



**Agenda
for the Meeting
of the
Royal Berkshire Fire Authority**

Tuesday, 15th February 2022

At

6.30pm

**Theale Community Fire Station
Wigmore Lane
Reading, RG7 5HH**

For further information regarding this meeting, please contact:

Committee Team

0118 938 4611

E-Mail at committeeteam@rbfrs.co.uk

Headquarters, Newsham Court, Pincents Kiln, Calcot, Reading, Berkshire RG31 7SD



MEETING: Royal Berkshire Fire Authority Meeting
DATE AND TIME: Tuesday, 15th February 2022, at 6.30 pm
VENUE: Theale Community Fire Station
Wigmore Lane
Reading
RG7 5HH

S U M M O N S

You are hereby summoned to attend the meeting of the Royal Berkshire Fire Authority at the time, date and venue indicated above, when it is proposed to deal with the business set out in the enclosed Agenda.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Graham Britten'.

GRAHAM BRITTEN
Monitoring Officer

To: Members of the Royal Berkshire Fire Authority:

| | |
|--------------------------------|-------------------------------------|
| Councillor Avtar Cheema | Councillor Christine Bateson |
| Councillor Harjinder Minhas | Councillor Colin Dudley |
| Councillor Dennis Benneyworth | Councillor Paul Gittings |
| Councillor Tricia Brown | Councillor Pauline Helliard-Symons |
| Councillor David Cannon | Councillor Tina McKenzie-Boyle |
| Councillor Tony Linden | Councillor Angus Ross |
| Councillor Jo Lovelock | Councillor Rachelle Shepherd- DuBey |
| Councillor Garth Simpson | Councillor Dexter Smith |
| Councillor Jane Stanford-Beale | Councillor Simon Werner |
| Councillor Jeff Brooks | Councillor Alison Swaddle |

Copy to: Senior Leadership Team (SLT), Royal Berkshire Fire and Rescue Service

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DATE AND TIME: Tuesday, 15th February 2022, at 6.30 pm

VENUE: Theale Community Fire Station
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RG7 5HH

AGENDA

1. Apologies for Absence

2. Declarations of Interest

Purpose:

To receive declarations of interest from Councillors relating to items to be considered at the meeting, in accordance with the provisions of the Fire Authority's Local Code of Conduct, and any from Officers.

3. Minutes of the meeting held on 2 November 2021, and 5 January 2022
(Pages 7 - 24)

Recommendation:

That the Minutes of the meeting, and recoded actions held on 2 November 2021 and 5 January 2022, be confirmed as a correct record and signed by the Chairman.

4. Petitions and Questions from the Public under Standing Orders 19 and 25

Purpose:

To receive any questions from members of the public, in accordance with Standing Orders 19 and 25.

5. Receipt of Announcements

Purpose:

To receive any announcements from the Chairman or the Chief Fire Officer.

6. Issues arising from the Audit and Governance Committee

Recommendation:

That it be noted that no reports have been referred by the Audit and Governance Committee.

7. Questions from Members under Standing Order 30

Purpose:

To receive any questions from Members under Standing Order 30.

8. Notices of Motion under Standing Order 44

Purpose:

To receive any notices of Motion under Standing Order 44.

9. Recommendations of Committees

Recommendation:

That Item 12, Pay Policy Statement has been recommended from Audit and Governance Committee at its meeting on 24 January 2022, and Item 15, Scheme of Allowances Annual Review 2022/23 has been recommended from Management Committee on 3 February 2022.

10. Appointment of Committees (Pages 25 - 28)

Purpose:

To note the appointment of Councillor Swaddle onto the Fire Authority with effect from 1 February 2022, and agree that Councillor Swaddle be appointed onto the Audit and Governance Committee.

11. Annual Budget 22/23, Medium-Term Financial Plan, Strategic Asset Investment Framework and the Thames Valley Fire Control Service Budget (To Follow)

Purpose:

To agree the Annual Budget 2022/23, Medium-Term Financial Plan, Strategic Asset Investment Framework and the Thames Valley Fire Control Service Budget.

12. Pay Policy Statement (Pages 29 - 46)

Purpose:

To approve the Pay Policy Statement for 2022/23 for publication.

13. Royal Berkshire Fire and Rescue Service Equality, Diversity and Inclusion Objectives (Pages 47 - 54)

Purpose:

To note the report, and agree that the new proposed Objectives can proceed to consultation.

14. State of Fire and Rescue 2021 *(Pages 55 - 192)*

Purpose:

To note the State of Fire and Rescue 2021 report, the outcomes of the first tranche of Round Two inspections by Her Majesty's Inspectorate of Constabulary and Fire and Rescue Services, and to note the update on the preparations for the inspection of Royal Berkshire Fire and Rescue Service.

15. Scheme of Allowances Annual Review 2022/23 *(Pages 193 - 206)*

Purpose:

To agree the Scheme of Allowances Annual Review 2022/23.

16. Forward Plan *(Pages 207 - 208)*

Recommendation:

That the Forward Plan be noted.

17. Minutes of the Standing Committees

Recommendation:

To note that the minutes of the following meetings were published on RBFRS website <http://www.rbfrs.co.uk/about-us/fire-authority/fire-authority-meetings/>

18. Date of Next Meeting

Thursday, 28 April, at 6.30pm. Venue to be confirmed.

19. Exclusion of the Public *(Pages 209 - 210)*

Recommendation:

To Resolve that under Section 100(A)(4) of the Local Government Act 1972 (as amended), the public be excluded from the meeting for the following Agenda Items on the grounds that they involve the likely disclosure of exempt information, as defined in the Paragraphs 1, 2 and 3 of Part I of Schedule 12A of the said Act indicated and is exempt information if, and so long as, in all the circumstances of the case, the public interest in maintaining the exemption outweighs the public interest in disclosing the information.

20. Part II Minutes of the meeting held on 2 November 2021 *(Pages 211 - 214)*

Purpose:

That the Part II Minutes of the meeting and recorded actions held on 2 November 2021, be confirmed as a correct record and signed by the Chairman.

MINUTES OF THE MEETING OF THE ROYAL BERKSHIRE FIRE AUTHORITY



Held on Tuesday, 2nd November 2021, 6.30 pm

Theale Community Fire Station, Wigmore Lane, Theale RG7 5HH

Members:
(*present)

- | | |
|----------------------------------|--------------------------------------|
| * Councillor Anne Chadwick | * Councillor Jeff Brooks |
| * Councillor Avtar Cheema | * Councillor Christine Bateson |
| Councillor Harjinder Minhas | * Councillor Colin Dudley |
| * Councillor Dennis Benneyworth | * Councillor Paul Gittings |
| * Councillor Tricia Brown | * Councillor Pauline Helliar-Symons |
| * Councillor David Cannon | Councillor Tina McKenzie-Boyle |
| * Councillor Tony Linden | * Councillor Angus Ross |
| * Councillor Jo Lovelock | * Councillor Rachelle Shepherd-DuBey |
| * Councillor Garth Simpson | * Councillor Dexter Smith |
| * Councillor Jane Stanford-Beale | * Councillor Simon Werner |

In Attendance: Mark Antell (Senior Communication and Engagement Officer, SC&EO)
Mark Arkwell (Deputy Chief Fire Officer, DCFO)
Wayne Bowcock (Chief Fire Officer CFO)
Graham Britten (Monitoring Officer, MO)
Alex Brown (Head of Property Capital Projects and Estates, HPCP&E)
Conor Byrne (Head of Finance and Procurement, HF&P)
Tom Carvell (Senior IT Technical Support Officer)
Noosha Churchill (Built Environment Programme Manager, BEPM)
Becci Jefferies (Head of Human Resources and Learning and Development, HHR&L&D)
Andrew Mclenahan (Head of Facilities, Fleet and Equipment, HFF&E)
Katie Mills (Director of Corporate Services, DCS)
Tom Nice (IT Technical Support Officer (IT TSO))
Jim Powell (Area Manager Collaboration and Policy, AM C&P)
Nikki Richards (Deputy Chief Executive, Dep ChEx)
Fayth Rowe (Democratic Support Lead, DSL)
Hannah Sheehan (Democratic Support Assistant, DSA)
Tregear Thomas (Area Manager, Prevention and Protection, AM P&P)
Joanna Watson (Communication and Engagement Lead, C&EL)
Helen Watts (Business Support Officer, BSO)
Tony Vincent (Head of Business and Information Systems, HBIS)

Action

Action

21. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Apologies of absence were received from Councillors McKenzie-Boyle and Minhas.

22. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

In accordance with the provisions of the Fire Authority's Local Code of Conduct, Councillors Ross and Cannon declared a personal interest as 2021/22 Members of the TVFCS Joint Committee.

There were no Declarations of Interest received from Officers.

23. MINUTES OF THE MEETING HELD ON 30 JUNE 2021

RESOLVED that the Minutes and actions of the meeting held on 30 June, be approved as a true and correct record and signed by the Chairman.

24. PETITIONS AND QUESTIONS FROM THE PUBLIC UNDER STANDING ORDERS 19 AND 25

There were no petitions and questions from members of the public under Standing Orders 19 and 25.

25. RECEIPT OF ANNOUNCEMENTS

Urgent Late Item

By virtue of section 100B (4) (b) of the Local Government Act 1972. The Chairman accepted an Urgent Late Item in Part II on Capital Projects – Asset Release Strategy for the Pangbourne Fire Station Site due to time critical nature of the decision that was required. The report was sent as a separate report from the main agenda pack as Urgent Late Item and will be taken in Part II as the final item of the evening.

Theale Community Fire Station Now Operational

The Chairman stated he was delighted the Fire Authority meeting was held at Theale Community Fire Station. He added, the station was a fantastic state-of-the-art facility of which the community would be proud.

Theale Community Fire Station was now operational, after firefighters successfully relocated from Dee Road Fire Station in Tilehurst. The relocation had been made possible thanks to a team effort involving staff from across the Service, led by the Capital Projects Team, who worked effectively with the contractors on site.

Although crews had moved into the new facility, several other teams would relocate in the coming weeks. The new station supported Royal Berkshire's ongoing commitment to work collaboratively with emergency service partners, offering a shared location for our Service, Thames Valley Police and South Central Ambulance Service.

The official opening ceremony was being planned for March 2022.

As Theale was now operational, the Pangbourne site will no longer provide an emergency response from 1 November. On behalf of the Fire Authority, the Chairman requested to place on record his thanks to all those that have served from Pangbourne Fire Station. A small ceremony was held on 1 November with past and present staff at the Station to say thank you for their contributions over the years with Chief Fire Officer, Wayne Bowcock in attendance.

Celebration Event

In October, an event was held to celebrate the outstanding achievements of staff and volunteers in response to a challenging 18 months.

The event recognised the work of those that had taken on additional responsibilities during the pandemic, and included a Graduation Ceremony to formally welcome a number of firefighters that completed their training at the start of 2020.

The event was held at Welford Park, after Her Majesty's Lord-Lieutenant of the Royal County of Berkshire, Mr James Puxley, generously offered to host the event at his family home.

The event was made possible thanks to the generous donations of a number of sponsors, who kindly agreed to support the event.

The Chairman stated he was proud of the team effort by all involved to make the event such an outstanding success and was delighted that at long last, Fire Authority Members had the opportunity to say thank you in person for the work that had been completed over the last 18 months.

Opening of Crowthorne Community Fire Station

On 15 October, Crowthorne Community Fire Station officially opened.

Although the station began serving the community in April 2020, the official opening ceremony of the station was delayed due to COVID-19 measures in

place at the time.

Crowthorne Community Fire Station was Royal Berkshire's second tri-service community fire station. It offered a shared location for Royal Berkshire Fire and Rescue Service, Thames Valley Police and South Central Ambulance Service.

The Chairman stated he was delighted that finally, the Fire Authority were able to officially open the new station and celebrate the efforts of all those involved in bringing it into operation. The Community Fire Station will provide space for all three blue light services to come together, work collaboratively and engage with the local community.

Engagement with Berkshire MPs

On behalf of the Fire Authority, the Chairman and Chief Fire Officer, Wayne Bowcock, had been engaging with MPs that represent Berkshire constituencies.

The aim of those meetings were to continue to build positive working relationships and talk to MPs about the challenges of funding a modern fire and rescue service.

Royal Berkshire Fire Authority remained one of the lowest precepting authorities in the country. The Chairman stated, in order to continue to provide excellent services for our communities, it was essential that we have flexibility in our funding arrangements.

As part of these engagement sessions, the Chairman and Chief Fire Officer met with Theresa May, Member of Parliament for Maidenhead, to discuss the progress made by the Authority and Service in recent years, as well as the challenges the organisation faced moving forward.

Similar meetings had been held with Laura Farris MP and Sir John Redwood MP, the MPs for Newbury and Wokingham respectively.

The Chairman stated that he and Chief Fire Officer will continue to engage with local MPs and will keep Members informed of their progress.

Collaboration Event at Blenheim Palace

On Tuesday, 19 October, Royal Berkshire joined partners from Oxfordshire County Council Fire and Rescue Service and Buckinghamshire and Milton Keynes Fire and Rescue Service to celebrate the progress that had been made as part of ongoing collaborative work.

The event was held at the historic location of Blenheim Palace and was attended by elected representatives from across the Thames Valley, Senior Officers from each of the three fire services, as well as team members whose

hard work had contributed to the achievements made to date.

Some of the areas recognised included progress made towards Operational Alignment, including the opening of Thames Valley Fire Control Service in 2015, and joint procurement processes on new Volvo fire engines, an Aerial Ladder Platform (ALP) and new standardised personal protective equipment (PPE) kit.

The Chairman stated he was delighted to attend the event to show Royal Berkshire's commitment to ongoing partnership to provide an efficient and effective service for the communities we serve across the Thames Valley.

Next Armed Forces Veterans' Hub to take place at Crowthorne Community Fire Station

The Chairman stated he was delighted Royal Berkshire would host the next Armed Forces Veterans' Hub at Crowthorne Community Fire Station from 10:30am-12:30pm on Wednesday, 17 November.

The Armed Forces Veterans' Hub was designed to offer a place for veterans to come together, listen to speakers and meet organisations who can provide them with advice or support them and meet each other.

The Armed Forces Veterans' Hub was open to all veterans. At this event, attendees would be able to speak to a range of organisations and each other, and some hot food would be provided in a COVID-safe manner.

Further information on the Hub, as well as the registration link, can be found on the Service's website.

Liz Warren, Safeguarding Manager, shortlisted for Unsung Hero Award at Excellence in Fire and Emergency Awards

The Chairman announced Liz Warren, Royal Berkshire Fire and Rescue Service (RBFRS) Safeguarding Manager, had been shortlisted for the Unsung Hero Award in the 2021 Excellence in Fire and Emergency Awards.

The Award was given to someone who had made an outstanding contribution to the fire and emergency services over the last 12 months. The winner will demonstrate a sustained and significant contribution to the community, evidencing ingenuity and determination whilst helping to improve the lives of colleagues and/or members of the public.

Liz's work throughout the pandemic, with an increase in Safeguarding referrals, continued to place our communities' safety at the heart of everything she does. She goes above and beyond her role remit to ensure that the best possible care is given to the people of Royal Berkshire and she is a credit to the Service.

The awards were held on 3 December and the Fire Authority wished Liz the

very best of luck.

HMICFRS Inspection Date

Her Majesty's Inspectorate of Constabulary and Fire and Rescue Services confirmed the Service's inspection fieldwork will begin week commencing 20 June 2022. The Service falls into Tranche Three of the second round of inspections and fieldwork was due to take place over several weeks through to the end of July.

The Chief Fire Officer made the following announcements.

Matt Parr Visit

The Service hosted Her Majesty's Inspector (HMI) Matt Parr's visit to Theale Community Fire Station on 22 October as a way of keeping in touch. The visit focused on three areas;

- 1) Hub structure
- 2) Tour of Theale Community Fire Station
- 3) Update on the Built Environment Programme

Wayne Bowcock thanked Tregear Thomas and colleagues for making the event a success.

Deputy Chief Fire Officer (DCFO) Recruitment

The recruitment process for the DCFO had commenced. The closing date was on 22 November. Becci Jefferies, Head of Human Resources and Learning and Development (HHR&L&D) had been working through the timeline for completion of the process before Christmas.

Fit for the Future

National Fire Chiefs Council (NFCC), Home Office and London Government Association (LGA) had started a review on role of Fire and Rescue Services (FRSs) three years ago. Fit for the Future is a draft proposal for establishing a common vision for the future of FRSs in England which is evidenced based. Wayne Bowcock stated he attended two workshops, one on behalf of the Chairman and stated that he will feedback the consultation and workshop outcome to a future Management Committee.

Fire Station Community Rooms

Councillor Ross announced that Fire Station Community Rooms had been closed in line with government guidelines during the last 18 months, however Hungerford, Wokingham and Crowthorne Fire Station Community Rooms were not open to the community.

Newbury Station Visit

Councillor Benneyworth reported of his and Councillor Linden's visit to Newbury Fire Station. He stated it was a pleasure to meet the crew and be shown the training and resources available at that station. Councillor Linen echoed the statement in his attendance at the station.

26. ISSUES ARISING FROM THE AUDIT AND GOVERNANCE COMMITTEE

There were no issues arising from Audit and Governance Committee.

27. QUESTIONS FROM MEMBERS UNDER STANDING ORDER 30

There were no questions from Members under Standing Order 30.

28. NOTICES OF MOTION UNDER STANDING ORDER 44

There were no notices of Motion under Standing Order 44.

29. BUILT ENVIRONMENT PRESENTATION

Mark Arkwell, Deputy Chief Fire Officer (DCFO), introduced the item and handed the presentation to Noosha Churchill, Built Environment Programme Manager.

The Built Environment Programme was formed in early 2020, and developed following the Implementation of Grenfell Tower Inquiry Phase 1 Recommendations. There were 46 recommendations of which 29 of those were specifically aimed at Fire and Rescue Services. An update report was recently circulated to Members which is also available on Royal Berkshire Fire and Rescue Service (RBFRS) website.

Noosha Churchill listed some of the achievements made so far from the implementation of seven online packages for crews, the completion of radio tests within buildings that were at highest risk to assure the Service's radio signals, published guidance on the use of radio signals and all buildings within interim measures now have an Electronic Premise Information Plate and full Site Specific Risk Information.

She stated although a lot had been achieved so far, there were priority areas the Programme will concentrate on in the next six months, which include:

- A review on how staff are currently deployed and then how we gather and disseminate information upon their return

- A review to identify gaps within current communication methods
- Conduct more training exercises

A number of the recommendations in the Phase 1 report are aimed at training and upskilling Fire and Rescue (FRS) staff and to ensure these improvements were measurable, a learning and assurance framework has been created within the programme.

A previous update to the Fire Authority earlier this year confirmed all 187 High Rise residential buildings within Berkshire had been audited. The second phase of the project is scheduled until July 2022. There are currently 34 buildings within interim measures which are visited by the project team and operational crews who have been working towards assisting these buildings to return to business as usual, by the end of the second project phase.

She reported that the commencement of the Fire Safety Act was expected to have happened but hasn't as of yet and were waiting to receive updates as to when it will come into effect.

The Building Safety Bill was going through Parliament and Royal Assent was expected early / mid 2022 with commencement due in 2023.

The Programme Team has started to look at delivering Objectives 3 and 4 and how legislative changes will impact the Programme and Service. As a result, a review has been held to ensure upcoming demands can be managed. As an organisation, senior managers are active members on various National Fire Chief Council (NFCC) groups which has enabled the Service to hear first-hand developments on a national level.

For a copy of this presentation please contact committeeteam@rbfrs.co.uk

30. AUTOMATIC FIRE ALARM CONSULTATION

Councillor Dexter Smith, Community Risk Management Plan (CRMP) Lead Member introduced the item. He confirmed that the Fire Authority was not making a decision on Automatic Fire Alarms (AFA), however the report was seeking Members to agree a consultation on how resources are used to deal with AFAs.

Jim Powell, Area Manager Collaboration and Policy (AM C&P), corrected the typo in paragraph 3.3 of the report, which should be read as '2,200 (and not 2,400) *alarm related incidents*'. He stated the majority of incidents end up as false alarms and the recommendation was seeking Members to agree a consultation on how to make improvements in this area.

He stated the evidence suggests that by changing the way the Service respond to some AFA incidents, those which occur in occupied commercial premises (non-residential premises), the Service could save up to approximately 1,300 hours of firefighters time. He reassured Members that the Service would

continue to attend high rise buildings and student accommodation.

He explained the current procedure outlined in page 37, Appendix A of the report. In referring to the impact of AFAs outlined in page 38, Appendix A, Jim Powell stated that he believed significant benefits in the change of how AFAs were responded to would allow teams to focus more on prevention activities.

The Chairman reported that the number of AFA incidents the Service responded to was identified in the last Her Majesty's Inspectorate Constabulary Fire and Rescue Service (HMICFRS) last inspection.

Councillor Brown queried whether the figures had improved since the period of 2014 – 2018. Jim Powell stated that the figures outlined in the report were up to pre-COVID.

Councillor Brown stated that options A and B in the consultation document were not clear. Jim Powell advised that the Options in the consultation document was proposing a small change to the way the Service responds to AFA which was Option A, no further action would be taken by the Service unless the presence of a fire was confirmed. He explained currently, an appliance was mobilised after 20 minutes even if the premises were unable to confirm the cause of alarm.

Councillor Brooks stated the Service previously looked at charging premises if an appliance had been mobilised to a false alarm and requested for an update on whether this had been considered as part of this consultation.

Jim Powell reported that charging premises did exist, however the consultation was seeking change on how the Service respond to alarms and added that there were not consistent offenders which would warrant a charge imposed on them.

Councillor Brooks requested to receive data on whether the Service has charged premises in order to reduce the rate of AFA.

AM C&P

In response to a question from Councillor Werner, Jim Powell reported that an appliance would be mobilised on the basis Control was unable to contact the premises under the new proposals. He added that the new proposals were based around call challenge and that an appliance would not be mobilised (if source of alarm could not be confirmed).

Councillor Gittings asked whether there had been any cases which resulted in a fatality.

The Chairman confirmed that the consultation was proposing a change to AFA incidents in commercial premises, for example offices and shops. Wayne Bowcock, Chief Fire Officer (CFO), reported Chief Fire Officers Association (CFOA) had created model guidance and as a risk management organisation, the proposal was evidence based. He explained that CFOA guidance was more stringent as opposed to the Option in the proposed consultation document.

Councillor Chadwick asked whether analysis had been done on the cause of the

false alarm. Jim Powell reported that the effects were minimal as the cause were not due to repeat offenders.

Councillor Smith reiterated that the paper was seeking Members to approve the consultation document and the proposed change was based largely around the call challenge process.

In answer to questions from Councillors Shepherd-DuBey and Bateson, Jim Powell confirmed that the proposed change in how the Service respond to AFA would not change response times to 999 calls and that the Service was unable to compare how other FRSs were responding to AFAs due to the wide range of differing response models.

Councillor Brooks stated that he was in favour of adaptations of how the Service respond to AFAs and suggested for the consultation document to be looked at again. This was echoed by Councillor Werner and requested an amendment to 2.2 of the recommendation, which was *'any minor amendments to the consultation document [be made by] the Chief Fire Officer and in consultation with the Task and Finish Group'*, and for Councillor Brooks to be included as part of the cross Party Task and Finish Group.

The Chairman confirmed that the consultation document was the subject of two meetings of the cross Party Task and Finish Group. He moved the recommendation to include the amendment by Councillor Werner, 2.2 of the recommendation. This was seconded by Councillor Smith.

RESOLVED that:

- To commence a 10 week public consultation in January 2022, at a date to be confirmed at the Chief Fire Officers discretion, to inform a future decision on how it responds to Automatic Fire Alarms be agreed;
- The draft consultation document subject to delegating responsibility for any minor amendments to the consultation document to the Chief Fire Officer, in consultation with the AFA Consultation Task and Finish Group (Councillors Brooks, Dudley, Gittings and Helliar-Symons) and CRMP Lead Member, be agreed.

31. APPOINTMENT OF EXTERNAL AUDITOR

Conor Byrne, HF&P, reported this item was a recommendation from the Audit and Governance Committee (A&GC) from their meeting on 20 October 2021. He reported A&GC had noted although the first scheme has been successful in delivering low prices, it had been less successful in delivering timely audits.

To rectify this, Public Sector Audit Appointments Ltd (PSAA) stated one of its key aims for the next procurement exercise was to encourage market sustainability. Organisations will be able to bid for a variety of different sized contracts so they can match available resources and risk appetite to the contract

for which they bid. They will be required to meet appropriate quality standards and reflect realistic market prices.

He advised the PSAA had issued a formal invitation to the Authority to opt into the national scheme to appoint external auditors and that it would provide external audit arrangements for five years commencing 1 April 2023.

In answer to Councillor Chadwick, Conor Byrne reported to opt into national scheme would not be at any additional cost to the Authority.

In referring to the risk implications outlined in paragraphs 8.1 – 8.2 of report, Councillor Brown asked for reassurance that the Authority would not experience delays in the signing off of future financial statements, as there had previously been.

Conor Byrne reported that although there were no guarantees, PSAA was working at a national level and was engaging with government and stakeholders. He added should the Authority decide against joining this scheme, it would have to appoint auditors via its own procurement process within the Authority's own Contract Regulations.

The Chairman moved the recommendation and it was seconded by Councillor Benneyworth.

RESOLVED that it was agreed to opt into the national scheme for appointment an external auditor.

32. ANNUAL TREASURY MANAGEMENT REVIEW 2020/21 AND MID-YEAR TREASURY MANAGEMENT UPDATE 2021/22

Conor Byrne, HF&P, reported there were two reports seeking Members to note, Annual Treasury Report 2020/21, and Mid-Year Treasury Management Update for 2021/22.

In referring to the Annual Treasury Report 2020/21 he reported capital expenditure amounted to £6.5 million. £5.5 million of this expenditure was unfinanced which had led to the doubling of the capital financing requirement from just over £5 million to £10.5 million. He stated that although this was a large increase, it was in line with the 2021/22 budget and had been factored into the Medium-Term Financial Plan. He added that the increase was expected as the Authority moved through phase One of the Strategic Asset Investment Framework (SAIF).

In terms of actual loans with the PWLB, the outstanding debt fell to £7.1 million at the end of 2020/21 as a loan of £1.75 million was repaid in March 2021. The Authority took out a new loan of £3 million in April 2021. An existing loan of £738,000 matured in September 2021, which meant that the half-year total debt stood at £9.4 million.

In summary, the Authority conducted its Treasury Management operations in line with the approved prudential indicators and there were no requirements to change the Strategy approved by the Fire Authority in February 2021.

In answer to a question from Councillor Chadwick's query as to why investments had gone down between March 2020 and March 2021, Conor Byrne reported the Capital Programme and the building of Theale Community Fire Station in addition to a number of other factors. He further explained there were ups and downs on the cash balances the Authority held. For example, the Authority received a grant from the government for pensions which amounted to £5.5 million based on forecasts and was effected by the number of retirements throughout the year.

In response to a question from Councillor Shepherd-DuBey, Conor Byrne reported the Audit and Governance Committee recently looked at budget assumptions. Pay increases and inflation will put pressure on the Revenue Budget, hence the importance of having satisfactory levels of reserves.

The Chairman moved the recommendation and it was seconded by Councillor Benneyworth.

RESOLVED that:

- The Annual Treasury Report for 2020/21 be noted; and
- The Mid-Year Treasury Management Update for 2021/22 be noted.

33. LEAD MEMBER AND THAMES VALLEY FIRE CONTROL SERVICE (TVFCS) SIX MONTH UPDATE REPORTS

The Chairman proposed subject to questions, Lead Member and Thames Valley Fire Control Service (TVFCS) six Month Update reports be taken as read.

Councillor Brooks requested for further detail on income generation.

HF&P

RESOLVED that the reports be noted.

34. FORWARD PLAN

RESOLVED that the Forward Plan be noted.

35. MINUTES OF THE STANDING COMMITTEES

RESOLVED that the Minutes of the Standing Committees were published on RBFRS website be noted.

36. DATE OF THE NEXT MEETING

Tuesday 15 February 2022, at 6.30pm. Venue to be confirmed.

37. EXCLUSION OF THE PUBLIC

RESOLVED that under Section 100(A)(4) of the Local Government Act 1972 (as amended), the public be excluded from the meeting for the following Agenda Items on the grounds that they involve the likely disclosure of exempt information, as defined in the Paragraphs 1, 2 and 3 of Part I of Schedule 12A of the said Act indicated and is exempt information if, and so long as, in all the circumstances of the case, the public interest in maintaining the exemption outweighs the public interest in disclosing the information.

The meeting was adjourned for five minutes from 20:20. The meeting reconvened at 20:26

(The meeting concluded at 20:52)

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MINUTES OF THE EXTRAORDINARY MEETING OF THE ROYAL BERKSHIRE FIRE AUTHORITY



Held on Wednesday, 5 January 2022, 6.30 pm
 Royal Berkshire Fire and Rescue Service (RBFRS) Headquarters
 Newsham Court, Pincents Kiln, Calcot, Reading RG31 7SD

Members:
 (*present)

- | | | |
|---------------------------------|---|------------------------------------|
| Councillor Anne Chadwick | * | Councillor Jeff Brooks |
| Councillor Avtar Cheema | | Councillor Christine Bateson |
| Councillor Harjinder Minhas | | Councillor Colin Dudley |
| * Councillor Dennis Benneyworth | * | Councillor Paul Gittings |
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| Councillor Garth Simpson | | Councillor Dexter Smith |
| Councillor Jane Stanford-Beale | | Councillor Simon Werner |

- In Attendance:** Mark Antell (Senior Communication and Engagement Officer, SC&EO)
 Mark Arkwell (Deputy Chief Fire Officer, DCFO)
 Wayne Bowcock (Chief Fire Officer CFO)
 Graham Britten (Monitoring Officer, MO)
 Conor Byrne (Head of Finance and Procurement, HF&P)
 Becci Jefferies (Head of Human Resources and Learning and Development, HHR&L&D)
 Nikki Richards (Deputy Chief Executive, Dep ChEx)
 Fayth Rowe (Democratic Support Lead, DSL)
 Hannah Sheehan (Democratic Support Assistant, DSA)
 Tony Vincent (Head of Business and Information Systems, HBIS)

The Vice-Chairman stated that due to Councillor Dudley being unable to attend that she would preside over the meeting. She also stated that due to the current social distancing measures, some Members would be joining remotely, but that the meeting remains quorate, with all Covid secure requirements in place.

The Vice-Chairman announced that Becci Jefferies, Head of HR and Learning and Development, had been awarded a British Empire Medal in the New Year's Honours for her work to transform health and wellbeing services for Royal Berkshire Fire and Rescue Service.

Becci has been with the Service for 28 years, first joining in 1993, and has

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made an enormous contribution in this time. She began her career with Berkshire County Council (Social Services) in 1989 before joining the Service in April 1993. In November 2015, she took on the role of the Head of HR and Learning and Development.

As part of her role, Becci has championed mental health provision within the Service, creating a Mental Health Action Plan and pioneering a group of Trauma Support Volunteers, who deliver support sessions to firefighters involved in traumatic incidents, to ensure that mental health is a key priority for everyone in the Service. Her passion and energy has created an environment where mental health is openly discussed without stigma.

Becci has also ensured that we are focused on creating a welcoming, inclusive environment where everyone can thrive through her Equality, Diversity and Inclusion work. She has ensured that these principles are embedded in every aspect of the work we do within the Service so that we can better represent and serve our communities.

The measures she has actively campaigned for and implemented improve the lives of the Service's team members and our communities. Becci is an inspirational leader and unsung hero of the Service, putting the needs of colleagues and her community before her own. On behalf of the Fire Authority, the Vice-Chairman thanked Becci for her continued efforts to support the Service and the communities of Berkshire.

40. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Apologies of absence were received from Councillors Cannon, Chadwick, Dudley and Shepherd-DuBey.

Councillors Benneyworth, Brooks, Brown, Gittings, Helliard-Symons, Linden and Ross were in attendance in person. All other Members joined remotely.

41. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

Mark Arkwell, Deputy Chief Fire Officer, declared an interest.

42. PETITIONS AND QUESTIONS FROM THE PUBLIC UNDER STANDING ORDERS 19 AND 25

There were no petitions and questions from members of the public under Standing Orders 19 and 25.

43. ISSUES ARISING FROM THE AUDIT AND GOVERNANCE COMMITTEE

There were no issues arising from Audit and Governance Committee.

44. QUESTIONS FROM MEMBERS UNDER STANDING ORDER 30

There were no questions from Members under Standing Order 30.

45. NOTICES OF MOTION UNDER STANDING ORDER 44

There were no notices of Motion under Standing Order 44.

46. APPOINTMENT PANEL RECOMMENDATION- DEPUTY CHIEF FIRE OFFICER

Mark Arkwell, Deputy Chief Fire Officer, left the meeting, whilst the item was discussed.

Wayne Bowcock, Chief Fire Officer, introduced the item, and thanked Becci Jefferies, Head of HR and Learning and Development, the HR Team and Lorraine Sullivan for their work coordinating the appointment from advertisement to the final process. Wayne also thanked the Members of the Appointment Panel who took part in the process.

Becci introduced the report explaining when previous Deputy Chief Fire Officer Steve Foye retired in early 2021, interim arrangements were in place and, on 12 October, Management Committee approved the revised SLT restructure. Management Committee also agreed that the Chairman would invite Members to take part in the interview process. The Management Committee Members that formed the panel were; Councillors Dudley, Helliar-Symons, Gittings, Shepherd-DuBey and Cannon, in accordance with the Management Committee Terms of Reference.

There was an extensive and robust process and a conditional offer was made for the role of Deputy Chief Fire Officer to Mark Arkwell, with effect from the decision date of the report to the Authority. Members are invited to approve the appointment of Mark Arkwell to the role of Deputy Chief Fire Officer from 6 January, on the salary package outlined in 3.6 and 3.7 of the report.

Councillor Brooks asked how many applicants there were, the longlist, the shortlist and the numbers that were interviewed, to gain an understanding of how attractive our service is. Wayne said that he believes the Service is very attractive to apply for. There were 11 expressions of interest, not all candidates completed their application process, five completed forms, shortlisted to three who were invited to stage one of the process, and following stage one, one candidate was invited back to final interview.

Councillor Ross stated that having worked a lot with Mark both in his original and substantive role, he has always been well on top of his brief and it was a pleasure to work with and that he is delighted see his appointment

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substantiated.

Councillor Gittings said that on behalf of the Labour Group he would like to congratulate Mark on his appointment and that he was an outstanding candidate and wished him the best of luck in his new role.

The Vice-Chairman reminded Members that only Members present in the room were eligible to vote.

RESOLVED that Fire Authority approve the appointment of Mark Arkwell, to the role of Deputy Chief Fire Officer from 6 January 2022, on the salary package outlined in 3.6 and 3.7.

Mark Arkwell re-joined the meeting.

Vice-Chairman congratulated Mark on his appointment and stated that she was really impressed by what he has done so far for this Authority and that it's a very worthy appointment.

Mark thanked the Vice-Chairman and Members and said that he was delighted to be chosen as the next Deputy Chief Fire Officer. He also said it was a genuine privilege to work for the organisation and be part of the team and with fantastic Officer and Member colleagues throughout. He also stated that the Authority have his commitment in continuing to work as one team across Officers and Members.

47. MINUTES OF THE STANDING COMMITTEES

RESOLVED that the Minutes of the Standing Committees were published on Royal Berkshire Fire and Rescue Service's website be noted.

48. DATE OF THE NEXT MEETING

Tuesday, 15 February 2022, at 6.30pm. Venue to be confirmed.

(The meeting concluded at 18:44)



ROYAL BERKSHIRE FIRE AUTHORITY

| | |
|---------------------------|---|
| COMMITTEE | FIRE AUTHORITY |
| DATE OF MEETING | 15 FEBRUARY 2022 |
| SUBJECT | APPOINTMENT OF COMMITTEES |
| LEAD OFFICER | GRAHAM BRITTEN, MONITORING OFFICER |
| LEAD MEMBER | N/A |
| EXEMPT INFORMATION | NONE |
| ACTION | FOR DECISION |

1. EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

- 1.1 To welcome the new Member nomination of Councillor Alison Swaddle by Wokingham Borough Council on to Royal Berkshire Fire Authority (RBFA); and to make appointments to Committees in accordance with the rules relating to political balance.

2. RECOMMENDATION

That the Fire Authority:

- 2.1 **NOTE** that Councillor Chadwick will step down from the Authority and her membership will terminate at midnight on 31 January 2022;
- 2.2 **NOTE** the appointment of Councillor Swaddle onto the Authority with effect from 1 February 2022; and
- 2.3 **AGREE** that Councillor Swaddle be appointed onto the Audit and Governance Committee.

3. REPORT

- 3.1 Wokingham Borough Council's Democratic and Electoral Services Lead Specialist, has informed the Authority of a change in their political nomination onto Royal Berkshire Fire Authority.
- 3.2 At its council meeting on 20 January 2022, Councillor Chadwick resigned as appointed Fire Authority Member with effect from 31

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January 2022, and Wokingham Borough Council appointed Councillor Swaddle as her successor. Minute reference 83.

4. CONTRIBUTION TO STRATEGIC COMMITMENTS:

4.1 Not applicable.

5. FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS:

5.1 There are no financial implications arising from the recommendations, given that the Scheme of Allowances have been budgeted for 20 members.

6. LEGAL IMPLICATIONS:

6.1 Local Government and Housing Act 1989 and Local Government (Committees and Political Groups) Regulations 1990.

The Authority is required by the above Regulations to review the basis of allocation of seats amongst the Political Groups either at its Annual Meeting, or as soon as practicable thereafter, or following a change in its Membership. In making its review, the Authority is required, so far as reasonably practicable, to comply with the following principles:

- (i) Not all seats on each Committee are to be allocated to the same Group.
 - (ii) The majority of seats is to be allocated to a particular Group if the number of persons belonging to that Group is a majority on the Authority.
 - (iii) Subject to the above paragraphs, the number of seats on the Committees allocated to each Group should bear the same proportion to the total of all the seats on the Committees as that borne by the number of Members of that Group to the Membership of the Authority.
 - (iv) Subject to paragraphs (i) to (iii) above, that the number of the seats on the body which are allocated to different political groups bears the same proportion to the number of all the seats on that body as is borne by the number of members of that group to the membership of the authority.
- 6.2 The Authority is required to make appointments to committees and outside bodies in accordance with the wishes of the respective Political Groups.
- 6.3 Paragraphs 13 and 14 of the Berkshire Fire Services (Combination Scheme) Order 1997 provide as follows:
- (13.) A member of the Authority shall come into office on the date of his appointment and shall, [...], hold office for such period or periods as shall be determined by the constituent authority which appoints him.
 - (14.) A member of the Authority may resign his membership by giving notice in writing to that effect to the officer of the Authority whose function it is to receive such notice.

7. EQUALITY AND DIVERSITY IMPLICATIONS:

7.1 There are no equality and diversity implications.

8. RISK IMPLICATIONS:

8.1 There are no risk management implications.

9. CONSISTENCY WITH DUTY TO COLLABORATE:

9.1 Not applicable.

10. PRINCIPAL CONSULTATION:

10.1 Chief Fire Officer

The Chief Fire Officer was consulted during the preparation of this report.

10.2 Chief Finance Officer

The Chief Finance Officer was consulted during the preparation of this report.

10.3 Monitoring Officer

Report author.

11. BACKGROUND PAPERS:

11.1 [Wokingham Borough Council meeting held on 20 January 2022](#)

11.2 [Local Government and Housing Act 1989](#) and [Local Government \(Committees and Political Groups\) Regulations 1990](#)

11.3 [The Berkshire Fire Services \(Combination Scheme\) Order 1997](#)

12. APPENDICES:

12.1 None.

13. CONTACT DETAILS:

13.1 Graham Britten, Monitoring Officer 0129674444

13.2 Fayth Rowe, Democratic Support Lead 07500 991975

21 January 2022

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ROYAL BERKSHIRE FIRE AUTHORITY REPORT

| | |
|---------------------------|--|
| COMMITTEE | FIRE AUTHORITY |
| DATE OF MEETING | 15 FEBRUARY 2022 |
| SUBJECT | ROYAL BERKSHIRE FIRE AUTHORITY – PAY POLICY STATEMENT 2022/2023 |
| LEAD OFFICER | BECCI JEFFERIES, HEAD OF HR AND LEARNING AND DEVELOPMENT |
| LEAD MEMBER | N/A |
| EXEMPT INFORMATION | NONE |
| ACTION | DECISION |

1. **EXECUTIVE SUMMARY**

- 1.1 Section 38 (1) of the Localism Act 2011 requires the Royal Berkshire Fire Authority to prepare and publish a Pay Policy Statement each financial year. This statement includes information on remuneration for all staff as defined by the Act.

2. **RECOMMENDATION**

That the Fire Authority:

- 2.1 **APPROVE** the Pay Policy Statement for 2022/2023 (Appendix A) for publication, subject to any further amendments considered appropriate.

3. **REPORT**

- 3.1 Sections 38 to 43 of the Localism Act 2011 require that relevant authorities in England prepare a Pay Policy Statement for each financial year. Pay Policy Statements must be approved by a meeting of the full Fire Authority and subsequently published.
- 3.2 A draft Pay Policy Statement for the Royal Berkshire Fire Authority (RBFA) for the forthcoming year (2022/2023) (Appendix A) is drafted to take into account guidance issued by the Department of Communities and Local Government Transparency Code 2014 and the Local Transparency Publishing

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Organisational Information guidance provided by the Local Government Association in 2015.

- 3.3 The attached draft was presented to the Audit and Governance Committee on 24 January 2022 for consideration. The Committee made no recommendations for amendments to the contents and agreed to recommend to the full Fire Authority its approval.
- 3.4 Whilst it has not been necessary to amend the format of the Pay Policy Statement for 2022/23, a number of updates have been included and are detailed below.
- 3.5 A revised Car User Scheme was published in September 2021. This provided an enhanced lease car rate for individuals who need an enhanced vehicle specification related to the requirements of their role. The section on Car Provisions has been updated to reflect this.
- 3.6 An updated section relating to the removal of discrimination from public sector pension schemes (including the Firefighters Pension Scheme) and the impact on RBFRS.
- 3.7 Additional information on teams across the service that receive incremental pay increases outside of the annual increments.
- 3.8 Inclusion of information on the number of personnel who receive a role supplement in line with the Role Specific Supplement Policy.
- 3.9 Inclusion of information on the re-structure of the Senior Management Team which took place on 1 December 2021.
- 3.10 Subject to any further amendment the Fire Authority may wish to make, officers recommend that the Fire Authority adopt the Pay Policy Statement for 2022/23 as set out in Appendix A

4. CONTRIBUTION TO STRATEGIC COMMITMENTS

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

5. FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

- 5.1 There are no direct financial implications arising from this report

6. LEGAL IMPLICATIONS

- 6.1 This report is prepared to enable Royal Berkshire Fire Authority to meet its obligations under Sections 38 to 43 of the Localism Act 2011 and the Local Transparency Code 2015 and in accordance with issued Government guidance.
- 6.2 The Pay Policy Statement must be approved by the full Fire Authority.

7. EQUALITY DIVERSITY AND INCLUSION IMPLICATIONS

7.1 There are no direct equality issues arising from this report.

8. RISK IMPLICATIONS

8.1 There are no risk management issues arising from this report.

9. CONSISTENCY WITH DUTY TO COLLABORATE

9.1 N/A

10. PRINCIPAL CONSULTATION

The following individuals have been consulted in preparation of this report.

- 10.1 Monitoring Officer
- 10.2 Head of Finance and Procurement
- 10.3 Chief Fire Officer

11. BACKGROUND PAPERS

- 11.1 Localism Act 2011
- 11.2 Openness and Accountability in Local Pay, Guidance under Section 40 of the Localism Act, February 2012, Department for Communities and Local Government.
- 11.3 Openness and Accountability in Local Pay, Guidance under Section 40 of the Localism Act, February 2013, Supplementary Guidance, Department for Communities and Local Government.
- 11.4 Hutton Review of Fair Pay in the Public Sector: Final Report, March 2011
- 11.5 Pay Policy and Practice in Local Authorities – A guide for Councillors, Local Government Association (January 2013) issued November 2013 to Local Authority Chairs
- 11.6 Local Government Transparency Code 2014 – Department for Communities and Local Government, October 2014.
- 11.7 Local Transparency Publishing Organisational Information - Local Government Association 30 November 2015

12. APPENDICES

12.1 Appendix A - Royal Berkshire Fire Authority Pay Policy Statement 2022/2023

13. CONTACT DETAILS

13.1 Becci Jefferies
Head of Human Resources and Learning and Development
0118 9384670

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ROYAL BERKSHIRE FIRE AUTHORITY

Pay Policy Statement
2022/2023





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Introduction

This Pay Policy Statement reflects the Royal Berkshire Fire Authority's (RBFA) long standing Pay and Reward Strategy, which has been in place since its inception in 1998.

It has been formulated to discharge the RBFA's obligation to publish such a statement as required by Section 38 (1) of the Localism Act 2011. The purpose of this statement is to provide transparency with regard to RBFA's approach to setting the pay of its employees by identifying:

- The methods by which salaries of all employees are determined; and
- The detail and level of remuneration of its most senior staff as defined by the relevant legislation
- The detail and level of remuneration for the lowest level of post/employee
- The ratio of pay of the top earner and that of the median earner

RBFA seeks to balance the need to reward its staff sufficiently to attract, motivate and retain the talented individuals needed to deliver a first class fire and rescue service with the need to ensure that RBFA delivers its strategic commitment of providing good value for money.

This policy statement has been approved by RBFA. It will be subject to review annually and in accordance with new or proposed legislation to ensure that, it remains relevant and effective. Information supplied to inform the Pay Policy Statement will be based on figures available at the time of writing (31 October 2021).



Royal Berkshire Fire Authority Pay Policy Statement 2022/2023

Accountability and Decision Making

The Fire Authority is responsible for decision making in relation to the recruitment, pay, terms and conditions and severance arrangements in relation to its' employees subject to the exercise of delegated powers. The Fire Authority has approved the pay ranges for any post in excess of £100,000 per year on appointment.

Responsibility and Scale

For 2021/2022, RBFA was directly responsible for a budget of £35,788,674 and the employment of 649 staff. The Fire Authority provides services to a total population of 914,859 residents.

The Fire Authority's pay strategy - How is pay determined?

The RBFA's overall approach to determining the pay of its employees is to participate in national collective bargaining for fire-fighters and fire control staff through the National Joint Council (NJC) for Local Authority Fire and Rescue Services; for non-operational support staff through the NJC for Local Government Services and for Directors through NJC for Brigade Managers of Fire and Rescue Services. These arrangements account for a total of 465 employees covered by NJC for Local Authority Fire and Rescue Services, 180 employees covered by NJC for Local Government Services and four covered by NJC for Brigade Managers of Fire and Rescue Services.

The pay scale rates for apprentices have been reviewed and remain well in excess of the National Minimum Wage for apprentices as at 1 April 2021.

The RBFA's long term approach to pay and reward has been to continue to support national pay bargaining as the most effective way to manage payroll costs and the challenge of running a fire and rescue service in one of the highest cost-of-living areas outside London.

RBFA does not pay any location allowances related to the cost of living in Berkshire.

There are occasions where the job evaluation scheme and pay grading structure does not take into account market factors such as market pay rates for specialist and technical project roles, or fluctuating demand for skills in the marketplace. It is therefore sometimes necessary to pay a supplement in addition to base salary in

order to recruit and retain staff. To this end, a Role Specific Supplement Policy has been published to ensure RBFA has a fair, transparent and controlled approach to pay. Currently seven individuals receive a role supplement.

At times we need ad hoc project work to be completed, which is achieved via Framework arrangements or paid on a casual hourly or day rate as appropriate to the task, duration and/or local market rates.

The Fire Authority also operates an individual Merit Payment Scheme to reward individual employees in any staff group as a result of specific exceptional performance in a one off task, sustained high performance within their normal job, or undertaking temporary additional responsibility where another allowance is not applicable.

The NJC for Local Authority Fire and Rescue Services

The NJC for Local Authority Fire and Rescue Services currently provides a nationally agreed competence based pay structure of six roles ranging from Firefighter to Area Manager and a parallel, with fewer levels, structure for Fire Control staff. For each role there is a Role Map and National Occupational Standards have been established.

Firefighters begin their careers as trainees for which there is a separate rate of pay. On satisfactory completion of initial training they move onto the development rate of pay and undertake a Development and Assessment Pathway (DAP). When they have demonstrated competence against the National Occupational Standards they receive competent pay. A similar structure of development and competent pay rates exists for each role, and for roles from Watch Manager to Area Manager, there are two job sizes at each role level for competent staff, which are based on the scale of the duties and responsibilities of the post. Allocation of posts to roles and job sizes within roles is determined through locally agreed evaluation processes.

For staff on Local Authority Fire and Rescue Services conditions, the NJC for Local Authority Fire Services agreed a 1.5 percent increase effective from 1 July 2021.

Other elements of pay include:

- Allowance payments for work undertaken outside the role map
- Continuous Personal Development (CPD) payments
- Locally agreed allowance for Area Managers undertaking a Head of Service role
- An operational allowance for being available to undertake 'Gold' level command
- Station Manager allowances paid to Watch Based Station Managers
- A flexible duty allowance paid to officers undertaking duties as part of the flexible duty rota

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- A one-off payment made to members of the Pension Board for attendance at each Pension Board meeting
- Training allowance for Training Centre Instructors

Full details of the NJC for Local Authority Fire and Rescue Services terms and conditions of service are set out in the Sixth Edition of the NJC Scheme of Conditions of Service and any subsequent updates, Local Agreements reached between the Fire Authority and the Fire Brigades Union and the Fire Authority's Policies.

The NJC for Local Government Services

The NJC for Local Government Services National Agreement on Pay and Conditions of Service, sets the framework for the pay and conditions of service for the Fire Authority's non-operational support staff. This provides a national pay spine which was reviewed in April 2019 following the two year pay agreement reached in 2018 to address the impact on local government employers of the National Living Wage increases. At the time of writing, the 2021 pay award had not yet been agreed. RBFRS uses the pay ranges identified within the National pay scales, localised to reduce the number of spinal column points (SCP) within each grade and further extended to provide ten pay grades. Posts are allocated to a grade through a process of job evaluation using the HAY job evaluation methodology.

Staff are appointed to a spinal column point (SCP) in the appropriate pay grade and progress subject to satisfactory performance confirmed through an annual appraisal (Performance and Development Review (PDR), to the top of their pay scale by annual increments on the first of April each year. Based on the outcome of PDRs, there are provisions for the acceleration or stopping of incremental progression. In order to avoid possible claims for age discrimination, there are no more than six SCPs in each grade range.

Fire Safety Inspecting Officers (FSIOs) progress through pay grades as they complete nationally recognised fire safety qualifications. Trainees in Procurement are able to receive increment SCP increases within their Grade subject to the achievement of the relevant examinations in addition to annual increments.

Senior Managers' Pay

A new Senior Leadership Team (SLT) structure was put in place with effect from 1 December 2021. This structure retains four positions designated as Chief Fire Officer/Chief Executive (CFO/CEX), Deputy Chief Executive/Director of Corporate Services (DCEX), Deputy Chief Fire Officer/Director of Operations and Collaboration (DCFO) and Assistant Chief Fire Officer/Director of Service Delivery (ACFO)

Conditions of service for the CFO/CEX, DCFO, DCEX and ACFO are aligned with those set out in the National Joint Council for Brigade Managers of Fire and Rescue Services Constitution and Scheme of Conditions of Service. The DCEX is aligned to the Joint National Council for **Joint Chief Officers of Local Authorities – Constitution, Conditions of Service, and Salaries** document; A decision by the CFO on 20 June 2016, aligned the pay award for the non-operational Director (DCEX position) to those set out in the National Joint Council for Brigade Managers of Fire and Rescue Services.

The CFO/CEX, DCEX, DCFO and ACFO are each placed on a five point pay range set by the Fire Authority:

| | | | | | | | | |
|-----|------|----------|-----------|------|----------|------|------|----------|
| CFO | CO16 | £134,576 | DCFO/DCEX | CO11 | £108,230 | ACFO | CO9 | £99,815 |
| | CO17 | £139,009 | | CO12 | £111,925 | | CO10 | £102,672 |
| | CO18 | £143,453 | | CO13 | £115,617 | | CO11 | £108,230 |
| | CO19 | £148,579 | | CO14 | £119,311 | | CO12 | £111,925 |
| | CO20 | £153,570 | | CO15 | £130,132 | | CO13 | £115,617 |

The Chairman and Vice-Chairman determine where on the agreed pay scale the CFO/CEX is placed, based upon year-end performance appraisals. The RBFA have determined that the CFO/CEX, as Head of Paid Service determines where on the agreed pay scales the Directors are placed based upon year-end performance appraisals. A 1.5 per cent increase on was agreed for Directors which took effect from 1 January 2021.

In addition the operational CFO/CEX, DCFO and ACFO are entitled to a vehicle for use in connection with Fire Authority business. Those in these roles are entitled to a Provided Car or receive the enhanced rate of £3,500 as a contribution towards a lease car. This is in line with the contributions towards a lease car for other eligible staff as outlined in the Car User Scheme. The non-operational DCEX receives a Car Allowance of £1239 per annum.

The operational Director posts (CFO, DCFO and ACFO) also receive an additional allowance for providing out of hours operational incident command cover and services based on 10% of the mid-point of the Assistant Chief Fire Officer salary range, currently £10,823 per annum.

There are no other bonuses or additional payments currently made to the Directors. In the event a merit payment is made, details will be included in the annual report to the Management Committee.

Senior Managers' pay (i.e. Grade 7 to 10, Area Managers and Directors) accounts for 7.34% of the total pay bill (which includes all taxable earnings, including base salary, variable pay, allowances and lease car cash value).

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Appendix A

Benefits Other Than Pay

Pensions

The RBFA offers membership of the Firefighters' Pension Scheme (2015) to newly appointed staff engaged in operational fire-fighting. Non-operational support staff and Control Staff are offered membership of the Local Government Pension Scheme (LGPS). Following the introduction of the 2015 Firefighters' Pension Scheme (2015 FPS) on 1 April 2015 transitional arrangements for members of the Firefighters Pension Scheme 1992 (FPS), the New Firefighters Pension Scheme 2006 (NFPS) and individuals in the Retained Modified Scheme 2006 were put in place.

Currently, the majority of the existing operational workforce are members of the 2015 Firefighters Pension Scheme. From 1 April 2022, all those who continue in service will become members of the 2015 scheme.

In 2015 most public service pension schemes were reformed. These reforms included 'transitional protection', for people closer to retirement. The Courts have ruled that this directly discriminated against some younger pension scheme members. On 19 July 2021 HM Treasury's introduced the Public Services Pensions and Judicial Offices Bill (PSPJO) which sets out in law HMT's solution to the age discrimination. The impact on RBFA is likely to be significant and will continue to be monitored.

The respective contributions made by the RBFA and employees who are members of these pension schemes, from 1 April 2021 are as follows (in all cases members are auto-enrolled into the appropriate pension scheme in accordance with legislation in relation to workplace pensions):

| Scheme | Employer Contributions | Employee Contribution Bands |
|------------------------|------------------------|-----------------------------|
| FPS (1992 Scheme) | 37.3% | 11% - 17% |
| NFPS (2006 Scheme) | 27.4% | 8.5% - 12.5% |
| 2015 FPS (2015 Scheme) | 28.8% | 11% - 14.5% |
| LGPS | 13.5*% | 5.5% - 12.5% |

* Employer contributions for members of the LGPS scheme are set at 13.5% of annual salary. RBFA also pays an employer annual lump sum to the pension fund of £366,000

Car Provision

The RBFA offers a Car User Scheme to staff who are required have access to a vehicle to be used in connection with their official duties. A revised Car User

Scheme was adopted in September 2021 to ensure a fair and equitable process for determining the provisions for staff across the service. The scheme is in three parts:

1. Lease Cars – Lease Cars are available for essential car users. The annual allowance is as follows:
 - Standard rate of £2,000 per annum
 - Enhanced rate of £3,500 per annum

The enhanced lease car rate is provided for individuals who need an enhanced vehicle specification specifically related to the requirement of their role. This includes Flexible Duty Officers who are required to have a vehicle with a defined specification as outlined in the Car User Scheme. Any payment of the enhanced rate for non-Flexible Duty Officers is subject to approval by the appropriate Head of Service.

2. Provided Cars - following a change in taxation rules for car users, a Provided Car Scheme is available for Flexible Duty Officers (FDO) as an alternative to a lease car. The Fire Authority also maintains a pool of provided vehicles for use by other members of staff requiring access to a vehicle as part of their role.
3. Car Allowance – a car allowance of up to £1,239 per annum is payable to those using their own car, for those not eligible for a lease car, should they meet the criteria outlined in the Car User Scheme.

Cycle to Work Scheme

RBFA participate in the national “Cycle to Work” scheme through which its employees hire bicycles to use for travelling to and from work.

Subscriptions

Individuals required by RBFA to be members of professional bodies in relation to their duties are reimbursed subscription fees.

Uniform

The RBFA provides uniform clothing for its operational firefighting and Control Room staff and some Green Book staff engaged in public facing activities such as prevention work, Fire Safety Inspecting Officers and HQ reception staff. A number of other staff are provided with work wear as required for the purpose of their role. In addition, the operational firefighting staff are issued with and required to wear Personal Protective Equipment when undertaking operational duties.

Employee Assistance Programme

The RBFA provides an employee assistance programme for all its staff.

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Appendix A

Occupational Health Support

The RBFA provides an Occupational Health Service to all its staff which seeks to keep them fit and well to undertake their duties and to ensure their speedy and safe return to work when they are injured or sick.

Healthcare Provision

Where appropriate and cost effective, the RBFA may pay for physiotherapy, private medical assessment and/or treatment for its staff in order to secure their more rapid return to work following injury or sickness.

RBFA also provides the opportunity for staff to access the Benenden employee healthcare scheme at no direct cost to employees other than tax due on the benefit. This is currently at a cost of £11.50, for those who choose to opt into the scheme. As at 31 October 2021, there were 444 members of the scheme.

Outplacement Support

In the rare event of employment being terminated on the grounds of redundancy, RBFA may provide appropriate outplacement support to the employee(s) concerned in order to assist them to find alternative employment elsewhere.

Highest and Lowest Paid Employees

The CFO/CEX is the RBFA's highest paid employee. The policy regarding his remuneration is set out in RBFA's Senior Managers Pay section.

The CFO/CEX is selected by an RBFA Members' Appointment Panel following a comprehensive selection process and national advertising campaign.

Remuneration packages (as at 31 October 2021):

| | Basic Salary and (operational command allowance (per annum) | Total remuneration (including pension contributions and car provision) |
|--|---|--|
| CFO/CEX | £154,276 | £202,207.49 |
| Lowest paid employee (excluding Apprentices) | £21,748 | £25,445.16 |
| Competent Firefighter | £32,244 | £39,240.95 (1992 scheme) £36,081.04 (2006 scheme) £36,854.89 (2015 scheme) |

From April 2022, the compulsory government National Living Wage for workers over 23 years of age and over is £9.50 per hour. Please note the National Living Wage is distinct from the Living Wage, which is the level of pay recommended by the Living Wage Foundation, an independent campaign group. In assessing this requirement on current pay arrangements in RBFA it is noted that the lowest paid post to which an employee would be recruited would attract an hourly rate of £11.27 (excluding apprentices on apprenticeship rates of pay).

Given that staff pay and benefits dominate the RBFA budget, the current and anticipated future reductions in RBFA's financial resources mean that these costs are and will continue to be under close scrutiny.

RBFRS has in some cases found it difficult recruit suitable professionally qualified staff through normal channels and in some areas the use of interim agency staff or contractors working outside of IR35 legislation, is in place.

Reviews will be required to ensure appropriate remuneration is in place to attract and retain staff as structures within the Service are examined. Consideration of the total reward available to respond to changing organisational pressures and the linkages between pay and performance and redesigned structures will continue to be explored through organisational change programmes to ensure staff are attracted to, and retained by RBFA. In accordance with our Equality Policy, pay is monitored and reviewed. An equal pay audit was completed during 2019/20. The next equal pay audit will be undertaken in March 2022. RBFA has published its Gender Pay Gap report in line with legislation, which can be viewed on the Services' website and also at gov.uk. RBFA will also publish an Ethnicity Pay Gap Report which will be available on the Services' website.

Pay Multiples

The relationship between the rate of pay for the median full time equivalent earnings and the highest paid employee excluding pension, can be described as the pay multiple.

The multiple between the median full time equivalent earnings and the CFO/CEX is 1:4.56.

Payments on Termination of Employment

Compensation Policy

The RBFA currently exercises its discretions under the Local Government (Early Termination of Employment), (Discretionary Compensation) Regulations 2006 to enhance statutory redundancy payments by paying one and a half times the Statutory Redundancy Pay Table and waiving the statutory maximum week's pay for calculation of redundancy payments. These discretions only apply to staff who are

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Appendix A

offered membership of the LGPS, that is Fire Control Staff and non-operational support staff.

Uniformed operational staff at all levels are not currently covered by the Local Government (Early Termination of Employment) (Discretionary Compensation) Regulations 2006 and in the event of redundancy, their compensation is limited to statutory redundancy pay.

Pensions Policy

RBFA has adopted a policy of considering the re-engagement of its retired operational staff subject to certain conditions. In the event that re-engagement of a retiree takes place, their pension payments will be abated (up to 100%) to ensure that they do not earn more in retirement than they did immediately prior to their retirement. Refer to the Pensions and Retirement Planning Policy.

Publication of Pay Statement

Upon approval of the full Fire Authority, this statement will be published on RBFA's web site. In addition RBFA publishes the following details for Directors for the two most recent years in its Annual Statement of Accounts:-

- Salary including fees and allowances
- Any sums payable by way of expenses allowance that are chargeable to UK income tax (Benefits in Kind/Car Allowance)
- Total Remuneration excluding pensions
- Employer Pension Contributions
- Total Remuneration including pensions

In addition, RBFA publishes the numbers of employees earning £50,000 and over in bandings of £5,000 and any compensation for loss of employment and any other payments connected with termination

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ROYAL BERKSHIRE FIRE AUTHORITY REPORT

| | |
|---------------------------|---|
| COMMITTEE | FIRE AUTHORITY |
| DATE OF MEETING | 15 FEBRUARY 2022 |
| SUBJECT | ROYAL BERKSHIRE FIRE AND RESCUE SERVICE (RBFRS) EQUALITY, DIVERSITY AND INCLUSION OBJECTIVES |
| LEAD OFFICER | BECCI JEFFERIES, HEAD OF HR AND LEARNING AND DEVELOPMENT |
| LEAD MEMBER | N/A |
| EXEMPT INFORMATION | NONE |
| ACTION | FOR DECISION |

1. EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

- 1.1 The purpose of this report is to outline the revised equality, diversity and inclusion (EDI) objectives for the organisation. The report consequently highlights the reasons for suggested amendments, as well as outlining the requirements related to setting objectives. Implications of failing to implement objectives, beyond legal consequences, are also detailed.
- 1.2 The report additionally outlines the process of review undertaken so far and details plans for further consultation subject to the approval of the Authority.

2. RECOMMENDATION

- 2.1 **NOTE** the contents of the report, and
- 2.2 **AGREE** that the new proposed objectives can proceed to consultation.

3. REPORT

- 3.1 This paper is brought to the Authority following initial consultation with the EDI Forum and subsequent approval by the Senior Leadership Team, at meetings on 25 January and 2 February respectively.
- 3.2 The requirement to set objectives is outlined in the Equality Act (2010) and Public Sector Equality Duty (PSED).

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- 3.3 The Equality Act 2010 sets out the requirement for public authorities to comply with the public sector equality duty. Essentially, this places a duty on public bodies to consider how policies and decisions conducted by the organisation affect people who are protected under the equality act. If this is not considered properly fulfilled, legal action can be taken against the organisation.
- 3.4 The intention of this duty is to accelerate progress towards equality, by placing a responsibility on public bodies to consider how they can work to tackle inequalities and discrimination specifically relating to individuals with protected characteristics as defined by the Equality Act.
- 3.5 The protected characteristics are:
- Age
 - Disability
 - Sex (Gender)
 - Sexual Orientation
 - Gender Reassignment
 - Race including national identity and ethnicity
 - Religion or belief
 - Pregnancy and maternity
 - Marriage and Civil Partnership
- 3.6 It should also be noted that the PSED, whilst primarily aiming to induce public organisations to consider the impacts of their activities and decisions to reduce or avoid negative impacts, in doing so simultaneously supports RBFRS to consider how we can tailor our services for a range of individuals, therefore protecting our communities in a more effective and efficient manner.
- 3.7 This is further supported by the RBFRS approach which, whilst maintaining cognisance of the protected characteristics at all times, also considers broader impacting factors such as socio-economic difference or related elements which may impact our community and their level of risk. Such considerations are captured through the recently revised equality impact assessment process, for example, further ensuring that we are fulfilling the relevant duties as fully as possible by considering the widest range of potential impacts of our work.
- 3.8 The requirements of the PSED are categorised into general and specific duties:

General Duties

- Section 149 of the Equality Act 2010 requires us to demonstrate compliance with the PSED
- Eliminating unlawful discrimination, harassment, victimisation and any other conduct prohibited by the Equality Act 2010
- Advance equality of opportunity between people who share a protected characteristic and people who do not share it

- Foster good relations between people who share a protected characteristic and people who do not.

Specific Duties

- Publish information to demonstrate compliance with the Equality Duty, at least annually
- Set equality objectives, at least every four years.

RBFRS EDI Objectives

- 3.9 At the time of the creation of the initial EDI Objectives, the EDI Forum recommended that our objectives should focus on the broad areas of inclusiveness, leadership, knowing our communities and culture. It was agreed that the review period for the equality objectives will align to the term of the RBFRS people strategy subject to a maximum of four years to ensure compliance with the Equality Act.
- 3.10 It is proposed that this review period continues in line with broader organisational considerations.
- 3.11 Consequently, new objectives have been proposed and developed in consultation with the EDI Forum and subsequently the Senior Leadership Team to ensure compliance with the relevant duties:

| CURRENT | PROPOSED |
|--|---|
| <p>Increasing the diversity of staff at all levels: We will take actions to increase the diversity of job applicants to help us reflect the community by focusing particularly on under-represented groups.</p> | <p>Increasing the diversity of staff at all levels: We recognise the value that a diverse workforce brings and will take action to increase the diversity of job applicants, seeking individuals with the right behaviours and skills to help us reflect and engage with our local communities.</p> |
| <p>Leadership and corporate commitment: This objective aligns with the NFCC Framework which centres on leadership, partnership and commitment. Leadership and corporate commitment means we will be strong and visible in our leadership and that all employees have confidence in our commitment to equality, diversity and inclusion.</p> | <p>Leadership and corporate commitment: We will support our organisational leaders to understand their role in tackling inequalities and demonstrating inclusive behaviours, in line with our Behavioural Competency Framework. This commitment means we will be strong and visible in our leadership and ensure that all staff and members of our local communities have confidence in our commitment to equality, diversity and inclusion.</p> |

| | |
|--|--|
| <p>Improving our service delivery by knowing the communities we serve through partnership and risk based approach: This objective will focus on promoting equality by knowing our diverse communities and understanding their needs, ensuring that our prevention, protection and response activities target the most vulnerable people with the greatest risk.</p> | <p>Improving our service delivery by creating strong links with our community: We will connect and communicate with our diverse local community to develop meaningful and sustainable links, which help us to increase our understanding of their needs. We will ensure that we tailor our prevention, protection and response activities accordingly and target the most vulnerable people with the greatest risk.</p> |
| <p>Promoting a culture of equality, diversity and inclusion: We will continue to take action to ensure we have a culture where everyone feels valued and is treated with dignity and respect by creating an inclusive working environment that will enable us to maximise the potential of a diverse workforce.</p> | <p>Creating a culture of equality, diversity and inclusion: We will take action to ensure we have a culture where everyone feels valued and is treated with dignity and respect, and support all staff to contribute to the creation of an inclusive working environment.</p> |

- 3.12 As noted, the proposed objectives are amended in line with feedback from the EDI Forum. Minor additional revisions have been made in line with best practice, the objectives of comparable organisations and a desire to ensure that each objective is clear and accessible to all, both in terms of ease of understanding and also ease of implementation for relevant stakeholders i.e. RBFRS employees and representatives. Furthermore, the proposed objectives are cognisant of the position and progress of RBFRS with regard to equality, diversity and inclusion, and aspects not previously explicitly outlined such as recognition of the value of diversity and the importance of staff engagement in the creation of an inclusive culture.

Considerations for Implementation

- 3.13 Considerations such as resources for implementation, clarification of accountability and ownership and the plan for achievement of these objectives will be considered in the consequently revised EDI Action Plan.
- 3.14 Agreed actions as part of this work will be regularly consulted on with relevant representatives internally and externally, including the EDI Forum and EDI Steering Group, which will also support the meeting of the PSED duties by fostering good relations between groups.
- 3.15 The way in which the public is consulted is not specified in the legislation, however it is our intention to utilise RBFRS' community database to make relevant contacts and ensure we reach a wide range of representative groups across Berkshire. We will also undertake consultation with local authorities in Berkshire and other key stakeholders such as South Central Ambulance Service and Thames Valley Police. In addition, consultation with Members, employees and general consultation via Siren and the external website will

be conducted. All consultation will be cognisant throughout of accessibility and equality of access to ensure that the consultation is as effective and representative as possible.

Benefits of Setting EDI Objectives

- 3.16 The benefits of setting these objectives are evidently multifarious and wide-reaching, expanding beyond the organisation itself to positively impact our service users and members of the local community.
- 3.17 Naturally key benefits relate to the meeting of legal duties as outlined above. The consequences of failing to fulfil these duties could be extensive and invites risk as outlined in the relevant section below. There is equally a clear moral benefit to setting objectives which focus on the role of the organisation in promoting and actively creating fairness and equality in all areas.
- 3.18 Beyond being legally and morally the 'right thing' to do, RBFRS benefits in numerous tangential ways from the setting of EDI Objectives, including but not limited to:
- A workforce that is clear on the commitment of the Service to equality, diversity and inclusion, and which has confidence in not only how the Service intends to achieve its goals regarding EDI, but also on the individual role each member of staff or representative is expected to play, and the way in which they can expect to be treated in return.
 - An expanded talent pool as a result of both this commitment and the work it engenders, specifically regarding the work outlined in the first objective in terms of recognising the value of a diverse workforce and taking action to encourage a diverse applicant pool.
 - Through the duty to consider the impact of our activities and the objectives we set, we will create services which are consistently cognisant of and tailored to the needs of different groups, which thereby will unquestionably better fulfill our aim of providing effective and efficient services to our communities.
- 3.19 To conclude, while the setting of equality objectives is a legal necessity, the benefits of doing so and specifically the advantages of setting clear, purposeful and authentic objectives, is far more wide-ranging, ultimately ensuring that all staff, representatives of the organisation and members of the local community receive a fair, equitable and effective service from RBFRS.

4. CONTRIBUTION TO STRATEGIC COMMITMENTS

- 4.1 Commitment 1 – We will provide advice on how to prevent fires and other emergencies.
- 4.2 Commitment 2 – We will ensure a swift and appropriate response when called to emergencies.

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- 4.3 Commitment 3 – We will provide advice, consultation and enforcement in relation to fire safety standards in buildings.
- 4.4 Commitment 4 – We will seek opportunities to contribute to a broader safety, health and wellbeing agenda, whilst delivering our core functions.
- 4.5 Commitment 5 – We will ensure that Royal Berkshire Fire and Rescue Service provides good value for money.
- 4.6 Commitment 6 – We will work with Central Government and key stakeholders in the interests of the people of Royal Berkshire.

5. FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

- 5.1. There are no direct financial implications of undertaking consultation and agreeing the equality objectives. The actions required to support achievement of the objectives will need to be clarified and may require additional resources and monies. Any such resource will be considered accordingly and business cases made where necessary and appropriate.

6. LEGAL IMPLICATIONS

- 6.1 The PSED consists of both general and specific duties, the broad aim of the general equality duty is to integrate consideration of the advancement of equality into the day-to-day business of all bodies subject to the duty. Failure to comply will result in a breach of the Equality Act 2010.

7. EQUALITY DIVERSITY AND INCLUSION IMPLICATIONS

- 7.1 This report considers the requirement and proposal for the equality, diversity and inclusion objectives. It has not been necessary to conduct an Equality Impact Assessment (EIA) due to the nature of the report. Specific EIAs will be completed i.e. regarding consultation, in line with the progression of this work and best practice guidance.

8. RISK IMPLICATIONS

- 8.1 In our continued efforts to minimise organisational risks, we will embark on meaningful and accessible consultation with our internal and external stakeholders to ensure the objectives are appropriate.

9. CONSISTENCY WITH DUTY TO COLLABORATE

- 9.1 The EDI Forum will work with stakeholders, both internally and externally, to seek feedback on the suitability of the objectives through consultation.

10. PRINCIPAL CONSULTATION

- 10.1 The Chief Fire Officer/Chief Executive has been consulted on the content of this paper.
- 10.2 The Chief Finance Officer has been consulted on the content of this paper.
- 10.3 The Monitoring Officer has been consulted on the content of this paper.

11. BACKGROUND PAPERS

- 11.1 Public Sector Equality Duty as cited in the Equality Act 2010.

12. APPENDICES

- 12.1 N/A

13. CONTACT DETAILS

- 13.1 Chloe Duncan – Equality, Diversity and Inclusion Co-ordinator
(07733301740 | duncanc@rbfrs.co.uk)

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ROYAL BERKSHIRE FIRE AUTHORITY



| | |
|---------------------------|---|
| COMMITTEE | FIRE AUTHORITY |
| DATE OF MEETING | 15 FEBRUARY 2022 |
| SUBJECT | STATE OF FIRE AND RESCUE THE ANNUAL ASSESSMENT OF FIRE AND RESCUE SERVICES IN ENGLAND 2021 |
| LEAD OFFICER | KATIE MILLS, HEAD OF CORPORATE SERVICES |
| LEAD MEMBER | COUNCILLOR COLIN DUDLEY |
| EXEMPT INFORMATION | NONE |
| ACTION | FOR NOTE |

1. EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

- 1.1 The purpose of the report is to note the State of Fire and Rescue 2021 report and the outcome of the first tranche of round two inspections undertaken by Her Majesty’s Inspectorate of Constabulary and Fire and Rescue Services (HMICFRS).
- 1.2 A presentation will accompany the report at the meeting to provide further detail, together with an update on inspection preparations being undertaken by Royal Berkshire Fire and Rescue Service (RBFRS).

2. RECOMMENDATION

That the Fire Authority:

- 2.1 **NOTE** the State of Fire and Rescue 2021 report and the outcomes of the first tranche of Round Two inspections by Her Majesty’s Inspectorate of Constabulary and Fire and Rescue Services; and
- 2.2 **NOTE** the update provided on the preparations for the inspection of Royal Berkshire Fire and Rescue Service.

3. REPORT

- 3.1 HMICFRS was due to commence its second round of inspections of fire and rescue services in England in spring 2020. However, it took the decision to suspend the start of the programme due to the COVID-19 pandemic. The round two inspection programme subsequently began in 2021.
- 3.2 In December 2021, the inspection reports of those services inspected as part of tranche one were published, alongside Her Majesty's Chief Inspector of Fire and Rescue Services State of Fire 2021 report.
- 3.3 At the meeting, a presentation will be given providing an overview of the main findings from the tranche one inspections, together with a summary of the State of Fire 2021 report, which is attached at **Appendix A**.
- 3.4 In November 2020, HMICFRS set out its round two timetable with RBFRS' inspection taking place in Tranche 3 of the 2021/22 programme.
- 3.5 Formal inspection activity has now commenced with the RBFRS Self-Assessment and document submission submitted to HMICFRS in early February. Attached at **Appendix B** is the RBFRS Self-Assessment.
- 3.6 Inspection fieldwork is due to start week commencing 20 June 2022, and will consist of both virtual and on-site activity for a period of six weeks.

4. CONTRIBUTION TO STRATEGIC COMMITMENTS

- 4.1 The inspection programme covers a number of the service areas outlined in the Strategic Commitments.

5. FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

- 5.1 No financial implications as a result of this report.

6. LEGAL IMPLICATIONS

- 6.1 HMICFRS has powers of inspection under the Fire and Rescue Act 2004, as amended by the Policing and Crime Act 2017. As outlined in the Fire and Rescue National Framework for England, all fire and rescue authorities must cooperate with the inspectorate and its inspectors to enable them to deliver their statutory function.

7. EQUALITY AND DIVERSITY IMPLICATIONS

- 7.1 No equality and diversity implications as a result of this report.

8. RISK IMPLICATIONS

- 8.1 No risk implications as a result of this report.

9. CONSISTENCY WITH DUTY TO COLLABORATE

9.1 No implications with our duty to collaborate as a result of this report.

10. PRINCIPAL CONSULTATION

10.1 The Senior Leadership Team has been consulted in the preparation of this report.

11. BACKGROUND PAPERS

11.1 [Fire and Rescue National Framework for England](#)

12. APPENDICES

12.1 Appendix A – State of Fire 2021

12.2 Appendix B – RBFRS Self-Assessment

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State of Fire and Rescue

The Annual Assessment of
Fire and Rescue Services in England

2021

Her Majesty's Chief Inspector
of Fire and Rescue Services



State of Fire and Rescue – The Annual Assessment of Fire and Rescue Services in England 2021

Her Majesty's Chief Inspector
of Fire and Rescue Services

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Appendix A

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Foreword

This is my third and final report to the Secretary of State under section 28B of the Fire and Rescue Services Act 2004. It contains my final assessment of the effectiveness and efficiency of fire and rescue services in England, based on the inspections carried out between February and August 2021. I report separately every year on the efficiency and effectiveness of police forces in England and Wales, and in early 2022 I will be publishing my final report.

I am also taking this opportunity to reflect on the overall progress made since July 2017, when the inspectorate's remit was extended to include inspections of England's fire and rescue services.

This report's structure and purpose

Part 1 contains my assessment of the state of fire and rescue services in England. In making my assessment, I have drawn on all the fire and rescue service inspection activity carried out since our first round of inspections in 2018.

The 13 inspections between February and August 2021 have informed my assessment of the progress made by the sector, including progress against national recommendations. These 13 inspections formed the first tranche of our current second round of inspections. The second inspection round resumed in February 2021, having been postponed in 2020 as a result of the pandemic.

I have also used the findings and reports of other organisations, and other information and analysis, made available to me.

Part 2 is an overview of the gradings and findings from the 13 inspections between February and August 2021.

Part 3 contains the full list of our fire and rescue reports in the period covered by this report.

The results of our individual inspections enable an assessment of the performance of individual services. I hope those responsible for holding fire and rescue services to account, as well as the public, will draw on the overall conclusions in this report just as much as they draw on the specific conclusions we have reached for each service.

When making this assessment, I wrote to chief fire officers and other interested parties throughout the fire and rescue sector, inviting them to contribute their views on the state of fire and rescue in England. I put on record my warmest thanks to all those who responded for their very thoughtful and insightful contributions. They have been a great help.



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Senior staffing changes

My term as Her Majesty's Chief Inspector of Fire and Rescue Services ends on 31 March 2022. It has been a privilege to report on the effectiveness and efficiency of the fire and rescue services in England since the inspectorate's remit was extended in 2017, and to discharge my other national duties. I am grateful to my colleagues both in and outside the inspectorate for their support.

Her Majesty's Inspectors (HMIs) have joint responsibility for inspecting fire and rescue services and police forces. HMI Zoë Billingham left the inspectorate in September after 12 years of distinguished service. Zoë has my deep gratitude for her dedication to the inspectorate and for her work with the fire and rescue sector. I wish her every success in the future.

Zoë's successor is HMI Roy Wilsher OBE QFSM, who was the first chair of the National Fire Chiefs Council (NFCC). I extend to him the warmest welcome as he assumes his responsibilities as the inspectorate's senior lead for the fire and rescue inspection programme and domestic abuse, and the HMI with primary responsibility for the fire and rescue services and police forces in the Eastern region.



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Our approach to inspecting fire and rescue services

The pandemic required us to adapt our approach to inspections of fire and rescue services. In my last annual report, I explained that the inspectorate temporarily suspended all inspection work needing appreciable engagement by services. We postponed last year's planned inspection programme for the second round of our fire and rescue service inspections by 12 months.

In 2020, the Home Secretary commissioned us to inspect how each service had responded to the first phase of the pandemic. We found that many services had adapted well and had provided very valuable additional support to the public.

The pandemic and remaining public health restrictions continue to place strain on public services and on our inspection programme. Firefighters and other service staff continue to go above and beyond their roles to help their communities. Home Office data shows 518,263 incidents were attended by fire and rescue services in England in the year ending 31 March.¹ Of all incidents attended by fire and rescue services, fires accounted for 29 percent, fire false alarms 42 percent, and non-fire incidents 29 percent.

This year, some services faced and responded to additional difficulties caused by flooding and wildfires. Home Office data shows fire and rescue services responded to 14,921 incidents of flooding in England between April 2020 and April 2021. Norfolk Fire and Rescue Service attended 451 flooding incidents, which represents a 273 percent increase from 2020, and Gloucestershire Fire and Rescue Service attended more than twice as many flooding incidents (236) as in the previous year. In addition, in the year to March 2021, there were 13.3 percent more secondary fires attended in grassland, woodland and crops in England (25,345) compared to the previous year.

In February 2021, we resumed inspections and started our second full round of inspections. This time we inspected 44 fire and rescue services, following the formation of the Hampshire and Isle of Wight Fire and Rescue Service.

Firefighters and other service staff continue to go above and beyond their roles to help their communities.

While some services have made material efforts to make improvements, serious problems persist in others.

Between February and August 2021, we carried out our first tranche of inspections and graded 13 services. These inspections were carried out almost entirely virtually as a result of pandemic restrictions. Our inspection teams and the fire and rescue services they inspect have shown fortitude and resilience in doing this. This was the first time we inspected this way; it presented many difficulties.

Since the second round of our inspections was postponed, services have had longer to improve, albeit while also dealing with the pandemic response. While some services have made material efforts to make improvements, serious problems persist in others.



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Our second round of inspections of all 44 services will continue into 2022. We recognise the difficulties of virtual inspections. Depending on how the pandemic develops, we are reintroducing some on-site inspection activity as we complete the remainder of our inspections. Our full findings from our inspection of all 44 services will therefore be available in the 2022 *State of Fire and Rescue* report.

We regularly monitor all services in order to promote improvements. If we identify a serious, critical or systemic shortcoming in a service's practice, we will report it as a 'cause of concern',² which is always accompanied by one or more recommendations. If a cause of concern is identified, it is raised with the fire and rescue service and authority so they can take appropriate action. We conduct a number of follow-up inspections throughout the year.

The inspection programme was designed to follow substantially the same approach as our first round of inspections. We did this to assess the improvements services are making, in respect of effectiveness, efficiency and people.

We have continuously improved our process of design, monitoring and reporting. The sector, particularly our expert reference and technical advisory groups, have continued to provide useful feedback on and support for our ideas, which have led to appreciable improvements. In particular, for our second round of inspections we have made improvements to how we assess risk, protection, and equality and diversity.

I extend my warmest appreciation to all those involved in our work: from our staff who designed inspection processes or spent numerous hours collecting evidence virtually and analysing it, those who contributed to my assessment, and to those services that have facilitated our inspections so well in testing circumstances. This continues to be a difficult time for us all, and I am grateful for everyone's efforts.

Sir Thomas P Winsor

Her Majesty's Chief Inspector of Fire and Rescue Services





Part 1: Overview

Many services have done more to prioritise fire protection.

Overview

This year's report begins with my final assessment of the state of the fire and rescue sector in England in 2021. I also take this opportunity to comment on the progress made by the sector since the inspectorate's first round of fire and rescue service inspections in 2018. Considerable efforts have been made by local and national organisations to improve the sector, but there is still much more to be done.

All safety-critical, essential public services benefit from the scrutiny of inspection and reporting. Our inspections are valuable for both the public and the fire and rescue sector: we have seen evidence of how services have improved and staff have told us that they have seen worthwhile changes for the better.

The fire and rescue services and the National Fire Chiefs Council (NFCC) have welcomed our inspections. We have acted on feedback from services, the NFCC and others, and with the benefit of that advice we have developed our inspection methodology for our second round of inspections. This has enabled us to get a more detailed view of the state of the sector.

In August 2020, the Home Secretary commissioned us to inspect how all 45 fire and rescue authorities in England responded to the pandemic. We completed those inspections in November 2020. This means that, since 2018, every service has been inspected at least twice. There is now a benchmark against which the inspectorate can monitor progress.

Progress has been made in some areas

It is encouraging to see many services that had received causes of concern in our first round of inspections have taken steps to improve and act on our recommendations.

Many services have done more to prioritise fire protection; this was an area we criticised heavily in our first round. This focus on protection has intensified alongside the national response to the *Grenfell Tower Inquiry (Phase 1)*.³

The Home Office has also provided fire and rescue services with additional funding for protection work. There has been a 17 percent increase in competent protection staff.

In many respects, the sector is well prepared when it comes to responding to routine and major emergency incidents, and this has been the case throughout the pandemic. In their responses to the questions we asked as part of last year's pandemic inspections, local resilience forums (which are made up of representatives from local public services) were overwhelmingly positive about the sector's response to the pandemic. This year, its pandemic response has continued to be good.

Most services we inspected are better at promoting a positive professional culture: 84 percent of respondents to the staff survey (part of our inspections) told us they are treated with dignity and respect at work (which is 3 percent more than in the first round of inspections). Staff wellbeing and health and safety are clearly being prioritised, with 91 percent of respondents telling us they are satisfied their personal safety and welfare are being treated seriously by their service (7 percent more than in Round 1).

Most services we inspected are better at promoting a positive professional culture.



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Too many services aren't taking enough action on prevention.

But more change is urgently required

Too many services have failed to act sufficiently, if at all, on the areas for improvement⁴ we issued in Round 1 of our inspections. Of the 184 areas for improvement we issued across these 13 services in Round 1, one third remain open.

While all 10 existing causes of concern from Round 1 have now been closed, we issued 11 new causes of concern for the 13 services inspected between February and August 2021. Seven of these relate to effectiveness and four relate to people.

Too many services aren't taking enough action on prevention. This is despite the range of areas for improvement in respect of prevention that we issued in our first round of inspections. In many cases, we found a clear disconnection between what is in public-facing service plans and what is actually being done by public-facing staff.

Good intentions to promote equality, diversity and inclusion generally haven't resulted in tangible improvements, and many services don't clearly define what they are working towards. There remains a woeful lack of representation of both women and people from Black and minority ethnic backgrounds. In our most recent public perceptions survey,⁵ 78 percent of 1,981 respondents said that fire and rescue services being representative of local populations was either fairly or very important. The sector must do much more in this respect, and must learn from experiences in other sectors. Not only should it recruit staff from a diverse range of backgrounds, but it should also foster environments and cultures that will keep those people in their jobs and develop them professionally.

The responsibility to make these changes does not lie solely with chief fire officers and their senior teams; political leaders must also take action to resolve both new and long-standing problems.



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Our national recommendations need to be brought in faster

We have made national recommendations:

- the Home Office should precisely determine the role of fire and rescue services, to remove any ambiguity;
- the sector should remove unjustifiable variation, including in how they define risk;
- the sector should review and reform how effectively pay and conditions are determined;
- the Home Office should invest chief fire officers with operational independence, whether through primary legislation or in some other manner;
- there should be a code of ethics; and
- the Home Office should ensure that the sector has sufficient capacity and capability to bring about change.



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The full details of each recommendation are contained in Annex D. They are designed to promote reform of the sector and address the barriers we have found in every service since we started inspecting. I reiterated this need in last year's assessment and explained the adjusted new dates for completion.

Four of our national recommendations still have not been implemented. These relate to reducing variation in standards, determining the role of services and firefighters, reviewing the machinery determining terms and conditions, and providing operational independence for chief fire officers.

In October 2021, I wrote to the named bodies (the Home Office, the NFCC, the Local Government Association and National Employers) requesting an update on the progress of implementing our recommendations. I received comprehensive responses from each named body and acknowledge and welcome the progress made in this respect. I have provided a status update on the progress made against each recommendation in Annex D. These responses will allow me to revise the completion dates for two of the recommendations, where the current dates either have expired or are very shortly due to expire.

Although the pandemic has understandably delayed progress, the public and the fire and rescue services cannot wait any longer. In some respects and some levels, there has been a conspicuous failure to give due priority to the essential reform of the fire and rescue sector.

Our national recommendations are still relevant. This is why I will not be setting any new recommendations this year, as the sector must continue to act on the ones I have already made, and at a more urgent pace. My frustrations grow, on behalf of the public, at the lack of progress being made to reform this vital public service.

**Our national
recommendations are
still relevant.**

The windspeed of national reform has dropped

In March 2021, the Home Secretary announced her plans to further reform fire and rescue.⁶ I welcomed these plans and hope to see the subsequent Home Office White Paper published soon.

Many services that wrote to me about the state of fire and rescue services described the reforms they believe are necessary. These changes included the implementation of our recommendations; many hoped the White Paper would be the catalyst for this.



© Oxfordshire FRS

The case for reform remains

The sector continues to be admired by the public, as our most recent public perception survey showed: 57 percent of 1,981 respondents said they were satisfied with their local service and most said that they believed that the service provided by their local service has stayed the same.

Almost universally, the focus of fire staff is to protect the communities they serve. Their dedication to protect life and property is highly commendable, and their efforts throughout the pandemic have saved many lives.

It is unarguable that firefighters deserve fair pay; everyone does. But the continued threat of industrial action doesn't help anyone, least of all the public. Many services have told us that the threat can significantly adversely affect their ability to respond to incidents and that it is costly for them to provide contingency arrangements, particularly when, in some cases, resources are already scarce. We were also told that many firefighters are often conflicted in their choices; dissenting from union positions takes courage. The influence of the Fire Brigades Union (FBU) is considerable in some services. Sometimes, it goes too far and is contrary to services' values and behaviours, and to the public interest.

The threat of industrial action isn't the only thing that is hindering progress. The outdated and ineffective structures for negotiating pay, terms and conditions are where reform is most needed. A significant number of periods of industrial action have taken place since 2001; two were national strikes. These were largely as a result of failed negotiations on pay and terms and conditions.

Too often, the public haven't been served as they should because of the restrictive industrial relations arrangements in place. We provided examples of these in our report *Responding to the pandemic: The fire and rescue service's response to the COVID-19 pandemic in 2020*,⁷ such as the limited ability of firefighters to support the vaccination programme or carry out wellbeing checks when delivering food to the most vulnerable.

The continued threat of industrial action doesn't help anyone, least of all the public.

How services establish the necessary capability to respond to marauding terrorist attacks (MTAs) is another example of industrial relations impeding the ability of services to serve the public. As I have publicly set out⁸ this year, it is of course extremely important that every fire and rescue service has the capacity and capability of dealing with an MTA. Training for an MTA as well as attendance at and the performance of fire and rescue functions in respect of an MTA, are squarely within the established role of a firefighter. However, the FBU's position on the matter has led services to consider paying twice for that essential service – a service the public both needs and properly expects – out of fear the FBU will direct firefighters to withdraw this capability. The FBU position has also led firefighters to incorrectly believe that they would be ineligible for a pension or compensation scheme pay-out if they were to die in the line of duty while responding to an MTA – a suggestion that lacks merit.

Chief fire officers do not have the same operational independence as chief constables, something I recommended in an earlier *State of Fire and Rescue* report. Many services that wrote to me about this were broadly supportive of this. It is a pressing matter. Deployment decisions and operational preparedness, such as the location of fire engines and the duty systems worked by firefighters, get tangled in protracted local, regional and national differences to the detriment of the public interest.



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Out of the 35 letters I received from services about the state of fire and rescue services, 25 specifically said that the Government needs to provide a much clearer specification of the role and purpose of the sector. The sector's response to the pandemic has demonstrated the capability of many services to do much more in responding to emergencies and the public's needs. Many of those who replied said that firefighters should be allowed to do more in response to medical emergencies. The public and those who work in the sector deserve greater clarity on these important matters.

The current pay structure does not give experienced firefighters a sufficient financial incentive to stay in their roles.

In our most recent public perceptions survey, "responding to storms and other natural disasters" was selected most frequently as the work that respondents felt their fire and rescue services have responsibility for, other than extinguishing fires (56 percent of 1,981). Other work included "responding to water rescue incidents" (50 percent of 1,981) and "responding to medical incidents" (40 percent of 1,981).

The current pay structure does not give experienced firefighters a sufficient financial incentive to stay in their roles; to get higher pay, they need promotion to command or management responsibilities. This fails to provide a fair reflection of their levels of experience. Unlike the police, who receive progression pay each year, firefighters only move between two levels for most roles: from trainee to competent. They usually move on from the trainee stage within 18 months, which means that most firefighters see minimal pay progression beyond this, irrespective of additional skills and contributions. This places firefighters at a disadvantage.

The primary focus of the National Joint Council (NJC) should be to reform pay structures to introduce much greater levels of fairness. Almost all services that wrote to me commented on the ineffectiveness of the NJC. I have previously recommended that the NJC be abolished and subsumed into the independent pay review body that already covers police officers.

In the interests of public safety, I urge policy-makers, legislators, employers and the wider fire sector to take steps to consider what useful improvement could be made to current terms and conditions and pay negotiation machinery. This work should include a consideration of the removal of the right of firefighters to strike.

If leadership quality is not the highest it can be, staff, services, and those they serve are at a disadvantage.

Insufficient action to develop prospective future chief fire officers

Recently, we have seen a high turnover of chief fire officers. The lack of clarity on the Government's reform of the sector has had an unsettling effect on fire and rescue service leadership.

In too many recruitment campaigns, the pool of prospective candidates for the role of chief fire officer has been very small. Applicants may be dissuaded from applying for the role as a result of changes in terms and conditions for pensions, which have moved from final to average salary. Chief fire officers, unlike chief constables, do not have the ability to freeze their pensions, and they can be put at a financial disadvantage if they stay in service for more than 30 years. Many therefore leave the role prematurely.

There is a reluctance in the sector to open up the most senior jobs to people other than those who have worked their ways up from firefighter. This limits the diversity and volume of candidates. And this is particularly worrying given the fact that processes for appointing chief fire officers aren't always open and that there is a current lack of diversity at senior level.

In my 2019 assessment, I commented on how all too often we have found senior management teams to be echo chambers for people who look, sound and think the same. I welcome the work of the NFCC, including its direct entry scheme, to establish mechanisms to better manage, support and develop staff. Investment is needed for the full benefits of this work to be felt.

In some circumstances, the deputy chief fire officer may well be the best person for the top job, but if there isn't a range of candidates, and services don't at least consider appointing candidates from outside the sector, there is no guarantee that the best appointment will be made. I have said before that services sometimes miss opportunities to bring in new talent. If leadership quality is not the highest it can be, staff, services and those they serve are at a disadvantage.

Progress seen elsewhere

The NFCC has carried out some commendable work on developing national fire and rescue policy on areas such as leadership, data and digital. The NFCC is also working with National Employers and the Local Government Association on the 'Fit for the Future' initiative.⁹ When completed, Fit for the Future will set out all three organisations' joint objectives for the future of fire and rescue in England, as well as what is needed to achieve them. The three organisations will also establish how they will work together to best serve the public.

In May 2021, the Local Government Association, the NFCC and the Association of Police and Crime Commissioners published the *Core Code of Ethics for Fire and Rescue Services*.¹⁰ I am pleased to see the publication of the code and I look forward to services adopting it. The code has also become one of the eight standards published by the Fire Standards Board.



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I welcome the focus of the Government and the sector on fire and building safety.

I welcome the focus of the Government and the sector on fire and building safety. In early 2021, the Fire Safety Act 2021 received royal assent. This is an important piece of legislation that will ensure that the person responsible for building safety, as well as the fire and rescue services, know their roles and responsibilities when it comes to reducing the risks posed by external wall systems. This legislation will also make sure that due consideration is given to fire safety in multi-occupied residential buildings.

I also welcome the introduction of the Building Safety Bill,¹¹ which is designed to improve building and fire safety practices in high-rise residential buildings (HRRBs) – buildings over 18 metres or eight or more storeys tall. When brought into force, this legislation will establish a new building safety regulator for HRRBs. The legislation will also introduce a new regime that requires an accountable person to prepare a safety case for HRRBs in occupation. It is anticipated that representatives from fire and rescue services will contribute to this work by being part of multi-disciplinary teams.

The legislation will also strengthen some of the most important aspects of the Regulatory Reform (Fire Safety) Order 2005. These changes will help those who are responsible for fire protection to hold the person or persons responsible¹² – usually the landlord, employer or the building manager – for buildings to account.



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2021 inspections

The 13 service inspections we completed between February and August 2021 have given a clear picture of the sector's current state and the progress it has made since our first round of inspections, and our inspections of how services responded to the pandemic (which are still being carried out). We assessed services' work and their ability to continuously improve.

We made changes to our methodology for our second round of inspections on the basis of feedback from services. These changes included:

- a greater focus on diversity, and in particular race and how services are trying to overcome inequalities;
- considering the productivity of services;
- assessing how services are identifying and planning against known risks to their communities; and
- more case file reviews, particularly in relation to protection and the role carried out by services in fire safety regulations.

We paid great attention to how services collect and make sure all those who need risk information to serve the public have access to it when they need it. This includes making available to response crews the risk information gathered during services' prevention activity. For example, response crews need information about someone who has restricted mobility in order to rescue that individual. We are worried that some services aren't doing enough to make the availability of such information a priority.

We have seen some services make improvements this year, with both local successes and moderate improvements in some but not all areas. There have also been the continuing problems faced by services and the sector, with some services receiving lower grades on their effectiveness, efficiency and people assessments. In particular, so far in this round of inspections we have seen more causes of concern relating to the effectiveness of services.

We found that many services hadn't done enough work on prevention.

Services are making good progress on protection

In my 2019 and 2020 assessments, I said that many services needed to improve their protection work. It has therefore been encouraging in our 2021 inspections to see that many services have made protection and risk planning more of a priority.

This is, in part, a result of increased government investment in protection in fire and rescue services and the NFCC. That investment needs to be sustainable and sustained. I am pleased to see an increase in the number of competent protection staff, who have the right knowledge and skills to carry out audits at premises at highest risk. This is making a difference, but it takes time to train and develop confident and competent fire safety inspectors, and a concerted effort to retain them. Leaders need to keep a relentless focus on protection, and develop, train and accredit their staff to maintain this progress and for the public to feel the safety benefits.

Services need to do more on prevention

Despite this renewed focus on protection, we found that many services hadn't done enough work on prevention.

If we consider that an aspect of a service's practice, policy or performance falls short of the expected standard, we will report this as an 'area for improvement'.¹³ In our first round of inspections, many of the areas for improvement we issued relating to prevention focused on how well services identify those most at risk from fire. We were disappointed to find a general lack of progress made to address those areas for improvement in many of this year's inspections.

A very small number of services hadn't planned well enough and hadn't allocated sufficient resources to be able to help those most at risk of fires. This was accompanied, in some cases, by a disconnection between what is in public-facing service plans and what is actually being done by public-facing staff.

It is understandable that services may change their focus to meet the needs of their communities, including at times of crisis such as during a pandemic. However, the three statutory functions of fire and rescue services are response, prevention and protection; they must all be resourced and prioritised continuously and appropriately for them to safely serve the public.

Inconsistent funding and governance arrangements persist

In previous assessments, I have spoken of the inconsistencies of funding arrangements, with some services financially strapped and others relatively flush but inefficient. Many services are still operating with a lack of financial certainty, which is caused by differences in their governance models. Most services that wrote to me about the state of fire and rescue services said the current year-to-year funding arrangements are a constraint on their ability to be efficient and effective. Many noted that short-term funding settlements continue to make medium and longer-term planning difficult.

Simply put, services need to know how much money they will receive every year. Funding comes to fire and rescue authorities in different ways depending on their governance models. Those services that are not part of councils or other organisations receive their funding directly from local government settlements and from increased rates of council tax. Fire services that are part of a wider authority (such as county, unitary and mayoral services) receive their funding from the authority it sits under. Almost a third of those who wrote to me said that they wanted to see the fire funding formula reviewed. The fire funding formula is the model used by the Government to allocate funding to all 44 fire and rescue services in England.

Many services are still operating with a lack of financial certainty.

Those services in strong financial positions must become more efficient.

This year, we continued to find short-term funding arrangements for services, which makes it difficult for them to plan ahead and to invest to make efficiencies. These include the one-year government funding settlements. The amount they receive varies year on year, and this makes it even more difficult for them to plan ahead.

The Government should review the way services are funded to address this problem. While the future of fire reform and future governance remains unclear, many services are vulnerable to a lack of investment or even the ability to work with other public sector organisations. Some services told us that some public sector organisations were reluctant to consider working with them as a result of their future financial uncertainty.

And while many services do not struggle financially, some services rely too much on their financial reserves. Fire and rescue authorities (other than county council-led fire and rescue authorities) can keep part of their funding as reserves. But these should be used to manage financial risk, fund major future programmes and cover unforeseen pressures. They shouldn't be used to plug budget gaps in the long term or to put off making efficiencies. If a service relies on its reserves, this means that it may delay making efficiencies, such as investing in technology to improve efficiency and productivity.

Those services in strong financial positions must become more efficient, and most services could do more to make sure their workforces improve their productivity. For instance, we found examples of ineffective ICT structures hampering the productivity of staff, operational crews not carrying out protection work, and low levels of prevention and protection activity.

Some services don't allocate resources appropriately

During our first round of inspections, we established that some services were spending too much on their response functions and not enough on prevention and protection. While some progress has been made since then, fewer than half of the services we inspected in 2021 were able to demonstrate they were allocating resources appropriately across their response, prevention and protection functions. This casts doubt on their ability to achieve sufficient operational performance.

Over half of the services we inspected had problems with capacity, in particular when it came to prevention, protection and control functions. They don't always have enough of the right people available to carry out these functions. We saw a range of problems, such as an over-reliance on overtime and a lack of qualified staff in certain areas. This is not a new problem; this is something we have mentioned in previous reports. In many services, while response functions are well resourced and maintained, this is often at the expense of other statutory functions.

Over half of the services we inspected had problems with capacity.



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The on-call model still needs attention to make sure it works now and in the future.

Many services rely on dual contracts and overtime, which can create inefficiencies

On-call firefighters account for 35 percent (12,498 of 35,291) of firefighters nationally. They are essential to make sure services have enough firefighters to crew engines to meet foreseeable risks. During the pandemic, they have been invaluable as they have done some work that the FBU discouraged its members from doing. For example, they drove ambulances, packaged and repackaged food supplies for vulnerable people, and delivered personal protective equipment and other medical supplies.

Despite this, over a third of services that wrote to us about the state of fire and rescue said they had misgivings about the sustainability of the on-call model and said – as I have said previously – that there needs to be a national solution.

Most services have a shortage of crews available at their on-call stations. This low availability – mainly during office hours – makes it a risk for most services to include on-call crewed engines as part of their minimum crewing arrangements. The on-call model depends on having enough appropriately trained firefighters within a few minutes of the fire station when the call comes in.

There needs to be a continued, concerted effort by services and policy-makers to create and maintain the conditions necessary to attract and retain enough firefighters to crew engines when they are needed. This includes providing greater flexibility in working arrangements and establishing other financial incentives. Making sure these firefighters also have the right training is another difficulty for services. Services usually only run one paid training night a week for on-call firefighters. While I recognise the difficulties involved, services need to find more innovative ways to develop and maintain the skills of these firefighters. The public need to know that, regardless of whether a wholetime or on-call crew responds to an incident, the response will be of the same standard. The on-call model still needs attention to make sure it works now and in the future.



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Managers need to be able to be confident that those being deployed to emergencies are safe to work.

Many services use alternative working models because they don't have enough crew members available at on-call stations. These models include employing staff on dual-contract¹⁴ and overtime arrangements (approximately 12 percent of wholetime firefighters have dual-contracts). Only 35 percent of services regularly monitor staff secondary employment, and some services don't monitor it at all. If these arrangements aren't monitored properly – or aren't monitored at all – this model runs the risk of being inefficient at best, and unsafe at worst. Managers need to be confident that those being deployed to emergencies are safe to work. It was therefore disconcerting to find examples of staff working for long periods without a break.

This is yet another example of the need for terms and conditions and the pay model to be reformed to better reflect the work firefighters do.



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Good intentions to promote equality, diversity and inclusion aren't always successful

We found that most services were better at promoting their values. This is an aspect of operations which varied considerably across services in our first round of inspections, and led to us issuing eight areas for improvement. These have now largely (six out of eight) been addressed and every service inspected had established clearly defined values; virtually all (96 percent) of the respondents to our staff survey stated they were aware of them. Generally, we found that staff behaved consistently with their services' values and demonstrated respect for one another.

Two services took no or little action to improve equality, diversity and inclusion. Many services have acted with good intentions to promote equality, diversity and inclusion, although this hasn't always led to actual improvements being made. In our most recent public perceptions survey, respondents said that fire and rescue services should hold open days for the public and careers events for children, as well as promote the different types of roles available in services, in an effort to make services more inclusive.

In our 2021 inspections, we found a lack of training on equality, diversity and inclusion, including among managers, and a poor understanding by staff.

We continue to find evidence that fire and rescue service staff with protected characteristics, including women, aren't always given opportunities to be heard, and we still find that the number of women working in the sector is very low. The sector must work with its staff in this respect. It should take steps to get rid of the unfair barriers experienced by women and Black and other ethnic minority staff and ensure they do not suffer unlawful discrimination in the workplace.

Diversity and race equality in the fire sector continues to be woeful.

Diversity and race equality in the fire sector continues to be woeful. We have seen continued low joiner rates from groups with protected characteristics. New recruits will only be attracted by, and must be able to join, a workforce that is fair, open and inclusive. Although many services welcome a greater diversity of staff and are taking steps in this respect, they must ensure these are not just tokenistic efforts and that their actions are part of a sound strategy. Services must make sure that current staff are aware of the value of having an inclusive workforce and the benefits it can bring for the service and the community it serves.



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Future of inspection

We will continue to improve what we do and listen to what services, policy-makers and the public tell us. We will also evaluate the effect of our inspections on the sector and the degree to which services are improving as a result of our findings.

From September 2021, we have continued to inspect as part of our Round 2 inspections, which will conclude in 2022. We have reintroduced some on-site inspection activity for the remainder of these inspections.

The findings from our inspection of all 44 services will be in the 2022 *State of Fire and Rescue* report.

Conclusion

The fire and rescue services continue to be an enormous asset to our communities. In many respects, the sector's response to the pandemic has been exemplary. Services have had to adapt many aspects of how they operate as a result of the new requirements and restrictions brought in to reduce the transmission of the virus.

The dedication and expertise of the fire and rescue services have provided an invaluable source of security. But the sector faces significant obstacles that are hampering its progress. These include: rigid national terms and conditions that stop services from fully exploiting their resources to meet local needs; out-of-date working practices; a lack of diversity; and, in some respects, weaknesses in leadership development.

While improvements have been made at local and national levels, including in recent reforms, much more needs to be done. Policy-makers and legislators need to raise the priority of fire reform considerably. The service, its staff and the public deserve no less.

The fire and rescue services continue to be an enormous asset to our communities.





Part 2: Our inspections

Our inspections

This report covers the first 13 inspections of our second full cycle of all 44 fire and rescue service (FRS) inspections in England, known as our Round 2 inspections. We have divided all 44 inspections into three phases of inspection, known as 'tranches'. Tranche 1 was carried out between February and August 2021, during which we inspected the 13 services in question. We will complete Tranches 2 and 3 in the remainder of 2021 and through 2022, when we will report our findings in full.

As part of our inspection programme, we assess and make graded judgments on three principal areas, known as 'pillars'. For each FRS, we assess:

- its effectiveness;
- its efficiency; and
- how well it looks after its people.

Our assessments are designed to enable the public to see each FRS's performance, as well as how this compares with the performance of other services. In future, the public will also be able to see changes over time.



Effectiveness

We assess how effectively each FRS operates. This includes how well the service: understands its current and future risks; works to prevent fires and other risks; protects the public through the regulation of fire safety; responds to fires and other emergencies; and responds to major incidents.

Efficiency

We assess whether the FRS is affordable and providing value for money. This includes: how well the service understands and matches its resources to the risks and demands it faces; the extent to which it collaborates with others; and the sustainability of its financial plans.

People

We assess how well the FRS looks after its people. This includes: the values and culture of the service; how it trains its staff and ensures that they have the necessary skills; how it promotes fairness and diversity for its workforce; and what it is doing to develop leadership.





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The operating context

The difficulties each service continues to face vary considerably across England and can be affected by many things. These include the service's size and financial position, as well as local factors such as geography, road networks, levels of affluence and deprivation, industries and employment patterns, and – most importantly – the people who live, work and spend time there. The pandemic continues to create additional difficulties for services, their staff and communities.

Few services have mostly full-time – known as 'wholetime' – firefighters. These are in metropolitan areas and have stations that are crewed on a continuous basis, allowing them to mobilise a fire engine immediately when a call is received. Most other services use both wholetime and 'on-call' firefighters. On-call firefighters are fully trained, part-time firefighters who may have other jobs but respond to calls when summoned. These firefighters mostly crew stations that have less demand and where having a full-time crew may not represent good value for money.

Each FRS is required by the *Fire and Rescue National Framework for England*¹ to produce an integrated risk management plan (IRMP).² This plan should:

- set out the main risks in the service's area;
- show how it will use prevention, protection and response activities to prevent fires and other incidents, and mitigate the effects of risks on its communities; and
- outline how resources will be allocated.

Taken together, these and other factors can be considered the operating context of the service. We take account of this context and recognise that differing operating contexts create different needs for, and demands of, services. We have explained the operating context of each service within its service report.

We have explained the operating context of each service within its service report.

Including our pandemic inspections, this is the third time we are inspecting services.

Understanding our graded judgments

It is important to emphasise that FRSs aren't in competition with each other. Inevitably, some people may want to compare gradings to form a league table. But considering the breadth and complexity of FRS performance, while taking account of each operating context, needs a more sophisticated approach. Similarly, it is important to read beyond the headlines and consider why some services have been graded higher than others. We take into account a range of factors when giving a grade, and there is no link between larger budgets and higher grades.

The nuances are in the individual service reports on our website. In each service report, we have identified 'areas for improvement' and, in some cases, 'causes of concern'. If we consider that an aspect of a service's practice, policy or performance falls short of the expected standard, we will report this as an area for improvement. If we identify a more serious, critical or systemic shortcoming in a service's practice, policy or performance, we will report it as a cause of concern. A cause of concern will always be accompanied by one or more recommendations. The *Fire and Rescue National Framework for England* requires the fire and rescue authority receiving a recommendation to prepare, update and regularly publish an action plan detailing how it will take action. If we identify a cause of concern relating to a potential risk to public safety, we will always revisit the service to assess whether the service is taking action to address the potential risk.

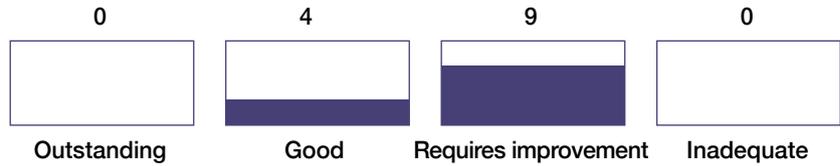
We have outlined the grades of each service against each question in the following pages. Including our pandemic inspections, this is the third time we are inspecting services. We now have a benchmark against which we can measure the 13 services inspected between February and August 2021. We don't, however, yet have the same benchmark for the remaining 31 services. As we continue to inspect the remaining services, we will be able to consider their progress and the extent to which they have made improvements.



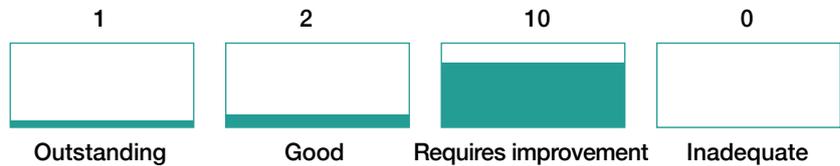
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Summary of grades

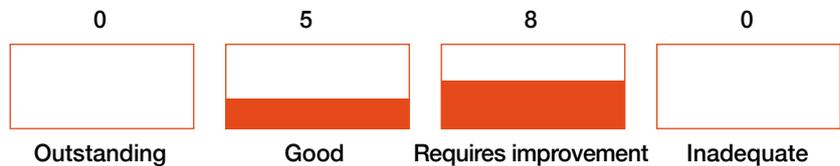
On **effectiveness**, we didn't grade any service as outstanding overall, or inadequate. We graded four as good and nine as requiring improvement.



On **efficiency**, we graded one service as outstanding, two as good and ten as requiring improvement. We didn't grade any as inadequate.



On **people**, we graded five services as good and eight as requiring improvement. We didn't grade any as outstanding or inadequate.



Our findings

The majority of the 13 services we inspected between February and August 2021 are continuing to discharge their primary obligations in respect of the safety of their communities. However, with seven causes of concern issued across our effectiveness pillar, some services need to do more in relation to prevention. Fewer than half of the services we inspected could confidently demonstrate that they are sufficiently aligning their plans and resources to mitigate risk. However, many have significantly improved how well they look after their people. We continued to find both excellent and worrying practices across services, and we hope the more positive examples provided in this report will inspire innovation and improvement throughout the sector.

We have summarised our findings from every inspection from February to August 2021 over the next few pages, divided into our three inspection pillars of effectiveness, efficiency and people.



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Our judgments

| Service |  Effectiveness | How well does the FRS understand the risk of fire and other emergencies? |
|---------------------------------|--|--|
| | Judgment | Judgment |
| Avon | Requires improvement | Requires improvement |
| Bedfordshire | Good | Good |
| Buckinghamshire | Requires improvement | Requires improvement |
| Cambridgeshire | Good | Good |
| Cheshire | Good | Good |
| Cornwall | Requires improvement | Requires improvement |
| Greater Manchester | Requires improvement | Good |
| Hereford & Worcester | Requires improvement | Requires improvement |
| Lincolnshire | Requires improvement | Requires improvement |
| Merseyside | Good | Good |
| Northumberland | Requires improvement | Requires improvement |
| Surrey | Requires improvement | Requires improvement |
| Warwickshire | Requires improvement | Requires improvement |

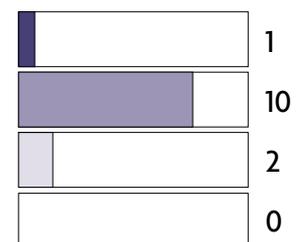
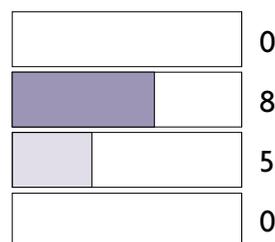
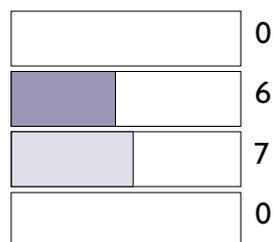
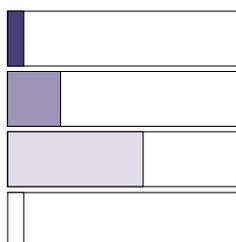
Totals

| | | | | |
|-----------------------------|--|---|---|---|
| Outstanding |  | 0 |  | 0 |
| Good |  | 4 |  | 5 |
| Requires improvement |  | 9 |  | 8 |
| Inadequate |  | 0 |  | 0 |

Agenda Item 14

Appendix A

| How effective is the FRS at preventing fires and other risks? | How effective is the FRS at protecting the public through the regulation of fire safety? | How effective is the FRS at responding to fires and other emergencies? | How well prepared is the FRS to respond to major and multi-agency incidents? |
|---|--|--|--|
| Judgment | Judgment | Judgment | Judgment |
| Requires improvement | Requires improvement | Good | Good |
| Requires improvement | Requires improvement | Good | Good |
| Requires improvement | Requires improvement | Good | Good |
| Good | Good | Good | Good |
| Good | Good | Good | Good |
| Requires improvement | Requires improvement | Requires improvement | Good |
| Requires improvement | Requires improvement | Good | Requires improvement |
| Requires improvement | Good | Requires improvement | Good |
| Requires improvement | Requires improvement | Good | Good |
| Outstanding | Good | Good | Outstanding |
| Requires improvement | Good | Requires improvement | Good |
| Good | Good | Requires improvement | Requires improvement |
| Inadequate | Requires improvement | Requires improvement | Good |



Our judgments

Service

Avon

Bedfordshire

Buckinghamshire

Cambridgeshire

Cheshire

Cornwall

Greater Manchester

Hereford & Worcester

Lincolnshire

Merseyside

Northumberland

Surrey

Warwickshire

£ Efficiency

Judgment

Requires improvement

Requires improvement

Requires improvement

Good

Good

Requires improvement

Requires improvement

Requires improvement

Requires improvement

Outstanding

Requires improvement

Requires improvement

Requires improvement

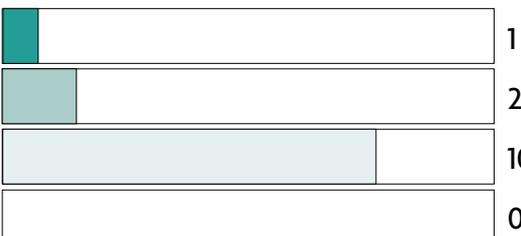
Totals

Outstanding

Good

Requires improvement

Inadequate



How well does the FRS use resources to manage risk?

Judgment

Requires improvement

Requires improvement

Requires improvement

Good

Good

Requires improvement

Requires improvement

Requires improvement

Requires improvement

Outstanding

Requires improvement

Requires improvement

Requires improvement

How well is the FRS securing an affordable way of managing the risk of fire and other risks now and in the future?

Judgment

Good

Good

Requires improvement

Requires improvement

Good

Requires improvement

Good

Requires improvement

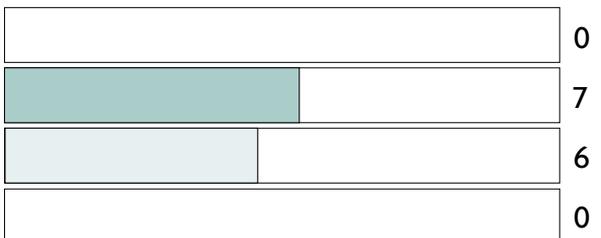
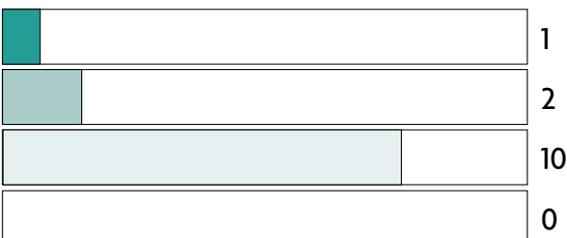
Good

Good

Requires improvement

Good

Requires improvement



Our judgments

People

How well does the FRS promote its values and culture?

Service

Judgment

Judgment

Avon

Requires improvement

Good

Bedfordshire

Good

Good

Buckinghamshire

Requires improvement

Requires improvement

Cambridgeshire

Good

Good

Cheshire

Good

Good

Cornwall

Requires improvement

Good

Greater Manchester

Good

Good

Hereford & Worcester

Requires improvement

Requires improvement

Lincolnshire

Requires improvement

Good

Merseyside

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Northumberland

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Requires improvement

Surrey

Requires improvement

Good

Warwickshire

Requires improvement

Requires improvement

Totals

Outstanding



Good



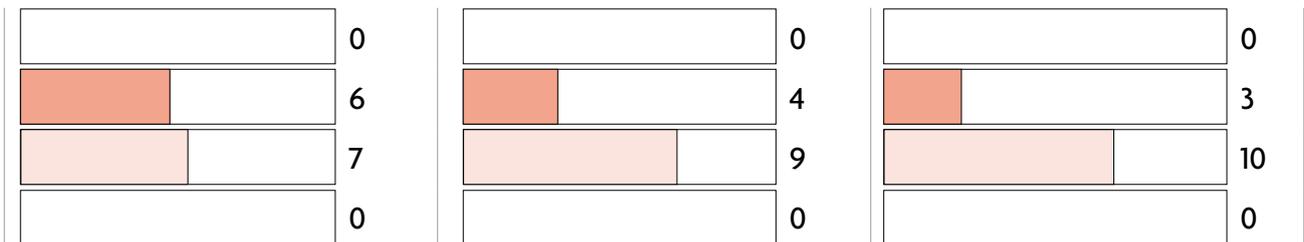
Requires improvement



Inadequate



| How well trained and skilled are FRS staff? | How well does the FRS ensure fairness and diversity? | How well does the FRS develop leadership and capability? |
|---|--|--|
| Judgment | Judgment | Judgment |
| Requires improvement | Requires improvement | Requires improvement |
| Good | Good | Good |
| Requires improvement | Requires improvement | Requires improvement |
| Good | Good | Good |
| Good | Good | Requires improvement |
| Requires improvement | Requires improvement | Requires improvement |
| Good | Good | Requires improvement |
| Requires improvement | Requires improvement | Requires improvement |
| Requires improvement | Requires improvement | Requires improvement |
| Good | Requires improvement | Good |
| Requires improvement | Requires improvement | Requires improvement |
| Good | Requires improvement | Requires improvement |
| Requires improvement | Requires improvement | Requires improvement |



Effectiveness

In this pillar, we ask five questions:

1. How well does the FRS understand the risk of fire and other emergencies?
2. How effective is the FRS at preventing fire and other risks?
3. How effective is the FRS at protecting the public through the regulation of fire safety?
4. How effective is the FRS at responding to fires and other emergencies?
5. How well prepared is the FRS to respond to major and multi-agency incidents?



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Our findings

Most services are prioritising protection work

When services carry out protection work, they comply with the provisions established in the Regulatory Reform (Fire Safety) Order 2005 which is concerned with the safety of premises from the risk of fire. This includes working with businesses to educate and support them in connection with the risks of fire in their buildings. If necessary, they use enforcement powers to require that premises are made compliant with fire safety legislation.

This is different from prevention work, which services must also carry out. This type of work focuses on the people most at risk of fire. Preventing incidents occurring in the first place is the best and most cost-effective outcome. Services carry out a range of prevention activities, such as safe-and-well visits in people's homes, and educate the public on matters relating to road, water and fire safety.

In the first round of inspections, which we carried out between June 2018 and August 2019, we had material concerns about the extent to which services were adequately prioritising protection work. There had been an observable underinvestment over a prolonged period, as well as a reduction in the number of specialist staff and fire safety audits.³

Services are responsible for enforcing fire safety legislation in relevant premises. Regrettably, our inspections revealed a reduction in the level of enforcement and prosecution work in many services. Most services didn't have enough qualified fire safety inspectors. These problems were made worse by a lack of focus and prioritisation of protection in services' IRMPs.

The improvements we have seen so far indicate that the sector has responded positively to our concerns.

Although we have inspected fewer than a third of services during our 2021 inspections, the improvements we have seen so far indicate that the sector has responded positively to our concerns. This is reflected by the overall improved grades we have given to the 13 services in relation to their effectiveness in protecting the public through the regulation of fire safety.

Avon FRS was the only service whose protection work we considered to be inadequate during Round 1. Since then, it has made material efforts to improve, and in Round 2 we graded it as requiring improvement. Northumberland and Surrey FRSs have had their grades lifted to good. And although their grades have remained the same, we have observed significant improvements in both Buckinghamshire and Merseyside FRSs. These improvements include increasing the numbers of fire safety inspectors, developing their risk-based inspection programmes⁴ – which are used to determine which buildings should be prioritised for full fire safety audits, such as hospitals, care homes and some high-rise residential buildings – and ensuring that protection activity is a main strategic priority. This increased focus on protection activity must be maintained.

Most services have increased their number of fire safety inspectors; as a result, they have more capacity to carry out fire safety audits at high-risk premises. On 31 March 2021, there were 221 members of staff working in protection roles in the 13 services we inspected, which means that there were 44 more members of staff than in 2020. Between 31 March 2019 and 31 March 2021, the median number of staff working in protection roles in services rose from 12.5 to 14. Most of the services we inspected have reviewed their risk-based inspection programmes and made improvements to ensure they are auditing high-risk premises regularly. We also found that many services are responding more quickly to planning applications from local authority building controls (9 out of 13 services had responded to more planning applications within the required timeframe than they had in previous years).

All services have also adopted the *Competency Framework for Fire Safety Regulators*,⁵ which was published by the National Fire Chiefs Council (NFCC). It establishes the required level of skills, knowledge and understanding for a fire safety inspector to be considered competent.

The Home Office has provided the sector with additional funding for investment in staff, training and technology. This funding is also intended to be used to help services cope with their additional workloads following the Grenfell Tower fire and the recommendations made in Phase 1 of the inquiry.⁶ This is making a difference, but it takes time to train and develop confident and competent fire safety inspectors, and it takes a material effort to retain them. It will be some time before the numbers of fire safety inspectors reach the numbers required in England.

We welcome the Fire Standards Board's new protection standard, which was published in September 2021.⁷ This standard is designed to make services more consistent in their protection work, improve the quality of that work, and reduce the risks of fires starting in buildings. Protection must continue to be a priority.



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Building risk review work is on track

The building risk review programme is a government-funded scheme to review the safety of all high-rise residential buildings in England by the end of 2021. At the time of our 2021 inspections, the 13 services we inspected told us that they had either completed this work already or were on track to do so.

In July 2021, the Building Safety Bill⁸ was introduced in the House of Commons. The bill establishes how high-rise residential buildings should be constructed and maintained, and provides for the creation of a new building safety regulator. The regulator will be set up by and form part of the Health and Safety Executive; it is currently operating as a shadow body. It will monitor compliance with and enforce the legislation. Once fully operational, we expect the regulator to place additional demands on services' already stretched protection teams.

Services must carry out careful workforce planning to make sure these potential additional demands don't have a detrimental effect on their other work. This includes their risk-based inspection programmes and other statutory responsibilities.



Services aren't giving prevention work sufficient priority

In our Round 1 inspections, 11 of the 13 services had at least one area for improvement in respect of their prevention work. These services also needed to do more to improve how they established who was at greatest risk of fire and other emergencies. They also needed to prioritise prevention work and make sure that they were meeting the needs of those who were most vulnerable. All these services also needed to improve how they evaluated which interventions were most effective at helping those in need.

In our 2021 inspections, we were disappointed to find that many services hadn't made enough progress to address these areas for improvement; more than half needed further work. In three cases, we were troubled by the lack of progress made and have issued a cause of concern in this respect to each of the services in question. We will monitor progress made by these services closely.

An effective fire and rescue service must give a sufficient level of priority to its three principal responsibilities: prevention, protection and response. Neither one should be prioritised at the expense of the other; the cost to public safety is too great.

Some services are carrying out unjustifiably low levels of prevention work.

Levels of prevention activity are declining, and targeting is poor

Some services are carrying out unjustifiably low levels of prevention work; this does not reflect the level of priority set out in their IRMPs. In the year ending 31 March 2020, an average of 12 home safety checks per 1,000 people were carried out by the 13 services we inspected. In the year ending 31 March 2021, this number dropped to four. While the pandemic was largely the reason, it wasn't always. In some services, we found that they had little or no adequate strategy in place to carry out prevention work.

We were encouraged to see that some services have continued to make improvements to the ways of working they introduced in response to the pandemic. These have included securing access to more comprehensive health data to help those who are most vulnerable, better use of technology to prioritise those individuals who would benefit most from meeting face to face, and assisting with vaccine clinics.

In 9 of the 13 services we inspected, we recommended that they proactively improve the way they identify and target members of the public who are most at risk from fire. It is essential, particularly when face-to-face prevention activity is carried out, that services are able to reach those who are most vulnerable.

It is unacceptable that some fire and rescue services don't take a sufficiently targeted approach to their prevention work. While some services rely solely on referrals from other organisations, others wait for members of the public to get in touch with them for support. Services can and should use the range of technology available so they can work with other organisations to establish who are the most vulnerable and target their resources accordingly.

Evaluation remains a weakness for the sector

Many services are still not doing enough to evaluate their prevention activities. Some of these activities include home fire safety checks (HFSCs). During an HFSC, a service visits a person's home to give advice on how to reduce the risk of fire. Safe-and-well visits are a more comprehensive type of HFSC, during which a service will provide advice on how to protect the home from fire, as well as general health advice. They will also refer people for specialist support if needed.

We found that services carry out their prevention activity in different ways. Most of the services we inspected had insufficient knowledge of what are the most effective interventions to mitigate the risk of fire. And only 3 of the 13 services we inspected (Cambridgeshire, Cheshire and Merseyside) had adequately evaluated their prevention activity. The remaining ten services we inspected had carried out either no or limited evaluation. This is not a new problem; we drew attention to it during our first round of inspections. More needs to be done and more urgently.



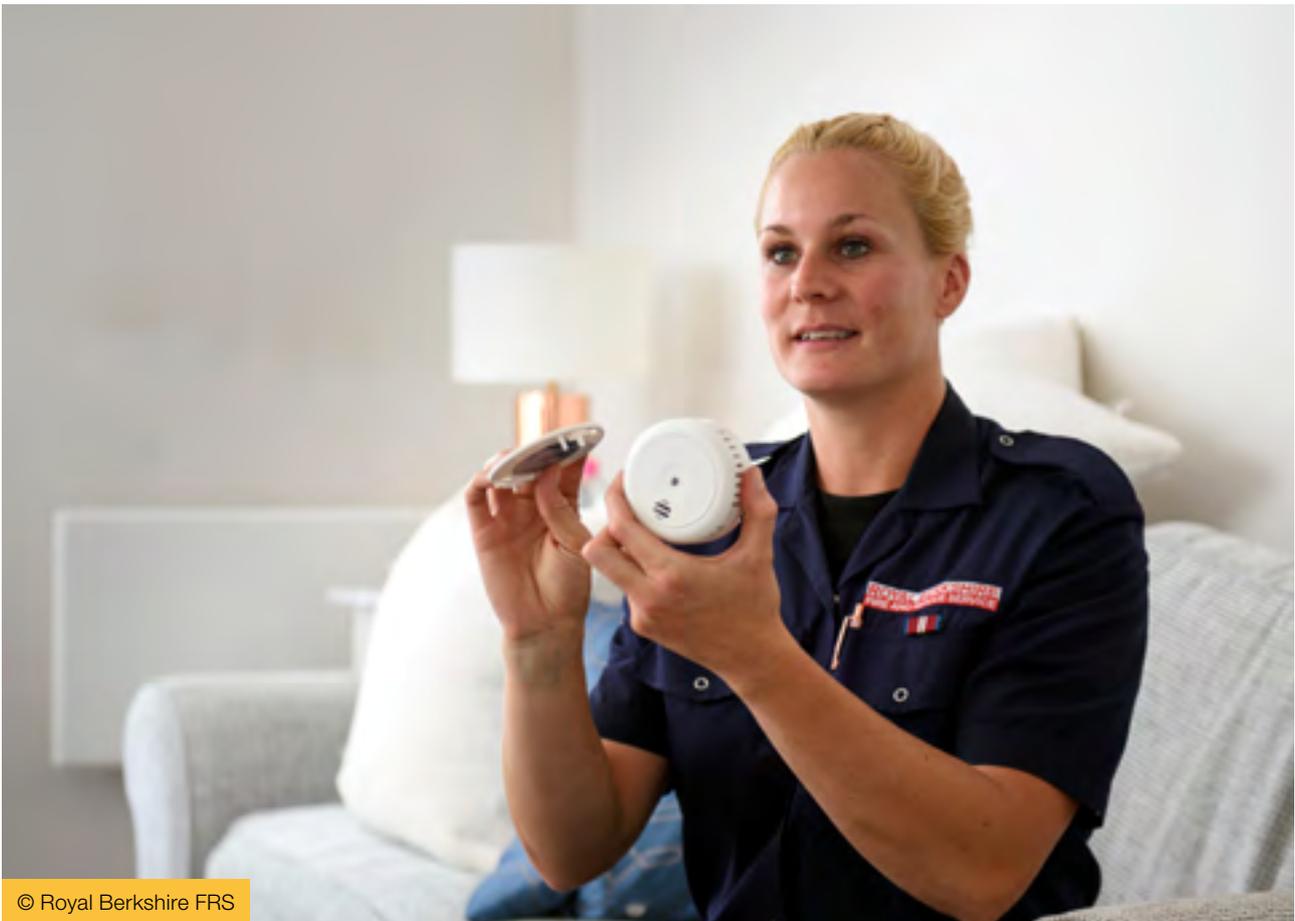
When fire and rescue staff carry out prevention work, they often come face to face with the most vulnerable in society.

The NFCC is currently designing a method that services can use to evaluate objectively their prevention, protection and response activities, although it will not be ready for quite some time. Services must do more to make sure that information is available to their prevention, protection and response functions. They must also do more to make sure that each function is aware of how their actions could be beneficial when the service discharges one or both of its other functions. For example, firefighters responding to a house fire should be able to access information gathered during a prevention visit that explains if and how the occupant might be vulnerable and in need of help.

Safeguarding awareness has improved

When fire and rescue staff carry out prevention work, they often come face to face with the most vulnerable in society. It is therefore essential that they have the confidence to deal with those who are vulnerable and that they are aware of what can make a person vulnerable. Their awareness should go beyond matters relating to fire and should extend to problems such as human trafficking, domestic abuse and radicalisation. While we wouldn't expect fire services to have the skills to resolve these problems, they should have robust arrangements in place to recognise vulnerability and be able to refer people to the relevant authorities.

We are therefore encouraged by the fact that all but one of the services we inspected have good safeguarding arrangements in place. This is a significant improvement from our first full round of inspections. Avon, Bedfordshire, Greater Manchester, Hereford and Worcester, and Surrey FRSs have addressed the areas for improvement we gave them relating to safeguarding. However, we encourage all services to provide safeguarding awareness training to all staff, and not only to frontline firefighters and specialist prevention teams who are most frequently in contact with the public.



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Proactive action is being taken to tackle fire-setting behaviour

Working with people who are more likely to engage in fire-setting behaviour is an effective way of reducing the likelihood of their entering into the criminal justice system as arsonists. They are often vulnerable young people with complex ranges of needs.

We are therefore encouraged to see that all but one of the services we inspected have good arrangements in place to work with other organisations to identify and rehabilitate these individuals at an early stage.

At present, many services have difficulty sufficiently understanding the primary risk factors in their communities.

Work is being done at national level to improve prevention work

Despite the general lack of emphasis on prevention activities by services, we are pleased that national work is underway to promote improvements. In July 2021, the Fire Standards Board published a prevention standard⁹ which is designed to help services take a consistent approach to their prevention work and to help them educate their communities to adopt safer behaviours, reduce community-related risks and work collaboratively with others where appropriate.

The NFCC has also published guidance¹⁰ which encourages services to focus on people in their prevention activities. The guidance is designed to support services to take a more standardised and evidence-based approach to prevention. Once services have adopted the standard and made the NFCC's guidance part of their prevention work, they should be better placed to take effective action at the appropriate time.

But more should be done by the sector to standardise the data sets used by different services. Services should be able to plan their prevention work on the basis of comparable data. At present, many services have difficulty sufficiently understanding the primary risk factors in their communities. In some services, there is an unnecessary duplication of work. Services should also use their prevention data to assist with their protection and response planning.

Services are well prepared to respond to routine incidents

Responding to fires and other emergencies continues to be a strength of the sector. Most services we inspected had appropriate arrangements in place that enabled them to respond to emergency incidents efficiently and effectively.

In Round 1, we were concerned that many services didn't update their mobile data terminals (MDTs) in fire engines regularly enough. This meant that firefighters couldn't always access the most up-to-date risk information when they went to emergencies. Some services had MDTs that were unreliable. So far during our 2021 inspections, we have found that many firefighters now have better access to risk information when they attend emergencies. We are pleased that many services have taken steps to make these improvements.

We are encouraged to see an improvement in the availability of trained and competent incident commanders who can deal with a wide range of emergencies. In the 13 services we inspected, the proportion of incident commanders who were trained and assessed increased from 93 percent on 31 March 2020 to 99 percent on 31 March 2021. The proportion who are accredited nationally is 92 percent. National guidance says that services should assess the continued competence of incident commanders every two years. This should include refresher training and an assessment.

Fire and rescue services don't take a sufficiently common approach to explaining to the public how many fire engines are required and how long it takes to respond to an incident. And with no national response standards in place, there isn't a way for the public to compare their service with others.

Responding to fires and other emergencies continues to be a strength of the sector.

The NFCC, through its 'Definition of Risk'¹¹ project, has begun work to provide a risk rating for each service on the basis of its response to a range of common incidents. We are interested to see how services use this tool in the future to mitigate the risks they face.

We are concerned that some services cannot sufficiently assure themselves that their control rooms are adequately set up to handle multiple fire survival guidance calls or are able to adequately exchange real-time risk information with incident commanders.¹² It is important that control rooms are resourced appropriately, and that services have fallback arrangements in place. Services must also make sure that control staff are well trained and equipped with the technology they need to work effectively. All too often we see that control staff aren't sufficiently included in training plans, and that support is prioritised for their response colleagues instead.



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Other services have used technology to improve arrangements in their control room. For example, Bedfordshire FRS control staff use technology effectively to pinpoint the location of callers and to access live images from incidents. They use this information to inform their assessments of risk and response. The service can also access a live video feed once they have had permission from the caller. Footage from the feed can also be passed on to incident commanders and the other emergency services.

More needs to be done by services to attract on-call firefighters and make best use of them.

More needs to be done to improve the on-call crewing model

We continue to be worried that the sector has not been able to significantly improve the recruitment, retention and availability of on-call firefighters. These are firefighters who generally provide fire cover in remote and rural areas. They respond from their home addresses or their primary places of employment. The requirement to be within a set number of minutes away from a fire station (usually five) to respond to incidents promptly makes it difficult to attract and retain these staff.

During the pandemic, the availability of on-call firefighters improved when the country was in lockdown. Many on-call firefighters were furloughed from their primary employments. But the sector has not found a longer-term, more sustainable solution.

During our 2021 inspections, we found that some services have been more creative and flexible in relation to their use of on-call firefighters. For example, Buckinghamshire FRS uses its on-call staff to respond to larger incidents that are further away from on-call fire stations, instead of using them to respond to local incidents. This means on-call staff do not need to be immediately available to respond to an incident.

On-call firefighters are important: they are used to provide additional support when multiple fire engines are required to respond to an incident. But more needs to be done by services to attract on-call firefighters and make best use of them.

We are worried about the resilience of the marauding terrorist attack arrangements in place at some services.

Services are well prepared to respond to major and multi-agency incidents

In our first inspections, we found that services were well prepared to respond to major and multi-agency incidents. This is one of the sector's strengths; all services have good arrangements in place to work with other emergency services and organisations such as utility companies and local authorities. They are also good at helping other fire and rescue services and will respond to incidents outside their own fire authority borders.

All services and firefighters must be prepared to respond to a marauding terrorist attack (MTA). But we are worried about the resilience of the MTA arrangements in place at some services. Services must make sure that they are able to respond, quickly and effectively, to an MTA. Their procedures for responding to an MTA must be understood by all staff and properly tested. Currently, not all services have in place sufficiently robust arrangements to pay for this capability. Some services use overtime while others resort to additional responsibility allowances.

Responding to major incidents of terrorism is part of the role of the firefighter and is set out in the 'grey book' (the *National Joint Council for Local Authorities' Fire and Rescue Services Scheme of Conditions of Service*¹³). The NFCC has confirmed that fire and rescue services will be part of the emergency service response to all types of terrorist incident. In January 2020, we recommended that the Home Office should clearly set out its expectations of fire and rescue services and what the responsibilities of a firefighter are. This recommendation is now urgent as there is too much variation in the ways services approach establishing and paying for this capability.

Local resilience forums (LRFs) are made up of representatives from local public services. They are responsible for planning and preparing for localised incidents and catastrophic emergencies. During our pandemic inspections, LRF members told us that they appreciated the valuable contributions made by fire and rescue services.

The Joint Emergency Services Interoperability Principles (JESIP) establish that the emergency services must work together as effectively as possible during major, serious and catastrophic incidents and events. In our Round 1 inspections, we found that supervisory managers who command smaller-scale incidents didn't understand the principles as well as middle and senior managers. Following our latest inspections, we are pleased to see that most of the supervisory managers we spoke with now have a better understanding of the principles.

Cross-border training is still below pre-pandemic levels

In Round 1, we found that services weren't doing enough joint exercises with neighbouring services to make sure their equipment and ways of working were aligned. As might be expected, fewer cross-border training exercises took place as a result of the restrictions put in place during the pandemic.



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In the year ending 31 March 2020, a total of 21 joint training exercises with neighbouring services were carried out by one service (Hereford and Worcester FRS); however, some services didn't carry out any at all. In the same period, on average, services carried out ten joint training exercises.

In the year ending 31 March 2021, the average number of joint training exercises dropped to 5.6 – this was mainly a result of pandemic restrictions. In the Round 1 Tranche 2 staff survey, 75 percent of firefighters and specialist staff told us that they hadn't participated in training or exercising with neighbouring services in the past 12 months. Our expectation is that cross-border training will increase as the pandemic restrictions are lifted.

Services disseminate what they have learned widely

We are pleased that services are learning from significant emergencies and that they are disseminating what they have learned widely. Two platforms are used for this purpose: the joint operational learning platform, which is used by all emergency responder organisations, and the national operational learning platform, which is used by all fire and rescue services in the United Kingdom.

But we were disappointed to find that, in all but 4 of the 13 services we inspected, there was a need to improve the ways services debrief and learn from routine emergency incidents.

Home Office data shows in the year ending March 2021, 518,263 incidents were attended by fire and rescue services. This was a 7 percent decrease compared with the previous year (558,013), a 2 percent decrease compared with five years ago (529,674) and a 20 percent decrease compared with ten years ago (647,362). As we see a steady decrease in the number of emergency incidents attended by fire services, it is essential that the lessons learned from the incidents that do occur are widely disseminated within and by each service, and that improvements to operational preparedness are made as a result.

There is still an inconsistent approach to identifying and mitigating risk

In Round 1, we found too much variation in how services identified and mitigated risk. The content and quality of IRMPs and how services consulted their communities on their IRMPs also varied significantly. In our most recent public perceptions survey, 14 percent of respondents (1,981) said they didn't know what their fire and rescue services should be responsible for other than extinguishing fires. We have not seen any significant change during our 2021 inspections.

In May 2021, the Fire Standards Board published a standard¹⁴ on community risk management planning, which is the process a service follows to assess foreseeable risks and decide how to best use its resources to mitigate them. The standard was published during our 2021 inspections, so the services we inspected haven't yet incorporated it into their plans. We encourage services to adopt the standard as quickly as possible, as it will help the sector to meet our June 2019 recommendation that services should be more consistent in how they identify and determine risk as part of the IRMP process. We encourage the NFCC to provide a set of tools to further support services. It is important that the standard is applied consistently throughout the country.

In many of the services we recently inspected, prevention, protection and response work continue to take place in isolation. These principal areas of work are generally not sufficiently co-ordinated with each other to mitigate the main risks set out in IRMPs.

In our staff survey, 71 percent of those surveyed told us that they felt their service was extremely or very effective at identifying foreseeable risks faced by the community. We found that some services have made improvements in their approach to identifying and mitigating risk. But we are disappointed that too many services have not made any adequate progress since Round 1. These services have not acted sufficiently on the specific areas for improvement we gave them during their first inspection.

In many of the services we recently inspected, prevention, protection and response work continue to take place in isolation.

Local risk must be understood.

Data used by services to build risk profiles varies too much

Services use a range of data to build their risk profiles and to produce their IRMPs. This includes historical incident data, public health data and commercially available consumer data. But services use different data sets, and often the data isn't used effectively in their prevention, protection and response work. This includes the work they do to make sure their home fire safety visits are targeted at the right people, and to decide on the rationale for risk-based inspection programmes and where fire stations should be located.

There will always need to be some variation in the data used by services. Local risk must be understood, and this includes identifying high-impact but low-likelihood emergencies, such as train crashes, terrorist attacks and emergencies at nuclear power sites. But most data used is common to all services. This includes historical incident data, the locations of people most at risk from fire, and the locations of the highest risk buildings regulated by fire safety legislation. Services could be more efficient by making their data sets available to one another.

In its 'Definition of Risk' project, the NFCC has begun work to make sure that services use data more consistently. One aim of the project is to provide a comparable view of risk in each service by drawing on the same types of data. This will allow individual services to then consider and compare how efficiently they are allocating resources to prevention, protection and response.

Some services need to improve how they collect and disseminate risk information

During our 2021 inspections, we examined in detail the range of risk information that was collected and passed on to firefighters, incident commanders and control room staff. This is an area where we have placed great emphasis, following the recommendations made in the Grenfell Tower Inquiry's Phase 1 report.

We were pleased to find that most services were collecting good-quality risk information, including for high-risk and high-rise buildings. But we are concerned that some services haven't sufficiently prioritised making sure up-to-date risk information is available for firefighters, incident commanders and control room staff.

Disappointingly, in some services, we also found that control room staff didn't have immediate access to the same risk information available to incident commanders at the incident in question. A lack of consistent risk information could very well materially lower the quality of fire survival guidance provided by control room staff to people who may be trapped in a fire. And it could have an adverse effect on communication and co-ordination between the control room and incident commanders. This puts the public at unnecessary risk of harm.



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Efficiency

In this pillar, we ask two questions:

1. How well does the FRS use its resources to manage risk?
2. How well is the FRS securing an affordable way of managing the risk of fire and other risks, now and in the future?



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Our findings

Services are mitigating financial risks

Most services have a sound understanding of what financial difficulties they are likely to face in the future. We have seen some realistic assumptions made in respect of budgets, as well as examples of scenario planning in service plans and investment in future innovation. For example, Cheshire FRS has developed different scenarios to respond to unanticipated risks. It considers the wider external environment and carries out some scenario planning, while taking into account matters such as government funding, business rates and pay for future spending reductions. All services need to follow suit if they are to cope with future financial pressures.

Financial planning scenarios and future risks considered by other services include changes in pension settlements, future levels of council tax precepts, business rates, inflation and future pay increases for staff. Many services have also made plans that take into account the Government's comprehensive spending review.

But some services only produce financial plans for the year ahead. Their plans are reactive rather than proactive and make immediate short-term rather than long-term financial decisions. For example, one service's recent IRMP action plans have focused more on achieving immediate and short-term savings rather than on identifying and managing risk.

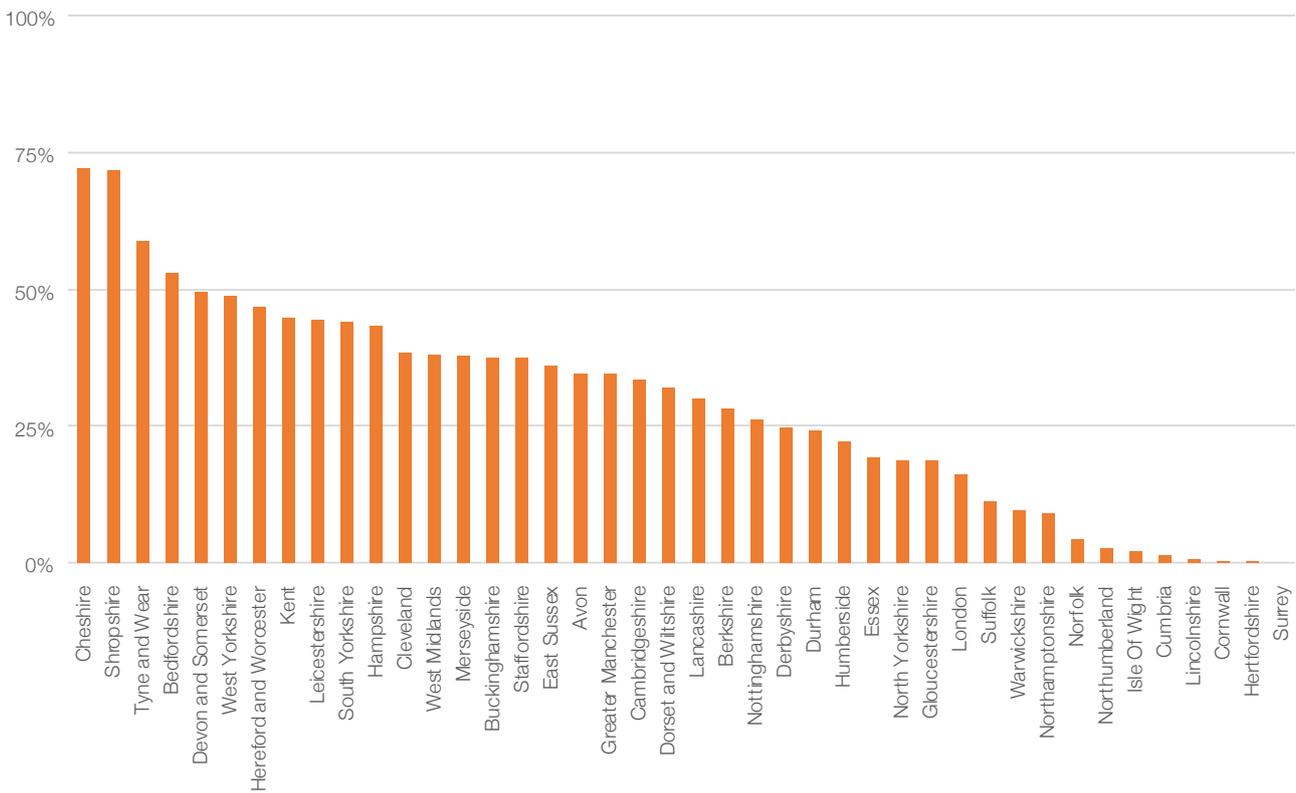
While short-term funding settlements are unhelpful for longer-term planning, these services should try to understand the future financial pressures they may face. Without doing so, they will not be able to take measures to adequately mitigate their main or significant financial risks.

Some services only produce financial plans for the year ahead.

Some services rely too much on their reserves to support revenue budgets, rather than use this money productively to support new ways of working. One service’s plan for its reserves is particularly unclear and unsustainable. The reserves will shortly be depleted and it is unlikely that the service will be able to invest in future capital projects in fleet, estates and technology.

Services have different levels of reserves, and they don’t all use them in the same way. The reason why services have different levels of reserves can be partially explained by the difference in governance models.

Figure 1: Reserves and provisions as a percentage of total expenditure 1 April 2019 to 31 March 2020

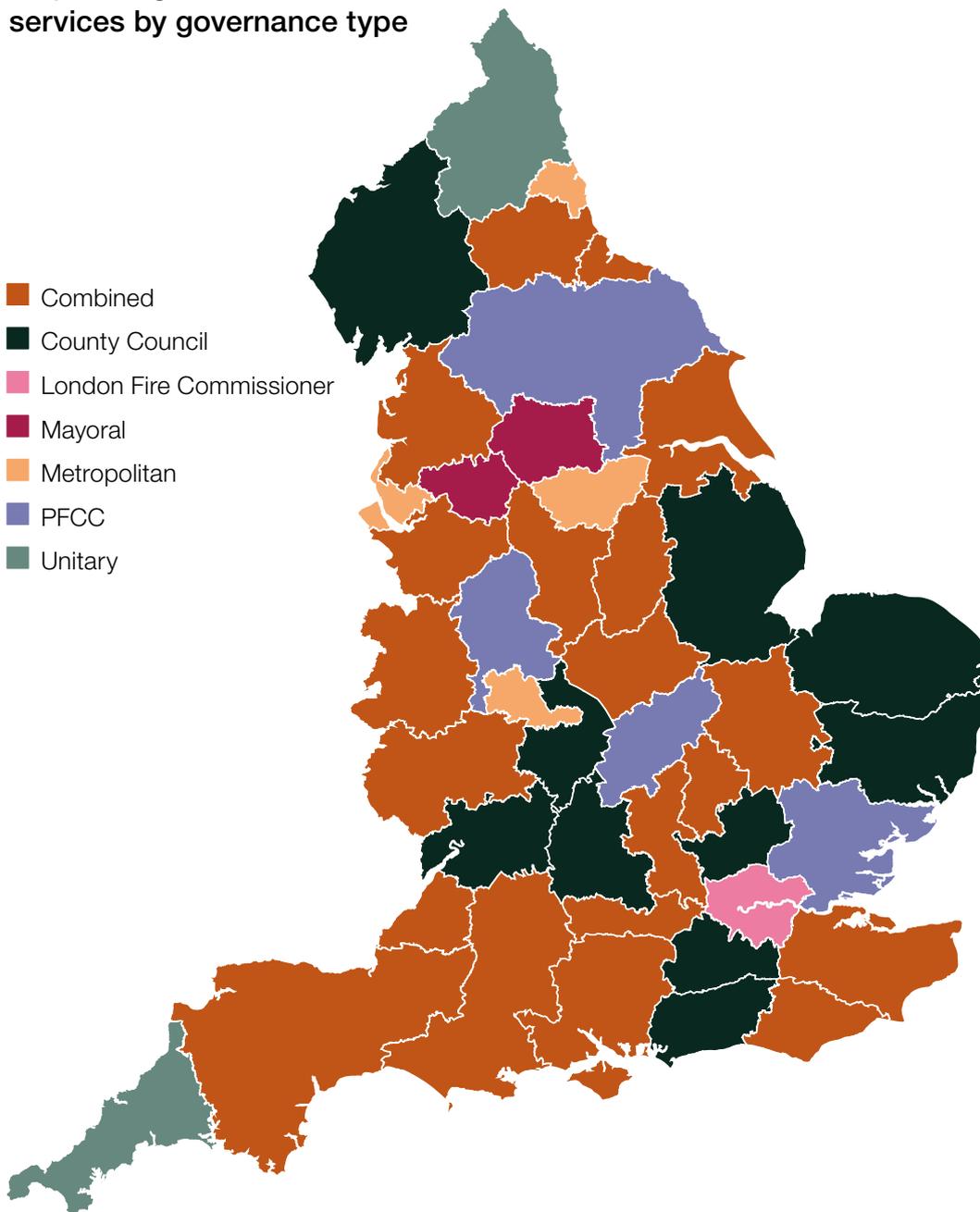


Source:: Annual financial data returns to Chartered Institute of Public Finance and Accountancy

Note: Data is not available for all services

This variation in governance can make financial comparisons between services difficult. While combined¹⁵ council and metropolitan services have specific budgets, it can be difficult to disaggregate the budget for the fire and rescue service from the budget for the larger organisation. Out of the 44 fire and rescue services in England, 24 are combined council or metropolitan, 13 are county council or unitary, 4 are PFCCs, 2 are mayoral, of which London has a separate governance structure called the London Fire Commissioner.

Map of England fire and rescue services by governance type





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Services are making use of new ways of working

Many services have introduced positive changes to their working practices. This has been partly out of necessity as a result of the pandemic. But other changes have been made to improve the effectiveness and efficiency of services.

During the pandemic, many services quickly adapted many aspects of how they worked in order to enable staff to work from home. Some services plan to keep certain arrangements in place to allow for flexible working. In some services, staff in protection roles have carried out remote fire safety audits for businesses from their desktops. And some services have continued to provide training to staff virtually.

Buckinghamshire FRS has introduced a 'flexi firefighter contract', which enables staff to work more flexible shift patterns. Surrey FRS has reviewed the crewing models it uses to make sure appropriate numbers of staff are available when needed. Overtime is now being used far less to maintain fire engine availability.

During the 2019/20 financial year, £14.2 million was spent on ICT by services. This represented 9.1 percent of all capital expenditure, although this varied quite considerably across services. Despite this, we continue to find numerous examples of ineffective ICT structures which hamper staff productivity and the ability of services to provide effective fire safety. We are disappointed that, in some cases, problems with technology that we identified in our last inspection have not been resolved. This is particularly troubling considering that some services didn't give a sufficiently clear explanation of how they were intending to replace and update their ICT infrastructure.

In the services which have given us most cause for concern about their protection work, we have also found that they have unreliable ICT systems. For a service to promote fire safety effectively, it must be able to risk assess, plan and carry out audits, and maintain robust records of the buildings in its local area. It must also be able to easily disseminate risk information within the service and with local authorities and organisations.

Many services have introduced positive changes to their working practices.

These services have ICT systems that are difficult to retrieve information from, unwieldy to use and often aren't connected to other risk databases. This isn't satisfactory. As a result, staff find it difficult to use their time productively and to determine how useful are the audits that have been done.

Some services do actively exploit the opportunities arising from changes in technology. For example, Cambridgeshire FRS has improved the efficiency and effectiveness of its asset management system. Staff use scanners and tablet computers when carrying out equipment and fire engine checks, and when maintaining inventories. As a result of these automated processes, staff are spending less time on administration work.

More needs to be done to make sure workforces are productive

Overall, progress made by fire and rescue services to make sure that their workforces are productive is slow and limited.

Of the 13 services we inspected, we found that only 4 were improving the productivity of their workforces. For example, Cheshire FRS is reviewing some existing shift patterns and expanding its fleet of rapid response rescue units to all primary on-call fire stations to improve the availability of its staff. Merseyside FRS monitors the performance of each fire station and what its firefighters do.

Ineffective and inefficient ICT systems undermine some services' attempts to improve their productivity. During the initial stages of the pandemic, one service allocated periods of time to its staff during which they could access the service's ICT system remotely. However, this meant that they could only access the system at specific times of the day, and some members of staff told us that, at times, they had to work outside their contracted working hours – in the evenings or at weekends – to access the system. Some services could use firefighter time more productively by using them to help with prevention and protection work.

Resources aren't always aligned to risk

In their IRMPs, services establish what foreseeable risks they face and how they will allocate their resources between prevention, protection and response to mitigate those risks. In our 2021 inspections, we found that some services weren't able to adequately demonstrate that their budget and resource allocation were aligned to their IRMPs.

For example, one service reduced the number of staff in its prevention team. This was done to save money rather than to reflect reduced community risk. Other services allocated resources on the basis of previous funding allocations or historical information. And, in one case, a service couldn't guarantee that it had enough resources to meet the priorities in its IRMP.

Too many services have plans which aren't consistent with the risks and priorities in their IRMPs. This is significantly hindering their efficiency.

Too many services have plans which aren't consistent with the risks and priorities in their IRMPs.



Some services rely too much on dual contracts and overtime to maintain operational response cover.

Many services can't fully cope

In Round 1, we found that, as budgets and staffing levels had been reduced, operational response was protected at the expense of prevention and protection. The majority of services have allocated more staff and funding to protection, but most services still don't have enough fire safety inspectors to carry out fire safety audits and other protection work. We are particularly worried by the reduction in the number of prevention visits, which are now below pre-pandemic levels.

Some services rely too much on dual contracts and overtime to maintain operational response cover. In some services, staff need to work extra hours or carry out multiple functions. However, some positive steps have been taken by some services. For example, Bedfordshire FRS is making more effective use of on-call firefighters to cover staffing shortfalls at wholetime fire stations.

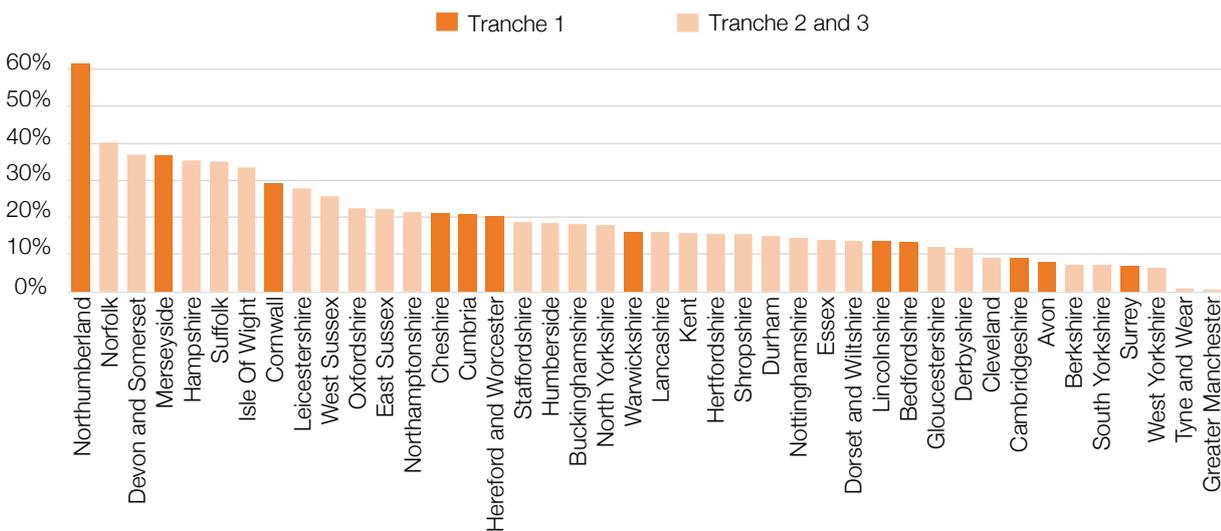
We are concerned that most services don't have sufficient capacity and capability to make the changes they need to improve their digital technology. We saw examples of staff having to use multiple ICT systems or programmes to access the information they needed to carry out their protection work. In one service, staff said that the ICT programme they use is unreliable and that it makes them much less efficient because they have to double-check everything manually.

Services need to make sure that they can make the changes required to enable them to operate more efficiently and effectively. They also need to make sure they invest enough money and have enough skilled people to bring in the ICT improvements they need.

Services need to better manage the use of dual contracts and overtime

Many services resort to using alternative working models when they have shortages of crews available at on-call stations; these include dual contracts and overtime arrangements. As at March 2020, 21.7 percent of wholetime firefighters had second jobs and 12.1 percent had dual contracts with the same service. However, when unmonitored or monitored ineffectively, this model to provide adequate cover can be inefficient, costly, and at worst, unsafe; it can also be detrimental to staff wellbeing.

Figure 2: Proportion of wholetime firefighters on dual contracts within their services as at 31 March 2020



Services with no staff on dual contract within the same service have been excluded from the graph

Source: HMICFRS data collection

If overtime isn't offered fairly to staff, this can also create inequalities of opportunity and feelings of resentment.

If services can establish shift patterns which both provide effective cover that matches the public's needs and reduce the need for excessive overtime arrangements, they will be more efficient.

We found that nearly half of the services we inspected were not fully evaluating their collaboration activities.

All services collaborate with local organisations and authorities to some extent, but evaluation is limited

Many services are generally proactive at looking for opportunities to work with other emergency responders. There are many examples of positive collaboration, particularly from some services that work in the same buildings as other emergency services.

Some services share control rooms to save costs and improve services. Merseyside FRS has a programme under way to develop a new training and development academy with the North West Ambulance Service NHS Trust. The ambulance service plans to base its hazardous area response team at the site. Other services work together on joint procurement, such as buying new vehicles.

However, some services aren't quite as proactive and some do nothing more than work in the same building. We found that nearly half of the services we inspected were not fully evaluating their collaboration activities.

Collaboration isn't only about making savings or efficiencies. Avon FRS works with the South Western Ambulance Service NHS Foundation Trust and has provided a community first-responder vehicle at one of its fire stations. The service is also helping the trust by driving ambulances to incidents.

Cornwall FRS has worked with the other two emergency services to set up the new role of a tri-service safety officer. Staff in this position carry out a range of activities to support the fire, police and ambulance services. The new role has led to savings being made and safety benefits for the community.

Too many services don't consistently or effectively evaluate, review or monitor collaboration activities to assess the extent to which they work well and are cost-effective.

Fleet and estate strategies should be aligned to IRMPs

Services must carefully consider any changes to their estates and determine whether such changes could improve the service they provide to the public.

We are disappointed that many services either don't have fleet and estate strategies in place or that these strategies are inconsistent with their IRMPs. For example, we saw that one service had made plans for new training facilities and other changes at three of its sites. But it made very little progress against these plans.

Control room continuity plans need regular testing

It is vital that services, and their control rooms in particular, have robust arrangements in place so that they can continue to provide a service during periods of disruption. These arrangements are known as 'continuity arrangements'. In our 2021 inspections, we found that most services don't test their control room continuity arrangements often enough.

Many services haven't tested a full evacuation of their control rooms since before the pandemic; in some cases, it has been much longer. This means that staff aren't fully aware of what they should do if an evacuation is needed.

Services should test their evacuation plans often. While the pandemic has made it more difficult to test a full evacuation, it is still possible. Some services, such as Avon FRS, have managed to test their evacuation plans throughout the pandemic; it carries out four exercises each year to test its arrangements.

People

In this pillar, we ask four questions:

1. How well does the FRS promote its values and culture?
2. How well trained and skilled are the FRS staff?
3. How well does the FRS ensure fairness and diversity?
4. How well does the FRS develop leadership and capability?



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Our findings

Values are better understood and demonstrated

Organisational cultures can have a material effect on staff wellbeing.¹⁶ In Round 1, we found few services that had both unambiguous values and a clear indication of acceptable workplace behaviours. In most services, we found that even if such values were in place, they weren't a sufficient part of the working culture and weren't communicated to staff effectively.

As a result, staff didn't properly understand these values and there were many instances of poor behaviour. We were particularly concerned to find outdated practices that prevented some staff from getting the formal help they needed. In several services, we also found evidence of cultures so toxic that bullying, harassment and discrimination were commonplace and unchallenged. This included use of inappropriate language, overly autocratic management styles and, most worryingly, staff finding amusement in the poor treatment of colleagues.

In our 2021 inspections, it was encouraging to find services have made the greatest improvement in this area. Work to promote and prioritise values and culture at all levels of fire and rescue services is well under way. Of the 8 areas for improvement related to values and culture that we previously issued in respect of the 13 services we inspected, 6 were closed during our 2021 inspections. In particular, Avon FRS proactively worked with its staff to improve its new values and behaviour framework. The service appointed 'cultural advocates' who were responsible for this work. They promoted these values and set clear behavioural standards for all staff in the service.

Every service we inspected had clearly defined values, of which almost all (96 percent) respondents to our 2021 staff survey said they were aware. We found that the vast majority of fire and rescue staff are diligent and proud to work for their organisations. They told us they want to do a good job to protect the communities that they serve.

Work to promote and prioritise values and culture at all levels of fire and rescue services is well under way.

We were pleased to see that, in most services, staff generally behaved in a way that was consistent with the service's values. The majority (84 percent) of respondents to our 2021 staff survey told us they agreed or tended to agree that they were treated with dignity and respect at work and were involved in decisions that affected them.

The numbers of grievances in services were low. Where there was evidence of poor behaviour, this was limited to small pockets of staff, and sometimes it took the form of a lack of the presence and visibility of members of the service's senior leadership team. We found that all services had some form of grievance resolution process in place, with a correlation between the more robust processes and consistent action taken on the basis of staff feedback. Some services encouraged managers to resolve grievances informally, which in some circumstances is appropriate. However, this sometimes resulted in grievances not being officially recorded, or no record being kept of a problem that had arisen and that needed to be resolved. It was unclear how, in these instances, services could assure themselves that they were able to identify trends in problems affecting their workforces.

We previously recommended that the sector would benefit from a code of ethics. Since then the *Core Code of Ethics for Fire and Rescue Services* has been established by the NFCC, the Association of Police and Crime Commissioners and the Local Government Association; it was published in May 2021.¹⁷ The corresponding standard was published by the Fire Standards Board.¹⁸ Despite being released part way through our 2021 inspections, we are already seeing evidence of services, such as Cornwall and Merseyside, starting to consider how to integrate the code into their values and other policies. We hope all other services follow suit.

Health and safety and wellbeing provision are prioritised

In almost all services we inspected, staff wellbeing and health and safety continue to be priorities; this was also something we found in our pandemic inspections. In almost all services we inspected, we found that, in general, staff had high confidence in the wide range of support available to them and that staff understood procedures and policies well. We also found this in our Round 2 Tranche 1 staff survey.¹⁹

Staff absences are managed in all services and, for the most part, policies are robust. There are, however, some areas where policies on absences fall short; some services may find it difficult to identify trends in absences. Some services would also benefit from management training in order to better deal with staff absences.

We found that there were some inconsistencies and gaps in performance management processes. This means that some opportunities are being missed when it comes to making sure staff have what they need to be safe and well at work. Services must have continuous open conversations with staff to make sure they provide them with the right tools and support for them to do their jobs.

In almost all services we inspected, staff wellbeing and health and safety continue to be priorities.



We previously identified the need for services to better monitor overtime and secondary employment to make sure they and their employees were complying with the Working Time Directive (WTD). Cheshire FRS has a working time group and a health, safety and wellbeing committee, which it developed in response to an area for improvement we issued in Round 1. While there is evidence of some services having systems in place to monitor overtime and secondary contracts, it isn't clear how robust or effective these are. Some services still don't have adequate oversight of the hours their staff are working and staff are expected to manage WTD compliance themselves.

It is imperative that services have systems in place to effectively monitor the secondary employment, dual contracts and overtime arrangements of their workforces, to make sure working arrangements are safe and to minimise work stress.



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Good intentions to promote equality, diversity and inclusion aren't always successful

In Round 1, equality, diversity and inclusion (EDI) was an area in desperate need of improvement. We found that many services wanted to improve diversity, but there was still a great deal more to do. Three services received an inadequate judgment in this area and five causes of concern were issued.

In the 13 services we inspected, we found shortcomings in the approach two services had taken to improve EDI, and we issued causes of concern as a result. We do not want to inhibit leaders from prioritising and promoting this important area of work, but efforts to improve EDI must lead to positive outcomes for workforces. We found that all other services were promoting EDI in some way, although their methods weren't always effective.

Some members of staff said they had reservations about how successful EDI changes would be. Some of the most important EDI needs for staff were missed. Only three services we inspected (Cheshire, Greater Manchester and Humberside) provided evidence of strong EDI planning. In some cases, it wasn't clear what services hoped to achieve with their EDI strategies. In this respect, services need to work closely with staff to try to understand and meet their needs.

Despite services using a considerable range of feedback channels to communicate with their workforces, we found only three services that consistently took effective action as a result of staff feedback (Cambridgeshire, Cheshire and Merseyside).

We also found that services either didn't use equality impact assessments and staff networks, or that they used them inconsistently. There was a lack of information and training on EDI, including among managers, and a poor understanding of it by staff. This may explain why we continued to find examples of inappropriate and non-inclusive language. Services must do more to make sure that their people understand the importance of diversity and why it is necessary.

Services must do more to make sure that their people understand the importance of diversity and why it is necessary.

Workforces don't always represent the communities they serve

The workforces of all services remain woefully unrepresentative of many of the communities that they serve, and services should do more to recruit people from diverse backgrounds.

According to Home Office data, as of 31 March 2020, 17 percent of the workforce identify as female. This is slightly higher than in previous years (16.7 percent in 2019, 14.5 percent five years ago and 15.1 percent ten years ago). The majority of female staff work in fire control and support staff roles. Only 7 percent of firefighters identify as female.

Only 5 percent of the workforce identify as being from a Black, Asian or minority ethnic (BAME) background. Only 4.4 percent (1,410) of firefighters identified as being from an ethnic minority, compared with 4.3 percent (1,368) in the previous year, and 3.8 percent (1,276) five years ago.

In the three years since 2017/18, only 5 percent of all new firefighters were from a BAME background and only 12 percent identified as female. A high proportion of diversity characteristics were either not recorded or not stated. In the three years since 2017/18, an average of 22 percent of new firefighters and 22 percent of all new joiners did not state their ethnicities.

To truly understand whether progress is being made to attract more diversity into the sector, we need services to gather more detailed data and make sure that staff feel comfortable providing this information. Recruiting a more diverse workforce is only the first step for services; they must make sure they provide the right environment and culture for all staff to flourish and to keep them in the sector in the long term.

Equality, diversity and inclusion initiatives must not be carried out in isolation

A more equal and diverse workforce will make services more efficient and effective because more people of high ability, dedication and commitment, who work hard and effectively, will join from under-represented communities.

Working towards inclusive practice is everyone's responsibility. Evidence from the Chartered Institute of Personnel and Development establishes that EDI initiatives carried out in isolation do not work, and they will not make workplaces more diverse or inclusive.²⁰ Inclusive behaviour allows individuals to work together effectively and creates a healthy environment for employees. It enables people, regardless of their differences, to work together effectively and avoid stereotyping. Services should make sure their EDI initiatives are parts of co-ordinated strategies and woven through their day-to-day activities, rather than being standalone actions.

As we continue our second round of inspections, we will continue to assess what services are doing to improve their diversity and equality, how they are tackling unlawful or undue discrimination, educating their workforces, and working with their diverse communities.

A more equal and diverse workforce will make services more efficient and effective.



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Many services are failing to establish adequate succession plans for future leadership.

Lack of workforce planning

In Round 1, only a third of services had in place sufficiently strong processes to carry out workforce and succession planning in a way that was consistent with their IRMPs. In Round 2 Tranche 1, not much progress had been made in this respect, with still only a third having adequate processes in place (Bedfordshire, Cambridgeshire, Cheshire, Greater Manchester, Merseyside and Surrey). We are worried that some services continue to operate without a clear understanding of the skills and capabilities of their workforces.

Ineffective, reactive or narrow planning can lead to some areas being understaffed. In their planning, services should anticipate any potential staff shortages and factor these in. For example, Cheshire FRS anticipated that many members of staff would retire, so they proactively recruited in advance. This is simply good management, and it is disappointing that it is not done routinely everywhere.

Not enough is being done to plan for future leaders

Many services are failing to establish adequate succession plans for future leadership. This is particularly important following the recent high turnover of chief fire officers.

It is crucial that succession planning for leaders includes the need to consider a diverse range of individuals. In our 2021 inspections, we continued to find senior management teams, including recent appointments, comprising people who look, sound and think the same. Brigade, area and group managers are all leadership positions in services. In 2020, only 7.2 percent of brigade managers were female, and approximately 6 percent of all brigade, area and group managers were female. The numbers of staff from BAME backgrounds at these levels were also disappointingly low.

We found services were making efforts to remove the risk of bias from internal recruitment processes; one way this was done was by using independent panel members and assessing applications without the names of the applicants being shown.

However, in some cases, services couldn't always provide evidence of how the latter stages of appointment processes (such as interviews) had been carried out; it wasn't clear whether the measures to remove the risk of bias had always been applied. As such, services couldn't always assure themselves, and others, that the recruitment process in its entirety was fair.

Many on-call staff didn't feel that they had the same development opportunities as other staff.

A lack of people with protected characteristics in leadership teams is not the only problem. We found that not enough was being done to attract people from outside the sector; most people who were appointed to senior positions had held traditional firefighter roles. This failure to recruit from elsewhere limits the diversity and volume of suitable candidates.

Services should also develop their staff and provide consistent and fair opportunities as part of their workforce succession planning. This will help to make sure their staff have the skills they need to be able to do their jobs and take on more senior roles in the future. We found that, in some services, operational, corporate and support staff didn't always have the same development and promotion opportunities, with the balance being tipped in favour of operational staff.

In Round 1, we found a lack of talent management programmes. We also found that staff performance and development appraisals were not being done often enough. In Round 2, it was therefore encouraging to find many services had improved their provision of learning and development for staff, and staff reported a high level of confidence that these met their needs. Where we did find problems, these were a result of ineffective manager training, or inequality of training provision between non-operational and operational staff, with the latter having either greater or more structured access to learning and development opportunities, or both.

In the Round 2 Tranche 1 staff survey, 30 percent of those who responded told us they had a conversation with their managers about their performance no more than once a year. Access to development was often linked to appraisals, so it is a matter of concern that we found that 26 percent of on-call firefighters hadn't completed an appraisal or performance development review in 2020/21; many on-call staff didn't feel that they had the same development opportunities as other staff.





Part 3: Our reports

Our reports

In July 2017, the Inspectorate's remit was extended to include inspections of England's fire and rescue services. This is my third annual report on the fire and rescue inspections we have carried out.



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Agenda Item 14

Appendix A

On 15 December 2021, we published 13 reports. The reports we publish fulfil our statutory duty to inspect and report on the effectiveness and efficiency of fire and rescue authorities in England.

Every report has been published in full on our website and given to the relevant fire and rescue service.



Reports published

February 2021 to December 2021



Fire and Rescue Service: Effectiveness, efficiency and people 2021

Thirteen individual reports on the fire and rescue services we inspected in England from February to August 2021.

All HMIs

Revisit letters

When we identify a cause of concern, we require the service to produce an action plan to resolve it. We monitor progress against this plan. As for causes of concern relating to effectiveness, we usually carry out a revisit – and further revisits if necessary – to assess progress against each plan. Following each revisit, the regional HMI provides written feedback to the chief fire officer. Each letter is published in full on our website. We sent and published revisit letters in respect of:

- Devon and Somerset FRS;
- Gloucestershire FRS;
- Northamptonshire FRS; and
- West Sussex FRS.

We didn't revisit Hampshire and Isle of Wight FRS. We did, however, publish a letter summarising our findings on the progress made by the service after we gave it a cause of concern.



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Part 1

- 1 *Detailed analysis of fires attended by fire and rescue services, England, April 2020 to March 2021*, National statistics, Home Office, 30 September 2021. Available at: <https://www.gov.uk/government/statistics/detailed-analysis-of-fires-attended-by-fire-and-rescue-services-england-april-2020-to-march-2021/detailed-analysis-of-fires-attended-by-fire-and-rescue-services-england-april-2020-to-march-2021>
- 2 More information on causes of concern is available in Part 2, Understanding our graded judgments.
- 3 *Grenfell Tower Inquiry: Phase 1 Report*, Grenfell Tower Inquiry, October 2019. Available at: <https://www.grenfelltowerinquiry.org.uk/phase-1-report>
- 4 More information on areas for improvement is available in Part 2, Understanding our graded judgments
- 5 For more information about our public perceptions survey and the data used in this report, please see: <https://www.justiceinspectors.gov.uk/hmicfrs/fire-and-rescue-services/data/about-the-data-2021-22/>
- 6 *Concluding Part One of the Police and Crime Commissioner Review*, Home Office, 16 March 2021. Available at: <https://questions-statements.parliament.uk/written-statements/detail/2021-03-16/hcws849>
- 7 *Responding to the pandemic: The fire and rescue service's response to the COVID-19 pandemic in 2020*, HMICFRS, March 2021. Available at: <https://www.justiceinspectors.gov.uk/hmicfrs/wp-content/uploads/responding-to-the-pandemic-fire-and-rescue-service-response-covid-19-pandemic-2020.pdf>
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- 11 Building Safety Bill, UK Parliament. Available at: <https://www.gov.uk/government/collections/building-safety-bill>
- 12 According to Article 3 of the Regulatory Reform (Fire Safety) Order 2005/1541, "responsible person" means:
 - (a) in relation to a workplace, the employer, if the workplace is to any extent under his control;
 - (b) in relation to any premises not falling within paragraph (a):
 - (i) the person who has control of the premises (as occupier or otherwise) in connection with the carrying on by him of a trade, business or other undertaking (for profit or not); or
 - (ii) the owner, where the person in control of the premises does not have control in connection with the carrying on by that person of a trade, business or other undertaking.
- 13 More information on areas for improvement is available in Part 2, Understanding our graded judgments.
- 14 A dual contract in this context is an arrangement in which a firefighter not only has a full-time contract with a fire and rescue service, but also an on call contract with either the same or another service. This means that not only can they work their usual full-time working pattern, but that they can also be on call at certain times. This means that they can be on call during some of their rest days from their full-time job. Of course, safety is paramount and the employing service needs to assure itself that those who are coming to work are safe and sufficiently rested to do so.

Part 2

- 1 *Fire and Rescue National Framework for England*, Home Office, May 2018. Available at: <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/fire-and-rescue-national-framework-for-england--2>
- 2 Under section 21 of the Fire and Rescue Services Act 2004, the Secretary of State is required to produce the *Fire and Rescue National Framework for England*. The framework establishes that each FRS must produce an integrated risk management plan. Each plan must specify, among other things: all foreseeable fire and rescue related risks; how the service will allocate resources to prevention, protection and response; what service it must provide, including resource allocation for mitigating risks; and its management strategy and risk-based programme for enforcing the Regulatory Reform (Fire Safety) Order 2005.
- 3 A fire safety audit is an examination of premises and its documentation to make sure that it complies with the requirements of the Regulatory Reform (Fire Safety) Order 2005.
- 4 Fire and rescue authorities must have a risk-based inspection programme to make sure that they comply with Regulatory Reform (Fire Safety) Order 2005. *Approved Standards: Code of Ethics*, Fire Standards Board, May 2021. Available at 2(1) and (2) of the Home Office *Fire and Rescue National Framework* establish that fire and rescue authorities must assess all foreseeable fire and rescue related risks that could affect their communities.
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- 12 These problems were covered in the Grenfell Tower Inquiry Phase 1 report.
- 13 *National Joint Council For Local Authorities' Fire and Rescue Services, Scheme of conditions of service. The Grey Book*, 6th edition, Local Government Association.
- 14 *Approved Standards: Community Risk Management Planning*, Fire Standards Board, May 2021. Available at: <https://www.firestandards.org/approved-standards/community-risk-management-planning-fss-rmp01/>
- 15 Combined fire and rescue authorities are also known as standalone fire and rescue authorities. This reflects that they are not part of another organisation such as a county council.
- 16 'Culture and behaviour in the English National Health Service: overview of lessons from a large multimethod study', *BMJ Quality and Safety*. Available at: <https://qualitysafety.bmj.com/content/23/2/106>
- 17 *Core Code of Ethics for Fire and Rescue Services*, National Fire Chiefs Council, Association of Police and Crime Commissioners and Local Government Association, May 2021. Available at: <https://www.ukfrs.com/core-code-ethics>
- 18 *Approved Standards: Code of Ethics*, Fire Standards Board, May 2021. Available at: <https://www.firestandards.org/approved-standards/code-of-ethics/>
- 19 According to our 2021 Round 2 Tranche 1 staff survey, 68 percent of respondents have high confidence in services providing wellbeing support and 97 percent understand the policies and procedures in place.
- 20 *Building inclusive workplaces: accessing the evidence*, Chartered Institute of Professional Development, September 2019, p11. Available at: <https://www.cipd.co.uk/knowledge/fundamentals/relations/diversity/building-inclusive-workplaces>





Annexes

Annex B: About us

Our history

Her Majesty's Inspectorate of Constabulary – as it then was – was established in 1856 to “inquire into the state and efficiency of the police”. Our role and influence have evolved over the past century and a half.

In 2017, we saw the biggest material change in our remit with our expansion to take on inspection of fire and rescue services in England. This was one element of the Government's fire reform programme announced in 2016. The Policing and Crime Act 2017 amended the Fire and Rescue Services Act 2004 to create this jurisdiction.

We are independent of Government, as well as of fire and rescue services and police forces. Both our independence and inspection rights are vested in Her Majesty's Inspectors, who are Crown appointees (section 28(A1), Fire and Rescue Services Act 2004).

HMIC was established in

1856



Fire and Rescue Services Act

2004

Our statutory responsibilities

We must inspect and report on the efficiency and effectiveness of fire and rescue authorities in England (section 28(A3), Fire and Rescue Services Act 2004).

The Secretary of State may at any time direct us to carry out an inspection of one or all fire and rescue authorities in England (section 28A(3), Fire and Rescue Services Act 2004).

We can carry out an inspection that hasn't been set out in our inspection programme. We must consult with the Secretary of State before we do so (section 28A(5) and (6), Fire and Rescue Services Act 2004).

We don't have any statutory responsibility to inspect any other fire and rescue service, other than fire and rescue services in England.

Publishing reports

We must publish the reports we prepare under section 28B of the Fire and Rescue Services Act 2004 (section 28B(1), Fire and Rescue Services Act 2004).

We must not publish anything the inspectors believe would be against the interests of national security or might put anyone in danger (section 28B(2), Fire and Rescue Services Act 2004).

Each year, Her Majesty's Chief Inspector (HMCI) of Fire & Rescue Services must submit to the Secretary of State a report on our inspections carried out in that period. A copy of this report must be laid before Parliament (section 28B(6), Fire and Rescue Services Act 2004). The report must include HMCI's assessment of the efficiency and effectiveness of fire and rescue authorities in England for the period the report covers (section 28B(5), Fire and Rescue Services Act 2004). This is my *State of Fire and Rescue* report. My first *State of Fire and Rescue* report was published in January 2020.



Producing our inspection programme and framework

HMCI must prepare and publish an inspection programme (section 28A(1)(a), Fire and Rescue Services Act 2004) and framework (section 28A(1)(b), Fire and Rescue Services Act 2004).

HMCI must obtain the approval of the Secretary of State for an inspection programme or inspection framework before we can act in accordance with it (section 28A(2), Fire and Rescue Services Act 2004).

Fire and rescue authorities are responsible for the fire and rescue services in their areas.

Acting as a check on the removal of senior officers

Fire and rescue authorities are responsible for the fire and rescue services in their areas. Authorities differ in size and governance arrangements. For authorities that are run by a police, fire and crime commissioner, arrangements for the dismissal of the chief fire officer are similar to those covering the dismissal of a chief constable.

If a police, fire and crime commissioner in England is proposing to dismiss his or her chief fire officer, he or she must invite HMCI to give his written views on the proposed removal. The police, fire and crime commissioner must consider his views before a decision is made (article 18, Fire and Rescue Authority (Police and Crime Commissioner) (Application of Local Policing Provisions, Inspection, Powers to Trade and Consequential Amendments) Order 2017). These written views must be given to the appropriate police, fire and crime panel when considering the police, fire and crime commissioner’s decision.

No police, fire and crime commissioner asked for written views during the period covered by this report.



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Our powers

Amendments made by the Policing and Crime Act 2017 to the Fire and Rescue Services Act 2004 created inspectors of fire and rescue services. They also created a duty to inspect and report on the effectiveness and efficiency of fire and rescue services in England and created new powers of inspection.

Amendments made by the Policing and Crime Act 2017 to the Fire and Rescue Services Act 2004 created inspectors of fire and rescue services.

Access to information and premises

Inspectors have powers to obtain any information or documents they reasonably need to assess the efficiency and effectiveness of a fire and rescue service (paragraph 6, Schedule A3, Fire and Rescue Services Act 2004).

Inspectors also have powers to access premises used by fire and rescue services or those providing a service to a fire and rescue service. They can seek access for the purpose of assessing the efficiency and effectiveness of the fire and rescue service. This includes obtaining documents and “other things” found on those premises (paragraphs 6 and 7, Schedule A3, Fire and Rescue Services Act 2004).

Power to delegate functions

Inspectors have the power to delegate any of their inspection functions to another public authority (paragraph 2, Schedule A3, Fire and Rescue Services Act 2004).

Power to act jointly with another public body

We can help another public body exercise its functions, if HMCI considers it appropriate. This includes facilitating a best value inspection under section 10 of the Local Government Act 1999.

We can do these things on any such terms, including payment terms, as HMCI thinks fit (paragraph 5, Schedule A3, Fire and Rescue Services Act 2004).

Biographies for each of HM Inspectors of Fire and Rescue Services are on our website:

justiceinspectorates.gov.uk/hmicfrs/about-us/who-we-are

Who we are

Her Majesty's Chief Inspector of Fire and Rescue Services



Sir Thomas Winsor

In October 2012, Sir Thomas was appointed Her Majesty's Chief Inspector of Constabulary. He took on the additional role of Her Majesty's Chief Inspector of Fire and Rescue Services in July 2017.

Her Majesty's Inspectors of Fire and Rescue Services



Andy Cooke

Andy Cooke DL QPM is Her Majesty's Inspector for the Northern region.



Matt Parr

Matt Parr CB is Her Majesty's Inspector for the Southern region.



Wendy Williams

Wendy Williams CBE is Her Majesty's Inspector for the Western region.



Roy Wilsher

Roy Wilsher OBE QFSM is Her Majesty's Inspector for the Eastern region.

Zoë Billingham held the role of Her Majesty's Inspector for the Eastern region during the inspected period, but left office in September 2021.

How we are accountable

We currently have five Inspectors of Fire and Rescue Services.

The first Inspectors of Constabulary were appointed under the County and Borough Police Act 1856. This Act required them to inspect and report on the efficiency and effectiveness of most of the police forces in England and Wales. Identical roles covering the inspection of fire and rescue services in England were created by the Policing and Crime Act 2017, which amended the Fire and Rescue Act 2004.

We currently have five Inspectors of Fire and Rescue Services. These inspectors also hold the separate appointment of Inspector of Constabulary. They are neither civil servants nor fire or police officers, and are appointed by the Crown for fixed terms of up to five years. That means we are independent of fire and rescue services, police, the Government, police, fire and crime commissioners/ police and crime commissioners (and their equivalents), other agencies in the criminal justice system and all outside parties.



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Independence doesn't mean a lack of accountability.

However, independence doesn't mean a lack of accountability. We are accountable in these ways:

- our statutory duties, enforceable through judicial review or by action for breach of statutory duty;
- our obligation to submit an annual report to the Home Secretary under section 28B of the Fire and Rescue Services Act 2004, which must be laid before Parliament;
- our obligation to seek approval to our inspection programme and framework from the Home Secretary;
- written Parliamentary questions;
- our obligation to give written and oral evidence to Committees of Parliament, including the Home Affairs Select Committee, the Public Accounts Committee and any other select committee that may call on us to give evidence;
- our obligation to carry out other duties the Home Secretary directs us to (section 28A(3), Fire and Rescue Services Act 2004); and
- our obligation to comply with the rules of administrative law and the rules of good public administration, enforceable in the High Court by judicial review.

As a public body, we are also subject to the legal obligations imposed on public authorities, including:

- Official Secrets Acts 1911 and 1989;
- Health and Safety at Work etc. Act 1974;
- Data Protection Act 2018 and the General Data Protection Regulation (2016/679/EU);
- Human Rights Act 1998;
- Freedom of Information Act 2000; and
- Equality Act 2010.



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How we work with other organisations

We are mostly funded by the Home Office and are accountable to the Home Office for our spending, even though we are neither a subsidiary nor a part of the Home Office. For fire inspections, all our funding comes from the Home Office.

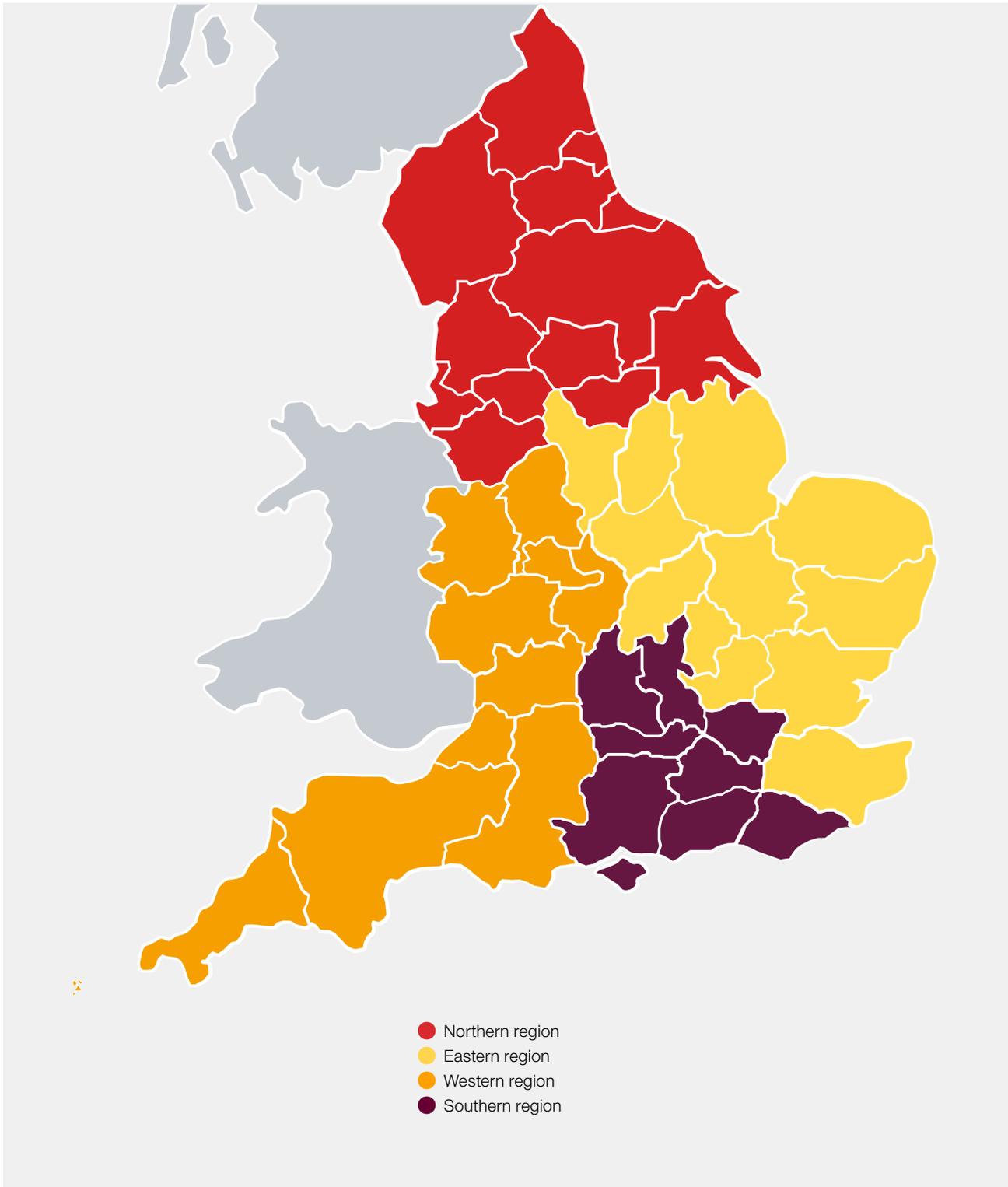
We have a concordat with the Home Office that explains the material parts of the relationship between our two organisations. The concordat sets out our respective roles, and the responsibilities of the main people involved in running, sponsoring and overseeing our affairs. The concordat is published on our website.

We also have a memorandum of understanding with the Fire Standards Board. This is also published on our website. The memorandum sets out our respective roles and responsibilities, and how we work with each other.

Our regions

STATE OF FIRE AND RESCUE

ABOUT US



Our purpose, values and objectives

Our purpose is to promote improvements in policing and fire and rescue services to make everyone safer.

Our values of respect, honesty, independence, integrity and fairness are at the heart of how we work. They act as a touchstone to help us make decisions – both as individuals and as an organisation.



We spend 92 percent of our funding on our workforce.

Annex C: Our finances

As an inspectorate, we are mainly funded by the Home Office. All our funding for our fire inspection work comes from the Home Office.

We spend 92 percent of our funding on our workforce, with the rest spent on travel, subsistence, accommodation and other expenses.

Expenditure breakdown 2020/21

Staffing costs including associates



IT and telephony



Surveys and inspection services



Office expenses and other costs



Accommodation



Travel and subsistence



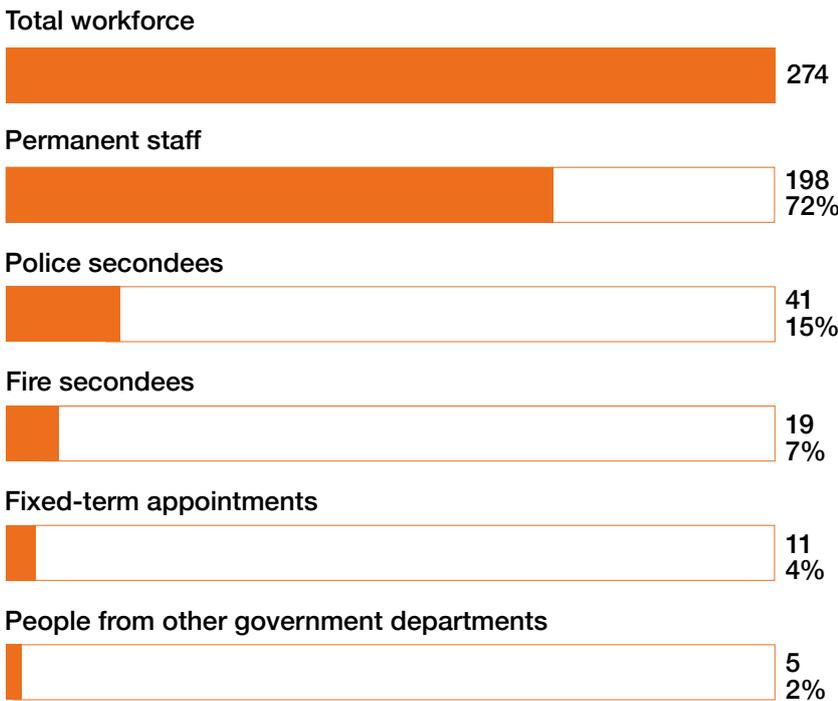
Our workforce

274

members of staff

Our workforce comprises HM Inspectors, civil servants, and secondees from fire and rescue services and police forces. We also have a register of associate inspectors and other specialist staff.

Staffing breakdown 2020/21



Annex D: Our national recommendations

Recommendation

Recommendation 1:

As soon as is practicable the Home Office, National Fire Chiefs Council (NFCC) and the Local Government Association (LGA), in consultation with the Fire Standards Board (FSB) and Association of Police and Crime Commissioners, should establish a programme of work that will result in consistency in the following four priority areas:

- identifying and determining risk as part of the IRMP process;
- identifying and measuring emergency response standards and approaches;
- defining what are high-risk premises for the purposes of fire protection; and
- setting an expectation for how frequently high-risk premises, and parts of those premises, should be audited for compliance with fire safety legislation).

There should be completion or significant progress in the four priority areas specified above, towards a common set of definitions and standards for fire and rescue services to adopt and apply as soon as reasonably practicable, for each of the four priority areas.

| Completion date | Status |
|--|---|
| <p>December 2021. This date was originally set as December 2020; it will need to be revised again.</p> | <p>The Home Office confirmed it has funded the NFCC’s community risk programme, which is designed to develop a single method for services to use so that they identify and assess risk in the same way. The programme will also provide support to services so that they can use this method successfully. The NFCC told us that it expected the community risk programme work to be completed by the end of 2021/22.</p> <p>In February 2021, the Fire Standards Board published the fire standards for operational competence, operational learning and operational preparedness.</p> <p>In September 2021, the Fire Standards Board published its protection standard. Since then, a range of guidance documents have been published which are designed to support services in their implementation of the standard.</p> <p>In addition to its continued work on high-risk premises, the NFCC has been co-ordinating the building risk review programme. This programme provides the most up-to-date information on a subset of buildings that will be in the jurisdiction of the new building safety regulator.</p> <p>These projects are still in progress and the specific requirements of this recommendation must be met in its entirety for it to be considered as complete.</p> |

| <p>Recommendation</p> | |
|--|--|
| <p>Recommendation 2:</p> <p>As part of the next spending review, the Home Office in consultation with the fire and rescue sector should address the deficit in the fire sector’s national capacity and capability to support change.</p> | |
| <p>Recommendation 3:</p> <p>The Home Office, in consultation with the fire and rescue sector, should review and with precision determine the roles of: (a) fire and rescue services; and (b) those who work in them.</p> | |
| <p>Recommendation 4:</p> <p>The Home Office, the Local Government Association, the National Fire Chiefs Council and trade unions should consider whether the current pay negotiation machinery requires fundamental reform. If so, this should include the need for an independent pay review body and the future of the ‘Grey Book’.</p> | |
| <p>Recommendation 5:</p> <p>The Home Office should consider the case for legislating to give chief fire officers operational independence. In the meantime, it should issue clear guidance, possibly through an amendment to the Fire and Rescue National Framework for England, on the demarcation between those responsible for governance and operational decision making by the chief fire officer.</p> | |
| <p>Recommendation 6:</p> <p>The National Fire Chiefs Council, with the Local Government Association, should produce a code of ethics for fire and rescue services. The code should be adopted by every service in England and considered as part of each employee’s progression and annual performance appraisal.</p> | |

| | Completion date | Status |
|--|---|--|
| | Complete | Complete |
| | Awaiting fire reform implementation plan from Home Office. This date was originally set as June 2020. | The Home Office intends to consult on this matter in its forthcoming White Paper on fire reform. |
| | June 2021. This date was originally set as June 2020; it will need to be revised again. | The Home Office intends to consult on this matter in its forthcoming White Paper on fire reform. |
| | Awaiting fire reform implementation plan from Home Office. This date was originally set as June 2020. | The Home Office is considering ways to make progress against this recommendation. |
| | Complete | Complete |

Promoting improvements in policing and fire and rescue services to make everyone safer

Her Majesty's Inspectorate of Constabulary and Fire & Rescue Services (HMICFRS) independently assesses the effectiveness and efficiency of police forces and fire and rescue services – in the public interest.

In preparing our reports, we ask the questions that citizens would ask, and publish the answers in accessible form, using our expertise to interpret the evidence and make recommendations for improvement.

We provide authoritative information to allow the public to compare the performance of their police force or fire and rescue service against others. Our evidence is used to bring about improvements in the services they provide to the public.

Agenda Item 14

Appendix A



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and Fire & Rescue Services
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London SW1V 1PN

www.justiceinspectorates.gov.uk/hmicfrs

HMICFRS Fire and Rescue Services (FRS) Inspection 2021/22

Self-assessment template guidance

Every FRS will be asked to complete a self-assessment as part of the inspection process.

The self-assessment poses a number of general questions to give chief officers an opportunity to give the HMI and the inspection team an insight into the FRS. The self-assessment should also provide some general information about service priorities and current challenges. The assessment should be no longer than 1,500 words in total and cover the high-level strategic issues facing your FRS.

We recommend that each FRS uses the self-assessment as the basis for its presentation at the strategic briefing. We may make a subsequent request to address further specific questions in advance of the strategic briefing.

How to complete the self-assessment:

- Please answer every question.
- Please do not exceed the word limit set out in the template.
- Please do not embed any documents; documents to support the self-assessment will have been provided as part of the document request.
- There is no expectation that the FRS should grade themselves against the judgment criteria.
- HMICFRS anticipates that FRS's will share the assessment with their FRA.

Please return the self- assessment to HMICFRSInspectionsAdmin@hmicfrs.gov.uk as part of the document return.

What to include in the self-assessment narrative answer:

- A good self-assessment will highlight the challenges and future plans of the FRS to address any gaps in its provision or performance.
- A good self-assessment will identify areas of strengths as well as areas for improvement and set out the actions being taken to address them.
- A good self-assessment is realistic and sets out the FRS's position using evidence and data to support the assessment.

HMICFRS Fire and Rescue Services (FRS) Inspection 2021/22 – Self-assessment template

- Please do not embed any documents
- Please do not exceed the word count limits (1,500 words)
- Please refer to the guidance document

| General FRS self-assessment | |
|---|---|
| <p>Please set out a general FRS self-assessment covering the following points:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • What key changes have there been for your FRS since the round 1 inspection – e.g. governance, funding, staffing? • What action has the service taken in response to any areas for improvement identified during the last inspection (round 1)? • What are your FRSs priorities for the coming year? • What action is the service taking in response to the Covid-19 inspection report? • Please include any other information that you feel would be useful to the inspectors to provide context for the operation of the FRS and its current performance. | |
| Question | FRS Assessment |
| <p>What key changes have there been for your FRS since the round 1 inspection – e.g. governance, funding, staffing?</p> | <p>Royal Berkshire Fire and Rescue Service has seen significant change within its Senior Leadership Team, most notably the retirement of the previous Chief Fire Officer and Deputy Chief Fire Officer in 2021.</p> <p>Wayne Bowcock joined the Service in June as the new CFO and undertook a review of the SLT following his appointment to ensure it was structured to continue to support the effective delivery of services and lead the organisation on the next stage of its continuous improvement journey. The new structure became effective in December 2021, followed by the appointment of a new DCFO. This creates two delivery arms for the organisation – one focused on operations and collaboration, and the other, led by the Deputy Chief Executive, focused on corporate services.</p> |

| | |
|---|---|
| | <p>We continue to work as efficiently and effectively as possible, whilst not compromising our ability to manage risk locally. At the time of the last inspection the Service was delivering the Authority's Efficiency Plan, aiming to deliver £2.4m in savings. This work is now completed with the successful delivery of the Remotely Managed Stations and Flexi Duty Officer Project, closure of Wargrave Fire Station and replacement of Pangbourne and Dee Road Fire Stations with a new Community Fire Station at Theale.</p> <p>The Authority's longer-term funding position remains challenging. Royal Berkshire Fire Authority has had an ambitious strategy for investment in capital assets and using capital receipts to ensure vital investment in support of our CRMP. However, this will become ever more challenging in the future and we will be remodelling our capital programme to ensure we continue to make the most efficient and effective use of our capital resources.</p> <p>RBFA is one of the lowest precepting FRAs and, following extensive lobbying, intends to use the proposed precept flexibility for 2022/23 for lowest quartile Authorities to build financial resilience and sustainability, prerequisites for the delivery of an efficient and effective service. Nevertheless, pressures around pay and pension costs, volatility in business rates income and the ongoing focus on fire protection and the built environment, mean that financial headroom remains limited as set out in the Medium-Term Financial Plan.</p> |
| <p>What action has the service taken in response to areas for improvement identified during the last inspection (round 1)?</p> | <p>We immediately put in place an action plan with progress being regularly monitored and reported to the Authority on a quarterly basis. Our progress includes:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Successfully digitised Safe and Well Visits; • Implemented hybrid working technology as part of our ICT Strategy and technology roadmap; • Fully digitised our Protection records; • Developing Quality Assurance programmes for our Prevention and Protection activities; |

| | |
|--|--|
| | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Developed an evaluation toolkit to support Prevention evaluation and wider project work e.g. digitising Safe and Well Visits and the Remotely Managed Stations and Flexible Duty Officer Project. • Analysed attendance at Automatic Fire Alarms to identify ways in which we can reduce the burden of unwanted fire alarms. We launched a CRMP consultation on our proposals, which is due to conclude in March. • Reviewed our approach to warning and informing the public to ensure we have robust arrangements in place; • Developed an Operational Competence Roadmap, which will further embed understanding of the operational competence recording system, ensure NOG alignment and implement any changes required following the publication of the Operational Competence Fire Standard. • Completed an end to end review of our operational assurance policy and gap analysis against the Operational Learning Fire Standard. We are implementing a plan to support continuous improvement in these areas. • Undertook an extensive staff engagement exercise to support and encourage staff to use our feedback mechanisms. This will inform the development of our new People Strategy. • Completed a review of our Grievance process and policy and continue to regularly monitor its application. • Planned to develop our offer in support of high potential staff following the launch of the NFCC Talent Management Framework; • Updated our Behavioural Competency Framework to improve accessibility and alignment to the Code of Ethics. Further embedded the BCF through training and a series of Leadership Forums. |
|--|--|

| | |
|--|--|
| <p>What are your FRSs priorities for the coming year?</p> | <p>As we approach the final year of our current Corporate Plan and CRMP, we have a number of continuous improvement priorities. These include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Development of our next Corporate Plan and CRMP (2023+) and update of our risk analysis to inform the next iteration of our Prevention, Protection and Response strategies; • Continued delivery against the commitments set out in our current Corporate Plan and CRMP; • Launch our new People Strategy which will further develop the professionalism of the Service and its staff, ensuring that our people are trained and equipped to provide the most efficient and effective services, targeted at local risk; • Continued commitment to our Equality, Diversity and Inclusion Objectives, and taking positive action to ensure we better represent the communities we serve; • Ongoing focus on financial planning and remodelling our capital programme to ensure we make most efficient and effective use of our resources the in medium-term; • Developing a sustainability strategy for the Service, building on work already undertaken, and setting out our future intentions and ambition; • Retain our focus on continuous improvement, including developing our assurance processes to support organisational learning, which we will manage through our robust governance framework to ensure effective delivery; • Following a period of change in the SLT, stabilise our new arrangements and lead the delivery of our work plans and commitments over the coming year. |
| <p>What action is the service taking in response to the Covid-19 inspection report?</p> | <p>We are evaluating our response to the pandemic to ensure we have captured our learning and identify how we can adopt longer-term change in our ways of working and delivery of services. Key findings include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • RBFRS has a lean operating model, which has been placed under pressure by factors such as COVID sickness. This has created opportunities to manage our operational resilience with increased agility, which we will be capitalising on in the longer-term. This has included increased opportunities for our on-call staff, |

| | |
|---|---|
| | <p>which has provided further resilience for our response model, and greater flexibility in our delivery of training to improve productivity.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • RBFRS, Buckinghamshire and Oxfordshire improved resilience across the Thames Valley by putting in place a mutual agreement which means we can we can utilise a Principal Officer of another Service for incident command roles, improving collaborative working; • The Service has a long standing commitment to flexible working. We have reviewed our Flexible Working Policy and Home/Hybrid Working Policy and our improved hybrid technology will support our longer-term cultural journey driven by our new People Strategy; • We have further developed relationships locally between partner agencies. For example, providing a prevention resource to form part of a multi-disciplinary team supporting hospital discharges. This assists our health partners during significant winter pressures, and provides an opportunity to develop our Prevention Strategy in the longer-term by accessing members of our community that are potentially at greater risk of fire. • We have adapted the delivery of our education programme, which has been delivered in a pre-recorded package. We will evaluate the effectiveness of this approach in the hope that we can benefit from the efficiencies this creates in the longer-term. • We have effectively managed our resources to respond to changing risk, such as the increased safeguarding demand through an upward trend in the number of referrals related to domestic abuse and threats of arson, which we will continue to monitor closely to assess longer-term change. |
| <p>Please include any other information that you feel would be useful to the inspectors to provide context for the operation of the FRS and its current performance.</p> | <p>Throughout the pandemic we have made decisions on the efficient and effective use of our resources based on risk, ensuring we have protected our critical service delivery, prioritised the wellbeing of our staff and provided support to partners. This has meant we have reprioritised our programme of work.</p> <p>We have continued to deliver our improvement and risk management plans and have made significant progress. We have developed and consulted on updated Prevention, Protection and Response strategies, opened a new Community Fire Station at Theale,</p> |

rebuilt our on-call Community Fire Station in Crowthorne and continued to deliver our Fleet Strategy, which has included the arrival of a new Aerial Ladder Platform, procured collaboratively.

We have developed our Risk Based Inspection Programme to enhance our targeting of resources to risk and adopted the NFCC Competency Framework for Fire Safety Regulators, and used this to implement a Development and Assessment Pathway for our Fire Safety Inspecting Officers.

We have ensured the continued prioritisation of our Built Environment Programme. We are on track to deliver the first two phases of this Programme by December. As part of this Programme, we have undertaken fire safety audits of all 198 high-rise residential buildings within Berkshire. We completed this work in July 2021, and are now focused on revisits and concentrating our efforts on the 80% of buildings that require further management.

Our workforce planning arrangements are robust and critical in the management of our lean operating model. Whilst there have been short-term pressures created by increased sickness and self-isolation, the impact of changes to pension arrangements is having a notable impact on our retirement profile. In response to this, we have evolved our response model, for example, in the recruitment of Firefighter Apprentices. In the short-term, we have taken immediate decisions to ensure we effectively maintain our required establishment, such as increasing our recent transferee intake.

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ROYAL BERKSHIRE FIRE AUTHORITY



| | |
|---------------------------|--|
| COMMITTEE | FIRE AUTHORITY |
| DATE OF MEETING | 15 FEBRUARY 2022 |
| SUBJECT | 2022/23 MEMBER SCHEME OF ALLOWANCE REVIEW |
| LEAD OFFICER | GRAHAM BRITTEN, MONITORING OFFICER |
| LEAD MEMBER | N/A |
| EXEMPT INFORMATION | NONE |
| ACTION | DECISION |

1. EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

- 1.1 To receive recommendation from Management Committee on 3 February 2022, the 2022/23 Member Scheme of Allowance Review and to receive for note the recommendations of each of the six unitary authority Independent Remuneration Panels (IRPs) to their respective councils.
- 1.2 The Local Authorities (Members' Allowances) (England) Regulations 2003 regulations 10 and 19 (2) require the Authority to make a Scheme of Allowances before the beginning of the financial year; and, before it makes it, to have regard to the recommendations made by Independent Remuneration Panels of its constituent councils.

2. RECOMMENDATION

That Fire Authority:

- 2.1 **AGREE** the Scheme of Allowances for 2022/23 (Appendix A);
- 2.2 **NOTE** that subject to any pay award reached by the National Joint Council (NJC) for staff employed under 'Green Book' conditions, be backdated from 1 April 2021; and
- 2.3 **NOTE** the recommendations of each of the six unitary authority Independent Remuneration Panels (IRPs).

3. REPORT

Agenda Item 15

- 3.1 On an annual basis the Authority is required to adopt a Scheme of Members' Allowance prior to the start of the financial year. MA14 of Royal Berkshire Fire Authority (RBFA) Scheme of Allowances states that *'The Basic, Special Responsibility and Co-optees' Allowances shall be adjusted annually in line with the average percentage pay increase agreed by the NJC for Local Government Services. Adjustment of the allowance shall take effect from the beginning of the financial year'*
- 3.2 Members will be aware that when the Fire Authority agreed the 2021/22 Revenue Budget, staffing salary budgets were set based on central Government position of a public sector pay freeze. The National Joint Council (NJC) Government Services are currently negotiating a pay agreement for staff employed under 'Green Book' terms and conditions for 2021/22. To date, an agreement has not been made.
- 3.3 Due to reasons stated in paragraph 3.2, Appendix A reflects that no pay award increase has been applied to the Members Scheme of Allowances effective from 1 April 2022.
- 3.4 This report was presented to the Management Committee on 3 February 2022 and recommend paragraphs 2.1 to 2.3 to the Fire Authority.
- 3.5 An Independent Review of the Scheme of Allowances is held every four years. The last independent review was held in September 2019 by South East Employers and recommended the following indices are applied to the specified allowances:
- 3.5.1 Basic Allowance, SRAs and IP remuneration:
- Indexed to the annual local government percentage salary increase, (known as the 'spinal column point' 49 of the National Joint Councils' agreement) to be implemented from the date of the Authority's Annual Meeting for the year that the index applies to staff.*
- 3.5.2 *It is further recommended that the indices recommended in this review are utilised for four years from the date of the Annual Meeting, or until the Authority requires a further review whichever is sooner.*
- 3.6 At its meeting on 24 October 2019, the Fire Authority approved the recommendation from South East Employers, with the exception that the indexation references be effective from the start of the financial year. Minute reference 24. The next Independent Review of the Scheme of Allowances will be held in 2023.

Independent Remuneration Panels (IRPs)

- 3.6 There are six Independent Remuneration Panels (IRPs) in the Royal County of Berkshire, which make recommendations to Bracknell Forest Council, Reading Borough Council, Royal Borough of Windsor and Maidenhead,

Slough Borough Council, West Berkshire Council and Wokingham Borough Council. Members are asked to note the recommendations of each IRP.

- 3.6.1 **Bracknell Borough Council** – approved on 28 February 2018 its Member Scheme of Allowance and became effective from 1 April 2018. It is indexed to the annual local government pay increase. Minute reference 49. The IRP review the scheme on an annual basis.
- 3.6.2 **Reading Borough Council** – approved on 23 March 2021, that the 2021/22 Basic Allowance and Special Responsibility Allowance remain at the same level as set for 2020/21; and the Basic Allowance paid to individual councillors be set subject to increase in line with the Local Government Pay Settlement for 2021/22). Reading Borough Council minute reference 27.
- 3.6.3 **Royal Borough of Windsor and Maidenhead** – On 27 October 2020, RBWM approved the Basic Allowance payable should remain at its current level, and indexed annually in line with average pay increase given to Royal Borough employees. Minute reference 47.
- 3.6.4 **Slough Borough Council** at its Council meeting on 24 November 2020, it approved the IRP recommendation of recalibrated Basic Allowance effective from 1 April 2021. Minute reference 46.
- 3.6.5 **West Berkshire Council** – On 3 December 2020, West Berkshire Council agreed the new Scheme of Allowances be implemented from the beginning of the financial year (01 April 2022) minute reference 46.
- 3.6.6 **Wokingham Borough Council** – On 21 January 2021, Wokingham Borough Council approved no changes are made to the basic allowance for the financial years consisting of 2020/21 and 2021/22. The Council also agreed that during the municipal year, when a review of Members' Allowances is not required, the IRP are given permission to publish a press release in local news and via WBC media sources, with administrative support from Democratic Services Officers. The content of this piece will focus on the views of Panel members, both before and after appointment to the Panel, on Members' Allowances and the work of a Councillor. Minute reference 87.

4. CONTRIBUTION TO STRATEGIC COMMITMENTS

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

5. FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

- 5.1 The current budget for Members' Allowances (Basic and Special Responsibility Allowances) is estimated to be in the region of £95k. Costs will be incurred in publishing a notice that the Authority has made a Scheme of Members' Allowances in a Berkshire newspaper. The cost is estimated to be in the region of £300.

6. LEGAL IMPLICATIONS

- 6.1 This report is in accordance with the Local Authorities (Members' Allowances) (England) Regulations 2003 Regulations 10 and 19 (2) which require the authority to make a scheme of allowances before the beginning of the financial year; and, before it makes it, to have regard to the recommendations made by the Independent Remuneration Panels of its constituent councils.

7. EQUALITY AND DIVERSITY IMPLICATIONS

- 7.1 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. All RBFA Members have been appointed by one of the six Unitary Authorities in Berkshire and are entitled to claim "dependent carers' allowances" from their appointing authority.

8. RISK IMPLICATIONS

- 8.1 No risk implications have been identified.

9. CONSISTENCY WITH DUTY TO COLLABORATE

- 9.1 Not applicable.

10. PRINCIPAL CONSULTATION

- 10.1 The Chief Fire Officer, Chief Finance Officer and Senior Leadership Team were consulted during the preparation of this report. The Monitoring Officer is the report sponsor.

11. BACKGROUND PAPERS

- 11.1 [Bracknell Forest Council meeting on 28 February 2018. Minute reference 49.](#)
- 11.2 [Reading Borough Council meeting on 23 March 2021. Minute reference 27.](#)
- 11.3 [Royal Borough of Windsor and Maidenhead Council meeting on 27 October 2020. Minute reference 47.](#)
- 11.4 [Slough Borough Council meeting on 24 November 2020. Minute reference 46.](#)
- 11.5 [West Berkshire Council meeting on 3 December 2020. Minute reference 46.](#)
- 11.6 [Wokingham Borough Council meeting on 21 January 2021. Minute reference 87.](#)

11.7 [Royal Berkshire Fire Authority meeting on 24 October 2019. Minute reference 24.](#)

12. APPENDICES

12.1 Appendix A – 2021/22 RBFA Scheme of Allowances.

13. CONTACT DETAILS

13.1 Fayth Rowe, Democratic Support Lead, 0118 938 4611

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SCHEME OF ALLOWANCES

February 2022



MEMBERS ALLOWANCES SCHEME

INTRODUCTION

The Royal Berkshire Fire Authority, in exercise of the powers conferred by the Local Authorities (Members' Allowances) (England) Regulations 2003, hereby makes the following scheme:

NAME AND DURATION

- MA1. This scheme may be cited as the Royal Berkshire Fire Authority Members' Allowances Scheme.
- MA2. **This scheme shall have effect for the financial year 2022/23.** The Scheme may be amended at any time by resolution of the Authority.

BASIC ALLOWANCE

- MA3. A **Basic Allowance** at a rate of £2,552¹ per annum shall be paid to each Member in monthly instalments.
- MA4. For the avoidance of doubt, 'Member' in this context means a person appointed to the Authority under the provisions of the Royal Berkshire Fire Service Combination Scheme.
- MA5. The Basic Allowance is intended to recognise the time commitment of Members including calls on their time at meetings with officers and constituents. It is also intended to cover incidental costs such as the use of Members' homes.
- MA6. Where a Member's term of office does not extend throughout a complete year, the amount payable shall be pro rata to the number of days during which his/her term of office subsists.

¹ Indexed to local government percentage salary increase so may be subject to change.

SPECIAL RESPONSIBILITY ALLOWANCE

MA7. A **Special Responsibility Allowance** shall be paid in monthly instalments to those Members who hold the special responsibilities in relation to the Fire Authority, in recognition of the additional duties and time commitment such positions entail. These Special Responsibility Allowances are specified in Schedule 1.

Schedule 1

| Position | Special Responsibility Allowance ² |
|--|---|
| Chairman of Authority | £12,762 |
| Vice Chairman of Authority | £6,381 |
| Chairmen of Committees | £3,828 |
| Lead Members | £3,828 |
| Opposition Group Leaders | £2,552 |
| Member Champions | £1,276 |
| RBFA Chairman of Thames Valley Joint Committee (if applicable) | £2,552 |
| Co-optees' Allowance | £142.00 per meeting |

MA8. Where a Member holds one of the above positions for part of a year, the amount payable shall be pro rata to the number of days he/she holds that position.

MA9. A Member may not receive more than one Special Responsibility Allowance at any one time. Therefore, a Member holding more than one of the positions of special responsibility must notify the Monitoring Officer to the Authority in writing which Special Responsibility Allowance he/she wishes to be paid.

CO-OPTEEES' ALLOWANCE

MA10. The Co-opted Independent Person (s) shall be entitled to receive a payment of £142.00 per meeting.

MA11. Independent Persons are entitled to receive only the allowances under this scheme for the duties he/she undertakes on behalf of the Fire Authority, and

² Indexed to local government percentage salary increase so may be subject to increase.

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Appendix A

may not claim or receive allowances from another Local Authority or any other source for the same duties.

SCHEDULE 2 – APPROVED DUTIES

MA12. Members and the Independent Persons shall be entitled to claim travelling and subsistence allowances for the following duties:

- (1) Meetings of the Authority, committees and task and finish groups formally convened by the Monitoring Officer, including (a) seminars, etc. to which all Members have been invited and (b) cases where a Member is invited and officially notified to attend a meeting of a committee of which he/she is not a Member;
- (2) formal briefings by the Chief Fire Officer/ Chief Executive or other officer, provided Members of at least two political groups have been invited to attend;
- (3) on-site inspections or visits authorised in advance by the Authority or a committee;
- (4) official and courtesy visits undertaken by the Chairman of the Authority or, in the case of a particular visit, such other Member as he/she may ask to represent him/her.
- (5) attendance as an officially appointed representative of the Authority on any other body, including a committee, sub-committee or working party of that body, or a further body to which that body has appointed the representative provided there is a connection with the functions of the Authority;
- (6) attendance at outside conferences, courses, seminars and like meetings, subject to prior approval by the Authority or a committee, or by the Monitoring Officer or Chief Fire Officer/Chief Executive after consultation with the Chairman or Vice Chairman;
- (7) attendance at medal presentation ceremonies and other events of a public relations nature to which Members of the Authority have been formally invited;
- (8) subject to the provisions of the Local Authorities (Members' Allowances) (England) Regulations 2003, such other duties for the purpose of or in connection with the discharge of the functions of the Authority as the Authority may from time to time determine;
- (9) attendance at meetings with officers of the Service where a Member has been formally invited in his/her capacity as reference holder;
- (10) visits to Fire and Rescue Service premises undertaken as part of a planned programme;

MA13. The amounts of allowances paid by the Authority are set out in Schedule 3.

INDEXATION OF ALLOWANCES

- MA14. The Basic, Special Responsibility and Co-optees' Allowances shall be adjusted annually in line with percentage salary increase (known as the 'spinal column point 49') agreed by the NJC for Local Government Services. Adjustment of the allowance shall take effect from the beginning of the financial year for the year the index is applied to staff.
- MA15. The rates of travel allowances shall be the same as those approved by the HMRC (HM Revenue and Customs) and shall be adjusted and take effect in line with alterations made from time to time by the HMRC.
- MA16. The rates of subsistence allowances shall be the same as those agreed for officers of Royal Berkshire Fire and Rescue Service.
- MA17. The Chief Finance Officer shall have delegated power to approve the adjustment in accordance with paragraphs MA15 and MA16 above.

RENUNCIATION OF ALLOWANCES REPAYMENT

- MA18. A Member may, by notice in writing given to the Monitoring Officer, elect to forego, assign or transfer all or part of his/her entitlement to an allowance under this scheme.

CLAIMS

- MA19. Basic, special responsibility and co-optees' allowances do not need to be claimed.
- MA20. Claims for travelling and subsistence must be made on the approved form. Expenses claims should be made monthly. Claims submitted after three months from the date of expenditure occurred will not be accepted, except in exceptional circumstance and approved in writing by the Chief Finance Officer.
- MA21. Where re-imbursment of travelling and subsistence is being claimed, receipts should be attached to the claim form.
- MA22. All expenses can be claimed on one form (except Basic and Special Responsibility Allowances which are paid automatically).
- MA23. Time and place of departure may be from work, it does not have to be a home to home journey but claims must show clearly where you are travelling from and to. Completed forms should be sent to Democratic Support who will forward them to the Payments Section following approval.

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Appendix A

MA24. Allowances are paid at the end of each month. The usual payment date is the last working day of the month. To ensure payment is received by the end of the month, claims should be submitted **by the 7th of each month**.

SCHEDULE 3 - TRAVELLING AND SUBSISTENCE ALLOWANCES

MA25. Councillors are entitled to receive payments for travelling and subsistence for the purpose of performing approved duties.

MA26. The cost to the Authority of the use of public transport for medium and long distance journeys may often be less than the cost of a Member's use of a private car. There is an expectation that before making medium or long distance journeys Members will consider the cost to the Authority as well as the convenience of the mode of transport. Where public transport is available, convenient, and cheaper, a Member may choose to use his or her own private vehicle but the total amount claimed for mileage shall not exceed the ordinary standard public transport fare.

MA27. For travel by a Member in his/her own private car or one provided for his/her use, the rate shall be that [approved HMRC](#) (HM Revenue and Customs).

MA28. Claims for expenses should only be made when actually incurred, i.e. rail/bus, taxis, hotel accommodation. Receipts must be provided.

MA29. The rates of subsistence allowances shall be the same of those agreed for officers of Royal Berkshire Fire and Rescue Service. Copies of the rates agreed for officers of Royal Berkshire Fire and Rescue Service are available from Democratic Support committeeteam@rbfrs.co.uk

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| ITEM | DECISION BODY | NEXT REPORTING DATE | REPORTING FREQUENCY | RECOMMENDED ACTION | LEAD OFFICER | LEAD MEMBER | PART I / II |
|---|----------------------|---------------------|---------------------|--------------------|---------------|-------------------------------------|-------------|
| Internal Audit Report | A&GC | 23.03.22 | quarterly | Note | HF&P | N/A | Part I |
| External Audit Report | A&GC | 23.03.22 | quarterly | Note | HF&P | N/A | Part I |
| Statement of Assurance | A&GC | 23.03.22 | Annual | Agree | HCS | A&GC Chairman | Part I |
| Statement of Accounts | A&GC | 23.03.22 | Annual | Agree | HF&P | Budget and Income Generation Lead | Part I |
| Member/Officer Protocol | A&GC | 23.03.22 | every four years | Agree | HCS | N/A | Part I |
| Annual Report on Members Development | A&GC | 23.03.22 | Annual | Note | HCS | Organisational Development Champion | Part I |
| Members Code of Conduct | A&GC | 23.03.22 | Annual | Note and recommend | HCS | A&GC Chairman | Part I |
| Annual report on Governance / Members attendance and allowances | A&GC | 23.03.22 | Annual | Note and recommend | HCS | A&GC Chairman | Part I |
| Quarter 3 Performance Report | A&GC | 23.03.22 | Quarterly | Note | HCS | N/A | Part I |
| Capital Projects Update - project closedown report | Management Committee | 05.04.22 | Ad-hoc | Note | HCP&E | Strategic Assets Lead | Part II |
| Corporate Calendar 2022/23 | Fire Authority | 28.04.22 | Annual | Agree | HCS | N/A | Part I |
| Core Code of Ethics for Fire and Rescue Services (England) - Presentation | Fire Authority | 28.04.22 | Ad-hoc | Note | DChEx | N/A | Part I |
| Lead Members Annual Reports | Fire Authority | 28.04.22 | Bi-annual | Note | Lead Officers | Lead Members | Part I |
| Built Environment Presentation | Fire Authority | 28.04.22 | Ad-hoc | Note | DCFO | N/A | Part I |
| Pension ID Framework | Fire Authority | 28.04.22 | Ad-hoc | Agree | HHR&L&D | N/A | Part I |
| Member Champion Annual Reports | Fire Authority | 28.04.22 | Annual | Note | Lead Officers | Member Champions | Part I |
| Annual Plan 2022/23 | Fire Authority | 28.04.22 | Annual | Agree | HCS | N/A | Part I |
| Annual Report on Governance - to include Member attendance, allowances and expenses | Fire Authority | 28.04.22 | Annual | Note | HCS | A&GC Chairman | Part I |

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**Categories of “Exempt Information”
under Schedule 12A of the Local Government Act 1972**

| | Category |
|---|---|
| | [For each of nos 1 - 7, see <u>Qualification 1</u> below] |
| 1 | Information relating to any individual |
| 2 | Information which is likely to reveal the identity of an individual. |
| 3 | Information relating to the financial or business affairs of any particular person (including the authority holding that information). [see <u>Qualification 2</u> below] |
| 4 | Information relating to any consultations or negotiations, or contemplated consultations or negotiations, in connection with any labour relations matter arising between the authority or a Minister of the Crown and employees of, or office holders under, the authority. |
| 5 | Information in respect of which a claim to legal professional privilege could be maintained in legal proceedings. |
| 6 | Information which reveals that the authority purposes: (a) to give under any enactment a notice under or by virtue of which requirements are imposed on a person; or (b) to make an order or direction under any enactment. |
| 7 | Information relating to any action taken or to be taken in connection with the prevention, investigation or prosecution of crime. |

Qualifications:

- (1) Information falling within paragraph 3 is not exempt information by virtue of that paragraph if it is required to be registered under -
 - (a) the Companies Act 1985;
 - (b) the Friendly Societies Act 1974;
 - (c) the Friendly Societies Act 1992;
 - (d) the Industrial and Provident Societies Acts 1965 to 1978;
 - (e) the Building Societies Act 1986; or
 - (f) the Charities Act 1993.
- (2) Information is not exempt information if it relates to proposed development for which the local planning authority may grant itself planning permission pursuant to regulation 3 of the Town and Country Planning General Regulations 1992.
- (3) Information which -
 - (a) falls within any of paragraphs 1 to 7 above; and
 - (b) is not prevented from being exempt by virtue of the two preceding paragraphs

is exempt information if and so long, as in all the circumstances of the case, the public interest in maintaining the exemption outweighs the public interest

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in disclosing the information.

Interpretation:

- (4) "*Employee*" means a person employed under a contract of service;
- (5) "*Financial or business affairs*" includes contemplated, as well as past or current, activities;
- (6) "*Labour relations matter*" means -
 - (a) any of the matters specified in paragraphs (a) to (g) of section 218(1) of the Trade Union and Labour Relations (Consolidation) Act 1992[10] (matters which may be the subject of a trade dispute, within the meaning of that Act);
 - or
 - (b) any dispute about a matter falling within paragraph (a) above;and for the purposes of this definition the enactments mentioned in paragraph (a) above, with the necessary modifications, shall apply in relation to office-holders under the authority as they apply in relation to employees of the authority;
- (7) "*Office-holder*", in relation to the authority, means the holder of any paid office appointments to which are or may be made or confirmed by the authority or by any joint board on which the authority is represented or by any person who holds any such office or is an employee of the authority;
- (8) "*Registered*" in relation to information required to be registered under the Building Societies Act 1986, means recorded in the public file of any building society (within the meaning of that Act).

By virtue of paragraph(s) 1, 2, 3 of Part 1 of Schedule 12A of the Local Government Act 1972.

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