



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. **If any members of the public wish to have access or to contribute to the Public Participation item then please contact Democratic Services in advance of the meeting on Tuesday, 12 January 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	

Item	Subject	Lead	Purpose of Discussion
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	
4.	Minutes	Chair	To confirm the Minutes of the meeting held on 10 December 2020 (Pages 5 - 14)
5.	Public Participation	Chair	To receive any questions put to the Authority under the Public Participation Scheme
6.	Audit and Standards Committee 1 December 2020	Cllr Headley	To consider a report (Pages 15 - 52)
7.	Budget Setting	CFO/Treasurer	To consider a report (Pages 53 - 74)
8.	Work Programme	CFO	To consider a report (Pages 75 - 80)

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 of Part 1 of Schedule 12A to the Act as amended.

Item	Subject	Lead	Purpose of Discussion
9.	Executive Committee 7 January 2021	Chair	To receive an update

Item**Subject****Lead****Purpose of Discussion**

Next Meeting

10.00 am on 11 February 2021. This meeting will be held remotely. If any members of the public wish to have access or to contribute to the Public Participation item then please contact Democratic Services in advance of the meeting

Item

Subject

Lead

Purpose of Discussion

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.

MINUTES OF FIRE AND RESCUE AUTHORITY MEETING HELD VIRTUALLY ON 10 DECEMBER 2020

Present: Councillors C Atkins, J Chatterley (Chairman), K Choudhry, P Duckett, D Franks, J Gambold, M Headley, S Khurshid, D McVicar, I Shingler and Y Waheed

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

20-21/FRA/49 Apologies

An apology for absence was received from Councillor R Berry.

20-21/FRA/50 Declarations of Disclosable Pecuniary and Other Interests

There were no declarations of disclosable pecuniary and other interests.

20-21/FRA/51 Communications

Correspondence

The Chair reported that he had circulated the three items of correspondence he had received. The first was a fire and rescue service inspection update that had been received from Her Majesty's Inspectorate of Constabulary and Fire & Rescue Services (HMICFRS), the second was from the Home Office in relation to the fire and rescue sector's response to the COVID-19 pandemic and the third was also from HMICFRS providing a report on inspection activity in 2020/21.

Fire Incident

The Chief Fire Officer reported on an incident in St Neots to which Bedfordshire crews had responded to support Cambridgeshire Fire and Rescue Service. There had been two fire fatalities and appropriate support arrangements were being put in place for the responding crews.

Grant Funding Bid

The Chief Fire Officer advised that the Service had received notification from the Minister that it had been unsuccessful in its bid for a second wave of COVID funding. It was not known if any of the five fire and rescue services who had applied had been granted funding. As

the pressures detailed in the bid related primarily to the winter period, the Service had been encouraged to resubmit a bid for retrospective funding in the New Year.

Request from East of England Ambulance Service Trust

The Chief Fire Officer reported that a formal request from East of England Ambulance Service Trust had been received to continue providing support to the Trust until the end of March 2021. Discussions were ongoing regarding the impact to the Service and how any additional costs arising would be reimbursed.

Request from the Clinical Commissioning Group

The Chief Fire Officer reported that the Service had also received a formal request from the CCG to support the mass vaccination programme. Volunteers were required to provide marshalling and administrative support in four hour blocks at locations around Bedfordshire and Milton Keynes.

The Service did not feel that it was able to facilitate this as a result of the impact on operational resilience but would circulate the request via the Blue Bulletin and encourage members of staff to volunteer in their own time if they so wished.

Draft COVID-19 Inspection Letter

The Chief Fire Officer reported that he had received the draft letter detailing the outcome of the recent HMICFRS COVID-19 inspection as part of the pre-publication fact-checking stage. The Service had been requested to populate a template on activities undertaken as a result of the national tri-partite agreement. As the Service had taken part in local agreements, the activity undertaken by the Service was not reflected in this part of the document and the Chief Fire Officer advised that he would be seeking reassurances that this would be referred to if the table was published as part of the annual State of Fire Report.

NJC Circular

A joint circular from the secretaries of the national employers and the Fire Brigades Union had been received regarding the incorporation of the tri-partite agreement into the employee/employer relationship at national level.

20-21/FRA/52 Minutes

RESOLVED:

That the Minutes of the meeting held on 21 October 2020 be confirmed as a true record.

20-21/FRA/53 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).

20-21/FRA/54 HMICFRS Update Report

Service Operational Commander Jeffery provided an update on the COVID-19 inspection undertaken by Her Majesty's Inspectorate of Constabulary and Fire & Rescue Services (HMICFRS) in October 2020. The inspection included evidence gathering, a staff survey and a series of interviews covering areas such as business continuity management, operational response and fire control, human resources, health and safety, prevention, protection, finance and the Service response to COVID-19.

As reported earlier in the meeting, the draft letter detailing the outcome of the inspection that took place from 12-23 October 2020 had now been received and feedback had been overwhelmingly positive, in particular the recognition of the significant support that the Service has provided to the Ambulance Service over the pandemic period and the ability of the Service to maintain its core business. The two learning points related to the delay in the reintroduction of on-call training and the resumption of the fire safety audit inspection programme.

The Service would respond to the draft letter and it was anticipated that the final letter would be published by the end of the year.

In response to a question, the Service Operational Commander confirmed that the Service continued to prepare for the full inspection, which had been postponed from April 2020 and was anticipated to take place early in 2021. This included regular contact with the Service Liaison Lead at HMICFRS.

The Chief Fire Officer advised Members that this was the last meeting of the Authority that Service Operational Commander Jeffery would be attending before he retired at the end of the year.

The Chair and other Members of the Authority thanked Service Operational Commander Jeffery for his commitment and years of service and wished him all the best in his retirement.

RESOLVED:

That the update be received.

20-21/FRA/55 Q2 Performance Report

The Deputy Chief Fire Officer presented a summary of organisational performance at the end of Quarter 2 2020/21. In introducing the report, the Deputy Chief Fire Officer advised that 80% of the performance indicators were meeting target or within 10% variance and 86% had improved from the previous year.

The Members of the Executive Committee confirmed that they had met with the relevant Service Leads to discuss their relevant performance areas.

In discussing the performance, it was noted that the number of primary fire fatalities was 1 for the year, and that the percentage shown was not the actual against the five year average but the percentage reduction between the two, which was 25% as reported.

It was also noted that 44% of the total number of Automatic Fire Alarms attended in Non-Domestic Properties were to premises in Bedford Borough. Additional information on the location of the premises would be provided to Councillor Atkins as the relevant Executive Member.

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The Deputy Chief Fire Officer highlighted areas of good performance during the reporting period, including a 20% reduction in primary fires and an increase in Safe and Well Visits delivered during September and October 2020. In terms of response, the availability of on-call fire fighters had improved during the period.

The increase in secondary fires was thought to be caused by the closure of the Household Waste Recycling Centres and the consequent increase in rubbish fires.

In relation to the prevention indicators, efforts were being made to complete the fire safety audit by year-end, noting that this activity had ceased during the first lockdown period as the Service had prioritised other areas of work.

There had been a decrease in performance against the training indicators due to COVID as the Service had not been able to deliver as many courses. Work was now being undertaken to make the Training Centre more COVID secure and alternative methods of providing training were also being considered.

The health and safety indicators had been impacted by a very small number of accidents resulting in long periods of time off from work, particularly in the case of an on-call fire fighter who had sustained a burn injury during training.

In response to a question about the availability of the first on-call appliance, the Deputy Chief Fire Officer reported that performance against this indicator was not impacted by the secondment of staff to the Ambulance Service. The Chief Fire Officer referred to other factors which

impacted performance against this indicator, including the location of the nearest available resource and traffic conditions, and reassured Members that resourcing was kept under constant review.

The secondment of staff to the Ambulance Service was funded primarily through Government grant. The on-call staff were also available to the Service and many had taken a sabbatical from their primary employment to support the Ambulance Service. There was a 60/40 split between whole time and on call fire fighters who had been seconded.

In response to a question about the recording of fire fatalities, Members were advised that it was for the Coroner to decide if a death was to be recorded as a fire death. This would not be the case if it was an unavoidable death.

RESOLVED:

1. That the Service's performance against the delivery of the Authority's Community Risk Management Plan (CRMP) at the end of Quarter Two be acknowledged.
2. That the report be approved for publication on the Service's website.

20-21/FRA/56 2021/22 Budget Update and Consultation

The Assistant Chief Officer – Finance and Corporate Services introduced his report which provided an update on the 2021/22 Budget process and presented the draft Council Tax consultation questions. The questions remained largely unchanged from the previous year and the consultation would be run in parallel with the consultation on the Community Risk Management Plan.

Unlike in previous years, the Authority would be considering its draft budget in January. This was as a result of the delay in the announcement of the Comprehensive Spending Review, as the detail of the provisional financial settlement would not be released until around 17 December 2020.

As part of the announcement, the Council Tax referendum limit had been set at 2% and the Government had guaranteed to cover 75% of Collection Fund losses due to COVID-19.

Therefore, it was being proposed to consult on support for a 1.99% Council Tax increase. This would be an increase of £2 per annum for a Band D property. As in previous years, support for a larger increase would be gauged. Consultees would also be asked for any suggestions for savings or efficiencies which could be considered by the Service.

RESOLVED:

1. That the proposed public Council Tax consultation questions at Appendix 1 of the report be approved.
2. That the budget process updates be noted.

20-21/FRA/57 Public Sector Equality Duty Report

The Chief Fire Officer submitted the Service's Public Sector Equality Duty Report (2019/20) to the Authority for consideration. The report provided information on the support provided for members of staff with protected characteristics, identified the percentage of underrepresented groups in the Service's employment and highlighted other equality issues such as the gender pay gap.

Members were referred to the Executive Summary of the report which set out the position as at 31 March 2020 and demonstrated the evolution of the Service to become more representative of the communities it served over time.

Members commented favourably on how informative and well laid out the report was and the amount of work undertaken in this area throughout the Service.

RESOLVED:

That the report be approved.

20-21/FRA/58 2019-23 Community Risk Management Plan - draft 2021/22 Annual Action Plan

The Deputy Chief Fire Officer introduced the draft Community Risk Management Plan (CRMP) annual action plan for 2021/22 and explained the associated public consultation process. The publication of the CRMP was a requirement under the current National Framework and must reflect up to date risk information and cover at least a 3 year period. The current CRMP covered a four-year period from 2019-2023 and had been approved by the Authority in 2019.

The CRMP had been updated to include a new foreword by the Chief Fire Officer and Chair of the Fire Authority, along with more recent photographs and financial information.

In response to a question about the introduction of a volunteer scheme, the Deputy Chief Fire Officer advised that it was envisaged that volunteers would work alongside the prevention teams and would provide a vital link to the communities in Bedfordshire, so that the Service could better understand its communities and how to improve the uptake of these services.

It was recognised that there were many active charity and voluntary organisations operating in Bedfordshire and that they had provided essential support to the communities of Bedfordshire during the pandemic.

The Deputy Chief Fire Officer confirmed that the Service worked closely with the CCG to identify individuals in need of Safe and Well visits, as well as using Exeter data. The importance of partnership working to identify and support these individuals was acknowledged.

In reference to the emergency cover review, the Deputy Chief Fire Officer advised that this would be presented to Members at a future Authority meeting and the Service had not committed to any changes at this stage. This would form part of the Service's Estates Strategy.

The Chief Fire Officer added that the review was currently in an initial data gathering and analysis stage.

RESOLVED:

1. That the initial draft of Community Risk Management Plan Annual Action Plan for 2021/22 be approved.
2. That the consultation arrangements and questions be agreed.

20-21/FRA/59 Members' Allowances Scheme 2021/22

Mr J Atkinson, the Secretary and Monitoring Officer, presented his review of the Members' Allowances Scheme for 2021/22. It was being proposed that the Scheme be updated in accordance with the annual local government pay award, with no other changes being proposed at this stage.

RESOLVED:

That the Members' Allowances Scheme be updated from 1 June 2021 in accordance with the proposals set out in the report and that the Scheme be adopted for the financial year 2021/22.

20-21/FRA/60 Calendar of Meetings 2021/22

Members received the draft calendar of meetings for 2021/22, noting that the Chair had requested that regular meetings of the Executive Committee be included in the final version of the calendar. Members were advised that liaison had already taken place with the constituent authorities during the preparation of the draft calendar.

A request was made to postpone the meeting of the Authority scheduled for 2 September 2021 to the following week. An additional request was made for calendar invites to be sent for all meetings on the calendar, once it was approved.

RESOLVED:

That the submitted provisional calendar of dates for meetings of the Fire and Rescue Authority and its associated Committees for the forthcoming year be approved, subject to the inclusion of Executive Committee dates and consideration being given to postponing the Authority meeting on 2 September 2021 to the following week.

20-21/FRA/61 Blue Light Collaboration Strategic Board

The Deputy Chief Fire Officer provided a verbal update on the recent meeting of the Blue Light Collaboration Strategic Board.

The main focus of discussion had been the set of principles that would underpin the tri-service estates strategy. These had received broad support, with partners being asked to provide additional written feedback with a view to a final draft being submitted to a meeting in the New Year to be agreed by the Board.

Following the approval by the Board, the Service's own estates strategy would be reviewed and the outcome of this would be presented to a future meeting of the Authority.

The other item of discussion had been the joint Headquarters project. The Service's current Headquarters housed five key functions: response, control, training, general Headquarter offices and workshops and stores. Consideration was currently being given to the development of a joint workshop for the three services, following the successful trial of the servicing of ambulances by the Service.

The Board had requested a costed options appraisal to be presented to a future meeting.

Councillor McVicar, as the lead Member for Collaboration, commented on the support from the other services from the work being led by this Service, but advised caution as any financial impact of new Headquarter buildings would have to be carefully considered in light of the scarce resources available.

RESOLVED:

That the update be received.

20-21/FRA/62 Work Programme

Members received the updated Work Programme, noting that the draft budget would be submitted to the next Authority meeting.

The Chair reminded Members that they were able to suggest items for inclusion in the Work Programme.

RESOLVED:

That the work programme be received.

20-21/FRA/63 Information Bulletin

Members received the Quarter 2 Information Bulletin covering the period July to September 2020, noting the improved layout of the document.

RESOLVED:

That the information bulletin be received.

20-21/FRA/64 Executive Committee 9 December 2020

The Chair advised the Authority that there were no proposals arising from the meeting of the Executive Committee held on 9 December 2020 to be reported.

The meeting ended at 11.42 am

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REPORT AUTHOR: COUNCILLOR M HEADLEY
SUBJECT: AUDIT AND STANDARDS COMMITTEE

For further information on this Report contact: Nicky Upton
Service Assurance Manager

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:

To report on the meeting of the Audit and Standards Committee held on 1 December 2020.

RECOMMENDATIONS:

That the submitted minutes of the meeting held on 1 December be received and the recommendations of the meeting, noted below, be considered.

1. Introduction

1.1 The draft minutes of the meeting of the Audit and Standards Committee held on 1 December 2020 are appended for Members' consideration.

1.2 The Audit and Standards Committee made the following recommendation to the Fire Authority:

20-21/ASC/039 Statement of Assurance

That the Chair be delegated authority to sign off the Statement of Assurance for 2019/20 for reporting to the full Fire and Rescue Authority Meeting, subject to the section on the external audit of the Statement of Accounts 2019/20 being updated by the Assistant Chief Officer and Treasurer in consultation with the Chair.

**COUNCILLOR M HEADLEY
CHAIR OF AUDIT AND STANDARDS COMMITTEE**

MINUTES OF AUDIT AND STANDARDS COMMITTEE MEETING HELD ON 1 DECEMBER 2020

Present: Councillors M Headley (Chair), P Duckett, R Berry, K Choudhry, J Gambold and I Shingler

Councillor J Chatterley was present as an observer

Mr J Atkinson, ACO G Chambers, SOC G Jeffery, T/AC D Cook and Mr P Hughes

Mr N Harris, Ernst & Young

Mr D Harris, RSM

20-21/ASC/28 Apologies

28.1 An apology for absence was received from Councillor S Khurshid.

20-21/ASC/29 Declarations of Disclosable Pecuniary and Other Interests

There were no declarations of interest.

20-21/ASC/30 Communications

30.1 The Committee received the RSM Business Continuity Planning – COVID-19 briefing from RSM.

RESOLVED:

That the RSM Business Continuity Planning – COVID-19 briefing be received.

20-21/ASC/31 Minutes

RESOLVED:

That the Minutes of the meeting held on 22 September 2020 be confirmed as a true record.

20-21/ASC/32 Public Participation

32.1 There were no members of the public present.

20-21/ASC/33 External Audit Progress Report (Ernst & Young)

33.1 Mr N Harris of EY provided an update on the audit of the Statement of Accounts 2019/20.

33.2 That since the last progress report to A&SC, there were no material amendments or matters arising associated with the accounts.

33.3 EY resolved the material differences on valuations but there would be updated commentary in the final ISA260 on the fact this arose because of an understatement of land (comparative values) and overstatement on buildings (residual lives and CAPEX), with a recommendation on valuation methodology for next year.

33.4 EY cleared the consultation processes associated with the FRAs going concern disclosure note.

33.5 EY received Pension Fund audit assurances from PF auditor with only one immaterial exception on a net £49,207 understatement of the Fire Authorities share of Pension Fund investment assets (rate of return on investment assets) and therefore a reduction in the IAS19 net pension liability at the balance sheet date. The Authority is unlikely to amend for this item and will include reasons why in the letter of representation.

33.6 That EY were now in the final stages of completing the audit, but were unable to finish by 30th November because of EYs resource constraints associated with a combination of sickness absence of the Manager on the engagement and the impact of senior staff completing other Major Local Audits and only returning to conclude outstanding items from the first visit until very recently. This was a matter for which Mr Harris apologised for the inconvenience caused to the Authority's finance team at this late stage.

33.7 EY expected to finish the audit as soon as possible and Mr Harris' recommendation was that the A&SC could continue to take delegated authority through the Chair of A&SC to authorise for issue the audited accounts and letter of representation when advised subject to their being no further material matters arising (which is now considered extremely unlikely).

33.8 Mr G Chambers, the Assistant Chief Officer requested the Committee to delegate authority to himself as Treasurer of the Authority and the Chair to approve the letter of representation on behalf of the Authority, subject to no material considerations being identified in the final stages of the audit work. This would then be circulated to all Committee Members for information.

33.9 He also requested that authority be delegated to him to make any final minor amendments to the Statement of Accounts.

33.10 In response to a question from the Chair regarding the value of the additional work undertaken on the property valuations, Mr Harris advised that, if this matter, particularly in relation to obsolescence and land value, had not been resolved satisfactorily, it could have led to a qualified audit opinion being issued.

33.11 In response to a further question from the Chair, the Assistant Chief Officer reported that NPS, the organisation that had carried out the property valuations on behalf of the Authority, had been asked to conduct another review on 31 March 2021 and liaise with EY to address the areas of irregularity that had been highlighted through this year's audit process with a view to less work being required on property valuations for the 2020/21 audit of the Statement of Accounts.

RESOLVED:

1. That the external audit progress report be agreed.
2. That the Treasurer, in consultation with the Chair, be delegated authority to make any final amendments to the Statement of Accounts.
3. That the Treasurer, in consultation with the Chair, be delegated authority to approve the letter of representation.

20-21/ASC/34 Internal Audit Progress Report (RSM)

34.1 Mr D Harris of RSM submitted a report on progress made against the internal audit plan for 2020/21.

34.2 Two reports, on HR - Recruitment and Key Financial Controls, were in the draft stage and would be presented to the next meeting of the Committee.

34.3 The internal audits completed to date, with only one partial assurance opinion being issued, would not impact negatively on the year-end audit opinion. There were no changes to report to the internal audit plan for 2020/21.

34.4 The final audit report on Cyber Security had been submitted to the Committee with the report. Eleven actions had been identified, five low and six medium priority actions. Issues were identified across the Boundary Firewalls and Internet Gateways, Secure Configuration, Malware Protection and Patch Management control themes. Progress was being made, recognising that this was a complex area requiring constant attention. All eleven management actions had been agreed.

34.5 Mr P Hughes, the Head of ICT, confirmed that three of the medium priority had been completed and three were in progress. The Service had received its Cyber Security Essentials Plus accreditation earlier in June 2020. This was a constantly evolving area with persistent threats and the audit demonstrated that the Committee could be reassured that there was a robust framework in place.

RESOLVED:

That the report be received.

20-21/ASC/35 Review of the Effectiveness of the Fire and Rescue Authority's Internal Auditors

- 35.1 Mr G Chambers, the Assistant Chief Officer and Treasurer, submitted his report on the effectiveness of the Authority's internal auditors, RSM, advising that the review of the effectiveness of the Authority's external auditors would be submitted to the Committee's next meeting.
- 35.2 The Committee noted that the internal audit contract was due to expire early in the new year and that arrangements had been made to re-procure internal audit services in collaboration with Cambridgeshire and Essex Fire and Rescue Services, with Cambridgeshire leading the procurement process.
- 35.3 RSM conformed with the Global Institute of Internal Auditors (IIA) International Professional Practice Framework (IPF). In complying with these standards, internal audit services were required to have an External Quality Assessment (EQA) every five years. RSM's last review had been undertaken in 2016, with the next external review being conducted in 2021.
- 35.4 Mr D Harris of RSM advised that, in addition to the external assessment, regular internal quality assurance exercises were undertaken.

RESOLVED:

That the effectiveness of the Fire and Rescue Authority's Internal Audit arrangements be confirmed.

20-21/ASC/36 Audit and Governance Action Plan Monitoring - Exception Report and Summary Analysis

- 36.1 The Assistant Chief Officer and Treasurer introduced the report which provided summary statistical analysis of actions arising from internal audit reports over the last three financial years to date and from the Fire and Rescue Authority's current Annual Governance Statement; together with any exception reports on those actions currently in progress, progress to date on current action plans and proposals to extend the original timing for completion.
- 36.2 Three extension requests to the original completion dates had been submitted to the Committee for approval. These related to stock control and procurement.
- 36.3 In relation to stock control, there had been delays to the upgrade as the external provider had been unable to access and test the system due to the Service's Firewall. The testing was due to take place in November and, as such, an extension to January 2021 was being requested.

- 36.4 The two actions against procurement were related with an extension of the completion and approval of the Commissioning Review Plan to January 2021 requested due to work pressures. The second action related to progressing the Procurement Activity Plan and the Commissioning Review Plan which was dependent on the Review Plan being completed and approved by the Service Corporate Management Team. An extension to February 2021 was requested.
- 36.5 The Chair expressed the view that, whilst he understood the reasons for the extensions being requested, the delays to the actions due to be completed in October 2020 could have been reported to the previous meeting of the Committee on 22 September, as it should have been apparent at that stage that the original completion dates would not be met.
- 36.6 The Committee was advised that a more robust process for chasing progress against actions arising from internal audit reports had been implemented so that any delays would be identified and reported to the Committee at an earlier stage.

RESOLVED:

1. That progress made to date against action plans be acknowledged.
2. That the extension requests relating to stock control to January 2021 and procurement to January and February 2021 be agreed.

20-21/ASC/37 Review of 'Monitored Policies'

- 37.1 The Assistant Chief Officer and Treasurer introduced his report detailing the outcome on the review of the policies on Protected Reporting (Whistleblowing), Anti-Fraud, Bribery and Corruption incorporating the National Fraud Initiative (NFI), Use of Regulation of Investigatory Powers Act 2000 (RIPA) and the Authority's Complaints and Compliments process. The complaints and compliments received were set out in Appendix B of the report.
- 37.2 The Committee noted that there had been no whistleblowing reports received during the year, no cases of suspected fraud and no requests for direct surveillance under RIPA.
- 37.3 In response to a question on the complaints regarding inappropriate behaviour, three of which had been received and one upheld during the year to date, the Committee was advised that the complaint upheld related to the behaviour of a uniformed member of staff who was not on duty at the time. The incident had been referred through the Service's disciplinary process and the complainant had been satisfied with the course of action taken.
- 37.4 The Committee also noted that one complaint had been received in relation to inappropriate use of social media but this had not related to a member of staff. The individual concerned had purported to be employed by the Service but there was no record of an individual of that name having been employed by the Service, either currently or historically.

37.5 The outstanding complaint regarding damage to property when gaining entry for the Ambulance Service had been subject to an investigation. The complainant had been advised of the outcome and no additional communication had been received.

RESOLVED:

That the arrangements in place for the Protected Reporting (Whistleblowing) policy, the Anti-Fraud, Bribery and Corruption policy incorporating the National Fraud Initiative (NFI), Use of Regulation of Investigatory Powers Act 2000 (RIPA) and the Authority's Complaints and Compliments process and their review be noted.

20-21/ASC/38 Report on Registration of Interests and Gifts/Hospitality

38.1 Mr J Atkinson, the Secretary and Monitoring Officer submitted his report on the registration of interests and gifts/hospitality by Members and Officers during the past year.

38.2 All register of interest forms had been submitted and there had been no declarations of gifts or hospitality.

RESOLVED:

That the contents of the report be noted.

20-21/ASC/39 Statement of Assurance

39.1 Area Commander Jeffery introduced the Service's Annual Statement of Assurance 2019/20 to the Committee for approval. The Service was required to provide such a Statement in line with the Fire and Rescue National Framework for England. The Statement included information on financial assurance (including the audit arrangements for the Annual Statement of Accounts), governance framework, operational assurance and future improvements.

39.2 An overview of service activity was included in the Statement and this illustrated that there had been a reduction in Accidental Dwelling Fires, Accidental Dwelling Fire Injuries, for which Bedfordshire had recorded the lowest number in the region, Road Traffic Collisions and Road Traffic Collision Injuries. There had also been a considerable reduction in mobilisations to false alarms from Automatic Fire Alarms following a change in Service policy in 2017. The Service had also recorded the highest level of Home Fire Safety Checks/Safe and Well Visits in 2019/20.

39.3 A summary of the collaborative work the Service was engaged with was also included in the Statement.

39.4 Councillor Duckett reported that, in a meeting with Central Bedfordshire Council, the East of England Ambulance Service representative had paid tribute to the work of the Service in progressing collaboration with the Ambulance Service and expressed appreciation for the effort involved in this.

- 39.5 In response to a question, Area Commander Jeffery explained how referrals were made for Safe and Well visits. These were largely made by the Service's partner organisations in the health service and local authorities. Referrals could also be made via the Council's website.
- 39.6 The Committee was advised that there was a Service Officer who was embedded within the local authorities whose sole purpose was to improve fire safety in Houses in Multiple Occupation (HMOs).
- 39.7 The Chair commented that, as the external audit had not been completed by 30 November 2020 as planned, the section in the Statement of Assurance relating to this should be updated.

RESOLVED:

That the Chair be delegated authority to sign off the Statement of Assurance for 2019/20 for reporting to the full Fire and Rescue Authority Meeting, subject to the section on the external audit of the Statement of Accounts 2019/20 being updated by the Assistant Chief Officer and Treasurer in consultation with the Chair.

20-21/ASC/40 Corporate Risk Register - Exception Report

- 40.1 The Committee received an update on the progress against the Corporate Risk Register and the eight corporate risks identified within the Register, one which was very high, two high and five moderate.
- 40.2 T/Area Commander Cook provided the following updates against the corporate risks:
- Risk 1 (the Service does not have the capacity or capability to respond to significant events and meeting service delivery requirements): a new course management system went live on 17 September 2020. A PDR Pro upgrade was taking place and the ISO audit on training had been carried out in October 2020. The report on findings was awaited. The risk score remained unchanged.
 - Risk 2 (Failure to meet service delivery legislative prevention and protection requirements): two progress actions had been closed. The overall risk score remained unchanged.
 - Risk 4 (Insufficient funds to deliver the organisation's CRMP): Brexit implications had been added as an additional risk control measure. The Brexit risk score had been reviewed and the Service continued to liaise with its treasury management advisors. The risk score remained unchanged.
 - Risk 6 (Death or serious injury in the workplace due to BRFS activities): shortlisting for the Learning and Development Manager post was being undertaken. New National Operational Standards had been developed. The Service's Health and Safety Adviser was reviewing the updated Death in Service Guidance issued by the National Fire Chiefs Council.

- Risk 8 (The Service fails to effectively record, track and maintain its key assets and business critical equipment): the Head of ICT had allocated specific resource to resolve issues with ICT connectivity issues plaguing progress with the fleet system. Two stations had been transferred to a fully electronic inventory system and this would be rolled out to other stations. There was no change to the overall risk score.

40.3 There were no updates to the other corporate risks and the risk score for the COVID Risk Register remained unchanged.

40.4 The Committee noted that the controls and risks were being reviewed regularly.

RESOLVED:

1. That the continuing progress of the Service's Corporate Risk Register be acknowledged.
2. That the continuing progress of the Services COVID-19 Register be acknowledged.
3. That the Committee's assurance that the risks and controls were being regularly reviewed and the work involved in doing this be recognised.

20-21/ASC/41 Review of Work Programme 2020/21

41.1 The Committee considered the updated work programme for 2020/21.

RESOLVED:

That the Committee's Work Programme for 2020/21 be received.

The meeting ended at 11.12 am



Bedfordshire
Fire and Rescue Service

STATEMENT OF ASSURANCE 2019/20



Statement of Assurance 2019/20

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1. Introduction

The Government sets out the high level expectations and requirements for Fire and Rescue Authorities through the [Fire and Rescue National Framework \(England\) 2018](#).

The Framework is issued under Section 21 of the [Fire and Rescue Services Act 2004](#) with the stated purpose to give Fire and Rescue Authorities the freedom and flexibility to deliver services to their communities, moving accountability away from Central Government and placing responsibility with local communities.

Under the National Framework, Bedfordshire Fire and Rescue Authority (BFRA) have a responsibility to publish an Annual Statement of Assurance which provides a report on the Service's performance in the previous year with regard to:

- **Financial:** How BFRA ensures that public money is properly accounted for, managed, audited and reported along with management of financial assets and the production of the Annual Statement of Accounts which is produced in line with accounting codes of practice.
- **Governance:** How BFRA ensures that it conducts its business lawfully and that public money is properly accounted for and managed economically, efficiently and effectively and that an Annual Governance Statement (AGS) is published.
- **Operational:** How BFRA operates within a clear defined statutory framework including key documents such as National Framework and the Fire and Rescue Services Act 2004 etc.

The Statement of Assurance is required to be published annually and where possible form part of the existing governance reporting arrangements. This Statement of Assurance is subject to normal scrutiny arrangements which comprise of:

- Approval by the Audit and Standards Committee, who oversee the production of the Annual Statement of Assurance;
- Presented to the Full Fire and Rescue Authority Meeting by the Chair of the Audit and Standards Committee; and,
- Published on the Service's website.

In summary this Statement of Assurance aims to provide information to the Communities, Government, Local Authorities and Partners in an easy and accessible way, so a valid assessment can be made of their local Fire and Rescue Authority's performance during 2019/20.

2. Financial Assurance

BFRA is a precepting authority; this means that its net cost, after receiving Government Grant and a proportion of local business rates, is met by all council tax payers in Bedford Borough, Central Bedfordshire Borough and Luton as a proportion to the valuation band of their home. The precept accounts for 69% of BFRA income. A precept leaflet is published each year on our [website](#) detailing our revenue and expenditure for the year.

BFRA has the responsibility for ensuring that public money collected by way of grant and council tax is properly accounted for and managed appropriately in accordance with Section 3 of the Local Government Act 1999. This responsibility extends to securing the continuous improvement in which BFRA's functions are exercised, having regard to a combination of economy, efficiency and effectiveness.

As part of managing the financial arrangements of the Authority, BFRA have robust control measures in place for protecting the public purse which are supported by accurate budget monitoring processes and internal controls which are subject to annual scrutiny and reporting.

The Treasurer to the BFRA has the responsibility for ensuring that the right measures are in place to manage the Authority's financial assets and that the financial reporting arrangements are sound and that the Annual Statement of Accounts is prepared in accordance with statutory requirements.

The [Statement of Accounts](#) for the year ending 31 March 2020 is a document that summarises BFRA's transactions for the previous financial year detailing how the funding was used to provide a Fire and Rescue Service to the communities of Bedfordshire and includes:

- a) The Statement of Responsibilities for the Statement of Accounts which sets out the responsibilities of the FRA and the Treasurer to the FRA;
- b) The Annual Governance Statement (AGS);

- c) The Movement in Reserves Statement which summarises the FRA's spending against the council tax it raised, taking into account the use of reserves during the year;
- d) The Comprehensive Income and Expenditure Statement which summarises the income and expenditure of the FRA;
- e) The Balance Sheet which displays the financial position of the FRA as at 31 March 2020;
- f) The Cash Flow Statement which summarises the changes in the FRAs funds; and,
- g) The Pension Fund Account for the year together with the Net Assets Statement at the year end.

The Accounts are supported by a Statement of Accounting Policy and Core Financial Statements and these are prepared by the Finance Team under the direction of the Assistant Chief Officer and Treasurer to the BFRA.

The Statement of Accounts is signed off by the Chairperson of the Audit and Standards Committee who oversees the audit activity, regulatory framework, accounts and standards of the Service and these are prepared in accordance with proper accounting practices that include:

- [Accounts and Audit \(England\) Regulations 2015](#);
- The 2019/20 Code of Practice and,
- [International Financial Reporting Standards \(IFRS\)](#).

BFRA are subject to independent external audit and scrutiny to ensure that appropriate and effective financial arrangements are in place. The external audit on the 2019/20 accounts was completed in December 2020 and are available on [our website](#). It is the opinion of the external auditors that 'Bedfordshire Fire and Rescue Authority put in place proper arrangements to secure economy, efficiency and effectiveness in its use of resources for the year ended 31 March 2020.'

3. Governance Framework

BFRA is made up of twelve elected members who are appointed in proportion to the number of local government electors in each constituent Authority area with Members from the three Local Authorities of Bedford Borough Council, Central Bedfordshire Council and Luton Borough Council comprising:

- Three members from Bedford Borough Council;
- Five members from Central Bedfordshire Council; and,
- Four members from Luton Borough Council.

In addition the Police and Crime Commissioner for Bedfordshire has an invited non-voting position on the Authority.

The responsibility for ensuring proper governance arrangements and controls rests with BFRA who enable the effective exercise of the Authority's functions and the management of risk. The Governance Framework includes systems, processes, culture and values to enable BFRA to monitor the achievement of strategic objectives and consider whether the objectives have led to the delivery of appropriate, cost effective services to the communities of Bedfordshire and stakeholders.

BFRA's governance framework derives from seven core principles identified in the International Framework: Delivering Good Governance in Local Government: [Delivering Good Governance in Local Government: Framework \(CIPFA/SOLACE\) Review of Annual Governance Statements](#)

The seven core principles are:

1. Behaving with integrity, demonstrating strong commitment to ethical values, and respecting the rule of the law
2. Ensuring openness and comprehensive stakeholder engagement
3. Defining outcomes in terms of sustainable economic, social and environmental benefits
4. Determining the interventions necessary to optimise the achievement of the intended outcomes

5. Developing the entity's capacity, including the capability of its leadership and the individuals within it
6. Managing risks and performance through robust internal control and strong public financial management
7. Implementing good practices in transparency, reporting and audit to deliver effective accountability.

3.1 Annual Governance Statement

The Annual Governance Statement (AGS) for 2019/20 explains how the BFRA manages its governance arrangements and internal control measures. It is an open and transparent account of how the BFRA ensures its financial management systems are adequate and effective, as well as ensuring there is a robust and sound system of internal control.

The AGS also explains how BFRA has complied with the Code and meets the requirements of the Accounts and Audit (England) Regulations 2015 in relation to the publication of an Annual Governance Statement. BFRA's financial arrangements conform to the governance requirements of the CIPFA – Statement on the Role of the Chief Financial Officer in Local Government. The Treasurer to the BFRA reports in this role directly to the Chief Fire Officer.

3.2 Internal Audit

The role of internal audit is to review the internal control framework that governs the operations of the BFRA and, in so doing, provide an independent opinion to both Management and Members of the BFRA on the robustness of the Authority's internal control environment. Each year an Internal Audit Plan is produced and developed by the auditors, in conjunction with the Assistant Chief Officer – Finance and Corporate Services and Treasurer to the BFRA and is based on a risk assessment of all the services/systems of the Authority. Members and Service Managers are directly involved in the development of the plan and it is subject to review by the Corporate Management Team (CMT), prior to being approved by the Audit and Standards Committee. In summary, the plan identifies the audits to be completed each year, including core fundamental systems and other operational systems.

The appointed Internal Auditors also work with both Essex and Cambridgeshire Fire and Rescue Services (FRS) as part of a joint contract and where possible are able to audit on areas of commonality and shared service areas across all three FRAs. The work of the audit team complies fully with the requirements of CIPFA's Code of Practice for Internal Audit in Local Government in the UK.

The [Annual Internal Audit report for 2019/20](#) by the Service's appointed internal auditors, RSM, advises that 'The Service have undertaken training with an RSM Risk Specialist in 2019/20 and management have undertaken a review of the risk management arrangements within the organisation. Associated guidance documents was being revised and updated at the end of the financial year and therefore our risk management audit has been delayed until 2020/21 when the updated process will be established.'

For the 12 months ended 31 March 2020, the Head of Internal Audit's opinion for the Authority was as follows:
"The organisation has an adequate and effective framework for risk management, governance and internal control. However, our work has identified further enhancements to the framework of risk management, governance and internal control to ensure that it remains adequate and effective".

3.3 External Audit

BFRA remains committed to continuing to improve its performance towards achieving excellence in all areas. Value for Money (VFM) is still part of an annual review carried out by the Service's external auditors with an opinion whether the BFRA is delivering VFM as part of the external auditor's annual report and whether the BFRA has proper arrangements for:

- Securing financial resilience; and,
- Challenging how it secures economy, efficiency and effectiveness.

An integral part of this assurance is the role of the external auditor in the annual review report which complies with the statutory requirements governing audit and inspection work, in particular:

- National Audit Office's 2015 Code of Practice, International Standards on Auditing (UK & Ireland);
- The 2019/20 Code of Practice; and
- Accounts and Audit Regulations 2015.

On the 23 December 2020, our external auditors Ernst & Young LLP (E&Y) issued an unqualified opinion on the 2019/20 Statement of Accounts. In the auditor's opinion, the Statement of Accounts provided a true and fair view of the financial position of the Authority and have been prepared properly in accordance with the CIPFA/LASAAC Code of Practice on Local Authority Accounting in the United Kingdom 2019/20.

Additionally E&Y confirmed that in their opinion, in all significant respects the Authority has put in place proper arrangements to secure economy, efficiency and effectiveness in its use of resources for the year ending 31 March

In July 2017 Her Majesty's Inspectorate of Constabulary (HMIC) gained the statutory responsibility of the inspection of Fire and Rescue Services in England and Wales and became Her Majesty's Inspectorate of Constabulary and Fire & Rescue Services (HMICFRS). This was the first time that Fire and Rescue Services have had an inspectorate in over a decade.

HMICFRS initial inspection of the 45 Fire and Rescue Services in England was split in to three tranches. BFRS was inspected in the first Tranche with the main fieldwork carried out during August 2018. All Fire and Rescue Services inspections received their inspection reports by December 2019. A 'State of the Nation' report reflecting on the first full round of inspections was published in January 2020.

The inspection framework is built around three key questions:

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

No overall grading is given for the Service as a whole. However, separate grading's are given for the three key inspection areas. BFRS was graded as 'Good' for Effectiveness and as 'Requires Improvement' for Efficiency and People.

In addition to commenting on a number of strengths and achievements by the Service. HMICFRS identified 23 areas for improvement (AFI) within the [report](#). These AFI's were developed into an action plan to drive Service improvement, and further supported by objectives contained within the CRMP 2019-23. A public facing version of the Service HMICFRS action plan is available on our [website](#).

3.4 Committee and Groups

BFRA has adopted a Constitution which sets out how the Authority operates, how decisions are made and the procedures which are followed to ensure these are efficient, transparent and accountable to local people and stakeholders.

During 2019/20 the BFRA agreed at its full FRA meeting on 19 July 2019 to undertake a review of governance arrangements and to trial with an additional two FRA meetings, no further Policy and Challenge group meetings, but maintaining the necessity of the Audit & Standards Committee. The purpose of this change enables Members of the Authority to have a wider understanding, involvement and scrutiny across the Authority's services, whilst streamlining the democratic process.

With the suspension of the Policy and Challenge group meetings, the BFRA now meets eight times per year with an Executive Committee and Audit and Standards Committee. This Governance structure aligns with the Service structure ensuring a more interactive relationship between Elected Members, managers and employees, and facilitates the scrutiny role of Members more visibly effective.

All areas of the Service are covered to ensure that the Service is functioning efficiently and effectively. This is achieved by providing checks and challenges, monitoring performance and approving associated policy and activity. The Executive and Audit and Standards Committees make recommendations on matters within their terms of reference to the Authority according to their area of concern.

The Chairs of these Committees report any recommendations arising from these meetings to the meeting of the full FRA. Reporting will also include on-going policy and decision making which is facilitated by a clear framework of delegation set out in the Authority's Constitution, including details of delegated authorities to officers.

All reports are reviewed for legal, human resource, financial and risk considerations prior to being presented to Members of the BFRA for formal decision-making. This, together with an appropriate level of delegation to both the Authority Executive and Senior Managers, enables prompt decision making.

For 2020/21 the BFRA will look to appoint each member of the Executive Committee with a special responsibility for the following portfolios:

- Prevention and Protection;
- Operational Performance and Preparedness;

- Corporate Risk, Health and Safety;
- People Board, Staffing and Diversity; and,
- Collaboration.

Members will attend regional and national meetings that relate to their portfolio providing continuity in these areas; each Member will report back to the full FRA on a rotational basis.

3.5 Review of Authority Effectiveness

In 2010, the Authority agreed a recommendation of the Audit Committee that it publishes an Annual Review of the Fire Authority’s Effectiveness and Record of Member Attendance. A Form of Review Questionnaire was thereafter prepared and annually sent out to all Members for consideration and completion. In prior years, this was discussed in each Policy and Challenge Group and the Audit and Standards Committee. It was agreed for 2018/19, in light of a new authority commencing in June 2019 and that the process had been repeated over a number of years, that the review would not take place during 2019/20. This will however, recommence during 2020/21. An FRA Governance/Structure review has taken place during 2020/21 and new Member Portfolio leads have been introduced.



3.6 Internal Control Framework

BFRA has responsibility for conducting, at least annually, a review of the effectiveness of the system of internal control and is informed by the work of the internal auditors and the Corporate Management Team (CMT).

The Internal Auditors provide an annual opinion on the internal control framework and operate to standards set out in the *Code of Practice for Internal Audit in Local Government in the UK*. The key features of the Authority’s internal control framework, which directly contribute to the review of effectiveness are:

- The Fire and Rescue Authority;
- The Audit and Standards Committee;
- Internal Audit;

- External Audit;
- Assurance Statements; and,
- Internal Performance Management Framework.

BFRA has a robust Performance Management Framework in place for securing continuous improvement in its services and where the quality of service to the communities can be measured by the use of local performance indicators.

Other forms of measures include:

An integral part of the performance framework includes the setting of organisational key performance indicators. These are agreed and monitored on a quarterly basis by senior managers of the Service with performance being reported through the Corporate Management Team, the Authority's Policy and Challenge Groups, and to full FRA Meetings.

An integral part of the performance framework includes the setting of organisational key performance indicators. Corporate indicators are established annually by the FRA alongside local indicators set by the Service. These are monitored continuously using a data toolkit (see 4.1) and reported and scrutinized quarterly by senior managers of the Service with performance being reported through the Corporate Management Team and to full FRA Meetings.

For the year ending 2019/20 the Annual Internal Audit report advised that the Auditors were satisfied that sufficient internal audit work had been undertaken to allow them to draw a reasonable conclusion on the adequacy and effectiveness of the Authority's arrangements.

3.7 Data Transparency

In accordance with the *Code of Recommended Practice for Local Authorities on Data Transparency*, BFRA is committed to greater openness and financial transparency through the publication, on the [Authority's website](#), of information regarding how public money is spent. This includes payments for goods and services to external bodies and suppliers above £500, and details of salaries and allowances paid to staff and Members.

In doing so, BFRA utilise a number of information sources and data sets to improve the delivery of service to the communities

and reports its performance accordingly. The performance data and information is published in the form of reports against targets and outcomes showing the performance of BFRA.

4. Operational Assurance

The National Framework does not prescribe operational firefighting matters; this is determined locally by respective FRAs. However it does set out the government's priorities and objectives for Fire and Rescue Authorities in England that include:

- Identifying and assessing the full range of foreseeable fire and rescue related risks in the respective areas;
- Making provision for prevention and protection activities and responding to incidents appropriately;
- Working with partners within the communities both locally and nationally to deliver their services; and,
- Being accountable to communities for the service they provide through the 'Statement of Assurance'.

FRAs operate within a clear defined boundary of a statutory framework that has a number of key documents that outline responsibilities, these include:

- [The Fire and Rescue Services Act 2004;](#)
- [The Civil Contingencies Act 2004](#)
- [The Regulatory Reform \(Fire Safety\) Order 2005;](#)
- [The Fire and Rescue Services \(Emergencies\) \(England\) Order 2007;](#)
- [The Localism Act 2011;](#)
- [The Fire and Rescue National Framework;](#)
- [Local Government Act 2010;](#) and,

- [Health and Safety & Work Act 1974.](#)

In addition to the statutory framework and assurance detailed above, BFRA has a range of key performance indicators and measures reported throughout the year. An integral part of operational assurance includes prevention and protection services and emergency response standards; these are regularly monitored and reviewed by the Service and the FRA by:

- Internal audits of service delivery functions;
- Quarterly performance reporting against station-based targets;
- Formal evaluation of prevention and protection activities; and,
- Full summary report of performance for the previous financial year.

Further Operational Assurance is provided externally by HMICFRS who found BFRS in 2018 to be 'Good' at responding to fires and other emergencies and also periodically by National Resilience Assurance Team (NRAT) for our National Resilience assets.

4.1 Performance Summary

BFRA oversees the performance of the Service throughout the year by the monitoring of robust and challenging Performance Indicators (PIs) and associated targets, aimed to maximise the effort and resources of the Service. The implementation of the Service Corporate Performance Dashboard provides all staff with easy access to these PI's.

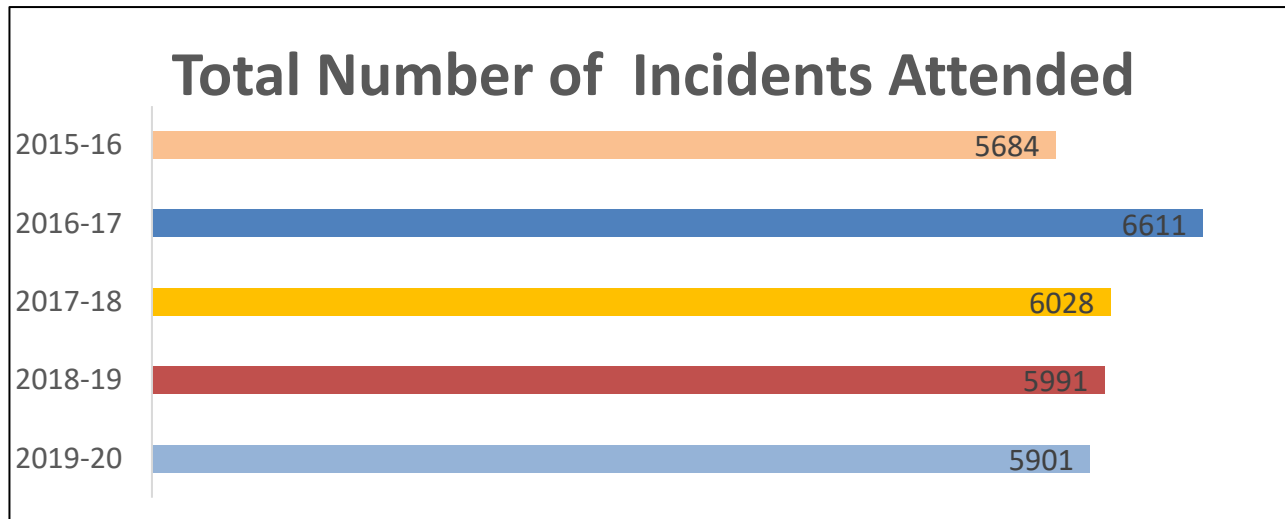
The Service Delivery PIs were reviewed for 2019/20. Full details of the Service's performance for 2019/20 and comparison against performance for 2018/19 is reported within the [Annual Overarching Performance Report 2019/20.](#)

4.2 Overview of Service Activity

The following charts provide an overview of the Service's Emergency Response, Prevention, and Safe and Well activities over a five year period to provide a balanced view of performance over the short and medium term. In particular, providing examples of incident types the Service attended.

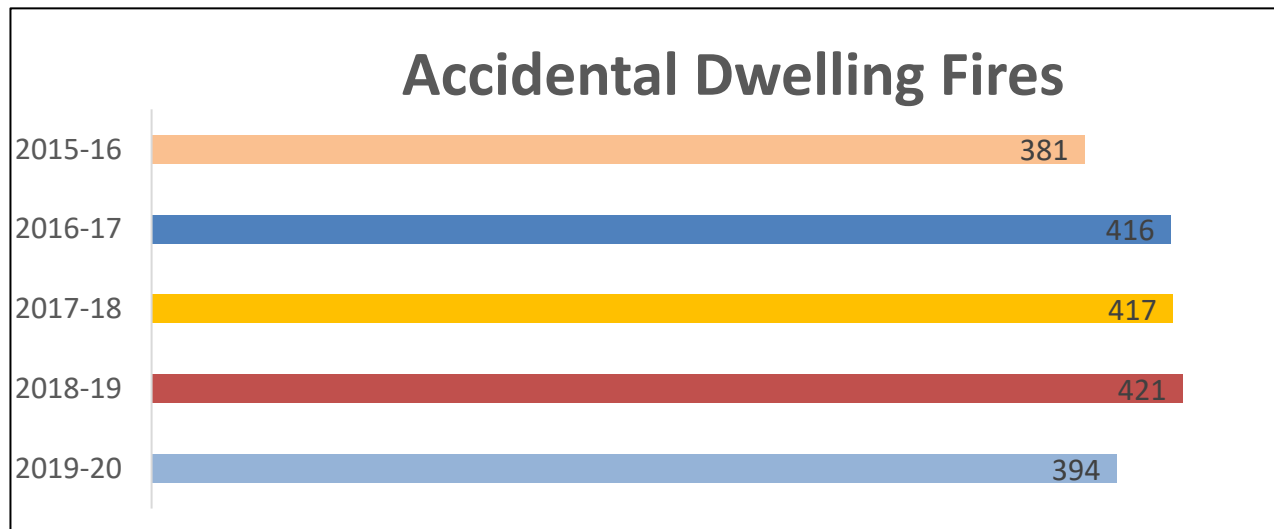
4.2.1 Total Number of Incidents Attended

The number of incidents attended by the Service has fluctuated over the five years but now shows a three year downward trend. The figures for 2019/20 demonstrate a 1.5% reduction in the number of incidents attended compared with 2018/19; this equates to a reduction of 90 incidents attended only. The number is anticipated to increase as more collaborative activity expands our capabilities (e.g. forced entry for medical emergencies, assisting the Police).



4.2.2 Accidental Dwelling Fires

Accidental Dwelling Fires are fires that occur in the home and the number across Bedfordshire during 2019/20 totalled 394. This shows a very minor decrease of 27 incidents compared to 2018/19. Over the five year period the number of Accidental Dwelling Fires has been stable at around 400. BFRS continues to explore areas which will assist our commitment to drive down the number of Accidental Dwelling Fires across Bedfordshire.

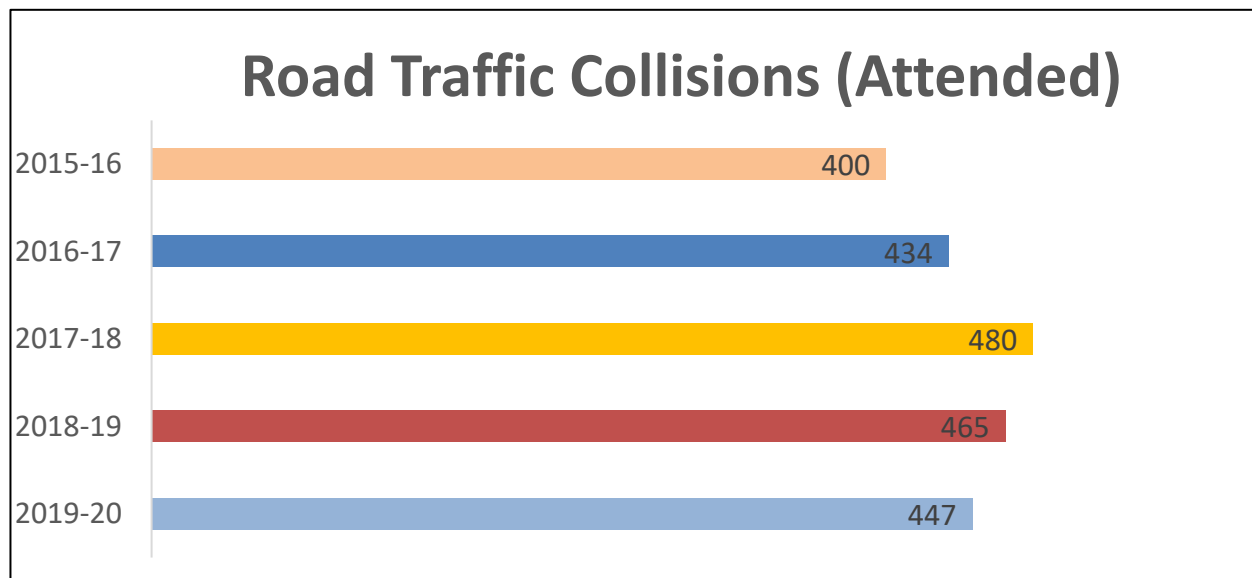
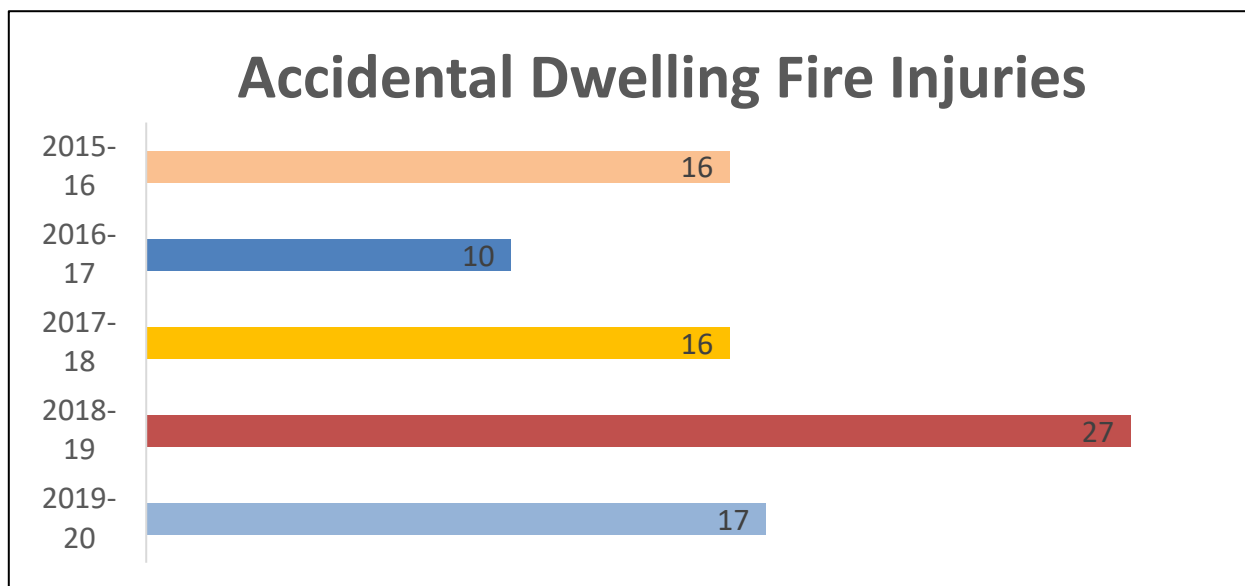


4.2.3 Accidental Dwelling Fire Injuries

Accidental Dwelling Fire Injuries continue to be one of the lowest reported within England. In 2019/20 the number of injuries fell to 17 a drop of 37% compared to 2018/19. BFRS continues work with partner agencies in order to target advice and guidance on domestic fire safety awareness to those most at risk in the community. When compared against the overall number of accidental dwelling fires the number of injuries is low. In 2019/20 only 17 injuries resulted from 394 fires. This is an average of 0.04 injuries per fire injury. BFRS monitors and reviews all accidents and injuries to assess and direct campaigns to improve community safety.

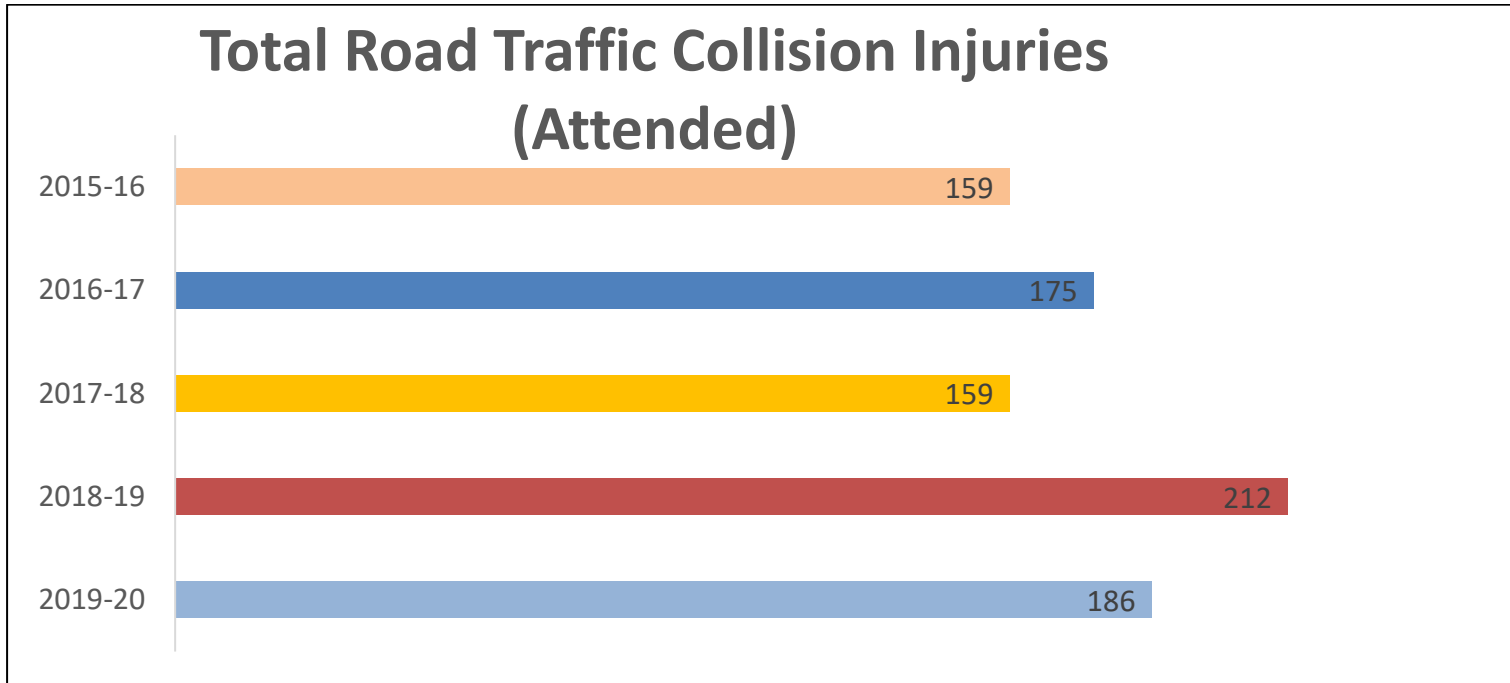
4.2.4 Road Traffic Collisions (Attended)

The Service has been seeing a year on year increase in the number of Road Traffic Collisions. However, the number of incidents attended has now dropped for two consecutive years. 447 Collisions were attended in 2019/20 a decrease of 7% compared to the peak in 2017/18.



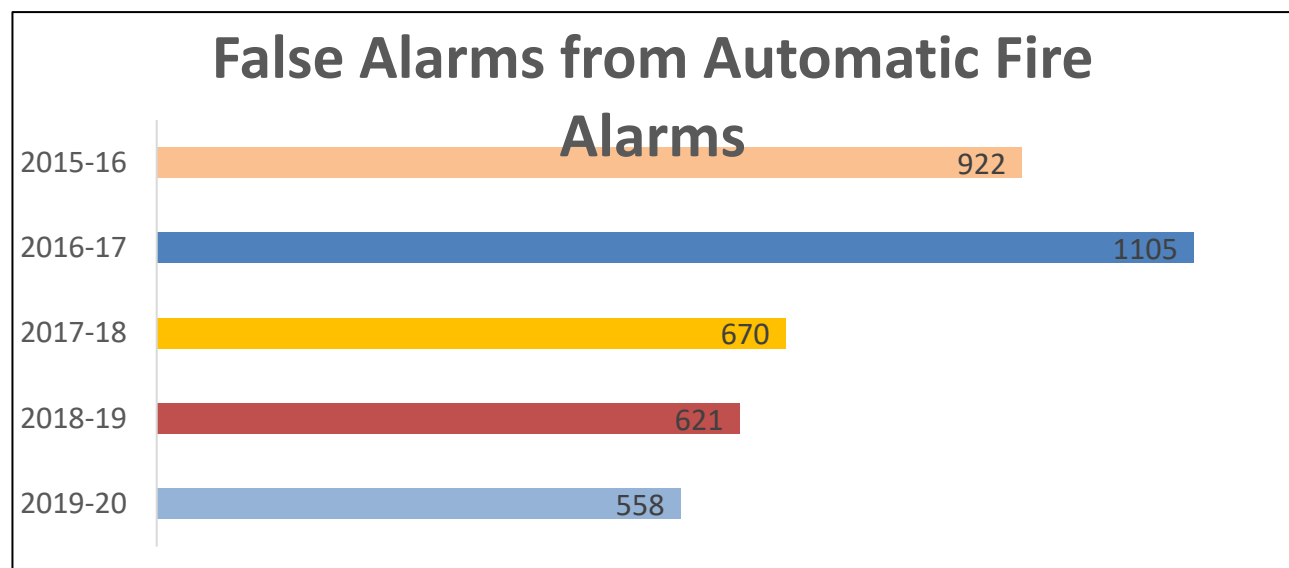
4.2.5 Road Traffic Collision Injuries (Attended)

The amount of Road Traffic Collision Injuries increase by 17% in 2018/19 to a five year high of 212. For 2019/20 the number fell to 186 a reduction of 12%.



4.2.6 False Alarms from Automatic Fire Alarms

During 2019/20 the Service attended 558 calls to False Alarms from Automatic Fire Alarm Systems, this is 63 less calls than the previous year and the third successive year in a row that the numbers have fallen from a peak of 1105 in 2016-17. The Service continues to target the reduction in False Alarms from Automatic Fire Alarm Systems and is applying further measures to support this.



4.2.7 Total Home Fire Safety Checks/Safe and Well Visits

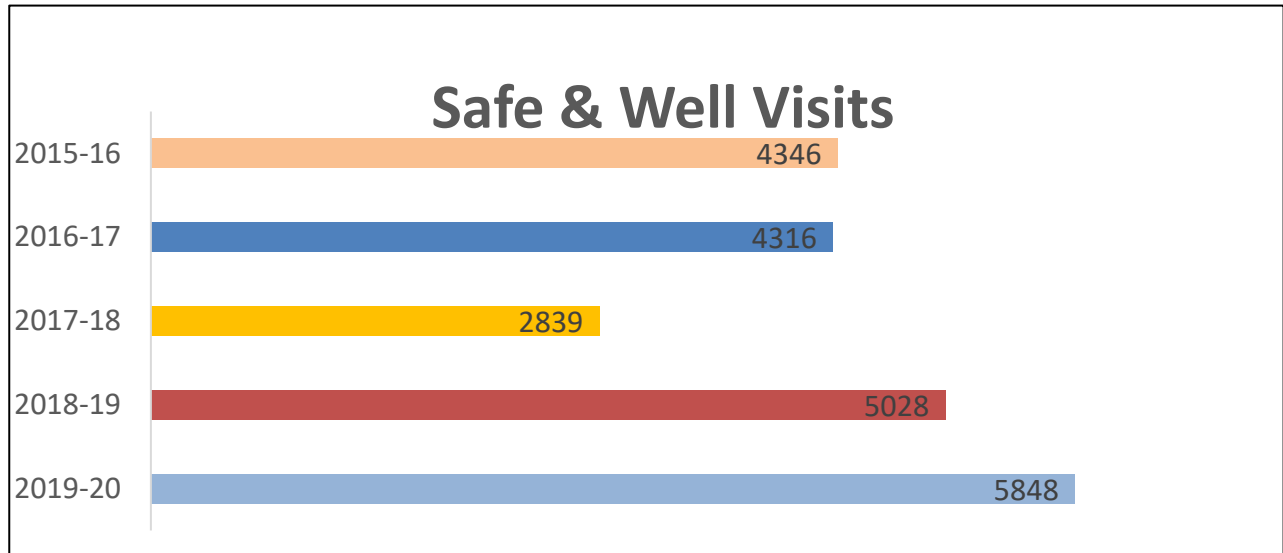
The Service uses a variety of preventative risk reduction activities in its continued commitment to keep the communities' of Bedfordshire safe.

In 2019/20 BFRS continued to deliver Safe and Well visits to the community delivering a total of 5848 visits; this is a 16% increase compared to 2018/19 and the highest numbers recorded in the 5 year period. These visits take the form of enhanced Home Fire Safety Checks that cover a range of additional areas addressing personal safety and wellbeing. These areas include:

- Crime Prevention;
- Slips, Trips and Falls;
- Smoking cessation; and,
- Alcohol.

BFRS works closely with Bedfordshire Police and has identified that fire risk factors closely align with the risks associated with vulnerability to crime. As such, Safe and Well visits will incorporate crime prevention advice.

BFRS makes effective use of its own data, and that of Health and other partners, to implement an intelligence led approach, targeting the most vulnerable households with Safe and Well visits. The Service uses existing partnerships and is establishing new partnerships to generate referrals from other professionals, who can assist in identifying vulnerable households that would benefit from a Safe and Well Visit.



4.3 Community Risk Management Plan

In 2019/20 BFRS launched its new Community Risk Management Plan 2019 - 2023 (CRMP). This document is the Authority's programme for securing continuous improvement in its services and outlines the Authority's vision, objectives and priorities for the future, sets performance targets and outlines the Authority's accountability to its stakeholders and the communities.

Within Bedfordshire the assessment of all fire and rescue related risk to life and injury formulates the basis of the production of the CRMP. When identifying priorities for the CRMP the views of stakeholders and the communities are taken into account to ensure that they are aware of the aims, objectives, priorities and performance of BFRA.

The CRMP aims to inform our communities of our plans and ensures that the Service contributes, in a coordinated and meaningful way towards keeping our communities safe. The CRMP is a long term plan that is refreshed annually to assist the Service in being more agile and responsive to locally identified needs and trends. This approach enables the effective targeting of resources to prevent incidents occurring in the first place, whilst putting resources in the right location to best protect the

communities.

The CRMP has an action plan which is reported against to monitor progress of the key work streams identified by the document.

In 2019/20 BFRS carried out further research and consultation to help better understand our communities to inform our approach to risk BFRS also worked with its staff to develop a new set of Service values. A [refreshed for 2020/21 CRMP has now been issued](#) and will be referenced during next year's Statement of Assurance. This document contains a new action plan and incorporates the new Service values.

Each quarter we consult those people who have received a Safe and Well Visit and those businesses who have taken part in a Fire Safety Audit, as well as those involved in incidents, to ensure they have been satisfied with the services they receive from BFRS. This ensures BFRS continually monitor our customer service and are able to respond to any issues that might arise when delivering services to our communities.

4.4 Mutual Aid and Reinforcement Schemes

[Sections 13](#) and [16](#) of the Fire and Rescue Services Act 2004 place a requirement on all FRAs to enter in to Mutual Aid agreements with neighbouring FRs. The purpose of these agreements is to enable the summoning of assistance to provide and utilise resources such as fire engines when required to attend a range of incidents. In addition to Mutual Aid, FRAs, as far as is practicable, should enter into Reinforcement Schemes, for securing mutual assistance between authorities and for the purpose of discharging their functions. BFRA has in place mutual agreements with neighbouring FRAs. In addition the Service, through National Resilience, provides specialist appliances and crews for mass decontamination. See 4.6.

4.5 Business Continuity Arrangements

The [Fire and Rescue Services Act 2004](#) and the [Civil Contingencies Act 2004](#) places a legal duty for all FRAs to write and maintain plans for the purpose of ensuring, so far as reasonably practicable, that if an emergency occurs the Authority is able to continue its functions.

In response to these duties BFRA has robust Business Continuity Management (BCM) plans in place which are integral in managing corporate risk and provides, in the event of a major disruption, a Fire and Rescue Service to the community. The BCM plans cover a broad range of interruptions for specific events such as wide spreading Pandemics through to individual functional disruptions

within the Service. These plans provide resilience arrangements across the entire Service.

In summary our BCM plans provide clear and defined strategies to be adapted to aid achievement of the following objectives:

- Provide a response to events that threaten the delivery of services to the community of Bedfordshire;
- Protect the Service from business interruptions;
- In the event of business interruptions to provide a coordinated recovery; and,
- Facilitate a risk management culture embedded into the Service to enable risks to be identified and managed effectively.

The Service Pandemic Business Continuity Plan was utilised in March 2020 to formulate the Service response to the COVID-19 pandemic. The plan focused our planning and delivery of services with our response to COVID-19 creating opportunities to swiftly review, develop and deliver new ways of working for our staff, partners and communities. The Service response to COVID-19 was inspected by HMICFRS in October 2020. HMICFRS are due to publish the results of this inspection in January 2021. More details will be provided in the 2020/21 Statement of Assurance.

The Service is a member of the NFCC Business Continuity Group. This gives the Service access to information on best BCM practice for the Fire and Rescue Sector.

4.6 National Resilience

The UK Fire and Rescue Service forms an integral part of the Governments National Resilience capability as Category 1 Responders.

Category 1 Responders include Blue-light emergency services as well Local Authorities and NHS hospitals etc. where the capacity and capability of FRSs work together with Category 1, and Category 2 Responders (Utilities/Transport infrastructure providers etc.) to deliver a sustained and effective response to major incidents, emergencies and disruptive challenges.

In addition to working with other FRAs, BFRA work closely with and are members of the [Bedfordshire Local Resilience Forum](#) (BLRF) which is a statutory body covering a police force area, designed to bring together Category 1 and Category 2 Responders for multi-agency co-operation and information sharing. This is in line with the Civil Contingencies Act (2004) which states every area of the United Kingdom is required to establish a Local Resilience Forum.

BFRA is a major contributor to national and regional resilience with the capability to respond to major disasters and terrorist attacks where some types of incident that are larger in scale may require a Fire and Rescue Service response.

BFRA are actively involved in National Resilience arrangements and hold a Module for Mass Decontamination. The Service also has Water Rescue national assets which have been mobilised to assist other Fire and Rescue Services on several occasions, this would be following requests from the National Resilience Fire Control based in Merseyside.

BFRS, one of several FRSs in the UK have a Special Response Team (SRT) to support Police and Ambulance operations. This team is exercised on a regular basis with other Category 1 Responders ensuring that the team is ready for operational deployment. As part of the assurance process to the Service, the Specialist Response Team were audited in 2016 as part of the National Audit Programme and a number of areas were highlighted as notable practice.

5. Awards and Commendations

The Long Service and Good Conduct medal is awarded to operational members of the Fire and Rescue Service who have completed 20 years meritorious service and are awarded under Royal Warrant. In 2019/20 four members of the BFRS were awarded the Long Service and Good Conduct Medal.

Each year the Service hosts a Celebration of Success Awards night, where staff are recognised for their personal achievements in education and development, professional conduct, community and charitable activity and meritorious service.



6. Future Improvements

The financial settlements from Central Government for FRAs since 2010 have significantly reduced, leading to the need for increased efficiencies from existing resources and developing new ways of working to meet the funding reductions. The Authority's Community Risk Management Plan (CRMP) process is the principle route for the development of a balanced approach to reducing risks within the community and to the delivery of future improvements. The current CRMP covers the period 2019-23 and incorporates an action plan across 6 aims. The CRMP can be viewed on our website [here](#).

During In 2020/21 the Service will continue with its collaborative projects, which deliver efficiency savings as well as benefits to the communities we serve. The Service has numerous effective collaborations in place with the Police, the East of England Ambulance Service Trust (EEAST) and other partners.

During 2019/20 the Blue Light Collaboration Governance structure supported the organisation to continue to collaborate and enabled a reporting stream to the FRA.

The Service continues to facilitate Blue Light collaboration conferences to build on the collaborative success that has already been identified.

Current collaborative projects that extend into 2020/21 include the following:

- An increasing number of Police colleagues are being provided with access to Service premises to help them manage their time more efficiently and achieve higher visibility in local communities. Police and Fire Hubs are now embedded at Leighton Buzzard, Toddington, Ampthill and Bedford, with drop-in sites being trailed at Dunstable.
- The Service is continuing with assisting Police colleagues in searches for missing vulnerable people. In 2019/20 the Service was informed of 23 incidents and mobilised to 13 to assist the police with searching. A further evaluation will be undertaken in 2020/21.
- The process for safeguarding people with dementia, the “Herbert Protocol” partnership with Bedfordshire Police will continue into 2020 and beyond, there are plans to enable electronic membership applications on the Service website.
- The Service is now providing a Dementia “Safety First” Home Safety Scheme in Partnership with NHS.
- In January 2020 we launched a pilot falls response team using our Prevention Team. The team have been trained by EEAST, with the skills required to the level of Community First Responders. This falls service operates during the working week, complementing the range of safety activities our staff are already delivering in that time. This service will be continued in 2020/21.
- Work began in 2018/19 and to continue in 2020/21 to explore a joint Driver training collaboration which enables Response car driver training during peak demands for partners within Police and Ambulance.

- Work completed in 2019/20 established a trained and competent team of Motor Cycle Instructor training. It is now possible to train other Blue Light organisation and in 2020/21 consideration of marketing the training will be given.
- In 2019/20, The Service and Police jointly recruited to a countywide Chaplaincy service.
- In 2019/20 BCH police trained 10 drone pilots for the Service to enable a strong collaborative approach to drone operations. Work is progressing to fly under one collective agreement between BCH Police and BCH Fire.
- In 2019/20 the Service undertook a pilot to service ambulances for EEAST, the trial was successful and a workstream is in place to expand the Service capability to service more vehicles through 2020.
- Work started in 2019 to look at a pilot to servicing Northamptonshire FRS hydraulic cutting equipment. This work is initially for a fixed 6-month period but will be reviewed in 2020/21 to look at opportunities in the future.
- The Service will continue into 2020/21 to support EEAST through the secondment of firefighters to drive ambulances to aid ambulance capacity during the pandemic.
- The Service will continue to provide the Command Support Function to the Local Resilience Forum Tactical and Strategic Command Groups.

Once completed, delivered, and integrated these projects will provide improvements to service delivery, safety of the community and partners. More information on our plans for 2020/21 are detailed in our Annual Action Plan which is Appendix A of our [Community Risk Management Plan](#).



7. Conclusion

This Statement of Assurance provides an accurate account of Bedfordshire Fire Authority's Financial, Governance and Operational Assurance arrangements secured from the 1 April 2019 to 31 March 2020.

I am satisfied that Bedfordshire Fire and Rescue Authority conducted its business practices within the appropriate legal framework and standards and that public money was properly accounted for and used economically, efficiently and effectively. This Statement of Assurance was approved by the Audit and Standards Committee on [Insert Date].

Signed
Chief Fire Officer



Signed
Chair Audit and Standards Committee on behalf of the Bedfordshire Fire and Rescue Authority

Signed
Chair of the Bedfordshire Fire and Rescue Authority

GLOSSARY

AGS - Annual Governance Statement

BFRA - Bedfordshire Fire and Rescue Authority

BFRS – Bedfordshire Fire and Rescue Service

BLRF - Bedfordshire Local Resilience Forum

BCM - Business Continuity Management

CIPFA - Chartered Institute of Public Finance and Accountancy

CRMP - Community Risk Management Plan

C&AG - Comptroller and Auditor General

CMT - Corporate Management Team

EEAST - East of England Ambulance Service Trust

FSOT – Fire Service Operations Team

FRA - Fire and Rescue Authority

HMICFRS – Her Majesty’s Inspectorate of Constabulary and Fire & Rescue Services

HR - Human Resources

IFRS - International Financial Reporting Standards

PIs - Performance Indicators

VFM - Value for Money

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REPORT AUTHORS: CHIEF FIRE OFFICER AND TREASURER
SUBJECT: DRAFT 2021/22 REVENUE BUDGET AND CAPITAL PROGRAMME

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

Background Papers:

1. The 2020/21 Budget Book and Medium-Term Financial Strategy.
 2. The 2021/22 Budget Update Paper presented to the FRA on 10th December 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 present information to allow Members to approve and consult further on a draft Revenue Budget, Capital Programme and Council Tax for 2021/22.

RECOMMENDATIONS

That subject to review and consideration of these papers, Members approve a draft budget position to take forward and refine for the final budget meeting on 11th February 2021. The specific recommendations are to approve at this point in time:

1. A draft revenue budget requirement of £31.286m, as per Appendix 1, with a council tax increase of 1.99%.
2. A draft Capital Programme of £1.038m as per Appendix 4.

1. Report Background:

- 1.1 The 2021/22 budget timetable was reviewed by the Fire and Rescue Authority (FRA) at the Members Budget workshop on 19th November and the FRA meeting of 10th December 2020. The timetable has been adhered to.
- 1.2 Budget work to-date has included a robust review and scrutiny of budgets by the Assistant Chief Officer/Treasurer, Chief, Deputy Chief and Assistant Chief Fire Officers, the Finance Team and the Corporate Management Team. Planned meetings have also taken place where the Capital Programme was scrutinised. There has also been one Members' budget workshop in November 2020 where the draft budget was discussed in detail.

There are £513k of new revenue bids, these are mainly for resources/posts and digital transformation. There has been a reduction in capital budget requests for 2021/22 of £506k from the indicative 2021/22 figures when setting the 2020/21 budget. The main change has been a rescheduling of vehicle purchases, extending the current life of the vehicles in use. Not all requests were approved at the officer budget scrutiny stage, so the bids included as part of the draft budget are the reduced scrutinised position. These are subject to further review and discussion at the 2nd Members Budget Workshop on 19th January 2021.

1.3 The next stages of the budget process, in accordance with the timetable, are summarised in Table 1 below:

Table 1: 2021/22 Budget timetable extract from the date of 12 January 2020 onwards.

Fire and Rescue Authority (FRA)	Draft budget approved.	12 January 2021
Public Consultation	End of December 2020 to 31 January 2021.	End of December 2020 to 31 January 2021
Corporate Management Team (CMT)	Update to CMT as required.	January 2021
FRA	2nd Members budget workshop – with bids scrutiny, updates on consultation responses received etc.	19 January 2021
FRA	2021/22 Budget and Council Tax Precept set.	11 February 2021

1.4 The Authority is proposing a draft budget for 2021/22 that takes into account the aims and objectives of the service and prioritises the resources available for front line services, in line with the Community Risk Management Plan (CRMP).

It does this by:

- a. Proposing a council tax increase of 1.99%. This equates to an increase from £100.41 to £102.41, therefore a £2.00 increase per Band D equivalent property per year or just under 4 pence per week.
- b. Proposing the continuation of significant efficiency savings over the period 2021/22 to 2024/25 which totals £0.704m.
- c. Examining all possible savings and other ways of reducing expenditure or increasing income without affecting service levels.

- 1.5 The Authority when reviewing this draft budget report may choose to make amendments to the draft revenue and capital budgets presented or to the draft council tax increase and adjust the budget proposals accordingly, in consultation with the Treasurer and the Chief Fire Officer. There will be the 2nd Members Budget Workshop on 19th January 2021, when Members will again discuss the proposed 2021/22 budget in detail prior to the final budget setting in February 2021.

2. Issues and Overview

- 2.1 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 25th 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.

- 2.2 Following the announcement of the CSR, the provisional financial settlement was announced on 17th December. The figures are summarised in Table 2 below:

Table 2: Provisional Formula Funding Settlement

	2020/21 £m	2021/22 £m	£m ch an ge
Revenue Support Grant (RSG)	2.320	2.333	0.013
Business Rates baseline funding	5.942	5.942	0
Settlement Funding Assessment	8.262	8.275	0.013

- 2.3 The Settlement Funding Assessment (SFA) is the Government's assessment of the funding that the Authority requires. This can be broken down into Revenue Support Grant (RSG), the Authority's Business Rates Baseline (how much is collected locally and allocated to the Fire and Rescue Service) and the Government's Business Rates Baseline Top up. The figure for 2021/22 includes the increased RSG from 2020/21 by £13k to £2.333m for 2021/22 and the currently estimated Business Rates income (as shown in the MTRP lines 52 and 53 with updated locally collected figures).
- 2.4 The employer firefighter pensions grant will be received again for a third year in 2021/22, at £1.7m. It has been indicated that this will be the final year received as a grant, as it will be included as part of the overall financial settlement from 2022/23 onwards. This confirmation negates the need for budget allocation towards this, so this has been reflected in the attached Medium Term Revenue Plan.
- 2.5 Capital - Prior to 2013/14 the Authority received in excess of £1m capital grant funding per annum. A bidding process was introduced in 2013/14 and continued until 2015/16. There have not been any capital grants or bidding rounds post 2015/16.
- 2.6 The 2021/22 budget assumptions and uncertainties, for transparency, are detailed in Appendix 2. Key pressures and uncertainties include pay awards, employers pension contributions, the continuation of grants and the Emergency Services Network costs.
3. Business Rates Retention/Formula Funding
- 3.1 As can be seen from Appendix 1, it is currently forecast that there will be a minimal increase in Revenue Support Grant to the Authority in 2021/22 at £2.333m, up £13k from the 2020/21 amount of £2.320m. This is after a 20% reduction or £0.573m in equivalent funding between the financial years 2018/19 and 2020/21. The MTRP factors in Revenue Support Grant funding being static between the years 2021/22 and 2024/25. This is subject to the Comprehensive Spending Review in 2021/22 and the outcome of the Business Rates Review. RSG may cease as a grant with business rates share/income increasing to compensate.

As our business rate baseline is lower than the baseline funding level, we are a 'top up' authority and receive a payment from central government. All Fire and Rescue Services are top up authorities. Fire grants such as for Firelink and New Dimensions are outside of the BRR scheme.

The Authority could be impacted by 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.

Table 3 below details the estimated business rates income from the three unitary authorities. This has decreased by (£117k) for 2021/22, based on the previously estimated 2021/22 predictions.

Table 3: Business Rates Income

Authority	2020/21	Forecast Original 2021/22 at time of 2020/21 budget setting	Current Forecast 2021/22	Variance Original to Revised 2021/22
	£'000	£'000	£'000	£'000
Bedford	657	667	675	8
Luton	672	686	653	(33)
Central Bedfordshire	970	1,062	970	(92)
Total	2,299	2,415	2,298	(117)

The figures above are indicative at this stage; final figures will be used for the budget setting report in February 2021.

4. Council Tax Taxbase

- 4.1 Table 4 below shows the estimated change in the taxbase between 2020/21 and 2021/22. These are the current estimated taxbase figures for 2021/22 received to date from the local billing authorities.
- 4.2 As can be seen from the table below, the forecast 2021/22 taxbase figures provided or estimated when setting the 2020/21 budget, have decreased by 5,206 Band D equivalent properties. This decrease will result in reduced council tax revenues for the Authority of £541k in 2021/22. This may have a longer term overall impact on the MTRP in the following years, we are yet to see how the taxbase will pick up post pandemic.

Table 4: Taxbase (Band D equivalents)

Council	2020/21 Taxbase	Indicative 2021/22 Estimates when setting 2020/21 budget	Councils Revised 2021/22 Estimates	Variance Original to Revised 2021/22	Original forecast income 2021/22 £'000	Revised forecast income 2021/22 £'000	Variance £'000
Bedford Borough	60,943.00	62,484	58,919	(3,565)	6,399	6,034	(365)
Luton	51,828.70	52,347	51,087	(1,260)	5,361	5,232	(129)
Central Bedfordshire	105,134.00	107,079	106,698	(381)	10,966	10,927	(39)
Total	217,905.70	221,910	216,704	(5,206)	22,726	22,193	(533)

The figures above are indicative at this stage; final figures will be used for the budget setting report in February 2021.

There is a new grant to support local authorities and their reductions in taxbase, called the Local Council Tax Support (LCTS) grant. For the Authority the grant, that is currently assumed to be a one off, will be £400k in 2021/22. This is therefore less than the forecast loss of £533k noted above.

5. Collection Fund Deficit

5.1 The Collection Fund Deficits from the three unitary authority authorities are captured in the MTRP at line 58. The updated 2019/20 council tax and/or business rates deficits or surpluses are allocated fully to the 2021/22 financial year, whereas the 2020/21 deficits can be spread over three years, so 2021/22, 2022/23 and 2023/24. The deficits from all unitary authorities are:

- 2021/22 £786k
- 2022/23 £171k
- 2023/24 £170k

5.2 The Authority awaits further information on the 75% support to local authorities on the 75% support for collection fund deficits associated with the 2020/21 element (not the 2019/20 revised figures). This has not yet been included in the figures presented, however, 75% of the in-year deficit would be additional one off income of £384k.

6. Choices (Options) - Revenue Budget

6.1 The council tax freeze grant option ceased for the 2016/17 budget setting period and is therefore not a consideration for this 2021/22 budget.

The 2011/12 freeze grant that the Authority did receive has been built into the formula funding baseline.

6.2 Appendix 1 details a council tax increase at 1.99% for 2021/22 and 1.99% per year thereafter. This is based on need as with these increases, the medium term budget is showing a near balanced position.

6.3 The referendum trigger for council tax will be 2% for 2021/22 as previously indicated.

6.4 As identifiable in Appendix 1 the Authority has:

- Planned savings and efficiencies over the medium-term of £0.704m to assist in balancing the budget and offset the Government's funding reductions (MTRP line 21).
- Implementing the Transformational Reserves Strategy that was set up in the 2011/12 Medium-Term Financial Plan, setting earmarked reserves aside to utilise to balance the budget in following years whilst the savings and efficiencies were/are being planned and implemented (MTRP line 43).
- Focused on the medium-term, as well as the 2021/22 tax setting year, to ensure that there is an outstanding fire and rescue service that we can all be proud of in the future.
- Budgeted for revenue contributions to capital, to enable future funding of the Capital Programme to be met from internal resources and not new borrowing (MTRP line 18).

As well as the focus on savings and efficiencies, the Authority is also aiming to maximise its income generation from chargeable services, investments and property rental.

- 6.5 Further work has again been carried out for this budget round on savings and efficiencies and these are summarised in Appendix 3, covering the period 2021/22 to 2024/25. Work continues on this and it is at least annually reviewed and refreshed.
7. Transformational Earmarked Reserve (TEMR)
- 7.1 Following the last few years of contributing to the TEMR as per the agreed financial strategy, these monies are now being used to smooth the introduction of the savings/efficiencies, are being invested in transformational initiatives and also support closing the budget gap in the medium-term.
- 7.2 The balance of the TEMR as at 1 April 2021 is forecast to be £2.485m. As identified in Appendix 1, £1.932m has been allocated over the 2021/22 to 2024/25 years, currently leaving a gap to balance the 2024/25 financial year. This position will be discussed further and closed at the 2nd Members Budget workshop.
- 7.3 The FRA has previously approved (meeting of 21st October 2020) that the forecast 2020/21 year end underspend is allocated to a new Collection Fund deficit reserve. The latest forecast outturn position will be reported to the FRA at the February 2021 meeting. Line 58 in the MTRP currently shows this reserve being allocated at £700k.

7.4 The Authority's Officers and Treasurer recommend that at least a Council Tax increase of 1.99% should be implemented. This is based on need, as the current MTRP shows that there is likely to be a budget gap in 2025/26 to close. As this is based on numerous funding assumptions, there is planning time between now and 2024/25 to implement additional savings and efficiencies if the forecasts become reality. However, these do need to be researched, planned and implemented, so there is a significant lead time for large scale savings and efficiency options that will be required to close a base revenue budget gap in 2025/26. The Transformational Efficiency Reserve will also be continued in the medium-term to assist in future year's budget setting, with investments in innovation to close the budget gap and improve the efficiency of the Authority's resources.

8. Capital Programme

8.1 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 base budget revenue contribution of £1.3m per annum, which fluctuates in line with the varying funding demand (MTRP line 18). This is with the assumption that capital grants are not forthcoming. If the capital funding from 2022/23 changes, the base budget revenue contributions could reduce. No new borrowing is currently planned in the medium term, however, this could change and would be discussed with FRA Members if this was anticipated.

8.2 The Capital Programme, as per the approved timetable, has followed the same robust challenge/scrutiny route as the revenue budget. CMT has also reviewed and assessed the bids made, supporting the schemes that are attached at Appendix 4 as the 2021/22 Capital Programme.

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

- Investment in our front line operational equipment
- Investment in ICT and software.
- Investment in the modernisation of our buildings (office and operational).

8.4 The FRA Treasurer will be reviewing the capital reserves and it is likely some will be un-earmarked/released to support the funding of the 2021/22 capital programme. This will ease the financial pressures in this year and support the medium term with this one off un-earmarking.

9. Budget Consultation

9.1 The budget consultation questions were approved by the FRA at the meeting on 10th December 2020. The consultation, in conjunction with the Community Risk Management Plan consultation, is currently underway.

10. Implications

10.1 **Financial:**

10.1.1 The implications to highlight are:

- With the medium term financial uncertainty, due to a one year settlement and the forthcoming anticipated changes from 2021/22, a prudent level of general and earmarked reserves are being retained.
- Should there be a change to the referendum limit in a future year, the Authority will consider the options presented at that time.

10.2 **Medium-Term Implications:**

10.2.1 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 and beyond. There are significant efficiency savings over this period that will require action in the short term if they are to be secured within the planned timescales.

10.3 **Robustness of Estimates and Adequacy of Reserves:**

10.3.1 The Local Government Act 2003 places a duty on the Section 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 will do this for the final budget that is set post consultation on 11 February 2021.

10.3.2 Budget work to-date has included a robust review and scrutiny of budgets by the Assistant Chief Officer/Treasurer, Chief and Deputy Chief Fire Officers, the Finance Team, Corporate Management Team and one FRA Members' budget workshop.

In addition to the Authority's own council tax, there are separate council taxes for the Police Service, the local authorities of Central Bedfordshire, Bedford, Luton and their associated parishes that taxpayers will see on their council tax bills.

10.4 Use of Balances:

10.4.1 A prudent level of reserves, along with appropriate contributions to and from reserves, should be part of the overall budget. Ernst & Young, the Authority's external auditors, reported in their Opinion of the 2019/20 Statement of Accounts on 23rd December 2020, that the Authority had appropriate arrangements in place to secure efficiency, effectiveness and economy in our use of resources.

10.4.2 As noted above in this report, it is anticipated that the Transformational Reserve will be fully utilised over the medium term. The General Reserves has reduced from £2.6m in 2020/21 to £2.4m in 2021/22. Further discussions will be held with the Authority at the 2nd Members budget workshop on reducing this further in a latter year.

10.4.3 The revenue contributions to capital have built up over a number years to circa £1.3m per annum. This is a capital funding source to be utilised annually from 2021/22.

10.5 Resources and Risk:

10.5.1 The resource implications are detailed throughout this report, appendices and in the current Medium Term Financial Strategy.

10.5.2 The Authority's General and Earmarked reserves have been reviewed against the revised corporate risk register and these will be presented and discussed at the second Members' budget workshop on 19th January 2021.

10.6 Legal:

10.6.1 The Authority must set a balanced budget for 2021/22 by midnight on 1 March 2021.

10.6.2 The Authority has specific legal duties in relation to equalities and financial decision-making – see below.

10.6.3 There are no further specific legal issues arising from this report.

10.7 Equality:

10.7.1 Under the equality duty (set out in the Equality Act 2010), public authorities must have ‘due regard’ to the need to eliminate unlawful discrimination, harassment and victimisation as well as to advance equality of opportunity and foster good relations between people who share a protected characteristic and those who do not. The law requires that public authorities demonstrate that they have had ‘due regard’ to the aims of the equality duty in their decision-making. Assessing the potential impact on equality of proposed changes to policies, procedures and practices is one of the key ways in which public authorities can demonstrate that they have ‘due regard’.

10.7.2 It is also important to note that public authorities subject to the equality duty are also likely to be subject to the Human Rights Act 1998. It is therefore recommended that public authorities consider the potential impact their decisions could have on human rights.

10.7.3 Decisions should include a consideration of the actions that would help to avoid or mitigate any impacts on particular protected characteristics. Decisions should be based on evidence, be transparent, comply with the law and it is important that a record is kept.

10.7.4 Due regard has been and will be considered as part of the budget build process.

The Appendices are set out as follows:

- Appendix 1 – Draft 2021/22 Revenue Budget with a 1.99% council tax increase and Pay Award Freeze in 2021/22.
- Appendix 2 – Summary of planning assumptions and uncertainties.
- Appendix 3 – Medium-Term Savings and Efficiencies.
- Appendix 4 – Draft 2021/22 Capital Programme.

PAUL M FULLER CBE QFSM MStJ DL
CHIEF FIRE OFFICER

GAVIN CHAMBERS
ASSISTANT CHIEF OFFICER/TREASURER

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1st FRA Meeting 12th January 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
Base Budget		30,328	32,035	32,035	31,682	32,036	32,443
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	90	30	0	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	Total Base Budget Adjustments	651	377	-591	33	54	25
15							
16	Forecast Variations						
17	Investment Interest Decrease/(Increase)	-25	-10	50	0	0	0
18	Revenue Contribution to Capital	-1,076	1,084	683	118	-170	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	208	-81	31	0
23	Total Forecast Variations	-375	-98	-165	-161	-301	1,384
24							
25	Inflation						
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 Inflation at 2% 2021/22 - 2024/25	75	76	76	78	81	82
36	Total Inflation	1,058	704	210	499	630	643
37							
38	Budget Pressures						
39	FMS3' bids (Current Year MTFP process)	477	199	513	182	80	62
40	FMS3' bids (Previous Years MTFP process)	-104	-320	-320	-199	-56	0
41							
42	Estimated Net Revenue Expenditure	32,035	32,897	31,682	32,036	32,443	34,557
43	Contribution to/from Transformational Earmarked Reserves	-973	-1,101	-396	-505	-161	-1,334
44							
45	Estimated Budget Requirement	31,063	31,796	31,286	31,531	32,282	33,223
46							
47	Budget Requirement Increase Year on Year	1,226.7	1,506.0	223.9	-265.7	995.4	1,692.5
48	% Budget Increase	4.1%	5.0%	0.7%	-0.8%	3.2%	5.4%
49							
50	Financed by:						
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	2,298	2,321	2,344	2,368
54	Business Rate Top Up	3,839	3,901	3,840	3,878	3,917	3,956
55	Adjusted 2019/20 Business Rates Top Up following revised VOA list	50	0	0	0	0	0
56	Business Rates Grant (multiplier compensation)	303	236	309	309	309	309
57	Collection Fund Surplus/(Deficit)	368	200	-786	-171	-170	0
58	Use of Collection Fund Deficit Reserve	0	0	700	0	0	0
59	Council Tax (the remainder)	21,880	22,726	22,192	22,860	23,549	24,257
60	New Local Council Tax Support Grant (to compensate for taxbase reductions)	0	0	400	0	0	0
61	Redistribution of Business Rates Retention Levy Account surplus	0	0	0	0	0	0
62							
63		31,063	31,796	31,286	31,531	32,282	33,223
64							
65	Band D equivalent Tax base	217,906	221,910	216,704	218,871	221,060	223,270
66	% change on Band D's	2.30%	1.84%	-0.55%	1.00%	1.00%	1.00%
67	Leading to an average council tax (Band D) of	100.41	102.41	102.41	104.45	106.53	108.65
68							
69	% increase	1.99%	1.99%	1.99%	1.99%	1.99%	1.99%
70							
71							
72	Use of Transformational Reserves Summary	Proposed	Proposed	Proposed	Proposed	Proposed	Proposed
73		2020/21	2021/22	2021/22	2022/23	2023/24	2024/25
74		£000s	£000s	£000s	£000s	£000s	£000s
75	Transformational Earmark Reserve for Budget Setting	3,507	2,485	2,485	1,839	1,084	673
76		0	0	0	0	0	0
77	Contribution to/from Transformational Earmarked Reserves	-973	-1,101	-396	-505	-161	-1,334
78	Annual use of Transformational Reserve for Strategic Projects and Improvements	-250	-250	-250	-250	-250	-250
79	Reduction of General Reserve from £2.6m to £2.4m in 20/21, potential to reduce further	200	0	0	0	0	0
80	Net Balance Transformational Earmark Reserves	2,485	1,134	1,839	1,084	673	-911

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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 award 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 low 1% increase in 2022/23 onwards).
- Business rates reduced from previous indications with again limited increases built in until further information is received from Unitary Authorities
- 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. This has not yet been built into the figures until further clarification is received. This is potentially £384k.

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.

Draft FRA Budget Meeting 12th January 2021

Appendix 3

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)				
		<u>New for 2021/22 Budget Setting Process</u>				
	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			
328			181	239	184	100

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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
	Scheme				
	Fleet:				
1	Revised - Vehicles/associated equipment (See bid sheet for detail)	707	783	477	1,785
	ICT Projects:				
	IT Developments				
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	
	General:				
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
	New for 2021/22				
11	Dunstable Fire Station - Internal Rope Rescue Training Platform (working at height WAH)	15	0	0	0
12	Future Capital Programme Schemes (yet to be finalised, reviewed and approved)	0	0	0	0
13	Future ICT Capital Schemes (yet to be finalised, reviewed and approved)	0	200	0	250
14	Compressors - Dunstable and Bedford	30			
	TOTAL	1,038	1,161	1,006	2,445
	Capital Financing Summary				
	RCCO = Revenue Contribution to Capital	1,003	1,121	951	2,415
	Capital Receipts & Reserve Utilisation	35	40	55	30
	Total	1,038	1,161	1,006	2,445

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REPORT AUTHOR: CHIEF FIRE OFFICER

SUBJECT: WORK PROGRAMME 2020/21

For further information on this report contact: Nicky Upton
Service Assurance Manager

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:

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
12 January 2021			Budget Setting	Requested by Officers
			2020/21 Revenue Budget and Capital Programme Monitoring	Deferred from December Deferred to February
			ASC Minutes from (01.12.20) (including Statement of Assurance)	

Meeting Date	'Cyclical' Agenda Items		Additional/Commissioned Agenda Items	
	Item	Notes	Item	Notes
11 February 2021	Communications			
	Blue Light Collaboration Strategic Board			
	ASC Minutes from 01.12.20 (including Statement of Assurance)	Reported at January meeting		
	Q3 Projects and Programmes Update			
	Revenue Budget and Capital Programme Monitoring			
	The 2020/21 Revenue Budget, Capital Programme and Council Tax setting			
	2020/21 Community Risk Management Plan			
	Treasury Management Strategy and Practices			
	Localism Act 2011 – Pay Policy Statement 2021			
	Proposed Indicators and Targets for 2021/22			
	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			
	Blue Light Collaboration Strategic Board			
	Q3 Performance			
	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			