



3 January 2025

Dear Resident,

Royal Berkshire Fire Authority Budget and Council Tax Consultation 2025/26

As Chair of the Fire Authority, I am acutely aware of the financial pressures that all residents must contend with. Therefore, it is important for you to know that the Fire Authority is committed to providing excellent services as well as delivering value for money but most importantly, continuing to work tirelessly to keep the people of Berkshire safe.

Royal Berkshire Fire and Rescue Service's annual budget for 2024/25 is £46 million. About two thirds of our funding comes from council tax, the rest from Government grants and business rates.

We are committed to delivering value for money to our residents and, through investing in efficiency improvements, we have delivered over £1.5 million in savings and income generation over the last two years. However, even after factoring in these efficiencies, we still face a significant shortfall in our budget.

Unfortunately, the Local Government Finance Settlement for 2025/26 is less favourable than the current year's Settlement in terms of Government support. For 2024/25, the Authority received an Income Guarantee Grant and a Service Grant from Government, amounting to £820,000. These grants will not be payable in 2025/26, resulting in significant budgetary pressure on the Service.

As part of the plan to balance the budget for 2025/26, Royal Berkshire Fire Authority will deliver a significant programme of savings next year, amounting to £863,000. However, this will still leave us with a large funding shortfall, and I am therefore recommending that we raise the Band D precept by £5 per annum to £86.31.

This will most likely still leave the Authority in the lowest 25% of precepting fire authorities in the country. Importantly, the money raised through this £5 annual increase will be used to make sure we have very highly trained and dedicated firefighters, excellent firefighting equipment with over £4.5m being invested in new fire engines in the coming years, as well as IT systems that are modern and impactful and backed up by exceptional support staff.

Your fire service is rated as a 'good' fire and rescue service across the three pillars of Efficiency, Effectiveness and People by His Majesty's Inspectorate of Constabulary and Fire & Rescue Services and we will receive our next assessment in early 2025.

I would be grateful if you could take part in our [online survey](#) or visit rbfrs.co.uk/haveyoursay to let us know your views. The consultation closes at 12 noon on 31 January 2025.

Yours faithfully,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read 'Jeff Brooks', written over a light blue horizontal line.

Councillor Jeff Brooks
Chair of Royal Berkshire Fire Authority