staff get the right training and work towards the appropriate accreditation. The service continues to comply with the [National Fire Chiefs Council](#) competency framework for business fire safety advisors. The service should make sure it continues to support the development and direction of this newly established team.

COVID-19 had a limited impact on protection activity

We considered how the service had adapted its protection activity during our COVID-19 specific inspection in November 2020. At that time, we found it had adapted its protection work well. Since then, we are encouraged to find that the service has continued to use some of the new virtual contact methods to carry out inspections and has continued to support staff to develop their abilities in face-to-face audit inspections, completing audits, issuing notices and enforcing action when appropriate.

The service is ahead of schedule to audit all high-rise premises clad with aluminium composite material (ACM)

Audits have been carried out at all high-rise buildings the service has identified as having cladding that is similar to the cladding installed on Grenfell Tower. Information gathered during these audits is made available to response teams and control operators, enabling them to respond more effectively in an emergency.

The service is on track to visit all the high-rise, high-risk buildings it has identified in its service area, both Buckinghamshire and Milton Keynes, by the end of 2021.

The service provides proportionate enforcement activity and works with others to support its capacity

The service consistently uses its full range of enforcement powers and, when appropriate, prosecutes those who don't comply with fire safety regulations. A specific enforcement and training officer role has been added to the team's structure to support the service in its enforcement activity. In addition, the service works closely with other enforcement agencies to regulate fire safety and routinely exchanges risk information with them. It is actively using the local council's legal support services to follow up on prosecution cases.

In the year to 31 March 2020, the service issued 3 alteration notices, 11 enforcement notices, 13 prohibition notices and undertook 1 prosecution. We were told by the service that it has eleven other prosecution cases pending court dates.

The service is improving its response to building consultations

The service has improved its performance in commenting on fire safety arrangements at new and altered buildings. In the year to the end of March 2020, the service was only able to complete 46.1 percent of the building consultations it received – and it received far fewer that year than in previous years. Encouragingly, the situation has improved throughout 2020, despite the pandemic. The service has been able to respond to 88.6 percent of building consultations within the required timeframe. The service also received a record number of licencing requests in the year ending March 2021 and has responded to 93.5 percent of these within the required timeframe.

The service's protection strategy is not being used to direct its work

The service's protection strategy isn't clearly linked to the risks identified in its IRMP. Although it has a broad protection policy statement, which has been revised in light of the new public safety plan, the protection plan hasn't been reviewed or updated. The protection team have an action plan for the year ahead, but some of these actions are not aligned with the strategy, and some do not clearly set out what level of activity will be carried out or how the benefits for the public of this activity will be evaluated.

Protection activity generally happens in isolation rather than across the whole service. It appears that operational staff don't conduct any protection activity unless they are in a specific role within the specialist protection team. The staff survey conducted for the service by an external consultant in February 2020 identified the need to better

establish ways of working across the service's different departments. Information isn't always and accurately shared between the service's protection, prevention and response functions.

It is unclear how the service aligns its activity to risk

The service has recently reviewed its risk-based inspection programme, but this has not yet been implemented. We were told that the service plans to pilot this revised programme for three months from July 2021 and will then allocate resources according to the findings of the pilot.

The service has no set target for the number of high-risk premises it must audit. Staff told us that they are unclear about which activities to prioritise, with the result that some high-risk premises may not receive the protection activity they need.

The number of audits conducted in the year ending March 2020 was 267. This is a reduction from the previous year in which 360 audits were conducted. We were told that the new risk-based inspection programme has identified 1,458 premises for inspection from June 2021. Of these, 8 percent of visits are already complete. We are concerned that the service hasn't completed its review of the risk-based inspection programme before determining the resources it needs.

The service needs to do more to adopt quality-assurance to its activity and to raise the quality of its audits

We reviewed a range of audits of different premises throughout the service. This included audits as part of the service's risk-based inspection programme after fires at premises where fire safety legislation applies, where enforcement action had been taken, and at high-rise, high-risk buildings. Not all of the audits we reviewed were completed in a consistent and systematic way.

Only limited quality assurance of the service's protection activity takes place. The process relies on verbal discussions about audit findings and activity. We were told that this conversational approach is supportive for developing protection officers, but it is recognised that it doesn't provide consistency across a geographically dispersed and separated team.

The service doesn't have good evaluation tools in place to measure its effectiveness or to make sure all sections of its communities get equal access to protection services that meet their needs.

The service has increased the ways in which it works with businesses to help them understand and comply with fire safety legislation

The service now has designated team members for working with businesses and has increased its activity with large organisations. An example of this is that it organised a Thames Valley online information seminar for the region's care home organisations. This service could still do more to engage with local businesses and other organisations to promote compliance with fire safety legislation. And it needs to better co-ordinate and monitor the effect its activity has to understand how it reduces risk.

The service has made no progress in reducing its attendance at false alarms ('unwanted fire signals')

The service has continued to respond to all automatic fire alarm activations – in the year ending March 2021, 2,890 false alarms had been attended, which means that 39 percent of the service's activity was taken up in responding to false alarms. This means that engines may be unavailable to respond to genuine incidents because they are attending false alarms. It also creates a risk to the public if more fire engines travel at high speed on roads to respond to these incidents.

We are disappointed that the service has made no change to this policy and therefore has made no progress in addressing the area for improvement identified in 2019. As such, the area for improvement remains.

Responding to fires and other emergencies



Good (2019: Requires improvement)

Buckinghamshire Fire and Rescue Service is good at responding to fires and other emergencies.

Fire and rescue services must be able to respond to a range of incidents such as fires, road traffic collisions and other emergencies within their areas.

In the year to 31 December 2020, the service responded to 7,458 incidents. This equates to 9.17 incidents per 1,000 population, which is comparable to the England rate of 9.39 over the same period. As of March 2021, the service had 19 fire stations and 30 fire engines, as well as 2 swift water rescue boat teams and four [urban search and rescue](#) vehicles. Its public safety plan (2020–25) identifies that it intends to maintain these.

We have graded the service's response to fires and other emergencies as good, but we still have concerns that the approach the service takes to maintain this unique operational model has negative impacts for its overall availability (both wholetime and on-call fire engines) and its productivity in prevention and protection.

Areas for improvement

- The service should assure itself that it understands what resources it reasonably requires to meet its foreseeable risk; it should make sure that all of its fire engines can be sufficiently resourced, if required.
- The service should make sure it consistently gives relevant information to the public to help keep them safe during and after all incidents.

We set out our detailed findings below. These are the basis for our judgment of the service's performance in this area.

The service's response plan takes a unique and innovative approach

The service's response plan is linked to the risks it identifies in its public safety plan. The extensive research conducted to develop its unique resourcing model is regularly reviewed through the strategic management board. Its fire engines and other vehicles and response staff, as well as its working patterns, are designed and located to enable the service to respond flexibly to fires and other emergencies with the appropriate resources. The service states that on 99 percent of occasions it will need 12 or fewer fire engines to respond to daily demand. The service maintains 18 additional flexible resilience fire engines to support the service's response for the 1 percent of occasions when it may need more.

The service meets its immediate availability standard

The service aims to have 12 fire engines ready for immediate use to cover its daily demand. Additional 'when needed' crews are available on 'delayed turnout' of 20 minutes, 60 minutes or up to three hours. These can be called on to respond to incidents or provide cover arrangements. This is known as the second, third and fourth lines of availability.

The service reports that 99 percent of the time, it has had (at least) the 12 fire engines immediately available that it needs to respond to daily demand. Therefore, the service consistently meets that standard and this has improved since our first inspection. It is due to this improvement in immediate response that the previous area for improvement has been closed.

The service meets national response standards of performance

Home Office data shows that in the year to 31 March 2020, the average (mean) time that it took the service to attend a [primary fire](#) was 9 minutes and 41 seconds. This is in line with the national average for services that include both rural and urban areas.

We reported in our round one inspection that the service's approach to reporting attendance times could theoretically lead to an increase in its response times. In actuality, the service has seen a reduction in its average response time in the year ending March 2021.

The service's overall availability is negatively affected by its low on-call figures

In the year to 31 March 2020, the service's overall fire engine availability was 47.1 percent, which is very low compared to other services. While its 12 wholetime crewed fire engines were almost always available, its additional 18 on-call fire engines were only available 24.3 percent of the time.

We are not satisfied that the service has a plan to maintain the long-term viability of its additional 18 resilience fire engines. It is unclear why the service needs so many additional fire engines when its daily demand pattern is consistently met with 12 available fire engines. The service continues to see a reduction in its [on-call staff](#) and has no plans to address this trend.

The service has good command of incidents

The service has trained incident commanders who are assessed regularly and appropriately. Incident command is standardised via documentation in the incident command pack and by uploading decision logs to a central point so that command officers can be provided with continuing support through learning reviews and training days. As part of our inspection, we reviewed the service's recently implemented Learning Review Command reports, which were comprehensive and shared throughout the service. This allowed the service to recently identify a training need relating to the incident command pack, and it quickly implemented a plan to improve the problem. This process enables the service to safely, assertively and effectively manage the whole range of incidents that it could face, from small and routine ones to complex multi-agency incidents.

As part of our inspection, we interviewed incident commanders throughout the service. Those we spoke to were familiar with risk-assessing, decision-making and recording information at incidents in line with national best practice, as well as with conforming to the [Joint Emergency Services Interoperability Principles \(JESIP\)](#).

The service has a positive relationship with Thames Valley Fire Control

We were pleased to see that the service's control staff are integrated into the service's command, training, exercise, debrief and assurance activity. Thames Valley Fire Control is a joint [control room](#) for Buckinghamshire, Oxfordshire and Royal Berkshire fire and rescue services. Staff in control described a positive relationship with Buckinghamshire FRS, including involvement in regular assurance meetings and invitations to attend debriefs and learn from incidents.

The service has established an agreement throughout the Thames Valley Fire Services to [mobilise](#) across borders, making sure that the quickest fire engine is always sent, no matter where the incident occurs. This has a positive effect on Thames Valley Fire Control, which is able to deploy resources promptly and effectively.

Thames Valley Fire Control is developing its ability to handle fire survival guidance calls

The control room staff were confident they could provide fire survival guidance to many callers simultaneously. This was identified as learning for fire services after the Grenfell Tower fire. Staff interviewed described recent training exercises and the use of its back-up control systems to support multiple fire survival guidance calls should this type of incident occur.

Control has good systems in place via Airwave radio and it is trialling video calling, which they described as being predominantly promoted by Buckinghamshire FRS, to exchange real-time risk information with incident commanders, other responding partners and other supporting fire and rescue services. Maintaining good situational awareness enables the service to communicate effectively with the public, providing them with accurate and tailored advice.

The service maintains and regularly updates information about risk to firefighters

We sampled a range of risk information cards and logs on the service's centrally co-ordinated database, including what is in place for firefighters responding to incidents at high-risk, high-rise buildings and what information is held by fire control.

The information we reviewed was in the main detailed and had recently been updated. For example, the service provides recent photographic, mapped and written information about these sites, which is then quickly refreshed on the [mobile data terminals](#) used on the ground at incidents. Staff reported that the system is easily accessed and understood, but that there are sometimes inconsistencies in the quality of some site data.

The service intends to integrate information for response, prevention and protection into one accessible system so that all potential risk information, including that of medical cylinder use or short-term domestic risks, is available to all staff.

The service is good at evaluating its operational performance and is aligning with [national operational guidance](#)

As part of the inspection, we reviewed a range of emergency incidents and training events. These included a multi-agency incident on the railway, a single domestic dwelling incident, an incident at a commercial property, and a training exercise within a high-rise building.

We were pleased to see the service routinely follows its policies to assure itself that staff command incidents in line with operational guidance. Internal risk information is updated with the information received. The service collates operational learning into an operational assurance newsletter and other documentation that is shared throughout the service and mandatory for all staff to read. The quarterly strategic performance monitoring board reviews operational learning and shares this regularly with the [fire authority](#). This information is exchanged with other interested bodies such as South Central Ambulance Service and Thames Valley Police.

The service has responded to learning from incidents to improve its service for the public. For example, we were told about an information leaflet that can be provided to members of the public who have assisted at traumatic incidents and that includes information about support for what they have witnessed. The service also uses the LRF warning and informing group to make sure standardised and appropriate messaging is communicated in the event of a major incident.

We were encouraged to see that the service is contributing towards, and acting on, learning from other fire and rescue services and operational learning gathered from other emergency service partners. The service undertook a comprehensive gap analysis to ensure service policy aligns with national operational guidance. The service has also jointly implemented the Thames Valley Action Plan for the Grenfell Tower Inquiry recommendations; active use of nationally recognised declaration of tactical modes; and a recently reviewed incident policy for marauding terrorist attacks developed by the Thames Valley resilience forum.

The ways in which the service keeps the public informed are inconsistent

The service relies on the LRF systems to inform the public about ongoing incidents and help keep them safe during and after incidents. It does provide communication training to incident commanders and makes efforts to use social media platforms such as Twitter and its external website to update the public about some ongoing incidents. It has links with local radio and press to provide information when appropriate. This needs to be applied consistently across all incidents and platforms to provide information to the public about incidents, exercises and safety concerns.

Responding to major and multi-agency incidents



Good (2019: Good)

Buckinghamshire Fire and Rescue Service is good at responding to major and multi-agency incidents.

All fire and rescue services must be able to respond effectively to multi-agency and cross-border incidents. This means working with other fire and rescue services (known as intraoperability) and emergency services (known as interoperability).

We set out our detailed findings below. These are the basis for our judgment of the service's performance in this area.

The service is well prepared for major and multi-agency incidents

The service has effectively anticipated and considered the reasonably foreseeable risks and threats it may face. These risks are listed in both local and national risk registers as part of its integrated risk management planning. For example, the service identifies major infrastructure projects such as HS2, the impact of flooding, cyber security and the risk of attacks on technology, both in its own risk assessments and as part of the LRF.

It is also familiar with the significant risks that could be faced by neighbouring fire and rescue services that it might reasonably be asked to respond to in an emergency. It is good that the service has standardised its predetermined response for high-rise buildings throughout the three Thames Valley Fire Services. Firefighters have access to risk information from neighbouring services via the fire engine mobile data terminals, control mobilising software and [Resilience Direct](#). The service shares risk information up to 10 km across borders via an agreed and centralised email-sharing system, and that it is looking to align the three Thames Valley mobile data terminals to improve interoperability.

The service has a good ability to respond to major and multi-agency incidents

We reviewed the arrangements for responding to different major incidents, including flooding, high-rise and a specific multi-agency railway incident. The service has good arrangements in place, which are well understood by staff. For example, the service has routine and regular planned exercises for a variety of incident types including mass casualty, mass evacuation, wildfire and flooding.

We were able to follow up on our review of how the service responded to the COVID-19 pandemic. The service continues to play a vital role in the support of its local health services and co-ordination of vaccination centres. The service's continuing support of these is highly commendable.

The service works well with other fire services

The service supports other fire and rescue services in responding to emergency incidents. For example, the service has specially trained [national inter-agency liaison officers](#), which are a shared resource to support the Thames Valley region. It also has an urban search and rescue unit, and specialist tactical advisors available for deployment locally and nationally. It is interoperable with these services and can form part of a multi-agency response.

The service has successfully deployed to other services and has used national assets, such as its urban search and rescue capability and swift water rescue capability.

The service works well with other partners

The service has good arrangements in place to respond to emergencies with other partners that make up the Thames Valley LRF. These arrangements include the continuing development and nurturing of the relationships between the agencies so that in the event of a major or multi-agency incident the service knows who will take on what role. This was evident in the response to the COVID-19 pandemic and during the flood of December 2020.

The service is a valued partner and is an active member in many of the LRF's working groups, including training, communications, mass casualty, and the warning and informing group. The service takes part in regular training events with other members of the LRF and uses the learning to develop planning assumptions about responding to major and multi-agency incidents. Prior to COVID-19, the service took part in a flu pandemic tabletop exercise with LRF partners. Staff described the partnership as very strong.

The service has a well-established cross-border exercise plan

The service has a cross-border exercise plan with neighbouring fire and rescue services so that they can work together effectively to keep the public safe. The plan includes the risks of major events at which the service could foreseeably provide support or request assistance from neighbouring services, such as at Silverstone Circuit or Pinewood Studios. We were encouraged to see that feedback from these exercises is used to inform risk information and service plans.

The three Thames Valley services meet regularly and review and align their procedures, equipment and practices wherever possible. They recently undertook a joint training exercise at the Fire Service College and are awaiting an independent evaluation of their command structures and shared polices. The shared control room means that the nearest fire engine to an incident is mobilised first and the three services often jointly respond to incidents across their borders, using their aligned equipment and fire engines.

The service has adopted JESIP

The incident commanders we interviewed had been trained in and were familiar with the JESIP.

The service could provide us with strong evidence that it consistently follows these principles. This includes the service recently testing staff on their knowledge to identify if further learning was required, and the operational assurance team attending incidents to monitor and assure application of the principles. JESIP is included in all levels of incident command courses, from a level 1 e-learning awareness package to level 4 multi-agency gold incident command (MAGIC).

The service listens to and applies learning from national incidents and practices

The service keeps itself up-to-date with joint operational learning updates from other fire services and [national operational learning](#) from other 'blue light' partners, such as the police force and ambulance trusts. This learning is used to inform planning assumptions that have been made with other partners.

Efficiency



How efficient is the service at keeping people safe and secure?



Requires improvement

Summary

An efficient fire and rescue service will manage its budget and use its resources properly and appropriately. It will align its resources to the risks and priorities identified in its [integrated risk management plan](#). It should try to achieve value for money and keep costs down without compromising public safety. It should make the best possible use of its resources to achieve better outcomes for the public. Plans should be based on robust and realistic assumptions about income and costs. Buckinghamshire Fire and Rescue Service's overall efficiency requires improvement.

The service remains in a similar financial position as it was in our first inspection in 2019. Its lean operational response model, combined with an increase in capacity, has addressed our previous cause of concern. The service maintains its 12 immediately available fire engines on nearly all occasions; this is a significant improvement from our first inspection.

However, the response model is supported by spending from its [reserves](#). The service hopes that its income will increase in the future, but it is not sufficiently addressing its current shortfalls to effectively allocate resource to risk. This gives us concerns about whether the service's model, and in particular its 18 additional resilience fire engines, are long-lasting over time.

This model is having negative effects on staff throughout the service. Staff are working hard to do what they can within the resources they have, but some teams are overstretched and aren't getting the support they need to do their work effectively, improve their processes, increase productivity and develop their careers.

These concerns are acknowledged by the service, but the lack of a clear plan for improving this situation is leading to staff feeling frustrated and to low productivity in its statutory functions of prevention and protection. The service needs to improve this situation by setting clear priorities for what it wants to achieve with the resources it has

to make the best use of them. It should also do more to use its existing collaborations and explore new opportunities.

Making best use of resources



Requires improvement (2019: Requires improvement)

Buckinghamshire Fire and Rescue Service requires improvement at making best use of its resources.

Fire and rescue services should manage their resources properly and appropriately, aligning those resources to meet the services' risks and statutory responsibilities. They should make best possible use of their resources to achieve better outcomes for the public.

The service knows its main financial risks and has developed and delivers a unique demand-risk-led model of operational response. The service's budget for 2020/21 is £28.1 million. This is a 3.3 percent increase from the previous financial year.

Areas for improvement

- The service should have effective measures in place to assure itself that its workforce is productive, that their time is used as efficiently and effectively as possible and in a more joined up way to meet the priorities in the IRMP.
- The service should actively seek further collaboration opportunities with other Thames Valley fire services, to achieve value for money and better outcomes for the public.

We set out our detailed findings below. These are the basis for our judgment of the service's performance in this area.

The service plans to deal flexibly with its immediate financial difficulty

Since our previous inspection, the service has worked hard to address the cause of concern and increase its capacity to meet its IRMP. The service conducted a consultation with the public about its financial situation before publication of the latest version of this plan. Although there has been a slight increase in the service's income, it has been able to make additional financial savings. It has reallocated this resource to significantly increase its protection team, recruit more firefighters and provide additional resource to its prevention team.

The service sometimes uses its resources well to manage risk, but there are still weaknesses that need addressing. For example, it is positive that the service has carried out a [zero-based budgeting](#) exercise (where all expenditure has to be justified, rather than assuming that previous spending should continue); this has enabled it to recruit additional apprentice firefighters and staff within its prevention and protection teams. The service's response model is still reliant on the use of some overtime and a formalised 'bank shift' system (a secondary contract to work as and when there is a

shortage in the service), which allows flexibility for the service but presents challenges and requires significant resources to manage. Currently the use of 'bank shifts' and maintaining the availability of fire engines is managed by a team of six support staff and [watch](#) managers.

The service's plans, including allocating resources to prevention, protection and response activities, aren't consistent with the limited risks and priorities identified in the IRMP. For example, the service needs to identify those most at risk from fire in order to better target activity at those most vulnerable.

The service's immediate financial plans are built on sound scenario planning. They help make sure it endures in the short term and are underpinned by financial controls that reduce the risk of misusing public money. The service has recently introduced a financial plan that lays out scenarios based on possible changes to future income and anticipated increases in expenditure. These scenarios help the service to plan and understand how it will meet its short-term gaps in funding.

The service could do more to increase its productivity and improve its ways of working

We were encouraged to see the improvements the service has made since the last inspection to the appraisal of individuals. We are pleased to see that the arrangements for managing performance clearly link individual development to the service's most important aims. Managers reported having had training in the personal development review process and most staff reported having positive conversations with their line managers to support individual performance. Staff don't fully understand how their individual performance contributes to the strategic direction.

The service has considered and implemented new ways of working. For example, it has introduced a 'flexi firefighter contract', which enables staff to work a more flexible shift pattern. The COVID-19 pandemic necessitated changes to working practices, which are being incorporated into the service's 'business as usual'. These include supporting staff whose roles allow them to work from home or at other remote locations by providing the technology to easily access systems and processes.

The service should do more to make sure its workforce is as productive as possible in all work areas. For example, we heard that operational staff do limited prevention and protection activity and that there are areas where the service has manual processes that could be automated. Staff felt unsure of what to prioritise, how much work there was overall, and what more they could be doing to contribute towards the service's overall outputs and to address the needs of the community. Prevention and protection priorities are not clearly understood and it is difficult for staff to be confident that they are focusing their activities in the areas where they will add most value.

The service relies heavily on its 'bank shift'. On average, 25 to 30 percent of the response model is made up of staff carrying out 'bank shifts'. It is dependent on its workforce completing these 'bank shifts' to maintain its 12 immediately available fire engines.

The service collaborates when possible

We are pleased to see that the service meets its statutory duty to collaborate and routinely considers opportunities to collaborate with other emergency responders. It continues to collaborate on joint purchasing, and told us that the three Thames Valley fire and rescue services are to collaborate on the procurement of breathing apparatus equipment, aligning the services' response and operations models.

The Blue Light Hub became occupied by the three emergency services (Buckinghamshire FRS, Thames Valley Police and South Central Ambulance Service) during the pandemic which has encouraged joint activity. The service is looking to further collaboration through this project. The service is also working on its upcoming wide area network/local area network (WAN/LAN) upgrade in collaboration with the local council and NHS.

Throughout the pandemic, the service has been significant in co-ordinating, leading and delivering activity including vaccination and test centres, and food parcel collection and delivery, and has been ready and willing to provide drivers to the South Central Ambulance Service. The service is looking to continue this collaborative approach beyond the pandemic recovery and hopes to continue to have several staff become qualified in both firefighting operations and a basic level of paramedic response.

Though we are satisfied that the service monitors, reviews and evaluates the benefits and results of its collaborations, this is sometimes limited in scope. The service has identified areas from which it can learn and from which it has made savings, such as in the joint Thames Valley Control room, but it doesn't always apply this learning to improve its decision-making. The Blue Light Hub currently has unoccupied space and the project is currently forecast to overspend. The service explained that the learning from the recent development of its headquarters site identified the need for more space for its staff. But as this has not yet been implemented, the additional floor at the Blue Light Hub remains unoccupied and the service has yet to benefit from its additional investment. The service should continue to actively seek collaboration opportunities with other fire services to achieve value for money and better results for the public.

The service has good continuity arrangements

The service continues to have good continuity arrangements in place for areas where threats and risks are considered high. These threats and risks are regularly reviewed and tested so that staff are aware of the arrangements and their associated responsibilities. The service's flu pandemic plans were detailed enough that it was able to provide an initial robust response. It reviewed these plans during the COVID-19 pandemic and has updated them during the recovery phase.

Thames Valley Control have robust and regularly tested business continuity arrangements in place in case of disruption, cyber-attack or a major incident requiring multiple fire survival guidance calls or a national response.

The service shows sound financial management, but it could make improvement in its resource allocation

There are regular reviews to consider all the service's expenditure, including its non-pay costs. And this scrutiny makes sure the service gets value for money. For example, the business case for the WAN/LAN essential upgrade was challenged at both the senior management board and [fire authority](#) board. The service has 'growth and saving' bid processes twice a year to make sure its spending is within the limits of the IRMP.

The service's current financial position means that some of its departments have reduced significantly. This is having a disproportionate impact on performance within these areas. We heard that staff feel under pressure and that they need additional resources to be able to provide the best service possible to the public.

Staffing of the response model can be a struggle, although improvements have been made, including the recruitment of new apprentices. The service is having to make difficult decisions and it is struggling to provide enough support to its main functions such as prevention and protection, especially skilled and experienced staff. In important areas such as procurement, efficiencies are being made through national initiatives and contracts, but these savings are not large enough to fund the increase in the number of firefighters the service states it needs. The service continues to be creative and do more with less, as is shown by its support during the COVID-19 pandemic.

The service could do more to make sure that important areas, including estates and fleet, are in a position to make efficiency gains. The fleet strategy is due for review in 2022 and the estate strategy is due for review in 2023. The service could be more ambitious in its future plans to make increased savings.

Making the fire and rescue service affordable now and in the future



Requires improvement (2019: Requires improvement)

Buckinghamshire Fire and Rescue Service requires improvement at making itself affordable now and in the future.

Fire and rescue services should continuously look for ways to improve their effectiveness and efficiency. This includes transforming how they work and improving their value for money. Services should have robust spending plans that reflect future financial challenges and efficiency opportunities and should invest in better services for the public.

Areas for improvement

- The service needs to assure itself that it is maximising opportunities to improve workforce productivity and develop future capacity through use of innovation, including the use of appropriate and up-to-date technology.
- The service should have a clear and sustainable strategic plan for the use of its reserves, which promotes new ways of working.
- The service needs to make sure that its fleet and estate strategies are regularly reviewed and evaluated to maximise potential efficiencies.

We set out our detailed findings below. These are the basis for our judgment of the service's performance in this area.

The service works hard to continually improve value for money and do more with less

We are encouraged to see the improvements the service has made since the last inspection. It has developed a sound understanding of future financial challenges. It plans to mitigate its main or significant financial risks. The previous area for improvement regarding this has been fully met. It is working hard both at a national and local level to secure an increase in the flexibility of the council tax precept (the share of council tax proceeds allocated to the service). It uses additional grant money wisely to invest in current opportunities.

The underpinning assumptions are relatively robust, realistic and prudent, and take account of the wider external environment and some scenario planning for future spending reductions. These include the cessation of the revenue grants for [urban search and rescue](#) and the impact of pending pension rulings.

We are pleased to see that the service has identified savings and investment opportunities to improve its service to the public or generate further savings. It has conducted a zero-based budgeting exercise to realise savings and will continue to do so regularly in the future. It has also introduced a business transformation and programme management office to maintain the alignment, progress and efficiency of its major change projects.

Reserves are reducing significantly

The service's plan for its reserves is unclear and isn't sustainable. We heard that the service is anticipating that its reserves will reduce from £4.6m to £2.8m over the coming year and these will continue to decrease if the council tax precept doesn't rise. The service has set aside funding for its main business continuity project of upgrading its WAN/LAN infrastructure and to establish a leadership development programme. It also sets aside part of its reserves to continue to fund the shared control room. With a reduction in reserves, it's unlikely that the service can invest in new, large-scale, future capital projects in fleet, estates or technology, such as that seen for the development of the Blue Light Hub.

Fleet and estates are affected by the reducing reserves

The service has fleet and estates strategies, but these don't exploit opportunities to improve efficiency and effectiveness presented by changes in fleet and estate provision. This is due in part to the service's reduced reserves, which may not allow for investment in future capital projects. The senior management team are yet to review the strategies beyond 2022 and 2023.

The service showed us evidence of the way it is assessing the possible impact on risk of changes in estate and fleet provision or future innovation. It has identified the need to improve or redevelop one of its stations. The local council offered the service the opportunity to relocate to a new site. Through thorough planning and assessment, the service identified that the relocation to this particular site would have a significant impact on response times in the local area, negatively affecting the public in the case of an emergency and it is now seeking an alternative option.

Transformation is stifled by the limited future funding scenario

Although the service has invested in some technological solutions to improve its efficiency, these have not resulted in the savings it may have hoped for. It rarely considers how changes in technology and future innovation can improve the efficiency and effectiveness of its workforce. The business and integrated systems project introduced in 2019 has not delivered on the integration of all systems as intended. We were told that it was successful in reducing workloads and processes in the finance, payroll and HR functions. But neither the upgrade of the premises risk management system nor that for fleet and estates management resulted in all of the anticipated improvements for prevention, protection and response. There is little or no consideration of exploiting such opportunities throughout the service due to financial constraints.

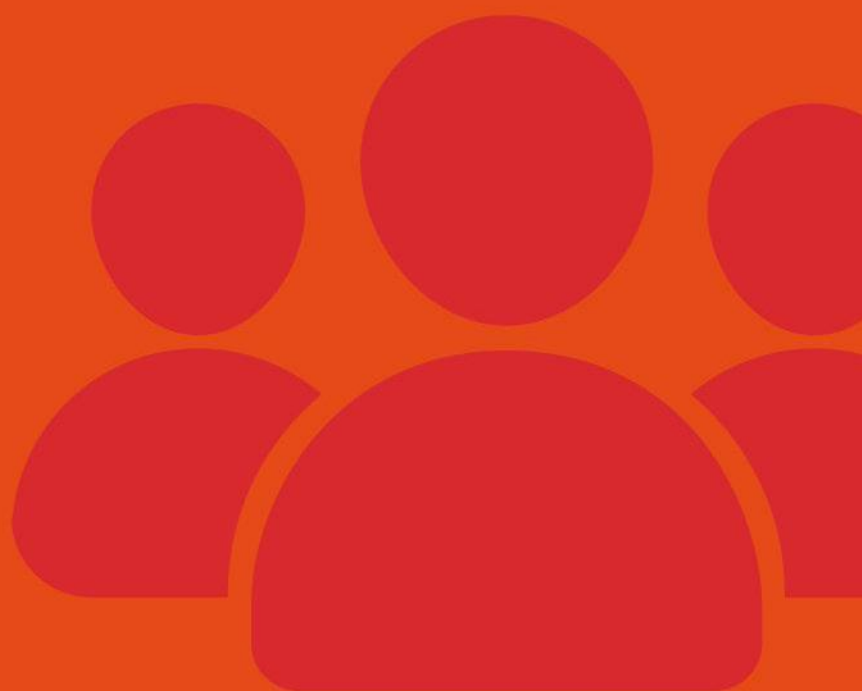
The service has limited capacity and capability to bring about sustainable future change. Although it has previously worked with others to improve efficiency, it is currently struggling to identify opportunities to do more.

The service has limited opportunities to generate increased income

The service considers options for generating extra income, but its ambition and track record in securing extra income is limited. It continues to generate an income of £90,000 by renting out its operational drill towers to house mobile phone masts.

The service hasn't been able to secure external funding to invest in improvements to what it provides the public. It intends to develop and invest in the additional space at the Blue Light Hub, but this has yet to be fully realised and incorporated into its funding.

People



How well does the service look after its people?



Requires improvement

Summary

A well-led fire and rescue service develops and maintains a workforce that is supported, professional, resilient, skilled, flexible and diverse. The service's leaders should be positive role models, and this should be reflected in the behaviour of staff at all levels. All staff should feel supported and be given opportunities to develop. Equality, diversity and inclusion is embedded in everything the service does and its staff understand their role in promoting it. Overall, Buckinghamshire Fire and Rescue Service requires improvement at looking after its people.

Buckinghamshire Fire and Rescue Service's staff are committed to their work and are proud to work for the service. The service's values are well defined and well understood and it did a good job of working with its staff during the pandemic. Despite this, there are some areas where it needs to improve.

We acknowledge that the service has fewer available opportunities for staff progression compared to other bigger services, but staff feel frustrated that prospects for developing their career and being promoted are limited. Some feel that their workloads are too great and are unsure about whether the service has any plans to deal with this in the future.

Equality, diversity and inclusion doesn't appear to be a priority for the service. Its policies and action plans in this area are limited and it relies on its staff to keep themselves informed and resolve issues locally. It needs to do more to engage with both its equality, diversity and inclusion working group and with external networks to inform this area. It should particularly focus on its promotions process and how it develops future leaders. Accordingly, our assessment of this area has dropped from 'good' in our previous report to 'requires improvement'.

Promoting the right values and culture



Requires improvement (2019: Good)

Buckinghamshire Fire and Rescue Service requires improvement at promoting the right values and culture.

Fire and rescue services should have positive and inclusive cultures, modelled by the behaviours of their senior leaders. Health and safety should be effectively promoted, and staff should have access to a range of wellbeing support that can be tailored to their individual needs.

The service could do more to ensure a positive and inclusive culture for all staff. Accordingly, our assessment of this area has dropped from good since our first inspection.

Areas for improvement

- The service should assure itself that senior managers are visible and demonstrate service values through their behaviours.
- The service should make sure that it effectively communicates its absence/attendance procedures for consistent application.

We set out our detailed findings below. These are the basis for our judgment of the service's performance in this area.

The service has clearly defined values, but these are not always demonstrated

The service continues to have well-defined values that are understood by most staff. Work is underway to communicate how the new national [Code of Ethics](#) aligns with the service's current values. Staff told us that they were proud to work for the service and do all they can to keep communities safe under difficult circumstances.

The service adapted its plan for working with its staff during the pandemic and this was well received. Virtual communication and weekly newsletters kept the service well involved. Staff reported that senior leaders have become less visible since face-to-face station visits and the chief's birthday forums had to stop during the pandemic. The service should continue to adapt its communications to respond to the changing environment and use all available methods.

We are not certain that the culture of the organisation always aligns with its values. Some behaviours we saw or were told about didn't meet the service's stated expectations. For example, some staff reported managers not taking action to tackle poor behaviour. The staff survey results also showed that 30.8 percent of respondents felt that senior leaders don't consistently model the service's values.

The workforce's wellbeing, both mental and physical health, is supported by the service, but requires review to fully meet the needs of its staff

The service continues to have well understood wellbeing policies that are available to staff. A significant range of wellbeing support is available to support both physical and mental health. For example, an employee assistance programme is widely promoted for use at any time by any employee to support problems outside work that might affect their wellbeing. The service has trained members of staff in mental health first aid. Staff can access a range of support via its occupational health team, but staff said this does not always meet individual staff needs.

There are good provisions in place to promote staff wellbeing. This includes a dedicated welfare officer, about whom we heard overwhelmingly positive feedback. Most staff reported they understand and have confidence in the wellbeing support processes available. Of those who responded to our staff survey, 96.6 percent reported that they are able to access support services for their mental health and 93.1 percent of respondents said they felt confident that the service would provide support following an incident.

Line managers could do more to involve the workforce and to understand what else they need to support the individual needs of staff, as there has been no review or change to the internal support staff can access, such as employee networks. Of the staff who responded to the staff survey, 31.5 percent said they had either never or only once in the last year spoken with their line manager about their personal health and wellbeing.

There is a positive health and safety culture within the service

The service continues to have effective and well understood health and safety policies and procedures in place. The health and safety documents we reviewed were in date and comprehensive. The interviews we conducted with staff were positive about the health and safety culture within the service. The service has a health and safety management board that is attended by a representative of the [fire authority](#). Reviews of the information that supports the health and safety culture take place regularly.

Policies and procedures are readily available and effectively promoted to all staff. It is pleasing that of those who responded to the staff survey, 97.3 percent said that they feel their personal safety and welfare is treated seriously at work. Additionally, 74.1 percent agreed that they have access to the time and equipment needed to maintain operational fitness. The representative bodies for the service also reported that the service provides a supportive approach to health, safety and wellbeing for staff. Both staff and representative bodies have confidence in the health and safety approach taken by the service. The service needs to continue to monitor secondary contracts (staff taking on extra shifts or other work) and lone working to further limit breaches of the working time directive. They also need to consider the implications this may have on staff.

Absence is not consistently managed within the service

As part of our inspection, we reviewed some case files to consider how the service manages and supports staff through absence. The service has an absence policy, but it isn't widely understood by all staff and managers. From the files we reviewed, the policy wasn't always followed – for example, there were instances when the service's absence triggers had been met but no follow-up action or discussion was shown in the return to work log.

The service has an intensive support process for employees on long-term absence, which is managed centrally. This has several positive impacts on the service's employees.

Overall, the service has seen a slight increase in staff absences over the last 12 months. Many of the additional absences were linked to COVID-19. The service should make sure that it effectively communicates all of its absence processes to managers so that they are consistently applied.

Getting the right people with the right skills



Requires improvement (2019: Good)

Buckinghamshire Fire and Rescue Service requires improvement at getting the right people with the right skills.

Fire and rescue services should have workforce plans in place that are linked to their [integrated risk management plans](#), set out their current and future skills requirements, and address capability gaps. This should be supplemented by a culture of continuous improvement that includes appropriate learning and development across the service.

The service could do more in this area and accordingly, the grade has dropped from good since our first inspection.

Areas for improvement

- The service should review its succession planning to make sure that it has effective arrangements in place to manage staff turnover while continuing to provide its core service to the public.
- The service should assure itself that all staff are appropriately trained to fulfil their role.

We set out our detailed findings below. These are the basis for our judgment of the service's performance in this area.

The service needs to do more to ensure its future workforce planning

There was very little time for this service to implement change between publication of our first inspection report and the start of the COVID-19 pandemic. The service has made some progress in developing its succession plan beyond 2020, given the area for improvement identified in 2019. The service should not be too cautious in its approach and should put in place an achievable succession plan for the whole organisation so that it has effective arrangements to implement its IRMP.

The service currently models the number of staff due to retire and assumes there will be additional leavers in the year ahead. It is positive that the service supports promotions and secondments externally from the service, but recent moves have left gaps in capability that now need internal staff to be upskilled. Temporary promotions are used appropriately to fill short-term resourcing gaps. But more is needed by the service to improve how it considers future needs and undertakes succession planning.

The service has a positive learning and improvement culture, but could do more to make sure all staff receive necessary training

A culture of continuous improvement is promoted throughout the service and staff are encouraged to learn and develop. For example, all protection team members and two of the prevention department have been encouraged to complete the level 3 (and above in some cases) qualification in fire safety.

We are pleased to see that the service has a range of training resources in place. These include practical and e-learning-based theory development for incident command, [safeguarding](#) and other main areas.

Although learning and development is provided by the service for many areas of its work, it doesn't always meet the needs of staff or indeed the service. For example, there is no 'in-house' IT training available to staff for existing or new software and computer use. The service relies on project or departmental managers to implement training on new systems and technological processes, which can result in staff completing forms and processes inconsistently. Training in prevention, management of staff absence, resolving workforce concerns, equality, diversity and inclusion and completion of site-specific risk information could be improved.

The service has a focus on risk-critical training, but could do more to make sure it continues to have the right capabilities to carry out the integrated risk management plan

Risk-critical training is given a high enough priority by the service. Staff training is monitored via an electronic system that ensures that annual validation of main skills in operational firefighting is effective and up-to-date. The service identifies training-themed months throughout the year to support operational learning and development. This allows staff to undertake their operational roles effectively and for the service to actively monitor immediate shortages in specialist skills. The service has robust measures in place to temporarily remove staff – those who have not demonstrated the required level of competence – from risk-critical roles, affording them time to retrain, develop and be re-assessed.

The service is aware of a current shortage in competent emergency response drivers, incident commanders and some staff are waiting to validate their breathing apparatus competency, which can have a negative effect on fire engine availability and need constant staffing changes.

Ensuring fairness and promoting diversity



Requires improvement (2019: Good)

Buckinghamshire Fire and Rescue Service requires improvement at ensuring fairness and promoting diversity.

Creating a more representative workforce will provide huge benefits for fire and rescue services. This includes greater access to talent and different ways of thinking, and improved understanding of and engagement with their local communities. Each service should make sure that equality, diversity and inclusion are firmly embedded and understood across the organisation. This includes successfully taking steps to remove inequality and making progress to improve fairness, diversity and inclusion at all levels within the service. It should proactively seek and respond to feedback from staff and make sure any action taken is meaningful.

Cause of concern

The service hasn't made enough progress since the last inspection to improve equality, diversity and inclusion.

Recommendation

By 31 January 2022, the service should:

- give greater priority to how it increases awareness of equality, diversity and inclusion across the organisation;
- make sure it has appropriate ways to engage with and seek feedback from all staff, including those from under-represented groups;
- make improvements to the way it collects equality data to better understand its workforce demographics and needs;
- ensure it has robust processes in place to undertake equality impact assessments, implement and review any actions required; and
- be more ambitious in its efforts to attract a more diverse workforce which better reflects the community it serves.

We set out our detailed findings below. These are the basis for our judgment of the service's performance in this area.

The service seeks staff feedback, but it does not always act on this to make positive changes

Although the service does have some means of gathering staff feedback, they are inconsistent and not wide-ranging. For example, representative bodies and staff associations reported that they would like to see improvements in the way in which the service works with them, and there is an opportunity for the service to better promote challenge from the workforce. Also, the return rate from [on-call](#) staff to the staff survey was much lower than we had hoped for, despite the service promoting it to them. This suggests that the service needs to find other ways to work with on-call staff.

Staff have limited confidence in the service's staff survey feedback mechanism and don't think this is effective. There was a mixture of feelings from the staff we interviewed about the impact that the service's own culture survey of 2020 had on improving the service. The survey received a 77 percent return rate from which it could take positive and meaningful challenge. The survey identified main points for improvement within the service, but progress on these has been interrupted due to COVID-19, and we saw no evidence that implementation of action plans was being monitored centrally to make sure improvements are made.

The service needs to improve its approach to equality, diversity and inclusion

The service hasn't made enough progress to improve its approach to equality, diversity and inclusion. The service's understanding of the diversity of its workforce is insufficient to formulate an effective diversity plan. The current policy and associated action plan for this doesn't focus on effectively gathering workforce information, training and development or staff support opportunities, and the monitoring of improvements and developments in this area is limited. The service relies on its staff keeping themselves informed about issues and concerns about inclusion and leaves issues to be dealt with locally. The equality, diversity and inclusion group could have better alignment with strategic management and does not provide enough opportunity to seek the views and feedback from the service's under-represented groups.

Although the service has a form to use in equality impact assessments, the effect on each of the protected characteristics wasn't being properly assessed or actioned. More could be done to work with both the internal equality, diversity and inclusion working group and external networks to inform this. The service has a consultation process for developing policies, process and practices, but the equality impact assessment may not be reviewed by those with a specialist knowledge of equality principles, which could lead to the service not making appropriate changes. For example, we were informed that some stations do not have gender-appropriate facilities and staff weren't aware of plans to change this. Many of the completed equality impact assessments we reviewed identified few or no impacts with regard to protected characteristics.

The service needs to improve its approach to recruitment

More still needs to be done by the service to increase staff diversity. According to Home Office data, since 2017/18, 6.7 percent of new joiners self-declared as being from a black, Asian or minority ethnic (BAME) group and 23.2 percent have been female. According to the service's data, for firefighter apprenticeship recruitment specifically, 14.6 percent of all new apprentices were women, while 93.5 percent declared they were from a white background – the remaining 6.5 percent didn't declare an ethnicity and no apprentices self-declared as BAME. In relation to the service's entire workforce, 4.4 percent are BAME and 19 percent are women. While the service has made some progress in recruiting more women via its apprenticeship scheme, this is only a marginal change and so the area for improvement identified in 2019 remains.

Recruitment campaigns aren't always directed at or accessible to under-represented groups and the service's approach isn't leading to changes in this area that would increase the diversity of its workforce. For example, the service has used various radio advertisement opportunities and holds 'have a go days', but these have not greatly increased the numbers applying to the service and there is no evaluation of the effectiveness of these approaches. The service could do more to understand all the available opportunities it has to actively promote its vacancies and recruit a more diverse workforce. Our staff survey showed that 29.4 percent (43 of 146) feel that the service is not effective in ensuring that recruitment processes are fair and accessible.

The service has made some progress to promote fairness in its internal promotion and progression processes

In the short time since our previous inspection, the service has put considerable effort into developing its internal operational promotion and progression processes for some levels of the service. These processes are well understood by staff, who see the selection board process for promoting operational staff to middle management as fair.

The promotion and recruitment policies are comprehensive and cover opportunities to develop into operational roles. Staff reported wanting this process to be applied throughout the service to all roles and opportunities, including support staff. Our staff survey showed that 54.1 percent (79 of 146) of those who responded don't agree that the promotion process in the service is fair.

The service needs to do more to make sure its internal promotion processes are fair for all roles. The current process for promotion only covers operational roles from firefighter to station manager. We were unable to assess whether the policies had been followed in the recent promotion process for station manager to group manager or group manager to area manager. The service should evaluate this process to make sure all staff involved are receiving feedback as per the guidance and it is seen as a fair process by all staff.

The service could do more to make sure that its policies for tackling bullying, harassment and discrimination are being followed

Although the service does have clear policies and procedures in place, staff have limited confidence in the service's ability to deal effectively with all cases of bullying, harassment, discrimination, grievances and discipline. In the staff survey conducted during our inspection in 2021, 89.4 percent of staff who reported feelings of bullying, harassment or discrimination felt either unable to report the situation or that little had changed resulting from the report they made. The service does not routinely collect information from exit interviews. These would allow the service to gather significant information that could help it to better understand how to retain staff – this is currently a problem for the service.

The service could go further to improve staff confidence in the handling of bullying, harassment and discrimination. In our staff survey, 13.7 (20 of 146) percent of staff told us they had been subject to harassment and 18.5 (27 of 146) percent to discrimination over the past 12 months. Of these staff, only 10.6 percent thought their concerns had been properly dealt with by the service and the majority of these respondents identified someone more senior than them as being the cause of the bullying, harassment or discrimination. A more consistent approach could be taken to providing continuing training in these areas.

Managing performance and developing leaders



Requires improvement (2019: Requires improvement)

Buckinghamshire Fire and Rescue Service requires improvement at managing performance and developing leaders.

Fire and rescue services should have robust and meaningful performance management arrangements in place for their staff. All staff should be supported to meet their potential and there should be a focus on developing high-potential staff and improving diversity in leadership roles.

Areas for improvement

- The service should put in place an open and fair process to identify, develop and support high-potential staff and aspiring leaders.
- The service should put in place a system to actively manage staff careers, with the aim of diversifying the pool of future and current leaders.

We set out our detailed findings below. These are the basis for our judgment of the service's performance in this area.

The service has introduced a good process for managing individuals' performance

There is a good performance management system in place, which allows the service to effectively develop and assess the individual performance of most staff. Staff felt confident in the performance review arrangements. For example, the revised personal development review (PDR) reflects the service's corporate plan. It was well understood throughout the service and most staff reported having completed the process with their line manager within the last 12 months. Home Office data shows that the number of staff with a completed PDR has increased each year up to 2020/21, when 60 percent of [wholetime](#) staff completed a PDR, in comparison to just 43 percent in the year 2019/20. This is a significant improvement, but we heard from some staff that they felt the continuation of any positive results and support of this process were dependent on their line manager's involvement with it.

Through our staff survey, it is positive that 94.5 percent of staff reported that they have received regular discussions with their manager, but only 69.7 percent said that these were meaningful. Staff informed us that they have individual goals and objectives, and regular assessments of performance.

The service should do more to develop leaders and high-potential staff at all levels

The service needs to improve how it actively manages the career pathways of staff, including those with specialist skills for leadership roles. We are concerned about the process not being fairly applied throughout the whole workforce.

The service has some talent management schemes in place to develop leaders and high-potential staff, such as project roles, shadowing and development centres, but they aren't managed in a way that is open or fair for all levels of the service. For example, 54.1 percent of responses in the staff survey said the processes for promotion are unfair and 41.8 percent said that they didn't feel as though they received the same level of opportunity to develop as others. This has resulted in inconsistency and undermines staff perception of fairness in the process.

The service is considering putting in place more formal arrangements to support members of staff to become leaders, based on guidance from the [National Fire Chiefs Council](#) on leadership. We reviewed a business case for the implementation of leadership and management training for all middle and senior managers and concluded that the service could still do more to be clear about how it identifies and supports those with high potential. As such, the area for improvement grade is still appropriate.

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Matt Parr CB
Her Majesty's Inspector of Constabulary
Her Majesty's Inspector of Fire & Rescue Services

By email:

Jason Thelwell
Chief Fire Officer
Buckinghamshire Fire and Rescue Service

06 August 2021

Dear Jason,

BUCKINGHAMSHIRE FIRE AND RESCUE INSPECTION - FOLLOW UP

Thank you for hosting the HMICFRS inspection team during our recent inspection. I know you were provided with initial feedback on 14 July 2021.

2. During the debrief, we shared our initial findings from the inspection fieldwork. The team described how the service has effective procedures in place for dealing with major and multi - agency incidents.
3. The inspection team also outlined areas where we felt improvement was needed. Following consideration of the evidence we collected I am writing to outline a cause of concern in relation to how Buckinghamshire FRS keeps the public safe through prevention activity.
4. We found that the service does not have a revised prevention strategy that identifies and prioritises those most at risk from fire. The service is making very limited use of risk modelling information to ensure prevention activity is targeted at the most vulnerable. We were concerned that prevention activity is not a sufficiently high priority for the service, and it has limited productivity when compared to other similar Fire & Rescue Services. There is currently a lack of direction for the prevention team to complete work of highest priority and at the time of the inspection operational crews were doing very limited prevention activity. As was found in the round one inspection in 2019, there is now a draft evaluation report for prevention activity, but this has not yet resulted in changes or improvements to prevention activity.

Cause of concern

Prevention activity is not a sufficiently high priority for the service, and it is not adequately identifying those most at risk from fire.

Recommendation(s):

By 30 September 2021, the service should have plans in place for:

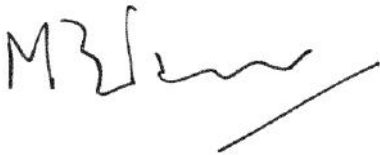
- An effective system to define the levels of risk in the community.
- A revision of its prevention strategy that clearly prioritises the people most at risk of fire and other emergencies, giving focus and direction to specialist teams.

- The review of systems and processes for dealing with referrals from individuals and partner agencies. This is to make sure they are managed effectively and those referrals with highest identified risk are prioritised.

5. As a result of these concerns, I should be grateful if you would provide an action plan that sets out how you intend to address the issues we identified, by 30 September 2021. I have asked the inspection team to revisit your service in the winter this year to review the progress being made against your plan in relation to the above areas. Your service liaison lead, Kathryn Richardson, will be in touch to discuss arrangements for the revisit.

6. I understand this will be a challenging time for you and the service and I would be happy for you to meet with the team if you require further clarification. I am copying this letter to the Chair of Buckinghamshire Fire and Rescue Authority, Cllr Lesley Clarke.

Yours sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'M Parr', with a long horizontal stroke extending to the right.

Matt Parr CB

Her Majesty's Inspector of Constabulary
Her Majesty's Inspector of Fire & Rescue Services



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Matt Parr CB
Her Majesty's Inspector of Constabulary
Her Majesty's Inspector of Fire & Rescue Services

By email:

Jason Thelwell
Chief Fire Officer
Buckinghamshire Fire and Rescue

Cllr Lesley Clarke
Fire and Rescue Authority Chair

14 December 2021

Dear Jason,

UNDER EMBARGO ROUND 2 FIRE AND RESCUE SERVICE REPORT

Please find attached an embargoed copy of your service inspection report. Also attached is our response to your pre-publication comments.

2. This report is under embargo until **00.01 on Wednesday 15 December 2021** when it will be published on our website. Please ensure the content of the attached report is kept confidential until then.
3. A copy of this report has also been shared with the chair (or equivalent) of your fire and rescue authority. As you will be aware, all fire and rescue authorities must give due regard to our reports and recommendations (section 7.5 of the Fire and Rescue National Framework for England 2018).
4. Our national findings will be summarised in the 2021 *State of Fire and Rescue* report, which is due to be published at **14.00 on Wednesday 15 December 2021**.
5. Some services have already received recommendations by letter from us. Some services will receive recommendations in their reports. If this applies to your service, and you have not already received the recommendation and provided us with an action plan, you should prepare, update and regularly publish an action plan, detailing how the recommendations are being actioned. If the fire and rescue authority does not propose to undertake any action as a result of a recommendation, reasons for this should be given. If you have not already done so, please send your action plan and any comments to our dedicated email account FRSactionplans@hmicfrs.gov.uk within 56 working days of your report being published.
6. Like you, we would like to keep the public fully informed and updated on your response to our report. We are still examining options to make all action plans easily accessible via our website. In the meantime, it would be helpful if, when responding, you could also provide us with a link to where your response is published (via our dedicated e-mail account FRSactionplans@hmicfrs.gov.uk).
7. Following publication, you will be able to use our interactive fire assessment tool to see the data used in the inspections and how your service compares to others in England. The interactive

tool can be accessed by the public and shared on your social media or press releases using the following link: [Fire and Rescue Service Assessment](#)

8. Once again, I would like to offer my thanks to you and your service for your co-operation with the inspection process. We look forward to continuing to work with you.

Yours sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'M Parr', followed by a long, sweeping horizontal stroke.

Matt Parr CB

Her Majesty's Inspector of Constabulary

Her Majesty's Inspector of Fire & Rescue Services



Promoting improvements
in policing and fire & rescue
services to make everyone safer

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Matt Parr CB
HM Inspector of Constabulary
HM Inspector of Fire and Rescue Services

By email:

Jason Thelwell
Chief Fire Officer
Buckinghamshire Fire and Rescue Service

12 January 2022

Dear Jason,

BUCKINGHAMSHIRE FIRE AND RESCUE SERVICE ASSESSMENT OF PROGRESS – CAUSE OF CONCERN

We inspected Buckinghamshire Fire and Rescue Service in May and June 2021. In our letter of 6 August 2021, we sent you the following cause of concern identified during the inspection and our recommendation:

Prevention activity is not a sufficiently high priority for the service, and it is not adequately identifying and prioritising those most at risk from fire.

By 30 September 2021, the service should have the following plans in place:

- an effective system to define the levels of risk in the community;
- a revised prevention strategy that clearly prioritises the people most at risk of fire and other emergencies, giving focus and direction to specialist teams; and
- a review of systems and processes for dealing with referrals from individuals and partner agencies, to make sure that they are managed effectively and that referrals with highest identified risk are prioritised.

2. You kindly submitted an action plan to HMICFRS on 29 September 2021. This included a prevention improvement plan setting out how you would address the cause of concern stated above and our recommendations.

3. On 29 September and 19 November 2021, we received updates on the action plan. We explained that while we didn't expect to see all the remedial work completed, we were looking for evidence of progress. Thank you for continuing to provide further updates.

Governance

4. Your service has shown a strong commitment to carry out its action plan. You have put in place appropriate governance structures to oversee the plan's completion. This includes a prevention improvement plan that states when actions are to be completed.
5. You have presented the plan to the fire authority for ongoing oversight and scrutiny and have a plan to support its continual development. Progress against the plan is monitored at weekly and monthly meetings.

Action plan

6. The prevention improvement plan identifies 60 areas for improvement and uses a dashboard to monitor progress. It identifies the person responsible for each area and details any problems that emerge. Additionally, the service has assessed each area to see what resources are needed to achieve the improvement needed and the effect it will have.
7. The service still needs to make some immediate changes to the way its fire and wellness referrals are processed to make sure it prioritises and mitigates the risks identified in its public safety plan.
8. We are pleased to see the service is planning to use peer support through the National Fire Chiefs Council to further support this work. We recognise the value of this and encourage the service to do this as soon as possible.

Results to date

9. The service has in place some resources and appropriate governance structures to carry out the commitments in the action plan. Some work on these commitments has already started.
10. We would like to see continued progress against the plan. The service needs to make sure that it continues to support the implementation of its commitments and communicates them effectively throughout the service and to the public.
11. We will continue to monitor progress to make sure the service provided to the public of Buckinghamshire has improved. This may include a further visit in spring 2022.

Yours sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'M Parr', with a long horizontal stroke extending to the right.

Matt Parr CB
HM Inspector of Constabulary
HM Inspector of Fire and Rescue Services



Buckinghamshire & Milton Keynes Fire Authority

Meeting and date: Fire Authority, 16 February 2022

Report title: Pay Policy Principles and Statement 2022/23

Lead Member: Councillor Steven Lambert; People, Equality and Diversity and Assurance

Report sponsor: Mick Osborne; Chief Operating Officer / Deputy Chief Fire Officer

Author and contact: Faye Mansfield; HR Advisory and Development Manager

Action: Decision

Recommendations:

1. The Pay Policy Principles and Statement as set out in Appendix one as the statutory Pay Policy Statement for 2022/23 is approved for publication
2. The Authority notes the Pay Multiple ratio continues to fall for the tenth year running, with the tenth-year period seeing the ratio improved by 30 per cent since 2012

Executive summary:

The Authority is required to approve the Pay Policy Principles and Statement before the end of March immediately preceding the financial year to which it relates.

It is proposed the attached draft (Appendix one) be the Authority's revised Pay Policy Principles and Statement for 2022/23. It is based on the Authority's current approved Pay Policy Principles and Statement for 2021/22, save as amended by additional text underlined (underlined) and deleted text shown struck through (~~struck through~~).

It is pleasing to report that the Pay Multiples ratio of highest paid to lowest paid employee (as at December 2021) continues to fall for the tenth year running. This tenth-year period sees the ratio improved by 30 per cent since 2012.

The Pay Policy Principles and Statement will continue to support and enhance a range of employment opportunities. This will continue to be utilised on a voluntary basis across some roles and functions to offer a more resilient, enhanced and flexible resource, focused on meeting demand and offering the very best service to the public.

Within the 2018/19, 2019/20, 2020/21 and 2021/22 Pay Policy Principles and Statement cover reports, a note was made to the introduction of a public sector exit payment cap termination payment for high earners. The Restriction of Public Sector Exit Payment Regulations 2020 then came into force on 04 November 2020 and

detailed within the Pay Policy Principles and Statement for 2021/22. However, on 12 February 2021, HM Treasury published a Treasury Direction disapplying the parts of the Regulations which implemented a £95,000 cap on public sector exit payments. On 25 February 2021, the Restriction of Public Sector Exit Payment (Revocation) Regulations 2021 (the Revocation Regulations), was placed before Parliament, and came into force formally revoking the 2020 Regulations on 19 March 2021. The Revocation Regulations contained a legal obligation for employers to make termination payments to employees with an exit date in the period the Regulations applied (04 November 2020 to 11 February 2021). For the Authority there were no employees impacted by the exit payment cap.

Since the Revocation Regulations, the Government continues to discuss exit payments and the importance of delivering value for the taxpayer. It is anticipated an exit payment cap or similar will be reintroduced in some form, and the Authority will contribute to any Government consultation process as appropriate, and thereafter, await details of any Regulation changes and implementation dates.

Financial implications:

There are no direct financial implications arising from the Pay Policy Principles and Statement. Any financial impact of subsequent decisions will be factored into the Medium-Term Financial Planning process and scrutinised and challenged by Members. Any in-year impacts will be considered and reported through the budget monitoring process and any resource re-allocation will be subject to the usual virement approvals and limits as set out in the Financial Regulations.

Risk management:

The Fire Authority is required to adopt and publish an annual Pay Policy Principles and Statement.

Developing and maintaining good employee morale is key to instilling loyalty and maintaining a productive workplace. By being fair, transparent and accountable in what employees are paid for and why, and being consistent, systematic and clear in applying reward practices for all employees, the Authority is living its values and showing best practices with its reward and recognition needs.

Legal implications:

Section 38 of the Localism Act 2011 places a requirement on the Authority to prepare annually, a statement setting out the Authority's policies on the remuneration of its Chief Officers, the remuneration of its lowest paid employees and the relationship between the remuneration of its Chief Officers and the remuneration of its employees who are not Chief Officers. Chief Officers are the most senior Officers of the Authority. Authorities are required to state the definition of lowest paid employees they have adopted in the statement and explain the

reasons for adopting that particular definition. The statement may also set out the Authority's policies relating to other terms and conditions applying to its senior Officers. In preparing this Statement, the Authority must have regard to any guidance issued or approved by the Secretary of State.

The 2022/23 Pay Policy Principles and Statement must be approved by the full Fire Authority before 31 March 2022. Approval cannot be delegated to any committee, sub-committee, or officers.

The Pay Policy Principles and Statement may be amended by the full Fire Authority during the financial year to which it applies.

Section 41 of the Localism Act 2011 requires the Authority to comply with its Pay Policy Principles and Statement for the relevant financial year when making a determination that relates to the remuneration, or other terms and conditions of a senior officer of the Authority.

The Pay Policy Principles and Statement must include the Authority's policies in relation to senior pay on:

- a) the level and elements of remuneration
- b) remuneration on recruitment
- c) increases and additions to remuneration
- d) the use of performance related pay
- e) the use of bonuses
- f) the approach to payment on their ceasing to be employed by the Authority, and
- g) the publication of and access to information relating to remuneration.

The statutory guidance gives discretion as to whether the Authority wishes to mirror these headings in its Pay Policy Principles and Statement in respect of its other employees.

Privacy and security implications:

The purpose of the Pay Policy Principles and Statement is to provide transparency with regards to the Authority's approach to setting the pay of its employees.

Duty to collaborate:

All Authorities are required to have a Pay Policy Principles and Statement. At this time our Thames Valley partners have separate Statements, however an aligned approach may be appropriate in the future, particularly to support collaborative working, sharing of resources and working across boundaries.

Health and safety implications:

There are no health and safety implications arising from this report.

Environmental implications:

There are no environmental implications arising from this report.

Equality, diversity, and inclusion implications

An Equality Impact Assessment has been completed as part of the update. There are no identified adverse impacts on any protected characteristics.

Any pay decisions will be subject to the demands of equal pay processes.

The Equality Act 2010 (Specific Duties and Public Authorities) Regulations 2017 and approved by Parliament in 2016 and came into force in 2017. The obligations under the Regulations requires prescribed gender pay gap information to be published within 'the period of 12 months beginning with the data snapshot date' (Regulation 2(2)). The snapshot data for public sector employers is 31 March each year.

The intention of the Regulation is to highlight differences in pay between male and female employees, therefore showing greater transparency within the workplace, and will encourage employers to consider what more can be done to close any pay gaps. The Authority will continue to work on closing the Gender Pay Gap and a separate report will be presented to the Executive Committee in March 2022.

Consultation and communication

Adoption of the annual Pay Policy Principles and Statement ensures statutory compliance. However, as the legislation permits in-year changes there is scope for the Authority to revisit certain elements to reflect the needs of the Service and any relevant reform outcomes from a national perspective.

Communication: Following approval of the Pay Policy Principles and Statement, communication will be via the normal policy publication and amendment process. This will include engagement with members of the Joint Consultation Forum.

Internal Controls: Adherence to the Pay Policy Principles and Statement is controlled via strict establishment and pay change approval process controls and annual reporting. In addition, reports are submitted on key reward areas as appropriate.

Background papers:

Report to Fire Authority held 17 February 2021; BMKFA Pay Policy Principles and Statement 2021/22:

<https://bucksfire.gov.uk/documents/2021/02/item-9-pay-policy.pdf/>

The Localism Act 2011:

<http://www.legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/2011/20/contents/enacted>

Openness and accountability in local pay: guidance. Published 2012:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/openness-and-accountability-in-local-pay-guidance>

Openness and accountability in local pay: supplementary guidance. Published 2013:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/openness-and-accountability-in-local-pay-supplementary-guidance>

| Appendix | Title | Protective Marking |
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| 1 | Pay Policy Principles and Statement 2022/23 | |

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BMKFA Pay Policy Principles and Statement 2022/23

1.0 Introduction

The Pay Policy Statement (the 'Statement') sets out Buckinghamshire & Milton Keynes Fire Authority's (the Authority) approach to pay in accordance with the requirements of Section 38 of the Localism Act 2011. The purpose of the Statement is to provide transparency with regards to the Authority's approach to setting the pay of its employees by identifying:

- the method by which salaries of all employees are determined
- the details and level of remuneration of its most senior employees, i.e. Chief Officers, as defined by the relevant legislation

Following approval of the Fire Authority, the Statement will be effective from 1 April 2022. It will be subject to an annual approval and in accordance with any new or proposed legislation to ensure it remains relevant and effective.

As detailed within the Authority's Reward and Recognition policy, and the Statement of Principles, the Authority aims to:

- Be fair, transparent and accountable in what employees are paid for and why, and to be consistent, systematic and clear in applying reward practices for all employees
- Adhere to affordability; ensuring all decisions on pay represents value for money for the taxpayer
- Reward and recognise employees for their knowledge, skills and contribution in the roles they are performing
- Adopt practices which will focus on enabling the recruitment, engagement and retention of the right calibre of people at all levels to deliver its corporate priorities
- Provide effective financial management of the total pay bill in order to inform all of its reward practices and approaches in making the most effective use of resources
- Have appropriate mechanisms in place to review terms and conditions of service
- Meet legislative requirements; ensuring remuneration practices comply with all legal obligations

2.0 Accountability and decision making

Decisions on pay policies will be taken by elected members - those who are directly accountable to local communities. All democratically accountable



members will have input into how decisions on pay are made and there will be openness about the policies that determine those decisions.

The annual Statements and any amendments will be considered by a meeting of the Fire Authority and will not be delegated to any sub-committee. All decisions on pay and reward for Chief Officers must comply with the current Statement.

3.0 Transparency

On an annual basis, the approved Statement will be published on the external website.

Although there is no requirement to use the Statement to publish specific numerical data on pay and reward, consideration will be given to how the information within the Statement fits with data on pay and reward published separately.

This includes data required to be published under the Local Government Transparency Code 2015 and Annual Statement of Accounts.

4.0 Legislation

In applying the Statement, the Authority will work to eliminate any elements which may, directly or indirectly, discriminate unfairly on the grounds of sex, race, colour, nationality, ethnic or national origin, age, marital status, having dependents, sexual orientation, gender reassignment, religion or belief, trade union activity, disability or any other factors.

Part-time employees will receive the same pay and remuneration as full-time employees undertaking the same role on a pro-rata basis.

Under the Equality Act 2010, it is unlawful for an employer to discriminate between men and women in terms of their pay and conditions where they are in the same employment and are doing the same or similar work, work rated as equivalent, or work of equal value. Undertaking an equal pay audit demonstrates the Authority's commitment as an employer to remove unfair pay practices. The last equal pay audit was undertaken in 2020, and no areas of concern were identified as a result of this audit.

The Equality Act 2010 (Specific Duties and Public Authorities) Regulations 2017 that came into effect in 2017 requires public sector organisations with 250 or more employees to carry out gender pay gap reporting. In accordance with the Regulations, the Authority is required to annually publish six pieces of prescribed data about the pay and bonuses of male and female workers



within the Authority. On an annual basis the Authority publishes a Gender Pay Gap report, containing information relating to pay inequalities in line with gender pay gap reporting requirements.

5.0 Responsibility and scale

The Authority is directly responsible for an establishment budget of ~~£23,167,671~~ **£23,314,200**, and for a budgeted establishment of ~~128.81~~ **129.56** full-time equivalent (FTEs) for Support Services employees, 280 FTE Wholtime employees and 96.76 FTE On-Call employees (details as at December 2020 **2021**).

6.0 Determining levels of pay

The Authority recognises its employees are a vital factor in the efficient and effective operation of the Service. In this respect the Authority is committed to ensuring employees are valued and rewarded for their contribution to the Authority.

The Authority is committed to establishing the right working arrangements and conditions of employment for all its employees and understands the benefits of the employment package in promoting and encouraging employee engagement, which in turn improves organisational performance.

The Authority is committed to effectively supporting day to day service delivery, transforming the Authority into a value for money, outcome driven and high performing organisation through, amongst other interventions, appropriate reward and recognition mechanisms.

The Authority is committed to ensuring its reward and recognition practices are conducted in a fair, open and transparent manner that is effective, efficient and responsive, promoting good practice with all its reward and recognition needs.

7.0 Pay structure

The pay structure reflects the different roles, duties and responsibilities undertaken by employees within the Authority. This is reflected in pay differentials between different employee groups and between employees within the same employee group. The pay bands established are based on nationally applied role maps (Operational employees) or graded bands established through role profiles (Support Services employees).



Operational roles

For the majority of Operational roles, appointments are offered under the National Joint Council for Local Authority Fire and Rescue Services Scheme of Conditions of Service (known as the Grey Book) and any other local terms and conditions, which the Authority may, from time to time, adopt in relation to the appointment, save where such provisions are amended by a contract of employment.

Any National pay award is as agreed through the National Joint Council (NJC) and notified to Fire Authorities. The last pay award was agreed as ~~two~~ one and a half per cent, effective 01 July 2020 2021.

The pay framework was reviewed in 2003 following a rank-to-role exercise in line with National Guidance, with the grades for each role determined by a consistent job evaluation process. Where appropriate, National role maps are used to determine responsibilities and accountabilities within roles.

For Grey Book employees, rates of pay are set out in circulars issued by the NJC and entitlements are governed by Part B of the Grey Book. However, the Authority recognises new employees may be employed on terms and conditions outside of the Grey Book. This includes the operation of the 'Bank System'.

The Authority also recognises employees in existing Firefighter roles may want to agree rates of pay outside of the Grey Book for the protection of services and provision of enhanced resilience, including agreement to not participate in industrial action.

In addition, and in line with retention and succession planning, the Authority does agree enhanced remuneration outside of the Grey Book for specific roles, such as Area Commanders, Group Commanders and Station Commanders.

Support Services roles

Appointments for Support Services roles are determined in accordance with local terms and conditions of Buckinghamshire & Milton Keynes Fire Authority Scheme of Conditions of Service for Support Services employees and any other local terms and conditions, which the Authority may, from time to time, adopt in relation to appointments, save where such provisions are amended by a contract of employment.

Any pay award is locally agreed by the Strategic Management Board (SMB). In 2019 SMB agreed a six per cent pay award covering three years, and the last pay award represented the third year, ~~was agreed as two per cent~~, effective 01 July 2020 2021.



For Support Services employees, the pay structure takes the form of pay scales, which was reviewed in 2014 to two pay points; development and competent. This is with the exception of employees in post prior to September 2014, who retain three-point scales (until they move posts or are subject to regrading) and those employed within Fleet Management.

The grades for Support Services roles are determined using an analytical job evaluation process, that systematically ranks each role objectively and fairly. This job evaluation system (Korn Ferry (Hay) Methodology) is a recognised best practice non-discriminatory method of ranking roles against a pre-determined scale.

Brigade Manager roles

Appointments for Brigade Managers are offered under the National Joint Council for Brigade Managers of Local Authority Fire and Rescue Services (known as the Gold Book) as adopted locally and as amended or supplemented by agreement between the Chief Fire Officer/Chief Executive and the employee, or in the case of the Chief Fire Officer/Chief Executive, or equivalent, between the Fire Authority and the employee. Employment is also subject to other terms and conditions of service as determined by the Authority from time to time.

Any National pay award is as agreed through the NJC and notified to Fire Authorities. The last pay award was agreed as ~~two~~ **one and a half** per cent, effective 01 January ~~2020~~ **2021**.

For Strategic Management Board (SMB) members, pay arrangements are locally determined and the level of pay fixed and designed to cover the full range and scope of the role.

There is a twin-track approach for determining levels of pay for Brigade Manager roles. At National level, the NJC annually reviews the level of pay increase applicable to these roles covered by the National Agreement. Any increases agreed by the NJC are communicated to Fire Authorities via circulars. All other decisions about pay and remuneration are taken by the Fire Authority, who will review salary levels on an annual basis.

8.0 Remuneration on Appointment

Remuneration will be based on the evaluated rate for the role, either nationally or locally set.

Base salary is one of a number of components of the employment package and by no means the only factor that influences the Authority's ability to recruit and retain employees.



New employees will usually be appointed to the minimum pay level for the relevant grade (trainee or development rate), unless relevant supporting experience can be identified and appropriately evidenced.

All new Brigade Manager appointments are subject to Fire Authority approval. The Fire Authority will be offered the opportunity to vote before salary packages (£100,000 plus) are offered in respect of a new appointment. For this purpose, salary packages should include salary, any bonuses, fees or allowances routinely payable to the appointee and any benefits in kind to which the Officer is entitled as a result of their employment.

9.0 Pay Progression

For Operational roles, rates of pay are determined by the role the employee is undertaking, and whether the employee is in the 'Trainee', 'Development' or 'Competent' stage of that role. The time it will take an employee to demonstrate competence will depend on the specific requirements of the employee, accessibility to assessments and the opportunities available. Employees can move between roles through successfully completing a promotion assessment process.

For Support Services roles, progression through the pay grade will be based on evidenced performance, and at least six months in post, attaining training and qualifications associated with the role, and the maximum grade for the post not being exceeded. Progression may be withheld if performance is not to the required standard. Employees can move between roles through completing a promotion assessment process.

For SMB members, pay progression is performance based, with scope to increase the salary after completion of the annual SMB remuneration and performance review process. Any increase or additions to remuneration will require approval of the appropriate committee of the Authority.

10. Other allowances and payments

Allowances: There are a number of allowances paid to employees, where specific circumstances require this and where it can be justified. These allowances are in accordance with National agreement or have been locally set in order to meet the demands of service delivery.

Market rate supplement: The Authority recognises the pay structure and job evaluation process does not normally consider factors such as market pay rates relating to specific roles or fluctuating demand for skills in the market place. Whilst the use of market rate supplements will not be the norm, there may be occasions where the Authority is unable to attract candidates to



specific roles due to the fluctuations in the local labour market. In addition, existing employees may leave, citing the reason of being offered the 'market rate' for the role. When this occurs consideration may be given to awarding a market rate supplement in addition to the approved job evaluated grade for the role. Any payment will be time limited and reviewed annually.

Expenses: The Authority recognises employees may incur reasonable expenses whilst undertaking their role and will ensure employees are not financially disadvantaged or advantaged because of genuine business expenses. Unless a prior arrangement is in place, employees will be responsible for the payment of expenses incurred and will be reimbursed in accordance with the Authority's procedures relating to expenses.

Car lease schemes: Some employees participate in lease car arrangements, either as an essential car user, lease car user, or via a provided car scheme. The criteria are dependent on the requirements of the role or in accordance with terms and conditions of employment.

Relocation expenses: Upon appointment, where relocation expenses are incurred, the Authority may reimburse the individual in accordance with the Authority's Relocation Expenses Scheme. Members of the Fire Authority will determine the specific application in respect of a SMB appointment and SMB will determine the application of the scheme to all other appointments. The scheme is applied at the discretion of the Authority and normally only applies to external appointees.

Additional Responsibility Allowance (ARA): These payments are used to reward increased responsibilities and duties beyond the normal remit of the role for specific periods, for example to cover managed vacancies for short to medium term periods, enabling successful change management with minimal risk. These payments apply to employees on Grey Book terms and conditions.

Honorarium payments: These can be given to Support Services employees when they are asked to undertake part of the duties at a higher graded post or duties outside the scope of their post, which is particularly onerous. Where the payment relates to an employee undertaking a proportion of the duties of a higher graded post, the calculation of the payment will normally link to the pay scale of the duties of the higher graded post being undertaken. For duties outside the scope of the employee's role, the amount of the payment will be determined by estimating the relative worth of the task in comparison to the employee's substantive grade. These payments are for Support Services employees.

An ARA or Honorarium payment requires approval via a business case.



For SMB members, any increase or additions to remuneration will require approval of the appropriate committee of the Authority.

Bonus payments and performance related pay: One-off bonus payments/merit awards may be considered linked to evidenced and scrutinised delivery of performance management objectives.

Pension Schemes: The Authority operates five pension schemes:

- 1992 Firefighters Pension Scheme
- 2006 Firefighters Pension Scheme
- 2006 Retained Modified Pension Scheme
- 2015 Firefighters Pension Scheme
- 2014 Local Government Pension Scheme

Subject to meeting the qualifying conditions, employees have a right to belong to a pension scheme. All new employees will be automatically entered into the relevant occupational pension scheme as defined by their terms and conditions of employment. Qualifying employees will be automatically re-enrolled every three years during their employment if they have opt-out of the scheme.

The Authority makes an employer contribution to the Firefighters Pension Scheme of 37.3 per cent of pensionable pay (1992 Scheme), 27.4 per cent of pensionable pay (2006 Scheme), 37.3 per cent of pensionable pay (2006 Retained Modified Scheme), 28.8 per cent of pensionable pay (2015 Scheme), and 17.4 per cent of pensionable pay (LGPS Scheme).

The employee contributes of between 11 per cent and 17 per cent of pensionable pay (1992 Scheme), 8.5 per cent and 12.5 per cent of pensionable pay (2006 Scheme), 11 per cent and 17 per cent of pensionable pay (2006 Retained Modified Scheme), 11 per cent and 14.5 per cent of pensionable pay (2015 Scheme) and 5.5 per cent and 12.5 per cent of pensionable pay (LGPS Scheme).

The Authority is obliged to publish its adopted pension discretions for the Firefighters' Pension Schemes and Local Government Pension Scheme, and the Authority's current policies in respect of discretionary payments are detailed on the external [website](#).

11. Pay Multiple

The pay multiple is the ratio between the highest paid salary and the median (average) salary of the Authority's workforce. The average salary level is defined as the total of all regular payments made to an individual.



The definition of lowest paid employees are those who are paid at rates maintained in line with the National Living Wage and the lowest rate will be that applicable for workers aged 23 and over.

As at December ~~2020~~ 2021:

- The lowest paid salary is £16,824 £17,190 (FTE)
- The highest paid salary is £151,446 £153,717 (FTE)
- The median salary is £31,767 £32,243 (FTE)

The Authority's pay multiple; the ratio between the highest paid employee and the median average salary figure for all employees in the Authority.

Pay multiple between the highest salary and lowest salary is ~~9:1~~ 8.94:1 (this essentially means the lowest salary goes into the highest salary ~~9~~ 8.94 times).

Pay multiple between the highest salary and median salary is 4.77:1 (this essentially means the median salary goes into the highest salary 4.77 times).

| Year | Highest pay : Lowest pay | Highest pay : Median pay |
|----------------|--------------------------|--------------------------|
| <u>2022/23</u> | <u>8.94:1</u> | <u>4.77:1</u> |
| 2021/22 | 9:1 | 4.77:1 |
| 2020/21 | 9.37:1 | 4.77:1 |
| 2019/20 | 9.64:1 | 4.77:1 |
| 2018/19 | 9.86:1 | 4.77:1 |
| 2017/18 | 10.17:1 | 4.77:1 |
| 2016/17 | 10.71:1 | 4.72:1 |
| 2015/16 | 11.04:1 | 4.77:1 |
| 2014/15 | 11.5:1 | 4.87:1 |
| 2013/14 | 11.72:1 | 4.9:1 |
| 2012/13 | 12.7:1 | 5.0:1 |

It is the intention that salary multiples do not reach the 1:20 ratio referred to in the Hutton Report.

12. Payment on termination of employment

There may be a number of circumstances where early retirement or voluntary redundancy payments may be paid to employees on ceasing to hold office. This can relate to individual circumstances, for example ill health, or can be the result of organisational change or in the interests of the efficiency of the Authority.

In the event of any redundancies, redundancy payments will be calculated in accordance with statutory requirements as modified by the Authority's agreed policies.



The Authority does not make payments to senior staff members in addition to entitlements under its redundancy procedure who leave, other than to those who are leaving for the purposes of improved efficiency.

Where other severance payments are appropriate, such payments will be approved by the Director of Legal and Governance and the Director of Finance and Assets and will be subject to a settlement agreement.

~~The Restriction of Public Sector Exit Payment Regulations 2020 came into force on 4 November 2020. Under the Regulations, various payments count towards the exit payment cap. These include redundancy payments, notice payments in excess of three months, severance payments, settlement agreements and pension strain payments (i.e. additional employer pension contribution to enable an individual to take early retirement on an unreduced pension). It is the total of all exit payments that cannot exceed £95,000.~~

~~If the total value of the exit payments is more than £95,000, consideration will be given to whether either a mandatory or discretionary waiver is applicable. The power to relax restrictions imposed by the Regulations can only be exercised by the Authority to the extent permitted under one or more of the criteria set out in HM Treasury Directions.~~

13. Re-employment and Pension Abatement

This applies where an individual retires from the Authority, draws their pension benefits and is subsequently re-employed into the same or other role within the Authority.

The Authority will consider re-employment of retired employees in accordance with the relevant pension scheme regulations and governance arrangements. There is no automatic right to be re-employed. The decision will be strictly based on organisational need and will normally follow an open and fair selection process.

The Fire and Rescue National Framework for England, published in May 2018, stated that Fire Authorities must not re-appoint principal fire officers (at Brigade Manager or Area Manager level or those with comparable responsibilities to those roles) after their retirement to their previous or similar role, save for in exceptional circumstances when such a decision is necessary in the interest of public safety. Any such appointment must be transparent, justifiable and time limited, with the reason for the decision published and the pension abated until the contract ends. Such a decision will be subject to prior approval at a meeting of the Fire Authority in open session.



Where an employee has taken their pension benefits (either as a former employee or employee from another public section organisation), and is then re-employed, an abatement check will be undertaken. Pension will be adjusted so the combination of pension and new salary does not exceed the individual's salary at the time of their retirement.

There is no age limit on abatement, and this continues for the full period of re-employment. When the re-employment ends, the pension will be reinstated to the full amount.

The Authority operates a flexible retirement process for employees in the Local Government Pension Scheme. This allows an employee to take their pension benefits and remain employed on reduced hours or at a lower grade without abatement of pension. This complies with the provisions of the Local Government Pension Scheme.

14. Employee bonus and merit award payment setting scheme and process

Introduction: This section outlines the principles and process for determining whether or not employees will receive bonus payments and if so, sets out the process to determine the allocation of such payments. Bonus payments will be one-off and paid only to reflect excellent performance; that is performance, which exceeds the standards and targets agreed with the employee during their annual appraisal process and prior to the start of the financial year, for which any performance scheme is introduced.

Eligibility: Eligibility would be specified as part of any scheme rules on an annual basis.

Key Principles: The following key principles underpin any bonus and/or performance related reward schemes:

The scheme is entirely discretionary and forms no part of the contract of employment

- The scheme sits in the context of the Authority's overall strategic and performance management processes, therefore targets and objectives included in any scheme will align with the Corporate and Public Safety Plan objectives, via the "golden thread" process
- Payments will only be made where the employee's contribution not only reflects excellence but also clearly assists with achieving the Authority's strategic objectives
- It is intended to reward those who can demonstrate sustained, outstanding achievement or excellence in their role

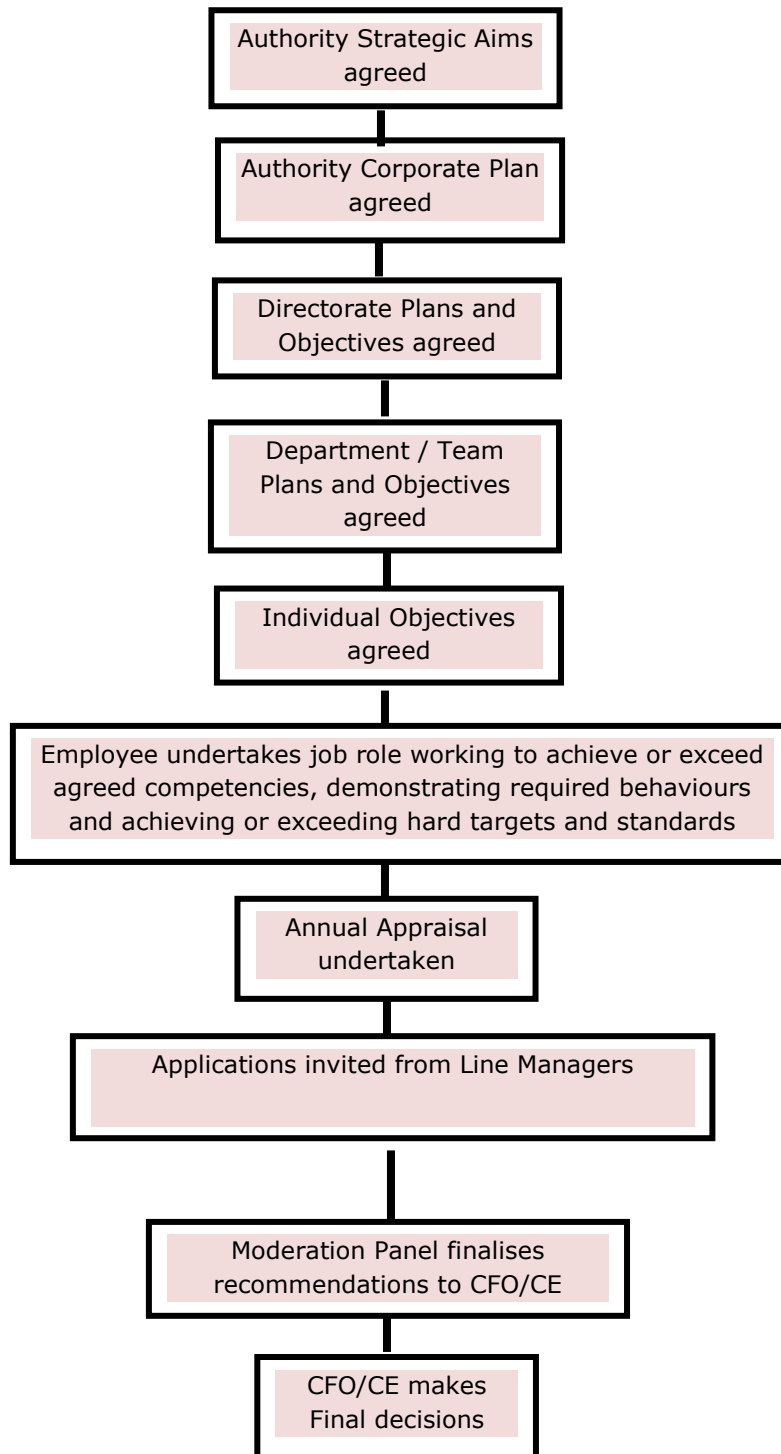


- It is intended to recognise and reward, not only the exceeding of targets and standards, but also the acquisition of the necessary competencies and deployment of behaviours that reinforce the Authority's values and norms
- The amount of money available to be paid in bonus payments to employees under the scheme will be determined as part of the annual budgeting process and any scheme will be self-funding
- All eligible candidates invited to participate in any scheme must have an agreed appraisal, including core and stretching objectives in advance of the bonus scheme year
- Recommendations for payments under the scheme will be made by the employee's line manager following the annual appraisal process to the appropriate Director
- Recommendations will be reviewed by a Moderation Panel consisting of:
 - The Chief Operating Officer/DCFO
 - The Director of Finance and Assets
 - The Director of Legal and Governance
- The Moderation Panel may choose to appoint an independent advisor to assist with the process of ensuring that proposed awards are based on the exercise of consistent judgement in both the setting of targets and standards and the assessment of achievement against these
- Payments under the scheme will be authorised by the Chief Fire Officer/Chief Executive on recommendation of the Moderation Panel
- Employees will only be informed of approved awards and not as to whether or not a recommendation was made
- There will be no appeal against recommendations or final decisions
- The Executive Committee will receive an annual report summarising the awards, if any, that have been made
- Eligibility criteria will be approved by members of SMB on an annual basis. This may include decisions not to run a bonus scheme
- Decisions will comply with the requirements of the Authority's Pay Policy, which is reviewed and approved annually
- If and when an annual bonus scheme is agreed, specific detailed rules will be developed in advance of the scheme year; for example, new employees who become eligible in year, long term absence
- Any payments will be subject to statutory deductions



**BUCKINGHAMSHIRE & MILTON KEYNES FIRE
AUTHORITY**

**Bonus and Merit Award Setting Scheme Process Flow
Chart**





15. Equality Impact Assessment (EIA)

An Equality Impact Assessment should be included to identify any issues which may result in a group being disadvantaged by the process.

To complete the table, tick ✓ the likely impact. If you have a tick in any negative box you need to consider why and include this in your assessment. If an EIA action plan is necessary, this can be downloaded from the intranet.

Assessment of impact on groups in **bold** is a legal requirement. Assessment of impacts on groups in *italics* is not a legal requirement, however it will help to ensure that your activity does not have unintended consequences.

| Protected characteristic | Positive | Negative | Neutral | If negative, why and how could this be lessened (<i>use action plan if necessary</i>) |
|---|----------|----------|---------|---|
| Individuals of different ages | | | ✓ | |
| Disabled individuals | | | ✓ | |
| Individuals transitioning from one gender to another | | | ✓ | |
| Individuals who are married or in civil partnerships | | | ✓ | |
| Pregnant individuals and new parents | | | ✓ | |
| Individuals of different race | | | ✓ | |
| Individuals of different religions or beliefs | | | ✓ | |
| Individuals gender identity | | | ✓ | |
| Individuals sexual orientation | | | ✓ | |
| <i>Individuals living in different family circumstances</i> | | | ✓ | |
| <i>Individuals in different social circumstances</i> | | | ✓ | |
| <i>Different employee groups</i> | | | ✓ | |
| <i>Other</i> | | | | |



Data Protection Impact Assessment (DPIA) screening questions

If the document includes any personally identifiable information (PII) a Data Protection Impact Assessment (DPIA) will be required. This should be discussed with the Data Protection Officer and the DPIA file location referenced at this point in your document.

Where no PII is involved it should be stated at this point in your document.

The Data Protection Officer holds the master copies of all completed DPIA in N:Common/Information Assets/DPIAs.

The DPIA needs to be reviewed periodically to ensure that any PII is adequately considered.

The DPIA template and guidance can be found [here](#).

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Buckinghamshire & Milton Keynes Fire Authority

Meeting and date: Fire Authority, 16 February 2022

Report title: Treasury Management Strategy 2022/23

Lead Member: Councillor David Hopkins

Report sponsor: Mark Hemming, Director of Finance & Assets

Author and contact: Asif Hussain, ahussain@bucksfire.gov.uk

Action: Decision.

Recommendations: That the Authority approve the Treasury Management Policy Statement, Treasury Management Strategy Statement and the Annual Investment Strategy for 2022/23

Executive summary:

This report is being presented as the Fire Authority is required to approve the Treasury Management Policy Statement, Treasury Management Strategy Statement and the Annual Investment Strategy. These documents (Appendix 1) all support the Medium-Term Financial Plan.

The current strategy has been operating effectively and outperforming the benchmark targets. However, since the outbreak of the Covid-19 Pandemic, the Bank of England reduced the Base Rate to 0.10% in March 2020. Consequently, this has resulted in a reduction in the level of returns from investments. Therefore, the investment returns budget for 2022/23 will remain at to £0.030m.

There is no significant change from the previous strategy, although given the current pandemic the focus will continue to shift towards maintaining a higher level of liquidity than would normally be the case.

Financial implications:

The proposed budget for 2022/23 is £0.030m. It is anticipated that the budget will be met. Detailed information is shown within Appendix 1.

Risk management:

Making investments in the Authority's own name means that the Authority bears the risk of any counterparty failure. This risk will be managed in accordance with the strategy and with advice from external treasury management advisors.

The Director of Finance and Assets will act in accordance with the Authority's policy statement; treasury management practices and CIPFA's Standard of Professional Practice on Treasury Management.

The risk of counterparty failure is monitored on the directorate level risk register within Finance and Assets.

There are no direct staffing implications.

Legal implications:

The Authority is required by section 15(1) of the Local Government Act 2003 to have regard to the Department for Communities and Local Government Guidance on Local Government Investments; and by regulation 24 of the Local Authorities (Capital Finance and Accounting) (England) Regulations 2003 [SI 3146] to have regard to any prevailing CIPFA Treasury Management Code of Practice.

Under section 12 of the Local Government Act 2003 the Authority has the power to invest for "any purpose relevant to its functions" and "for the purposes of the prudent management of its financial affairs".

However, it must exercise its investment power in accordance with its fiduciary duty, analogous to that of a trustee, owed to those who contribute to the funds of the Authority.

Privacy and security implications:

No direct impact.

Duty to collaborate:

No direct impact.

Health and safety implications:

No direct impact.

Environmental implications:

The Authority will explore sustainable investments, which are sustainable deposits that allow customers to have their capital referenced against sustainable assets, whether existing now or in the future, as verified through the green and sustainable product framework on a net positive basis.

Equality, diversity, and inclusion implications:

No direct impact.

Consultation and communication:

No direct impact.

Background papers:

CIPFA Code of Practice for Treasury Management in the Public Services (CIPFA Code)

Department for Communities and Local Government Guidance on Local Government Investments (DCLG Guidance)

| Appendix | Title | Protective Marking |
|-----------------|---|---------------------------|
| 1 | Treasury Management Policy Statement, Treasury Management Strategy Statement and Annual Investment Strategy | |
| 2 | Provisional Counterparty List | |
| 3 | Prospects for Interest Rates | |

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Appendix 1 – Treasury Management Policy Statement, Treasury Management Strategy Statement and Annual Investment Strategy

Treasury Management Policy Statement

This Authority defines its treasury management activities as:

The management of the Authority's investments and cash flows, its banking, money market and capital market transactions; the effective control of the risks associated with those activities; and the pursuit of optimum performance consistent with those risks.

This Authority regards the successful identification, monitoring and control of risk to be the prime criteria by which the effectiveness of its treasury management activities will be measured. Accordingly, the analysis and reporting of treasury management activities will focus on their risk implications for the organisation, and any financial instruments entered into to manage these risks.

This Authority acknowledges that effective treasury management will provide support towards the achievement of its business and service objectives. It is therefore committed to the principles of achieving value for money in treasury management, and to employing suitable comprehensive performance measurement techniques, within the context of effective risk management.

The investment policy objective for this Authority is the prudent investment of its treasury balances. The Authority's investment priorities are the security of capital and liquidity of its investments so that funds are available for expenditure when needed. Both the CIPFA Code and DCLG guidance require the Authority to invest its funds prudently, and to have regard to the security and liquidity of its investments before seeking the highest rate of return, or yield. The generation of investment income to support the provision of local authority services is an important, but secondary, objective.

The Authority's borrowing objectives are to minimise the revenue costs of debt whilst maintaining a balanced loan portfolio. The Authority will set an affordable borrowing limit each year in compliance with the Local Government Act 2003 and will have regard to the CIPFA Prudential Code for Capital Finance in Local Authorities when setting that limit.

Treasury Management Strategy Statement

Current Portfolio Position

The Authority's treasury portfolio position as at 30 September 2021 comprised:

Borrowing

Fixed Rate Funding: £6.797m, Average Rate: 4.62%

The last repayment of £0.585m was made in May 2018 with the next loan maturity not due until May 2022. The repayments do not directly affect the revenue budget, as they simply reflect the use of cash accumulated by setting aside the appropriate minimum revenue provision (MRP) to settle the outstanding liability.

Investments

£19.219m, Average Rate: 01 April 2021 to 30 September 2021: 0.31%.

The investments have various terms and mature on a frequent basis to ensure The Authority can maintain sufficient liquidity and meet short term expenditure requirements. By 31 March 2022, the investments will be circa £13m, plus current account balances.

Prospects for Interest Rates

At the Bank of England Monetary Policy Committee (MPC) meeting held on 15 December 2021, The MPC voted by a majority 8-1 to increase the base rate by 0.15 percentage points, to 0.25%. The Authority will continue to monitor interest base rate and will not be adjusting the investment returns target for 2022/23. This is due to the uncertainties regarding COVID-19 and threats of future variants will have on the base rate. Therefore, projected investment returns have been modelled on an average fund balance of £15.0m against an average rate return of 0.20% for 2022/23.

For 2022/23, the Authority will continue with Link as its external treasury management advisor. Link's view of the prospects for interest rates can be seen in Appendix 3. Link advise that the current benchmark rate of return on investments should be Base Rate (currently 0.25%), however The Authority will continue to set a benchmark rate of return of 0.20%. Based on this rate the Authority would achieve an annual return of circa £0.030m on a balance of £15.0m (as at September 2021, the total projected return for 2021/22 is in the region of £0.032m).

Since the treasury management function has been managed in-house from 1 April 2013, the Authority have over-achieved regularly against the investment returns budget. However due to the Covid-19 Pandemic outbreak, 2020/21 was the first year the Authority did not achieve its annual investment target. This is a direct result of the Pandemic and the Bank of England MPC reducing the Base rate to 0.10%. The base rate in December 2021 has increased to 0.25%, however the investment returns budget for 2022/23 will remain at £0.030m.

For any type of investment there is a downside risk to the level of return we would obtain due to the uncertainty in the markets and the negative impact they have on the interest rates and therefore historical rates of return may not always provide a realistic indication of returns for the future. This will be closely monitored and reported to Members if the position changes from what we are currently projecting.

Borrowing Strategy

The Authority's borrowing objectives are:

- To minimise the revenue costs of debt whilst maintaining a balanced loan portfolio
- To manage the Authority's debt maturity profile, leaving no one future year with a disproportionate level of repayments

No additional borrowing is forecast to take place during the duration of the medium-term financial plan.

Investment Strategy

This Authority maintains investments that are placed with reference to cash flow requirements. Investment of the Authority's funds is in accordance with the Annual Investment Strategy.

Debt Rescheduling

The potential for debt rescheduling is monitored in light of interest rate movements. Any rescheduling will be in accordance with the borrowing strategy. The reasons for rescheduling include:

- The generation of cash savings at minimum risk
- Fulfilment of the borrowing strategy
- Enhancement of the maturity profile of the borrowing portfolio

The level of penalties on the early repayment of borrowing makes it difficult to restructure debt effectively at current interest rates. It is recommended that we continue to review this with our treasury advisors and if the opportunity arises, further work be undertaken to investigate debt restructuring, including the potential renegotiation of the early repayment charges.

Annual Investment Strategy (AIS)

A prudent investment policy has two objectives (as defined by the DCLG guidance):

- achieving first of all security (protecting the capital sum from loss);
- and then liquidity (keeping the money readily available for expenditure when needed);
- only once proper levels of security and liquidity are determined, it will then be reasonable to consider what yield can be obtained consistent with those priorities.

Investment Policy

In accordance with guidance from the DCLG and CIPFA, and in order to minimise the risk to investments, the Authority has clearly stipulated below the minimum acceptable credit quality of counterparties for inclusion on the lending list. The creditworthiness methodology used to create the counterparty list fully accounts for the ratings, watches and outlooks published by all three ratings agencies with a full understanding of what these reflect in the eyes of each agency. Using the Link ratings service potential counterparty ratings are monitored on a real time basis with knowledge of any changes notified electronically as the agencies notify modifications.

Continuing regulatory changes in the banking sector are designed to see greater stability, lower risk and the removal of expectations of Government financial support should an institution fail. This withdrawal of implied sovereign support has had an effect on ratings applied to institutions. This will result in the key ratings used to monitor counterparties being the Short Term and Long Term ratings only. Viability, Financial Strength and Support Ratings previously applied have effectively become redundant. This change does not reflect deterioration in the credit environment but rather a change of method in response to regulatory changes.

As with previous practice, ratings will not be the sole determinant of the quality of an institution and that it is important to continually assess and monitor the financial sector on both a micro and macro basis and in relation to the economic and political environments in which institutions operate. The assessment will also take account of information that reflects the opinion of the markets. To this end the Authority will

engage with its advisors to maintain a monitor on market pricing such as credit default swaps (CDS) and overlay that information on top of the credit ratings. This is fully integrated into the credit methodology provided by the advisors, Link in producing its colour coding which show the varying degrees of suggested creditworthiness.

Other information sources used will include the financial press, share price and other such information pertaining to the banking sector in order to establish the most robust scrutiny process on the suitability of potential investment counterparties.

The aim of the strategy is to generate a list of highly creditworthy counterparties which will also enable diversification and thus avoidance of concentration risk.

The intention of the strategy is to provide security of investment and minimisation of risk.

Creditworthiness Policy

This Authority applies the creditworthiness service provided by Link. This service employs a sophisticated modelling approach utilising credit ratings from the three main credit rating agencies - Fitch, Moody's and Standard and Poor's. The credit ratings of counterparties are supplemented with the following overlays:

- credit watches and credit outlooks from credit rating agencies
- CDS spreads to give early warning of likely changes in credit ratings;
- sovereign ratings to select counterparties from only the most creditworthy countries.

This modelling approach combines credit ratings, credit watches and credit outlooks in a weighted scoring system which is then combined with an overlay of CDS spreads for which the end product is a series of colour coded bands which indicate the relative creditworthiness of counterparties. These colour codes have been used by the Authority to determine the suggested duration for investments. It is recommended that the Authority continues to use Link's colour codes plus an additional six months for UK counterparties only. It would be beneficial if the Authority could lend to existing counterparties for a longer duration. This will increase the risk slightly but will offer increased returns. The Authority will therefore use counterparties within the following durational bands:

| Colour Rating (UK Counterparties) | Colour Rating (Non-UK Counterparties) |
|---|--|
| Yellow - 5 Years and 6 Months | Yellow - 5 Years |
| Purple – 2 Years and 6 Months | Purple – 2 Years |
| Colour Rating (UK Counterparties) | Colour Rating (Non-UK Counterparties) |
| Blue – 1 Year and 6 Months (only applies to nationalised or semi nationalised UK Banks) | Blue – 1 Year |
| Orange – 1 Year and 6 Months | Orange – 1 Year |

| | |
|---|--------------------------|
| Red – 1 Year | Red – 6 Months |
| Green – 9 Months | Green – 3 Months |
| No colour not to be used (except for building societies on our counterparty list which the Authority can invest with for a maximum duration of 365 days limited to a maximum investment of £2 million per counterparty) | No colour not to be used |

The Link creditworthiness service uses a wider array of information than just primary ratings and by using a risk weighted scoring system, does not give undue preponderance to just one agency’s ratings.

Typically the minimum credit ratings criteria the Authority use will be a short term rating (Fitch or equivalents) of short term rating F1, long term rating A-, viability rating of A-. There may be occasions when the counterparty ratings from one rating agency are marginally lower than these ratings but may still be used. In these instances consideration will be given to the whole range of ratings available, or other topical market information, to support their use.

All credit ratings will be monitored weekly. The Authority is alerted to changes to ratings of all three agencies through its use of the Link creditworthiness service.

- if a downgrade results in the counterparty/investment scheme no longer meeting the Authority’s minimum criteria, its further use as a new investment will be withdrawn immediately.
- in addition to the use of credit ratings the Authority will be advised of information in movements in credit default swap spreads against the iTraxx benchmark and other market data on a weekly basis. Extreme market movements may result in downgrade of an institution or removal from the Authority’s lending list.

Sole reliance will not be placed on the use of this external service. In addition this Authority will also use market data and market information, information on government support for banks and the credit ratings of that supporting government.

Country Limits

In 2017/18, the Authority determined that it would not only use approved counterparties based within the United Kingdom but allowed any counterparty (UK or non-UK based) rated at least ‘Green’ by Link. Although no counterparty outside UK was used during 2021/22, these will remain on the lending list for 2022/23. The primary purpose of this is not to increase yield, but to provide additional diversity to the portfolio to effectively manage risk. A number of non-UK banks are ranked higher than some of the UK banks on the Authority’s current counterparty list. Therefore, the Authority proposes to limit the duration of all non-UK investment in line with Link’s recommended limits. A list of the proposed counterparties is shown in Appendix 2.

Counterparty Limits

As per the AIS, the Authority has determined that the maximum balance that can be invested with a single counterparty at any point in time will be no more than 30% of the portfolio, up to a limit of £5 million.

The two exceptions to this limit in the AIS will continue to be Lloyds, where the maximum balance that can be invested will be a limit of £7.5 million. Of this £7.5 million, no more than £5 million will be invested in non-instant access (call) accounts.

The rationale for this is that Lloyds are the Authority's main banking provider, and as part of the contract will pay credit interest on all balances at a rate of Base Rate minus 0.10%. This means that:

- The staff time taken to move money between our main bank account and other instant access account is reduced
- The banking charges associated with the movement of the money between accounts is reduced
- The additional risk exposure to the Authority is minimal as all amounts over the current £5 million limit would be available for withdrawal immediately should circumstances require

The other exception relates to building societies on our counterparty listing whereby the maximum balance that can be invested will be limited to £2 million for a maximum duration of 365 days.

Investment Security

Investments are defined as being in one of two categories:

- Specified investments – these are investments with high security and high liquidity. All specified investments are in sterling and have a maturity of no more than one year. They will be with the UK government, a local authority, a parish council or with an investment scheme or body of “high credit quality” (as judged against the Creditworthiness Policy detailed earlier in this paper)
- Non-specified investments – any type of investment that does not meet the specified investment criteria. A maximum of £5 million will be held in aggregate in non-specified investments for longer than 364 days – up to a maximum of five years and 6 months as denoted by the yellow banding on the Link creditworthiness policy detailed earlier in this paper. In addition, property funds are also classified as non-specified investments and a maximum of £3 million will be held in aggregate.

Investment Training

Relevant training and updates will be provided to relevant staff by the external treasury management advisors. This will be supplemented by additional training from CIPFA where necessary.

Investment of Money Borrowed in Advance of Need

The Authority does not currently have any money that has been borrowed in advance of need. No further borrowing is planned over the medium term.

Investment Liquidity

In consultation with external treasury advisors, the Authority will review its balance sheet position, level of reserves and cash requirements in order to determine the length of time for which investments can be prudently committed. Investments will be placed at a range of maturities, including having money on-call in order to maintain adequate liquidity.

Appendix 2 – Provisional Counterparty List

This list is based on information provided by Link as at 31 December 2021. Please note that all colours indicated refer to Link's creditworthiness policy (see Appendix 1):

UK Based Counterparties

| <u>UK Based Counterparties</u> | <u>Counterparty</u> | <u>(as rated by Link)</u> |
|--------------------------------|---|---------------------------|
| UK | Bank of Scotland PLC (RFB) | Red - 6 mths |
| UK | Barclays Bank PLC (NRFB) | Red - 6 mths |
| UK | Barclays Bank UK PLC (RFB) | Red - 6 mths |
| UK | Close Brothers Ltd | Red - 6 mths |
| UK | Clydesdale Bank PLC | Green - 100 days |
| UK | Co-operative Bank PLC (The) | No colour - 0 mths |
| UK | Goldman Sachs International Bank | Red - 6 mths |
| UK | Handelsbanken Plc | Orange - 12 mths |
| UK | HSBC Bank PLC (NRFB) | Orange - 12 mths |
| UK | HSBC UK Bank Plc (RFB) | Orange - 12 mths |
| UK | Lloyds Bank Corporate Markets Plc (NRFB) | Red - 6 mths |
| UK | Lloyds Bank Plc (RFB) | Red - 6 mths |
| UK | National Bank Of Kuwait (International) PLC | Orange - 12 mths |
| UK | NatWest Markets Plc (NRFB) | Red - 6 mths |
| UK | Santander Financial Services plc (NRFB) | Red - 6 mths |
| UK | Santander UK PLC | Red - 6 mths |
| UK | SMBC Bank International Plc | Red - 6 mths |
| UK | Standard Chartered Bank | Red - 6 mths |
| UK | Debt Management Office | Yellow - 60 mths |
| UK | Other Local Authorities | Yellow - 60 mths |
| UK | Royal Bank of Scotland Group | Blue - 12 mths |
| UK | National Westminster Bank | Blue - 12 mths |

*** This is the duration suggested by Link. As per the updated Creditworthiness Policy (see page 6) these will all be extended by six months, except for building societies rated 'Green', which will have a maximum duration of 12 months for up to £2m.**

The Authority will also have the ability to invest in AAA rated money market funds (MMFs) and enhanced money market funds.

Non-UK Based Counterparties

As noted in Appendix 1, the duration of all non-UK investments will be in line with Links' duration limits.

| <u>Non-UK Based Counterparties</u> | <u>Country Counterparty</u> | <u>(as rated by Link)</u> |
|---|---|----------------------------------|
| Australia | Australia and New Zealand Banking Group Ltd. | Orange - 12 mths |
| Australia | Commonwealth Bank of Australia | Orange - 12 mths |
| Australia | Macquarie Bank Ltd. | Red - 6 mths |
| Australia | National Australia Bank Ltd. | Orange - 12 mths |
| Australia | Westpac Banking Corp. | Orange - 12 mths |
| Belgium | BNP Paribas Fortis | Red - 6 mths |
| Belgium | KBC Bank N.V. | Red - 6 mths |
| Canada | Bank of Montreal | Orange - 12 mths |
| Canada | Bank of Nova Scotia | Orange - 12 mths |
| Canada | Canadian Imperial Bank of Commerce | Orange - 12 mths |
| Canada | National Bank of Canada | Red - 6 mths |
| Canada | Royal Bank of Canada | Orange - 12 mths |
| Canada | Toronto-Dominion Bank | Orange - 12 mths |
| Denmark | Danske A/S | Red - 6 mths |
| Finland | Nordea Bank Abp | Orange - 12 mths |
| Finland | OP Corporate Bank plc | Orange - 12 mths |
| France | BNP Paribas | Orange - 12 mths |
| France | Credit Agricole Corporate and Investment Bank | Orange - 12 mths |
| France | Credit Agricole S.A. | Orange - 12 mths |
| France | Credit Industriel et Commercial | Orange - 12 mths |
| France | Societe Generale | Red - 6 mths |
| Germany | Bayerische Landesbank | Red - 6 mths |
| Germany | Commerzbank AG | Green - 100 days |
| Germany | Deutsche Bank AG | Green - 100 days |
| Germany | DZ BANK AG Deutsche Zentral-Genossenschaftsbank | Orange - 12 mths |
| Germany | Landesbank Baden-Wuerttemberg | Red - 6 mths |
| Germany | Landesbank Berlin AG | Orange - 12 mths |
| Germany | Landesbank Hessen-Thuringen Girozentrale | Red - 6 mths |
| Germany | Landwirtschaftliche Rentenbank | Purple - 24 mths |
| Germany | Norddeutsche Landesbank Girozentrale | Green - 100 days |
| Germany | NRW.BANK | Purple - 24 mths |
| Netherlands | ABN AMRO Bank N.V. | Red - 6 mths |
| Netherlands | Bank Nederlandse Gemeenten N.V. | Purple - 24 mths |
| Netherlands | Cooperatieve Rabobank U.A. | Orange - 12 mths |
| Netherlands | ING Bank N.V. | Orange - 12 mths |
| Netherlands | Nederlandse Waterschapsbank N.V. | Purple - 24 mths |
| Qatar | Qatar National Bank | Red - 6 mths |
| Singapore | DBS Bank Ltd. | Orange - 12 mths |
| Singapore | Oversea-Chinese Banking Corp. Ltd. | Orange - 12 mths |
| Singapore | United Overseas Bank Ltd. | Orange - 12 mths |
| Sweden | Skandinaviska Enskilda Banken AB | Orange - 12 mths |
| Sweden | Svenska Handelsbanken AB | Orange - 12 mths |

| | | |
|----------------------|------------------------------|------------------|
| Sweden | Swedbank AB | Orange - 12 mths |
| Switzerland | Credit Suisse AG | Red - 6 mths |
| Switzerland | UBS AG | Orange - 12 mths |
| United Arab Emirates | First Abu Dhabi Bank PJSC | Orange - 12 mths |
| United States | Bank of America N.A. | Orange - 12 mths |
| United States | Bank of New York Mellon, The | Purple - 24 mths |
| United States | Citibank N.A. | Orange - 12 mths |
| United States | JPMorgan Chase Bank N.A. | Orange - 12 mths |
| United States | Wells Fargo Bank, NA | Orange - 12 mths |

Counterparties Rated 'No Colour' by Link

As noted in Appendix 1, sole reliance will not be placed on the use of Link ratings. The Authority will also use market data and market information, information on government support for banks and the credit ratings of that supporting government. The Authority added four building societies to its counterparty list in 2014/15, at which time they were all rated 'No Colour'. These are all now rated by Link and appear on our Provisional Counterparty Listing above. In 2018/19 the Authority increased the number of building societies in our counterparty list to ten. The top-ten building societies (by net assets) were added to the counterparty list. The duration of investment will continue to be limited to 365 days and the maximum amount invested with any building society at any point in time will not exceed £2 million.

| <u>UK Based Counterparties</u> | <u>Country Counterparty</u> | <u>(as rated by Link)</u> |
|---------------------------------------|------------------------------------|----------------------------------|
| UK | Coventry Building Society | Red - 6 mths |
| UK | Cumberland Building Society | No colour - 0 mths |
| UK | Leeds Building Society | Green - 100 days |
| UK | Nationwide Building Society | Red - 6 mths |
| UK | Newcastle Building Society | No colour - 0 mths |
| UK | Nottingham Building Society | No colour - 0 mths |
| UK | Principality Building Society | No colour - 0 mths |
| UK | Skipton Building Society | Red - 6 mths |
| UK | West Bromwich Building Society | No colour - 0 mths |
| UK | Yorkshire Building Society | Red - 6 mths |

Appendix 3 – Prospects for Interest Rates

The following table gives the Link central view as per 31 December 2021:

| Annual Average % | Bank Rate % | PWLB Borrowing Rates % (including certainty rate adjustment) | | | |
|------------------|-------------|---|---------|---------|---------|
| | | 5 year | 10 year | 25 year | 50 year |
| Dec 2021 | 0.25 | 1.40 | 1.60 | 1.80 | 1.50 |
| Mar 2022 | 0.25 | 1.50 | 1.70 | 1.90 | 1.70 |
| Jun 2022 | 0.50 | 1.50 | 1.80 | 2.00 | 1.80 |
| Sep 2022 | 0.50 | 1.60 | 1.80 | 2.10 | 1.90 |
| Dec 2022 | 0.75 | 1.60 | 1.90 | 2.10 | 1.90 |
| Mar 2023 | 0.75 | 1.70 | 1.90 | 2.20 | 2.00 |
| Jun 2023 | 0.75 | 1.80 | 2.00 | 2.20 | 2.00 |
| Sep 2023 | 0.75 | 1.80 | 2.00 | 2.20 | 2.00 |

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Buckinghamshire & Milton Keynes Fire Authority

Meeting and date: Fire Authority Meeting, 16 February 2022

Report title: Armed Forces Covenant

Lead Member: Councillor Steven Lambert

Report sponsor: Area Commander Calum Bell

Author and contact: Group Commander Shaun Cunningham,
scunningham@bucksfire.gov.uk

Action: Noting

Recommendations:

That the report be noted.

Executive summary:

The purpose of this report is to provide an update on the progress that continues to be made, with regard to the delivery of the Service's pledge to support the Armed Forces Community through the Armed Forces Covenant.

In August 2020 the Service signed the Armed Forces Covenant and were awarded Bronze in the Employer Recognition Scheme and in July 2021 were awarded Silver, after demonstrating further the Service's commitment to support our Armed Forces Community. The award ceremony was held on 1 September 2021 at the Historic Dockyard Portsmouth, due to Covid restrictions only one representative of the Service could attend to receive the award.

To Demonstrate the Service's support to the Armed Forces Community we have:

- Established Veteran Drop-in Centres at Marlow and West Ashlands. These are predominantly for Veterans with complex issues, the footfall is low but this is to be expected, as these are the hardest to reach veterans. The centre at Marlow is in collaboration with NHS 'Op Courage' The Veterans Mental Health and Wellbeing Service. The centre at West Ashlands is in collaboration with the Veterans Community Network.
- Developed a training program to support Armed Forces Cadet associations, allowing them onto our Stations to undertake supported, challenging training.
- Offered to provide a room for 1-1 clinical advice. Veteran support network and NHS services for veterans occasionally need a room to carry out clinical consultations, we will try and support this where possible.

- Identifying Armed Forces Veterans during our own Fire and Wellness visits and directing them to the support networks available.
- Supported, where possible, with events that celebrate Armed Forces Day.

Some of the work above is in collaboration with Buckinghamshire Council Civilian Military Partnership Board.

There are reciprocal benefits to supporting the Armed Forces Community;

- The Service have held a training event at the Reserve Forces centre in Marlow for a nominal fee and communications have been held to discuss further use of their facilities.
- The Service has secured Mental Health First Aid courses through the Veterans Community Network again for a nominal fee.
- Some of our staff, who have supported these events and are themselves military veterans, have certainly benefited from being directly involved.

Financial implications:

There are no direct financial implications associated with this report. Local supermarkets will be approached to donate tea/coffee etc, for the drop-in centres, equipment required for Cadet training is already supplied on station. There are some reciprocal benefits that accrue to the Service such as access to venue hire and training courses on either a cost-recovery basis, or for a nominal fee.

Risk management:

Delivery of the Armed Forces Covenant will contribute toward ensuring the Service maintains its promise through the People Strategy. This commits the Service to actively supporting the armed forces community. It acknowledges that we recognise the value serving personnel, reservists, veterans and military families can bring to the Service. It also indicates that we will, through our business dealings, work to ensure they are treated with fairness and respect within both the local community and wider society and help remove any disadvantages they may encounter in their day-to-day lives. The Covenant formally recognises our commitment to supporting both the physical and mental wellbeing of this often-unrecognised part of our community and will endeavour to support those who have served, those who are currently serving, and all those connected with the Armed Forces.

Failure to deliver the pledges of the Armed Forces Covenant could lead to serious reputational risk of Buckinghamshire and Milton Keynes Fire Authority as both the Silver and Gold awards are reviewed annually and can be withdrawn.

Legal implications:

Third party liability insurance covers the attendance of Veterans and the welfare providers on the Services sites, this is subject to them being escorted by a member of

the Service. All of the events held on the Services sites are attended by members of the Service and no event will go ahead without a Service representative.

Privacy and security implications:

The Armed Forces Covenant does not appear to raise any immediate privacy or security issues. No information is processed or stored reference the attending Veterans.

Duty to collaborate:

Although the Authority has committed to a default position of collaboration with Thames Valley Fire and Rescue Authorities (FRAs). The Armed Forces Covenant relates specifically to BFRS activities; however we are collaborating with a vast array of partner agencies including both Milton Keynes and Buckinghamshire councils and the NHS.

Health and safety implications:

No adverse Health and Safety implications identified.

Environmental implications:

There are no adverse environmental implications associated with this report.

Equality, diversity, and inclusion implications:

No immediate issues identified in relation to the Armed Forces Covenant, however, IIAs and DPIAs will be completed for any changes that result from any subsequent activity, where there is the potential for equality, diversity and privacy issues to arise.

Consultation and communication:

The Business Transformation Board were provided with a verbal update on progress in relation to the Armed Forces Covenant at their 6 January 2022 meeting. Also, consultation has been held throughout, engaging with a variety of stakeholders throughout the Service.

Background papers:

- <https://www.armedforcescovenant.gov.uk/#:~:text=The%20Armed%20Forces%20Covenant%20is%20a%20promise%20by,their%20families%2C%20are%20treated%20fairly.%20About%20the%20covenant.>
- <https://vcn.org.uk/>
- <https://veteranaware.nhs.uk/op-courage/>

| Appendix | Title | Protective Marking |
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Buckinghamshire & Milton Keynes Fire Authority

Meeting and date: Fire Authority, 16 February 2022

Report title: Composition of the Authority for 2022/23

Lead Member: Councillor Lesley Clarke OBE, Chairman

Report sponsor: Graham Britten, Director of Legal and Governance

Author and contact: Katie Nellist knellist@bucksfire.gov.uk

Action: Noting

Recommendations: That it be noted that the Councils of Buckinghamshire and Milton Keynes will be requested to appoint 12 Councillors and 5 Councillors respectively as representatives to be Members of Buckinghamshire & Milton Keynes Fire Authority for the municipal year 2022/23.

Executive summary: Buckinghamshire Council (BC) and Milton Keynes Council (MKC) each undertake an annual electoral canvass and publish their electoral registers each year on 1 December based on the results of those canvasses.

The purpose of this report is to apprise the Authority of a change to its composition required for 2022/23 arising from a change in the ratio of local government electors between BC and MKC based on the following data from the 2021 Electoral Registers.

Total Number of Members: 17

| | | | | |
|-----------------|---------|----------|------------|---------|
| Buckinghamshire | 411,005 | (67.73%) | 12 Members | (11.51) |
|-----------------|---------|----------|------------|---------|

| | | | | |
|---------------|---------|----------|-----------|--------|
| Milton Keynes | 195,827 | (32.27%) | 5 Members | (5.49) |
|---------------|---------|----------|-----------|--------|

This represents a change from 11:6 to 12:5. The Office for National Statistics (ONS) did not publish the annual datasets for the BC or MKC electorates (as at 1 December 2020) until 24 May 2021¹. A collection of electoral statistics for 2 March 2020 was published by the ONS on 5 January 2021 to support the 2023 Review of Parliamentary constituencies. These figures were used for the BC and MKC appointments for 2021/22.²

¹ 1 December 2020 Electoral Registers (ONS, 24 May 2021) Buckinghamshire: 411,317; Milton Keynes: 195,595. The Annual Meetings of MKC and BC were held on 19 May 2021 and 26 May 2021 respectively.

² 2 March 2020 Electoral Registers (ONS, 5 January 2021)

Total Number of Members: 17

| | | | | |
|-----------------|---------|----------|------------|-----------------|
| Buckinghamshire | 412,512 | (66.86%) | 11 Members | (11.37 rounded) |
|-----------------|---------|----------|------------|-----------------|

| | | | | |
|---------------|---------|----------|-----------|----------------|
| Milton Keynes | 204,465 | (33.14%) | 6 Members | (5.63 rounded) |
|---------------|---------|----------|-----------|----------------|

Financial implications: None arising from the recommendations

Risk management: In future years BC and MKC will be asked to make appointments based on the figures published by the appointing councils' electoral registers in December each year rather than awaiting the publication of those registers in the ONS datasets.

Legal implications: The [Buckinghamshire Fire Services \(Combination Scheme\) Order 1996 \[1996/2924\]](#) created Buckinghamshire & Milton Keynes Fire Authority (BMKFA) as the fire and rescue authority for Milton Keynes Council and the, then, Buckinghamshire County Council. Part III paragraph 12 requires that "Each constituent authority shall, so far as is practicable, appoint such number of representatives to be members of the Authority as is proportionate to the number of local government electors in its area in relation to the number of such electors in the other constituent authority's area."

BMKFA is a body to which the Local Government and Housing Act 1989 applies as a fire and rescue authority to which the constituent authorities appoint at least three seats such that each council must apply its own political proportionality rules to its appointments.

Privacy and security implications: None arising from the recommendations

Duty to collaborate: None arising from the recommendations

Health and safety implications: None arising from the recommendations

Environmental implications: None arising from the recommendations

Equality, diversity, and inclusion implications: None arising from the recommendations

Consultation and communication: There have been 17 Members on BMKFA since its inception in 1997. At the request of the, then, Chairman the membership was increased to 21 in June 2008. This reverted to 17 in June 2010. From June 2010 until June 2017 the ratio of BC:MKC members was 12:5; from June 2017 it has been 11:6.

Prior to the municipal year 2015/2016 the Electoral Registration Officers of the, then, five councils were contacted for the numbers of local government electors as at 1 December of the preceding calendar year. Thereafter the ONS datasets were used, however each year these were being published closer to the Annual Meeting of BMKFA and the Annual Meetings of the appointing councils.

An email received from the BC Senior Electoral Services Officer, 12 January 2022, confirmed 'The Local Government electorate for Buckinghamshire Council at 1 December 2021 is 411005.'

An email received from the MKC Electoral Services Manager, 25 January 2022, confirmed 'Milton Keynes Local Government Electorate as per the revised register on the 1 December 2021 is 195,827.'

Next steps – The Democratic Services Officer will contact relevant counterparts at BC and MKC in order that they can notify the respective Council meetings to appoint 12 and 5 representatives respectively for 2022/23.

Background papers: [Buckinghamshire Fire Services \(Combination Scheme\) Order 1996 \[1996/2924\]](#) version when made.

| Appendix | Title | Protective Marking |
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