



## BEDFORDSHIRE FIRE AND RESCUE AUTHORITY

Members of Fire and Rescue Authority.

Bedford Borough Councillors: C Atkins, J Gambold and M Headley

Central Bedfordshire Councillors: R Berry, J Chatterley, P Duckett, D McVicar and I Shingler

Luton Borough Councillors: K Choudhry, D Franks, S Khurshid and Y Waheed

A meeting of **Fire and Rescue Authority** will be held **remotely** on **Thursday, 11 February 2021** starting at **10.00 am**.

John Atkinson  
Secretary/Monitoring Officer

### A G E N D A

Item	Subject	Lead	Purpose of Discussion
1.	Apologies	Secretary/ Monitoring Officer	
2.	Declarations of Disclosable Pecuniary and Other Interests	Chair	Members are requested to disclose the existence and nature of any disclosable pecuniary interest and any other interests as required by the Fire Authority's Code of Conduct (see note below).
3.	Communications	Chair	

<b>Item</b>	<b>Subject</b>	<b>Lead</b>	<b>Purpose of Discussion</b>
4.	Minutes	Chair	To confirm the Minutes of the meeting held on 12 January 2021 (Pages 5 - 10)
5.	Public Participation	Chair	To receive any questions put to the Authority under the Public Participation Scheme
6.	Executive Committee 3 February 2021	Chair	To consider a report (Pages 11 - 16)
7.	2020/21 Revenue Budget and Capital Programme Monitoring as at 31 December 2020	CFO/Treasurer	To consider a report (Pages 17 - 28)
8.	The 2021/22 Revenue Budget and Capital Programme	CFO/Treasurer	To consider a report (Pages 29 - 94)
9.	2019-2023 Community Risk Management Plan, 2021/22 Action Plan: Consultation update	DCFO	To consider a report (Pages 95 - 164)
10.	HMICFRS Covid 19 Inspection Report	DCFO	To consider a report (Pages 165 - 222)
11.	HMICFRS Round 2 Service Inspections - Update	DCFO/Mr S Frank	To receive a presentation
12.	Localism Act 2011 - Pay Policy Statement 2021	HHR	To consider a report (Pages 223 - 234)
13.	Work Programme	CFO	To consider a report (Pages 235 - 240)
14.	Information Bulletin Q3 Oct-Dec	CFO	To consider a report (Pages 241 - 254)
15.	CFO Appointment Process	CFO	To receive an update (Pages 255 - 284)



Item	Subject	Lead	Purpose of Discussion
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**Local Government Act 1972: Schedule 12A (as amended) - Exclusion on the Public**

**Chair**

*To consider whether to pass a resolution under Section 100(A) of the Local Government Act 1972 to exclude the public from the remainder of the meeting on the grounds that consideration of the following items of business is likely to involve the disclosure of exempt information as defined in Paragraphs 3 and 4 of Part 1 of Schedule 12A to the Act as amended.*

Item	Subject	Lead	Purpose of Discussion
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16.	Business Continuity Annual Review	HHR	To consider a report (Pages 285 - 290)
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Next Meeting 10.00 am on 23 March 2021, this meeting will be held remotely.

**DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST**

From 1 July 2012 new regulations were introduced on Disclosable Pecuniary Interests (DPIs). The interests are set out in the Schedule to the Code of Conduct adopted by the Fire Authority on 28 June 2012. Members are statutorily required to notify the Monitoring Officer (MO) of any such interest which they, or a spouse or civil partner or a person they live with as such, have where they know of the interest.

A Member must make a verbal declaration of the existence and nature of any Disclosable Pecuniary Interest and any other interest as defined in paragraph 7 of the Fire Authority’s Code of Conduct at any meeting of the Fire Authority, a Committee (or Sub-Committee) at which the Member is present and, in the case of a DPI, withdraw from participating in the meeting where an item of business which affects or relates to the subject matter of that interest is under consideration, at or before the consideration of the item of business or as soon as the interest becomes apparent.

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## MINUTES OF FIRE AND RESCUE AUTHORITY MEETING HELD ON 12 JANUARY 2021

Present: Councillors C Atkins, R Berry, J Chatterley (Chairman), K Choudhry, P Duckett, D Franks, J Gambold, M Headley, D McVicar, I Shingler and Y Waheed (Vice-Chair)

CFO P Fuller, DCFO A Hopkinson, ACO G Chambers, ACFO A Peckham and Mr J Atkinson

### 19-20/FRA/65 Apologies

There were no apologies for absence.

### 19-20/FRA/66 Declarations of Disclosable Pecuniary and Other Interests

There were no declarations of disclosable pecuniary and other interests.

### 19-20/FRA/67 Communications

#### Letter from Lord Greenhalgh

The Chair advised that he had received a letter from Lord Greenhalgh which included performance indices from various fire and rescue services up to June 2020.

The Deputy Chief Fire Officer reported that a presentation was being prepared for the Service's Corporate Management Team in advance of it being submitted to a future Authority meeting.

#### COVID-19 Inspection

The Chair reported that he had received correspondence relating to the draft letter on the outcome of the inspection of the Service's COVID-19 response.

The Chief Fire Officer added that the final inspection result was still awaited following the submission of the Service's response to the draft inspection outcome letter.

#### Sharing of Correspondence

It was noted that both the Chair and Chief Fire Officer circulated communications to Members of the Authority on a regular basis in the period between Authority meetings.

#### 19-20/FRA/68 Minutes

##### **RESOLVED:**

That the Minutes of the meeting held on 10 December 2020 be confirmed as a true record.

#### 19-20/FRA/69 Public Participation

Members noted that no questions had been received in accordance with the public participation scheme approved at the meeting of the Fire and Rescue Authority held on 5 April 2000 (Minute 99/fa/94 refers).

#### 19-20/FRA/70 Audit and Standards Committee 1 December 2020

Councillor Headley submitted the draft Minutes of the meeting of the Audit and Standards Committee held on 1 December 2020. He reported that, as of the date of the meeting, the audit of the Statement of Accounts had not been concluded by EY, the Service's external auditors. An apology had been issued to the Committee for the delay. Subsequent to the meeting, the accounts had been signed off before Christmas.

Councillor Headley drew the Authority's attention to the Statement of Assurance. This document set out the Service's financial assurance, governance framework and operational assurance arrangements.

The work required to pull the Statement together was recognised.

##### **RESOLVED:**

That the submitted Minutes of the meeting of the Audit and Standards Committee held on 1 December 2020 be received and the recommendations of the meeting be approved.

## 19-20/FRA/71 Budget Setting

The Assistant Chief Officer – Finance and Corporate Services introduced his report that provided information to allow Members to consult further on a draft Revenue Budget, Capital Programme and Council Tax for 2021/22. The report would be discussed in greater detail at the Members Budget Workshop on 19 January 2021, with the final budget proposals being submitted to the next meeting of the Authority on 11 February 2021 for approval.

The Assistant Chief Officer reported that the timetable had been amended from previous years due to the lateness of the Chancellor's announcement on the outcome of the Comprehensive Spending Review and uncertainties around the level of pandemic funding available.

A Council Tax increase of 1.99% was being proposed. This would increase the precept for a Band D equivalent property by £2 per annum. Efficiency savings covering the period 2021/22 to 2023/24 totalled £704,000.

The Assistant Chief Officer reported that there would be a minimal increase of £13,000 to the Revenue Support Grant received by the Service.

Members' attention was drawn to the forecast reduction in business rate and Council Tax income resulting from the ongoing pandemic. Business rate revenue was £117,000 less than forecast in the previous year's budget and the reduction in Council Tax income was £533,000. This was somewhat offset by a Council Tax support grant of approximately £400,000. The Authority had also had the foresight to allocate the year end underspend of approximately £700,000 into a Collection Fund deficit reserve.

Following the observation that the Council Taxbase forecasts for Bedford Borough Council were significantly lower than the other two constituent authorities, Councillor Headley commented that the assumptions had been made based upon the forecast increase in claims against the Council Tax reduction scheme.

In relation to the Capital Programme, it was noted that the projects included in the Programme were similar to previous years, including investment in ICT infrastructure. An email detailing the £513,000 of new bids had been circulated to Members via email on Friday, 8 January 2021.

The Assistant Chief Officer advised that the proposals had been subject to consultation and to date, just under 200 responses had been received. Around 80% of respondents were in favour of the proposed 1.99% Council Tax increase, with over 60% in favour of a £5 increase per Band D equivalent property as suggested by the National Fire Chiefs Council.

Members considered the appendices of the report, particularly the Medium Term Revenue Plan (Appendix 1). The Assistant Chief Officer highlighted the following budget lines: removal of 3% Fire Fighter Pay increase 2020/21 from Base Budget, pensions changes and the offset

by grant of the additional employer costs, the revenue contribution to capital, the revenue support grant, business rate baseline, business rate top-up, including the 2019/20 revised top up, business rates grant, Collection Fund Deficit and use of Collection Fund deficit reserve.

The use of the Earmarked Reserve for budget-setting did not cover the full four-year period and Members would have to further discuss how to bridge the gap at the Budget Workshop so that a balanced budget for the four year period could be considered at the next meeting of the Authority.

It was also agreed that the Council Taxbase and employer pension grant would be subject to further discussion at the Budget Workshop.

Councillor Headley expressed concern about the proposed increases in expenditure relating to scrutiny panel decisions and new projects in the Capital Programme and requested further information on these to be discussed at the Budget Workshop.

The Chair advised Members that if there were any further suggestions for areas of discussion at the Budget Workshop, that these be forwarded to the Assistant Chief Officer.

**RESOLVED:**

1. That a draft revenue budget requirement of £31.286m, as per Appendix 1 of the report, with a council tax increase of 1.99%, be approved for further consultation.
2. That a draft Capital Programme of £1.038m as per Appendix 4 of the report be approved for further consultation.

19-20/FRA/72 Work Programme

Members received the updated Work Programme.

**RESOLVED:**

That the Work Programme be received.

19-20/FRA/73 Executive Committee 7 January 2021

The Chair advised the Authority that the Executive Committee had met on 7 January 2021 and the Minutes of that meeting had been circulated to all Members of the Authority on 11 January 2021 for information.

The main item of discussion at the meeting had been the process for appointing a successor for the Chief Fire Officer as Paul Fuller had announced his intention to retire as of 30 June 2021.

The Chair reported that the Executive Committee had delegated authority in relation to the appointment of Principal Officer posts, and was

seeking endorsement from the Authority to proceed with arrangements to appoint to the post of Chief Fire Officer.

In response to a query, the Chief Fire Officer and the Secretary and Monitoring Officer advised that, whilst the combination of the roles of Chief Fire Officer and Chief Executive was not required under the National Framework, almost every Fire and Rescue Service had appointed to a combined post as this gave the Chief Fire Officer the authority to undertake staffing matters delegated to the Head of Paid Service as set out in the Local Government and Housing Act 1989.

Members of the Authority expressed their regret at the Chief Fire Officer's departure and agreed that a Chief Fire Officer/Chief Executive should be appointed to succeed Paul Fuller on his departure from the Service. It was agreed that the appointment of the successful individual should be ratified by the full Authority at the conclusion of the selection process, noting that this may necessitate the calling of a special meeting solely for this purpose.

**RESOLVED:**

That the submitted Minutes of the meeting of the Executive Committee held on 7 January 2021 be received and that it be agreed that:

- (a) the process to appoint a new Chief Fire Officer to succeed Paul Fuller following his decision to leave the post on 30 June 2021 be approved and that the Executive Committee be given delegated authority to conduct the appointment process.
- (b) the post of Chief Fire Officer be advertised requiring operational competency and including the role of Chief Executive/Head of Paid Service, with a single point salary.
- (c) the appointment of the successful applicant will be ratified by the full Fire and Rescue Authority at the conclusion of the selection process.

The meeting ended at 11.16 am

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For Publication

Bedfordshire Fire and Rescue Authority  
11 February 2021

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**REPORT AUTHOR:** COUNCILLOR J CHATTERLEY

**SUBJECT:** EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE

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For further information on this Report contact: John Atkinson  
Secretary/Monitoring Officer

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Background Papers: None

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Implications (tick ✓):

LEGAL			FINANCIAL	
HUMAN RESOURCES			EQUALITY IMPACT	
ENVIRONMENTAL			POLICY	
CORPORATE RISK	Known	✓	OTHER (please specify)	
	New			

*Any implications affecting this report are noted at the end of the report.*

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**PURPOSE:**

To report on the meeting of the Executive Committee held on 3 February 2021.

**RECOMMENDATIONS:**

That the submitted minutes of the meeting held on 3 February 2021 be received and the recommendations of the meeting, noted below, be considered.

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1. Introduction

1.1 The draft minutes of the meeting of the Executive Committee held on 3 February 2021 are appended for Members' consideration.

1.2 The Executive Committee made the following recommendations to the Fire Authority:

20-21/EC/37 – Chief Fire Officer Recruitment Process

**RESOLVED:**

1. That the full Authority be recommended to approve the calling of a special meeting during the week commencing 8 March 2021 to confirm the appointment of the new Chief Fire Officer, if required.

**COUNCILLOR JOHN CHATTERLEY  
CHAIR**

## MINUTES OF EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE MEETING HELD ON 3 FEBRUARY 2021

Present: Councillors J Chatterley (Chair), Y Waheed, C Atkins, D Franks and D McVicar  
CFO P Fuller, Ms S Fecondi and Mr J Atkinson

### 20-21/EC/33 Apologies

33.1 There were no apologies.

### 20-21/EC/34 Declaration of Disclosable Pecuniary and Other Interests

34.1 There were no declarations of interests.

### 20-21/EC/35 Communications

35.1 Councillor Atkins praised the passing out booklet that had recently been issued celebrating the Service's new recruits.

### 20-21/EC/36 Minutes

#### **RESOLVED:**

That the Minutes of the meeting held on 7 January 2021 be confirmed as a true record.

### 20-21/EC/37 Chief Fire Officer - Recruitment Process

37. The Chief Fire Officer submitted the main information pack for the recruitment of his successor, which had previously been circulated to Members, and introduced Sarah Fecondi, the new Head of Human Resources, who would be providing advice and support throughout the recruitment process, to Members of the Executive.

The Executive was advised that the advertisement for the post had been issued the previous week with a closing date of 15 February 2021. The applicants would be asked to submit a 3 page CV and a 3 page statement outlining examples of how they fulfilled the personal attributes required.

The work involved in updating the pack, particularly in relation to the job description and person specification, was acknowledged.

Shortlisting would take place on 16 and 17 February 2021, with Members of the Executive receiving the applications with notes from the Chief Fire Officer electronically, unless hard copies were requested.

Two days of interview would be conducted on 4 and 5 March 2021. Day 1 would consist of a personal and technical interview. This interview would be attended by the Chief Executive of Bedford Borough Council and the Chief Constable of Bedfordshire Police as representatives of the Service's partner organisations. There would also be a media role play exercise which would test the candidates' ability to act under pressure. During Day 2 of the interviews, the candidates would be asked to give a 15 minute presentation on a subject yet to be determined.

The Chief Fire Officer reported that a decision would be made in the days following the interviews, and that the appointment would then be confirmed at the next meeting of the full Fire and Rescue Authority, which was on 23 March 2021.

Councillor Atkins commented that it was her understanding that it had already been agreed that a special meeting of the Authority be called as soon as possible following a decision being made and proposed that a meeting be held during the week commencing 8 March 2021 for this purpose. This was seconded by the Chair and supported by the other Executive Members.

The Chief Fire Officer suggested that the request for an additional meeting could form part of the report on the Chief Fire Officer Recruitment Process that would be considered at the next meeting of the Authority on 11 February 2021.

In response to questions about how the interviews would be conducted virtually, Ms Fecondi advised that an HR Officer would be present at all Panel meetings to advise Members and administer the hosting process via Microsoft Teams. Each interview would be set up as a separate appointment, and a separate room would be available for Members and their advisors in the event that they wished to speak in private. A representative of the ICT team would also be available at all times to provide technical support if required.

The process would be kept as simple as possible to make it more comfortable for the candidates and for the Selection Panel and a "test run" could be arranged for Members prior to the first interview so that they could familiarise themselves with the platform and the process.

Only those on the Panel would be able to attend the interviews as the Service was seeking to replicate, as far as possible, the interview process as it would be conducted non-remotely.

Members of the Executive confirmed that they were happy with the process as described.

In relation to the ongoing discussions around succession planning, Mr J Atkinson, the Secretary and Monitoring Officer, advised that the Executive had, at previous meetings, agreed that the Chair and Chief Fire Officer meet to develop proposals which then be brought forward for consideration. However, this had been superseded by the Chief Fire Officer tendering his notice of resignation and the subsequent recruitment process for his successor. It was also noted that plans were in place to enhance the role of the Assistant Chief Officer and this was being considered as part of the budget proposals. As there were no decisions to be made regarding succession planning outside of these processes, this matter could be closed.

**RESOLVED:**

1. That the full Authority be recommended to approve the calling of a special meeting during the week commencing 8 March 2021 to confirm the appointment of the new Chief Fire Officer, if required.
2. That it be noted that Councillors Chatterley and Franks will be the Member representatives on the Day 1 interview panel.
3. That it be acknowledged that succession planning discussions were no longer required at this time as a result of the recruitment of a new Chief Fire Officer, the budget proposals put forward in relation to the Assistant Chief Officer post and the measures put in place by the CFO under the Scheme of Delegation.

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**REPORT AUTHOR:** ASSISTANT CHIEF OFFICER / FRA TREASURER

**SUBJECT:** 2020/21 REVENUE BUDGET AND CAPITAL PROGRAMME MONITORING as at 31<sup>st</sup> December 2020

For further information on this Report contact: Gavin Chambers, ACO/FRA Treasurer

Background Papers: 2020/21 FRA Budget Setting Papers February 2020, FRA Budget Monitoring Report July 2020, FRA Budget Monitoring Report October 2020.

Implications (tick ✓):

LEGAL			FINANCIAL	✓
HUMAN RESOURCES			EQUALITY IMPACT	
ENVIRONMENTAL			POLICY	
CORPORATE RISK	Known	✓	OTHER (please specify)	
	New	✓		

*Any implications affecting this report are noted at the end of the report.*

**PURPOSE:**

To inform the Fire and Rescue Authority of the forecast year-end budget monitoring position as at 31 December 2020.

**Recommendations:**

1. That the FRA consider and comment on the updates provided within this report.
2. That the FRA consider and agree the requests in para 3.4.1 to slip the capital schemes into 2021/22.

## Executive Highlights Summary

- Members agreed to the request from the **Head of Information Communications Technology** to bring forward capital spend of £186k from the bid of £270k for Laptops from 2021/22 into 2020/21 (see para 3.4.2). This will be funded by the revenue underspend on whole time salaries allocated to the Covid response grant.
- The **Green Book pay award** was agreed at 2.75% from April 2020, therefore 0.75% above what was budgeted. The impact is a £42k budget pressure.
- **Covid-19 (C-19) funding.** The Government's funding to the Service was £105k in tranche 1 and £502k in tranche 2, therefore £607k in total. This has been used against mainly staffing (such as secondees to the Ambulance Service) but also additional PPE and ICT. It is forecast to be fully utilised.
- **Covid-19 (C-19) funding.** In November 2020 the government invited bids from Fire and Rescue Services for extra funding for the pandemic response, the service bid for extra funds however was unsuccessful in the first phase. The government has now opened phase 2 and invited bids, the service will submit a bid again for additional funding to support the collaborative work undertaken.
- The distribution of the **Fire Protection Board and Protection Funding**, has led to the Service receiving £161k. This is currently a one-off grant it is currently unclear if this will be funded in future years.
- The distribution of the **Grenfell Infrastructure Funding**, has led to the Service being allocated £51k, this is currently a one-off grant.
- The **CSR** review announced in late November 2020 led to a one-year settlement.
- The **External audit** fee from Ernst & Young (E&Y) has been proposed to increase from £23k per annum to £50k. All local authorities that have E&Y have been impacted by the price increase, with some tripling. The Audit & Standards Committee met on the 2<sup>nd</sup> July and did not agree to the price increase and delegated the ACO to continue discussions/negotiations with Public Sector Audit Appointments (PSAA) on this matter. The ACO is now liaising with PSAA and E&Y on this matter.
- There is significant **capital slippage from 2019/20**, on mainly operational equipment, this has previously been reported to the FRA.

## Looking ahead:

- In year Collection Fund deficit forecasts - The Authority has received the Collection Fund (council tax and business rates) collection forecasts for the year from the unitary authorities. These will be built into the 2021/22 medium term budget and



are currently totalling £1.127m, although this figure is subject to change as they are finalised. The Authority has previously agreed to allocate the in year 2020/21 underspend to a Collection Fund reserve.

- The one off 2019/20 FF Employer Pensions Grant continues for a second year so the additional £1.5m expenditure in 2019/20 will again be covered in 2020/21 by this grant. It has been confirmed that this will be covered by grant again in 2021/22 however ongoing funding for this in future years remains a risk to the Service and will be wrapped up as part of the new 3 year CSR funding review. The FF Pensions remedy also remains a financial risk to the Service, as any funding of increased costs is yet to be determined.

## 1. Introduction

- 1.1 On 11 February 2020, the Fire and Rescue Authority (FRA) approved a Revenue Budget Requirement for 2020/21 of £31.063m and a Capital Programme of £1.505m.

## 2. Revenue Budget Monitoring

- 2.1 The Revenue Budget efficiency savings for 2020/21 can be found in Appendix 1. The budgets have been reduced for these areas and will be monitored during the year.
- 2.2 The funding of the 2020/21 Revenue Budget is by way of Government Funding £6.512m, local Business Rates redistribution £2.301m and Council Tax of £21.882m, there is also funding from a Collection Fund surplus of £0.368m.

### 2.3 **Forecasting Outturn:**

- 2.3.1 Tables 1 and 2 below are populated during the year in line with the spreadsheet returns that Corporate Management Team (CMT) members submit to the Finance Team and through the meetings that Finance Officers have with CMT members. The forecast outturn positions are as accurate as the information received from each CMT member.
- 2.3.2 Table 1 below details the current budget excluding salary budgets, for each CMT service area. The forecast year-end outturn is shown in column three.

2.3.3 Table 1: 2020/21 Revenue Budget Forecast Outturn (excluding salary budgets)

Title	Current Budget £	YTD Actuals	F/cast Yr-End Outturn £	Variance £	RAG status (see note below**)
Strategic Management	167,800	68,333	167,800	0	Green
Assistant Chief Officer	2,921,800	(68,730)	2,989,800	68,000	Amber
Head of Response	1,097,300	313,302	1,143,800	46,500	Green
Head of Training and Assurance	427,300	209,083	427,300	0	Green
Head of Governance and Asset Management	752,300	644,964	762,300	10,000	Green
Head of Prevention and Protection	217,600	(182,653)	217,600	0	Green
Head of Information Communications Technology	2,473,700	869,577	2,610,700	137,000	Red
Head of Human Resources	264,100	123,118	264,100	0	Green
<b>Total</b>	<b>8,321,900</b>	<b>1,976,994</b>	<b>8,583,400</b>	<b>261,500</b>	

*\*\*RAG Status: Red would identify where there is a large overspend equal to or greater than £100,000 and/or a key service aspect was not being delivered. Amber would identify where there is a possibility of an overspend and/or a key service aspect may not be delivered. It may be that there are action plans in place to address an issue, where until they are successful it is flagged as Amber. Green identifies where service delivery is being performed and as above, where there are underspends. Underspends are not necessarily always green, if for example, there was a key service aspect not being delivered causing the underspend, it would be shown as Red.*

2.3.4 Table 1 above shows a number of variances as at 31<sup>st</sup> December 2020;

Within the ACO area, the forecast overspend is as a result of the proposed increase in External Audit fees £27k, as well as additional fees from the recent audit of the 2019/20 accounts due to Covid work and asset valuations £15k. These are yet to be approved and discussions re the £27k are due to take place with PSAA on this matter. A further £32k overspend relates

to the reduction in forecast investment income due to the drop in market rates for all investments due to the ongoing Covid-19 pandemic, these overspends are offset by an underspend relating to officer vehicle costs (£6k).

The £47k forecast overspend in Head of Response area relates to an unachievable income budget for both staff and visitor meals of £49k due to Covid restrictions, room hire £14k also as a result of Covid restrictions on room hire and a further of £15k with regards to an unachievable income target within Control where work is ongoing to identify income generating opportunities. This is offset by a forecast underspend on Derv across all the fire stations (£17k)

The forecast overspend in the Head of Governance and Asset Management of £10k is due to the unbudgeted purchase of new life jackets for the service rescue boats.

The Head of Information Communications and Technology is forecasting an overspend of £67k due to a partially unachievable efficiency saving relating to the removal of MIS legacy systems which will not be fully resolved until 2021, however the quarterly fee has greatly reduced due to the now low number of users/system areas. The ICT Shared Services recharge is forecast to be a £70k charge to the service at the year-end, as a result of increased workload in ICT due to Covid response and also project work across the service.

2.3.5 The current year to date (YTD) spend as at 31 December 2020 in table 1 looks low in a number of areas, the reasons for this are highlighted below:

Strategic Management - includes a Strategic Development/Innovation budget, some of which is allocated for the Response Review work and also inspection work.

Assistant Chief Officer budgets include £2m of year-end adjustments for contributions to capital, loan principal and interest, also the income received from our local authority partners which is received over 11 months so not equally apportioned across the financial year. Overall these variances will be £0 at year end. The Home Office Pension Grant £1.7m received is also within this area and will be matched against the unbudgeted pension increases within the whole time and retained fire fighter salaries.

The Head of Response is showing a low spend to date, mainly due to Derv (£30k), Utilities (£40k) where the service is awaiting invoices for supplies received. There is currently a year YTD underspend showing within the fire hydrants area (£40k) where again the service is awaiting invoices. As these payments will be due, a provision will be made at the year end for them if required. A further underspend is within the Special Operations Team area for PPE and equipment (£37k), this

will be earmarked into the new financial year. The HQ kitchen area also has an underspend on catering provisions (£30k) due to a greatly reduced service from the pandemic. Payments are also yet to be made where the service has received cross boarder support from Hertfordshire FRS.

Head of Training and Assurance budgets above include training budgets where we are currently showing variance of £60k underspend against budget however this is expected these budgets will show £0 variance at year end.

Within the Head of Prevention and Protection there are currently YTD underspend variances to budgets as a result of decreased activity due to Covid19 in Community Safety (£22k), spend on smoke alarms (£8k), communications and public relations (£15k) and Cadet activities (£20k). It is expected that that these budgets will be £0 variances at year end with any unspent budgets earmarked into 2021/22. There are also a number of revenue grants in this area including High Rise Building Grant (£161k), Dementia (£131k) which will show a £0 variance at year end with any unspent grant carried forward for use in future years.

Head of Information Communications Technology spend to date looks low due to the timing of contracts within this area for Hardware, Software and telecommunications compared to the budget which is spread equally over the year, these variances will be £0 at year end. The successful budget bid as part of the 2020-21 budget setting process of £50k for On-call firefighter - "Fob" in enhancements will not be spent in year due to other priorities affecting the Service and this project budget will be earmarked into 2021/22.

Within the Head of Human Resources there are currently YTD underspend variances against budgets as a result of decreased activity due to Covid19 in Occupational Health activity (£14k) and recruitment including advertising of (£10k). It is expected that these variances will be £0 at year end.

2.3.6 With the salary budgets being such a large proportion of the overall budget, the split from the budgets above is justified.

**Table 2: 2020/21 Salary Budget Forecast Outturn**

<b>Category</b>	<b>Current Budget £</b>	<b>YTD Actuals £</b>	<b>Forecast year end outturn £</b>	<b>Variance £</b>
Whole Time	14,431,200	11,302,831	13,815,200	(616,000)
Control	1,001,600	789,766	1,001,600	0
Retained	2,003,200	1,542,291	1,795,200	(208,000)
Non operational	6,226,900	4,515,467	5,998,900	(228,000)
Agency	432,900	414,571	432,900	0
<b>Grand Total</b>	<b>24,095,800</b>	<b>18,564,926</b>	<b>23,043,800</b>	<b>(1,052,000)</b>

The current forecast underspend in Whole Time (£616k) is mainly due to (£510k) which relates to the fire fighter pay award which was budgeted at 5% from July 2020 however it was agreed at only 2%. As previously reported to the FRA as a result of activities in response to Covid19 pandemic a further forecast underspend on firefighters seconded to the Ambulance Service expected to be (£240k) and senior management of these activities (£52k). Both of these expenses will be covered by the Covid19 grant received from government of (£607k). These underspends are to be partly offset by the brought forward capital spend from 2021/22 for laptops of £186k. The FRA approved this at a previous meeting

The (£208k) underspend forecast in Retained pay relates to the fire fighter pay award which was budgeted at 5% from July 2020 however it was agreed at only 2%, a further underspend of (£140k) relating to on-call firefighters seconded to the Ambulance Service which is funded by the Covid19 grant received from government of (£607k).

The current forecast underspend in non-operational (£228k) is as a result of the Green Book pay award being agreed at 2.75%, 0.75% higher than budgeted £42k which is offset by forecast underspends due to vacancies in Equality and Diversity of (£45k). Further vacancies in the service include workshops (£38k) which is due to a delay in the recruitment of x2 workshop apprentices. There are a number of other vacancies across the service including admin vacancies (£38k), site team vacancy (£24k) a partial vacancy in the Business Improvement Team (£15k), and vacancies within the community safety team, (£10k) on cooks overtime. There are two vacancies in the Dementia team which are funded by a grant (£66k) and members allowances are currently expected to underspend by (£13k).

## 2.4 Total Forecast Outturn, Salary and Non Salary:

- 2.4.1 The total forecast variance at year end including both the non-salary figure in Table 1 above and for pay and on costs, including agency staff shown in Table 2, is currently expected to be an underspend of (£790.5k). This does not take into account the forecast in year Collection Fund deficits and also any FF pay awards above the 2% reported above (agreed either locally or nationally).
- 2.4.2 It was approved at the FRA meeting in October 2020, in light of the significant Collection Fund deficits forecast, that the year end underspend is allocated to a new Collection Fund deficit reserve. This will be used to offset the deficits in the following budget setting years.

## 3. Capital Programme Monitoring

- 3.1 Table 4 below is the 2020/21 Capital Programme. The Red, Amber, Green (RAG) status indicates how well the schemes are progressing (Green being on target for year-end completion within budget; Amber indicating possible slippage or overspend; and Red indicating actual slippage/overspend or deletion of the scheme).
- 3.2 It should be noted that the Vehicles, ICT, Operational Equipment and Property Capital Works Programmes need to be treated with fluidity as the costs and expected completion dates can vary considerably and span across financial years. However, in accordance with the financial regulations, any significant changes of expenditure over 10% of an approved capital scheme need to be reported back to the FRA.

**3.3 Table 3: The 2020/21 Capital Programme**

<b>Scheme</b>	<b>2020/21 £000's</b>	<b>RAG Status</b>
Vehicles	400	G
SRU/RSU RTC Hydraulic Equipment	105	Spans across financial years, to be completed in Q1 of 21/22 A
<b>ICT Projects:</b>		
Endpoint Refresh with Desktop & Laptop Deployment	50	G
Endpoint Refresh with Desktop & Laptop Deployment – Funded by Covid Grant	(41)	G
Endpoint Refresh with Desktop & Laptop Deployment - brought forward from agreed 2021/22 budget	186	G
Public Address Systems Replacement	94	Slip into 2021/22
Appliance CCTV upgrade (Wireless)	113	Slip into 2021/22
Station End Equipment (SEE) - Hardware replacement and support	340	Amber – progressing, will conclude in 2021/22
<b>General:</b>		
Capital Works - Service Wide (lighting replacements, CCTV, fire protection, etc.) - All locations	86	G
Heating - boiler replacements (Ampthill, Bedford, Woburn)	23	G
Fitness Equipment Expenditure	15	G
Kempston Station - Mess Deck Refurbishment	12	G
Dunstable Fire Station - External Rope Rescue Training Rig (WAH working at height)	15	R
Improved provision of female showers/toilets at Stopsley Station	22	G
	<b>1,420</b>	

### 3.4 Capital Programme – Withdrawals, Slippage, Additions or Variations:

2.4.1 **Slippage:** The Head of ICT (HICT) has requested that the Public Address system replacement and Appliance CCTV upgrades are slipped into 2021/22. Progress with these projects has been predominantly hindered by the pandemic, as with Authority premises giving limited or no access to third parties, it has proved difficult to progress without site visits. There have also been resourcing issues too as a result of focused Covid-19 work, such as ICT support to staff working from home support and new laptops preparation. These projects are now however progressing and a Project Manager has been assigned. It is the HICT's proposal to slip these and enable his team to continue the focus on delivering new laptops and other key work streams. The

HICT has also requested that the planned replacement for Station End Equipment (SEE) also be slipped into 2021/22, as there has recently been new technology released to market which should deliver better outcomes and possible savings for the service. A trial of this equipment has been arranged, so again this is progressing.

3.4.2 **Additions:** The FRA have previously agreed to bring forward the funding of Laptops from 2021/22 into 2020/21 of £186k, this is to enable flexible working which has become a priority due to the Covid-19 pandemic. This expenditure would be off set for by the revenue underspend relating to the whole-time firefighter underspend as a result of the Covid pandemic response, where spend has been allocated against the Covid-19 grant. This has been incorporated into the figures presented above.

3.4.3 **To note:** A procurement process was undertaken for the Dunstable Fire Station external rope rescue training rig. Following a poor level of response and having sought feedback from potential suppliers, the process will be rerun and a more succinct procurement process will be followed to attract as much interest as possible. This is to ensure that value for money is achieved. This note flags that the project is unlikely to be completed by the end of the financial year, but the procurement process is again underway.

**PAUL FULLER**  
CHIEF FIRE OFFICER CBE, QFSM, MStJ, DL

**GAVIN CHAMBERS**  
ASSISTANT CHIEF OFFICER / FRA TREASURER



**Savings and Efficiencies 2020/21**

<b>CMT Area</b>	<b>Savings/Efficiencies</b>	<b>£'000s 2020/21</b>	<b>RAG Status</b>
ACO	Income from Property Rents & Collaboration	8	G – EEAST at Dunstable
ICT	Management Information System (MIS) - Wholetime Rota/Availability System, Human Resources, Technical Equipment (Includes £45k unachievable saving in 2019/20)	89	A – Partially achievable due to legacy systems still being used/on line
ACO	Collaboration Savings	20	G
ACO	Energy Management Savings (Insulation & works)	5	G
ACO	Principal Officer review/restructure	50	G
HTA	Draw down apprenticeship levy BTEC & Masters (therefore reduction in training budget)	10	G
ACO	Increase in interest received due to proactive investment management	25	R - C-19 impact on interest rates
ICT	Saving from Broadband contract	30	G
ICT	Saving from mobile phone contract	10	G
HPP	Online Communication Monitoring tool	10	G
HGAM	Replacement of Risk database	6	G
ACO	Following efficiency review savings associated with provision of catering at incidents (not replacing van & catering trailer)	65	G
		<b>328</b>	

\* NB - All Savings have been removed from 2020-21 Base Budget

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**REPORT AUTHORS:** CHIEF FIRE OFFICER AND TREASURER

**SUBJECT:** THE 2021/22 REVENUE BUDGET AND CAPITAL PROGRAMME

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For further information on this Report contact: G Chambers  
Assistant Chief Officer/Treasurer  
Tel No: 01234 845000

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Background Papers:

2021/22 Draft Revenue Budget Report to the FRA meeting on 12<sup>th</sup> January 2021.

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Implications (tick ✓):

LEGAL	✓	FINANCIAL	✓
HUMAN RESOURCES	✓	EQUALITY IMPACT	✓
ENVIRONMENTAL		POLICY	✓
ORGANISATIONAL RISK	✓	OTHER (please specify)	

*Any implications affecting this report are noted at the end of the report.*

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**PURPOSE:**

To present information to allow the Authority to:

- a. set a budget and precept level for 2021/22 in line with statutory requirements;
- b. approve a Medium-Term Revenue Plan for the period 2021/22 to 2024/25;
- c. approve a Medium-Term Capital Programme for the period 2021/22 to 2024/25;
- d. approve a Medium-Term Financial Strategy which provides the strategic context for each of the above, linking them to the Authority's corporate aims, objectives and strategic priorities.

## **RECOMMENDATIONS:**

1. That the Fire and Rescue Authority consider this report and determine for 2021/22 that:
  - a. A Revenue Budget requirement is set at £31.773m, met as indicated in paragraph 3.8 of this report.
  - b. In meeting this budget requirement, the Authority's Precept be set at £22.193m and that consequently, a council tax increase of 1.99% up to £102.41 per Band D equivalent property, calculated as shown in Paragraph 3.8 of this report.
  - c. In order to meet the Precept requirement, the Treasurer be authorised to issue Precepts in the necessary form to each of the Unitary Councils and for the amounts indicated in Paragraph 3.11 of this report.
2. That the FRA consider and approve the Medium-Term Revenue Plan attached at Appendix 1 to this report, in doing so, to also approve the 2021/22 savings and efficiencies detailed at Appendix 2
3. That the 2020/21 year-end underspend is allocated to the new Collection Fund Deficit Reserve.
4. That the FRA consider and approve the Medium-Term Capital Programme attached at Appendix 3 to this report.
5. That the FRA consider and approve the Medium-Term Financial Strategy attached at Appendix 4 to this report and the Reserves Strategy at Appendix 5.
6. That in considering the above recommendations, the FRA note the Treasurer's statement on the robustness of estimates included in the budget and the adequacy of the reserves for which the budget provides, attached at Appendix 6 to this report.
7. That the FRA delegate any budget amendments, following receipt of the final settlement figures, to the Treasurer and Chief Fire Officer.

## 1. Introduction and Background

- 1.1 This is an updated report that was originally released on the Authority's website for this meeting. Following receipt of the three Unitary Authority NNDR1 Government returns, and the subsequent work and conversations that took place after receiving these, the Treasurer considered that these were material enough to produce an updated report. This approach was discussed and agreed with the Monitoring Officer, the Chief Fire Officer and the FRA Chair.

The Authority is proposing a budget for 2021/22 that takes into account the aims and objectives of the Service and prioritises the resources available for frontline services.

- 1.2 It does this by:

- a. Proposing a council tax increase of 1.99%.
- b. Proposing significant efficiency savings.

- 1.3 There has been a considerable amount of work towards the 2021/22 budget setting over the past year. This has included a robust review and scrutiny of service wide budgets by the Assistant Chief Officer/Treasurer and the Principal Officers, review and challenge meetings by the Corporate Management Team and two Fire and Rescue Authority Members budget workshops. This work has covered both the revenue budget and the Capital Programme.

- 1.4 The budget consultation questions were approved by the Authority on 10 December 2020 for consultation. Feedback on the consultation is summarised in this report at para 6.

- 1.5 The Authority's council tax precept leaflets have been electronic since 2013/14. There will therefore be a web link address on the council tax bills to the websites detailing the precept information for the unitary authorities, police and fire.

## 2. Government Settlement for 2021/22

- 2.1 The provisional settlement for 2021/22 was announced on 17 December 2020. The final settlement figures for 2021/22 have been received and there are no updates.

Table 1 below shows a split of the 2020/21 and 2021/22 revenue grant funding and the Government's forecast total business rates funding. This is the Settlement Funding Assessment (SFA). A further detailed breakdown of this is included within the Medium-Term Financial Strategy (MTFS).

Table 1: Settlement Funding Assessment split

	<b>2020/21 £m</b>	<b>2021/22 £m</b>	<b>£m Variance</b>
Revenue Support Grant (RSG)	2.320	2.333	0.013
Business Rates baseline funding	5.942	5.942	0
<b>Settlement Funding Assessment</b>	<b>8.262</b>	<b>8.275</b>	<b>0.013</b>

- 2.2 Since the introduction of the Business Rates Retention Scheme in 2013/14, the Authority has been subject to fluctuations of the Business Rates collected in Bedfordshire. If business rates income increases, the Authority will receive a share of this, if it decreases again the Authority will be impacted by this. There are mechanisms in place within the funding scheme that offer protection, called safety nets, should an authority be considerably adversely impacted. From 2022 or beyond, it is expected that the Business Rates funding will increase and the RSG will cease. The RSG has still been identified in Appendix 1 in years 2022/23 onwards for transparency, albeit this funding will be included within other lines such as business rates from this year.
- 2.3 The Authority's Business Rates Baseline Funding Level (BFL) has been assessed at £5.942m by the MHCLG for 2021/22 and a business rate baseline estimated at £2.102m (the Government's estimate of the Authority's 1% share of locally collected business rates). As our business rate baseline is lower than the baseline funding level, we are therefore a 'top up' authority and will receive the payment of £3.840m from central government (to get back to the £5.942m baseline funding level). All fire and rescue services are top up authorities. The RSG and business rates funding of £8.471m shown in Appendix 1 for 2021/22 is split between £2.333m Revenue Support Grant funding and £6.139m Business Rates (with the local share of business rates at £2.405m, £0.303m higher than used in the SFA figures).
- 2.4 Fire grants will be treated outside of the above funding mechanisms and it is estimated that the Authority will receive £220k in 2021/22 for Firelink and New Dimensions. The final figures are yet to be confirmed.

- 2.5 The council tax referendum cap was confirmed in December 2020 as part of the provisional settlement. The proposed council tax figure of £102.41 is a 1.99% increase, therefore under the new 2% capping limit.

Police and Crime Commissioners have the option to increase their council tax charge by up to £15 per annum.

### 3. Proposed Budget and Precept for 2021/22 and Medium-Term Revenue Plan

- 3.1 In setting a budget for 2021/22, the Authority must take into account the implications for the following years' financial strategy, namely 2022/23 to 2024/25. There are significant efficiency savings over the coming years, which will require action in the short-term if they are to be secured within the planned timescales.
- 3.2 The settlement figures for 2020/21 were the second single year settlement. A three year Comprehensive Spending Review (CSR) was planned for the financial year 2021/22 onwards, however due to the pandemic a single year has again provided by Government. It is hoped that there will be the delayed three year CSR for 2022/23 onwards.
- 3.3 The Medium-Term Financial Strategy (MTFS) sets out the budget projections for 2021/22 to 2024/25 and the key features of the projections, including assumptions of the level of Government funding and council tax funding.
- 3.4 The Medium-Term Revenue Plan (MTRP) assumes that the Authority will achieve year-on-year cashable efficiencies. The MTRP is attached at Appendix 1, with the detail of the planned savings and efficiencies at Appendix 2.
- 3.5 Based on the assumptions and proposals within this report and appendices, Table 2 below details the key budget information. The budget requirement for 2021/22 is recommended to be set at £31.773m. Key assumptions include the Government funding of the Firefighters employer pension contributions increase in 2021/22 via a new grant and that the Firefighters pay award assumption is 2% from 2022 onwards (with a pay freeze in 2021). Table 2 also includes new one off grants, the Local Council Tax Support Grant, the 75% relief grant and the Business Rates S31 grant to compensate for predominantly the retail rate reliefs the Government awarded businesses at the beginning of the pandemic.
- 3.6 Following the draft budget report that was presented to the FRA on 12 January 2021, the three Unitary Authorities have reconfirmed their taxbases for 2021/22. This revised taxbase figure, when compared to the 2021/22 taxbase forecast at the time of setting the 2020/21 budget, will decrease the council tax income to the Authority by £0.534m. The forecast Collection Fund deficit figures as included on line 57 in the income section of the MTRP.

- 3.7 The 2011/12 freeze grant that the Authority did receive has been built into the formula funding baseline and is no longer visible.
- 3.8 Appendix 1 details the Government funding of RSG. It should be noted that from 2022/23 it is anticipated that RSG will cease and the equivalent funding, or potentially at a revised level, will be included within business rates. For transparency, it is currently still shown separately, although the narrative in Appendix 1 line 52 notes this. The RSG for 2021/22 increases by 0.5% when compared to the 2020/21 figure.

Table 2: Key Budget Information

	2020/21 £m	2021/22 £m	Change £m
Budget Requirement (£m)	30.991	31.773	0.782
<u>Funded by:</u>			
Precept Requirement (£m)	21.880	22.193	0.313
Central and Local Government Funding (£m)	8.459	8.578	0.119
Section 31 Business Rates grant	0.236	0.310	0.074
S31 Multiplier Cap grant	0	0.293	0.293
Collection Fund surplus/(deficit)	0.366	(1.136)	(1.502)
Business Rates Levy redistribution	0.050	0	(0.050)
Forecast 75% Coll Fund support	0	0.037	0.037
New Council Tax Support Grant	0	0.399	0.399
New Business Rates Grant (retail discount relief)	0	0.845	0.845
Use of Collection Fund Deficit Reserve	0	0.254	0.624



Funding Total (£m)	30.991	31.773	0.782
Tax Base (Band D equiv. properties)	217,906	216,704	(1,202)
Band 'D' Council Tax	£100.41	£102.41	2.00

- 3.9 The Authority's Officers and Treasurer recommend that the Council Tax increase of 1.99% should be implemented. This is based on need, as the current MTRP shows that there will be a future funding need. The results of the 2021/22 budget consultation support this increase, please see para 6 below.

There is planning time between now and 2024/25 to implement additional savings and efficiencies. However, these do need to be researched, planned and implemented, so there is a significant lead time for large scale savings and efficiency options. Even with the utilisation of reserves for investment in transformational efficiencies and also budget balancing, there is no budget gap forecast over the medium term up to and including 2024/25. This position will be reviewed following the 2022/23 settlement after potentially the funding formula review, the Spending Review and Business Rates review.

The 2022/23 financial year is likely to see changes in Government funding to local authorities. Local Authorities will potentially be able to keep more of their business rate income, subject to the redistribution via tariffs and top ups. The RSG is anticipated to cease and additional responsibilities may be passed to councils too. What these are is yet to be confirmed. It is now not anticipated that the Authority will be funded by direct grant and no business rates, like Police Authorities are. The Authority will continue with Business Rates and Council Tax, but no RSG.

- 3.10 Table 3 below details the council tax per band. As there is a 1.99% increase from the 2020/21 level, there is a change across all the valuation bands. The council tax of £102.41 equates to, for a Band D equivalent property, 28 pence per day for the Fire and Rescue Service.

Table 3: Council Tax Per Band:

Valuation Band	Tax Payable Compared to Band D (Expressed in Fractions)	Council Tax for Band £
A	6/9	68.27
B	7/9	79.65
C	8/9	91.03
D	1	102.41

E	11/9	125.17
F	13/9	147.93
G	15/9	170.68
H	2	204.82

In summary, the taxbase of 216,704 Band D equivalents, multiplied by the Band D council tax of £102.41 equals the precept of £22.193m.

- 3.11 Pursuant to the provisions of the Local Government Finance Acts 1992 and 1999 and all other relevant statutory powers, it is recommended that the Assistant Chief Officer/Treasurer issues Precepts in the necessary form to each of the Unitary Councils indicated in Table 4 below, Column 1, requiring those Authorities to make payments of the sum indicated in Column 2 in eleven equal instalments, and payments for the Authority's share of the estimated surplus or deficits on the council tax and business rate Collection Funds for 2021/22, in ten equal instalments on the agreed dates, of the sum indicated in Column 3. Column 4 details for the amounts that the local authorities will pay the Authority from their collection of Business Rates. This is 1% of their estimated net rates yield for 2021/22.

Table 4: Precepts

<b>Unitary Councils (1)</b>	<b>£ (2) Council Tax £'000</b>	<b>£ (3) (Deficit)/surplus £'000</b>	<b>£ (4) Business Rates £'000</b>
Bedford Borough	6,034	(273)	675
Luton Borough	5,232	(331)	653
Central Bedfordshire	10,927	(532)	1,077
<b>Total</b>	<b>22,193</b>	<b>(1,136)</b>	<b>2,405</b>

- 3.12 The NNDR1 returns have now been received from the Unitary Authorities, therefore this report and appendices contain the latest available figures and forecasts.
- 3.13 In addition to the Authority's own council tax, there are separate council taxes for the Police, the local authorities of Central Bedfordshire, Bedford, Luton and where applicable their town/parish councils.

#### 4 Use of Balances:

- 4.1 A prudent level of reserves, along with appropriate contributions to and from reserves, should be part of the overall budget. This risk assessment undertaken, and referred to in the MTFs, suggests that the minimum level of balances, taking all known risks into account along with the gross expenditure requirement, should be in the order of at least £2.4m for 2021/22. This equates to 7.7% of the Authority's budget requirement, which is circa the average for all Combined Fire Authorities. This is after a comprehensive review and setting up of specific ear-marked reserves of £1.925m (not including some specific reserves such as the Transformational reserve and Capital Contingency Reserve). It is proposed that the 2020/21 year end underspend, that is currently forecast to be circa £790k and is due to the budgeted Firefighter pay award and Covid grant, is allocated to a new Collection Fund Deficit Reserve.

As discussed at the second FRA Members budget workshop, the reserves strategy is to review and reduce both the General Reserve and Earmarked Reserves in the 2021/22 to 2024/25 MTFs. This 2022/23 budget will coincide with the potential significant changes from the Spending Review, Business Rates Retention and Funding Formula Review. It is prudent to plan to make these changes to reserves following clarity around these forthcoming reviews.

The Transformational reserve is planned to be £2.502m at the 2020/21 year end. It is currently considered adequate enough based on projections to fund transformational initiatives and balance the forecast 2022/23 to 2024/25 budgets and beyond. This is detailed at the foot of the MTRP in Appendix 1.

- 4.2 The reserves strategy is attached at Appendix 5. In summary, the strategy in recent years has been to increase the Transformational ear-marked reserve with underspends and budgeted contributions to enable this to be used for transformation initiatives and future years' budget setting processes. The 2015/16 and 2016/17 revenue underspend was allocated to a Collaboration Reserve, with a view that revenue and/or capital expenditure is likely in the medium term.

As detailed in the MTRP, it is forecast that the Transformational earmarked reserve will be used over the medium term to close any budget gaps in the financial years 2021/22 to 2024/25 and to invest in transformational efficiencies. This strategy will ensure that additional savings and efficiencies are introduced in a planned and effective manner over the years.

For 2021/22, the Capital Reserves have been reduced by £0.545m. This is following a detailed review of the capital items that the reserves were allocated to and the rescheduling of these over the forthcoming years that have new budgets

allocated to them. This therefore releases previously allocated capital monies to support the capital programme and therefore less revenue contributions in 2021/22.

## 5. Proposed Medium-Term Capital Programme

5.1 As anticipated, there is no Government funding or bidding round for capital in the 2021/22 budget. This was the position for the 2016/17 to 2020/21 financial years too. The Authority, in 2012/13 and before, used to receive an annual capital grant of £1m.

The Authority's base budget revenue contributions to fund capital commenced in 2012/13 to support capital expenditure funding in future years. There is now a budgeted base budget revenue contribution of circa £1.3m per annum (with fluctuations) from 2021/22 onwards towards capital expenditure. This is with the assumption that capital grants are not forthcoming in future years. If capital funding becomes available, there will be a direct reduction in revenue contributions.

5.2 The Capital Programme, as per the approved timetable, has followed the same robust challenge/scrutiny route as the revenue budget. The Capital Strategy Team has also reviewed and assessed the bids made, approving the schemes that are attached at Appendix 3 as the 2021/22 Capital Programme.

5.3 Key items of note in the proposed 2021/22 Capital Programme of £1.038m are:

- Investment in our vehicle fleet, to maintain efficient, economic and effective appliances.
- Investment in IT.
- Investment in the modernisation of our buildings.

## 6 Budget Consultation

6.1 The consultation on the 2021/22 budget and council tax proposals took place between 28 December 2020 and 31 January 2021. Last year the decision was made to join up the two aspects of consultation; the budget and the Community Risk Management Plan (CRMP). A total of 462 responses have been received to date.

6.2 A survey was sent to the 15,411 people registered on the BedsFireAlert Community messaging system, who are willing to take part in consultations. This was sent out on two additional occasions as a reminder. It was also made available via the Authority's website and publicised through the local press and several organic and paid for social media

campaigns on the Service's Facebook, Instagram and Twitter channels. It was promoted to BFRS staff through the weekly editions of Blue Bulletin and a supporting briefing note sent to all managers.

A letter was sent to a number of key partners in the emergency services and local government inviting their views. We also asked a number of organisations including the three unitary authorities, the Police, East of England Ambulance Service Trust (EEAST) and the Chamber of Commerce and community groups to put the link on their websites and to promote the consultation to their members. We communicated to the press via press releases and a number of them included the link on their websites and shared our social media content.

6.3 On the 28 January there were a total of 462 (88.8% coming from a direct link) responses with 371: 80.3% supporting the 1.99% council tax increase and 330: 71.4% supporting an increase of up to £5. A majority of these responses were from subscribers to BedsFireAlert but 52 came from those responding through social media. This is a significantly higher response to last year's consultation. The budget consultation for 2020/21 had 307 responses.

6.4 In response to the question of whether respondents thought there were efficiency areas that could be considered we received 98 comments, with the majority advising "none" or "don't know". Of the 98 that did provide comments some respondents said they did not have sufficient information to make a decision or that the Service should not make any more savings. A variety of comments related to suggestions for saving money or generating income, such as charging for some services, collaboration with other services including more site sharing and management and organisation efficiency

Feedback from last year was that the consultation was too long and complicated. This year we simplified the survey splitting it into two parts the budget and the proposed CRMP 2021/22 action plan. This seemed to work much better with an increase in responses

Other comments specifically on the budget consultation, can be categorised into the following main areas:

- Reducing the numbers of senior officers/managers;
- Collaborating, sharing services including support staff and co-responding with Police and Ambulance Service other FRS;
- Co-location with other emergency services;
- A review of charging for services.

6.5 As a response to the themes above, the paras below provide a summary of what efficiencies are already being undertaken.

The senior structure has already been reduced, there was recently a senior management review and restructure that removed a Corporate Management Team Member, with savings associated with this.

In addition to the above, there is a budget reduction planned in 2021/22, of another Area Commander (AC) post, changing this to a green book role, which leads to further savings. The AC posts will have then reduced from the original five to three over the last few years. As is planned in the CRMP action plan, there will also be a review of the Flexi Duty System during 2021/22 that may lead to further managerial efficiencies.

The FRA are aware of the collaboration work underway with the Police Service, Ambulance Service and other organisations. These initiatives are increasing with the sharing of premises and operational service areas, such as Forced Entry, Missing Persons Search and the Falls Team. We are now servicing Ambulance vehicles and there is also a new joint fire Investigation post, with costs shared between three Services, for a two year period included within the 2021/22 budget.

The Service has also significantly contributed to supporting the community over the pandemic. This has been fully documented elsewhere and includes driving ambulances, mortuary support, delivering food parcels, co-responding, supporting the Local Resilience Forum etc.

We have the Shared ICT Service in operation with numerous other shared work areas with local authorities such as Democratic Services support, legal, cleaning contracts, joint procurements, GDPR work and the Authority is a founding member of the Fire and Rescue Indemnity Company (FRIC), providing an alternative to traditional insurance.

The Service now shares its estate with the police at four locations (Bedford, Leighton Buzzard, Ampthill and Toddington), the Ambulance at five (Luton, Sandy, Stopsley, Shefford and Dunstable) with discussions taking place for Bedford station too. Other partner organisations also rent some space at our stations.

The Service informs telephone callers where charges will be levied on services provided such as lock outs and flood clearance from basements, where not deemed emergencies and suggesting that they seek alternative suppliers for these incidents.

## 7. Proposed Medium-Term Financial Strategy (MTFS)

- 7.1 The Medium-Term Financial Strategy, attached at Appendix 4, is a document that sets out the Authority's financial strategy for the next four years. It focuses on the 2021/22 revenue budget and capital programme, but also sets the scene for future years.
- 7.2 The MTFS details the reserves policy, planning assumptions behind the budget figures and other considerations that must be taken into account when setting the strategy, such as the taxbase, efficiencies and shared services.

## 8. Robustness of Estimates and Adequacy of Reserves

- 8.1 The Local Government Act 2003 places a duty on the Section 112/151 Officer (Treasurer) to comment on 'the robustness of the estimates' included in the budget and the adequacy of the reserves for which the budget provides. The Treasurer's statement is attached at Appendix 6.

## 9. Implications

### 9.1 **Financial:**

- 9.1.1 The resource implications are detailed throughout this report and appendices, particularly in the MTFS.
- 9.1.2 The Treasurer's statement comments on the robustness of the estimates and adequacy of the Authority's reserves with reference to risks identified.

### 9.2 **Legal:**

- 9.2.1 The Authority must set a balanced budget by midnight on 1 March 2021.
- 9.2.2 The Authority has specific legal duties in relation to equalities and financial decision-making.
- 9.2.3 There are no further specific legal issues arising from this report.

### 9.3 Equality, Human Resources, Environmental, Policy, Other:

#### 9.3.1 Equality Act 2010

The Equality Act 2010 is a modern, single and streamlined legal framework to effectively tackle disadvantage and discrimination. The protected characteristics covered under the Act are: Age, Race, Sex, Gender reassignment, Disability, Religion or belief, Sexual orientation, Marriage or civil partnership and Pregnancy and maternity.

The general equality duty is set out under Section 149 of the Equality Act 2010 and aims to help public bodies meet the specific duties. The aim of the general equality duty is to:

- eliminate unlawful discrimination, harassment and victimisation and other conduct prohibited by the Act.
- advance equality of opportunity between people who share a protected characteristic and those who do not.
- foster good relations between people who share a protected characteristic and those who do not.

Public bodies must take into consideration the advancement of equality into their day-to-day business and must exercise their functions, having due regard to:

- remove or minimise disadvantages suffered by people due to their protected characteristics.
- take steps to meet the needs of people from protected groups where these are different from the needs of other people.
- encourage people from protected groups to participate in public life or in other activities where their participation is disproportionately low.

Organisations must have adequate and accurate equality evidence, properly understood and analysed, to provide the root of effective compliance with the general duty. Evidence of compliance must be recorded and stored.

#### 9.3.2 Human Rights Commission

The Human Rights Commission has the power to enforce the duty, if a public authority does not comply with the general duty. Failure to comply can be challenged by means of a compliance notice to the High Court.

#### 9.3.3 Human Rights Act 1998



Public sector organisations are also subject to the Human Rights Act 1998. The purpose of the Act is to support a culture of respect for everyone's human rights by embedding the principles of dignity, equality, respect, fairness and autonomy through improved public services, and for public service providers to use the tool to improve the quality of services.

9.3.4 BFRS will undertake the 'Due regard' of the budget building process to mitigate any adverse impact on protected groups, and beyond.

**PAUL M FULLER CBE QFSM, MStJ, DL  
CHIEF FIRE OFFICER**

**GAVIN CHAMBERS  
TREASURER**

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## FRA Meeting 11th February 2021

		Original	Proposed	Proposed	Proposed	Proposed	
MEDIUM TERM REVENUE PLAN 2021/22 TO 2024/25		2020/21	2021/22	2021/22	2022/23	2023/24	2024/25
		£000s	£000s	£000s	£000s	£000s	£000s
<b>Base Budget</b>		<b>30,328</b>	<b>32,035</b>	<b>32,035</b>	<b>31,104</b>	<b>31,988</b>	<b>32,995</b>
1	Removal of 3% Fire Fighter Pay increase 2020/21 from Base Budget (will review pay award EMR)	0	0	-575	0	0	0
2	Increase to LGPS pay 2020/21 2% budgeted but 2.75% agreed	0	0	42	0	0	0
3	Firefighter Salaries differences between pensions and scales due to retirements and recruitment	470	-225	0	0	0	0
4	Additional Bank Holidays	3	3	3	3	3	3
5	FF Pensions changes	-23	-23	-23	0	0	0
6	To capture additional FF employer costs	0	0	1,700	0	0	0
7	Offset by grant	0	0	-1,700	0	0	0
8	Reduction in Minimum Revenue Provision (MRP) relating to borrowing costs on previous years vehicles	0	-140	-140	-11	-11	0
9	Budget Realignment	-2	0	308	-51	31	0
10	Apprenticeship Levy	2	2	2	2	2	2
11	SCAPE (FF Pensions Scheme) Costs from 01/04/2019. Grant from 21/22	0	750	0	0	0	0
12	Local Government Superannuation Revaluation Lump Sum	64	10	10	9	60	20
13	Increase in Local Government Superannuation Employer Contributions (17.3% to 20.5%) in 20/21	137	0	0	0	0	0
14	<b>Total Base Budget Adjustments</b>	<b>651</b>	<b>377</b>	<b>-373</b>	<b>-48</b>	<b>85</b>	<b>25</b>
15							
16	<b>Forecast Variations</b>						
17	Investment Interest Decrease/(Increase)	-25	-10	50	0	0	0
18	Revenue Contribution to Capital	-1,076	1,084	138	663	430	1,464
19	Creation of New Corporate Reserve for future Pensions contributions, then removal	1,000	-1,000	-1,000	0	0	0
20	Non-Uniform Incremental Drift	79	0	75	41	22	20
21	Transformational Savings/Efficiencies	-303	-237	-181	-239	-184	-100
22	Scrutiny Panel Decisions	-50	65	-10	0	0	0
23	<b>Total Forecast Variations</b>	<b>-375</b>	<b>-98</b>	<b>-928</b>	<b>465</b>	<b>268</b>	<b>1,384</b>
24							
25	<b>Inflation</b>						
26	Fire-fighters pay - 2% 1 April to 30 June 2021, then 0% followed by 2% following years	160	183	71	0	73	75
27	Fire-fighters pay - 1 July 2021 to 31 March 2022 (0% 2021, then 2% each following year)	524	220	0	220	224	228
28	Retained Pay (As per Fire-Fighters) April to June	97	55	22	0	23	24
29	July to March			0	30	40	41
30	Control pay (As per Fire-Fighters) April to June	69	26	14	0	14	14
31	July to March			0	20	20	20
32	Non Uniformed pay (0% effective from 01/04/2021, then 2% thereafter)	112	115	0	121	123	126
33	Member Allowances	2	2	0	2	2	2
34	Gas, Electricity, Water and Derv Inflation	19	27	27	28	30	31
35	Prices/Contract Inflation 2021/22 - 2024/25	75	76	76	78	81	82
36	<b>Total Inflation</b>	<b>1,058</b>	<b>704</b>	<b>210</b>	<b>499</b>	<b>630</b>	<b>643</b>
37							
38	<b>Budget Pressures</b>						
39	FMS3' bids (Current Year MTFP process)	477	199	480	167	80	62
40	FMS3' bids (Previous Years MTFP process)	-104	-320	-320	-199	-56	0
41							
42	<b>Estimated Net Revenue Expenditure</b>	<b>32,035</b>	<b>32,897</b>	<b>31,104</b>	<b>31,988</b>	<b>32,995</b>	<b>35,109</b>
43	<b>Contribution to/from Transformational Earmarked Reserves</b>	<b>-973</b>	<b>-1,101</b>	<b>669</b>	<b>116</b>	<b>-140</b>	<b>-1,482</b>
44							
45	<b>Estimated Budget Requirement</b>	<b>31,063</b>	<b>31,796</b>	<b>31,773</b>	<b>32,104</b>	<b>32,855</b>	<b>33,628</b>
46							
47	<b>Budget Requirement Increase Year on Year</b>	<b>1,226.7</b>	<b>1,506.0</b>	<b>710.9</b>	<b>307.4</b>	<b>1,081.6</b>	<b>1,523.6</b>
48	<b>% Budget Increase</b>	<b>4.1%</b>	<b>5.0%</b>	<b>2.3%</b>	<b>1.0%</b>	<b>3.4%</b>	<b>4.7%</b>
49							
50	<b>Financed by:</b>						
51							
52	Revenue Support Grant (RSG): expected to cease in 2022/23 and be included within increased business rates funding	2,320	2,320	2,333	2,333	2,333	2,333
53	Business Rate Baseline	2,302	2,414	2,405	2,429	2,453	2,478
54	Business Rate Top Up	3,839	3,901	3,840	3,878	3,917	3,956
55	S31 from Multiplier cap and Small Business Rate Relief	50	0	293	293	293	293
56	Business Rates Grant ( under indexing the multiplier compensation)	303	236	310	310	310	310
57	Collection Fund Surplus/(Deficit)	368	200	-1,136	-83	-83	0
58	Use of Collection Fund Deficit Reserve	0	0	254	83	83	0
59	Council Tax (the remainder)	21,880	22,726	22,193	22,860	23,549	24,257
60	New Local Council Tax Support Grant (to compensate for taxbase reductions)	0	0	399	0	0	0
61	Estimate of new 75% Collection Fund relief	0	0	37	0	0	0
62	Business Rates retail, nursery relief (NNDR 1 and 3 timings)	0	0	845	0	0	0
63							
64		<b>31,063</b>	<b>31,796</b>	<b>31,773</b>	<b>32,104</b>	<b>32,855</b>	<b>33,628</b>
65							
66	Band D equivalent Tax base	217,906	221,910	216,704	218,871	221,060	223,270
67	% change on Band D's	2.30%	1.84%	-0.55%	1.00%	1.00%	1.00%
68	Leading to an average council tax (Band D) of	100.41	102.41	102.41	104.45	106.53	108.65
69							
70	% increase	<b>1.99%</b>	<b>1.99%</b>	<b>1.99%</b>	<b>1.99%</b>	<b>1.99%</b>	<b>1.99%</b>
71							
72							
73	<b>Use of Transformational Reserves Summary</b>	<b>Proposed</b>	<b>Proposed</b>	<b>Proposed</b>	<b>Proposed</b>	<b>Proposed</b>	<b>Proposed</b>
74		<b>2020/21</b>	<b>2021/22</b>	<b>2021/22</b>	<b>2022/23</b>	<b>2023/24</b>	<b>2024/25</b>
75		<b>£000s</b>	<b>£000s</b>	<b>£000s</b>	<b>£000s</b>	<b>£000s</b>	<b>£000s</b>
76	Transformational Earmark Reserve for Budget Setting	3,507	2,485	2,502	2,921	2,787	2,397
77	2019/20 year end underspend contribution	17	0	0	0	0	0
78	<b>Contribution to/from Transformational Earmarked Reserves</b>	<b>-973</b>	<b>-1,101</b>	<b>669</b>	<b>116</b>	<b>-140</b>	<b>-1,482</b>
79	<b>Annual use of Transformational Reserve for Strategic Projects and Improvements</b>	<b>-250</b>	<b>-250</b>	<b>-250</b>	<b>-250</b>	<b>-250</b>	<b>-250</b>
80	Reduction of General Reserve from £2.6m to £2.4m in 20/21, with potential to reduce to £2.1m	200	0	0	0	0	200
81	<b>Net Balance Transformational Earmark Reserves</b>	<b>2,502</b>	<b>1,134</b>	<b>2,921</b>	<b>2,787</b>	<b>2,397</b>	<b>865</b>

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**Medium Term Savings and Efficiencies 2021/22 to 2024/25**

£'000s 2020/21	Ref	Savings/Efficiencies	£'000s 2021/22	£'000s 2022/23	£'000s 2023/24	£'000s 2024/25
8	1	Income from Property Rents & Collaboration	5			
89	2	Management Information System (MIS) - Wholetime Rota/Availability System, Human Resources, Technical Equipment (Includes £45k unachievable saving in 2019/20)				
20	3	Collaboration Savings/Income				
	4	Change of 4th Area Commander post to Green Book Head of Service (subject to natural turnover)	15			
5	5	Energy Management Savings (Insulation & works following bid for grant)	5	5		
50	6	Team review/restructure	13			
	7	Efficiencies from Operational Review	64	229	189	100
10	8	Draw down apprenticeship levy BTEC & Masters (therefore reduction in training budget)				
25	9	Increase in interest received due to proactive investment management				
30	10	Saving from Broadband contract				
10	11	Saving from mobile phone contract				
10	12	Online Communication Monitoring tool				
6	13	Replacement of Risk database				
65	14	Following efficiency review savings associated with provision of catering at incidents (not replacing van & catering trailer)				
		<b><u>New for 2021/22 Budget Setting Process</u></b>				
	15	Freedom of Information and Customer Complaints software	6			
	16	Corporate Telephony	20			
	17	Income from Workshops Non business Activity	25	5	5	
	18	Post sharing - work on Fire Investigation ISO17020 project (part time post shared with Cambs & Herts FRS)	10		-10	
	19	Saving from cessation of software, linked with new purchase of GIS and Data modelling solution	18			
<b>328</b>			<b>181</b>	<b>239</b>	<b>184</b>	<b>100</b>

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**CAPITAL PROGRAMME 2021-22 to 2024-25**

Ref	Bedfordshire Fire and Rescue Authority Capital Programme	Capital Budgets 2021/22 £000's	Capital Budgets 2022/23 £000's	Capital Budgets 2023/24 £000's	Capital Budgets 2024/25 £000's
	<b>Scheme</b>				
	<b>Fleet:</b>				
1	Revised - Vehicles/associated equipment	722	783	1,077	2,325
	<b>ICT Projects:</b>				
	<b>IT Developments</b>				
2	a. Migration from Unified Comms on premise to Microsoft Teams Cloud	80			0
	b. Endpoint Refresh with Desktop & Laptop Deployment	84	50		220
	c. Renewal of Mobilising System Mobile Data Terminal & Risk Information MDTs			310	
	d. Server & Storage Hardware Renewal			75	
	<b>General:</b>				
3	Capital Works - Service Wide (lighting replacements, CCTV, fire protection, doors & windows, security gates, etc) - All locations	52	27	30	100
4	Drill yard resurfacing (Biggleswade, Luton, Woburn, Potton)	0	20	0	20
5	WC/Shower facility refurbishments (Amphill, Harrold, Workshops, Training, Luton, Potton, Biggleswade)	0	25	25	20
6	Heating - boiler replacements (Amphill, Bedford, Woburn, Dunstable)	0	0	26	30
7	Bay Floor replacements (Bedford, Biggleswade, Potton, Shefford, Toddington)	65	0	38	0
8	Dormitory refurbishment (Bedford, Luton, Kempston, Stopsley, Dunstable)	0	30	10	20
9	Station Kitchen Refurbishments (Biggleswade, Leighton Buzzard, Stopsley)	0	21	0	0
10	Fitness Equipment Expenditure	5	5	15	0
	<b>New for 2021/22</b>				
11	Future ICT Capital Schemes (yet to be finalised, reviewed and approved)	0	200	0	250
12	Compressors - Dunstable and Bedford	30			
	<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>1,038</b>	<b>1,161</b>	<b>1,606</b>	<b>2,985</b>
	<b>Capital Financing Summary</b>				
	RCCO = Revenue Contribution to Capital	458	1,121	1,551	2,955
	Capital Receipts & Reserve Utilisation	580	40	55	30
	<b>Total</b>	<b>1,038</b>	<b>1,161</b>	<b>1,606</b>	<b>2,985</b>

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# **Bedfordshire**

## **Fire and Rescue Service**

### **BEDFORDSHIRE FIRE AND RESCUE AUTHORITY**

### **Medium-Term Financial Strategy**

**2021/22 – 2024/25**

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Annex 1 Medium-Term Revenue Plan  
(not attached to this version, see Appendix 1 of the 2021/22 budget report)

Annex 2 Medium-Term Capital Programme  
(*not attached to this version, see Appendix 3 of the 2021/22 budget report*)

## 1. Introduction

This is Bedfordshire Fire and Rescue Authority's (BFRA) Medium-Term Financial Strategy (MTFS). It is a four year strategy which covers the financial years 2021/22 to 2024/25 and seeks to build upon the work undertaken in developing previous MTFS. It contains the Authority's agreed plans for both revenue and capital expenditure and the planned sources of funding to support that expenditure. It also explains the Authority's supporting strategies for matters such as council tax levels, efficiency savings, the use of reserves/reserves strategy and capital funding.

In addition, the plan also seeks to provide the strategic context for these financial plans, linking them to the national and local context and the Authority's corporate objectives and medium-term strategic priorities.

BFRA has been a precepting body since 2004/05 and is required by the Local Government Finance Act 1992, as amended by the Local Government Act 2003, to set a budget requirement and levy a tax on local council taxpayers each year. The Authority is also required to maintain adequate reserves to cope with unforeseen commitments.

In common with many other authorities, each year since becoming a precepting authority, BFRA has experienced a pressurised financial situation which has necessitated robust and effective medium-term financial planning and the taking of some difficult decisions, in order to present acceptable and affordable budgets.

This year has seen the continuation of the harsh economic climate. However, BFRA continues to rise to the economic challenges that it faces, whilst at the same time endeavouring to continue to improve the quality of the service it provides to the communities it serves.

The Authority has a planning process which aligns its financial planning with its strategic and integrated risk management planning processes, the key outcomes of which are captured in the Authority's Community Risk Management Plan (CRMP). The financial implications of the CRMP are thus fully integrated into the annual budget plan and MTFS. Both the CRMP and MTFS cover a rolling four year timescale and are revised on an annual basis. This MTFS has therefore been developed to ensure that resources are adequate and appropriately directed to deliver the aims, objectives and key priorities of the Authority.

The Authority's corporate risk management process, which identifies key organisational risks and puts into place controls to manage these risks, also plays a major role in determining the outcomes of the planning process. This includes an annual assessment of the potential financial impact of such risks, which in turn is used in determining the most appropriate level of financial reserves for the Authority.

## 2. National Context

Service planning, and therefore financial planning, must take place with due regard to the national policy context for the fire and rescue service and economic and public expenditure plans.

Emergency services play an essential part in serving our communities and keeping them safe. Whilst the police, fire and rescue and NHS ambulance services all have distinct frontline roles, it is clear that close collaboration between them can provide real benefits for the public and help each service better meet the demands and challenges they face.

The Prime Minister's announcement on 5 January 2016 that responsibility for fire and rescue policy had transferred from the Department for Communities and Local Government to the Home Office again demonstrates the Government's commitment to closer collaboration between police and fire and rescue services.

In a number of Fire and Rescue Authorities, moves are being taken for the Police and Crime Commissioner to take on the governance responsibility of the Fire and Rescue Service. This has already taken place in Essex as one example and more are likely to follow.

In April 2017 the National Fire Chiefs Council (NFCC) was formed. The NFCC is made up of senior representatives from all fire and rescue services across the UK.

The new Council provides clear, professional advice to government (including devolved administrations) and the wider sector on matters such as professional standards, operational guidance, research and sharing best practice, while supporting the whole of the UK FRS.

As part of the reform agenda, a Fire and Rescue inspectorate (Her Majesty's Inspectorate of Constabulary and Fire and Rescue Services, HMICFRS) has been created. The Authority's review took place in the first tranche of inspections in 2018. The results of this can be found at <https://www.justiceinspectorates.gov.uk/hmicfrs/>

The Service/Authority will have its second full inspection in early 2021, with a recent Covid-19 pandemic review that took place in late 2020.

The Authority has implemented where appropriate, the recommendations from the Thomas Review.

The following sections cover in broad outline the national context within which the budget and other aspects of MTFS have been framed.

### 2.1. **National Statutory and Policy Context:**

The Fire and Rescue Services Act 2004 represented the most comprehensive reform of the statutory framework for the service for more than fifty years and brought about far reaching changes to the way in which individual fire and rescue authorities plan and deliver their services. Amongst the most fundamental of these was the replacement of the previous prescriptive standards of fire cover with a framework for local integrated risk management planning, a duty to engage in preventative community safety work and the provision for a National Framework (revised in June 2018) to provide clarity for Fire and Rescue Services on the Government's expectations.

In addition, a range of Statutory Instruments have been introduced over recent years, which between them impose new duties on the Service, including the requirement to respond to emergencies other than fire, such as road traffic collisions, chemical, biological, radiological and nuclear (CBRN) incidents, serious flooding and major search and rescue incidents. The new responsibilities are not limited to response, but also extend to the need for the fire and rescue service to play a key role in civil contingency planning.

### **Reform**

When the then Home Secretary, Theresa May, outlined her vision for fire and rescue services in May 2016, this was a "radical ambitious" package of reforms. This approach was then supported by the new Home Secretary and the then Minister for Policing and Fire, Brandon Lewis (2017 to 2019 Nick Hurd, now Kit Malthouse).

The reform agenda is made up of three distinct pillars. These are:

1. Efficiency and Collaboration

The aim is to drive deeper collaboration between fire and rescue and other local services – including through the statutory duty in the Policing and Crime Act – and support the NFCC and the sector deliver commercial transformation, including procuring more collaboratively, efficiently and effectively.

2. Accountability and Transparency

The aim to enable the public to fully hold their service to accounts by replacing opaque governance and inspection arrangements and publishing more comparable performance indicators.

3. Workforce Reform

The recommendations are the sector and Government to deliver and are based around five broad themes:

- The working environment including diversity of workforce
- Documented conditions of service
- Industrial relations
- Retained duty system and
- Management

On a more local level; the Service continues to work with a range of statutory and non statutory partners in pursuit of joint initiatives that will make our communities safer and healthier. With shrinking budgets and a Government desire to ‘do more for less’ the expectations of all partner organisations on each other will increase. As a Service we must ensure we remain best placed to meet this challenge. The Authority actively seeks joint working arrangements to best meet the need of the community. It is likely that

following Parliamentary approval, the Police and Crime Commissioner for Bedfordshire will become a voting member of the FRA. The Authority awaits the guidance on this process from the Home Office.

## 2.2 National Financial Context:

The public sector was expecting a three year Comprehensive Spending Review (CSR), following two years of annual budget allocations from Government. Due to the pandemic, the three-year CSR has been postponed until next year, therefore a one year CSR was announced for 2021/22.

The Chancellor of the Exchequer, Rishi Sunak, presented the outcome of the 2020 CSR on 25<sup>th</sup> November 2020. The highlights of this have been presented to the Authority at its December meeting, these included that the council tax referendum cap for Fire and Rescue Authorities would be 2% again.

Following the announcement of the CSR, the provisional financial settlement was announced on 17<sup>th</sup> December.

## 3. Local Context

### 3.1 The Authority's Area:

Bedfordshire occupies a geographically central position within the UK. It has exceptional links to London with the presence of key transport infrastructure including the M1 and A1 roads, three major rail routes and London Luton Airport. Bedfordshire has a growing and ageing population of over 664,000 people, with a workforce of over 250,000<sup>1</sup>. It has one of the most diverse populations in the country, over a relatively small geographical area.

The county is, in land use terms, largely rural and agricultural, including major areas of outstanding natural beauty. Most people (over 70%) live in its larger towns including the two major towns of Luton and Bedford but also in a number of smaller market towns. These towns lie within often picturesque rural settings which also includes many villages that add to the area's diversity of places to live, work and play.

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<sup>1</sup> Business Register & Employment Survey, Office for national Statistics Full & Part Time Employment



Over recent years the local economy, like many throughout the UK, has moved from traditional manufacturing and heavy industry to one based more upon the service industry. These industries include logistics and air transport, higher education, research and development, tourism and hospitality, creative and cultural businesses, construction, and business services.

Bedfordshire has two successful universities; the post-graduate Cranfield University, and the under-graduate University of Bedfordshire, together with strongly performing further education colleges based in Bedford, Luton and Dunstable. There are a number of significant and internationally linked research locations at these universities and also at Colworth Science Park, Cranfield Technology Park and the Millbrook Vehicle Proving Ground.

There are on-going major transport infrastructure improvements and developments to the road system within the county and continued growth at London Luton Airport; a key deliverer in the business passenger market and handling circa 16 million passengers a year in total.

There are also iconic visitor attractions in the county, such as Woburn Safari Park, Whipsnade Zoo and Center Parc's fifth UK village at Woburn.

From April 2009 local government within the county has been through three unitary authorities - Bedford Borough Council, Central Bedfordshire Council and Luton Borough Council. The Bedfordshire Fire and Rescue Authority (BFRA) comprises elected Members from each of these unitary authorities, whose numbers are proportional to the populations they represent: 3 Members from Bedford Borough Council, 5 Members from Central Bedfordshire Council and 4 Members from Luton Borough Council.

### 3.2. The Authority's Strategic Priorities Objectives:

The achievement of the Authority's objectives and targets within a rapidly changing and complex environment requires a robust strategic and business planning process which must in turn guide the development of the medium-term revenue and capital expenditure plans, targeting financial resources to support day-to-day activities as well as planned investment.

Such effective business planning is also essential in order to embed a Service-wide culture of providing the best quality service through the most efficient means and ensure that efficiency measures can be used to free up existing resources, enabling them to be redirected to new and emerging priorities.

BFRA continues to rise to the economic challenges that it faces, whilst at the same time endeavouring to continue to improve the quality of the service it provides to the communities it serves. In the recent years the Authority has:

- Changed the shift system at all of our wholetime fire stations.
- Changed the shift system at 1 of our 2 day crewed fire stations.
- Restructured our management teams and reduced the number of officers.

In accordance with its corporate planning policies and procedures, the Service undertakes a strategic assessment twice per year that assists in identifying the strategic issues facing the Service both in the short and longer term and to ensure that the Service is best positioned to continue to achieve its strategic objectives. The production of the Service's Community Risk Management Plan (CRMP) is facilitated by the Strategic Assessment and considers a wide range of factors and issues, many of which are complex and played out over a longer timeframe, whilst others are less complex but more volatile requiring close monitoring.

The outcomes of the strategic assessment also guide the development of more detailed plans across the Service and in particular the programme of strategic improvement projects for the forthcoming year and medium-term beyond and play a vital role in guiding and prioritising proposals for expenditure in the annual budget setting and medium-term financial planning process.

The Service planning processes and current medium-term strategic assessment has led to the development of six aims (see below). Our Mission is to *provide outstanding Fire and Rescue Services that help make Bedfordshire safer.*

For us, delivering on our mission means focusing on the following six aims:

- 1 **Preventing** fires and other emergencies happening
- 2 **Protecting** people and property when fires happen
- 3 **Responding** to fires and other emergencies promptly and effectively
- 4 **Empowering** our people as we work together to make Bedfordshire safer
- 5 **Utilising** our assets and resources efficiently and effectively
- 6 **Maximising** use of data and digital solutions to drive improvements

Please refer to the CRMP for further detail.

The budget also financially and strategically supports the Service's Values, including new 2021/22 budget bids. The Values are:

- We've got your back – striving to keep us all safe, while being supportive and inclusive.
- We are to be different – we are bold in our approach, we welcome challenge and are open to innovative ideas
- Every contact counts – making a positive difference each and every time, with respect and professionalism.
- We are accountable – we are transparent, trustworthy and responsible for our actions.

### 3.3. Government Funding Settlement:

The Government's provisional settlement was announced on 17 December 2020, with the final settlement figures confirmed in early February 2021. The settlement figures are detailed below in Table 1.

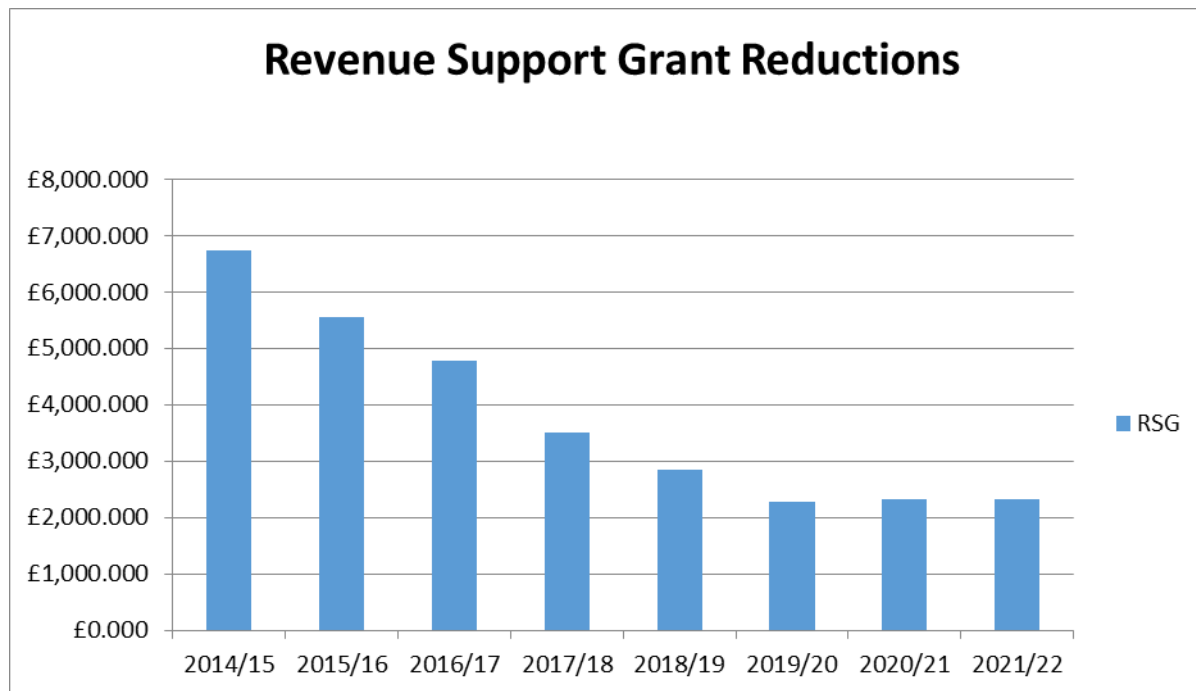
Table 1: Government Grant Revenue Funding

	<b>2020/21 £m</b>	<b>2021/22 £m</b>	<b>£m Variance</b>
Revenue Support Grant (RSG)	2.320	2.333	0.013
Business Rates baseline funding	5.942	5.942	0
<b>Settlement Funding Assessment</b>	<b>8.262</b>	<b>8.275</b>	<b>0.013</b>

As detailed above, the funding increase between 2020/21 and 2021/22 is £13k over both grant and business rates income.

The chart below details the Revenue Support Grant income reductions since 2014/15. These reductions have been visible in the Medium Term Revenue Plan and have course led to increased savings and efficiencies.

Chart 1: Revenue Support Grant from 2014/15 to 2021/22



The Authority's Business Rates Baseline Funding Level (BFL) has been assessed at £5.942m by the MHCLG for 2021/22 and a business rate baseline estimated at £2.102m (the Government's estimate of the Authority's 1% share of locally collected business

rates). As our business rate baseline is lower than the baseline funding level, we are therefore a ‘top up’ authority and will receive the payment of £3.840m from central government (to get back to the £5.942m baseline funding level). All fire and rescue services are top up authorities. The RSG and business rates funding of £8.459m shown in Appendix 1 for 2021/22 is split between £2.333m Revenue Support Grant funding and £6.138m Business Rates (with the local share of business rates at £2.298m).

The split of this between local authorities is shown below in Table 2.

Table 2: Local Business Rates income.

Authority	<b>2021/22</b> <b>£</b>
Bedford	674,836
Luton	652,871
Central Beds	1,077,819
Total	2,405,526

The above figures are fed into the MTRP. As are the Section 31 Business Rates Grants of £293,000 in total from the three Unitary Authorities for 2021/22. In addition there is annual Government S31 funding, £310k for 2021/22 and a new one off grant for 2021/22 to compensate for the additional reliefs provided to businesses by the Government at the beginning of the pandemic. These reliefs for Retail Relief, nursery and local newspaper relief for 2021/22 are forecast at £845k.

As previously reported, the Authority in future years will be subject to fluctuations of the Business Rates collected in Bedfordshire. If business rates income increases, the Authority will receive a share of this, if it decreases the Authority will be impacted by this. There are mechanisms in place within the funding scheme that offer protection, called safety nets, should an authority be considerably adversely impacted.

The detailed split of the Authority's total funding and local council tax is shown in Table 3 below:

Table 3: Detailed income split

	2020/21 £m	2021/22 £m	Change £m
Budget Requirement (£m)	30.991	31.773	0.782
<u>Funded by:</u>			
Precept Requirement (£m)	21.880	22.193	0.313
Central and Local Government Funding (£m)	8.459	8.578	0.119
Section 31 Business Rates grant	0.236	0.310	0.074
S31 Multiplier Cap grant	0	0.293	0.293
Collection Fund surplus/(deficit)	0.366	(1.136)	(1.502)
Business Rates Levy redistribution	0.050	0	(0.050)
Forecast 75% Coll Fund support	0	0.037	0.037
New Council Tax Support Grant	0	0.399	0.399
New Business Rates Grant (retail discount relief)	0	0.845	0.845
Use of Collection Fund Deficit Reserve	0	0.254	0.624
Funding Total (£m)	30.991	31.773	0.782
Tax Base (Band D equiv. properties)	217,906	216,704	(1,202)
Band 'D' Council Tax	£100.41	£102.41	2.00

The above income lines are further explained below:

- The Government Grant funding for 2021/22 is as per the provisional settlement figures provided by the MHCLG, with the exception of the local business rates. For business rates, as noted below, the more up to date local authority information is used.
- The Precept Requirement is the total of council tax income to the Authority.
- The local business rates for 2021/22 are the figures provided by the three local authorities, that have been finalised and reported in their NNDR 1 returns. It is the receipt of these returns that prompted the update to the original budget report shared with Members. The years 2022/23 to 2024/25 have been increased by using the MHCLG's figures for the top up grant and the unitary authority figures for the local share.
- Council Tax Taxbase, is the Band D equivalent number of properties. For six years there was a lower figure than in 2012/13 and prior years due to the changes in the benefits system, which has reduced the taxbases. This reduced council tax income was offset by the Council Tax Support funding that was separately identifiable in 2013/14 but from 2014/15 has been included in the general Government funding calculations. The taxbase in 2020/21 was higher for the first time than the 2012/13 levels.
- The S31 grants have been updated, for both the locally collected and the Government S31 grant. There are also two new additions, for 2021/22 only, the 75% Collection Fund support grant that is not material at circa £37k and also the grant for predominantly Retail Reliefs that were provided to businesses at the beginning of the pandemic in 2020. These are forecast to be £845k to the Authority.

### 3.4 Damping:

In allocating grant, the Government utilises a device known as 'floor damping' to ensure that no fire and rescue authority receives below a prescribed minimum adjustment to the level of grant in comparison to the previous year (the 'floor'). To achieve this, the grant for some other authorities is reduced ('damping') and the money used to increase the grant to those authorities needing it to ensure that they receive the 'floor'.

This Authority has been adversely affected by the ‘floor damping’ process, with ‘damping’ reductions of £227,222 in 2012/13 and £332,745 in 2013/14 incorporated into its grant settlements. For 2014/15 onwards the impact of damping is not as visible as it has previously been and is now included with the RSG figures.

### 3.5. Other Revenue Grants:

In addition to the formula funding, the Government provides specific revenue grants. For the three grants listed below, these are forecast to be circa £220,000 in 2021/22.

- *Firelink* - This is for the wide area radio system in England, Wales and Scotland for the fire and rescue service.
- *New Dimensions* - This is a grant to cover local costs associated with hosting and maintaining skills associated with national resilience vehicles. This grant was reduced from 2017/18.
- *Transparency Grant* – This is a grant to cover the costs of providing information on the Authority’s website.

The total and split of the 2021/22 funding is yet to be received from the MHCLG.

As well as the above, a grant is also received on an ad hoc basis for the Special Response Team (MTA).

### 3.6. Fire Capital Grant Allocation:

As anticipated, there is no Government funding or bidding round for capital in the 2021/22 budget. This was the position for the 2016/17 to 2020/21 financial years too. The Authority, in 2012/13 and before, used to receive an annual capital grant of £1m.

The Authority’s base budget revenue contributions to fund capital commenced in 2012/13 to support capital expenditure funding in future years. There is now a budgeted base budget revenue contribution of circa £1.3m per annum (with fluctuations) from 2021/22 onwards towards capital expenditure. This is with the assumption that capital grants are not forthcoming in future years. If capital funding becomes available, there will be a direct reduction in revenue contributions.



The Capital Programme, as per the approved timetable, has followed the same robust challenge/scrutiny route as the revenue budget. The Capital Strategy Team has also reviewed and assessed the bids made, approving the schemes that are attached at Appendix 3 as the 2021/22 Capital Programme.

Key items of note in the proposed 2021/22 Capital Programme of £1.038m are:

- Investment in our vehicle fleet, to maintain efficient, economic and effective appliances.
- Investment in IT.
- Investment in the modernisation of our building

#### 4. **The Medium-Term Revenue Plan**

##### 4.1. **Overview and Key Features of the Revenue Budget Strategy:**

The Medium-Term Revenue Plan (MTRP), attached at Appendix 1 of the 2021/22 budget report, sets out the Authority's revenue budget strategy for the next four years and the predicted impact on council tax. It captures all of the revenue budget implications of the forecasts and assumptions set out throughout this document, including the impact of the capital budget on revenue.

A key feature of the Authority's overall revenue budget strategy is the decision to set a budget for 2021/22 which involves a 1.99% increase in council tax on 2020/21 levels. This 1.99% council tax increase is combined with strategies for council tax, efficiency savings and the use of reserves, which together are aimed at delivering significant and sustainable savings over the four year period and beyond, whilst supporting continuing improvements in the quality of service in line with the Authority's strategic priorities.

The council tax strategy, based on current assumptions and estimates, involves increases at 1.99% for 2021/22 and for the following 3 years until 2024/25. The 1.99% increases are currently built into the MTRP based on need. This is supported by a strategy for efficiency savings and the utilisation of the 'transformational reserve' in 2021/22 onwards. The support provided to the revenue budget by the planned use of the reserves in the years 2021/22 to 2024/25 is aimed at smoothing the impact of formula grant reductions.

The 2022/23 financial year will be a significant one in terms of funding for the Authority. With possibly the funding formula review, Business Rates Retention and the Spending Review all to take place over 2021, the 2022 settlement could have a material impact on the forecast figures within the current 2022/23 to 2024/25 medium term plan.

## 4.2 Components of the Medium-Term Revenue Plan:

The following sections give a brief explanation of each of the main components of the MTRP:

### 4.2.1 *Base Budget*

The net revenue budget for running the Service in 2020/21 was £32.035m. After adjusting for an amount of £973k, which was a contribution from reserves to balance the budget, this decreased the budget requirement to £31.063m.

For the 2021/22 budget, the net revenue budget is £31.104m, with a budgeted use of £0.068m from the Transformational reserve decreasing the budget requirement to £31.773m.

### 4.2.2 *Impact of Pensions Funding Changes*

From 2006/07 arrangements were introduced which saw the majority of firefighters pension costs being paid for from the pension account (that is separate from the BFRA's budget), which is funded by a combination of employers' and employees' contributions with Government paying the balance. The level of the employers' contributions is set by the Government Actuary Department and applies uniformly across all Authorities. The BFRA is still responsible for injury retirements and the initial contribution towards ill-health retirements.

The employer pension contributions percentage have increase for non-operational employees from April 2020. The employer firefighter contributions have also seen recent significant increases, with some grant funding support that may or may not continue.

### 4.2.3 Forecast Variations

This component of the budget includes a variety of estimated or predicted impacts. The items for increases on insurance premiums and investment interest decrease/increase are self-explanatory and the figures given represent estimates based on information currently available. The Revenue Implications of the Capital Programme represent the cost of capital borrowing (minimum revenue provision, loan, interest repayments, running costs) on the revenue budget.

The item on non-uniform incremental drift relates to increases in pay for non-uniformed staff as a result of increased 'time served' which results in their moving up the 'spinal column points' within their salary scales.

Of particular importance are the items on efficiency savings. As noted at the start of this Section, the Authority's efficiency savings strategy is a core component of the MTRP. The efficiency savings for each of the four years are shown as two types: Transformational Efficiencies/Savings which relate to far-reaching organisational changes, normally associated with significant strategic projects; and Budget Manager Process Efficiency Savings which relate to incremental cost reductions and improvements in ways of working for which all senior managers are set annual targets across all non pay-related budgets. Further details of the Authority's efficiency savings strategy are given in Section 4.3 below.

Of course it is important to remember that actual spending will be under significant pressure. Other recent increases/pressures include the National insurance contributions for employers from April 2016 and the new apprenticeship levy from April 2017.

### 4.2.4 Inflation

*Staff Pay:* Direct employee costs amount to circa 82% of the revenue budget and as a result the annual pay awards in the latter years of this current budget setting process have a significant impact on future expenditure levels. Specifically for 2021/22, there is a pay freeze included as announced by the Chancellor in December 2020, with pay forecasts at 2% for non-uniformed officers and uniformed officers from 2022. For uniformed officers, there pay award may be linked with a review on conditions of service, so some funding uncertainty here.

This budget will fund wholtime and retained operational staff, emergency fire control operators and full-time and part-time support staff pay awards. All of the Authority's pay awards are determined by national negotiating bodies and, other than through the Employers' representatives on the negotiating team, the BFRA has no direct influence on the outcome and, therefore, the use of

estimates for budget projections is required. It should be noted however that a local pay award is being discussed. There will be significant pressure around pay awards.

*Prices Inflation:* This includes all non-pay items, from indirect employee costs such as recruitment, insurance, occupational health and health and safety related provision and operational training, through to premises, transport, supplies and services. Non-pay inflation of 2% for general supplies and services has been incorporated into the MTRP for 2021/22. There is a separate line for an inflation provision for gas, electricity, water and diesel.

#### 4.2.5 *Budget Pressures*

This line of the MTRP refers to proposed items of new or additional expenditure brought forward by managers during the process of budget setting, which have been approved for taking forward into the budget. These are known as 'FMS 3' projects (after the number of the business case template used for submission) and all have been subject to rigorous scrutiny.

#### 4.2.6 *Estimated Net Revenue Expenditure*

This line of the plan shows the sum total of each of the above expenditure elements and thus represents the total budgeted revenue spending on the Service.

#### 4.2.7 *Contributions to/from General Reserves*

As a precepting authority there is a requirement under the Local Government Act 1992 for BFRA to hold reserves in order to meet any unforeseen emergencies and manage uneven cash flows. The Authority undertakes a thorough risk assessment in order to identify the required level of reserves each year. Details of the amounts and nature of Reserves which the Authority has decided to hold are given in Section 4.4.

#### 4.2.8 *General and Earmarked Reserves, below*

This line of the MTRP shows how the Authority plans to use the Transformational Reserves, as per the strategy, in years 2021/22 to 2024/25. This strategy is supported by the Authority's efficiency savings plans and the proposed council tax strategy over the four years of the MTRP and is aimed at smoothing the impact of the uncertainty in formula grant in 2022/22 to 2024/25, thereby allowing adequate time for longer-term efficiency savings measures to deliver sustained reductions to base budget requirements, whilst maintaining levels of service delivery.

#### 4.2.9 Collection Fund

For 2012/13 and the years before, a collection fund deficit arose for a local authority (a billing authority) when the actual amount of council tax collected by the Authority is less than the amount calculated based upon the number of properties (taxbase) and level of council tax set. This can arise due to a number of reasons including an over-estimation of the taxbase and non-payment by householders. Conversely, a collection fund surplus can arise when the amount of council tax collected exceeds the calculated amount due to an under-estimation of the council taxbase. From 2013/14, there is also now a surplus or deficit on the business rates collected too.

For 2021/22, the respective estimated Collection Fund position of each of its constituent authorities (Bedford, Central Bedfordshire and Luton) has resulted in a net collection fund deficit of £721k for this Authority, with a further £87k deficit from 2020/21 in 2022/23 and 2023/24. This means that the Authority's net funding from council tax for this year only is effectively increased by that amount. This is detailed on an individual authority basis in Table 4 below.

Table 4: 2021/22 Collection Fund estimated outturn (not including apportionments for 2022/23 and 2023/24)

<b>Authority</b>	<b>Council Tax £ surplus/(deficit)</b>	<b>Business Rates £ surplus/(deficit)</b>	<b>Net £ surplus/(deficit)</b>
Bedford	(15,000)	(257,599)	(272,599)
Luton	(102,918)	(228,516)	(331,434)
Central Beds	(113,819)	(418,103)	(531,922)
<b>Total</b>	<b>(231,737)</b>	<b>(904,218)</b>	<b>(1,135,955)</b>

For a combined fire authority, any collection fund deficit or surplus will represent the combined 'net' result of its share of each of its constituent authorities' estimated year-end Collection Fund position.

A Collection Fund deficit reserve was approved by at the FRA meeting in October 2020, with the 2020/21 in year underspend contributing to this.

#### 4.2.10 *Financed By*

This element of the Plan shows the detail of the separate sources of revenue funding required to meet the estimated budget requirement for each year of the Plan, ie from where the Authority's revenue income comes. The detailed split of funding is shown earlier in the MTFS in Table 3.

#### 4.2.11 *Calculation of Band D Council Tax and Percentage Increase*

The taxbase used in the MTRP projections represents the number of Band D equivalent properties in the three constituent local authorities that BFRA precepts upon (ie Bedford, Central Bedfordshire and Luton). The taxbase for 2021/22 has been set at 216,704 Band D equivalent properties, based on the information that has been supplied by these authorities. This is 1,202 Band D equivalents lower than 2020/21. The split per authority is shown in Table 5 below. This is an decrease of 0.55% compared to the 217,906 taxbase in 2020/21.

The decrease is predominantly due to the pandemic, including benefits, exemptions and discounts.

The estimated increases of future years' council taxbases are included within the MTRP, currently at 1.5% each year.

Also shown is the percentage increase in council tax projected for each year of the MTRP. As explained previously, these equate to 1.99% for 2021/22 and each year until 2024/25.

Table 5: Taxbase – Band D Equivalents

<b>Authority</b>	<b>2021/22</b>
<b>Bedford</b>	58,919
<b>Luton</b>	51,087
<b>Central Bedfordshire</b>	106,698
<b>Total</b>	<b>216,704</b>

### 4.3 Efficiency Savings Strategy

An efficiency saving occurs when the cost of an activity is reduced, but its quality and effectiveness remains the same or improves. BFRA continues to focus on becoming more efficient - finding new ways to deliver highest quality services at lowest possible cost.

The Authority's MTRP for 2021/22 to 2024/25 shows the level of budgeted efficiency/ savings planned for each of the four years, which form an integral part of the overall revenue budget strategy. In addition, the Authority's efficiency savings/initiatives during 2020/21 are mainly on track to deliver an underspend which will be used, subject to the approval of the FRA, to contribute to the Collection Fund deficit Reserve.

As well as making significant savings in previous years, from 2010/11 to 2020/21 £6.846m has been reduced from budgets through budget scrutiny and savings/efficiencies, the Authority's plans for 2021/22 and beyond include making additional significant efficiency savings through:

- Further operational and non-operational reviews
- Efficiency improvements from investments in ICT
- Procurement savings from new contracts
- Collaboration savings
- Income generation

### 4.4. General and Earmarked Reserves:

As a precepting authority there is a requirement under the Local Government Act 1992 for BFRA to hold reserves in order to meet any unforeseen emergencies and manage uneven cash flows. The Authority undertakes a thorough risk assessment in order to identify the required level of reserves each year. The Treasurer has the duty to report on the adequacy of reserves (under section 25 of the Local Government Act 2003), particularly when the authority is considering setting its budget requirement.

The required level of reserves for the period 2021/22 is outlined within the Reserves Strategy and financial strategy.

General Reserves are a working balance to help cushion the impact of uneven cash flows and avoid unnecessary borrowing and as a contingency to cushion the impact of unexpected events or emergencies. The Authority's General Reserves are detailed in the Reserves Strategy at Appendix 5 to the 2021/22 Budget Report.

Earmarked Reserves, in accordance with the Local Authority Accounting Panel (LAAP) Bulletin 77, can be set up where there are known or predicted requirements. As is common with most other Fire and Rescue Authorities and public sector bodies, BFRA has set up a number of earmarked reserves which have been separated out from General Reserves. These are also detailed in Appendix 5, the Reserves Strategy.

At the time of writing, the forecast year end underspend for 2020/21 is circa £0.116m. The General Reserve of £2.4m, at c.8% of net revenue expenditure, is in line with the current overall average Combined Fire Authority average. As the S151 Officer I am comfortable with the level of reserves and do not deem it too low or high.

In addition, the Authority has separate ear-marked reserve for the Capital Receipts Reserve. Project carry forwards are also classed as ear-marked reserves at the year end stage.

The Transformational Earmarked Reserve that was specifically set up for budget setting purposes is estimated to total £3.507m at 31 March 2020. As detailed in the MTRP, it is forecast that this will be allocated to offset the budget gap in the years 2021/22 to 2024/25 and to invest in transformation initiatives.

## 5. The Medium-Term Capital Programme

### 5.1 **The Capital Programme**

Maintaining and improving the BFRA's infrastructure requires considerable resources and, for asset management purposes, this is broken down into three categories of investment, for each of which a comprehensive Asset Management Plan is produced; namely:

- Land and Buildings
- Fleet and Operational Equipment
- Information and Communication Technologies (ICT)



For each category of investment a separate programme of projects exists which spans a four year period. Because of the nature of the types of projects included in the programmes it has been the practice for some time to phase plans over a medium-term timeframe in order to show the way some schemes run over several years.

In line with best practice the land and buildings programme is developed so as to meet ongoing maintenance demands as well as to support the development of land and buildings investment and its subsequent management.

The fleet and operational equipment programme reflects the need to maintain a comprehensive fleet of vehicles with acceptable asset lives, equipped to the correct standard to meet current and planned service delivery requirements.

The ICT programme contains projects designed to develop and maintain the communications and technological infrastructure, to support both operational and organisational needs.

Traditionally IT, vehicles and operational equipment have either been leased or funded from revenue and hence did not feature in the Capital Programme, but are the subject of revenue bids for funding. Following the introduction of the Prudential Code, work was undertaken to review the cost effectiveness of leasing compared with long-term borrowing and a number of previously leased items are now being included as part of the four year Capital Programme. Discussions regularly take place with our treasury and leasing advisers, Capita Treasury Solutions, to ascertain for our specific Authority at that point in time, what the optimal funding options are.

All proposed schemes are assessed against set criteria to establish the extent to which they support the strategic objectives and Authority's priorities.

The Authority has implemented an asset management process that ensures all its assets are procured, maintained and disposed of in an efficient and effective way to provide value for money to the council tax payer.

The buildings programme for 2021/22 onwards has been developed on the basis that at present there are no further plans to change the type or location of fire stations and therefore the bulk of investment in premises is directed towards enhancement and the provision of new facilities for training and enhanced national resilience. However, it is an area that may change due to joint working/collaboration.

Historically, vehicles and equipment for frontline response and community fire safety have followed certain levels of specification and requirements. Following a comprehensive review of the emergency response fleet, a number of innovative changes are being made to the current fleet. These changes will deliver a fleet of vehicles aligned to the emergency response required to be mobilised to the identified risk profile of Bedfordshire.

The Capital Programme for 2021/22 is fully funded by revenue contributions of £320k, with a contribution from the Capital reserves of £1.185m.

It is unknown how fire and rescue authorities will be funded for capital expenditure in the next Spending Review period

## 6. Other Considerations

### 6.1. **Key Budget Assumptions and Uncertainties:**

#### ***2021/22 Budget Process- Assumptions/Uncertainties***

##### Current Assumptions:

- One year settlement for 2021/22, due to C-19 pressures (provisional settlement early December 2020, Final settlement February 2021)
- The FF Employer Pensions Grant will again be received in 2021/22 at £1.7m. Further information on this is yet to be announced. It is likely that this will be part of the CSR and settlement for 2022/23 onwards.
- The 2020/21 Unitary Authority forecast Collection Fund deficits that are to be allocated to the FRA can be spread over three years (the 2019/20 revised element cannot be and must be fully repaid in 2021/22).
- All longstanding grants received in 2020/21 will continue in 2021/22. This includes, New Dimensions, Transparency, Fire link, MTA
- Green Book pay award 0% April 2021 (was 2.75% April 2020) and 2% April 2022 onwards.
- Grey Book pay aware 0% July 2021 and 2% July 2022 onwards. The green and grey book pay awards align to the Chancellor's announcement regarding a public sector pay freeze.

- Council Tax referendum limit remains at 2% as announced by the Chancellor (with no £5 increase as proposed by the NFCC Finance Group to the Treasury – via the Home Office).
- Taxbases reduced from previous indications, with limited increases in the following years (built in a prudent 1% increase in 2022/23 onwards).
- Business rates forecast updated with the latest information received from Unitary Authorities (NNDR 1 returns)
- No Capital Funding (bidding round not announced)
- Fire Grant/Emergency Services Mobile Communications Programme (ESMCP) funded – *Potential large funding risk here.* MAIT funding
- That there will be a 75% in year Collection Fund deficit support grant from the Governments. It is currently forecast that this will not be material, at under £50k to the FRA.

#### Uncertainties:

- As above, how much of the Employer Pension Grant at £1.7m will be included as part of the settlement/CSR from 2022/23 onwards. The immediate pressure of £750k has now been removed from the MTRP, following confirmation that for 2021/22 this will be received in full. It could be subject to reduction in the following years.
- FF pensions – impact from the Remedy and associated costs (internal resourcing, payment to Administrators), immediate detriment costs and other pension related matters.
- Impact from Business Rates Retention (no Revenue Support Grant) potentially a future year in the MTRP
- Impact from Spending Review for 2022/23 onwards and if 3 year settlement
- Impact from delayed formula funding review 2022/23 onwards (year unknown)
- Recruitment profile/establishment/retirements – associated recruitment/training costs
- New savings/efficiencies in the medium term
- Collaboration (PCC – including election in May and potential impacts on governance, Ambulance (servicing, co-responding, falls, bariatric), Police etc) – and associated costs/savings/investments
- Medium term property strategy (One Public Estate, HQ, workshops, sharing etc)
- Contingent Liabilities/Assets included in the Statement of Accounts
- EU directives/legislative changes/Brexit impacts
- Implications arising from the Day Crewing and Retained pensions
- Strike expenditure potential over the course of the four year MTRP

- Interest and inflation rate fluctuations (post Brexit, negative inflation/interest rates a possibility)
- Outcomes of Retained Duty System project (budget increase/decrease)
- Outcome of Grey book pay review – broadening the role, pay award
- Outcome of Emergency Cover Review Project (now at stage two, looking forward)
- Due to significant turnover in the medium term, additional costs re succession planning
- Outcome of contaminants work both locally and nationally and potential additional expenditure here.

## 6.2 Equality Impact:

The challenging economic environment in which the Service is operating means that it is sometimes necessary to make difficult and unpopular decisions. A number of the major changes included within the Authority's strategic priorities for the medium-term and thus supported by financial provision within this MTFs, particularly those associated with transformational efficiency savings, will be of this type. The Authority recognises that equality legislation does not prevent it from making these decisions but gives an opportunity to demonstrate its commitment to equality, diversity and inclusion and to ensure such decisions are based on robust evidence and taken in accordance with the Public Sector Equality Duty.

The Authority, therefore, ensures that robust equality analysis is carried out, paying due regard to the impact on our community and staff, where policies, procedures and practices are changing. Decisions, where appropriate, will also be informed by the wider context to ensure particular groups are not unduly affected by the cumulative effects of different decisions. All decisions will be documented through equality impact assessment ensuring fairness, transparency and accountability. This information will be published in line with the requirements of the Public Sector Equality Duty.

## 6.3. Data Quality:

The Authority is committed to achieving and maintaining fit for purpose, quality data enabling sound decision making and informed planning. This is vitally important with key documents, such as this MTFs and the Authority seeks to continually improve the quality characteristics of such data with particular emphasis on accuracy, validity, reliability, timeliness, relevance and completeness.

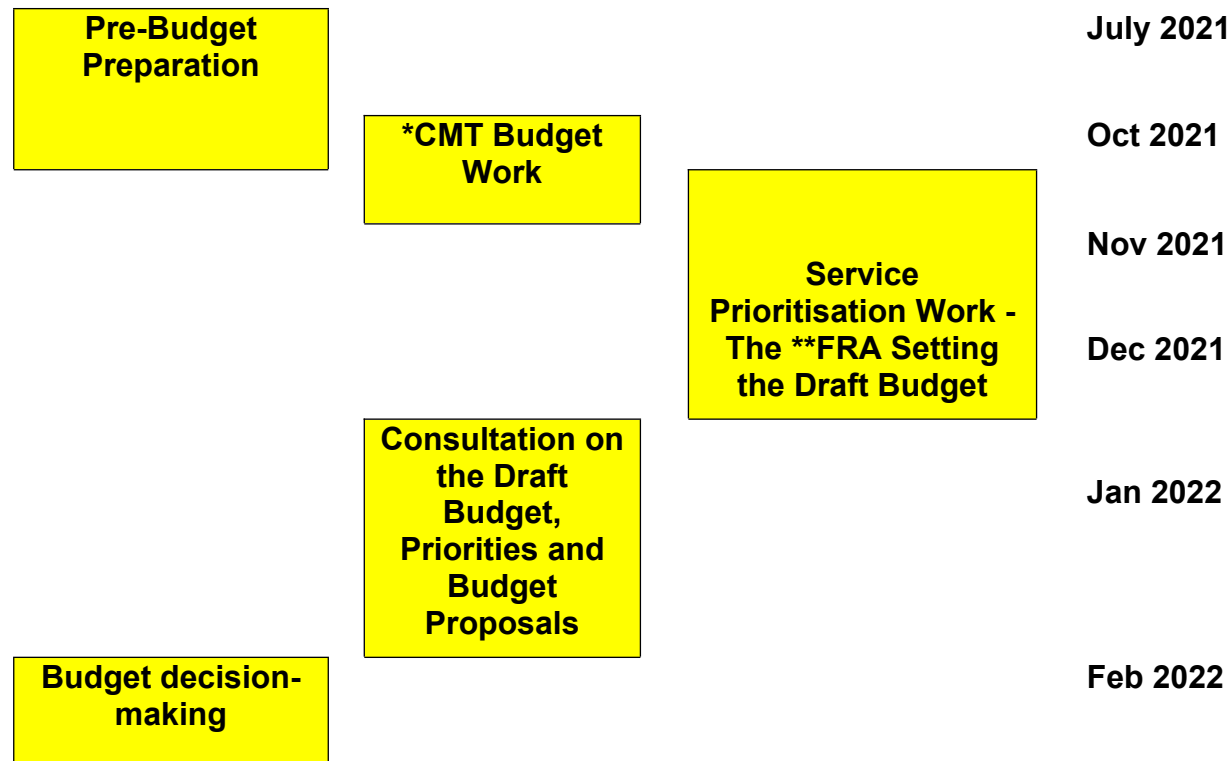
Systems for assurance and validation of our data are in place, for example Performance Indicators are supported by data proformas which include descriptors, data sources, and change control. A data issues log is maintained that considers severity, impact and mitigation. The Authority's Business Improvement Programme incorporates process re-engineering to assure our data

at the point of entry following the ‘record once and use many times’ principle, delivering new ways of working and business systems where appropriate.

#### 6.4. Budget Setting Process for Future Years:

The summary diagram below shows the key stages that will be followed by the Authority in setting future year’s budgets. In order to ensure proper process and timescales, it incorporates budget planning from July, setting a draft budget in December for consultation, followed by a final budget set in February.

Diagram 1: The budget setting timetable



\*CMT= Corporate Management Team      \*\*FRA= Fire and Rescue Authority

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## Appendix 5

### Reserves Strategy – Budget 2021/22 to 2024/25

#### 1 Introduction and Background

- 1.1 Reserves are an essential part of good financial management. They help the Authority to cope with unpredictable financial pressures and plan for future spending commitments. The level, purpose and planned use of reserves are important factors for the Authority to consider in developing the Medium-Term Financial Strategy (MTFS) and setting the annual budget.
- 1.2 Section 43 of the Local Government Finance Act 1992 requires that, when setting the budget for the forthcoming year, precepting authorities should have regard to the level of reserves needed to provide sufficient resources to finance estimated future expenditure, plus any appropriate allowances that should be made for contingencies.

Best practice on the use and management of reserves and balances is provided by CIPFA and the Local Authority Accounting Panel (LAAP) guidance, specifically LAAP Bulletin 99 - 'Local Authority Reserves and Balances'. This was issued in July 2014, but since then many references have been made to the scale of public sector reserves by various parties.

In May 2018 the Government published the New Fire and Rescue Services Framework which introduces a requirement for Combined Fire and Rescue Authorities to publish a Reserve Strategy on their website and outlined the detail which should be included. The relevant paragraphs are detailed in Annex 1 attached.

- 1.3 In setting the budget, the Authority decides what it will spend and how much income it needs from limited fees/charges and the council tax to supplement government funding. The Authority may choose to fund some of its spending from its reserves, or set aside some of its income to increase reserves for future spending.

Having the right level of reserves is important. If reserves are too low, there may be little resilience to financial shocks and sustained financial challenges.

- 1.4 Authorities are free to determine the reserves they hold. Members are responsible for ensuring that the Authority's reserves are part of the MTFS and need to be appropriate for circumstances. The Chief Finance Officer has a duty to provide members with advice on the level of reserves.

## Appendix 5

1.5 Fire and Rescue Authorities face significant challenges. The unprecedented reduction in government funding since 2010/11, rising costs and growing demand for many services are all testing the Authority's financial management and resilience. The position is potentially to become tougher with the delayed three year Spending Review, potential Funding Formula changes and Business Rates Retention all scheduled for 2022/23. There are also new pressures from the pandemic.

1.6 Current and future financial challenges pose significant, and increasing, risks for the Authority. The Authority may consider using reserves to balance competing pressures, for example:

- Using reserves to offset funding reductions and protect services – although this can only be a short-term strategy as reserves are a one-off funding resource – and/or invest in making changes that reduce the cost of providing services in the longer term.
- Increasing reserves to strengthen resilience against future, uncertain cost pressures. A feature of the previous budget strategy and MTFs, was that reserves were built up to be used to support the budget and fund investment in delivering savings through transformation and improving services. The Transformational Budget Reserve is now being utilised to offset the budget gap as strategically planned and importantly invest in service transformation.

## 2. **The approach to setting the Reserves Strategy**

2.1 The Reserves Strategy is integral to the MTFs and the annual budget setting process. This strategy includes:

- Information showing the current level of reserves
- Consideration of the forward strategy for reserves needed to support the Authority's MTFs
- A summary of the financial risks facing the Authority in conjunction with
- An explanation of the purpose and level of any earmarked reserves
- Details of the plans for reserves within the published budget

2.2 Reserves will be monitored throughout the year and the level of reserves reported as part of the year end accounting processes.



## Appendix 5

### 3 Why the Authority holds reserves

3.1 We use different terms to refer to the reserves depending on why they are held. Terms we use in this report have the following meanings:

- *General* – the main balance that the Authority wishes to set aside. This is the £2.4m and is compared annually to other Combined Fire Authorities. This has reduced, as planned, from the previous £2.6m.
- Available *earmarked reserves* – funds we hold set aside to meet known or predicted future spending or ring-fenced by previous Authority decisions (such as the Collaboration Reserve)
- *Other reserves* the Authority holds but which are not available to fund their general spending; some reserves with statutory restrictions on how they can be spent, such as capital receipts or specific revenue grants
- Total reserves – the sum of earmarked, other and General

3.2 Available earmarked reserves include funds for contingent spending that is hard to predict (risk-based reserves) – for example property or vehicle damage, or reserves to cover shortfalls in investment income, pay award projections and so on.

3.3 Reserves are distinct from provisions. Provisions are funds set aside for probable future liabilities where the timing and amounts are uncertain

### Delivering a balanced budget

3.4 There are a number of reasons why a Fire and Rescue Authority or Local Authority might hold reserves, these include to:-

- (a) Mitigate potential future risks such as increased demand and costs;
- (b) Help absorb the costs of future liabilities;
- (c) Temporarily plug a funding gap should resources be reduced suddenly;
- (d) Enable the Authority to resource one-off policy developments and initiatives without causing an unduly disruptive impact on Council Tax;
- (e) Spread the cost of large scale projects which span a number of years.

Reserves only provide one-off funding so the Authority aims to avoid using reserves to meet regular and ongoing financial commitments, other than as part of a sustainable medium-term budget plan.

## Appendix 5

Long-Term Sustainability - Reserves are an essential tool to ensure long term budget stability particularly at a time when the Authority is facing significant year on year reductions in grant funding over the medium term. Due to the fact that funding for future Capital Projects is held as an Earmarked Reserve, the overall level of reserves held by the Authority is currently still high, but will reduce significantly as the Capital programme progresses.

Reserve balances have been identified as a key indicator of financial health and the Authority continues to have an appropriate level of reserves to deal with identified risks. As a minimum, there are sufficient balances to support the budget requirements and provide an adequate contingency for budget risks.

- 3.5 The Local Government Finance Act 1992 requires the Authority to calculate its expected outgoings and income for the year – including any additions to or use of reserves. Where expected outgoings exceed expected income, the difference is the Authority’s tax requirement for that year.
- 3.6 If unplanned costs are incurred during the year that are not funded externally – for example, by a grant from government or an insurance policy – or the Authority experiences a shortfall in expected income/funding, there will be few options if it is to deliver to budget. Raising extra income or making in-year savings may have an unacceptable impact on service users. Therefore the Authority may want to consider using reserves to balance spending and income.
- 3.7 The 2021/22 to 2024/25 MTFs assumes that there will be utilisation of the Transformation Reserve for budgeting and transformation/innovation purposes. It forecasts that this reserve will be usable beyond 2024/25. The MTRP details the utilisation of General Reserve (line 79).

### **4 Reserves and the management of risks – Annual Review**

- 4.1 With regard to the Authority’s financial stability, reserves are used to manage risks. There are certain earmarked reserves that have been set aside for specific risks, for example: insurance/protection, ill health and early retirement, HR matters, Health and Safety matters, grant loss, Pensions/Pay uncertainties, budget pressures and new for 2021/22 a Collection Fund deficit reserve. These reserves and the potential pressures that need to be managed are reviewed as part of the budget setting process. The review of reserves in year and the forecast of a forecast large Collection Fund deficit, led to the FRA in October 2020 establishing an earmarked reserve for this from the 2020/21 year end underspend.

## Appendix 5

- 4.2 The Authority also manages unforeseen financial shocks by maintaining a General Fund/Working Balance. The Authority's agreed policy is to maintain working balance at £2.4m. Some Authorities set a minimum desired percentage and although the Authority has not done this, the policy would maintain general balances at approximately 7.5% to 8% of the net budget. This level of working balance is kept under review and the Chief Finance Officer has expressed a view that the level is reasonable as part of the budget setting process.

### Increasing Financial Risks

- 4.3 The risk environment for local government has significantly increased. This strategy identifies the following issues that have increased risk:
- Continued reductions in Government funding with three years of annual settlements, with a three year CSR anticipated for 2022/23 onwards.
  - Potential changes in the grant funding methodology from 2022/23 onwards – Formula Funding Review, Business Rates review and Spending Review
  - Significant movement and growth in resident population numbers brings pressures to a range of services and requires more investment in infrastructure – could have impacts on hydrant and operational provision
  - Localisation of business rates presents a collection rate risk, an economic downturn risk and a risk in respect of backdated appeals – From 2022/23, Business Rates Retention Scheme and no RSG
  - A key new uncertainty is the outcome of the Remedy for the age discrimination case (McCloud) and the impact that this may have financially on Fire and Rescue Services. A new £1m earmarked reserve has been set up to cover this and the unknown cost of employer contributions and Administrator payments.
  - Any impacts from Brexit and supplies still could have a financial impact.
  - Collection Fund deficits and the volatility of the taxbase during and post the pandemic.

## Appendix 5

### On-going risks in the current strategy

4.4 In addition to the new risks there are still the risks that are usually managed within the MTFS and the Corporate Risk Register.

### 5 Budgeted Reserves – Risk Assessment

5.1 The forecast Earmarked Reserves usage assumed as part of the budget strategy are included in the Medium Term Revenue Plan.

5.2 The forecast value of General Fund Reserves as at 1<sup>st</sup> April 2020 is £2.4m as detailed in Table 1 below.

Table 1: Risk Assessed General Reserves

Description	Likelihood	Impact	£'000
Large scale failure of Personal Protective Equipment or other safety critical equipment	Possible	Significant	300
Major incident within the County/Region	Likely	Significant	650
Failure of operational vehicle prior to planned replacement in Capital Programme/unforeseen inability to provide service requirements	Possible	Significant	300
Failure of a major supplier	Likely	Significant	300
Failure/corruption/security breach of ICT System	Possible	Significant	200
Non-specific General Reserves to meet any other unforeseen service requirements			650
<b>Total General Reserves</b>			<b>2,400</b>

## Appendix 5

- 5.4 The reserves below have been set aside for foreseen circumstances that may necessitate usage. They are annually reviewed and if not deemed necessary, released to support the revenue budget. Some have been set up as a result of base revenue budget scrutiny, where budgets in the past were held for just in case events necessitated their use. Where this was so, these have been removed from base revenue budget and an earmarked reserve created. The large items, such as ESMCP, Hydrants and the Replacement mobilising system, are where the spend is unknown so these amounts have indicatively been set aside to avoid budget pressure in the medium term and to assist with the Medium Term budget setting. The items listed below are not contractually or legally committed, at this point in time. All are clearly linked to supporting the Authority's service delivery plans.
- 5.5 The earmarked reserves are detailed in Table 2 below.

## Appendix 5

Table 2: Earmarked Reserves

Description	£'000
Emergency Services Mobile Communications Programme (ESMCP) reserve – Emergency Services Network (ESN)	200
Replacement Mobilising Project	100
Contingency for doubtful debts	10
Hydrant installation (taken out of revenue budget due to uncertainty)	225
Goods and services, contractual inflation in excess of assumptions (1%)	80
Potential liability as a result of legal/disciplinary action in relation to Personnel and/or Health and Safety issues (includes expected contaminant works at initially £100k)	300
Adverse weather conditions resulting in higher than average numbers of emergency incidents (excludes Bellwin incidents)	150
Sudden absenteeism of a large number of personnel across the whole of the Service due to pandemic or similar	125
Ill-health retirements in excess of budget provision/injury pension	125
Unplanned urgent property works (eg roof repairs)	100
Contingency for insufficient Insurance cover (additional contribution)	25
Interruption to Business Continuity (including Industrial Action)	200
Unplanned urgent maintenance/replacement of particular item of equipment (eg engine or gearbox wearing out/failing earlier than anticipated)	50
Invest to Save/Innovation Fund (these have been taken out of annual revenue budgets)	60
ICT Innovation/Application Development	75
Pensions/Pay reserve (£1m set as part of the 2020/21 budget)	1,100
<b>Total Requirement</b>	<b>2,925</b>

## Appendix 5

### 5.5 Other Reserves for noting:

- Collaboration Reserve £2.378m (includes 2017/18 year end additional contribution of £498k from Home Office Pensions refund)
- Capital Receipts Reserve £564k
- Collection Fund Reserve (after allocations as part of 2021/22 budget setting, the balance will be £370k).

There is also a Capital Reserve that holds the approved funding where schemes run over the financial year end, this includes vehicles, property works and ICT projects.

## Appendix 5

### Annex 1 – Extract from National Framework reference reserves

#### Reserves

##### 1.1

Sections 31A, 32, 42A and 43 of the Local Government Finance Act 1992 requires billing and precepting authorities to have regard to the level of reserves needed for meeting estimated future expenditure when calculating the budget requirement.

##### 1.2

Fire and rescue authorities should establish a policy on reserves and provisions in consultation with their chief finance officer. General reserves should be held by the fire and rescue authority and managed to balance funding and spending priorities and to manage risks. This should be established as part of the medium-term financial planning process.

##### 1.3

Each fire and rescue authority should publish their reserves strategy on their website, either as part of their medium term financial plan or in a separate reserves strategy document. The reserves strategy should include details of current and future planned reserve levels, setting out a total amount of reserves and the amount of each specific reserve that is held for each year. The reserves strategy should cover resource and capital reserves and provide information for the period of the medium term financial plan (and at least two years ahead).

##### 1.4

Sufficient information should be provided to enable understanding of the purpose(s) for which each reserve is held and how holding each reserve supports the fire and rescue authority's medium term financial plan. The strategy should be set out in a way that is clear and understandable for members of the public, and should include:

- how the level of the general reserve has been set;
- justification for holding a general reserve larger than five percent of budget; and
- details of the activities or items to be funded from each earmarked reserve, and how these support the FRA's strategy to deliver a good quality service to the public. Where an earmarked reserve is intended to fund a number of projects or programmes (for example, a change or transformation reserve), details of each programme or project to be funded should be set out.



## Appendix 5

1.5

The information on each reserve should make clear how much of the funding falls into the following three categories:

- a. Funding for planned expenditure on projects and programmes over the period of the current medium term financial plan.
- b. Funding for specific projects and programmes beyond the current planning period.
- c. As a general contingency or resource to meet other expenditure needs held in accordance with sound principles of good financial management (e.g. insurance)

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## **TREASURER'S STATEMENT**

Section 25 of the Local Government Act 2003 requires the Treasurer to report to the Fire and Rescue Authority when it is making the statutory calculations required to determine its council tax and the Authority is required to take that report into account when making the calculations. The report must deal with the robustness of the estimates included in the budget and the adequacy of the reserves for which the budget provides.

Dealing firstly with the robustness of the estimates; an improved budget scrutiny process was introduced some years ago and, as reported to Members throughout the budget process, this has been followed again this year. Members have also been briefed on and involved in debating the more important aspects of the budget at two Members' Budget Workshops. Feedback from the budget consultation has also been reported back to Members. Therefore, both Officers and Members have arrived at this budget setting meeting fully informed on all the major issues. Given this background, I can confirm my satisfaction as to the robustness of the estimates presented to you in this report.

Members will also be aware from previous years' discussions and at the two Budget Workshops of the need to make adequate provision for Reserves and Working Balances. The requirement for financial reserves is acknowledged in Statute and Sections 32 and 43 of the Local Government Finance Act 1992, requiring precepting authorities to have regard to the level of reserves needed for meeting estimated future expenditure when calculating the budget requirement.

CIPFA has published a Guidance Note on Local Authority Reserves and Balances. It details that it is the responsibility of the Treasurer to advise the Authority concerning the level of reserves and the protocols for their establishment and use.

The importance of sound working balances, reserves and provisions cannot be over emphasised. It is critical, particularly where an emergency service is involved, to have adequate working capital. A working balance is needed to even out the peaks and troughs of cash flow. It guards against the need (and cost) of regular short-term borrowing. Apart from the day to day fluctuations in cash flow, the working balance will be made up principally by the level of reserves and provisions.

There are three main purposes for the establishment and maintenance of reserves:

- A working balance to help cushion the impact of uneven cash flows and avoid unnecessary temporary borrowing.
- A contingency to cushion the impact of unexpected events or emergencies.
- A means of building up funds to meet known or predicted liabilities.

It has been recognised previously by Members that this latter purpose is crucial at the present time as Government support funding is decreasing and is expected to continue to do so over the next few years.

There is an annual review of the level of reserves. The detail on the level and strategy for both General and Earmarked Reserves is included within the Reserves Strategy. The level of the risk assessed General Reserve is £2.400m, reduced from £2.6m as part of the 2020/21 budget. The main earmarked reserves remain at £1.925m and have been added to in 2020/21 for the Pensions/Pay reserve at £1m due to significant uncertainties of financial impacts. The capital reserve, as noted below, is reducing over 2021/22. As detailed in the Strategy and MTRP, from 2022/23 onwards further reductions are proposed to the General Reserve. The level of general reserves was compared with those of other fire authorities and compared favourably with the average percentage. The Transformational earmarked reserve, used for transformation and budget setting purposes, is forecast to be £2.502m at the 2020/21 year end in line with the Authority's financial strategy. This excludes the 2020/21 year-end underspend, that has been approved by the FRA to allocate to a Collection Fund deficit reserve.

The reserves are fully detailed in the Reserves Strategy.

The Authority created a Collaboration Reserve that was predominantly funded from the 2015/16 and 2016/17 underspends and a pensions reimbursement.

For the 2021/22 year, as noted above, a new earmarked reserve has been set up to offset the unitary authorities apportionment of the council tax and business rates Collection Fund deficits. There has also been a thorough review of capital reserves, resulting in the un-earmarking £545k that will be funding the 2021/22 capital programme and relieving the revenue budget of this funding pressure in 2021/22.

**Gavin Chambers CPFA**  
**Treasurer to the Fire and Rescue Authority**

**REPORT AUTHOR:** DEPUTY CHIEF FIRE OFFICER

**SUBJECT:** 2019-2023 COMMUNITY RISK MANAGEMENT PLAN (2021/22 ACTION PLAN) -  
CONSULTATION SUMMARY

For further information on this report contact: Jason Tai  
T/Area Commander, Training, Assurance & Strategic Support  
01234 845112

Background Papers: Fire & Rescue National Framework for England (2018)  
2019-2023 Community Risk Management Plan (2020-21 refresh)

Implications (tick ✓):

LEGAL		✓	FINANCIAL	✓
HUMAN RESOURCES			EQUALITY IMPACT	✓
ENVIRONMENTAL			POLICY	✓
CORPORATE RISK	Known	✓	OTHER (please specify)	
	New			

*Any implications affecting this report are noted at the end of the report.*

**PURPOSE:**

To inform the Fire and Rescue Authority (FRA) of the outcomes of the public consultation on the proposals for inclusion in the 2021/22 Annual Action Plan within the 4-year Community Risk Management Plan (CRMP) covering the period 2019-2023.

**RECOMMENDATIONS:**

1. That Members consider the outcomes from the CRMP public consultation, and;
  2. That Members approve the adoption and publication of the final draft of the refreshed 2019-2023 CRMP and the 2021/22 annual action plan (Appendix A).
- 

1. Background

- 1.1. The Community Risk Management Plan (CRMP), covering the 4-year period 2019-2023, sets out the strategic approach Bedfordshire Fire and Rescue Services (BFRS) intends to take to deliver on its mission to:

*'...provide outstanding fire and rescue services that help make Bedfordshire safer.'*

- 1.2. The CRMP is structured around six aims:

- PREVENTING fires and other emergencies from happening;
- PROTECTING people and property when fires happen;
- RESPONDING to fires and other emergencies promptly and effectively;
- EMPOWERING our people as we work together to make Bedfordshire safer;
- UTILISING our assets and resources efficiently and effectively; and
- MAXIMISING use of data and digital solutions to drive improvement.

- 1.3. The CRMP fulfils a requirement of the Fire & Rescue National Framework for England (2018) to produce an Integrated Risk Management Plan (IRMP) that identifies and assess all the foreseeable fire and rescue related risks and challenges which may arise and how we plan to mitigate these risks using our available resources. The CRMP is published on our website and contains an annual action plan covering those more detailed priorities the Service will focus on within the coming year.
- 1.4. The CRMP is directly informed by the outcomes from our comprehensive Community Risk Analysis (CRA) document, also published on our website, and refreshed annually to ensure the statistical content and information within it remains current.
2. 2021/22 Annual Action Plan – consultation outcomes
  - 2.1. The Framework requires a Fire and Rescue Authority (FRA) to publicly consult with local communities, partners, our staff and their representative bodies when developing their CRMP.
  - 2.2. The draft annual action plan for 2021/22 was presented to the FRA in December 2020, prior to being consulted upon alongside the FRA's budget proposals for 2021/22.
  - 2.3. The CRMP public consultation was opened following the December FRA meeting and closed on 31st January 2021. It was combined with the FRA's Budget and Council Tax consultation, targeting both internal and external stakeholders and utilised the Service's community messaging system 'Beds Fire Alert'. 15,411 emails were sent (on three occasions) asking subscribers to participate in the consultation process. The consultation was also made available via the Service website and was promoted via our social media channels. It was also promoted internally via the weekly Blue Bulletin and email system.
  - 2.4. A total of **471 respondents completed the survey**.
  - 2.5. Two questions in the consultation related directly to the CRMP (4a & 4b). Before answering the questions, respondents were asked to read the 2021/22 action plan provided as an appendix.
  - 2.6. Question 4a: *Do you agree delivering on these actions will help us achieve our Mission to provide outstanding fire & rescue services that help make Bedfordshire Safer?*
    - 67% of respondents answered 'Yes';**
    - 8% answered 'No';**
    - 25% answered 'Unsure'.**

2.7. Question 2: *Is there anything you feel could improve our proposals for 2021/22?*

96 respondents completed this free text question,

2.8. Analysis of the narrative feedback received revealed some re-occurring themes:

- *Maintenance of the present levels of service and efficiency is essential*
- *Increased community engagement*
- *More collaboration with other blue light services*
- *Comprehensive and realistic*
- *Well written and appropriately positive given the challenging circumstances*
- *More on your website about your plans and how you are delivering against them*
- *Opening a whole time station somewhere near Sandy/Biggleswade. Fire cover in this area is entirely dependent on retained stations only*

There were recurring positive comments on the effective role of the Service in the community and the CRMP. For example, *'you're the experts and please stay that way!'* Overall, the feedback received has been positive, with the new priorities being well supported and seen as both refreshing and relevant during the current climate. Having considered the consultation feedback, there are no proposals to amend the draft annual action plan for 2021/22.

### 3. Recommendations

1. That Members consider the outcomes from the CRMP public consultation, and;
2. That Members approve the adoption and publication of the final draft of the refreshed 2019-2023 CRMP and the 2021/22 annual action plan (Appendix A).



4. Implications

**LEGAL**

Legal implications as detailed in the Fire and Rescue Services Act 2004 and Fire and Rescue National Framework for England 2018.

**FINANCIAL**

The financial impacts of the CRMP are taken into account in the budget proposals included elsewhere on this agenda. The proposals have been discussed through the development process with managers and staff and their views are reflected in the report.

**EQUALITY IMPACT**

Each of the priorities within the 2021/22 annual action plan will be subject to an Equality Assessment prior to implementation.

**ORGANISATIONAL RISK**

The CRMP is the primary delivery vehicle for address the organisational risks identified within the Corporate Risk Register.

**ANDREW HOPKINSON**  
**DEPUTY CHIEF FIRE OFFICER**

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**Bedfordshire**  
Fire and Rescue Service

# COMMUNITY RISK MANAGEMENT PLAN 2019 – 2023

REFRESHED FOR 2021

Please note the figures contained in this document will be updated for the financial year April 2020 – March 2021



Find us on social media @bedsfire



PREVENTING



PROTECTING



RESPONDING



EMPOWERING



UTILISING



MAXIMISING



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Our Mission is to provide outstanding fire and rescue services that help make Bedfordshire safer.

## Our Values



### **WE ARE ACCOUNTABLE**

we are transparent, trustworthy and responsible for our actions.



### **WE'VE GOT YOUR BACK**

striving to keep us all safe, while being supportive and inclusive.



### **EVERY CONTACT COUNTS**

making a positive difference each and every time, with respect and professionalism.



### **WE DARE TO BE DIFFERENT**

we are bold in our approach, we welcome challenge and are open to innovative ideas.



## FOREWORD



Together, we assure you of our continued commitment to making Bedfordshire a safer place.

**Our Community Risk Management Plan 2019 – 2023 (CRMP) sets out how we intend to deliver our mission of providing outstanding fire and rescue services by further improving:**

- How we assess and analyse the risks faced by the communities we serve.
- The effectiveness of our prevention, protection and emergency response services.
- How efficiently we use our assets and resources to reduce and respond to the risks faced by our communities; and,
- How we value, support and invest in our best asset, our staff.

We have revised the CRMP for 2021 to reflect the progress already made against the 2020/21 action plan and the achievements of the Service in the past year. A summary of the progress made against the 2019/20 CRMP action plan can be viewed [here](#).

**We are proud of so many achievements big and small across the Service over the past year. We would like to tell you about some of them:**

- Bedfordshire Fire and Rescue Service has been awarded 'Diamond' the highest possible Level 5 award for managing the safety of our staff.
- Bedfordshire Fire and Rescue Service collected second place in the national award for excellence in board leadership in equality, diversity and inclusion, sponsored by Asian Fire Service Association (AFSA) and presented by the National Centre for Diversity.

- The Service has been awarded the accolade for demonstrating strategic and operational awareness and understanding of how to challenge, promote and advance equality, diversity and inclusion at senior levels of the organization. In doing so, stimulating change, demonstrating visionary leadership, capacity, capability and a strong commitment to making things happen.
- In September 2020 Bedfordshire Fire and Rescue Service was awarded Gold in the BBC 3 Counties Radio - You Make a Difference Awards in the Emergency Services Category, for the work that we have done supporting EEA by seconding firefighters to drive ambulances during the COVID 19 Pandemic.
- During 2019 the Service has led nationally on the procurement of new Mobile Data Terminals. This important procurement process ensures that BFRS and other services will continue to be able to access vital risk information at the incident ground in a quick and accessible format.

A highlight of past years was our annual awards evening where we recognise outstanding individual achievements, bravery, quick thinking and lifesaving as well as educational and charitable endeavor. Unfortunately, due to COVID we have been unable to celebrate the achievements of our staff in the same way. We have however been able to recognise of staff's achievements through virtual awards celebrations.

Following an inspection of our Service during the summer of 2018, Her Majesty's Inspectorate of Constabulary and Fire and Rescue Services (HMICFRS) judged us to be good at 'effectively keeping people safe and secure' within our local communities. We welcomed the areas for improvement identified within their report, progress was made in addressing these areas in 2019 and we will continue to work with HMICFRS to implement further improvements. In 2020 we were inspected by the HMICFRS in response to our COVID work. As a result of this HMICFRS publish their results in January 2021. The document can be found [here](#).

We know that our successes would not be possible without our team of professional and dedicated staff. We have always worked hard to provide the most effective equipment, vehicles, training and support to our staff. This plan places further emphasis on valuing and investing in them; recognising the key role they play in developing our Service.

This year has given us some challenges with COVID affecting our normal ways of working. We have overcome these challenges by enabling our staff to work from home where they can and providing them with the equipment to do this effectively.

We have made our offices and our operational areas COVID safe and have provided additional PPE and other equipment to ensure that our staff have safe working environments.

In addition to aid the multi-agency response to COVID 19 we have provided a valuable command and support role for the Local Resilience Forum (LRF), COVID 19 Strategic Command Group (SCG) and the Tactical Command Group (TCG) meetings.

We continue to strive to be an 'employer of choice' with a highly skilled and motivated workforce that understands and reflects the diversity of our communities, and who see our Service as an engaging, positive and rewarding place to work. By being open and responsive to change, and through exploring and investing in new and innovative technologies and ways of working, we will continue to improve the safety and wellbeing of the diverse communities we serve.

Each year we will publish an action plan summarising what we intend to deliver that year. We will report on progress by producing an Annual Action Plan ([see Appendix A](#)) and a review of progress against [previous actions](#).

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### Paul M Fuller CBE QFSM MStJ DL



Chief Fire Officer Bedfordshire Fire and Rescue Authority

### Cllr John Chatterley



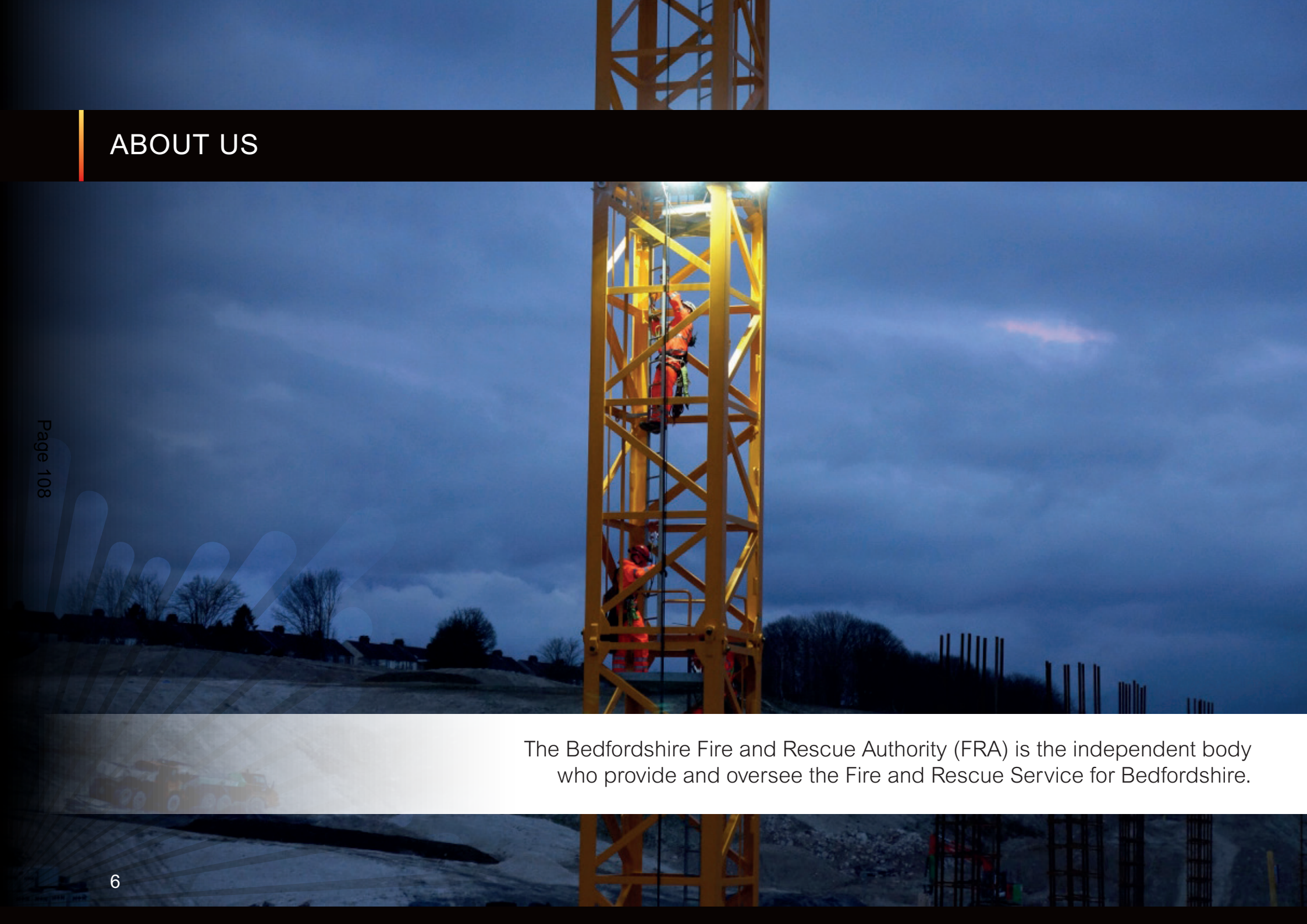
Chairman Bedfordshire Fire and Rescue Authority







## ABOUT US



The Bedfordshire Fire and Rescue Authority (FRA) is the independent body who provide and oversee the Fire and Rescue Service for Bedfordshire.

## BEDFORDSHIRE FIRE AND RESCUE AUTHORITY

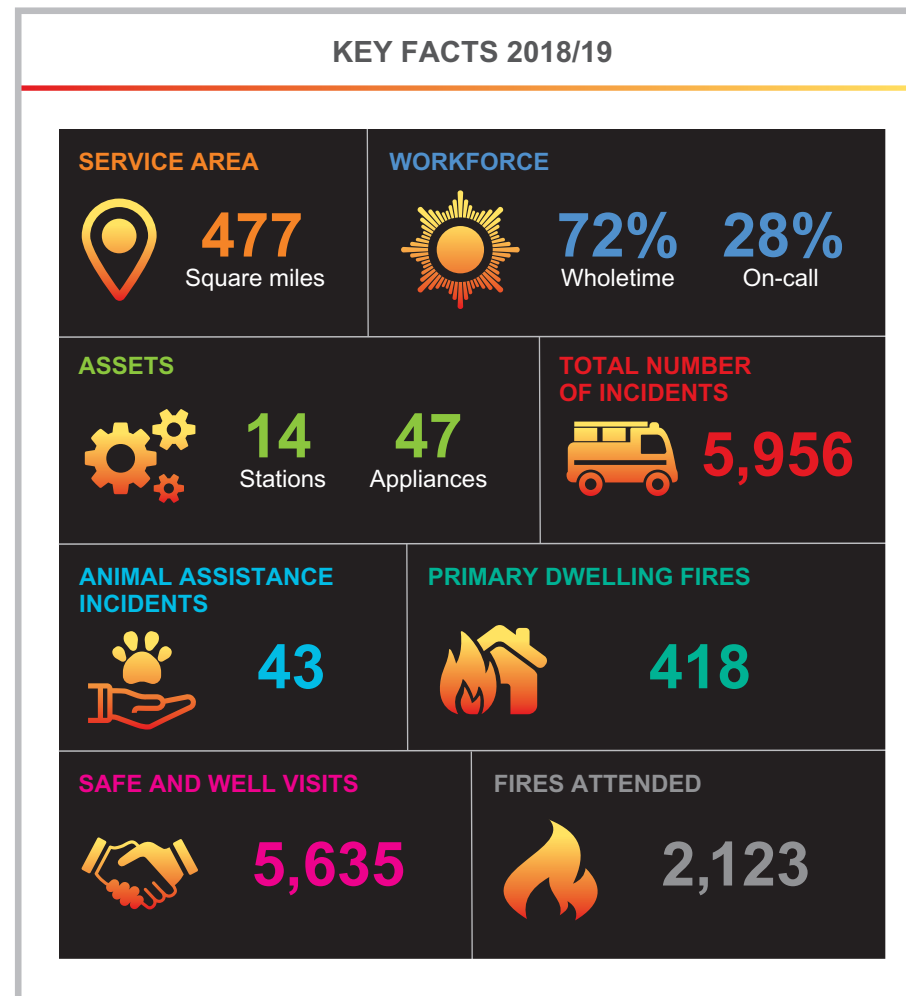
The Bedfordshire FRA comprises elected councillors (**Members**) appointed to it from each of the three unitary authorities, whose numbers are proportional to the populations they represent:

- 3 Members from **Bedford Borough Council**;
- 5 Members from **Central Bedfordshire Council**;
- 4 Members from **Luton Borough Council**.

Additionally the **Bedfordshire Police and Crime Commissioner** has a non-voting seat on the Authority.

Once appointed to the Authority, Members represent the whole community, not just the area they serve as a local councillor. They serve as a valuable link between communities and the Fire and Rescue Service. Members are collectively responsible for setting the overall strategic direction of the Service, including the setting of its budget, promoting its core values and ensuring that the Service is effective, efficient and provides value for money.

The full Authority meets periodically throughout the year and more information is available on our [website](#).



## BEDFORDSHIRE FIRE AND RESCUE SERVICE

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### We employ over 580 staff consisting of:

- Wholetime (fulltime) firefighters and officers;
- On-call (retained) firefighters;
- Control staff;
- Corporate (support) staff.

We provide our services from 14 fire stations and our Fire Control mobilising centre at our headquarters site at Kempston which also hosts our training centre and technical services hub.

We operate a range of duty systems to ensure we have the right number of firefighters available at the right time and place to respond to emergencies.

- 24 hour shift – immediate 24 hour response using full-time firefighters;
- Day-crewed – immediate daytime response using full-time firefighters Monday to Friday with an on-call firefighter response at night and weekends;
- On-Call/Retained – on-call firefighters providing a response within six minutes.

### Our fleet includes:

- 22 front-line fire engines;
- 16 specialist vehicles;
- 2 aerial ladder platforms;
- 66 support vehicles.

We work to **PREVENT** fires and other emergencies from occurring in the first place.

Our firefighters another front-line staff undertake more than 5,000 safe and well visits each year, carry out fire and road safety talks in schools, and work with partner agencies to inform our communities about fire and road safety.

We work to **PROTECT** people when emergencies do happen. Our firefighters and fire safety officers undertake inspections of workplaces, engaging with and educating owners and occupiers, taking enforcement action where necessary.

We **RESPOND** to emergencies including fires, road traffic collisions, air and rail crashes, water rescues and flooding, hazardous chemical incidents and many other types of emergencies. Our firefighters regularly train, maintain and test equipment to ensure they remain operationally ready to respond to emergencies at all times.

We also work closely with our partners such as Bedfordshire Police, the East of England Ambulance Service, local councils and our neighbouring fire and rescue services to ensure we can respond effectively and competently to any emergency.



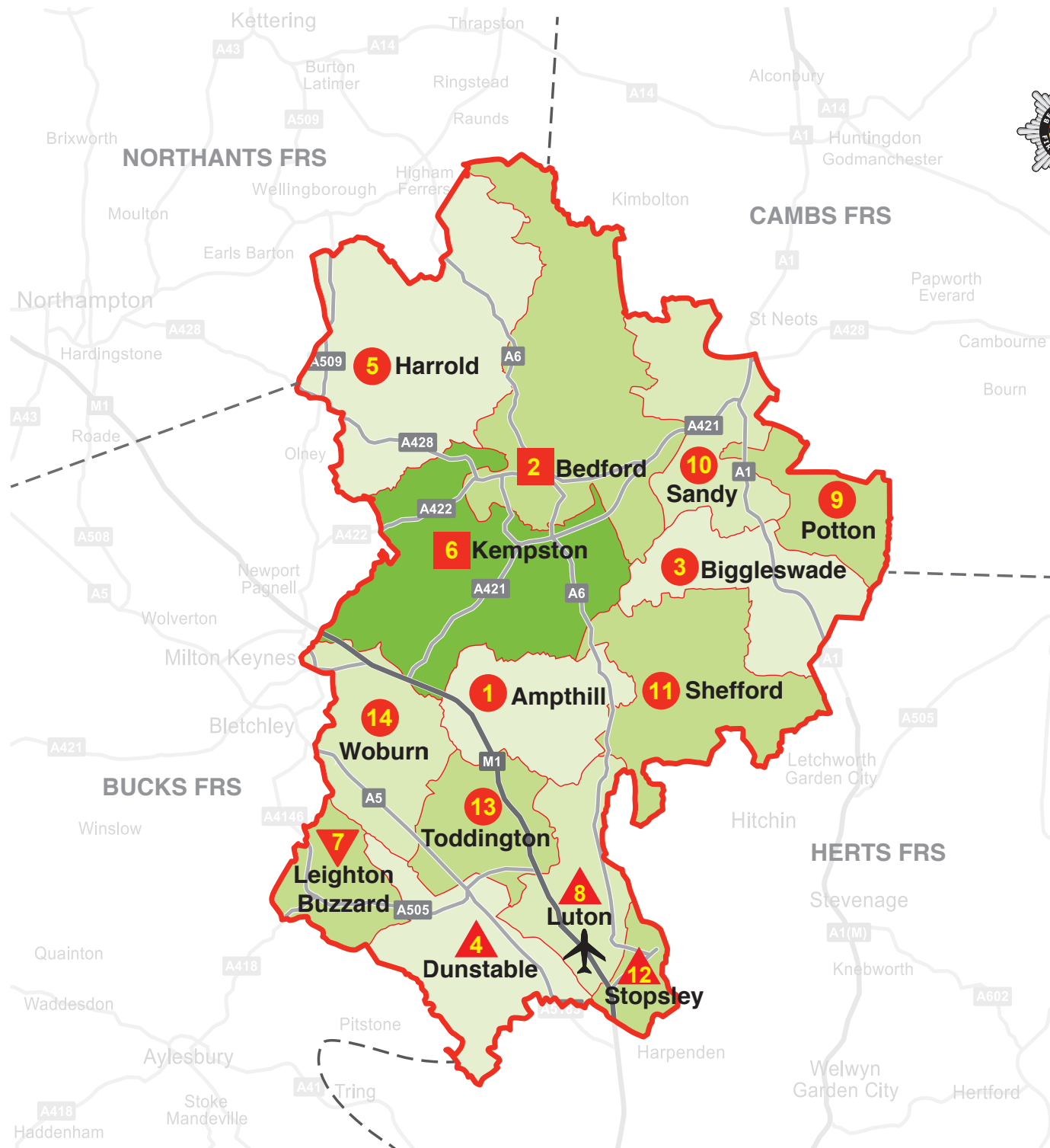


# Bedfordshire Fire and Rescue Service

- Wholetime/On-call
- ▲ Wholetime
- On-call
- ▼ Day Crewed/On-Call

## Bedfordshire Fire Stations

- 1 Ampthill
- 2 Bedford
- 3 Biggleswade
- ▲ 4 Dunstable
- 5 Harrold
- 6 Kempston
- ▼ 7 Leighton Buzzard
- ▲ 8 Luton
- 9 Potton
- 10 Sandy
- 11 Shefford
- ▲ 12 Stopsley
- 13 Toddington
- 14 Woburn



## OUR MISSION, AIMS AND PRIORITIES

Our Mission is simply to **provide outstanding fire and rescue services** that make Bedfordshire safer, and we are committed to doing everything we can to achieve this within the resources we have available to us. For us, delivering on our mission means focusing on the following six aims:



We focus our resources on achieving these aims and use them to develop and deliver the key priorities we set out to achieve through our Annual Action Plan.

We use Key Performance Indicators (KPIs) to measure how we are performing against our priorities, report these on a quarterly basis to the FRA and publish an Annual Performance Report.

## OUR VALUES AND VIRTUES – WHAT WE BELIEVE IN:

Our Values and Virtues are the qualities that we believe are the most important to us, and describe the expectations the public have of us, and that we have of each other.

We use them every day to influence how we work to achieve our mission and priority objectives, and to guide the professional behaviours we expect of our staff in everything we do.

We fully support the National Fire and Rescue Service core values of:

- Service to the community;
- Valuing all our employees;
- Valuing diversity in the Service and the community; and
- Valuing improvement.

### BEDFORDSHIRE FIRE AND RESCUE SERVICE VALUES

- **We've got your back** – Striving to keep us all safe, while being supportive and inclusive
- **We dare to be different** – We are bold in our approach, we welcome challenge, and we are open to innovative ideas
- **We are accountable** – We are transparent, trustworthy and responsible for our actions
- **Every contact counts** – Making a positive difference each and every time, with respect and professionalism



## COLLABORATION AND PARTNERSHIPS

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Partnerships may either be Statutory or non-Statutory in nature.

**‘Statutory’** partnerships are those where there is a legal duty for Bedfordshire Fire and Rescue Service to collaborate with other agencies to achieve certain goals, such as Community Safety Partnerships established under the Crime and Disorder Act 1998.

**‘Non statutory’** partnerships are entered into voluntarily in order to support achieving organisational targets and goals. We aim to evaluate our partnerships regularly to ensure that they are effective in delivering the expected benefits and outcomes. More information on our partnerships can be found on our [website](#).

We work closely with our blue light colleagues in Bedfordshire Police and the East of England Ambulance Service NHS Trust (EEAST), as well as our local authority colleagues in Bedford Borough Council, Central Bedfordshire Council and Luton Borough Council. We view collaboration as an opportunity to reduce costs and improve services to the public, so we continue to explore new opportunities to work together through the Blue Light Collaboration Strategic Board chaired jointly by the Deputy Chief Fire Officer and Deputy Chief Constable.





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We also work in partnership with other fire and rescue services on both front line and support services, such as our shared strategic operational command arrangements and shared Information and Communications Technology (ICT) service with Cambridgeshire Fire and Rescue Service. These arrangements have not only improved services but allowed the Authority to make efficiency savings.

**Currently Bedfordshire Fire and Rescue Service are collaborating with Bedfordshire Police and the EEAST on a number of projects. These include:**

- Co-locating police officers and police community support officers at Ampthill, Bedford, Leighton Buzzard, and Toddington community fire stations;
- Co-locating paramedics at Luton, Sandy, Shefford, Stopsley and Bedford community fire stations;
- Assisting Bedfordshire Police with searches for vulnerable missing persons;
- Assisting paramedics to gain entry to premises where there is suspected risk to life of the occupant;

- We launched a new Falls Service responding to vulnerable people who fall in their homes. This new service enabled us to support EEAST, helping relieve added pressures from the NHS. Our teams were trained by EEAST, with the skills required to the level of Community First Responders.
- A new Technical Support Unit has been set up, based at Dunstable Fire Station. This was the first of its kind in the country. This vehicle responds to Bariatric and complex patient incidents where emergency removal of a patient is required to support EEAST. This dedicated vehicle carries specialist equipment including a bariatric stretcher which, enables crews to provide the best possible care to the patient. They can then be handed over to EEAST for further care.
- We came together with East of England Ambulance Service (EEAST) last-year to provide support during the COVID crisis. BFRS worked with EEAST by providing over 30 seconded firefighters to drive ambulances across Bedfordshire keeping more ambulances on the road.

Our website has more information about our **collaboration initiatives**.





## HOW WE ANALYSE AND MANAGE RISKS TO OUR COMMUNITIES



While risk to property, the environment and our heritage are of significant importance in the work we do – it is risk to life that is given our highest priority.



## INTEGRATED RISK MANAGEMENT PLANNING

This CRMP helps us meet the responsibilities placed on us by the **Fire and Rescue National Framework for England**. This framework requires us to produce an Integrated Risk Management Plan (IRMP) that identifies and assess all the foreseeable fire and rescue related risks and challenges which may arise. It also requires us to set out how we plan to mitigate these risks using our available resources.

Integrated risk management planning gives fire and rescue services the flexibility to use their resources in the most effective way to save lives, improve public safety and reduce the impact of emergency incidents. The first and key component of our IRMP process is the analysis and understanding of the risks to the communities we serve, and also the risks to our organisation and our ability to deliver our core functions, both locally and nationally. The better we understand the risks the more effectively we can target our resources and activities towards reducing them.

We use a range of quantitative and qualitative analysis, the outcomes from which are detailed in our **Community Risk Analysis (CRA)** document. Our CRA directly informs what we, and our partners, are doing to ensure we are doing the right thing, using the right people and resources, provided in the right place and at the right time to help make Bedfordshire safer. Our CRMP should be read in conjunction with the CRA.

We play an active part in **the Bedfordshire Local Resilience Forum (BLRF)**; a multi- agency partnership formed to meet the requirements of the **Civil Contingencies Act 2004**. The BLRF compiles a Community Risk Register (CRR) which identifies the wide range of risks and emergencies we could potentially face within Bedfordshire. It draws upon the National Risk Register which gives a national perspective of the risks and emergencies that could occur and would result in major impact on all, or significant parts of the UK. These inform priorities for planning, training and exercising so we can effectively manage emergencies when they arise. Outlined below are the local risks considered to be of relatively high consequence.

We maintain robust business continuity plans to ensure the critical services we provide can continue to operate, should serious incidents or issues occur that might otherwise interrupt them. Our planning is also influenced by other legislation such as the Fire and Rescue Services Act 2004; Fire and Rescue Service (Emergencies) (England) Order 2007; Regulatory Reform (Fire Safety) Order 2005 and the Health and Safety at Work Act 1974.

### LOCAL 'VERY HIGH' RISKS

- Pandemic Influenza
- Energy supply disruptions

### LOCAL 'HIGH' RISKS

- Flooding
- Fuel Disruption
- Severe weather

## OUR COUNTY AND COMMUNITIES



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With a growing and aging population of over 664,000 people, Bedfordshire is proudly one of the most diverse populations in the county.

Bedfordshire occupies a geographically central position within the UK.

**Bordering four other counties and covering an area of 1,234.45 square kilometres (476.94 square miles), Bedfordshire is split by three unitary authority areas:**

- Bedford Borough: 476.4 km<sup>2</sup> (183.9 sq. miles);
- Central Bedfordshire: 715.7 km<sup>2</sup> (276.3 sq. miles);
- Luton Borough: 43.35 km<sup>2</sup> (16.74 sq. miles).

Bedfordshire is, in land use terms, largely rural and agricultural, including areas of outstanding natural beauty.

Most people (over 70%) live in its larger towns including the two major towns of Luton and Bedford, but also in a number of smaller market towns. These towns lie within often picturesque rural settings which also includes many villages that add to the area's diversity of places to live, work and play.

Over recent years the local economy, like many throughout the UK, has moved from traditional manufacturing and heavy industry to one based more upon the service industry. These industries include logistics and air transport, higher education, research and development, tourism and hospitality, creative and cultural businesses, construction, and business services. Bedfordshire is growing as a national distribution hub and has a number of large industrial sites and warehouses.

The county has two successful universities; the post-graduate Cranfield University, and the University of Bedfordshire, together

with strongly performing further education colleges based in Bedford, Luton and Dunstable. There are a number of significant and internationally linked research locations at these universities and also at Colworth Science Park, Cranfield Technology Park and the Millbrook Vehicle Proving Ground.

Within our area we have a significant stock of heritage buildings and environmental sites of special interest. Countywide rivers present us with special problems during spate flooding conditions. There are also iconic visitor attractions in the county, such as Woburn Safari Park, Whipsnade Zoo and Center Parc's fifth UK village at Woburn.

There are major growth plans that will see 66,850 new homes built across Bedfordshire in the next decade, including a new town at Tempsford, along with continued expansion in the number of industrial and commercial sites that will create an extra 53,400 jobs. The road, rail and waterway infrastructure include the M1 and A1 main arterial roads, and three major rail routes, including one of the busiest commuter rail links in the country running south from Bedford to London and beyond. The international London Luton Airport, which already handles circa 17 million passengers a year, is also expanding to accommodate this growth. Town centre redevelopment is underway in many of the county's towns, and in particular in Luton and Bedford.

It is essential that the Service continues to keep abreast of this emerging and changing risk profile and ensures our resources and capabilities continue to be aligned to the areas of greatest need.



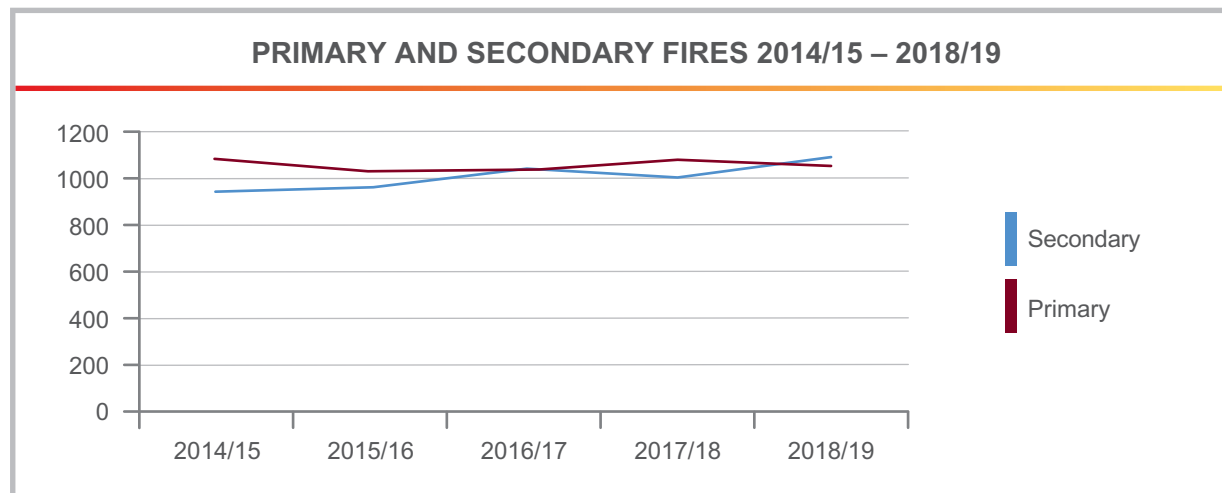
## SUMMARY OF RISKS WITHIN BEDFORDSHIRE

### FIRE RISK

The national incident recording system maintained by the Government categorises fires as either Primary or Secondary fires;

- Primary fires are serious fires affecting property such as buildings, caravans or trailers, vehicles and other methods of transport, those involving casualties or rescues, or fires attended by five or more fire appliances.
- Secondary fires are less serious fires confined to outdoor locations such as in fields, grassland or heathland, or that involve rubbish, derelict buildings or abandoned vehicles and which do not involve casualties or rescues.

In 2018/19 Bedfordshire rate of primary fires (per 10,000 population) was higher than the national average for England (15.76 compared to 14.05). However, the rate of secondary fires (per 10,000 population) was lower than the national average for England (15.81 compared to 19.50).



## DWELLING FIRE RISK

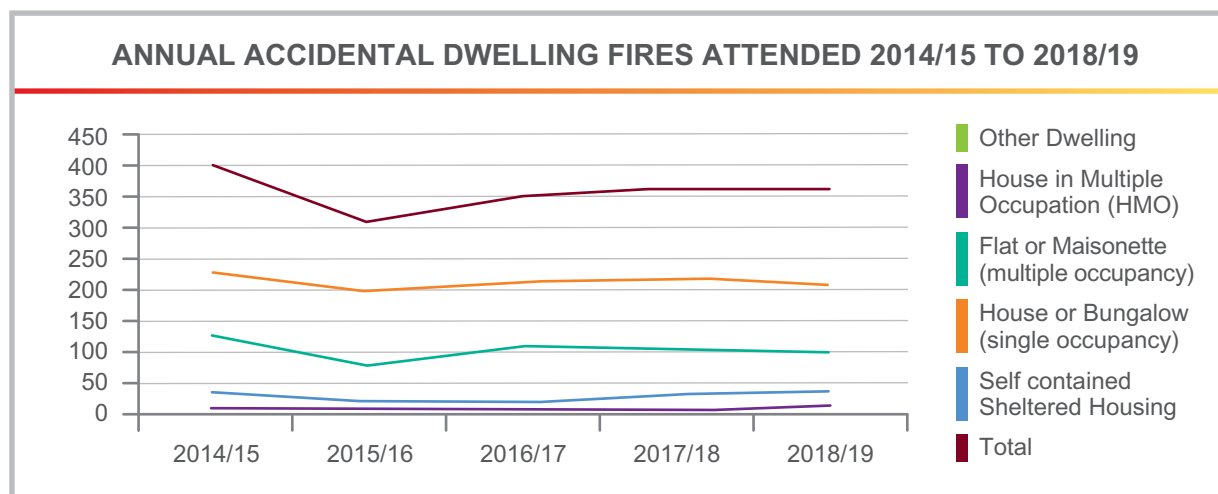
Fires deaths and injuries arising from accidental dwelling fires have reduced significantly over the past decade. We are aware Bedfordshire has a growing and ageing population with the 65+ age group predicted to increase more steeply over the next decade putting pressure on most public services.

In 2018/19 the rate of accidental dwelling fires (per 10,000 population) in Bedfordshire was significantly higher than the national average for England (5.87 compared to 4.45). In 2018/19 the rate of accidental dwelling fire non-fatal casualties (per 100,000 population) in Bedfordshire was lower than the national average (5.23 compared to 7.06).

Our analysis tells us that the people most at risk of dying in a dwelling fire include older people, smokers, people who live alone, those with some form of mobility or mental impairment, those who use alcohol or drugs and households without a working smoke alarm.

We use a range of data, including health data, to identify people who most need our prevention services and to make sure those people get support. Deprivation is also a recognised factor that increases risk from fire. The English indices of deprivation measure relative deprivation in small areas in England called lower-layer super output areas (LSOA). Although, Central Bedfordshire has none, Luton has 9 LSOA in the nation's top 10% and is within the 20% most deprived neighborhoods in England. Bedford has 5 LSOAs amongst the top 10%.

To better target our Prevention interventions effectively we worked with Experian, analysing five years of our incident data and five years of Home Fire Safety Check data profiled against national Mosaic data to produce a bespoke Mosaic Model profile; this classifies each household in the county into one of seven risk groups.



The three groups with the highest relative accidental dwelling fire risk score for each household group were:

1. **GROUP 3** Transient, young singles with high risk and few interventions.
2. **GROUP 2** High risk, elderly singles reliant on state support.
3. **GROUP 1** Less affluent social renters with high fire risk.

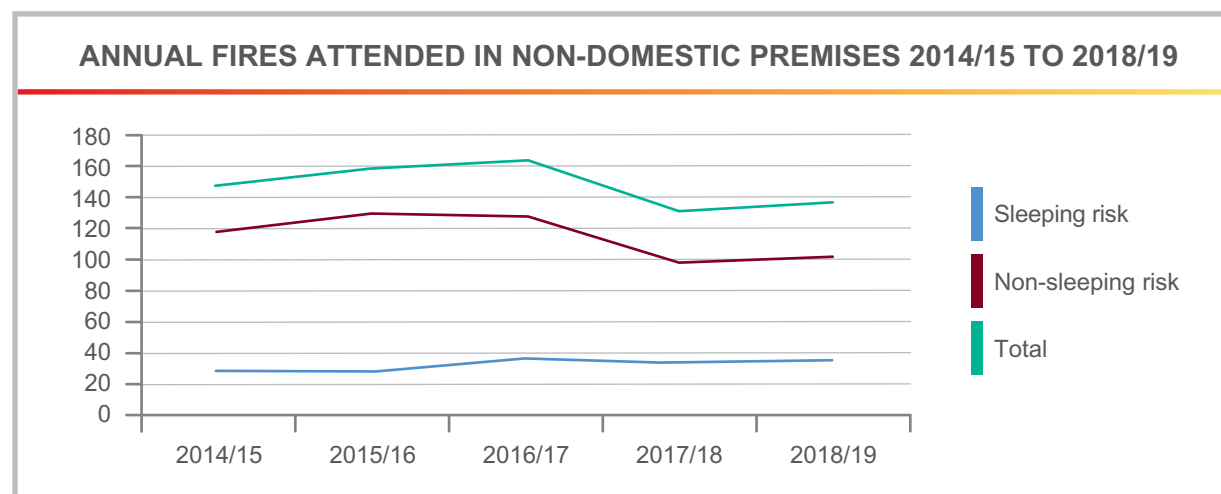
### NON-DOMESTIC FIRE RISKS

Non-domestic premises includes those premises not regarded as dwellings such as hospitals, schools, care homes, offices, shops, leisure facilities, factories, airports, transport hubs and other premises or places defined by the Regulatory Reform (Fire Safety) Order 2005.

There are more than 17,000 commercial or non-domestic buildings in Bedfordshire. These include hospitals, care homes, hotels, offices, shops, night clubs and other locations such as chemical plants and factories. Although fires in non-domestic buildings have declined in recent years, we recognise the impact that a fire can have on the local economy if a business is disrupted by a fire.

In 2018/19 the Bedfordshire rate of non-domestic fires (per 1,000 non-domestic properties) was slightly higher than the national average for England (7.16 compared to 6.38) Figures from the Association of British Insurers (ABI) suggest that fires in industrial and commercial buildings cost the UK economy £1.4 billion in 2011.

The downward trend is encouraging and we will continue to work to reduce these fires.





## HERITAGE FIRE RISK

We also work hard to protect the heritage of Bedfordshire. There are 114 Grade I and 143 Grade II\* listed buildings in our area. Heritage buildings were usually built in an era when fire safety was not a priority and as a result they can be more vulnerable to fire. Our fire safety officers work with the owner/operators of these

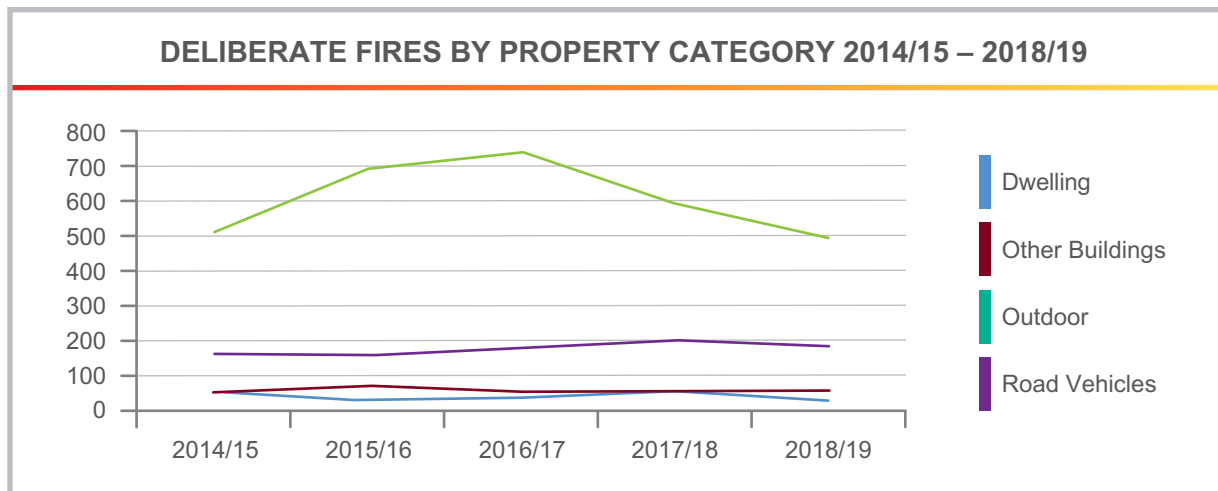
sites to ensure they comply with fire safety legislation and our operational firefighters gather on-site risk intelligence to inform tactical plans. These plans assist with effectively extinguishing any fires and with protecting and preserving these important buildings and their often valuable contents.





### DELIBERATE FIRE RISK

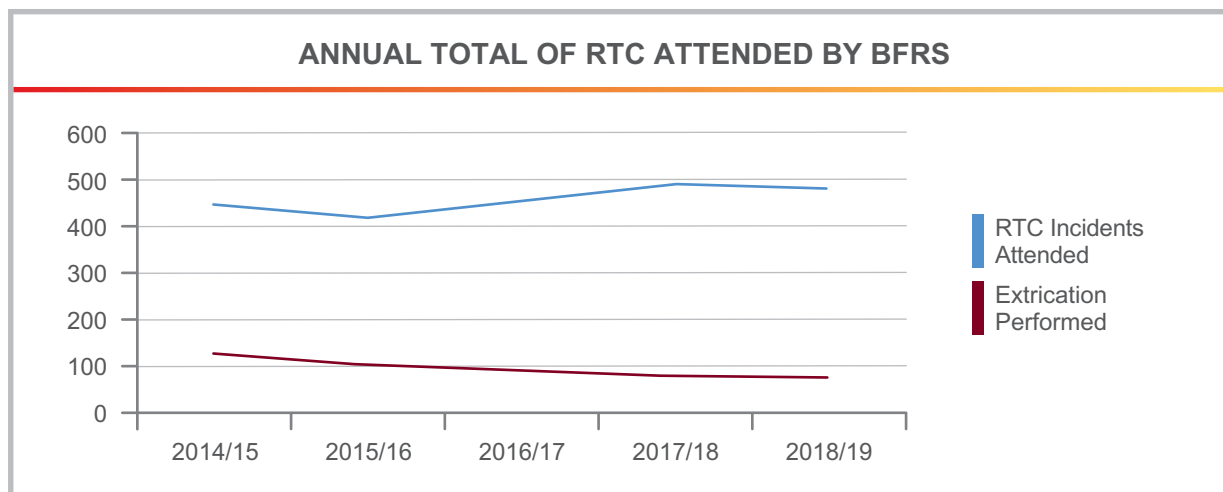
Due to the specific legal definitions associated with the term ‘arson’ the FRS generally refers to fires which are not accidental in nature as ‘deliberate’ fires. In 2018/19 36% of all fires attended by Bedfordshire FRS were determined to be deliberate, this compares favourably to the national average for England of 46%. The rate of deliberate secondary fires (per 10,000 population) was also considerably lower than the national average for England (6.80 compared to 11.98). However, the rate of deliberate primary fires (per 10,000 population) was higher than the national average for England (4.65 compared to 3.53). In 2018/19 deliberate outdoor fires (primary and secondary) accounted for two-thirds of all deliberate fires we attended.



## SPECIAL SERVICES AND ROAD TRAFFIC COLLISIONS

We have a number of major road networks running through our area with increasing volumes of traffic. These present a risk of road traffic collisions (RTC's) occurring. Collisions also frequently occur on the many rural roads that exist across Bedfordshire. We work to mitigate these risks through our prevention and response activities.

The chart below shows trends for RTCs attended by BFRS. After a fall in 2015-16 there has been an increase.



## RISK OF EXTREME WEATHER

Extreme weather is an increasing risk; this includes the risk of death, injury or loss from flooding. In recent years the number of severe localised flooding events in Bedfordshire has increased and we have deployed our flood rescue capability both locally and to support incidents in other areas as part of national planning and preparedness arrangements.

River Flooding and Surface Flooding are amongst the highest risks identified by the National Risk Register. Flooding is identified as a high risk by the Bedfordshire Local Resilience Forum (BLRF). A Multi-Agency Flood Plan has been prepared by BLRF to ensure an effective coordinated response to significant flooding events. There are a number of rivers and water courses that run through the county of Bedfordshire. Although most of the above are small water courses, they all have the potential to flood and cause risk to the life, property and infrastructure.

## NATIONAL RISKS

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### RISK OF TERRORIST ACTIVITY

This is a complex area due to the frequency of new threats being identified and enacted internationally. Events over the last few years, both at home and abroad, have increased the risk of terrorist or self-motivated attack activity impacting on our society. BFRS plays a major role in protecting the community in the event of such an incident, and along with the other blue light services contributes significantly to the planning and training for such events. A special team of firefighters have been trained to operate under the conditions of a terrorist incident.

Emergency services work closely with the Security Services and Government to identify threats and provide effective warning, informing and response planning. Our Service supports this with national incident liaison officers (NILO), who are able to work closely with emergency service partners, and currently provides a local and national capability for mass casualty injuries and decontamination processes.

## HOW WE USE OUR RESOURCES TO MAKE BEDFORDSHIRE SAFER

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Fulfilling our mission of providing outstanding fire and rescue services to make Bedfordshire safer requires us to make sure that everything we do is focused on improving the safety of our diverse communities. As the risk in Bedfordshire is constantly evolving our approach needs to keep pace with this change.

Our CRMP is underpinned by our medium term financial strategy, and specific strategies covering Prevention, Protection, Response, People, Assets, and Digital and Data.



PREVENTING



PROTECTING



RESPONDING



EMPOWERING



UTILISING



MAXIMISING





Like many fire and rescue services we are facing the challenges of:

- Reductions in government funding
- Reducing levels of experiential learning amongst firefighters due to fewer incidents, which places a greater focus on simulation training
- A retirement profile that is forecasting large numbers of senior and experienced firefighters retiring in the next few years
- Recruiting and retaining a skilled and diverse workforce
- A drive to diversify the range of services we provide to the public

We continually analyse the risks within our communities and use this to allocate the right number of our staff to prevention, protection and emergency response duties.



# PREVENTION STRATEGY







## AIM: **PREVENTING** FIRES AND OTHER EMERGENCIES FROM HAPPENING

### Our prevention **priorities** are to:

- Continue to reduce the number and impact of fires within our diverse communities;
- Improve our understanding of community risk through better and more innovative engagement with our diverse and hard to reach communities;
- Continue to reduce the number and impact of deliberate (arson) fires;
- Reduce the number of people killed or seriously injured on our roads;
- Reduce the number of people killed or seriously injured in water related incidents;
- Work with partners to broaden our prevention role and capabilities.

### Our **approach** (how we will do this) will be to:

- Use an intelligence led, risk based approach to target the vulnerable and most at risk from fire;
- Maximise capacity and reach through use of specialists, firefighters and partners;
- Work collaboratively to make every contact count;
- Positively engage with and educate young people;
- Deliver an effective Safe and Well service;
- Ensure continuous improvement through effective evaluation of prevention activities;
- Actively support the Bedfordshire Road Safety Partnership.



### **SAFE AND WELL VISITS**

The success of our traditional Home Fire Safety Checks (HFSC) has contributed to a reduction of risk and a significant reduction in the number of deaths and injuries from accidental fires in the home. Our Safe and Well programme, designed with our local health and social care partners to target the most vulnerable, extends our HFSC approach to include risk factors that impact on health and wellbeing, such as winter warmth checks, falls prevention support, alcohol misuse, crime prevention advice, and referrals to specialist services. We also work with other public sector organisations, such as housing providers and health services, to exchange relevant information about people who need support and make sure they receive a visit from the person best placed to help them.

## ARSON REDUCTION STRATEGY

Deliberate fires account for a large proportion of the emergency incidents we attend. Our prevention strategy is focused on working with partners including the police, local authorities and other agencies to understand where the areas of greatest risk are, and to work together to reduce the number of deliberate fires that occur, analysing data and investigating fire related crimes to ensure appropriate action is taken against offenders. We also deliver targeted educational activities to change the behaviours of those people who are likely to commit arson. Although the smaller fires we attend are, to some extent, linked to the prevailing weather conditions, there is a recognised link between deliberately set small fires and other forms of antisocial behaviour. It has been estimated that young people start a large proportion of these fires so education and engagement with this group is key to reducing these incidents.

We aim to reduce deliberate fires through interventions in three key areas:

- **Environmental Interventions:**  
These are multi agency initiatives involving teams of people from BFRS and other partners visiting designated areas to identify, process, and, where necessary, remove the opportunities and targets for arsonists such as fly-tipped combustible waste and abandoned vehicles. They also identify potential targets where improved security could deter arsonists, such as derelict or unused buildings and insecure outbuildings;
- **Investigation-based Interventions:**  
We identify arson 'hot spots', patterns and trends and share this information with relevant partners to ensure a joint approach is taken in dealing with arson attacks; the sharing of data often reveals that the arson is part of a wider pattern of anti-social behaviour;
- **Educational Interventions:**  
We aim to engage with every Year 2 pupil across the county to highlight the dangers of fire and the role of the Fire and Rescue Service within the community. Our staff and partner agencies also deliver 'Safety Squad' educational inputs to Year 5 and 6 pupils in Luton, which includes a session on the dangers of fire and the crime of arson. Secondary school students can engage in our newest programme, 'Fire Forward'. It is specifically designed to help improve young peoples' aspirations and promotes positive, safe decision making relating to fire, roads and water. Our SAFE (Safety Awareness and Fire Education) programme is a targeted programme for young people who present a risk around fire. This is delivered by specially qualified staff with the aim of changing behaviours.





### OUR FIRE CADETS

We have four Fire Cadet Units based at Kempston, Leighton Buzzard, Luton and Sandy Community Fire Stations. We focus on teaching practical skills to young people and developing positive behaviours to create role models in society. Cadet units take part in activities such as the Duke of Edinburgh Award scheme, with Cadets working towards recognised qualifications. Cadets support Fire Station Open Days, charitable events and fundraising, take part in civic events such as Remembrance Day and assist at ceremonial activities such as the Service Awards Evening and the Christmas Christingle Service. We are proud to nominate one Fire Cadet each year to be the Lord Lieutenant's Cadet.



### REDUCING THE RISK OF DEATH OR INJURY FROM ROAD TRAFFIC COLLISIONS

We are an active partner on the Bedfordshire Strategic Road Safety Partnership Board which brings together the key agencies with responsibility for safety on our roads. We undertake a range of interventions particularly targeting vulnerable road users. Many of these initiatives are delivered jointly with other partners including police and local authority.

#### Examples include:

- 'Biker Down' and 'Bike Safe' delivered by our Fire Bike team of Road Traffic Collision Reduction Officers (RTCRO);
- Schools 'Year 5 Alive' programme;
- '6th Form Safe' programme for new and learner drivers;
- Supporting national and local road safety campaigns;



# PROTECTION STRATEGY



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## AIM: PROTECTING PEOPLE AND PROPERTY WHEN FIRES HAPPEN

### Our protection **priorities** are to:

- Focus our resources on engaging and educating local businesses to reduce the risk of fire and comply with fire safety legislation;
- Through inspection and audit, continue to reduce the risk from fire in buildings to both the public and firefighters.

### Our **approach** will be to:

- Use an intelligence led, risk based approach to audit and inspection;
- Actively engage and educate local businesses, supported by fair and proportionate enforcement;
- Work together with other regulators and stakeholders to reduce risk;
- Maximise capacity and firefighter safety by utilising operational crews to undertake fire safety audits;
- Ensure we maintain a highly skilled and sustainable specialist fire safety team;
- Ensure continuous improvement through effective evaluation of protection activities;

- Work with the NFCC to actively support and respond to learning from the Grenfell Tower Public Inquiry and the Independent Review of Building Regulations.

In discharging our statutory responsibilities under the Regulatory Reform (Fire Safety) Order 2005, we provide education and business support and, if necessary, use our enforcement powers to make premises safe. This helps to protect people, property and the environment by either preventing fires from occurring in the first place, or by limiting the effects of fires when they do occur. We maintain a comprehensive database of premises that are categorised from very high risk to very low risk. Our risk based audit programme ensures that those premises most at risk of fire are prioritised by our protection activities. To increase capacity, our specialist fire safety officers have trained our full-time

firefighters to undertake audits of low and medium risk buildings. Our dedicated fire safety officers focus on premises that are more complex and which represent a higher risk. This makes the most appropriate use of resources we have available, enabling us to ensure we allocate resources according to risk.

We have taken proactive activity within education to improve compliance and community safety.

### We engage and share information with businesses and the public through:

- Business action days;
- NFCC Safety Weeks;
- Social media;
- Our website; and
- Attending business, residents and landlord forums.



# RESPONSE STRATEGY



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## AIM: **RESPONDING** TO FIRES AND OTHER EMERGENCIES PROMPTLY AND EFFECTIVELY

Our response **priorities** are to:

- Ensure we provide an effective and timely response to fires and other emergencies at all times;
- Work with Bedfordshire Local Resilience Forum partners to effectively plan and prepare for local and national emergencies;
- Work with partners to broaden our response role and capabilities;
- Ensure our response resources and crewing arrangements are aligned to current and future risks.

Our **approach** will be to:

- Have effective operational policies and procedures aligned to National Operational Guidance;
- Provide firefighters with fast access to relevant and timely operational risk information;
- Maintain a positive Health and Safety culture, ensuring we continuously learn from incidents;
- Continue to invest in the best appliances, equipment, training and development to ensure our crews respond safely and effectively;
- Review our emergency cover ensuring our resources align with current and future risks;
- Continue to test and maintain effective business continuity plans;
- Proactively collaborate with the NFCC and multi-agency and cross-border partners;
- Continue to develop and maintain our national resilience assets and capabilities.



## OUR EMERGENCY RESPONSE STANDARDS

Prior to 2004, targets for response times to fires and other emergencies were based on a prescriptive framework of national standards. Since then, we have established our own local emergency response standards that set out how quickly we aim to respond to key emergencies within our area. The standards relate to the time it takes to get the first fire appliance to the scene from the time it is alerted by our Fire Control Centre. This standard is now subject to review by the NFCC following recommendations from the HMICFRS.

### For emergency calls, we will:

- Answer 90% of 999 calls within 7 seconds or less; and
- Mobilise required resources within 60 seconds or less on 80% of occasions.

### For critical fire incidents, ((threaten life, structures or the environment), we will provide an initial response of:

- 2 fire appliances (total 9 riders) on 90% of occasions; and
- Arrive within 10 minutes on 80% of occasions.

### For road traffic collisions (RTCs), we will:

- Arrive within 13 minutes on 80% of occasions.

### For secondary incidents (non-life risk), we will provide an initial response of:

- 1 fire appliance with 5 crew; and
- Arrive within 20 minutes on 96% of occasions.

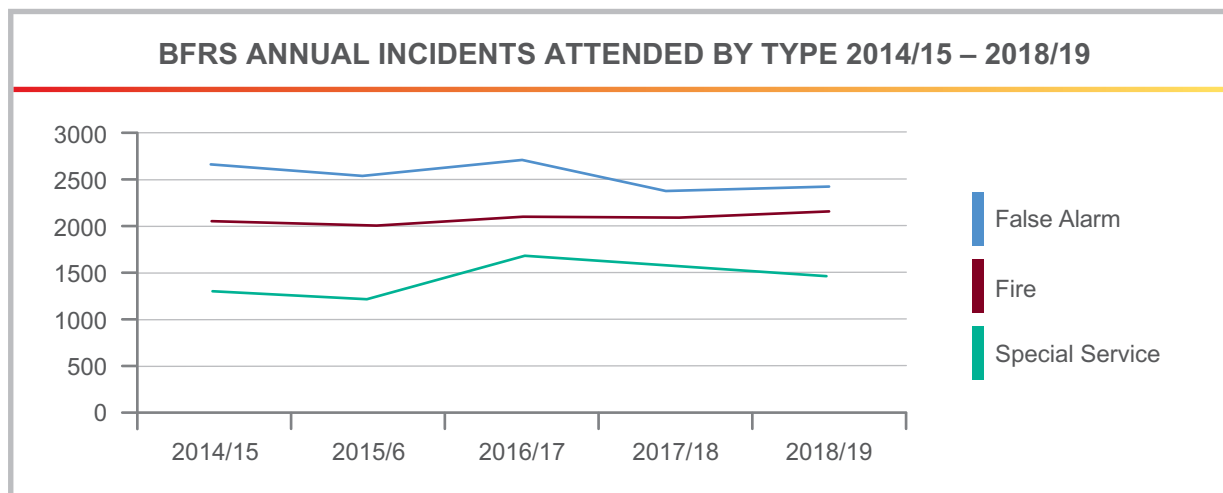
Our response strategy is designed to provide a resilient emergency response if an incident does occur.

### The type of incidents responded to by BFRS can broadly be split into three areas::

- **Fires** – Defined as either primary or secondary (see below);
- **Non-fire** – Covers a wide range of incidents including road traffic collisions, rescues from height, from water, providing medical assistance, flooding, incidents involving hazardous materials and other calls to protect life, property and the environment;
- **False alarms** – This includes false reports of all incidents types originating from both automatic fire detection systems and by human error.

Whilst there have been some increases in fire and non-fire incidents over the last five years, these have been significantly less than for England as a whole. Through our work to reduce responses unwanted fire signals from Automatic Fire Detector systems we have achieved a reduction in the number of false alarm incidents attended. The small increase in the number of fires attended is due to an increase the number of Secondary (non-property) fires. Non-fire incidents have increased as we have expanded the range of incidents we attend in support of other agencies, such as effecting entry to premises in the case of medical emergencies.

% CHANGE IN THE NUMBER OF INCIDENTS FROM 2014/15 TO 2018/19			
	Fires	False Alarms	Non-fire Incidents
England	18% Increase	8% Increase	29% Increase
Bedfordshire Fire and Rescue Service	6% Increase	8% Reduction	14% Increase



We have implemented a range of improvements to maintain operational availability more flexibly and efficiently including:

- Introducing lean 24 hour shift system arrangements in 2012 (10% reduction in posts);
- Implementing a revised officer rota in 2015 (20% reduction in officer posts);
- Introducing a shared Strategic Command rota with Cambridgeshire FRS in 2016;
- Better availability of on-call fire appliances through new ways of working (strategic reserve, standby schemes, dual contracts, self-rostering and phased alerting);
- On-call availability management improved through use of new software system, and trialing use of pro-rata retainers and flexible leave arrangements in 2020/21



# PEOPLE STRATEGY

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## AIM: **EMPOWERING** OUR PEOPLE AS WE WORK TOGETHER TO MAKE BEDFORDSHIRE SAFER

### Our people **priorities** are to:

- Be an employer of choice, recruiting, retaining and developing a highly skilled and diverse workforce who uphold and model our values;
- Ensure our people understand our strategic direction and their role in achieving it;
- Embed a positive and inclusive learning culture where all staff have a voice;
- Provide a safe and healthy working environment with low absence, accidents and injuries;
- Develop our managers to value, lead, motivate, develop and empower their staff to be the best they can be;
- Continue to invest in providing all our staff with the best training and development opportunities.

### Our **approach** will be to:

- Work with our communities and our partners to better engage, understand and recruit a truly inclusive workforce reflective of our diverse communities;

- Work with our staff to update and embed our values, ensuring all our leaders are visible role models;
- Work with our trade unions to maintain an effective employee relations environment, promoting and investing in the health and wellbeing of our people;
- Continue to recognise and reward our people for the excellent work they do;
- Build confidence, resilience, capability and capacity, providing a range of effective, high quality learning, development and assessment pathways that support our strategic objectives;
- Ensure our promotion processes are transparent and consistent;
- Seek more effective means of communicating and engaging with our staff in ways that empower them and encourage innovation, agility and continuous improvement in the services we provide;
- Continue to develop and embed our values based performance management framework.

The retirement profile of the Service shows a high number of staff are likely to retire in the next few years. This profile presents a risk around potential loss of skills and experience and therefore robust workforce planning is essential. However, it also presents an opportunity to reform our ways of working to ensure that the Service can attract and retain a more diverse workforce equipped with the skills to deliver a modern fire and rescue service.

We will be working to align our existing staff development programmes with the new NFCC leadership framework (2019) whilst maintaining career pathways that are underpinned with technical skills, knowledge and understanding, giving our staff the confidence and opportunities necessary. Since 2019 our new wholetime firefighters have benefited from attending initial training through an apprenticeship standard, developed by the sector to meet our expectations and externally accredited by Skills for Justice. We will explore further opportunities to benefit from modern apprenticeship standards to support a range of staff development.

# ASSETS STRATEGY





## AIM: UTILISING OUR ASSETS AND RESOURCES EFFECTIVELY

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### Our assets **priorities** are to:

- Continue to provide the best facilities, vehicles, equipment and personal protective equipment (PPE) we can afford, to enable our staff to respond and support the range of emergency incidents and other activities that we attend in ways that are professional, effective and efficient;
- Ensure any investment is mindful of our duty to collaborate and the national procurement agenda wherever there is a clear business case to do so;
- Always specify, procure and maintain our assets under the principles of protecting the front line, improving firefighter safety, and providing value for money.

### Our **approach** will be to:

- Produce sustainable capital and revenue budgets aligned to our strategic objectives;
- Adopt the whole life cycle approach to asset management, engaging with end users, utilising innovative new technologies, and actively pursuing collaboration opportunities with partners;
- Implement effective and sustainable asset management plans and systems providing assurance that our fleet, equipment, estates, ICT and training resources support current and future needs;
- Ensure we have compliant and collaborative procurement processes so we purchase the right products and services at the best price and when we need them.

We procure a range of professional services and provide and maintain a wide range of vehicles, equipment, personal protective equipment (PPE) and IT hardware and software. This enables us to provide our prevention, protection and training services, as well as respond professionally to the significant range of emergency incidents we are called to attend.

BFRS is committed to ensuring social value and sustainable use of resources is embedded throughout the procurement process from commissioning to contract management and outcomes measurement.



# DIGITAL AND DATA STRATEGY



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## AIM: **MAXIMISING** USE OF DATA AND DIGITAL SOLUTIONS TO DRIVE IMPROVEMENT

Like many public services, it can be challenging to keep pace with the changing digital environment. Feedback from our staff and recent HMICFRS inspection tells us that some of our IT systems and processes are hindering our productivity.

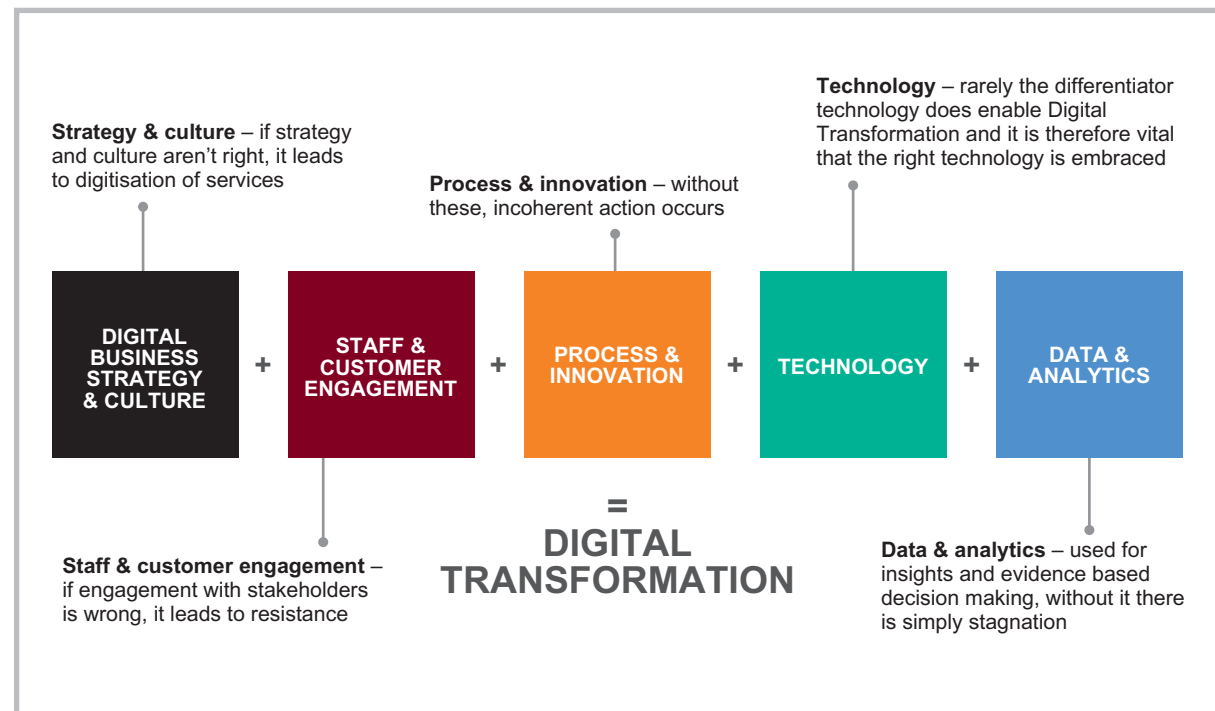
We know we can also improve how we collect, store and utilise our data so our staff have greater insight into how we are performing and the risks we are working to reduce. Giving staff access to more information will enable us to empower them to take greater ownership in driving improvements in everything we do, whilst allowing proper evaluation against our objectives.

Digital technologies available today can act as real enablers, not only speeding up our processes but also generating intelligence through analysis that allows evidence-based decisions to be made about where best to utilise our resources.

Digital transformation means the integration of digital technology into all areas of an

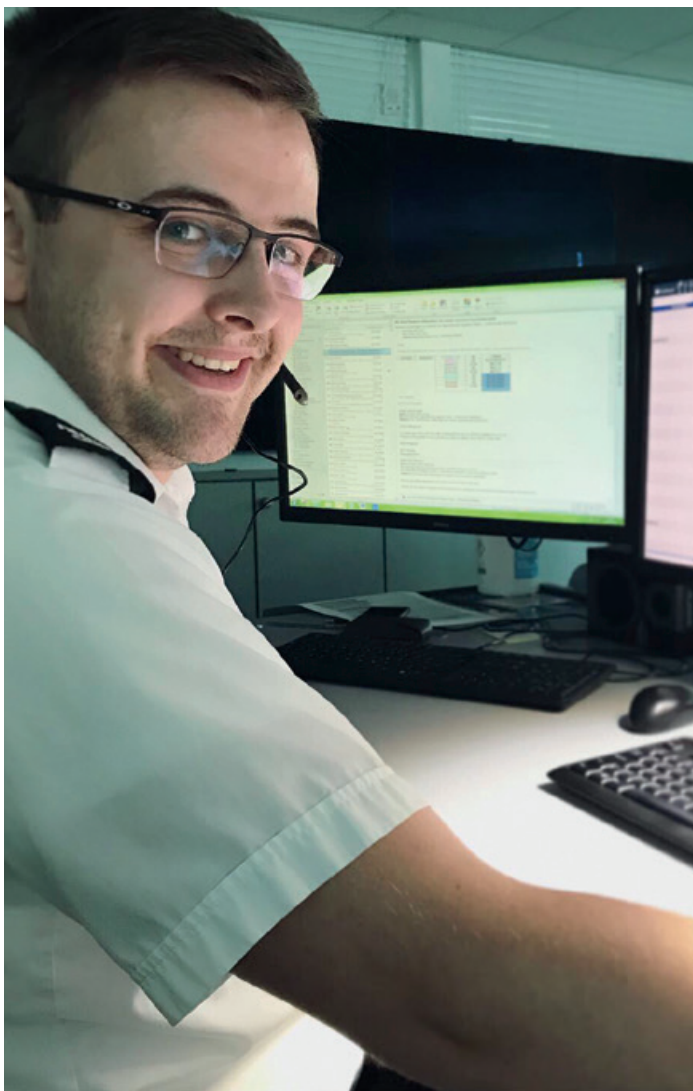
organisation, fundamentally changing how we operate and deliver value to customers. True digital transformation will improve the ways in which we work, how we interact with partners, the public and each other.

This transformation requires some organisational culture change; to accept and embrace the use of new technologies, systems and processes to facilitate organisational improvement where we can all work smarter.



Kind permission of ionology





#### Our digital and data **priorities** are to:

- Embark upon a programme of digital transformation, using data and technology to enable not hinder improvement;
- Become a 'fast follower', adopting industry best practices in key areas through collaboration, whilst building capacity to be a fire sector leader;
- Improve overall staff engagement and digital literacy by offering a more flexible, collaborative and mobile working environment;
- Create a paper-lite workforce, eradicating re-keying of data to central systems;
- Build a more visible brand with the creation of digital services;
- Enable better access to data and performance insight.

#### Our **approach** will be to:

- Maximise the value of digital solutions and invest in them to support collaboration and make better use of existing data;
- Develop our approach to understanding, and utilising, open data;
- Expand our data analysis capabilities, collaborating within and across sectors;
- Using data across fire and rescue services and partners to support service delivery;
- Create a culture and environment where data analytics can add value to service delivery, whilst allowing outcomes to be properly evaluated against objectives;
- Ensure our digital transformation is underpinned by strong governance and effective cyber security procedures;
- Influence and support delivery of the national NFCC Digital and Data Strategy.





## FINANCIAL STRATEGY



Since 2010, we have seen our Government funding reduce by £7.5 million focusing our attention toward prudent budgeting.



Due to Brexit and more recently the General Election the anticipated changes to funding will be delayed by another year, so 2020/21 will be predominantly be a funding rollover from 2019/20, for the Authorities Government funding streams.

The 2020/21 financial year may see significant funding changes due to the Comprehensive Spending Review, Formula Funding Review and changes to Business Rates Retention and we forecast a further cut of £1.4m.

However, we have been proactive in identifying changes that ensure continuity of our professional services whilst delivering the required efficiencies.

Future financial settlements are likely to remain difficult. As such, we continue to plan for a range of financial scenarios that may emerge in the next few years.

Our ability to mitigate our risks and realise opportunities is directly impacted by our resourcing and budgetary make-up. Our current budgetary plans and assumptions determine the speed at which we will deliver our action plans. More information is available on our [website](#).

#### **Our financial priorities are to:**

- Ensure we deliver a balanced sustainable budget that provides value for money, aligns our resources to risk and supports the delivery of our CRMP;
- Be innovative in developing and delivering on our Efficiency Plan whilst maintaining a prudent level and utilisation of our reserves.

Our Medium-Term Financial Strategy (MTFS) is a document that sets the Authority's financial strategy for the next four years. It focuses on the 2019/20 Revenue Budget and Capital Programme, but also sets the scene for future years. It covers national events such as the Comprehensive Spending Review (CSR) and then breaks down how this impacts locally on the Authority.

The MTFS details our reserves policy, planning assumptions behind the budget figures and other considerations that must be taken into account when setting the strategy, such as the tax base, efficiencies and shared services.

## **EFFICIENCY SAVINGS**

An efficiency saving occurs when the cost of an activity is reduced but its quality and effectiveness remains the same or improves. The Fire and Rescue Authority (FRA) continues to focus on finding new ways to deliver the highest quality services at lowest possible cost.

In 2015, the Government announced the revenue support grant funding for the Service over the four years from 2016/17 to 2019/20. This settlement equates to a 59% funding reduction from 2015/16 grant funding levels.

Some of the key areas where the Authority has been achieving its planned efficiency savings include:

- Savings in managerial and support staff costs through shared service arrangements, organisational restructure and improvements to working systems;
- Savings in firefighter crewing arrangements;
- Savings to the public through collaborative work;
- Savings through joint Procurement such as Firefighters Personal Protective Equipment (PPE);
- Savings in the Service Vehicle Replacement Programme through improved asset management and maintenance.

## **REVENUE BUDGET**

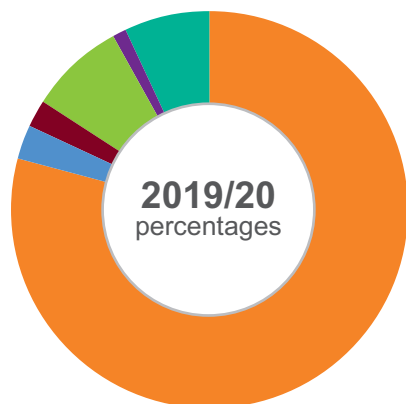
Our revenue budget sets out the money necessary for the day to day running of the Service. Our efficiency measures have allowed us to continue with key service improvements whilst restricting the increase in 2019/20 council tax precept to 2.99% (equivalent to an increase of 5.5 pence per week for a Band D household).

This has been achieved despite the impact of a 20% reduction in Government grant to the Authority (compared to 2018/19) totalling £0.573m, and the effect of inflation which is forecast to increase our costs in 2019/20 by £0.854m.

## **CAPITAL BUDGET**

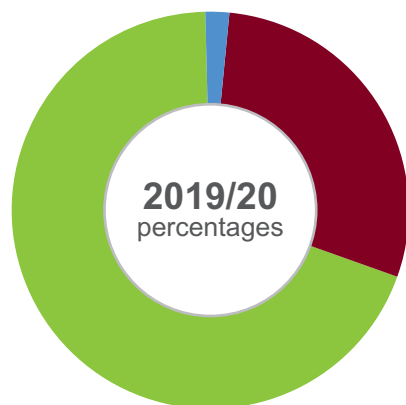
Our capital programme highlights spending on assets such as our fire stations and fire engines. Each year the FRA draws up a rolling four year programme of capital projects. The capital projects for 2019/20 total £1.736m and these are being funded by contributions from the revenue budget.

## WHAT THE MONEY IS SPENT ON 2019/20



	Employees	Premises	Transport	Supplies and Services	Agency and Contracted Services	Capital Financing	Total	Reserves Funding	Budget Requirement
2019/20 (£m)	23.8	1.0	0.7	2.3	0.5	2.0	30.3	-0.5	29.8
2018/19 (£m)	23.2	1.1	0.7	2.3	0.3	2.0	29.6	-0.2	29.4

## WHERE DOES THE MONEY COME FROM 2019/20



	Gross Budget	Income	Budget Requirement	Central and Local Government Funding	Council Tax	Total
2019/20 (£m)	30.3	-0.5	29.8	8.8	21.0	29.8
2018/19 (£m)	29.9	-0.5	29.4	9.4	20	29.4



## ACCOUNTABILITY



Providing assurance to our communities and seeking improvement in all we do.

Our Corporate Management Team (CMT) is responsible for overseeing the effective delivery of the key projects and programmes that underpin delivery of our CRMP and ensuring project risks and resources are properly managed.

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The Fire and Rescue Authority sets us challenging targets for a range of performance indicators which help them to monitor and scrutinise our performance, both in terms of activity outputs and outcomes, ensuring the Service is functioning efficiently and effectively and delivering on our CRMP.

To support the delivery of our CRMP, we have a range of measures known as Key Performance Indicators (KPIs) which are aligned to the strategies underpinning the CRMP and are reported to the FRA every quarter. You can view these and the targets set by the FRA on our [website](#).

We publish an annual Statement of Assurance that seeks to provide assurance on financial, governance and operational matters, showing that Bedfordshire Fire and Rescue Service continues to deliver the expectations detailed within both the National Framework and our own CRMP.

In 2017, Her Majesty's Inspectorate of Constabulary and Fire and Rescue We publish an annual Statement of Assurance that seeks to provide assurance on financial, governance and operational matters, showing that Bedfordshire Fire and Rescue Service continues to deliver the expectations detailed within both the National Framework and our own CRMP.

In 2017, Her Majesty's Inspectorate of Constabulary and Fire and Rescue Services (HMICFRS) extended its remit

to include inspections of England's fire and rescue service. They now assess and report on the efficiency, effectiveness and people of the 45 fire and rescue services in England. You can find more information about our most recent inspection on their [website](#).

Each year the Service conducts a number of audits in specific areas to provide assurance to our processes and identify further areas of improvement. We are also required to periodically respond to national audit and self-assessments on specific areas of our service, such as specialist response capabilities for flood rescue (conducted in 2019).



## CONSULTATION AND ENGAGEMENT



Have your say on how our services are delivered and get consultations sent directly to your inbox by joining our free community messaging system **Beds Fire Alert**.



The purpose of consultation is to understand the effects of a proposal on different stakeholder groups. We regularly consult with local people and organisations on a range of issues. There may be a number of reasons to consult such as gathering views and opinions on our plans.

We always seek to engage in real discussion with stakeholders to help us make informed decisions, and how we consult will vary depending on the nature of the proposal. Our main consultation method is Beds Fire Alert our Community Messaging system. With over 19,000 subscribers this system allows us to directly engage with members of the public. We also use Beds Fire Alert to send out regular safety information and advice.

Find out more at [www.bedsfirealert.co.uk](http://www.bedsfirealert.co.uk).





# APPENDIX A

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Our mission is to provide outstanding fire and rescue services that help make Bedfordshire safer.



## OUR 2021/22 ANNUAL ACTION PLAN

Each year, we prepare an Annual Action Plan that outlines what we intend to do during that particular year to support the delivery of our CRMP and our mission to ***provide outstanding fire and rescue services*** that help make Bedfordshire safer.

To help make it easier to follow, the actions are aligned to our CRMP 'Aims'. Our Annual Performance and Statement of Assurance Report will explain how well we did in delivering our plans.



PREVENTING



PROTECTING



RESPONDING



EMPOWERING



UTILISING



MAXIMISING

We have made progress on a number of actions which can be viewed on our [website](#).





## AIM 1: PREVENTING FIRES AND OTHER EMERGENCIES FROM HAPPENING

WHAT WE INTEND TO DO IN 2021/22	WHY WE ARE DOING THIS
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Revise &amp; update our Community Risk Analysis (CRA) document that assesses the evolving risks within Bedfordshire, ensuring it captures the impacts of the Covid19 pandemic.</li> </ul>	<p>Our Community Risk Analysis document directly informs our CRMP by capturing foreseeable fire &amp; rescue related risks that could affect our communities, assisting us to target our prevention, protection &amp; response activities to help make Bedfordshire safer. The Covid19 pandemic has impacted our communities in many different ways &amp; we need to ensure our approach continues to keep pace with the evolving risk profile &amp; identify the most vulnerable communities within Bedfordshire.</p>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Work with our partners to deliver 10,000 Safe &amp; Well interventions targeting the most vulnerable.</li> </ul>	<p>Our Safe &amp; Well Visits are reducing risks from fire, falls, alcohol, crime, winter warmth &amp; other health problems. The more we deliver, the more people we help keep safe &amp; well.</p>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Establish a Volunteer Scheme to improve our engagement with communities &amp; expand our capacity to deliver our prevention activities.</li> </ul>	<p>We believe recruiting volunteers to work alongside our staff can help us reach out to &amp; better reflect the diverse communities we serve, helping improve the quality of our Prevention services &amp; expand the number of people who receive them.</p>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Devise &amp; implement new &amp; innovative methods of delivering our Prevention work, reflecting how the Covid19 pandemic has affected our ability to physically interact with our communities.</li> </ul>	<p>A lot of our Prevention work has relied on meeting with children, young people &amp; adults in person. The Covid19 pandemic has restricted our ability to do this so we need to embrace new ways of working so we can continue to deliver our services effectively.</p>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Working with the East of England Ambulance Service, embed &amp; expand the successful Falls Team pilot established in January 2020.</li> </ul>	<p>Our Falls Team pilot has been a great success as with many of the vulnerable people we respond to on behalf of the East of England Ambulance Service identifying as being 'at risk from fire' so receive both a medical &amp; fire prevention response. We believe it important to expand our capability &amp; footprint to help save more lives.</p>



## AIM 2: **PROTECTING** PEOPLE AND PROPERTY WHEN FIRES HAPPEN

WHAT WE INTEND TO DO IN 2021/22	WHY WE ARE DOING THIS
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Maintain our investment in reviewing &amp; refining our risk based building inspection programme in line with the latest national guidance.</li> </ul>	<p>In 2020, we developed an interim definition of what makes a building 'high risk' taking account of the NFCC competency framework &amp; other relevant factors. We will continue to adapt our methodology as new national guidance for classifying risk levels &amp; determining appropriate audit frequencies emerges &amp; based upon our local need.</p>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Expand our specialist Protection team &amp; introduce different ways of working to attract &amp; retain more operational staff to support the new Fire &amp; Building Safety legislation.</li> </ul>	<p>Following the Grenfell Tower tragedy new legislation is being introduced to improve building safety. The Government has also provided funding to support improvements in our fire safety capability. To ensure that buildings in Bedfordshire are safe we need to both increase our capacity to deliver fire safety enforcement work &amp; ensure those carrying out this work are qualified in line with the new national competency framework.</p>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Invest in developing the competence &amp; accreditation of our specialist Protection staff in line with the new national competency framework &amp; Fire &amp; Building Safety legislation.</li> </ul>	<p>Same as above.</p>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Embed our fire safety management IT system, refining our databases to improve intelligence of premises.</li> </ul>	<p>We have implemented a new fire safety management system &amp; imported over 20,000 premises records onto the system. We need to continue to develop the functionality of the system so that we can efficiently manage our risk based inspection programme &amp; ensure that we hold up to date &amp; accurate information on those premises in Bedfordshire to which the Regulatory Reform Order applies.</p>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Continue to actively support &amp; implement the learning from the Public Inquiry into the Grenfell Tower tragedy in 2017.</li> </ul>	<p>Following the Grenfell Tower tragedy new legislation is being introduced to take forward reforms to the building &amp; fire safety system. We continue to support the Government Building Safety Programme established to ensure buildings are safe &amp; people feel safe being in them.</p>



### AIM 3: RESPONDING TO FIRES AND OTHER EMERGENCIES PROMPTLY AND EFFECTIVELY

WHAT WE INTEND TO DO IN 2021/22	WHY WE ARE DOING THIS
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Improve the availability of our fire appliances crewed by On-Call firefighters by investing in new &amp; innovative ways of recruiting, retaining &amp; managing our on-call workforce.</li> </ul>	<p>Many of our fire appliances are crewed by 'On-Call' firefighters who live or work close to their local fire station. Like many other fire &amp; rescue services, we find it challenging to recruit &amp; retain people so need to develop new ways of working to improve the availability of our On-Call appliances.</p>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Review the specification &amp; capability of our standard fire appliances.</li> </ul>	<p>Before we invest in our next batch of fire appliances, we want to take the outcomes from our emergency cover review &amp; work with our firefighters to identify what we want to 'add, remove or change' to the specification of both the vehicle &amp; the equipment carried so we continue to provide the best vehicles &amp; equipment we can afford.</p>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Review our specialist appliance capabilities &amp; their disposition.</li> </ul>	<p>In addition to our standard fire appliances, we maintain a range of specialist appliances across Bedfordshire including aerial ladder platforms, water carriers and heavy rescue &amp; water rescue boats. We intend to review the disposition &amp; capabilities of these specialist appliances to ensure they continue to meet the risks &amp; demand within Bedfordshire.</p>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Review the Flexible Duty System we operate to provide effective, efficient &amp; highly competent Level 2 &amp; 3 officer resourcing to emergency incidents on a 24/7/365 basis.</li> </ul>	<p>Each of our fire appliances is staffed with a crew or watch manager, who provide our Level 1 incident command cover. Our flexible duty officers work a 24/7/365 on-call rota system to provide Level 2 &amp; 3 cover for more complex incidents in addition to managing a team or function. Our review seeks to identify more efficient ways of working &amp; attract more applicants.</p>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Lead the development of &amp; embed an effective multi-agency information cell (MAIC) &amp; command support capability within the Bedfordshire Local Resilience Forum (LRF) to support the response to major emergencies.</li> </ul>	<p>The Covid19 pandemic has required a multi-agency response, co-ordinated &amp; sustained over many months rather the usual days or weeks that a major incident response normally occurs. BFRS are leading the work to adapt &amp; embed the learning from the response to pandemic so we can continue to respond effectively to major incidents.</p>



## AIM 4: **EMPOWERING** OUR PEOPLE AS WE WORK TOGETHER TO MAKE BEDFORDSHIRE SAFER

WHAT WE INTEND TO DO IN 2021/22	WHY WE ARE DOING THIS
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Expand &amp; promote the range of mental &amp; physical well-being support services we provide for our staff.</li> </ul>	<p>Members of the emergency services are more at risk of experiencing mental health problems than the general public but are less likely to seek support. This has been further heightened as a result of COVID. We're committed to raising awareness, challenging mental health stigma &amp; providing help &amp; resources to support our staff.</p>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Embed the learning from how we adapted our approach to recruitment &amp; selection during the Covid19 pandemic, devising a new recruitment marketing strategy for promoting BFRS as an Employer of Choice within our diverse communities.</li> </ul>	<p>Our workforce are truly our biggest asset, so it is important we attract &amp; recruit diverse &amp; skilled individuals committed to our values &amp; to improve the safety &amp; wellbeing of our communities. The aim is to attract &amp; retain a diverse &amp; skilled workforce by understanding &amp; offering what people value &amp; helping our communities get to know us, the breadth of opportunities available &amp; what you can expect in return for working for us.</p>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Improve our approach to how we assess, reward &amp; recognise our staff who go the extra mile to improve performance, deliver our key priorities &amp; demonstrably uphold our Service Values.</li> </ul>	<p>To retain our best performers, we need to review &amp; adapt the way in which we motivate &amp; recognise staff especially with the long-lasting impact of COVID on working arrangements.</p>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Expand &amp; promote the range of inclusive staff engagement forums to really improve 2-way communication, empowering all our staff to help shape &amp; inform our plans, our approach &amp; ways of working.</li> </ul>	<p>We aim to continue to build a diverse &amp; inclusive workforce in order to benefit from the richness offered by different perspectives, experiences &amp; approaches. An inclusive engagement forum will provide a platform for 2- way communication to help shape &amp; inform our plans, policies, processes &amp; other activities that affect our workforce.</p>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Redefine &amp; improve how we undertake our Learning Needs Analysis (LNA) to assess &amp; directly inform our individual &amp; organisational learning &amp; development programmes.</li> </ul>	<p>To ensure that there is a true understanding of development requirements for all members of staff across the Service. Aligning the outcomes of annual appraisals &amp; progression / selection processes to ensure that staff are developed appropriately, to meet their individual needs &amp; the needs of the Service.</p>



## AIM 5: UTILISING OUR ASSETS AND RESOURCES EFFICIENTLY AND EFFECTIVELY

WHAT WE INTEND TO DO IN 2021/22	WHY WE ARE DOING THIS
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Through the Bedfordshire Blue Light Collaboration Strategic Board, progress a detailed feasibility &amp; options appraisal to invest in a joint vehicle servicing hub in collaboration with our police &amp; ambulance colleagues.</li> </ul>	<p>This initiative will build upon our existing collaborations with Bedfordshire Police &amp; East of England Ambulance Service to establish a shared blue light vehicle servicing hub for Bedfordshire, generating income &amp; delivering efficiencies for partners.</p>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>To conduct a review of our existing estate provision in light of the impacts of the Covid19 pandemic to ensure it supports our new ways of blended &amp; remote working.</li> </ul>	<p>To ensure that we consider the developing &amp; changing demands of our estates &amp; workforce, to cater for the increasing demand for remote working &amp; to seek opportunities for collaboration &amp; partnerships through shared estates &amp; facilities.</p>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Taking account of the outcomes from our recent Emergency Cover Review, identify &amp; develop proposals for re-developing at least one of our fire stations, subject to funding availability.</li> </ul>	<p>Our fire stations need to keep pace with the evolving needs of our fire &amp; rescue service. Our emergency cover review will help identify which of our fire stations should be prioritised for re-investment.</p>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Revise our medium-term fleet strategy &amp; replacement programme to accommodate the Government announcements banning the sale of petrol/diesel cars from 2030.</li> </ul>	<p>Our vehicle fleet is reliant on diesel fuel technology so we need to ensure our replacement strategy considers alternative fuels and supports Government policy in the medium term.</p>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>In anticipation of potential funding pressures arising from the Covid19 pandemic &amp; the 2021 Comprehensive Spending Review, identify a range of potential efficiency options to maintain front line services.</li> </ul>	<p>To ensure that there is a robust, balanced, medium term financial plan with efficiency options, appropriate reserves &amp; an Authority that is providing value for money.</p>



## AIM 6: **MAXIMISING** USE OF DATA AND DIGITAL SOLUTIONS TO DRIVE IMPROVEMENT

WHAT WE INTEND TO DO IN 2021/22	WHY WE ARE DOING THIS
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Continue to invest in our Connected Fire Appliance capability, exploiting our mobile data terminals (MDT) &amp; video streaming technology to improve the efficiency &amp; effectiveness of our emergency response &amp; command support.</li> </ul>	<p>This will maximise the opportunities for operational crews when attending incidents by providing seamless data access &amp; transfer. This will further support the ability to complete data reports on the incident ground, reducing the need for paper based reporting systems.</p>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Continue to invest in &amp; develop our capacity &amp; capability for mobile &amp; remote working for all our employees.</li> </ul>	<p>To ensure that the workforce has the option to work from a remote location seamlessly &amp; consistently, through adapting new technology &amp; hardware.</p>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Identify new &amp; innovative ways for delivering training utilising virtual &amp;/or augmented reality technology, which will enable us to deliver immersive training in a COVID secure way.</li> </ul>	<p>To ensure that delivery of training &amp; safety critical training delivery can be maintained in a COVID secure, safe manner. This will include exploring of collaborative methods for delivering the training with other partners &amp; agencies.</p>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Further strengthen our data insight &amp; analysis capabilities through the introduction of an updated business management information system.</li> </ul>	<p>Building upon the work undertaken in 2020/21, our efforts to empower our staff to take greater ownership for delivering performance improvements at a local level means we need to give them better access to data &amp; information to broaden their insight into the risks we face &amp; how we are performing.</p>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Introduce a new Incident Recording System (IRS) &amp; embed the new 999 call handling &amp; mobilising system within our Fire Control Centre.</li> </ul>	<p>Investing in the latest technology will improve our ability to respond effectively to emergencies.</p>







“Bedfordshire Fire and Rescue Service is effective  
at keeping people safe and secure.”

HMICFRS December 2018



# Bedfordshire Fire and Rescue Service

Bedfordshire Fire and Rescue Service  
Southfields Road, Kempston  
Bedford MK42 7NR

t: 01234 845000  
e: [contact@bedsfire.gov.uk](mailto:contact@bedsfire.gov.uk)  
w: [www.bedsfire.gov.uk](http://www.bedsfire.gov.uk)



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**REPORT AUTHOR:** DEPUTY CHIEF FIRE OFFICER

**SUBJECT:** HMICFRS COVID19 INSPECTION REPORT

For further information on this report contact: Andrew Hopkinson  
Deputy Chief Fire Officer  
01234 845112

Background Papers: None

Implications (tick ✓):

LEGAL		✓	FINANCIAL	
HUMAN RESOURCES			EQUALITY IMPACT	
ENVIRONMENTAL			POLICY	
CORPORATE RISK	Known	✓	OTHER (please specify)	
	New			

*Any implications affecting this report are noted at the end of the report.*

**PURPOSE:**

The purpose of this report is to inform the Fire and Rescue Authority (FRA) of the outcomes of the Covid19 thematic inspection conducted by Her Majesty’s Inspectorate of Constabulary and Fire & Rescue Services (HMICFRS) during 2020.



## RECOMMENDATIONS:

1. That Members consider the findings of HMICFRS into Bedfordshire Fire and Rescue Service's response during the Covid19 pandemic, and;
  2. That Members agree to receiving a progress update a future FRA meeting.
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### 1. Background

- 1.1. In August 2020, the Home Secretary commissioned Her Majesty's Inspectorate of Police and Fire and Rescue Services (HMICFRS) to inspect how fire and rescue authorities in England responded to the COVID-19 outbreak and the numerous challenges it presents. HMICFRS inspected England's 45 fire and rescue services from September to November 2020, focusing on their response during the initial outbreak of the pandemic.
- 1.2. The inspections examined these areas:
  - what is working well and what is being learnt;
  - how the fire and rescue sector is responding to the COVID-19 crisis;
  - how fire and rescue services are dealing with the problems they face; and
  - what changes are likely as a result of the COVID-19 pandemic.
- 1.3. The inspection covered the first peak of the pandemic, in the period between April to June 2020, with inspection activity undertaken entirely virtually during autumn 2020, when restrictions were easing. Each FRS was asked to supply data covering the period 1 April to 30 June 2020.
- 1.4. A national report was published on 22 January 2021 showing their overall findings on the sector's preparation and response to the pandemic. Each individual fire and rescue service received letters, also published on 22 January 2021, giving detailed findings and focus areas for improvement. HMICFRS gave a narrative rather than a graded judgment in all inspections covered by this inspection, as they had no benchmark to measure against. The national report and individual service letters can be found on the HMICFRS website: <https://www.justiceinspectors.gov.uk/hmicfrs/publications/>

## 2. National Report Summary

- 2.1. Overall, the HMICFRS national report 'Responding to the pandemic – The fire and rescue service's response to the COVID-19 pandemic in 2020' (Appendix A) found that fire and rescue services across England responded very well to the pandemic. Services maintained their ability to respond to fires and many services provided pandemic-specific support outside their statutory duties.
- 2.2. This included driving ambulances and delivering essential items to the most vulnerable as well as personal protective equipment to those in healthcare. Firefighters also assisted in moving the bodies of those who died from the virus.
- 2.3. The report found that an agreement put in place between the National Fire Chiefs Council (NFCC), the fire and rescue service National Employers and the FBU (The Tripartite Agreement) aimed at making provisions for firefighters to do more to support their local communities, became more of a hindrance than a help for some services.
- 2.4. This 'Tripartite' agreement prevented or delayed some chief fire officers from deploying the right people with the right skills to better support communities when they were most in need of help. This was not the case in Bedfordshire where early and regular engagement with Fire Brigades Union officials at the local level enabled a more pragmatic and agile approach than that experienced elsewhere. This helped keep the focus on keeping our staff safe and using our skills, expertise and resources to support our partners in responding to the pandemic.

## 3. Bedfordshire Fire & Rescue Inspection

- 3.1. HMICFRS inspected this Service between 12 and 23 October 2020. All interviews were undertaken virtually and considered alongside the results from an online staff survey to which 124 of our staff responded.
- 3.2. In summary, HMICFRS reported in their letter (Appendix B) that BFRS reacted quickly and proactively to give additional support to partners and the community during the initial phases of the pandemic. It continued to provide the level of activity expected in its response and prevention functions.
- 3.3. They reported the Service was able to respond quickly to staff absences and implemented work to build resilience in our control room. They felt we communicated well with its staff throughout the pandemic, including on issues relating to staff wellbeing, introducing video logs and virtual tea breaks, as well as increasing the frequency of written communication. They also stated we made sure all staff had the resources they needed to do their jobs effectively, including providing extra IT.

- 3.4. However, whilst they acknowledged the Service had developed new ways to give support to businesses, HMICFRS said we were slow to provide the level of protection activity expected. They noted that work was already underway at the time of the inspection to recover from the pause in its risk-based inspection programme.
- 3.5. In recognising the pandemic may carry on for some time and that the Service continues to plan for the future, HMICFRS recommended focusing on the following areas:
- a) It should determine how it will adopt for the longer-term, the new and innovative ways of working introduced during the pandemic, to secure lasting improvements;
  - b) It should update its community risk profiles, of both people and premises, to take account of the changes the pandemic has caused. It should make sure that its prevention and protection activity remains focused on those areas at highest risk;
  - c) It should work with all staff to identify those at higher risk from COVID-19, so it can put appropriate wellbeing and support provisions in place;
  - d) It should consider what steps it needs to take to maintain its risk-based inspection programme through future phases of the pandemic.
- 3.6. Members will note that the data tables in the national report (p28 onwards) listing the tripartite agreement activities carried out by fire and rescues services contains no entries for Bedfordshire. This is due to the Service objecting to supplying data reporting on activities within the scope of the tripartite agreement which the Service did not sign up to due to the constraints it would place on our ability to deploy our resources to meet local needs. Data was supplied to HMICFRS but we specifically requested it not to be reported within the table. Our inspection letter provides more detail explanation of the range of activities undertaken including those outside the scope of tripartite agreement such as introducing co-responding at 3 fire stations and the technical support unit for complex patient rescues based at Dunstable.
- 3.7. Despite the very positive overall findings, an action plan is already in place to address these specific recommendations and provide reassurance to the FRA and HMICFRS that all are being discharged at the earliest opportunity.
- 3.8. HMICFRS have indicated they will follow up on some of the findings from the thematic Covid19 inspections during their second round of service inspections during the spring of 2021. Details of the forthcoming inspections are subject to another presentation to Members on this agenda.



4. Recommendations

1. That Members consider the findings of HMICFRS into Bedfordshire Fire and Rescue Service's response during the Covid19 pandemic, and;
2. That Members agree to receiving a progress update a future FRA meeting.

5. Implications

**LEGAL**

Legal implications as detailed in the Fire and Rescue Services Act 2004 and Fire and Rescue National Framework for England 2018.

**ORGANISATIONAL RISK**

The HMICFRS Inspection Report will inform a refresh of the organisational risks identified within the Corporate Risk Register and the associated action plans.

**ANDREW HOPKINSON**  
**DEPUTY CHIEF FIRE OFFICER**

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# **Responding to the pandemic**

## **The fire and rescue service's response to the COVID-19 pandemic in 2020**

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# Foreword

The COVID-19 pandemic is a global health emergency on a scale not seen in our lifetime. In August 2020, the Home Secretary commissioned us to inspect how fire and rescue authorities in England responded to the COVID-19 outbreak and the numerous challenges it presents. This report gives an overview of our findings.

To do this, we inspected England's 45 fire and rescue services from September to November 2020. Our focus was on how they responded during the initial period of the pandemic. We conducted our inspections entirely virtually – the first time we have done so. I am grateful for the positive manner in which the services and our staff adapted to this new way of working.

Overall, fire and rescue services responded very well to the outbreak. They maintained their ability to respond to fires and other emergencies in these extraordinary times. Many supported communities in ways that extended far beyond their statutory duties, with firefighters and staff stepping up to take on a range of pandemic activities, including driving ambulances, and delivering essential items to the most vulnerable and personal protective equipment (PPE) to those working in healthcare. Sadly, they were also called upon to help move the bodies of the deceased. I recognise the hard work and enormous dedication of so many across the fire and rescue sector, who provided much-needed additional humanitarian support to their communities.

The pandemic was a catalyst for many fire and rescue services to transform, modernising some of their working practices to become more effective and efficient.

All services put in place extra measures to support and protect their staff, although in some services more could have been done to proactively identify and engage with those who may have been more vulnerable to the virus and might have needed tailored support. With the continuing spread of the virus, services should continue to talk to staff who may be vulnerable and offer the appropriate assistance.

We have made six national recommendations since our first fire and rescue services inspection in 2018, two at the end of our [second tranche](#) of inspections in summer 2019 and four more in [State of Fire and Rescue 2019](#) in January 2020. They cover the most important factors affecting how services operate, and include:

- better standardisation of practice;
- clarity on the role of services and their staff;
- considering whether the arrangements governing staff terms and conditions remain appropriate; and
- providing greater operational independence for chief fire officers.

All these issues came to the fore during the pandemic. While, understandably, there has been a delay in implementing some of our recommendations, the need for improvement and reform remains.

Fire and rescue services are ‘can do’ organisations that want to help their communities. But too many services faced barriers in mobilising operational staff to assist with pandemic activities as effectively and rapidly as they would have wished. It is deeply regrettable that fire and rescue services would have been better placed to assist local communities at their time of greatest need had it not been for the restrictive industrial relations arrangements. This ultimately had the effect of tying the hands of chief fire officers and too often delaying the safe deployment of the right people with the right skills as quickly as their communities needed them.

We describe, in some detail, how a mechanism known as the ‘tripartite agreement’ was designed to enable the National Employers, National Fire Chiefs Council (NFCC) and Fire Brigades Union (FBU) to determine the additional activities firefighters would carry out in support of the fire and rescue services’ response to the pandemic. Despite the initial intentions of those involved, the mechanism rapidly became too prescriptive. In some services, it became a hindrance rather than a help.

We question the need for a mechanism such as the tripartite agreement in the first place, not least where staff are ready, willing and able to assist. We think the public would expect greater flexibility of the fire and rescue service during this global health emergency. Specifically, chief fire officers should be unhindered in their ability to deploy their workforce rapidly, safely and effectively so as to protect the public.

However valuable the role of trade unions in protecting their members’ interests, we don’t consider it appropriate for the FBU to have been given the ability to delay or veto the reasonable and safe deployment of firefighters to assist the public during a national emergency.

Looking forward, public-spirited firefighters and staff want to help their communities through the pandemic. It is in everyone’s interest to vaccinate the population as quickly as possible. I am encouraged that some fire and rescue services are making great strides to support the vaccination programme using firefighters and staff from within their own workforce. They are doing so with the necessary and reasonable measures in place to protect the health and safety of those stepping forward to help with this work. Others look set to follow.

At the time of publication, England has entered another national lockdown and some of the challenges presented in the early days of the pandemic have resurfaced and increased.

In conclusion, the fire and rescue service can be proud of how it responded during the initial stages of the pandemic, and the support it gave communities. Our comments on the barriers to doing more shouldn’t detract from our recognition of the important and significant contribution fire and rescue services made and continue to make. Fire and rescue services, firefighters and staff stepped up and supported their communities well beyond what they would normally do.



Nonetheless, now is a pivotal time for the country in terms of the fight against the virus. The fire service has much more to offer in supporting the mass vaccination programme and other pandemic activities; thereby matching the ambition of fire service leaders and the commitment of their staff. The barriers dominating the sector need to be overcome or resolved. The sector should look to the good work outlined in this report and continue to serve its communities to the best of its ability. I know there is a desire to do more, and I hope that all those vested with the power to enable this to happen will do so.

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Zoë Billingham". The signature is written in a cursive style and is centered within a light gray rectangular box.

**HMI Zoë Billingham**

# About this report

We suspended all inspection activity requiring appreciable input from fire and rescue services (and police forces) in response to the COVID-19 pandemic in March 2020. This was done to remove the administrative demand we place on services during our inspections, allowing them to focus instead on their response to the pandemic.

In August 2020, the Home Secretary commissioned us to inspect the English fire and rescue authorities' response to COVID-19. Our commission, under section 28A(3) of the [Fire and Rescue Services Act 2004](#), was to consider:

- what is working well and what is being learnt;
- how the fire and rescue sector is responding to the COVID-19 crisis;
- how fire and rescue services are dealing with the problems they face; and
- what changes are likely as a result of the COVID-19 pandemic.

The inspection covered the first peak of the pandemic, in the period between April to June 2020. We completed inspection activity during autumn 2020, when restrictions were easing. It was our first entirely virtual inspection, with all activity taking place remotely.

We also interviewed national leads from the fire and rescue sector, and other interested parties, including:

- national and local government;
- the NFCC;
- the fire and rescue service's National Employers;
- representative bodies, including the FBU, Fire and Rescue Services Association, Fire Officers Association and UNISON; and
- devolved administrations.

This report presents our overall findings on the sector's preparation and response to the pandemic. We will consider them in future inspections. We have detailed the findings and focus areas for improvement for each fire and rescue service in 44 [individual letters](#). We gave a narrative rather than a graded judgment in all inspections covered by this inspection, as we had no benchmark to measure against. We will revert to giving graded judgments when round-two inspections restart in spring 2021.

How we use our data is explained at Annex A.

# Headline findings

## Every service maintained its ability to respond to fires and other emergencies

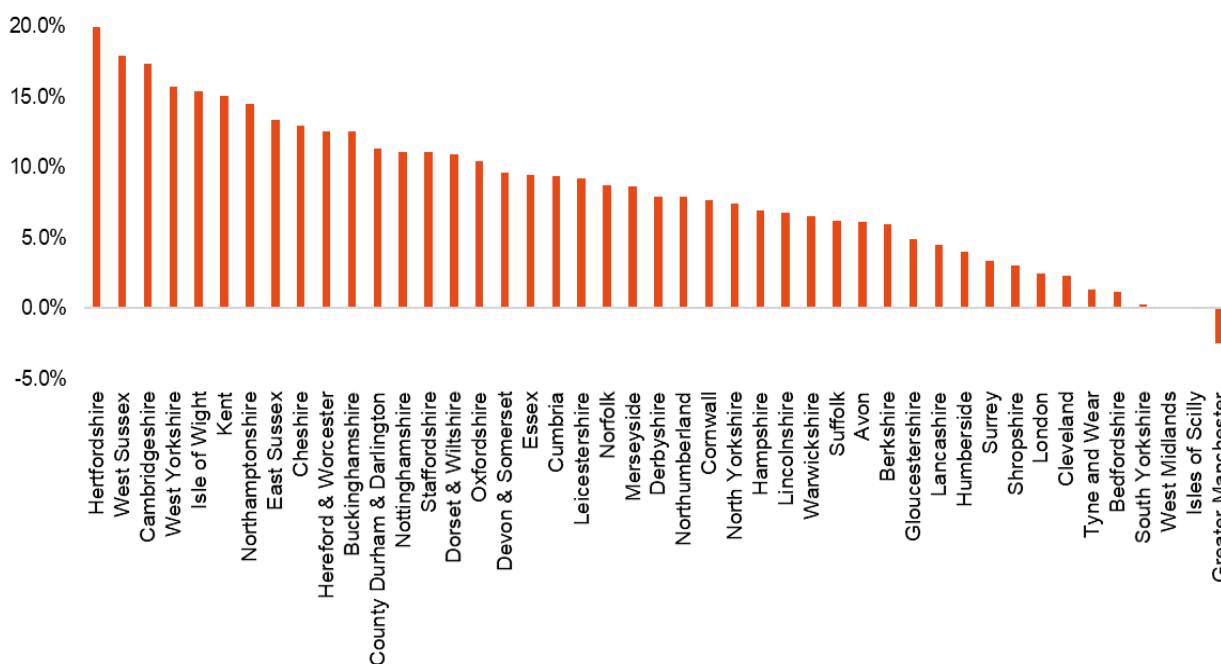
Every service was able to respond to calls from the public, incidents and emergencies when needed. Most prioritised responding to emergencies over other activities. They also put in place measures to reduce the risk of exposure to the virus, ensuring firefighters and control room staff remained available.

Staff absences were low and on-call firefighter availability was high during the first wave of the pandemic. There are several reasons for this, including steps taken by services to limit the spread of the virus.

The overall number of incidents attended by services fell 5 percent from 1 April to 30 June 2020 compared with the same period in 2019.

Fire engine availability data shows that 43 (of 45) services had more fire engines available to respond to calls from 1 April 2020 to 30 June 2020 compared with the same period in 2019. The graph in figure 1 sets out this data in detail.

**Figure 1: Percentage change in overall availability from 1 April–30 June 2019 to 1 April–30 June 2020 by fire and rescue service**



## Every service provided a range of additional support to its community that went above and beyond its statutory duties

The role of fire and rescue services is listed in legislation, predominantly the [Fire and Rescue Services Act 2004](#). It comprises:

- fire safety;
- firefighting;
- rescuing people in road traffic collisions;
- responding to emergencies;
- enforcing building safety regulations in the Regulatory Reform (Fire Safety) Order 2005; and
- responding to certain incidents such as chemical, biological, radiological or nuclear emergencies.

To support their communities during the pandemic, fire and rescue services did more than their 'business as usual' activities. Additional pandemic work included ambulance driving and delivering food to the vulnerable and PPE to healthcare professionals. Most of the activities carried out were listed in the tripartite agreement, but some services provided other support to their community under local agreement. What each service did varied and depended on what their local partners required of them and which part of the workforce was willing to carry it out.

- Some services didn't receive any requests from local partners for additional support.
- While additional activity varied between services, it was provided by different staff groups, including wholetime (that is, full-time) and on-call firefighters, as well as non-operational staff. The table at figure 2 shows a list of all these additional activities that took place under the tripartite agreement. This information is set out by service at Annex B.
- A small number of services were asked to lend their support but couldn't provide enough wholetime firefighters to do the work because the FBU objected. For example, the union had concerns with risk assessments, which are ultimately the responsibility of each fire and rescue service. Other staff, including on-call firefighters and non-operational staff, were sometimes deployed instead of wholetime firefighters.
- We were particularly impressed with how some county council run services worked with council departments and colleagues to increase their knowledge of, presence and work in the community. It shows how fire and rescue services can benefit from being part of a larger organisation, particularly being able to share IT and IT infrastructure and exchange information, especially in the current climate.

**Figure 2: Additional pandemic activities carried out by fire and rescue services provided under the tripartite agreement [between 1 April 2020 and 17 September 2020]**

<b>Additional pandemic activity listed under the tripartite agreement</b>	<b>Number of services out of 45</b>
Ambulance driving	19
Delivering essential items to vulnerable persons	33
Moving bodies of the deceased	16
Face-fitting masks to be used by NHS and clinical care staff working with COVID-19 patients	22
Delivering PPE and other medical supplies to NHS and care facilities	32
Taking samples for COVID-19 antigen testing	5
Driving ambulances not on blue lights (that is, without a siren), excluding COVID-19 patients, to outpatient appointments or to receive urgent care	8
Training non-service personnel to drive ambulances (not on blue lights)	5
Packing/repacking food supplies for vulnerable people	21
Transferring known or suspected COVID-19 patients to and from Nightingale hospitals under emergency response (on blue lights – that is, with a siren) or through non-emergency patient transfer (not on blue lights)	2
Transferring patients, including those recovering and recuperating from but no longer infected with COVID-19 to and from Nightingale hospitals under emergency response (on blue lights) or through non-emergency patient transfer (not on blue lights)	3
Delivering infection, prevention and control training packages for care homes, including hand hygiene products, and PPE guidance and procedures, and supporting the testing of care home staff	10

## The fire and rescue sector's outdated arrangements hindered the way services responded

We have made six national recommendations since we began inspecting fire and rescue services in 2018. The recommendations cover important structural issues relating to how the fire and rescue sector operates, including:

- better standardisation of practice;
- clarity on the role of services and their staff;
- considering whether the arrangements governing staff terms and conditions remain appropriate; and
- providing greater operational independence for chief fire officers.

All these structural problems affected the way services operated during the pandemic and reveal the sector's current limitations. This is despite the dedication and determination of services and their staff to provide the best possible outcome for the public.

The call we made in [State of Fire and Rescue 2019](#) for lasting national reform remains. Reform is necessary and essential, particularly in three areas.

First, to clarify the role of services. This became especially apparent when firefighters could, in many cases, carry out additional responsibilities to support partner agencies only after the national tripartite agreement on specific activities.

Second, to provide chief fire officers operational independence. The ability for chief fire officers to allocate resources rapidly, safely and effectively where required should be an integral part of their role. During the pandemic, local resilience forums (LRFs) asked their fire and rescue services to assist. In some instances, services couldn't commit resources there and then, sometimes requiring a national agreement to proceed.

Third, to reform arrangements governing staff terms and conditions. Throughout the pandemic, the fire and rescue sector's motto has been 'ready, willing and able'. However, the outdated arrangements for negotiating workforce issues meant some services were unable to realise that aim as fully as they wished.

## The effect of the tripartite agreement varied from service to service

The employment arrangements in the fire and rescue sector are longstanding and, in our view, outdated. The National Joint Council (NJC) oversees conditions of service for firefighters (included in what is known as the 'grey book'). Despite repeated calls for reform, this hasn't been reviewed for years. While it provides standard terms and conditions for firefighters, it has also established a rigid set of national arrangements. Some services have been able to put in place arrangements to adapt what they do in local circumstances. Others haven't and consider the grey book a barrier.

In [State of Fire and Rescue 2019](#), we called for these arrangements to be reviewed to consider whether they are still fit for purpose and if they establish, maintain or intensify intended or unintended barriers. We also recommended that consideration is given as to whether the NJC – the pay negotiation machinery – needs reform.



This recommendation remains open. To overcome the rigid arrangements, the national tripartite agreement was put in place to temporarily expand what operational staff could do during the pandemic. The agreement was between the NFCC, National Employers and the FBU. If additional roles were requested, they needed national agreement and further local consultation before work could start.

In March 2020, the first of 15 tripartite agreements was agreed to increase the scope of work that operational staff could do. Each service then had to consult locally on the specific work it had been asked to support to agree how to address any health and safety requirements, including risk assessments.

The arrangements under the tripartite agreement stopped in December 2020 and a new agreement was reached without the NFCC, involving only the National Employers and the FBU. Unfortunately, this new arrangement collapsed on 13 January 2021. At the time of publication, professional risk assessments provided by the NFCC are in place and provide appropriate control measures for staff. The National Employers support the risk assessments, and the onus is now on operational staff to volunteer to step forward for their communities. This can be done under local agreements specifying the work operational staff in each individual service will be undertaking.

- The tripartite agreement played a role in enabling services to use their staff in different ways, such as driving ambulances and delivering food to the vulnerable. The initial intention behind it was pragmatic and rooted in the desire on all parts to help the public, but in some cases, it had a limiting or even negative effect, including creating delays to activity already underway. Annex B sets out which activities were carried out by each service.
- There were national and local issues implementing the agreement, which became too prescriptive. For example, services were only able to deliver items to the most vulnerable once that specific activity had been listed in a national tripartite agreement. If it had focused on broad principles, the agreement would have given individual services the flexibility to make decisions on how to deploy staff.
- Because of the restrictive nature of this agreement, several services used other staff to provide this additional work who weren't bound by the tripartite agreement, such as non-operational employees. Deploying non-operational staff was often quicker and easier than using wholetime firefighters, even though they may not have had the same skills. We also found that services were able to deploy their on-call staff more flexibly through offering them additional hours and secondment contracts.

## **The pandemic demonstrated what on-call firefighters and non-operational staff offer fire and rescue services and the public**

Most services have on-call firefighters. On-call firefighters are generally employed on a part-time basis in locations where the local risk doesn't require full-time fire cover. These are firefighters who may have other jobs, but who respond to emergencies when called. Fire and rescue services used them extensively during the first wave of the pandemic to respond to emergencies, as well as provide additional support to their communities.

- The majority of on-call firefighters were available to support their fire and rescue service as needed, as many were furloughed from their primary employment or working from home. Consequently, most services with on-call staff had more fire engines available to respond to emergencies than before the pandemic.
- On-call firefighters were willing to work flexibly to fill a range of roles, including delivering food to the vulnerable, supporting local ambulance trusts and covering staff absences.
- Services took steps to mitigate any financial hardship these individuals might have faced if their primary employment was affected by the pandemic. This included offering them paid employment or short-term contracts.
- Non-operational staff (including those who work in non-uniformed roles, such as prevention) also volunteered to help. Services told us of their willingness and ability to assist.

### **The way services maintained statutory prevention and protection functions varied, and some did less than expected**

Services have had to balance the need to act responsibly during a public health emergency – that is, work out how to reduce the risk of exposure to the virus – with meeting their statutory duty to promote and enforce fire safety and fire safety legislation.

The NFCC provided advice on how services could maintain a risk-based approach to prevention and protection activity. However, not every service aligned its activity to NFCC guidance. Four services exceeded the requirements of the guidance and eight stopped the majority of protection activity during the early stages of the pandemic.

In the first round of our inspections, between 2018 and 2019, we raised concerns that too many services didn't see their protection function as a high enough priority and had under-invested in it for many years. It is concerning that some services have chosen to deprioritise it during the pandemic.

### **The wellbeing provision offered to staff during COVID-19 was generally good, but varied**

We saw that services placed importance on staff wellbeing. Some enhanced their wellbeing provision and tailored it to the outbreak, directing staff to additional help where necessary. However, more could have been done in a third of services to make sure staff who may have been at greater risk, such as those from a black or ethnic minority background, were identified and correct provisions put in place to offer them relevant support. We were pleased to find evidence of this happening in 29 services. Guidance from [Public Health England](#) says some people may not be prepared to disclose their individual circumstances. It is incumbent on services to talk to all their staff to identify risks and provide appropriate support.

## The pandemic was a catalyst for change and transformation

In our first inspections (between 2018 and 2019) we found that a small number of services had done little to transform and modernise the ways they work. The pandemic changed that quite dramatically for the better.

- Some services implemented improvement programmes within days of the first lockdown being announced, rolling out new IT and supporting infrastructure. Existing improvement programmes were brought forward and implemented in weeks rather than months. And existing barriers preventing the exchange of information between partners were removed.
- Transformation mostly benefitted non-operational staff, whose working lives have been revolutionised with the introduction of digital and flexible working in many services. However, this rarely translated into improvements in the working practices or productivity of operational staff, including firefighters. Services should take their experience of digital and workplace transformation and use it to make firefighter time as productive as possible while on station. This could include providing prevention advice remotely to vulnerable people.
- When the pandemic began, services implemented changes, such as re-deploying staff, reducing community activity and changing working practices, in anticipation of much higher sickness levels. Thankfully, these levels failed to materialise at the time of inspection. However, some services were slow to undo their changes, whether returning re-deployed staff or restarting activity that had been stopped.

# Findings

## **There was strong multi-agency working in every area, supported and facilitated by LRFs**

Most services were heavily involved in their LRFs and worked proactively with partners and other agencies to respond to the pandemic.

LRFs are multi-agency partnerships made up of representatives from local public services. They are responsible for planning and preparing for localised incidents and catastrophic emergencies. The long-lasting nature of the pandemic has put these forums under great strain. While LRFs are arranged by police force boundaries, some services such as those in the South West of England, have created regional groupings to share learning and advice.

LRF activity was carried out in a co-ordinated way, and forums and their members effectively supported their communities. Service leaders rose to the challenge and, in most cases, exceeded the expectations of their role in the forums – members told us that fire and rescue colleagues proactively contributed to an exceptional level.

The strength of LRFs is having local organisations, including the fire and rescue service, police force, ambulance trust and local authority present at meetings to share out tasks and agree mutual priorities. However, when asked, some services couldn't immediately agree to completing additional tasks. If the request was outside the scope of the firefighter role, they needed the national tripartite agreement to be in place, followed by further consultation with local representative, before they could agree to it. We found that at least 11 services had experienced some delay before beginning work. The agreement process sometimes took several weeks. Without this barrier, their response could have been quicker and more comprehensive. LRF members told us they sometimes avoided asking fire and rescue services to help because of these difficulties.

Suffolk Fire and Rescue Service's partner agencies requested that, in its capacity as a 24/7 emergency service, it 'door knock' on vulnerable members of the community who had called national helplines to request assistance in the early days of the pandemic, while more substantive arrangements were established. The FBU refused the request because door knocking wasn't listed as an activity in the tripartite agreement, so the service asked staff to volunteer and, thankfully, enough did to meet the request. This shows the difficulties some chief fire officers faced.

We heard several times that firefighters who volunteered to help weren't able to carry out some activities until the national tripartite agreement had been reached.

## **All services maintained their ability to respond to fires and other emergencies**

As illustrated in figure 1, fire engine availability in many services was high – certainly higher than it was in the same period in 2019. During the first phase of the pandemic, the steps that service incidents planners took to protect firefighters from exposure to the virus seemed to work, with very few absent. This was further helped by the overall number of incidents attended by services falling 5 percent from 1 April to 30 June 2020 compared with the same period in 2019.

Fire engine availability was also boosted by the large numbers of available on-call firefighters. Normally, the availability of on-call crewed engines is lower during the daytime, with on-call firefighters working away from their fire station. However, during the pandemic, with a considerable number of these firefighters furloughed from their primary employment or working from home, the majority of on-call fire engines were available.

Services may not be in the same position during subsequent waves. The availability of on-call firefighters largely returned to normal following the first peak, as many returned to their primary employment. Absence rates may also increase due to self-isolation and higher infection rates, and as those who were furloughed return to work.

We were encouraged to see that services were able to maintain their response to major incidents during the pandemic. In the early summer, hot weather resulted in a significant number of outdoor fires. For example, in May 2020, Dorset & Wiltshire Fire and Rescue Service experienced its largest fire in recent history at Wareham Forest. It was able to deal with the incident with support from a number of services (required due to the scale of the incident), while working within the restrictions of the pandemic. Likewise, Lancashire Fire and Rescue Service responded to several large moorland fires over the same period.

## **The prioritisation of response was, in some cases, to the detriment of protection and prevention activity**

In some instances, the chief fire officer decided to prioritise and/or redeploy staff to respond to emergencies. Protection and prevention activity suffered as a result. Services that paused their risk-based inspection programmes should make sure they have robust plans to make up the backlog.

It may have been sensible for some services to redeploy protection staff to response duties at first. However, some were slow to change their approach when the redeployment was no longer necessary – that is, when there were generally low sickness levels among firefighters and demand fell, albeit slightly. The overall number of incidents attended fell 5 percent from 1 April to 30 June 2020 compared with the same period in 2019.

Not all eight services that paused protection activity, such as risk-based inspection programmes, had a convincing rationale for doing so. We will pay close attention to how services have managed any inspection backlogs in our upcoming round of full inspection in spring 2021.

## **Access to data on vulnerable individuals from partners varied**

Services that had good arrangements in place to give and receive data (including on shielding and other vulnerability factors) to/from local agencies were well placed to identify the most vulnerable individuals in their area and respond accordingly. In some areas, services and their LRF partners combined lists, which gave everyone a more comprehensive view of vulnerability across the community.

While some services benefitted from improved access to data during the pandemic, others were frustrated by a lack of data exchange or provision from other agencies. This lack of consistency across the sector is a concern, as some vulnerable people may not be known to the fire and rescue services.

## **The oversight and scrutiny of fire and rescue authorities varied**

Each service is overseen by a fire and rescue authority, the size and composition of which varies. There are several governance arrangements in place across England, although each authority ultimately has the same function – that is, to set the service's priorities and budget and assure that the budget is spent wisely. The authority is also the employer to whom the chief fire officer and their staff ultimately report. London has slightly different governance arrangements, although responsibility ultimately rests with the Mayor of London.

There was no set approach for how authorities should operate during the pandemic. No governance arrangement appeared to be more effective than another.

Some fire and rescue authorities continued with business as usual, providing the same oversight they usually do. Others delegated functions to the chief fire officer. In doing so, they recognised the critical nature of the pandemic and the need for the chief fire officer to be able to quickly adapt the service's response. Chief fire officers spoke positively about this delegated authority and the sense of operational independence it gave them. We welcome this approach.

In [State of Fire and Rescue 2019](#), we recommended giving chief fire officers operational independence so they have the freedom to determine all operational aspects of their service to meet the risks set out in the authority's integrated risk management plan. Our recommendation stands. The pandemic has shown the value of this demarcation between governance and operational decision making.

## **Some services were more prepared for the pandemic than others**

Pandemic flu is at the top of most organisations' risk registers, so services should have had plans in place to deal with such an event. While most, but not all, services had business continuity and pandemic flu plans in place, understandably few foresaw the entirety of COVID-19 and its implications, so activity was reactive. Plans didn't foresee national lockdowns or the need for social distancing, and most were predicated on large staff absences that, thankfully, didn't materialise during the first wave.



Most, but not all, services evolved their plans to reflect learning and the changing situation. Eleven services didn't have a bespoke pandemic flu plan to begin with, so also hadn't tested or rehearsed it, putting them at an immediate disadvantage. Further waves, and the uncertainty they bring, makes this position of relatively inflexibility and poor preparedness for rapid change concerning.

## **The fire and rescue sector was able to come together effectively during the pandemic**

### **The role of the NFCC**

Those involved with the NFCC's response to the pandemic can be proud of how they facilitated a co-ordinated fire and rescue sector response. The Home Office recently provided additional funding to improve NFCC capacity and capability. However, this only arrived in June and, as the NFCC is a small organisation, it remains very dependent on the goodwill of volunteers, who do fire and rescue sector work in addition to their day jobs. The Home Office and the sector should consider how to further increase its capacity if the pandemic continues to demand support and resources.

We were encouraged to see the NFCC taking a leading role by providing an operational perspective in negotiations with fire and rescue services' employers (represented by the National Employers) and the FBU. We consider it essential that chief fire officers, who are responsible for providing fire and rescue services to the public, can contribute to and influence national discussions on terms and conditions. We were disappointed to see the employers and FBU revert back to NJC negotiations, thereby excluding the NFCC until revised professional risk assessments were required. Including the NFCC would ensure decisions were made in a way that allows fire and rescue services to deploy their staff flexibly to meet public need.

### **Clear communication channels between the fire and rescue sector and the government, facilitated by the NFCC**

We were encouraged to see the sector communicate with central and local government, including the Home Office and Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government, through a single representative, Roy Wilsher, chair of the NFCC. This aligns with the existing arrangements for responding to major incidents and provides a robust model for the sector in the future.

Phil Garrigan, chief fire officer for Merseyside Fire & Rescue Service, was appointed 'gold officer' to act as the interface between Roy Wilsher and the fire and rescue sector. He joined regular calls with the Home Office. Roy Wilsher chaired a weekly meeting of chief fire officers, at which Phil Garrigan was able to update colleagues and answer questions. Phil Garrigan was also able to make decisions and respond on behalf of the sector to any central government requests.

## National guidance on how to fulfil statutory duties during the pandemic

The NFCC produced a wealth of guidance on a range of issues, including prevention, protection and working safely, to help individual services respond to the challenges caused by the pandemic. This helped reduce operational variation between services. Many found the guidance useful, although some felt it could have been issued more quickly. Not all followed it. Overall, though, the council put effective arrangements in place.

### Joint procurement

We were particularly impressed that over three-quarters of services used a national procurement hub to jointly procure PPE.

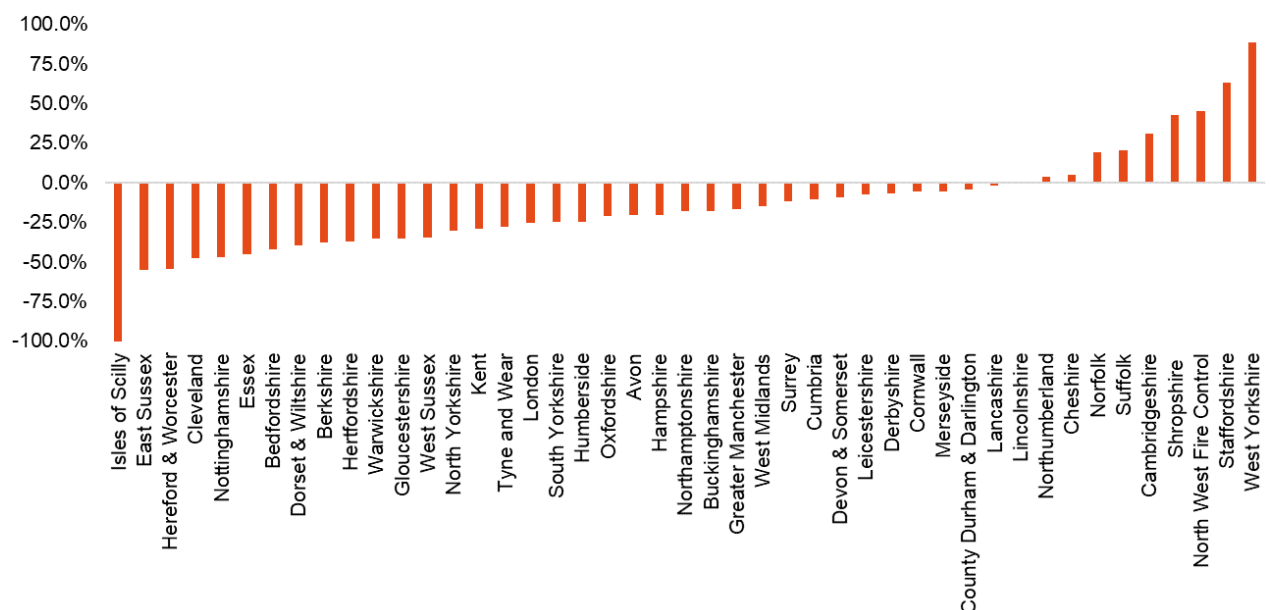
Worldwide demand for PPE outstripped supply at the outset of the pandemic, causing shortages. The fire and rescue sector formed a national procurement hub to give services access to a market with more than 400 suppliers. Individually, they wouldn't have met the minimum order requirements that many demanded.

The services that didn't procure PPE through the hub had arrangements with others – for example, the council county of which they are part – so didn't purchase in isolation.

### Sickness

We were provided with data on the number of shifts/days lost due to sickness absence by Cleveland Fire Brigade, which collects it on behalf of every service. Thankfully, this data shows that, across all services, none approached risk-critical absence levels during the first wave of the pandemic, from 1 April 2020 to 30 June 2020. In fact, sickness levels were generally lower than normal. Figure 3 shows the percentage change in days/shifts lost due to sickness when comparing the first three months of the pandemic with the same period in 2019. Only ten services had more staff off sick.

**Figure 3: Percentage change in overall sickness absence in the period 1 April to 30 June 2019 compared with 1 April to 30 June 2020 by fire and rescue service**



Isles of Scilly Fire and Rescue Service (FRS), Kent FRS and Cambridgeshire FRS didn't provide sickness absence data to the Cleveland Sickness Absence data collection, and instead provided this data direct to HMICFRS.

### **Continuous improvement**

The NFCC commissioned an independent 'lessons learnt' review that was shared across the sector to identify how it can improve, should it face another incident of this nature. This self-reflection is positive and shows a commitment to improve and modernise by the NFCC.

### **The intent behind the tripartite agreement was pragmatic, but it was too prescriptive in practice**

The tripartite agreement covers operational staff, including wholetime firefighters – that is, frontline staff whose terms and conditions, including roles and responsibilities, are specified in the grey book. The agreement was intended to offer a contractually compliant way of expanding the work these staff could do so that services, particularly those with a mainly wholetime workforce, could use them to help support their communities during the pandemic.

As these changes were temporary alterations to contractual terms and conditions, staff had to volunteer to carry out this additional pandemic work. – it wasn't compulsory. Before the agreement was reached, firefighters who were members of the FBU were discouraged from undertaking these additional humanitarian activities.

The agreement should have allowed services to simply refer to a single document before tasking additional pandemic activity to frontline staff. However, at the insistence of the FBU, and after hours, days and sometimes weeks of negotiation, it became too prescriptive. It didn't always enable chief fire officers to use their staff to meet local need in a timely manner. For example, the agreement to deliver food to the most vulnerable didn't extend to firefighters carrying out wellbeing checks.

In addition, each specific activity needed a new risk assessment or statement, even for roles that were similar to those that had been previously agreed. For example, separate agreements were required for firefighters driving ambulances on blue lights and not on blue lights.

The activities listed in the tripartite agreement, which had 15 iterations, were unnecessarily detailed.

There is now an unhelpful precedent of national bodies such as the FBU being able to specify the terms on which service leaders deploy large swathes of their workforce during a national emergency. We made a recommendation for operational independence to be given to chief fire officers in [State of Fire and Rescue 2019](#) and this remains pressing.

In December 2020, the NFCC was removed from the tripartite agreement, which then became an agreement between the National Employers and the FBU. On 13 January 2021, this agreement collapsed. While negotiating a further agreement for firefighters to support the national vaccination programme, the FBU placed restrictions on

firefighters that were unsustainable, so the National Employers couldn't support them. This shows the unworkable nature of such an approach.

In November 2020, we commissioned YouGov to [survey public perceptions of local fire and rescue services across England](#). The majority of respondents supported the idea that fire and rescue services use additional capacity to assist other emergency services with:

- driving ambulances and undertaking training to do so (60 percent);
- supporting vulnerable people with food packages and essential items (57 percent);
- delivering PPE and medical supplies to the NHS and care facilities (56 percent); and
- delivering and distributing vaccines (56 percent).

Many services deployed staff who weren't bound by the tripartite agreement – that is, those whose terms and conditions aren't in the grey book – to get around its restrictions. For example, UNISON agreed general principles for its members (typically non-operational staff), supporting their involvement where necessary and where it was for the good of their communities. Risk assessments were carried out locally and UNISON became involved at a national level only if issues arose.

That an agreement was needed for operational staff at all reflects poorly on the existing arrangements for negotiating terms and conditions in the sector and, consequently, services' ability to use their staff as required during a global public health emergency. It has created an unhelpful precedent for future negotiations about the role of the firefighter. For example, Greater Manchester FRS was asked in September 2020 for its assistance with the COVID-19 test and trace programme in the local area. To its credit, the service confirmed it had the capacity to help and deployed non-operational staff with immediate effect. Separately, the same month, the NFCC requested for this activity to be added to the tripartite agreement. However, delays caused by the tripartite process, including the additional work required for individual risk assessments related to other activities, meant wholetime firefighters didn't start until December 2020.

### **On-call firefighters further demonstrated their enormous value to fire and rescue services**

On-call firefighter availability was high during the pandemic. Many services relied on them and their flexibility to provide important additional activity, both within and outside the tripartite agreement, including:

- driving ambulances;
- packing/repacking food supplies for vulnerable people; and
- delivering PPE and other medical supplies.

During our first round of inspections in 2018, we found that on-call firefighters are often not seen as equal to their wholetime counterparts. However, the range of activities they were able to carry out during the first wave of the pandemic clearly reflects their strong community spirit. Their willingness to take on additional activity –

such as movement of the bodies of the deceased and covering wholetime absences – is testament to their skills and dedication to the role in challenging circumstances.

## **Services could have done more to ensure the efficient and productive use of their staff**

Wholetime firefighters were often confined to their station to ensure enough firefighters were available to respond to emergencies. However, many were underutilised, as there were:

- fewer incidents to attend (albeit only slightly fewer – see below);
- fewer training opportunities;
- less community engagement; and
- less prevention/protection work.

The digital transformation non-operational staff experienced during the pandemic wasn't always shared by those working on fire stations.

Around half of all services decided not to use their wholetime firefighters to conduct activity that was additional to emergency response. The majority of these firefighters stopped all engagement work with the public. This was done to reduce their risk of contracting the virus and, thereby maintain the resilience of services' response functions. This meant that wholetime firefighters in these services were primarily only responding to emergencies as well as taking on a small number of additional activities. The overall number of incidents attended fell 5 percent from 1 April to 30 June 2020 compared with the same period in 2019.

It was clearly important for services to make sure they had enough members of staff available to respond to emergencies. At the onset of the pandemic, when no one knew what the absence rates would be, ensuring their availability was sensible. But some services were slow to change activity rotas to more effectively deploy their staff when the full impact was known.

## **Most services put effective measures in place to protect control room functions**

Services need to be able to respond to calls for help from the public. The control room is the first and often only contact the public have with them. It is vital to the effective running of a fire and rescue service.

All services put in place measures to make sure their control room could continue to operate throughout the pandemic. Some of these measures were pre-planned and part of existing degradation and pandemic flu plans. Others were ad hoc and reactive. Measures included:

- training additional staff to provide resilience;
- implementing enhanced cleaning and hygiene standards; and
- isolating the control room from the wider workforce.

Every service has arrangements in place with other services to handle calls on their behalf should the need arise.

Services should consider how effective, resilient and robust these arrangements are, and make sure plans are in place and kept up to date. The possibility of firefighters and staff having to self-isolate while waiting for and following a positive test result is a real risk. If this risk isn't mitigated, considering the length of time it can take to train control room staff, the effect on services could be substantial.

### **More could have been done by services to consider if their risk profile changed as a result of the pandemic**

Some services hadn't done anything to consider if COVID-19 had changed the risk in their area and required them to change or re-prioritise activity. For example:

- different groups of people who may be at greater risk of fire; or
- risk in particular buildings, especially if their use had altered during the pandemic, whether they were repurposed or otherwise.

Services that reconsidered their risk profile were of the view that those who were vulnerable to COVID-19 and its effects were often the groups most vulnerable to fire and associated risks, so didn't feel it necessary to make any adjustments. But this may not be the case everywhere. It should have been something each service considered.

The NFCC is currently leading work, through its community risk programme, to help services identify and manage higher-risk people and buildings. We look forward to seeing how the lessons learnt during the pandemic contribute to that work.

### **The additional costs services incurred when responding to the pandemic were mainly covered by government grants**

Services incurred additional costs during the pandemic – some modest, others considerable. The biggest additional costs for most were overtime and PPE. The majority of services used their collective bargaining power to purchase PPE through a national procurement hub. This is encouraging and shows good commercial practice.

Nearly all the incurred costs were covered by government financial support. As a result, services didn't need to spend their reserves. A small number used some of their reserve to cover a shortfall while waiting for their grant. County council services were reimbursed for what they spent during the pandemic, so didn't have the same autonomy in how the grant was spent.

Services anticipate significant budget shortfalls in future years as business rates fall in response to the economic downturn. Many, but not all, services have retained some of their unspent grant money to cover some of this anticipated shortfall. We are pleased to see this prudent approach. Not all services have shown such forward-thinking.



## Wellbeing provision offered to staff during COVID-19 was good but varied

We found that most services offer a good, comprehensive wellbeing service to their staff. The vast majority of respondents to our staff survey agreed that they were able to access services to support their mental wellbeing when appropriate. (Note that wellbeing provision differs across services – more detail of this variation can be found in figure 4.)

Some services were quick to expand their wellbeing provision during the pandemic. Work is underway in most services to consider the long-term effects of COVID-19 on staff wellbeing.

Two-thirds of services identified staff who might be vulnerable to the virus. This included black and ethnic minority staff, who are disproportionately affected by the virus and those living with shielding factors. Additional support was offered to these staff members, where appropriate. It is incumbent on services to talk to all their staff to identify risks and provide appropriate support, especially as some staff may be reluctant to disclose this information voluntarily.

Kent FRS developed a COVID-19 risk estimator for all staff. They were asked to enter their personal data (including age, general health condition, ethnicity and gender) on a screening matrix. The risk score was cross-referenced to an individual's role and the risk they/it carried of contracting COVID-19. High-scoring members of staff had access to a tailored support programme that was also used to determine when they should return to the workplace. This risk tool was shared with the NFCC and subsequently adopted by other services.

Wellbeing could have been better targeted at those most at risk in a third of services. Some services didn't approach staff to identify if they needed support. Others didn't tailor any wellbeing services to those working in COVID-19 high-risk roles. This reactive rather than proactive approach meant that those who needed additional support may not have been helped in the most appropriate way. Relying on staff to self-identify as needing support creates a risk. Guidance from [Public Health England](#) says some people may not be prepared to disclose their individual circumstances. It is incumbent on services to talk to all their staff to identify risks and provide appropriate support.

**Figure 4: Which wellbeing services fire and rescue services tailored for staff members who met government requirements for the high-risk shielded patients list**

<b>Fire and rescue service</b>	<b>Occupational health</b>	<b>Specialist counselling and support</b>	<b>Peer support</b>	<b>External support services</b>	<b>Other</b>
<b>Avon</b>	✓				
<b>Bedfordshire</b>					
<b>Buckinghamshire</b>	✓	✓	✓	✓	
<b>Cambridgeshire</b>	✓				✓
<b>Cheshire</b>					✓
<b>Cleveland</b>					
<b>Cornwall</b>			✓		
<b>County Durham and Darlington</b>	✓		✓		
<b>Cumbria</b>	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
<b>Derbyshire</b>	✓		✓	✓	✓
<b>Devon &amp; Somerset</b>					✓
<b>Dorset &amp; Wiltshire</b>	✓	✓	✓	✓	
<b>East Sussex</b>	✓	✓	✓		
<b>Essex</b>	✓	✓	✓		✓
<b>Gloucestershire</b>	✓		✓	✓	
<b>Greater Manchester</b>					✓
<b>Hampshire and the Isle of Wight</b>	✓			✓	

<b>Fire and rescue service</b>	<b>Occupational health</b>	<b>Specialist counselling and support</b>	<b>Peer support</b>	<b>External support services</b>	<b>Other</b>
<b>Hereford &amp; Worcester</b>	✓	✓			
<b>Hertfordshire</b>	✓	✓			
<b>Humberside</b>	✓		✓		
<b>Isles of Scilly</b>					
<b>Kent</b>					✓
<b>Lancashire</b>	✓				✓
<b>Leicestershire</b>	✓	✓		✓	✓
<b>Lincolnshire</b>	✓	✓	✓		
<b>London</b>	✓	✓	✓		
<b>Merseyside</b>	✓	✓		✓	
<b>Norfolk</b>	✓				
<b>North Yorkshire</b>	✓		✓		
<b>Northamptonshire</b>	✓	✓	✓	✓	
<b>Northumberland</b>					✓
<b>Nottinghamshire</b>	✓				
<b>Oxfordshire</b>			✓		✓
<b>Royal Berkshire</b>	✓		✓	✓	✓
<b>Shropshire</b>	✓	✓	✓	✓	
<b>South Yorkshire</b>	✓		✓		

<b>Fire and rescue service</b>	<b>Occupational health</b>	<b>Specialist counselling and support</b>	<b>Peer support</b>	<b>External support services</b>	<b>Other</b>
<b>Staffordshire</b>	✓	✓	✓	✓	
<b>Suffolk</b>			✓		
<b>Surrey</b>	✓				✓
<b>Tyne and Wear</b>	✓		✓		
<b>Warwickshire</b>	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
<b>West Midlands</b>	✓	✓	✓		
<b>West Sussex</b>			✓		
<b>West Yorkshire</b>					

# Annex A: About the data

The data in this report is from a range of sources, including from:

- all 45 fire and rescue services (FRSs) in England;
- the Home Office;
- the NFCC;
- a public perceptions survey conducted by YouGov; and
- our COVID-19 edition of the FRS staff survey.

For more information on the methodology for regular data collection from fire and rescue services please see the about data section of our website and the Home Office fire statistics guidance.

Unless otherwise specified, the data in this report covers two distinct periods from 1 April to 30 June 2019 (for comparison) and 1 April to 30 June 2020 (during the pandemic).

## Percentage change in engine availability

An engine is deemed unavailable if there aren't enough staff or skills (for example, a driver competent to ride incident commander) for it to attend an incident.

## Percentage change in sickness absence

Sickness absence data is collected by Cleveland Fire Brigade for the National Occupational Health Report for FRSs.

Services give data as days/shifts lost due to sickness, and include both long-term and short-term sickness.

COVID-19 sickness is only included in the data when a staff member is showing symptoms of COVID-19 or when a staff member is confirmed COVID-19 positive. Self-isolation owing to household members displaying Covid-19 symptoms or high-risk staff members shielding aren't included in the sickness absence figures.

## Public perceptions survey, YouGov

We commissioned YouGov to undertake a survey of the public's perceptions of local FRSs across England as part of their GB and UK Omnibus survey.

Fieldwork took place online between 27 and 29 November 2020. There were 1,908 respondents from England and the figures have been weighted and are representative of all adults (aged 18+) in Great Britain.

## Staff survey

We conducted a COVID-19 edition of the FRS staff survey, which was open to all members of FRS workforces across England. We received 7,768 responses between 12 August and 9 September 2020.

The results don't necessarily represent the opinions and attitudes of a service's whole workforce. The survey sample was self-selecting, and the response rate ranged from 6 percent to 48 percent of a service's workforce. Any findings should be considered alongside the service's overall response rate (see figure 5).

The results from the staff survey are only to be used as an indicative measure of service performance.

The percentage of workforce was calculated using the number of responses received and Home Office fire statistics on workforce: Total staff numbers (full time equivalent) by role and fire and rescue authority by headcount.

**Figure 5: Staff survey responses by fire and rescue service**

<b>Fire and rescue service</b>	<b>Number of responses</b>	<b>Percentage of workforce</b>
<b>Avon</b>	106	12%
<b>Bedfordshire</b>	146	24%
<b>Buckinghamshire</b>	30	6%
<b>Cambridgeshire</b>	210	36%
<b>Cheshire</b>	214	25%
<b>Cleveland</b>	114	20%
<b>Cornwall</b>	99	13%
<b>County Durham &amp; Darlington</b>	41	7%
<b>Cumbria</b>	185	28%
<b>Derbyshire</b>	134	15%
<b>Devon &amp; Somerset</b>	277	13%
<b>Dorset &amp; Wiltshire</b>	167	12%
<b>East Sussex</b>	107	13%



<b>Fire and rescue service</b>	<b>Number of responses</b>	<b>Percentage of workforce</b>
<b>Essex</b>	191	13%
<b>Gloucestershire</b>	115	24%
<b>Greater London</b>	975	17%
<b>Greater Manchester</b>	173	10%
<b>Hampshire</b>	253	15%
<b>Hereford &amp; Worcester</b>	121	17%
<b>Hertfordshire</b>	115	13%
<b>Humberside</b>	199	19%
<b>Isle of Wight</b>	31	16%
<b>Isles of Scilly</b>	19	48%
<b>Kent</b>	399	25%
<b>Lancashire</b>	108	8%
<b>Leicestershire</b>	219	31%
<b>Lincolnshire</b>	134	20%
<b>Merseyside</b>	175	15%
<b>Norfolk</b>	154	17%
<b>North Yorkshire</b>	75	10%
<b>Northamptonshire</b>	103	18%
<b>Northumberland</b>	59	18%
<b>Nottinghamshire</b>	182	22%
<b>Oxfordshire</b>	121	18%
<b>Royal Berkshire</b>	256	39%

<b>Fire and rescue service</b>	<b>Number of responses</b>	<b>Percentage of workforce</b>
<b>Shropshire</b>	177	29%
<b>South Yorkshire</b>	210	24%
<b>Staffordshire</b>	62	7%
<b>Suffolk</b>	210	30%
<b>Surrey</b>	164	21%
<b>Tyne and Wear</b>	333	39%
<b>Warwickshire</b>	120	24%
<b>West Midlands</b>	129	7%
<b>West Sussex</b>	143	20%
<b>West Yorkshire</b>	213	15%

## Annex B: The tripartite agreement activities carried out by services

### Additional pandemic activities listed under the tripartite agreement

1. Ambulance driving
2. Delivery of essential items to vulnerable persons
3. Movement of bodies of the deceased
4. Face-fitting masks to be used by NHS and clinical care staff
5. Delivering PPE and other medical supplies to NHS and care facilities
6. Taking samples for COVID-19 antigen testing
7. Driving ambulances, not on blue lights (excluding COVID-19 patients) to outpatient appointments or to receive urgent care
8. Training for non-service personnel to drive ambulances (not on blue lights)
9. Packing/repacking food supplies for vulnerable people
10. Transferring known or suspected COVID-19 patients to and from Nightingale hospitals
11. Transferring patients, including those recovering and recuperating from but no longer infected with COVID-19 to and from Nightingale hospitals
12. Delivering infection, prevention and control training packages for care homes.

### Tripartite agreement activities carried out by fire and rescue services as at 17 September 2020.

It is important to note that in many cases the service wasn't asked by local partners to provide the listed activity. Details of the activity would be provided only if requested.

Fire and rescue service	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12
Avon	✓						✓					✓
Bedfordshire												
Buckinghamshire	✓	✓										✓
Cambridgeshire	✓			✓				✓				

<b>Fire and rescue service</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>4</b>	<b>5</b>	<b>6</b>	<b>7</b>	<b>8</b>	<b>9</b>	<b>10</b>	<b>11</b>	<b>12</b>
<b>Cheshire</b>		✓	✓	✓	✓	✓			✓			
<b>Cleveland</b>		✓			✓							✓
<b>Cornwall</b>	✓	✓		✓	✓				✓			
<b>County Durham and Darlington</b>		✓			✓							
<b>Cumbria</b>		✓		✓	✓				✓			
<b>Derbyshire</b>		✓		✓	✓		✓		✓			
<b>Devon &amp; Somerset</b>	✓			✓								
<b>Dorset &amp; Wiltshire</b>	✓	✓	✓	✓					✓			
<b>East Sussex</b>					✓							
<b>Essex</b>	✓	✓	✓		✓			✓	✓			
<b>Gloucestershire</b>	✓	✓	✓		✓	✓		✓	✓			✓
<b>Greater Manchester</b>			✓	✓	✓							
<b>Hampshire and the Isle of Wight</b>	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓		✓			✓	✓
<b>Hereford &amp; Worcester</b>				✓	✓							
<b>Hertfordshire</b>	✓	✓										
<b>Humberside</b>	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓		✓		✓	✓	✓	✓
<b>Isles of Scilly</b>			✓									
<b>Kent</b>	✓	✓		✓	✓							✓
<b>Lancashire</b>		✓		✓	✓	✓			✓			
<b>Leicestershire</b>		✓		✓	✓		✓					
<b>Lincolnshire</b>	✓	✓					✓					

<b>Fire and rescue service</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>4</b>	<b>5</b>	<b>6</b>	<b>7</b>	<b>8</b>	<b>9</b>	<b>10</b>	<b>11</b>	<b>12</b>
<b>London</b>	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓				✓			
<b>Merseyside</b>		✓	✓	✓	✓				✓			
<b>Norfolk</b>	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓		✓	✓				✓
<b>North Yorkshire</b>	✓	✓			✓				✓			
<b>Northamptonshire</b>		✓	✓				✓		✓			
<b>Northumberland</b>		✓	✓		✓				✓			✓
<b>Nottinghamshire</b>		✓			✓		✓		✓			
<b>Oxfordshire</b>	✓			✓								
<b>Royal Berkshire</b>												
<b>Shropshire</b>				✓	✓							
<b>South Yorkshire</b>		✓		✓	✓				✓			
<b>Staffordshire</b>		✓			✓							
<b>Suffolk</b>	✓	✓			✓				✓			
<b>Surrey</b>	✓	✓	✓		✓							
<b>Tyne and Wear</b>		✓	✓		✓				✓			
<b>Warwickshire</b>		✓			✓				✓			
<b>West Midlands</b>		✓	✓	✓	✓				✓			
<b>West Sussex</b>		✓			✓							
<b>West Yorkshire</b>		✓		✓	✓	✓			✓	✓	✓	✓

## **Tripartite activities carried out by services as at 17 September 2020**

### **Avon**

- Ambulance driving
- Driving ambulances, not on blue lights (excluding COVID-19 patients) to outpatient appointments or to receive urgent care
- Delivering infection, prevention and control training packages for care homes.

### **Bedfordshire**

None.

### **Buckinghamshire**

- Ambulance driving
- Delivery of essential items to vulnerable persons
- Delivering infection, prevention and control training packages for care homes.

### **Cambridgeshire**

- Ambulance driving
- Face-fitting masks to be used by NHS and clinical care staff
- Training for non-service personnel to drive ambulances (not on blue lights).

### **Cheshire**

- Delivery of essential items to vulnerable persons
- Movement of bodies of the deceased
- Face-fitting masks to be used by NHS and clinical care staff
- Delivering PPE and other medical supplies to NHS and care facilities
- Taking samples for COVID-19 antigen testing
- Packing/repacking food supplies for vulnerable people.

### **Cleveland**

- Delivery of essential items to vulnerable persons
- Delivering PPE and other medical supplies to NHS and care facilities
- Delivering infection, prevention and control training packages for care homes.

### **Cornwall**

- Ambulance driving
- Delivery of essential items to vulnerable persons
- Face-fitting masks to be used by NHS and clinical care staff
- Delivering PPE and other medical supplies to NHS and care facilities
- Packing/repacking food supplies for vulnerable people.



### **County Durham and Darlington**

- Delivery of essential items to vulnerable persons
- Delivering PPE and other medical supplies to NHS and care facilities.

### **Cumbria**

- Delivery of essential items to vulnerable persons
- Face-fitting masks to be used by NHS and clinical care staff
- Delivering PPE and other medical supplies to NHS and care facilities
- Packing/repacking food supplies for vulnerable people.

### **Derbyshire**

- Delivery of essential items to vulnerable persons
- Face-fitting masks to be used by NHS and clinical care staff
- Delivering PPE and other medical supplies to NHS and care facilities
- Driving ambulances, not on blue lights (excluding COVID-19 patients) to outpatient appointments or to receive urgent care
- Packing/repacking food supplies for vulnerable people.

### **Devon & Somerset**

- Ambulance driving
- Face-fitting masks to be used by NHS and clinical care staff.

### **Dorset & Wiltshire**

- Ambulance driving
- Delivery of essential items to vulnerable persons
- Movement of bodies of the deceased
- Face-fitting masks to be used by NHS and clinical care staff
- Packing/repacking food supplies for vulnerable people.

### **East Sussex**

- Delivering PPE and other medical supplies to NHS and care facilities.

### **Essex**

- Ambulance driving
- Delivery of essential items to vulnerable persons
- Movement of bodies of the deceased
- Delivering PPE and other medical supplies to NHS and care facilities
- Training for non-service personnel to drive ambulances (not on blue lights)
- Packing/repacking food supplies for vulnerable people.

### **Gloucestershire**

- Ambulance driving

- Delivery of essential items to vulnerable persons
- Movement of bodies of the deceased
- Delivering PPE and other medical supplies to NHS and care facilities
- Taking samples for COVID-19 antigen testing
- Training for non-service personnel to drive ambulances (not on blue lights)
- Packing/repacking food supplies for vulnerable people
- Delivering infection, prevention and control training packages for care homes.

### **Greater Manchester**

- Movement of bodies of the deceased
- Face-fitting masks to be used by NHS and clinical care staff
- Delivering PPE and other medical supplies to NHS and care facilities.

### **Hampshire and the Isle of Wight**

- Ambulance driving
- Delivery of essential items to vulnerable persons
- Movement of bodies of the deceased
- Face-fitting masks to be used by NHS and clinical care staff
- Delivering PPE and other medical supplies to NHS and care facilities
- Taking samples for COVID-19 antigen testing
- Training for non-service personnel to drive ambulances (not on blue lights)
- Transferring patients, including those recovering and recuperating from but no longer infected with COVID-19 to and from Nightingale hospitals
- Delivering infection, prevention and control training packages for care homes.

### **Hereford & Worcester**

- Face-fitting masks to be used by NHS and clinical care staff
- Delivering PPE and other medical supplies to NHS and care facilities.

### **Hertfordshire**

- Ambulance driving
- Delivery of essential items to vulnerable persons.

### **Humberside**

- Ambulance driving
- Delivery of essential items to vulnerable persons
- Movement of bodies of the deceased
- Face-fitting masks to be used by NHS and clinical care staff
- Delivering PPE and other medical supplies to NHS and care facilities
- Driving ambulances, not on blue lights (excluding COVID-19 patients) to outpatient appointments or to receive urgent care

- Packing/repacking food supplies for vulnerable people
- Transferring known or suspected COVID-19 patients to and from Nightingale hospitals
- Transferring patients, including those recovering and recuperating from but no longer infected with COVID-19 to and from Nightingale hospitals
- Delivering infection, prevention and control training packages for care homes.

### **Isles of Scilly**

- Movement of bodies of the deceased.

### **Kent**

- Ambulance driving
- Delivery of essential items to vulnerable persons
- Face-fitting masks to be used by NHS and clinical care staff
- Delivering PPE and other medical supplies to NHS and care facilities
- Delivering infection, prevention and control training packages for care homes.

### **Lancashire**

- Delivery of essential items to vulnerable persons
- Face-fitting masks to be used by NHS and clinical care staff
- Delivering PPE and other medical supplies to NHS and care facilities
- Taking samples for COVID-19 antigen testing
- Packing/repacking food supplies for vulnerable people.

### **Leicestershire**

- Delivery of essential items to vulnerable persons
- Face-fitting masks to be used by NHS and clinical care staff
- Delivering PPE and other medical supplies to NHS and care facilities
- Driving ambulances, not on blue lights (excluding COVID-19 patients) to outpatient appointments or to receive urgent care.

### **Lincolnshire**

- Ambulance driving
- Delivery of essential items to vulnerable persons
- Driving ambulances, not on blue lights (excluding COVID-19 patients) to outpatient appointments or to receive urgent care.

### **London**

- Ambulance driving
- Delivery of essential items to vulnerable persons
- Movement of bodies of the deceased
- Face-fitting masks to be used by NHS and clinical care staff

- Delivering PPE and other medical supplies to NHS and care facilities
- Packing/repacking food supplies for vulnerable people.

### **Merseyside**

- Delivery of essential items to vulnerable persons
- Movement of bodies of the deceased
- Face-fitting masks to be used by NHS and clinical care staff
- Delivering PPE and other medical supplies to NHS and care facilities
- Packing/repacking food supplies for vulnerable people.

### **Norfolk**

- Ambulance driving
- Delivery of essential items to vulnerable persons
- Movement of bodies of the deceased
- Face-fitting masks to be used by NHS and clinical care staff
- Delivering PPE and other medical supplies to NHS and care facilities
- Driving ambulances, not on blue lights (excluding COVID-19 patients) to outpatient appointments or to receive urgent care
- Training for non-service personnel to drive ambulances (not on blue lights)
- Delivering infection, prevention and control training packages for care homes.

### **North Yorkshire**

- Ambulance driving
- Delivery of essential items to vulnerable persons
- Delivering PPE and other medical supplies to NHS and care facilities
- Packing/repacking food supplies for vulnerable people.

### **Northamptonshire**

- Delivery of essential items to vulnerable persons
- Movement of bodies of the deceased
- Driving ambulances, not on blue lights (excluding COVID-19 patients) to outpatient appointments or to receive urgent care
- Packing/repacking food supplies for vulnerable people.

### **Northumberland**

- Delivery of essential items to vulnerable persons
- Movement of bodies of the deceased
- Delivering PPE and other medical supplies to NHS and care facilities
- Packing/repacking food supplies for vulnerable people
- Delivering infection, prevention and control training packages for care homes.

### **Nottinghamshire**

- Delivery of essential items to vulnerable persons
- Delivering PPE and other medical supplies to NHS and care facilities
- Driving ambulances, not on blue lights (excluding COVID-19 patients) to outpatient appointments or to receive urgent care
- Packing/repacking food supplies for vulnerable people.

### **Oxfordshire**

- Ambulance driving
- Face-fitting masks to be used by NHS and clinical care staff.

### **Royal Berkshire**

None.

### **Shropshire**

- Face-fitting masks to be used by NHS and clinical care staff
- Delivering PPE and other medical supplies to NHS and care facilities.

### **South Yorkshire**

- Delivery of essential items to vulnerable persons
- Face-fitting masks to be used by NHS and clinical care staff
- Delivering PPE and other medical supplies to NHS and care facilities
- Packing/repacking food supplies for vulnerable people.

### **Staffordshire**

- Delivery of essential items to vulnerable persons
- Delivering PPE and other medical supplies to NHS and care facilities.

### **Suffolk**

- Ambulance driving
- Delivery of essential items to vulnerable persons
- Delivering PPE and other medical supplies to NHS and care facilities
- Packing/repacking food supplies for vulnerable people.

### **Surrey**

- Ambulance driving
- Delivery of essential items to vulnerable persons
- Movement of bodies of the deceased
- Delivering PPE and other medical supplies to NHS and care facilities.

### **Tyne and Wear**

- Delivery of essential items to vulnerable persons
- Movement of bodies of the deceased
- Delivering PPE and other medical supplies to NHS and care facilities
- Packing/repacking food supplies for vulnerable people.

### **Warwickshire**

- Delivery of essential items to vulnerable persons
- Delivering PPE and other medical supplies to NHS and care facilities
- Packing/repacking food supplies for vulnerable people.

### **West Midlands**

- Delivery of essential items to vulnerable persons
- Movement of bodies of the deceased
- Face-fitting masks to be used by NHS and clinical care staff
- Delivering PPE and other medical supplies to NHS and care facilities
- Packing/repacking food supplies for vulnerable people.

### **West Sussex**

- Delivery of essential items to vulnerable persons
- Delivering PPE and other medical supplies to NHS and care facilities.

### **West Yorkshire**

- Delivery of essential items to vulnerable persons
- Face-fitting masks to be used by NHS and clinical care staff
- Delivering PPE and other medical supplies to NHS and care facilities
- Taking samples for COVID-19 antigen testing
- Packing/repacking food supplies for vulnerable people
- Transferring known or suspected COVID-19 patients to and from Nightingale hospitals
- Transferring patients, including those recovering and recuperating from but no longer infected with COVID-19 to and from Nightingale hospitals
- Delivering infection, prevention and control training packages for care homes.



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Paul Fuller CBE QFSM DL  
Chief Fire Officer  
Bedfordshire Fire and Rescue Service

Councillor John Chatterley  
Chair  
Bedfordshire Fire Authority

22 January 2021

Dear Mr Fuller and Cllr Chatterley,

### **COVID-19 INSPECTION: BEDFORDSHIRE FIRE AND RESCUE SERVICE**

In August 2020, we were commissioned by the Home Secretary to inspect how fire and rescue services in England are responding to the COVID-19 pandemic. This letter sets out our assessment of the effectiveness of your service's response to the pandemic.

2. The pandemic is a global event that has affected everyone and every organisation. Fire and rescue services have had to continue to provide a service to the public and, like every other public service, have had to do so within the restrictions imposed.

3. For this inspection, we were asked by the Home Secretary to consider what is working well and what is being learned; how the fire sector is responding to the COVID-19 crisis; how fire services are dealing with the problems they face; and what changes are likely as a result of the COVID-19 pandemic. We recognise that the pandemic is not over and as such this inspection concerns the service's initial response.

4. I am grateful for the positive and constructive way your service engaged with our inspection. I am also very grateful to your service for the positive contribution you have made to your community during the pandemic. We inspected your service between 12 and 23 October 2020. This letter summarises our findings.

5. In relation to your service, the strategic co-ordinating group of Bedfordshire Local Resilience Forum (LRF) declared a major incident on 23 March 2020.

6. In summary, the service reacted quickly and proactively to give additional support to partners and the community during the initial phases of the pandemic. It continued to provide the level of activity expected in its response and prevention functions. But while it developed new ways

to give support to businesses, it was slow to provide the level of protection activity expected. Work is now underway to recover from the pause in its risk-based inspection programme.

7. Fire and rescue service staff, including firefighters, took on several additional roles to support the needs of their local community. For example, they packaged and delivered around 500 food parcels to vulnerable people, and seconded staff to East of England Ambulance Service NHS Trust (EEAST) to drive ambulances and provide driver training. The service was awarded with a gold 'Make a Difference' award from BBC Three Counties Radio for this work.

8. The service was able to respond quickly to staff absences and implemented work to build resilience in its control room. It communicated well with its staff throughout the pandemic, including on issues relating to staff wellbeing, introducing video logs and virtual tea breaks, as well as increasing the frequency of written communication. It also made sure all staff had the resources they needed to do their jobs effectively, including providing extra IT.

9. We recognise that the arrangements for managing the pandemic may carry on for some time, and that the service is now planning for the future. To be as efficient and effective as possible, Bedfordshire Fire and Rescue Service should focus on the following areas:

(a) It should determine how it will adopt for the longer-term, the new and innovative ways of working introduced during the pandemic, to secure lasting improvements.

(b) It should update its community risk profiles, of both people and premises, to take account of the changes the pandemic has caused. It should make sure that its prevention and protection activity remains focused on those areas at highest risk.

(c) It should work with all staff to identify those at higher risk from COVID-19, so it can put appropriate wellbeing and support provisions in place.

(d) It should consider what steps it needs to take to maintain its risk-based inspection programme through future phases of the pandemic.

### **Preparing for the pandemic**

10. In line with good governance, the service had a pandemic flu plan and business continuity plans in place which were in date. These plans were activated.

11. The plans were detailed enough to enable the service to make an effective initial response, but, understandably, they didn't anticipate and mitigate all the risks presented by COVID-19.

12. The service devised a concept of operations and gold strategy to reflect the changing situation and what it has learned during the pandemic. These plans outline the strategic direction of the service relating to the pandemic and are regularly reviewed.

13. The plans now include further detail on what elements of the service should maintain response capability if loss of staff is greater than normal. These are the degradation arrangements.

They cover response, social distancing, making premises 'COVID secure', remote working, personal protective equipment (PPE), test and trace, and service communication.

### **Fulfilling statutory functions**

14. The main functions of a fire and rescue service are firefighting, promoting fire safety through prevention and protection (making sure building owners comply with fire safety legislation), rescuing people in road traffic collisions, and responding to emergencies.

15. The service has continued to provide most of its core statutory functions throughout the pandemic in line with advice from the National Fire Chiefs Council (NFCC). This means the service has continued to respond to calls from the public and attended emergencies. However, it stopped pre-planned building inspections in March and didn't implement a process to continue this work remotely until July. Work is now underway to catch up on its risk-based inspection programme. But we are concerned that the service compromised its ability to provide the full range of protection activities expected during the period we are inspecting.

16. To comply with pandemic restrictions, the service changed how it operated. This included providing support virtually, such as giving advice over the telephone and using social media to share fire safety messages.

### *Response*

17. The service told us that between 1 April and 30 June 2020 it attended broadly the same number of incidents as it did during the same period in 2019.

18. The overall availability of fire engines was broadly the same during the pandemic as it was during the same period in 2019. Between 1 April and 30 June 2020, the service's average overall fire engine availability was 81.1 percent compared with 80.0 percent during the same period in 2019.

19. The service didn't change its crewing models or shift patterns during this period.

20. The service told us that its average response time to fires improved during the pandemic compared with the same period in 2019. This was due to better fire engine availability and less road traffic during this period. This may not be reflected in [official statistics recently published by the Home Office](#), because services don't all collect and calculate their data the same way.

21. The service had adequate arrangements in place to make sure that its control room had enough staff during the pandemic.

22. This included effective resilience arrangements, such as making sure the control room was 'COVID secure', training more staff for control room roles, and testing fallback arrangements with Essex County Fire and Rescue Service.

### *Prevention*

23. The NFCC issued guidance outlining how services should maintain a risk-based approach to continuing prevention activity during the COVID-19 pandemic. The service broadly adopted this guidance.
24. The service conducted fewer safe and well visits than it would normally undertake. It didn't review which individuals and groups it considered to be at an increased risk from fire as a result of the COVID-19 pandemic.
25. The service decided to continue offering face-to-face safe and well visits on a risk-assessed basis, and provided staff with suitable PPE.
26. It introduced the option of a safe and well visit by telephone instead of face-to-face. It also introduced other options including an online referral portal that the public could access via the service's website.

### *Protection*

27. The NFCC issued guidance on how to continue protection activity during the COVID-19 pandemic. This includes maintaining a risk-based approach, completing desktop audits and issuing enforcement notices electronically. The service was slow to adopt this guidance and, as a result, did not undertake the full range of protection activities required during the initial stage of the pandemic.
28. The service didn't review how it defines premises as high risk during the pandemic.
29. The service conducted fewer fire safety audits than it would normally undertake. It decided to pause its risk-based inspection programme from March through June to limit face-to-face activities. In July 2020, it introduced risk-based desktop appraisals instead of face-to-face audits, to minimise face-to-face contact between members of staff and the public. It anticipates meeting its performance targets for the year.
30. The service continued with ongoing enforcement activity and issued one prohibition notice. It also continued responding to statutory building control consultations.
31. It also introduced other measures to reduce social contact in other areas of work, such as completing a COVID-19 risk assessment prior to attending premises, using telephone or email to make the initial contact and using electronic documents to replace hard-copy letters.
32. However, the overall level of protection activity undertaken is less than we would expect and is not in line with national expectations.
33. The service has continued to engage with those responsible for fire safety in high-risk premises with cladding similar to that at Grenfell Tower, in particular, premises where temporary evacuation procedures are in place.



## **Staff health and safety and wellbeing**

34. Staff wellbeing was a clear focus for the service during the pandemic. It had a range of support in place and responded to any concerns and further needs. Senior leaders actively promoted wellbeing services, but more could have been done to talk to staff directly about their individual needs so that the right support could be put in place.

35. Most staff survey respondents told us that they could access services to support their mental wellbeing if needed. Support put in place for staff included occupational health, counselling, peer support, virtual coffee breaks, a mental health forum, and external resources such as workshops and a 24-hour helpline. The service has communicated with its staff about how it should plan for the potential longer-term effects of COVID-19 on its workforce.

36. More could have been done to identify and address the specific needs of staff members most at risk from COVID-19, including those from a black, Asian and minority ethnic background and those with underlying health problems, to ensure all members of staff got the tailored support that they may have needed.

37. The service ensured that firefighters were competent to do their work during the pandemic. Local managers monitored firefighter fitness. The service has a plan to ensure that all 2020/21 fitness testing is complete by the end of March 2021.

38. The service assessed the risks of new work to make sure its staff had the skills and equipment needed to work safely and effectively.

39. The service provided its workforce with appropriate PPE on time. It participated in the national fire sector scheme to procure PPE, which allowed it to achieve value for money.

### *Staff absence*

40. Absences have decreased compared with the same period in 2019. The number of days or shifts lost due to sickness absence between 1 April and 30 June 2020 decreased by 42 percent compared with the same period in 2019.

41. The service updated its absence procedures so that it could better manage staff wellbeing and health and safety, and make more effective decisions on how to allocate work. This included information about recording absences, self-isolation and testing. Data was routinely collected on the numbers of staff either absent, self-isolating or working from home.

### *Staff engagement*

42. Most staff survey respondents told us that the service provided regular and relevant communication to all staff during the COVID-19 pandemic. This included regular virtual team meetings, written correspondence and video logs with staff about wellbeing and health and safety.

43. The service intends to maintain changes it has made to its ways of working in response to COVID-19, including the mental health and wellbeing steering group and virtual ways of communicating.

### **Working with others, and making changes locally**

44. To protect communities, fire and rescue service staff were encouraged to carry out extra roles beyond their core duties. This was to support other local blue light services and other public service providers that were experiencing high levels of demand, and to offer other support to its communities.

45. A national 'tripartite agreement' was put in place to include the new activities that firefighters could carry out during the pandemic. The agreement was between the NFCC, National Employers, and the Fire Brigades Union (FBU), and specifies what new roles firefighters could provide during the pandemic. Each service then consulted locally on the specific work it had been asked to support, to agree how to address any health and safety requirements, including risk assessments. If public sector partners requested further support outside the tripartite agreement, the specifics would need to be agreed nationally before the work could begin.

46. The service felt the tripartite agreement put limitations on its ability to support partners and members of the public during the pandemic. The additional activities it undertook therefore fell outside this agreement, even though they included tasks that were covered by it.

47. During the pandemic, the following additional activities were carried out: driving ambulances, assisting vulnerable people, supporting the 'Scrubs for Bedford Hospital' initiative, driving training and instruction, packing and delivering food for vulnerable people, 'co-responding' to medical emergencies, and 'community first' responding. In addition, it hosted flu vaccination clinics and mobile COVID-19 testing sites, which gave it the opportunity to speak to members of the public about fire safety. This generated a number of home safety referrals.

48. The service consulted locally with the FBU to agree most of the additional activities. It also consulted with the Fire and Rescue Services Association on issues that impacted their members. Other staff associations were kept informed, including UNISON.

49. The additional work was agreed on time for it to start promptly and in line with the request from the partner agency.

50. All new work, including that outside the tripartite agreement, was risk-assessed and complied with the health and safety requirements.

51. The service hasn't yet fully reviewed and evaluated its activities to support other organisations during this period. It has yet to identify which to continue.

### *Local resilience forum*

52. To keep the public safe, fire and rescue services work with other organisations to assess the risk of an emergency, and to maintain plans for responding to one. To do so, the service should be an integrated and active member of its LRF. Bedfordshire Fire and Rescue Service is a member of Bedfordshire LRF.

53. The service was an active member of the LRF during the pandemic. The service told us that the LRF's arrangements enabled the service to fully engage in the multi-agency response.

54. As part of the LRF's response to COVID-19, the service carried out the role of vice chair of the strategic co-ordinating group and chair of the tactical co-ordinating group, supporting the LRF's overall strategy to manage COVID-19. In addition, it chaired the command support cell, for which it provided 12 trained decision loggists to record decisions and their rationale, command support officers and minute takers. It was also a member of the media, volunteers, and health and social care cells. The service was able to allocate suitably qualified staff to participate in these groups without affecting its core duties.

### **Use of resources**

55. The service's financial position hasn't yet been significantly affected by the pandemic.

56. The service has made robust and realistic calculations of the extra costs it has faced during the pandemic. At the time of our inspection, its main extra costs were PPE, cleaning and decontamination supplies, IT infrastructure and licensing, premises changes, implementing a technical support unit, and food hampers for the vulnerable. It fully understands the effect this will have on its previously agreed budget and anticipated savings.

57. The service received £607,000 of extra government funding to support its response. At the time of our inspection, it had spent this money on £261,000 additional staffing costs, £39,000 PPE, £6,000 cleaning and decontamination supplies, £18,000 ICT infrastructure and licensing, £15,000 premises changes, £12,000 implementation of a technical support unit, and £12,000 food hampers for the vulnerable. It has shown how it used this income efficiently, and mitigated the financial risks that arose during this period.

58. The service didn't use any of its reserves to meet the additional costs that arose during this period. This didn't affect its ability to maintain the smooth running of its service during this period.

59. When used, overtime was managed appropriately. The service made sure that its staff who worked overtime had enough rest between shifts.

### *Ways of working*

60. The service changed how it operates during the pandemic. For example, it used technology to facilitate virtual ways of working. However, not all staff could access all the systems they needed remotely, and so weren't able to work as effectively as they would like. Where new IT was needed, the service made sure that procurement processes achieved good value for money.

61. The service could quickly implement changes to how it operates. This allowed its staff to work flexibly and efficiently during the pandemic. The service plans to consider how to adapt its flexible working arrangements to make sure it has the right provisions in place to support a modern workforce.

62. The service has had positive feedback from staff on how they were engaged with during the pandemic. As a result, the service plans to adopt these changes into its usual procedures and consider how they can be developed further to help promote a sustainable change to its working culture.

63. The service mostly adopted the guidance available from the NFCC to support its workforce planning, where they were not already working in the recommended manner.

### *Staffing*

64. The service had enough resources available to respond to the level of demand during the COVID-19 pandemic, and to reallocate resources where necessary to support the work of its partner organisations.

65. Arrangements put in place to monitor staff performance across the service were effective. This meant the service could be sure its staff were making the best contribution that they reasonably could during this period. Extra capacity was identified and reassigned to support other areas of the service and other organisations.

66. As well as performing their statutory functions, wholtime firefighters volunteered for extra activities, including those under the tripartite agreement.

67. This approach was taken because the service felt this was the best way to ensure it had the resources it needed to meet its foreseeable risk.

68. The on-call workforce took on extra responsibilities covering the shifts of absent wholtime staff and some additional roles.

### **Governance of the service's response**

69. Each fire and rescue service is overseen by a fire and rescue authority. There are several different governance arrangements in place across England, and the size of the authority varies between services. Each authority ultimately has the same function: to set the service's priorities and budget and make sure that the budget is spent wisely.

70. Members of Bedfordshire Fire and Rescue Authority were actively engaged in discussions with the chief fire officer and the service on the service's ability to discharge its statutory functions during the pandemic.

71. During the pandemic, the fire and rescue authority maintained some oversight of the service, and was kept informed of decisions it made. The chair maintained regular communication with the chief fire officer and received the service's written briefings.

72. Arrangements were put in place to give fire and rescue authority members relevant and regular information about how the service was responding to the pandemic. It made use of technology and held meetings virtually.

### **Looking to the future**

73. During the pandemic, services were able to adapt quickly to new ways of working. This meant they could respond to emergencies and take on a greater role in the community by supporting other blue light services and partner agencies. It is now essential that services use their experiences during COVID-19 as a platform for lasting reform and modernisation.

74. Bedfordshire Fire and Rescue Service has improved its collaboration with partners. It is now co-responding at two on-call stations. It is co-located with EEAST at three community fire stations, with plans for this to extend to others. In addition, the service has launched a new technical support unit carrying equipment provided by EEAST to assist with bariatric and complex patient incidents. The service has developed joint arrangements with EEAST regarding ambulance servicing and medical training for fire service staff. The service has transformed its use of technology and will continue developing virtual forums and online platforms to support employees and improve its service to members of the public.

75. Good practice and what worked was shared with other services through several routes. This includes regular information exchanges via the NFCC and regional forums. Information shared includes comparison of working arrangements. The service has actively engaged in regional and national debriefs and has worked with an external company and the Office of the Bedfordshire Police and Crime Commissioner to encourage innovation around post-COVID-19 recovery.

### **Next steps**

76. This letter will be published on our website. We propose restarting our second round of effectiveness and efficiency fire and rescue inspections in spring 2021, when we will follow up some of our findings.

Yours sincerely,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Zoë Billingham". The signature is written in black ink on a light-colored, textured background.

**Zoë Billingham**

Her Majesty's Inspector of Fire & Rescue Services

Her Majesty's Inspector of Constabulary



**REPORT AUTHOR: CHIEF FIRE OFFICER**

**SUBJECT: LOCALISM ACT 2011 – PAY POLICY STATEMENT FOR 2021**

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For further information on this Report contact: Sarah Fecondi  
Head of Human Resources  
Tel: 01234 845000

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Background Papers:

- Hutton Review of Fair Pay in the Public Sector March 2011 (available on request)
  - DCLG Openness and accountability in local pay: Draft guidance under Section 40 of the Localism Act November 2011 (available on request)
  - Localism Act 2011 Chapter 20 Part 1 Local Government, Chapter 8 Pay Accountability (available on request)
  - Localism Act Pay Policy Statements guidance for Local Authority Chief Executives November 2011 (available on request)
  - Policy on Principal Officer Salary reviews – March 2009 (available on request)
  - 2020 Pay Policy Statement (available on request)
  - Localism Act 2011 – Pay Policy Statement FRA paper February 2020 (available on request)
  - Local Government Association Pay Policy and Practice in local authorities 2013 (available on request)
  - Local Government Transparency Code 2015
-

Implications (tick ✓):

LEGAL		✓	FINANCIAL	✓
HUMAN RESOURCES		✓	EQUALITY IMPACT	
ENVIRONMENTAL			POLICY	✓
CORPORATE RISK	Known		OTHER (please specify)	
	New		CORE BRIEF	

*Any implications affecting this report are noted at the end of the report.*

## **PURPOSE:**

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To advise the Fire Authority of the requirement to agree and publish an annual pay policy statement and its constituent parts for the financial year 2021/22.

## **RECOMMENDATION:**

That the submitted proposed pay policy statement for 2021/22 be approved.

---

### 1. Introduction

- 1.1 Section 38 (1) of the Localism Act 2011 requires English and Welsh local authorities to produce a pay policy statement for 2012/13 and for each financial year thereafter. This is Bedfordshire Fire and Rescue Service's tenth annual Pay Policy Statement.
- 1.2 The Department for Communities and Local Government (DCLG) Guidance on Section 40 of the Localism Act clarified that each local authority is an individual employer in its own right and has the autonomy to make decisions on pay that are appropriate to local circumstances. The provisions in the Act do not seek to change this, determine what decisions on pay should be taken, or what policies individual authorities should have in place. Rather, they require that authorities are more open about their local policies and how decisions are made.
- 1.3 Bedfordshire Fire and Rescue Authority's proposed pay policy statement is derived from the 'model' pay policy statement contained in the Local Government Association Document 'Pay Policy and Practice in Local Authorities' which was

recommended to Fire and Rescue Authorities by the Head of Workforce at the Local Government Association via the principal negotiating officer of the National Joint Council for Fire and Rescue Authorities in November 2013.

## 2. Pay Policy Statement Content

2.1 Matters that must be included in the statutory pay policy statement are:

- Information on the approach to Chief Officer remuneration at recruitment, salary, bonus/performance related pay, charges, fees allowances, benefits in kind and enhancement to pension at termination. The definition of chief officer is not limited to heads of paid service or statutory chief officers; it includes those who report directly to them;
- Local authority's policy on the level and elements of remuneration for each chief officer;
- Local authority's policy on the remuneration of its lowest-paid employees (together with its definition of 'lowest-paid employees' and its reasons for adopting that definition); and
- A local authority's policy on the relationship between the remuneration of its chief officers and other officers.

2.2 The Act does not require the pay policy statement to include numerical data on pay; the statement is about policy and not the actual pay of individuals.

2.3 Information that has changed since the last Annual Pay Policy Statement is highlighted in bold.

## 3. Process for Annual Adoption of a Pay Policy Statement

3.1 The Localism Act also prescribes that the pay policy statement must be approved formally by a meeting of Members. In the case of a Fire and Rescue Authority, it cannot be delegated to any sub-committee and must be approved by the end of March each year, and can be amended in-year. It must also be published on the Authority's website (and in any other way the Authority chooses) and must be complied with when the Authority sets the terms and conditions for a Chief Officer.

## 4. Information

4.1 Nationally negotiated pay increases for employees covered by the Green Book (National Joint Council for Local Government Services National Agreement on Pay and Conditions), are applied as advised by the National Joint Council. In **August 2020** the NJC announced agreement **of 2.75% effective from 1 April 2020**.

- 4.2 Nationally negotiated pay increases for employees covered by the Grey Book (National Joint Council for Local Authority Fire and Rescue Services) are applied as advised by the National Joint Council. In **September 2020** the NJC announced a pay award of 2% backdated to 1 July **2020** for grey book employees **on pay and CPD payments** whilst negotiations continue to put in place a longer term deal. Any longer-term deal is contingent upon a successful conclusion to negotiations regarding broadening the role of the fire and rescue service and securing additional funding from government.
- 4.3 In accordance with nationally negotiated pay awards advised by the National Joint Council (NJC) for Brigade Managers of Local Authority Fire and Rescue Services **in November 2020 a 2%** increase was awarded to Gold Book employees (the Chief Fire Officer, Deputy Chief Fire Officer, and Assistant Chief Officer) **and backdated to January 2020**.
- 4.4 The Fire Authority is asked to consider and approve the proposed pay policy statement at Appendix 1.

**PAUL M FULLER CBE QFSM MStJ DL**  
**CHIEF FIRE OFFICER**

## ANNUAL PAY STATEMENT OF BEDFORDSHIRE FIRE AND RESCUE SERVICE

### 1. Introduction and Purpose

This is the Pay Statement of Bedfordshire Fire and Rescue Service covering the period April **2021** to March **2022**.

This Pay Statement (the 'statement') sets out Bedfordshire Fire and Rescue Service's (the Service) approach to pay policy in accordance with the requirements of Section 38 of the Localism Act 2011.

This pay statement has been approved by Bedfordshire Fire and Rescue Authority and is effective from 1 April **2021**. It will be reviewed annually and in accordance with new or proposed legislation to ensure that it remains relevant and effective.

### 2. Accountability and Decision Making

Decision making in relation to the recruitment, pay, terms and conditions and severance arrangements in relation to employees of the Service is determined by the Fire Authority who have delegated some powers to the Chief Fire Officer through a scheme of delegation.

### 3. Responsibility and Scale

The Service is directly responsible for a budget of **£32.5m** and for the employment of **580** staff.

### 4. The Service Pay Strategy

In determining the pay and remuneration of its employees the Service will comply with all relevant employment legislation this includes the Equality Act 2010, the Part Time Employment (Prevention of Less Favourable Treatment) Regulations 2000 and The Agency Workers Regulations 2010.

The Service takes the following approach to determining overall pay levels.

#### 4.1 Firefighting Roles - Salary and Remuneration

This relates to the following roles within Bedfordshire Fire and Rescue Service:

Firefighter, Crew Manager, Watch Manager, Station Manager, Group Manager and Area Manager, regardless of duty system (eg wholetime, day duty, retained or flexible duty) and Control specific roles. The pay structure for employees conditioned to the Scheme of Conditions of Service for Local Authority Fire and Rescue Services (Grey Book) provides a three point pay structure at Firefighter level and a two point pay structure for all other roles. Rates of pay are based on defined stages of development such as training, development and competent pay levels. After all the applicable functions have been assessed as having been achieved, and a quality assured process is in place, competence is deemed to have been demonstrated and competent salary rate applied.

Pay awards applied to the salary scales are as agreed through the national joint council and notified to Authorities.

#### 4.2 Support Roles - Salary and Remuneration

Salary and remuneration levels for support staff roles are determined in accordance with the National Joint Council for Local Government Services (NJC) National Agreement on Pay and Conditions of Service (Green Book).

The pay structure is aligned to the National spinal column point system. In 2005 Bedfordshire Fire and Rescue Service applied the Korn Ferry (formerly Hay) analytical job evaluation process that systematically ranked each job objectively and fairly. This evaluation system is a recognised best practice non-discriminatory method of ranking jobs against a pre-determined scale. The system is used in over ninety countries and within the public and private sector. In 2018 Korn Ferry were commissioned to quality assure the job evaluation scheme and reviewed the ranking of all Green Book roles against the pre-determined scale to ensure the job evaluation scheme was being applied correctly.

Spinal column points are configured into groups to provide incremental pay points. The incremental rises occur on 1 April, subject to National pay bargaining. Starting salary may be uplifted along the incremental structure if experience and knowledge warrant this approach.



In 2019 Green Book employers were required to implement a new National pay spine, which entirely replaced the existing pay spine. The Service assimilated employees from their existing spinal column point to their new spinal column point on 1 April 2019. For some time the Service has experienced recruitment difficulties in certain Green Book posts, this has primarily been 'professional' posts in areas like HR, Finance and Property and there were concerns at Corporate Management Team level that salaries were no longer competitive in the local labour market. Therefore as part of the assimilation exercise the Service took the opportunity to compare the pay line to other organisations that also use the Korn Ferry Job Evaluation Scheme, by undertaking a salary benchmarking exercise. This resulted in the application of the 2% NJC pay award to employees at Grade 12 and below, whilst Grades 13-17 were aligned to the 60<sup>th</sup> percentile of the Industrial and Service Sector.

#### 4.3 Chief Fire Officer and Principal Officer - Salary and Remuneration

The National Joint Council (NJC) for Brigade Managers of Local Authority Fire and Rescue Authorities will publish annually recommended minimum levels of salary applicable to Chief Fire Officers/Chief Executives employed by local authority fire and rescue authorities. The Fire Authority recognises that there is a two-track approach for determining levels of pay for Chief Fire Officer/Chief Executives and Director roles.

- i. At national level, the NJC shall review annually the level of pay increase applicable to all those covered by the Gold Book. Any increase agreed by the NJC will be communicated to fire authorities by circular.
- ii. Pay increases will be considered for local negotiation on an annual basis. All decisions about the level of pay and remuneration to be awarded to individual Chief Fire Officer and Principal Officer roles will be taken by the Fire Authority paying due regard to the information circulated by the NJC.

Details of senior salaries is published on the Transparency pages of our website and can be accessed on the internet at <https://www.bedsfire.gov.uk/About/Governance/Budget-Responsibilities-and-Pay-Details-for-Senior-Positions-19-20.pdf> Alternatively at page 64 of the Annual Statement of Accounts <https://www.bedsfire.gov.uk/About/Finance-and-budget/Final-audited-Statement-of-Accounts-2019-20-with-signatures-002.pdf>

#### 5. All Roles - Allowances, Expenses, Bonuses and Performance Related Pay

The Chief Fire Officer and Principal Officers are employees of Bedfordshire Fire and Rescue Service and are not self-employed. The Fire Authority (the Authority) will not award bonuses or Performance Related Pay (PRP) additional to base

salary, as the Authority expects excellent performance of its Principal Officers at all times in line with the Authorities objectives. Individual performance will be reviewed via the performance management framework.

When legitimately incurred in the performance of their duties all employees are able to claim a restricted range of legitimate expenses. These are reimbursed in accordance with the relevant terms and conditions specified in the Gold, Grey or Green Book. All expenses have the usual audit requirements with the requirement to produce receipts, authorisation of all expenditure and the requirement to retain records. **Eligible** Operational officers can utilise pool cars to undertake their operational duties and responsibilities **or can access the car leasing scheme**. Use of a pool car for non-official purposes will require reimbursement to the Service.

A range of allowances are payable subject to employees meeting relevant criteria. These include:

- Shift allowances for Green Book employees working unsocial hours;
- Flexible Duty System supplement for fire officers conditioned to the flexible duty system;
- Overtime allowances for employees required to work additional hours;
- Continuous Professional Development (CPD) payments for Grey Book employees who meet the qualifying length of service criteria and are able to demonstrate and provide evidence of continuous professional development in four key areas prescribed by the NJC;
- Essential user car allowance or (Grey Book only) access to a lease car scheme for employees required to use their own vehicle on official business;
- Honoraria payments to recognise employees acting up to a higher role, special projects involving work outside the job role and outstanding contribution;
- Additional Responsibility Allowance to reward additional skills and responsibilities outside of the requirements of Grey Book job roles;
- Acting up and temporary promotion allowances for employees performing the duties of a higher role.
- Mileage, travel expenses, subsistence and other expenses (e.g. Professional expenses) reimbursed when appropriate and in accordance with service procedure on expenses.
- Additional Holiday Payment for employees working overtime or additional hours paid on a monthly basis when eligible.

(Strategic Operational Commanders, Area Manager B) are paid an Additional Responsibility Allowance. This is to reflect the additional responsibility they undertake in the performance of Service operational command cover and for working a locally agreed rota that provides the Service with additional managerial hours.

## 6. Severance Arrangements

Provision for severance arrangements exist in the Local Government Pension Scheme applicable to Green Book and Control employees. The Fire Authority has previously agreed policy in relation to The Local Government (Early Termination of Employment) (Discretionary Compensation) (England and Wales) Regulations 2006. Regulation 7 states that employing authorities must formulate, publish and keep under review discretionary powers that they apply in the exercise of their discretionary powers under regulations 5 and 6. They provide the discretions that local authorities can use in awarding compensation to employees whose employment is terminated early as the result of redundancy, early retirement on the grounds of efficiency.

There is currently no provision for enhanced redundancy payments in the Firefighters Pension Scheme 1992, New Firefighter Pension Scheme 2006, or the Firefighters Pension Scheme 2015 for Grey Book/operational employees.

## 7. Pension Schemes

The Service operates five pension schemes, the Firefighters Pension Scheme 1992, the New Firefighters Pension Scheme 2006, the Firefighters Pension Scheme 2015, the Retained Modified Pension Scheme 2015 and the Local Government Pension Scheme 2014. New employees are automatically enrolled to the relevant occupational pension scheme as defined by their terms and conditions of employment on appointment and qualifying employees are automatically re-enrolled during their employment.

Employer contribution rates for each scheme are set by Actuaries and subject to regular review. As at 1 April **2020** the employer contribution rates are 37.30% for 1992 Fire Fighters Pension Scheme, 27.4% for the 2006 New Fire Fighters Pension Scheme, 28.8 % for the Firefighters Pension Scheme 2015, 37.30% for the Retained Modified Pension Scheme and **20.5%** for the Local Government Pension Scheme. Employee contribution rates are defined by statute and vary across the different pension schemes. Current employee contribution rates as at 1 April **2020** for the 1992 Firefighters pension scheme range from 11% –17%, contribution rates for the 2006 New Firefighter Pension Scheme are 8.5% - 12.5%, Firefighters Pension Scheme

2015 contribution rates range from 11% - 14.5%, contribution rates for the Retained Modified Pension Scheme are between 11% - 17%. The employee contribution rates for the Local Government Pension Scheme are presently 5.5% to 12.5%.

## 8. Abatement and Re-engagement

The Service will consider re-employment of retired employees in accordance with the relevant pension scheme orders and governance arrangements. There is no automatic right to be re-employed; the decision will be strictly based on organisational needs and will usually follow an advertising and selection process. Bedfordshire Fire and Rescue Service apply re-engagement and abatement rules for Grey Book employees in line with the requirements of the relevant pension scheme and in line with all Government guidance.

Abatement and re-engagement is a provision within the Firefighters' Pension Schemes that enables a retired member of the pension scheme to be re-employed. This means that the pensioner receives their commutation (lump sum) upon retirement. Pensioners who are re-engaged following their retirement are subject to the Abatement Rules under the terms of the relevant pension scheme. This requires that the current pension plus current pay cannot be more than pay on retirement, so any excess is abated (reduced). The Chief Fire Officer was re-employed under the abatement and re-engagement rules of the 1992 Fire Fighters Pension Scheme in February 2010 under these rules. From 2019, the Service will not reappoint Principal Officers after retirement to their previous, or a similar, post save for in exceptional circumstances when such a decision is necessary in the interests of public safety. Any such appointment must be transparent, justifiable and time limited.

## 9. Low Pay Definition

The lowest paid employees of the Service are employed on full time (37 hours) equivalent salaries in accordance with the minimum scale point in use within the Service grading structure. As at 1 April **2020**, this is Grade 6, spinal column point 6 **£10.21** per hour, **£19,698** per annum. The Service believe that this is the most easily understood definition of low pay as it is the lowest pay grade routinely used for substantive roles.

## 10. Pay Multiples

The Service uses an established process to determine job size and salary levels. This process determines the relationship between the rate of pay for the lowest paid employee and the highest paid Chief Officer, described as a pay multiple.

The current pay multiple between the lowest paid employee and the highest paid Chief Officer is **7.67:1**. This ratio can be measured as being lower than the public sector averages of 8:1 to 12:1 identified by Lord Hutton in March 2011. The reduction in the current pay multiple to below the public sector average is as a result of the Green Book pay award for 2018 and 2019 which resulted in a salary uplift equivalent to 5.06% to the lowest paid spinal column point.

BFRS pay multiple for the lowest earner has been calculated using all taxable earnings for the given year, including base salary, allowances, overtime and the cash value of any benefits-in-kind; pro rated to a full time equivalent, compared to the unabated Chief Fire Officer full time equivalent.

## 11. Part-Time Employees

The salary and remuneration of part-time employees is the same as those of full-time employees (pro-rata where appropriate) unless otherwise stated.

## 12. Code of Recommended Practice for Local Authorities on Data Transparency

Bedfordshire Fire and Rescue Service is committed to the three principles enshrined in the Code:

- Responding to public demand;
- Releasing data in open formats available for re-use; and
- Releasing data in a timely way.

Data on senior salaries is published in the annual statement of accounts and the most recently produced can be accessed on the internet at page 64 of the Annual Statement of Accounts

<https://www.bedsfire.gov.uk/About/Finance-and-budget/Final-audited-Statement-of-Accounts-2019-20-with-signatures-002.pdf>

The approved Pay Policy Statement will also be available from <https://www.bedsfire.gov.uk/About/Governance/Transparency.aspx> as well as the intranet site. In addition a range of information relating to Bedfordshire Fire and Rescue Services responsibilities under the local Government Transparency Code can be found on <https://www.bedsfire.gov.uk/About/Governance/Transparency.aspx>

13. Risk Management Implications

The Fire Authority needs to attract, retain and motivate staff to support excellent performance. Extensive research shows that individuals are attracted, retained and engaged by a range of both financial and non-financial rewards so a coherent link between reward, people management and attraction is essential.

14. Financial Implications

The financial implications are set out in the paper and contained within the Service's Medium-Term Financial Plan.

15. Legal Implications

The legal implications are set out in the paper.

16. Environmental Implications

The Pay Policy Statement will be published on the Service website.

17. Equality Implications

The requirements of the Equality Act are considered as part of the recruitment, selection and pay structure processes.

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**REPORT AUTHOR:** CHIEF FIRE OFFICER

**SUBJECT:** WORK PROGRAMME 2020/21

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For further information on this report contact: Nicky Upton  
Service Assurance Manager

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Background Papers: None

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Implications (tick ✓):

LEGAL			FINANCIAL	
HUMAN RESOURCES			EQUALITY IMPACT	
ENVIRONMENTAL			POLICY	
CORPORATE RISK	Known	✓	OTHER (please specify)	
	New			

*Any implications affecting this report are noted at the end of the report.*

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**PURPOSE:**

To review and report on the work programme for 2020/21 and to provide Members with an opportunity to request additional reports for the Fire Authority meetings for 2020/21.

**RECOMMENDATION:**

That Members consider the work programme for 2020/21 and note the 'cyclical' Agenda Items for each meeting in 2020/21.

**PAUL FULLER CBE QFSM MStJ DL  
CHIEF FIRE OFFICER**

## FIRE AND RESCUE AUTHORITY - PROGRAMME OF WORK 2020/21

Meeting Date	'Cyclical' Agenda Items		Additional/Commissioned Agenda Items	
	Item	Notes	Item	Notes
11 February 2021	Communications		HMICFRS Covid 19 Inspection Report	Added by DCFO
	Blue Light Collaboration Strategic Board	Deferred to March	HMICFRS Round 2 Service Inspections – Update	Added by DCFO
	Q3 Projects and Programmes Update	Deferred to March		
	Revenue Budget and Capital Programme Monitoring			
	The 2021/22 Revenue Budget, Capital Programme and Council Tax setting			
	2019-2023 Community Risk Management Plan, 2021/22 Action Plan			
	Treasury Management Strategy and Practices	Deferred to March		
	Localism Act 2011 – Pay Policy Statement 2021			
	Business Continuity Annual Review	Deferred from December		
	Information Bulletin (Q3 Oct – Dec)			
	Work Programme			

Meeting Date	'Cyclical' Agenda Items		Additional/Commissioned Agenda Items	
	Item	Notes	Item	Notes
23 March 2021	Communications			
	Executive Committee Minutes from 03.02.21 (provisional mtg)			
	Proposed Indicators and Targets for 2021/22			
	Q3 Performance			
	Q3 Projects and Programmes Update	Deferred from February		
	Treasury Management Strategy and Practices	Deferred from February		
	Blue Light Collaboration Strategic Board			
	Work Programme			

Meeting Date	'Cyclical' Agenda Items		Additional/Commissioned Agenda Items	
	Item	Notes	Item	Notes
29 April 2021	Communications			
	Blue Light Collaboration Strategic Board			
	ASC Minutes from 04.03.21			
	Q4 Projects and Programmes Update			
	Asset Management Strategy (reviewed every 3 years, next review 2021/22)			
	Disposal of Assets under the Scheme of Delegated Authority			
	Information Bulletin (Q4 Jan – March)			
	Work Programme			

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# **Bedfordshire Fire and Rescue Service**

For publication

11 February 2021

## **Bedfordshire Fire and Rescue Authority**

### **Information Bulletin**

# **October to December 2020**



# Personnel

## Statistics Covering Period October to December 2020

### Wholetime Uniformed Staff:

Strength as at 30 September 2020 : 299  
(Including 3 Gold Book)

### Firefighters on the Retained Duty System:

Strength : 146  
(Includes whole time retained)

### Appointments:

Whole time Duty System :	17
Retained Duty System :	7
Support Staff :	10

### Leavers:

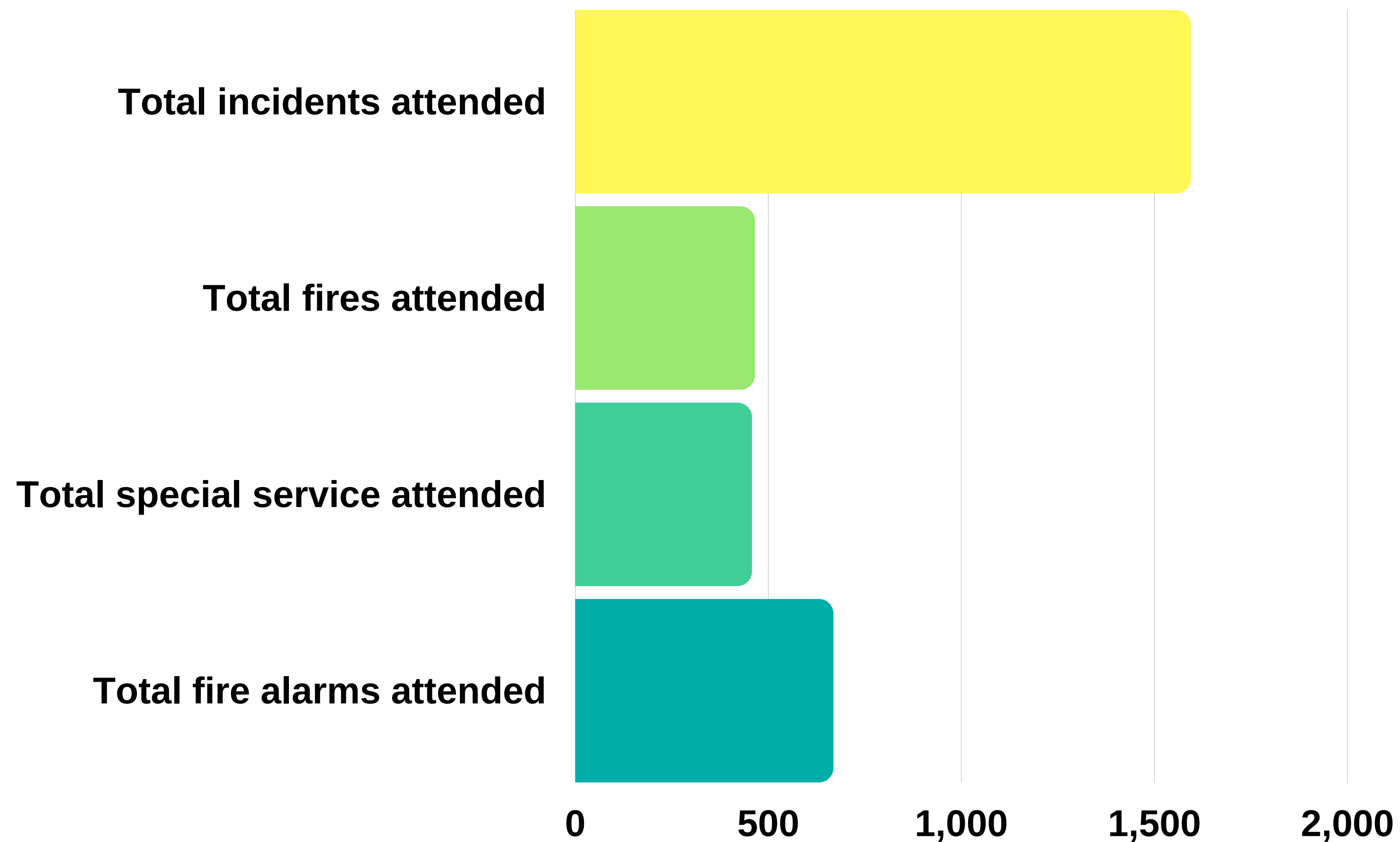
Whole time :	20
Retained :	15
Support Staff :	13





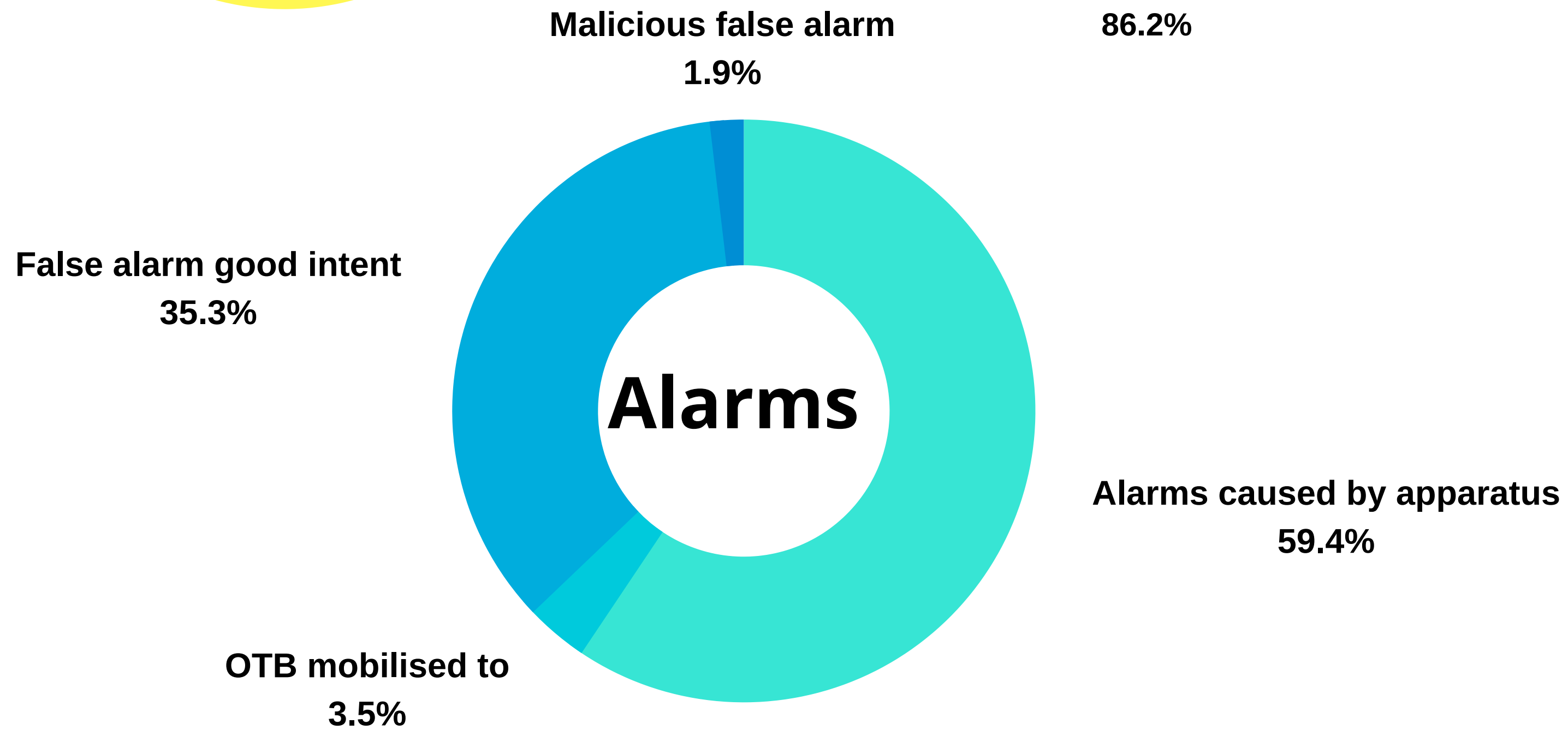
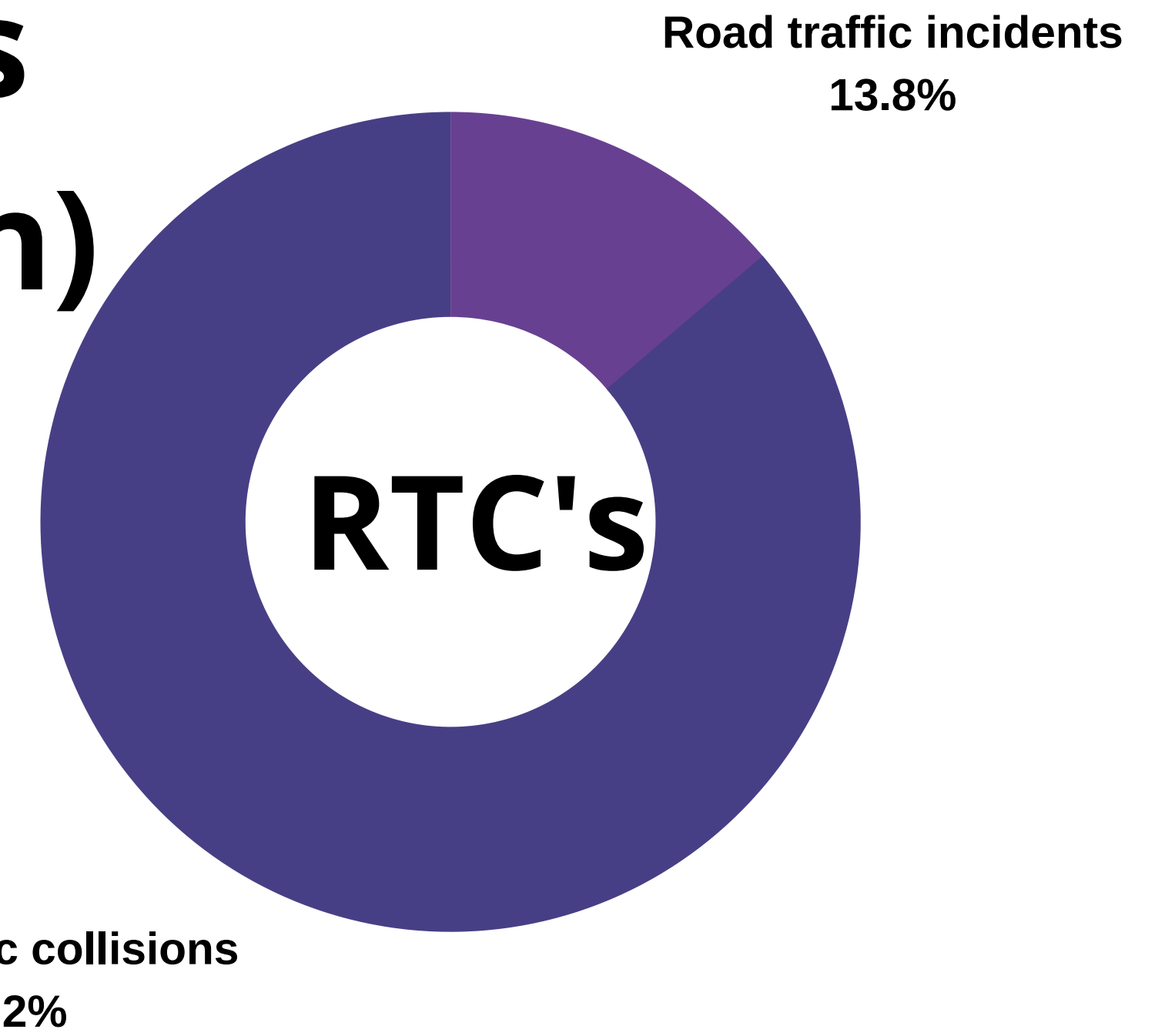
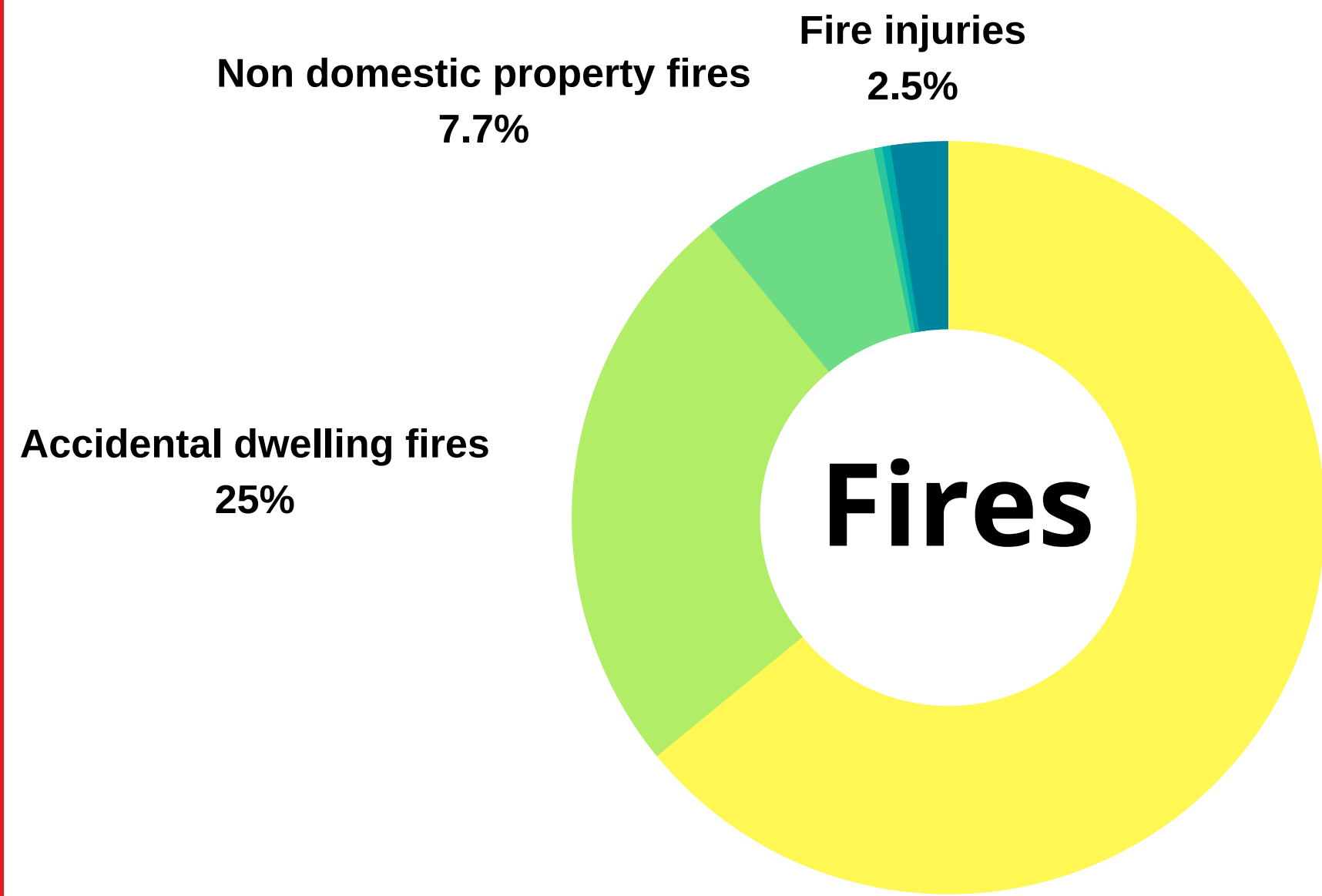
# Operations

## Statistics for the Period October to December 2020





# Operations (breakdown)





## Examples of incidents attended

**Transportation RTC up to 2  
Persons (No LGV)  
Barford Road, Blunham  
22 October 2020 – 1620 hours  
Rescue Pump from Bedford,  
Rescue Pump from Sandy and  
Rescue Unit from Kempston.  
RTC involving 2 cars and 2  
adults female casualties  
trapped, both casualties  
released by Fire Service and  
conveyed to hospital by  
Ambulance Service. 2 sets of  
holmatro rescue equipment,  
rhino saw and stabilisation in  
use. Cars made safe by Fire  
Service.**

**(Contact Station Commander J  
Clarke, Bedford and Harrold  
Fire Stations, Tel 01234 245501)**

**RTC**

**Transportation RTC make safe only M1  
/Dual  
A1 Southbound Biggleswade South  
Roundabout to Herts Border  
20 November 2020 – 1124 hours  
Rescue Pump from Sandy, Rescue  
Pump from Potton and Rescue  
Pump from Shefford. RTC involving  
1 van and 1 car, no persons trapped,  
1 person absconded from scene now  
in police custody. Environment grab  
pack used, scene safety  
implemented by Fire Service and  
Police.**

**(Contact Station Commander I Finch,  
Biggleswade, Potton, Sandy and  
Shefford Fire Stations, Tel 07912  
493250)**

**RTC**



## Examples of incidents attended

**Transportation RTC 3 or more persons  
Baldock Road, Stotfold  
05 December 2020 – 1439 hours  
Rescue Pump from Sandy, Rescue  
Pump from Potton, Rescue Pump from  
Stopsley and Rescue Support Unit  
from Stopsley. RTC involving 1 car and  
1 fence, no persons trapped, Fire  
Service making vehicle safe. Scene  
safety zone implemented by Fire  
Service.**

**(Contact Station Commander  
I Finch,  
Biggleswade, Potton, Sandy and  
Shefford Fire Stations, Tel 07912  
493250)**

RTC

**Fire Residential High Rise  
Holly Street, Luton  
21 October 2020 - 1933 hours  
2 Rescue Pumps from Luton, Rescue  
Pump from Stopsley, 2 Rescue Pumps  
from Dunstable, Aerial Platform from  
Luton and Incident Command Unit from  
Leighton Buzzard. Small fire outside flat  
on second floor, Fire Extinguished by  
resident using buckets of water. Smoke  
logging in corridors cleared by 2 phase 1  
PPV. Building checked with Zellweger gas  
monitor all readings in normal  
parameters. All residents in corridors  
confirmed to be ok.**

**(Contact Station Commander S Williams,  
Luton and Toddington Fire Stations,  
Tel 01582 875219)**

Fire



## Examples of incidents attended

**Fire Building Persons Reported  
Festival Road, Potton  
14 November 2020 - 0620 hours  
Rescue Pump from Potton. Small  
fire in cooker on first floor of semi  
detached property, fire out on  
arrival. 2 persons walked to safety  
by Fire Service, all persons  
accounted for. 2 BA stage 1, one  
hose reel and breaking in tools  
used.**

**(Contact Station Commander I  
Finch,  
Biggleswade, Potton, Sandy and  
Shefford Fire Stations, Tel 07912  
4932250)**

Fire

**Fire Building Garage Block  
Downs Road, Luton  
20 December 2020 - 1451 hours  
2 Rescue Pumps from Luton, Rescue  
Pump from Stopsley and Hazardous  
Material Unit from Stopsley. Fire in  
garage consisting of two storeys with  
rubbish located in lower level, 1 HR and 2  
BA in use under stage one. BA wearers  
believed to be contaminated by asbestos,  
further 2 BA wearers decontaminated  
using dry strip. 3 garages on upper level  
forced open to check for fire spread. One  
EASE set, two TIC'S, 3 HR in use. Scene  
safety zone implemented by Fire Service.**

**(Contact Station Commander S Williams,  
Luton and Toddington Fire Stations,  
Tel 01582 875219)**

Fire





## Examples of incidents attended

**Rescue Animal Large  
High Road, Shillington**

**20 October 2020 – 1137 hours**

**Rescue Pump from Kempston, Rescue Pump from Shefford and Specialist Rescue Support Unit. 1 Male Foal released by Fire Service using Hydraulic cutting equipment, horse now up and walking under veterinary supervision, special service now complete.**

**(Contact Station Commander I Finch, Biggleswade, Potton, Sandy and Shefford Fire Stations, Tel 07912 493250)**

Rescue

**Special Service Assist Ambulance  
Dunstable Road, Luton**

**27 November 2020 – 0824 hours**

**Rescue Pump from Stopsley and Rescue Unit from Stopsley. Assisting paramedics with 40 year old male suffering from seizure and head injuries. Scoop and MIBS stratchers used, patient left in care of Ambulance crew.**

**(Contact Station Commander S Williams, Luton and Toddington Fire Stations, Tel 01582 875219)**

Rescue



## Examples of incidents attended

### **Special Service Inspection**

**Carlton Road, Harrold**

**25 December 2020 – 0821 hours**

**Rescue Pump from Harrold, Multi Role Vehicle from Harrold, Rescue Boat from Bedford and a Drone. 7 adults, 2 children and 3 dogs rescued from badly flooded property - inflatable wading boat, sled, water rescue lines and drone used.**

**(Contact Station Commander J Clarke, Bedford and Harrold Fire Stations, Tel 01234 245501)**





# Letters of appreciation or complaint

## Complaint:

No complaints (past Stage I) have been received for this period.

## Appreciation:

We continue to receive letters of appreciation from members of the public, schools and organisations that we visit and/or assist with charitable events.

The following is a selection:

**Compliment received from EEAST - Thomas Barker at EEAST has praised the actions of our staff at Harrold for the response to a cardiac arrest incident and also a response they made to a child at Harrold school. The cardiac response, was attended by BFRS, who arrived at the same time as an EEAST response car and an Ambulance crew shortly after. The patient has been transferred to papworth and, following surgery, is making a good recovery. Our actions have absolutely made a life-saving difference. Tom has received compliments from his EEAST colleagues and the staff at Harrold school for our professionalism and acknowledging the real benefit of having Fire provide this emergency medical response. He is also really proud of the successful outcomes of the work that has taken place to enable this to happen.**



# Letters of appreciation or complaint

**Letter received from Bedford Foodbank -**

**Dear Eddie & Colleagues at the Kempston Fire Station, I am writing to thank you for your recent generous food donation which weighed a total of 78.8kg and would help to provide 445 meals and treats for people in food poverty in Bedford Borough Area. Those selections boxes will be going into the food parcels as 'extras' all next week until they are gone. It was very nice to meet you today and thank you for the wonderful work you do to serve your community. Any donations we receive we are always very grateful for and never more so than in these current challenging times. Your donation will help us to provide for any unfortunate people in the Bedford Borough area experiencing food poverty, or who move into the area due to domestic violence, or a homeless person who is rehoused, the running cost of the warehouse and the running of our transit van, as just a few examples. Unfortunately, the need for help from the foodbank continues to increase year upon year and we expect in the midst of this virus the need will be greater. We usually regularly feed over 500 people a month, giving them enough food for 3-4 days, or around 10 meals. The monthly food leaving our warehouse is generally in the region of 5-8 tonnes, so we are very grateful for all donations, whether money or food that we receive as each one is vital for the ongoing work of the Foodbank and is greatly appreciated. However, you may be interested to know that for the month of March 2020 we fed 1055 people of whom 433 were children and 11,308.3kg of food was given out. This is the first time since 2011 that we have fed over 1,000 in a month! In October 10756.73 kg of food was given out. 400 vouchers were redeemed, 838 people fed, and of which 290 were children. It is sad that help like this is needed, but great that individuals, organisations and communities can come together to meet the increasing need in Bedford and the surrounding villages. Thank you all once again, for your continued generous support on behalf of everyone who uses or volunteers at the foodbank. Keep well, keep safe.**





# Letters of appreciation or complaint

**Thank you message from a Member of the Public:**

**"You visited my home last Friday to replace my faulty smoke alarms and to carry out a Home Safety Assessment, The service was excellent and the two firefighters that fitted the new alarms were a credit to the fire service. Thank you very much."**

**Thank you message from a Member of the Public:**

**"Blue watch, you attended our house on Thursday November 5th at 8:15pm. We would like to say a big thank you to you all for the kindness shown. All good wishes to you all."**

**Letter received from Member of Public -**

**"Dear Chief Officer, On remembrance Sunday the 8th November I was unable to get to the Bedford service which I would normally attend. I happened to see the duty watch gathering outside the fire station, I requested the watch officer to stand with them. Yes replied the officer and we have a place for you stand over there, we were called to attention. Afterwards i thanked them for their kindness. I felt very privileged to stand in their company as a former firefighter. "**

**Compliment received from member of Public -**

**"Thank you so much for the speedy response from Fire and Rescue Kempston Blue Watch who attended the BDHRA (Beds and District Handicapped Riders Association) Willington, to help get one of our horses 'King' back on his feet after he had fallen and damaged his leg. I would like to say how professional and sympathetic they all were to the job in hand, of getting him back on his feet. Even a few people from the stables had given up on King as horses of that age, with the hours that he had been on floor, rarely survive. At no point did the fire service ever give up and with the joint effort of the fire service, local residents, and stable volunteers all working together, he eventually was back on his feet. Charlotte from Tyrells vets was able to put some stitches in his leg wound without sedation, as she was worried he might get wobbly and go down again. He was given pain killers and plenty of carrots kindly donated by Mick from the fruit and veg shop next door and when I left him that evening he was happily munching away. This morning I went to help Linda walk King round a bit and he managed very slowly too walk round the yard with some encouragement of food 😊which is a good sign. Fingers crossed he will recover from this experience unscathed. Once again thank you so much everyone of you, for your help."**



# Response

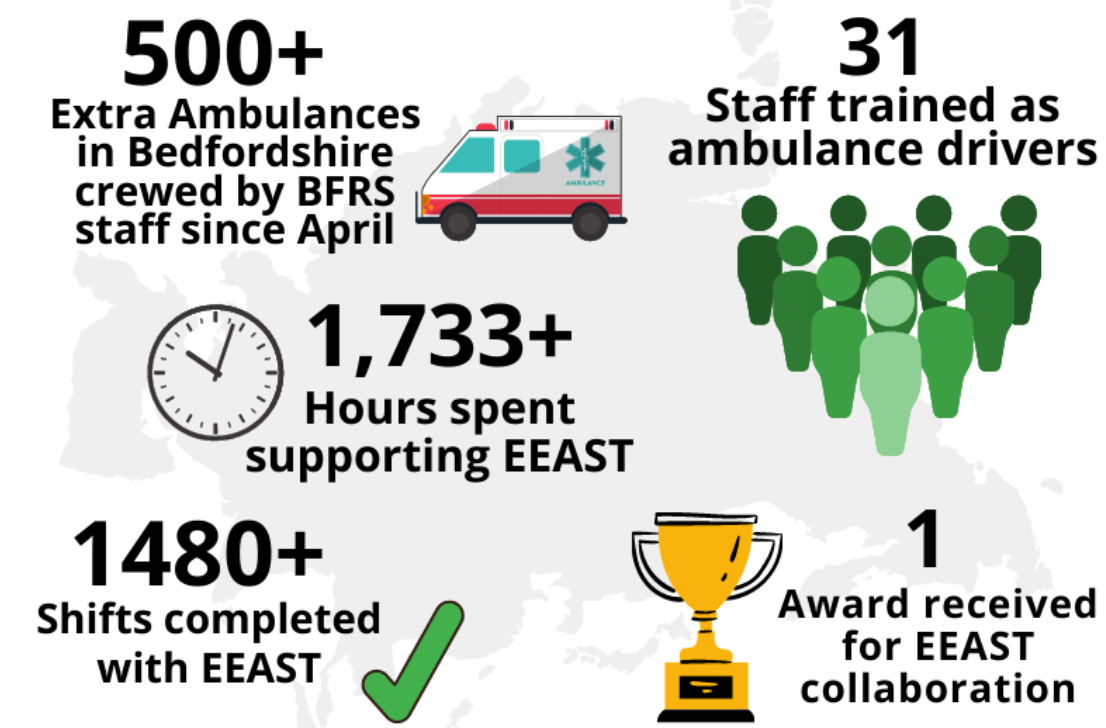
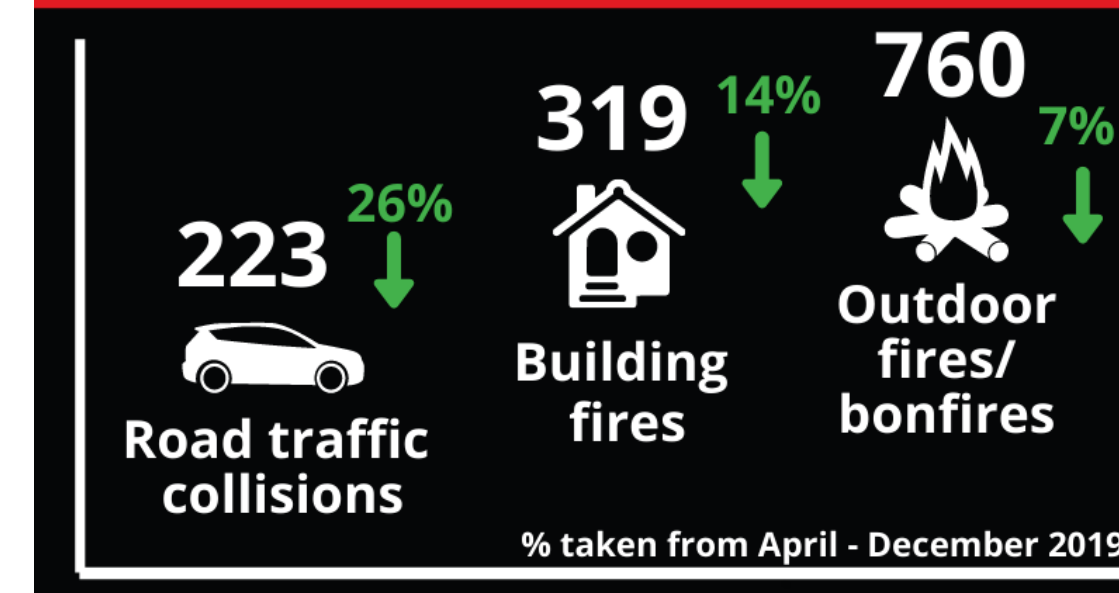
## Collaboration with East of England Ambulance Service (EEAST)

Figures taken April to December 2020



### BEDFORDSHIRE FIRE AND RESCUE

Response statistics (April - December 2020)



VISIT OUR WEBSITE

[www.bedsfire.gov.uk](http://www.bedsfire.gov.uk)



### Communications & Engagement

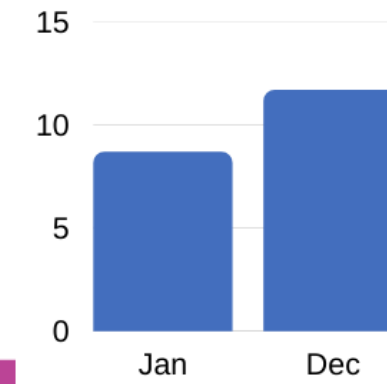
JANUARY - DECEMBER 2020

Below is a breakdown of the increased engagement of our corporate social media channels since January 2020

#### FACEBOOK

JANUARY  
8.7K FOLLOWERS

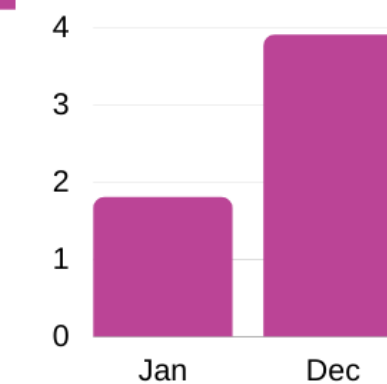
DECEMBER  
11.7K FOLLOWERS



#### INSTAGRAM

JANUARY  
1.8K FOLLOWERS

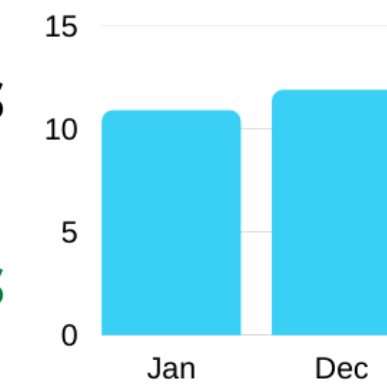
DECEMBER  
3.9K FOLLOWERS



#### TWITTER

JANUARY  
10.9K FOLLOWERS

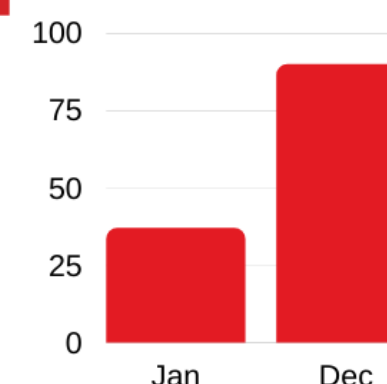
DECEMBER  
11.9K FOLLOWERS



#### YOUTUBE

JANUARY  
37 VIDEOS

DECEMBER  
90 VIDEOS



COMMUNICATIONS AND ENGAGEMENT TEAM





# Bedfordshire Fire and Rescue Service

## Information pack for the post of: **CHIEF FIRE OFFICER AND CHIEF EXECUTIVE**

### LEAD OUR TEAM



Find us on social media @bedsfire



Our mission is to provide outstanding fire and rescue services that help make Bedfordshire safer.

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WELCOME



## MESSAGE FROM COUNCILLOR JOHN CHATTERLEY, CHAIRMAN OF BEDFORDSHIRE FIRE AUTHORITY

---

On behalf of Bedfordshire Fire Authority, it is my pleasure to extend a warm welcome to all potential candidates for our Chief Fire Officer and Chief Executive position.

Due to the retirement of our current Chief Fire Officer, we are seeking an inspirational and talented individual to lead our Service on the next phase of our journey of change and improvement.

Our mission is to provide outstanding fire and rescue services that help make Bedfordshire safer.

We were last inspected by HMICFRS in 2018 where they assessed Bedfordshire Fire and Rescue Service's overall effectiveness as good. We are making continuous progress in implementing changes to further enhance our Service. We are due to be re-inspected in February 2021.

Bedfordshire Fire and Rescue Service is made up of an engaged and dedicated team of around 600 talented and diverse individuals. We are a progressive and community focused organisation that works as one team to deliver prevention, protection and response services to keep the residents of Bedfordshire safe. Our resilient workforce is made up of both operational and professional/support staff.

To protect our communities and respond to emergency calls we have 14 strategically positioned Fire Stations, an Emergency Communication Centre and Headquarters. We are committed to delivering an even better Service for our communities, our staff and our partners. Therefore, finding the person with the specific skills, values and experience to facilitate our journey to be an outstanding Service is critical to our success. As a Fire Authority, we are committed to identifying and supporting the right person for this tremendous opportunity.

The successful candidate will have a passion for public service, a commitment to continuous improvement and the collaborative leadership skills to guide our Service. If you believe you possess the skills, experience and vision that this role deserves, we would be keen to hear from you and wish you every success in the process.

Yours sincerely,  
Councillor John Chatterley

---

### Councillor John Chatterley



Chairman of Bedfordshire  
Fire and Rescue Authority

*John A. Chatterley*



**Bedfordshire**  
Fire and Rescue Service



# Bedfordshire Fire and Rescue Service: JOB DESCRIPTION AND PERSON SPECIFICATION



## JOB DESCRIPTION

### POST TITLE

Chief Fire Officer and Chief Executive

### RESPONSIBLE TO

The Fire and Rescue Authority



## Bedfordshire Fire and Rescue Service

### OVERALL PURPOSE OF THE JOB

As the Chief Fire Officer you will be the senior leader in the Service and will provide strategic leadership and command to all staff and overall co-ordination of the Fire and Rescue Service (the Service). This includes development of best practice, organisational strategy and exploring opportunities for joint working with our partners in order to ensure efficiency and effectiveness.

This role has two complementary elements, in this role you are also the Head of Paid Service and the principal professional adviser to the Fire Authority (the Authority) and for ensuring, along with the Authority's Monitoring Officer and Treasurer that the Authority can effectively discharge all responsibilities imposed upon it by statute and guidance.

### KEY ACCOUNTABILITIES OF THE POST

- |   |  |
|---|--|
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Provide vision, innovation and strategic leadership when formulating, implementing and leading key strategies, policies and plans that provide an effective and efficient fire and rescue service that meets current and future public need.</li><li>• Provide highly visible leadership, communicating a clear direction aligned to Service priorities and objectives in order to build a culture of trust, high performance and continuous improvement.</li></ul> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Be responsible for operational command of the Service. Attend and take strategic command at operational incidents, in the most-high risk and high-profile instances in order to protect the public and ensure an appropriate and effective response.</li><li>• Ensure effective management arrangements and processes are in place by leading, inspiring and engaging the Principal Officer team and the Corporate Management Team. Facilitating effective decision-making and robust performance management against the Service vision, goals and objectives.</li></ul> |
|---|--|

## JOB DESCRIPTION CONT...

### KEY ACCOUNTABILITIES OF THE POST CONT...

- |  |  |
|--|--|
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Lead and be accountable for planning, programme management, performance standards and quality assurance systems, driving a culture of development, change and innovation.</li><li>• Be accountable for the effective management of Bedfordshire Fire and Rescue Service annual revenue budget. Ensure that budgets and resources are utilised to optimum effect to deliver efficient and effective services.</li><li>• Promote the Service core values, champion the benefits of equality, diversity and inclusion ensuring the Service operates and promotes fair and open practices relating to employment and service delivery, ensuring compliance with standards of behaviour.</li><li>• Support and engender a safety culture throughout the Service to ensure compliance with Health and Safety requirements and best practice.</li></ul> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• As the principal professional adviser to the Fire Authority ensure that it is given the advice and information and support it needs to perform its duties of Governance and make effective decisions.</li><li>• Positively promote Bedfordshire by developing and maintaining strategic relationships with local, regional and national partners and key stakeholders effectively influencing and collaborating.</li><li>• Maintain and promote an effective industrial relations climate with Staff and Trade Unions that facilitates change, innovation and improvement.</li></ul> |
|--|--|

### OTHER

- You will be the senior operational commander in the Service and will be required to work the Principal Officers' Continuous Duty System.
- This is a Politically Restricted post.
- This position is subject to a criminal records disclosure check and an additional national level Security Check.

Note: The contents of this job description will be subject to regular review and amendment over time to ensure they continue to accurately describe the job requirements.



## PERSON SPECIFICATION

POST TITLE
Chief Fire Officer and Chief Executive
RESPONSIBLE TO
The Fire and Rescue Authority

Listed below are the qualifications, experience, knowledge, skills, abilities and personal attributes considered necessary to carry out the duties of the post as shown in the job description. These are the criteria against which suitability for the post will be assessed.

You must clearly show relevant examples in your **supporting statement** of the ways in which you meet each of the essential criteria. If you do not adequately address each and every one of the criteria required it may not be possible to shortlist you.

PERSONAL ATTRIBUTES REQUIRED (ON THE BASIS OF THE JOB DESCRIPTION).	ESSENTIAL OR DESIRABLE.	TO BE IDENTIFIED BY (E.G. SUPPORTING STATEMENT, INTERVIEW, ASSESSMENT DAY).
<b>QUALIFICATIONS</b>		
Possession of a relevant degree or equivalent professional qualification appropriate to the post.	Essential	Supporting Statement
Successful completion of the Brigade Command Course, FRS Executive Leadership Programme or equivalent.	Essential	Supporting Statement
Membership of an appropriate professional body e.g. Institute of Fire Engineers.	Essential	Supporting Statement
<b>EXPERIENCE</b>		
Substantial senior management and leadership experience in the Fire and Rescue Service, including at least two years at Assistant Chief Officer level or above.	Essential	Supporting Statement Interview
Experience of working alongside elected Members to fully support and deliver the policy making process.	Essential	Supporting Statement Interview Assessment Day
A proven track record of leading on strategies and plans aimed at continuous improvement of quality services and delivering corporate objectives.	Essential	Supporting Statement Interview
Ability to provide strategic leadership and direction which delivers outcomes and promotes trust and confidence.	Essential	Supporting Statement Interview Assessment Day

## PERSON SPECIFICATION CONT...

PERSONAL ATTRIBUTES REQUIRED (ON THE BASIS OF THE JOB DESCRIPTION).	ESSENTIAL OR DESIRABLE.	TO BE IDENTIFIED BY (E.G. SUPPORTING STATEMENT, INTERVIEW, ASSESSMENT DAY).
<b>KNOWLEDGE/SKILLS/ABILITIES</b>		
Ability to strategically develop innovative and creative solutions.	Essential	Supporting Statement Interview Assessment Day
Ability to drive efficiency and value for money with effective financial management.	Essential	Supporting Statement Interview
Highly developed communication and interpersonal skills to engage with a variety of audiences and establish positive relationships.	Essential	Supporting Statement Interview
Ability to analyse and interpret legislation and complex data to support decision making, policy development and good practice.	Essential	Supporting Statement Interview Assessment Day
Demonstrate evidence of genuine commitment to equality principles and practices.	Essential	Supporting Statement Interview
Evidence of an understanding of and commitment to health and safety within the workplace as appropriate to the Service.	Essential	Supporting Statement Interview
Demonstrable knowledge and understanding of the challenges facing public services and the Fire and Rescue Service. Including an understanding of the current and proposed UK Fire Service Statutory Framework and those related to fire protection and safety matters.	Essential	Supporting Statement Interview Assessment Day
<b>OTHER</b>		
Current full driving licence with no pending issues is required.	Essential	Supporting Statement
Willing to travel locally, nationally and internationally as required.	Essential	Supporting Statement
Able to satisfy medical standards as applicable. (A medical examination will be required.)	Essential	Medical

Note: The contents of this job description will be subject to regular review and amendment over time to ensure they continue to accurately describe the job requirements.



# BEDFORDSHIRE FIRE AUTHORITY



# BEDFORDSHIRE FIRE AUTHORITY

The Fire Authority came into being on 1 April 1997 and has become a valued single service authority within our communities. It comprises a total of twelve elected members from Bedford Borough Council, Luton Borough Council and Central Bedfordshire Council.

There are five Executive Committee Members who are appointed as Portfolio Holders and are responsible for the following portfolios:

- 1. Prevention and Protection**  
 Cllr Colleen Atkins MBE
- 2. Operational Response**  
 Cllr David Franks
- 3. Corporate Risk, Health and Safety**  
 Cllr John Chatterley
- 4. People, Staffing and Diversity**  
 Cllr Yasmin Waheed
- 5. Collaboration**  
 Cllr David McVicar

## THE CURRENT FIRE AUTHORITY MEMBERS



**COUNCILLOR COLLEEN ATKINS MBE**  
Bedford Borough Council Labour



**COUNCILLOR RAYMOND BERRY**  
Central Bedfordshire Council, Conservative



**COUNCILLOR JOHN CHATTERLEY CHAIR**  
Central Bedfordshire Council, Conservative



**COUNCILLOR KASHIF CHOUDHRY**  
Luton Borough Council Labour



**COUNCILLOR PAUL DUCKETT**  
Central Bedfordshire Council, Conservative



**COUNCILLOR DAVID FRANKS**  
Luton Borough Council Liberal Democrat



**COUNCILLOR JON GAMBOLD**  
Bedford Borough Council Conservative



**COUNCILLOR MICHAEL HEADLEY**  
Bedford Borough Council Liberal Democrat



**COUNCILLOR SUMMARA KHURSHID**  
Luton Borough Council Labour



**COUNCILLOR DAVID MC VICAR**  
Central Bedfordshire Council, Conservative



**COUNCILLOR IAN SHINGLER**  
Central Bedfordshire Council, Independent



**COUNCILLOR YASMIN WAHEED VICE CHAIR**  
Luton Borough Council Labour



# BACKGROUND



## BEDFORDSHIRE FIRE AND RESCUE SERVICE

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Bedfordshire covers an area of approximately 123,500 hectares and borders with Cambridgeshire, Hertfordshire, Buckinghamshire and Northamptonshire and is only 45 minutes from central London by train. It has a growing population currently estimated around 655,000.

The area consists principally of rural landscape and incorporates a number of market towns, including Ampthill, Biggleswade, Woburn and Leighton Buzzard. Larger towns include Bedford, Luton and Dunstable. Luton our largest town has some of the most deprived wards in the Country and has many of the characteristics and challenges of a London borough including several high rise buildings.

In addition to our large and very diverse community we also have a number of special risks including London Luton Airport, along with a significant road network including the M1 and A1 motorways. Bedfordshire is growing as a national distribution hub and has a number of large industrial sites and warehouses. We have three rail networks in the County one of which is the busiest commuter rail link in the country running from Bedford south to London and beyond. Within our boundary we also have a significant stock of heritage buildings and environmental sites of special interest. Countywide rivers present us with special problems during spate flooding conditions.

To protect our communities and respond to emergency calls we have 14 strategically positioned Fire Stations, an Emergency Communication Centre,

Control Centre and a Training and Development Centre based at our Headquarters in Kempston, Bedford.

There are five wholtime stations, crewed 24 hours a day, at Luton, Stopsley, Dunstable, Bedford and Kempston. The fire stations at Bedford and Kempston are also supported by Retained Duty System (RDS) personnel.

Leighton Buzzard is day crewed by wholtime staff during the daytime and reverts to a Retained Crewing System during the night.

In addition, 8 stations at Ampthill, Biggleswade, Harrold, Pottton, Sandy, Shefford, Toddington and Woburn which are crewed by personnel on the Retained Duty System.

Three different types of crewing are currently employed to ensure the most efficient use of staff resources:

- 5 wholtime shift stations which involve 24 hours a day staffing at Bedford, Dunstable, Kempston, Luton and Stopsley (Luton)
- 1 day-crewed station at Leighton Buzzard
- 8 retained stations at Ampthill, Biggleswade, Harrold, Pottton, Sandy, Shefford, Toddington and Woburn.



Area prevention/protection teams based strategically in the north and south of the County at our Luton and Bedford community fire stations.

Our modern and well maintained fleet includes:

- 22 front-line fire engines;
- 2 aerial ladder platforms;
- 16 specialist vehicles;
- 66 support vehicles.

There are a number of emergency services shared locations:

- Co-locating police officers and police community support officers at Ampthill, Bedford and Leighton Buzzard community fire stations;
- Co-locating paramedics at Luton, Sandy, Shefford and Stopsley community fire stations;
- Co-locating ambulances at our Dunstable community fire station.

We work closely with our blue light partners, examples include:

- Assisting Bedfordshire Police with searches for vulnerable missing persons;
- Forced entry protocol in support of ambulance service and police;

- Falls Service responding to vulnerable people who fall in their homes helping to relieve added pressures from the NHS. Our teams were trained by EEAST, with the skills required to the level of Community First Responders. This falls service complements the fire safety activities our staff are already delivering;
- A new Technical Support Unit, based at Dunstable community fire station. This was the first of its kind in the country. This vehicle complements our existing complex patient incidents where emergency removal of a patient is required;
- During the COVID-19 pandemic we have undertaken a wide range of additional activities and continue to seek ways to support our community in responding to the emergency.

In December 2018 HMICFRS determined “Bedfordshire Fire and Rescue Service is effective at keeping people safe and secure.” A further inspection is due to take place in the spring of 2021.

More detailed information about our Service is contained in the Community Risk Management Plan on our website [www.bedsfire.gov.uk](http://www.bedsfire.gov.uk).

# CORPORATE MANAGEMENT TEAM





## CORPORATE MANAGEMENT TEAM

The Corporate Management Team is responsible for long-term leadership, forward planning and steering policy formulation.

The Service is split into seven distinct functions headed by a senior manager who are members of the Corporate Management Team.

Corporate Management Team is the general decision making body for the Service which supports functional and geographical command areas.

The Team manage the Service to meet the aims, objectives and priorities of the Community Risk Management Plan.

The Team commands and directs resources, including prioritisation of workloads and finance, and monitors how the Service is performing through effective planning and performance management.

### THE CURRENT CORPORATE MANAGEMENT TEAM



**PAUL FULLER**  
CBE QFSM MSTJ DL FIFireE  
Chief Fire Officer



**ANDREW HOPKINSON**  
Deputy Chief Fire Officer



**GAVIN CHAMBERS** CPFA  
Assistant Chief Officer  
(Finance & Corporate Services)



**ANDY PECKHAM**  
Temporary Assistant  
Chief Fire Officer



**CHRIS BALL**  
(Head of Response)  
Strategic Operational  
Commander



**IAN EVANS** (Head of  
Prevention & Protection)  
Strategic Operational  
Commander



**PAUL HUGHES**  
Head of ICT and  
Programmes



**SARAH FECONDI**  
Chartered MCIPD  
Head of Human  
Resources



**DARREN COOK**  
(Head of Governance  
and Asset Management)  
Temporary Strategic  
Operational Commander



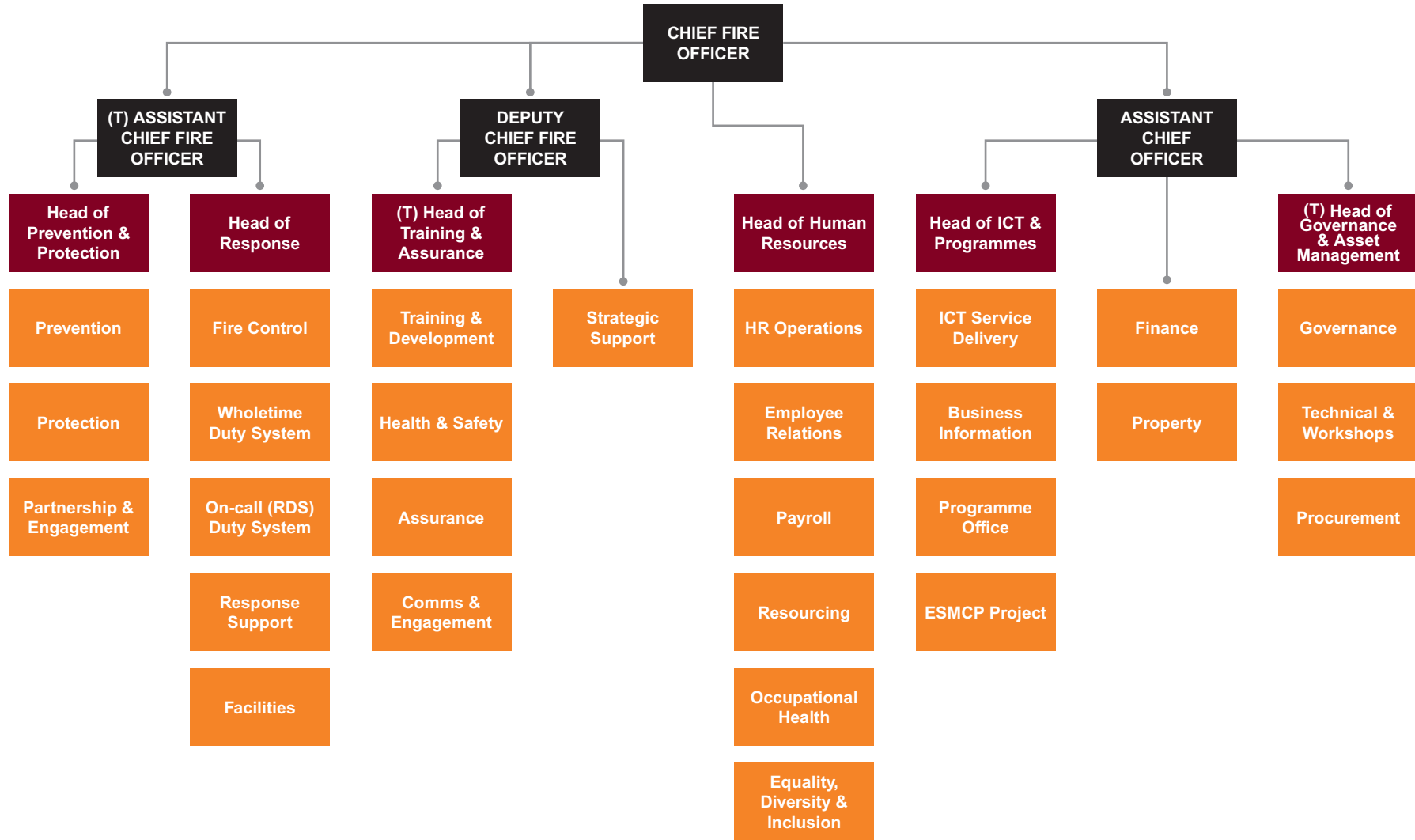
**JASON TAI**  
(Head of Training &  
Assurance) Temporary  
Area Commander



# FUNCTIONAL STRUCTURE (JANUARY 2021)



## FUNCTIONAL STRUCTURE



Page 27

EQUALITY, DIVERSITY AND INCLUSION





## EQUALITY, DIVERSITY AND INCLUSION

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Bedfordshire Fire and Rescue Service is committed to the equality, diversity and inclusion agenda.

We are focused on developing a workforce that is skilled, knowledgeable and experienced to deliver services to meet the needs of our diverse communities, locally, regionally, nationally and internationally.

We want to develop a workforce that reflects the community we serve. Our emphasis is to ensure that our policies, practices and functions are fair and equitable, by undertaking an assessment that helps to mitigate any adverse impact on groups of people.

We will ensure our processes are transparent to build trust for the very people that we help, and take responsibility for our actions. We are duty-bound to our legal responsibilities

by keeping everyone safe, whilst being supportive and inclusive.

Our pledge is to make a positive difference in each and every person's life, ensuring dignity, respect and kindness from our professionally trained workforce. We continue to challenge ourselves and ensure we effectively listen to our staff and the community to develop innovative ideas that enhance the services we deliver.

## SERVICE CASE FOR DIVERSITY

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Bedfordshire Fire and Rescue Service (BFRS) has demonstrated commitment to the equality, diversity and inclusion agenda since 1997.

We continue to actively engage and participate in local, regional and national agenda's and initiatives to ensure that we are at the forefront of inclusivity, considering how it involves and impacts on our workforce and communities.

We aim to shape our inclusion agenda by utilising national frameworks and working alongside our partners to build a better and cohesive service that tackles disparities in employment and service delivery.

We have risen above the challenges brought upon us by the Covid19 pandemic, through our continuous commitment to support our local, regional and national partners in their endeavours to keep our communities safe.

# OUR VALUES





## OUR VALUES

These values were developed with our staff and our communities to ensure that they reflected who we are and our priorities.

**BEDFORDSHIRE FIRE AND RESCUE VALUES**

**WE'VE GOT YOUR  
BACK**

**WE DARE TO BE  
DIFFERENT**



**EVERY CONTACT  
COUNTS**

**WE ARE  
ACCOUNTABLE**



**WE'VE GOT YOUR BACK**  
striving to keep us all safe, while being supportive and inclusive.



**WE DARE TO BE DIFFERENT**  
we are bold in our approach, we welcome challenge and are open to innovative ideas.



**EVERY CONTACT COUNTS**  
making a positive difference each and every time, with respect and professionalism.



**WE ARE ACCOUNTABLE**  
we are transparent, trustworthy and responsible for our actions.

# CONDITIONS OF SERVICE AND SYSTEM ARRANGEMENTS



## CONDITIONS OF SERVICE

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### POST TITLE

Chief Fire Officer and Chief Executive

### CONDITIONS OF SERVICE

Conditions of Service will be in accordance with the National Joint Council for Brigade Managers of Local Authority Fire and Rescue Services as amended by resolution of the Authority from time to time.

The appointment is subject to satisfactory medical examination.

### SALARY

The current salary is £154,079 per annum. This will be revised in accordance with annual pay awards for Chief Officers and Local Pay Agreements.

### LEAVE

Annual leave entitlement will be 25 days Scale A, 2 days Scale B and 3 days long service, as well as the normal statutory and public holidays.

### HOURS OF WORK

All Principal Officers will undertake the hours necessary to undertake their duties within the requirements of the Working Time Regulations, as they apply to Managing Executives, in so doing Fire and Rescue Services will have regard to the on-call commitments of its Service Managers.

It will be necessary for the appointee to provide Principal Officer fire cover as appropriate, in accordance with the needs of this Service on a continuous duty system. There will be a requirement to provide out of hours work commensurate with the responsibilities of this post to attend functions and events to further the organisations partnership and wider strategic approach. This post does not carry an entitlement for overtime pay for work in excess of thirty-seven hours per week.

### LOCATION

The post is based at Fire and Rescue Service Headquarters, Southfields Road, Kempston, Bedford, but may be subject to posting anywhere within the County at the request of the Authority.

### POLITICALLY SENSITIVE

Under the provisions of the Local Government and Housing Act 1989, this post is deemed as politically restricted. Please contact the Head of Human Resources if you have any queries.

### OTHER

The National Joint Council for Brigade Managers of Local Authority Fire and Rescue Services, Constitution and Scheme of Conditions of Service, latest published version (at time of printing Fifth Edition 2006) will apply.

### CFOA

Principal Officers are members of the National Fire Chiefs Council (NFCC) and have a contractual obligation to advance the interests of both the Service and the Authority through that organisation. The Fire Authority will pay the membership subscriptions. This is distinct from membership of a representative body for which the officer will pay themselves.



## PRINCIPAL OFFICERS' CONTINUOUS DUTY SYSTEM

The Service's Operational Principal Officers will be required to work the continuous duty system.

### SYSTEM ARRANGEMENTS

- Principal Officers should normally provide a contact address within the Bedfordshire Fire and Rescue Service area.
- Principal Officers must maintain contact for Operational duty and provide other requirements for the Service or Fire Authority, as appropriate, but without geographic restriction, except that at least one P.O. must be available in the Country and within 6 hours travelling time of Service HQ. For this purpose the Service will provide a mobile telephone and appropriate communications equipment. While abroad Principal Officers should provide an emergency contact facility for the Service. To assist the provided mobile telephone will be of a type that enables international calls.
- A Principal Officer is entitled to book off duty for specific periods providing a minimum of one Principle Officer is on duty within 6 hours of the Bedfordshire Fire and Rescue Service HQ.
- A Principal Officer will be provided with a car for use while on continuous duty.
- Principle Officer will pay an agreed monthly access free towards the cost of vehicle maintenance.
- Nominated persons of the Principal Officer's family may drive the provided car, subject to their status, possession of a full driving licence with no outstanding issues.
- When a Principal Officer is required to represent the Service or Fire Authority at particular functions, they may be entitled to take a partner for which the fees or cost of the ticket will be paid for by the Fire Authority at the discretion of the Chairman of the Authority
- Principal Officers are members of the NFCC (National Fire Chiefs Council) and have a contractual obligation to advance the interests of both the Service and the Authority through that organisation. The Fire Authority will pay the membership subscriptions. This is distinct from membership of a representative body for which the Officer will pay themselves.





# EMPLOYEE BENEFITS





## EMPLOYEE BENEFITS



**GENEROUS  
PENSION SCHEME**



**GENEROUS  
HOLIDAY  
ALLOWANCE**



**TRAINING  
COURSES**



**MENTAL HEALTH  
AND WELLBEING  
EVENTS**



**SUBSIDISED  
RESTAURANT  
FACILITIES**



**FREE  
PARKING**



**FREE ACCESS  
TO GYMS**



**EMPLOYEE  
ASSISTANCE  
PROGRAMME**



**OCCUPATIONAL  
HEALTH SUPPORT**



**RELOCATION  
PACKAGE**



**FLEXIBLE  
WORKING**



**PROVIDED CAR**



**GENEROUS  
SICKNESS  
ENTITLEMENT**



**ENHANCED  
MATERNITY PAY**



**BLUE LIGHT  
DISCOUNT**



**LONG SERVICE  
AWARDS**



## HOW TO APPLY



## HOW TO APPLY

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To apply please submit an up-to-date CV, which shows your full career history with any breaks explained, and details of two referees. You must not exceed three pages.

A supporting statement detailing examples of how your knowledge, skills and experience meet the essential criteria listed in the Person Specification is also required.

The supporting statement must be no longer than three pages in Calibri (or Arial whichever you prefer), font size 11.

Please submit your CV and Supporting Statement to [recruitment@bedsfire.gov.uk](mailto:recruitment@bedsfire.gov.uk).

You will receive an acknowledgement within 24 hours of receipt and we suggest that if after that time you have not heard from us, contact The Recruitment Team on 01234 845012.


Chief Fire Officer Paul Fuller will be pleased to discuss the post informally with potential candidates; this will not be seen as canvassing for the post. Please make the necessary arrangements by calling his PA on 01234 845017 or email [caroline.goates@bedsfire.gov.uk](mailto:caroline.goates@bedsfire.gov.uk).

## SELECTION PROCESS

TIMETABLE	
<b>Closing date</b>	Midnight Sunday 14 February
<b>Shortlisting</b>	Tuesday 16 / Wednesday 17 February
<b>Psychological Profiling / Ability tests</b>	18 February until 25 February
<b>Selection Process – Day 1</b>	Thursday 4 March Personal / Technical Interview Media Role Play Exercise
<b>Selection Process – Day 2</b>	Friday 5 March Competency based interview and 15 minute presentation
<b>Provisional offer of appointment and approval by the FRA</b>	

Please consider your availability for the selection dates as alternative dates will not be possible.

For further information regarding the recruitment process please contact Faima Begum, Recruitment Manager on 01234 845012 or email [recruitment@bedsfire.gov.uk](mailto:recruitment@bedsfire.gov.uk).



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“At Bedfordshire Fire and Rescue Service, we’re not all the same. And that’s our greatest strength. We draw on the differences in who we are, what we’ve experienced, and how we think. Because to provide a service that serves everyone, we believe in including everyone.”

By virtue of paragraph(s) 3, 4 of Part 1 of Schedule 12A of the Local Government Act 1972.

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