



# Bedfordshire Fire & Rescue Authority

26 September 2023

Members of Fire and Rescue Authority.

Bedford Borough Councillors: G Coombes, M Headley and A Sultan

Central Bedfordshire Councillors: R Goodchild, K Gurney, S Owen, M Versallion and R Wenham

Luton Borough Councillors: A Ali, J Burnett, M Hussain and S Hussain

Your attendance is requested at a meeting of the **Fire and Rescue Authority** to be held at **Dunstable Community Fire Station, Lecture Theatre** on **Tuesday, 3 October 2023** starting at **10.00 am**, for the transaction of the following business:

Graham Britten  
Monitoring Officer

## A G E N D A

Item	Subject	Lead	Purpose of Discussion
1.	Apologies	Democratic and Regulatory Services Supervisor	

<b>Item</b>	<b>Subject</b>	<b>Lead</b>	<b>Purpose of Discussion</b>
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 19 July 2023 (Pages 5 - 12)
5.	Public Participation	Chair	To receive any questions put to the Authority under the Public Participation Scheme
6.	Executive Committee 21 September 2023	Chair	To receive the minutes of the Executive Committee meeting held on 21 September 2023 (Pages 13 - 24)
7.	Planning report for 2024/25 Revenue Budget, Capital Programme and Council Tax Setting	ACO	To consider a report (Pages 25 - 30)
8.	Treasury Management Annual Report	ACO	To consider a report (Pages 31 - 42)
9.	Q1 2023/24 Performance Report (April to June)	DCFO	To consider a report (Pages 43 - 64)
10.	Annual Report	CFO	To consider a report (Pages 65 - 104)
11.	HMICFRS Inspection update	CFO	To consider a report (Pages 105 - 170)
12.	Community Panel	ACFO	To consider a report (Pages 171 - 176)
13.	Work Programme	CFO	To consider a report (Pages 177 - 188)

Item	Subject	Lead	Purpose of Discussion
Next Meeting		10.00 am on 7 December 2023 at Dunstable Community Fire Station, Lecture Theatre	

### **DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST**

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

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

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**MINUTES OF FIRE AND RESCUE AUTHORITY  
MEETING HELD ON 19 JULY 2023**

Present: Councillors J Burnett, G Coombes, R Goodchild, M Headley, M Hussain, S Owen, A Sultan and R Wenham  
CFO A Hopkinson, DCFO C Bigland, ACFO A Kibblewhite, ACO G Chambers, Mr G Britten (MO), Mrs K Heard, Ms L Fair and Mrs N Upton

23-24/FRA/12 Apologies

Apologies for absence were received from Councillors Ali, S Hussain and Versallion.

23-24/FRA/13 Declarations of Disclosable Pecuniary and Other Interests

There were no declarations of interests.

23-24/FRA/14 Communications

**Service Awards and Values Evening**

The Chair reported on the Service Awards and Values evening which was held the previous week at Cranfield University. She commented that it was pleasing to see staff being recognised for their good work.

There had also been a Cadets Awards Evening on 15 July 2023. One of the cadets had been awarded a scholarship and this had been acknowledged at the event.

**Protection Uplift Grant**

The Chair advised that the Service had been awarded an extra protection uplift grant of approximately £153,000.

The Chief Fire Officer added that this would enable the Protection Team to continue to undertake additional building responsibilities that arose following the Grenfell Towers tragedy.

In response to a question, the Deputy Chief Fire Officer reported that the grant funding would be allocated towards qualifications for staff to achieve the appropriate standard to carry out their additional responsibilities, as well as the recruitment of additional staff to assist with the increased workload. The increase in demand, which included work relating to Homes in Multiple Occupation, had been reported to Members recently during a presentation on protection and enforcement.

### **Risk of the Service being unable to provide an operational response**

The Chief Fire Officer provided an update following the discussion of the lowering of this risk at the Audit and Standards Committee on 6 July 2023 following the agreement around the fire fighters pay award and the subsequent reduced threat of imminent industrial action. However, further industrial action could not be ruled out should the Government's response to the consultation on the White Paper "Reforming our Fire Service", which was expected before the summer recess and had now been delayed, contained contentious issues. Members were provided with assurance that the Service kept its contingency plans under constant review and that the risk would be re-evaluated subject to any proposals arising from the White Paper response.

### **Fire Incident in Luton**

The Deputy Chief Fire Officer updated Members on the fire incident that took place on 18 July 2023 in Skyline Place, a high-rise building in Luton. The Service had coordinated a five pump response, with additional specialist equipment also being dispatched to the scene, including the aerial platform. The first two appliances arrived at the incident within 5 minutes, and the fire, although very aggressive, had been contained to the flat of origin, with no fire spread. No members of the public were injured, although a fire fighter had been treated for minor burns.

The Police and Ambulance Service had also been in attendance and a major incident had been declared, although this was later de-escalated.

In response to a question, Members were advised that all major incidents were reviewed by the Organisational Assurance Working Group to identify any learning points. This was an internal process; however, Members would receive information at some events through communications at meetings and also through the Bulletin and performance monitoring reports presented to the Authority.

Members recognised the timely response to the incident and the success in containing the fire to the flat of origin.

### **Water-related Incident in Bedford**

The Assistant Chief Fire Officer reported that a canoeist on the Great Ouse had reported a woman lying face down in the water along The Embankment in Bedford on 16 July 2023. Service personnel had attended the scene, retrieved the woman from the river and performed

CPR and first aid on the individual, who had subsequently been transferred to hospital and remained in hospital. It was not yet known if the woman intended to enter the water or not.

It was noted that there had been two recent drowning incidents in the river and that the Service was holding a water safety awareness event on 25 July 2023, as water related incidents were on an upwards trajectory as a result of the hot and wet weather.

The Chief Fire Officer reported on additional water safety measures that had been implemented, such as the provision of reach poles on The Embankment and at Harrold Odell Country Park. All staff were trained in water rescue and the Service was improving both its preventative work and facilities for response in this area.

#### 23-24/FRA/15 Minutes

##### **RESOLVED:**

That the Minutes of the Annual General Meeting of the Fire and Rescue Authority held on 20 June 2023 be confirmed as a true record.

#### 23-24/FRA/16 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).

#### 23-24/FRA/17 Audit & Standards Committee meeting 6 July 2023

The Chair presented the Minutes of the Audit and Standards Committee meeting held on 6 July 2023 in the absence of Councillor Ali.

##### **RESOLVED:**

That the submitted minutes of the meeting of the Audit and Standards Committee held on 6 July 2023 be noted.

#### 23-24/FRA/18 Executive Committee meeting 11 July 2023

The Chair introduced the Minutes of the meeting of the Executive Committee held on 11 July 2023.

##### **RESOLVED:**

That the submitted minutes of the meeting of the Audit and Standards Committee held on 6 July 2023 be noted.

## 23-24/FRA/19 Terms of Reference of Fire Authority

The Monitoring Officer introduced his report on proposed changes to the Terms of Reference of the Fire and Rescue Authority which arose from discussions around Lead Member areas at the meeting of the Executive on 11 July 2023. These related exclusively to updating the Lead Member roles, which were specifically set out in the Terms of Reference that had been approved by the Fire and Rescue Authority at the conclusion of the governance review in March 2023.

Following the decision of the Fire and Rescue Authority to delegate the appointment to Lead Member Roles at the Annual General Meeting on 20 June 2023 to the Executive Committee, that Committee, at its meeting on 11 July 2023, was presented with, and agreed in principle, re-designated Lead Member roles that would be more compatible with the strategic aims of the Authority following the adoption of a new Community Risk Management Plan.

The changes were set out in full in Appendix 2 to the report. Three of the roles were substantially, if not completely, the same and so had been appointed to at the meeting.

Two new roles had been proposed: Physical and Digital Assets and Finance, Productivity and Efficiency. The Members nominated for these were the Chair and Vice-Chair, respectively, and the Authority was being asked to agree the changes to the Terms of Reference and ratify the appointments made by the Executive Committee.

The Chief Fire Officer advised that, once the appointments to Lead Member roles were agreed, Principal Officers would make arrangements to meet with and brief Executive Members on their areas of responsibility before the next meeting of the Fire and Rescue Authority.

### **RESOLVED:**

1. That the Amendments to the Authority's Terms of Reference as shown in Appendix 2 of the report be approved.
2. That the appointment of the following members of the Executive Committee into the following Lead Member roles be noted:
  - a. 'Prevention and Protection': Councillor Sultan
  - b. 'Emergency Response and Resilience' (redesignated as 'Emergency Response'): Councillor Goodchild
  - c. 'Workforce and Organisational Development' (redesignated as 'People & Culture'): Councillor Hussain
3. That the appointment of the following members of the Executive Committee into the following Lead Member roles be ratified:
  - a. 'Physical and Digital Assets': Councillor Burnett
  - b. 'Finance, Productivity and Efficiency': Councillor Headley



## 23-24/FRA/20 2022/23 Q4 Year End Performance Report

The Fire and Rescue Authority received a summary of organisational performance at the end of the fourth quarter of the 2022-23 financial year.

The Deputy Chief Fire Officer advised that, in addition to the year to date performance information, data was also provided in comparison to the previous year's performance, as well as the five year average.

In response to questions from Members, the Deputy Chief Fire Officer reported that:

- Primary fires were classed as fires affecting people or property and secondary fires were generally smaller outdoor fires that did not involve people or property. Deliberate fires could be primary or secondary fires.
- Call handling performance was measured both in terms of time of alert to time of response and time of call to time of response. The decision had been made to provide both sets of data to improve transparency. The general increase in incidents would impact on attendance standards and times. The data indicated that the response was 6 seconds over the target time of 10 minutes but under the target time in relation to other incidents. It was also worth noting that increased call challenge could not be undertaken effectively in a very short period of time and asking Control Staff to challenge calls would increase response times. A review would be carried out this year, at the previous request of Members, on attendance standards so that the performance data reported was more meaningful.
- False alarms caused by fire alarm testing should not be responded to, but this was dependent on the level of call challenge.
- Performance data was presented to Members on a quarterly basis.
- Some of the data relating to call handling was not available as the Service had changed mobilising systems during the year.
- The incident relating to the three injuries affecting performance against the indicator measuring days lost due to serious accidents involved a member of the public colliding with a fire appliance. This had been investigated and reviewed by the Organisational Assurance Working Group but was not the fault of the Service.
- Fitness tests were now being undertaken every day and was expected that performance against this measure would improve in the current reporting year.

Ric Brackenbury, Business Application Manager, advised that the new mobilising system was able to extract data from January 2023 so this data could be reported to Members at future meetings.

Stuart Auger, Head of Response, explained that major incidents generated multiple calls and that this could delay response as there were only three operator positions in Fire Control. For example, a vehicle fire on the M1 could generate 50-100 calls.

**RESOLVED:**

That the Service's performance against the delivery of the Authority's Community Risk Management Plan (CRMP) at the end of the fourth quarter 2022-23 be acknowledged.

23-24/FRA/21 2023/24 Revenue Budget and Capital Programme Monitoring

The Assistant Chief Officer and Treasurer presented his report on the forecast year-end (31 March 2024) budget monitoring position as at 31 May 2023.

The Assistant Chief Officer and Treasurer reported that the Authority would receive an additional £460,000 above the budgeted amount in relation to Business Rates Section 31/Tariff top-up Payments, and an increase of £9,000 in Services Grant following the Government's final confirmation for 2023/24 after the budget setting process had been concluded. The Service had also been awarded a Protection grant of £153,000 which was discussed earlier in the meeting.

The income from investments was £180,000 more than forecast as at the end of May and there was a forecast underspend in non-operational staffing as the result of vacancies. The current forecast underspend was approximately £700,000 and Members were being asked to agree an equal apportionment of the forecast underspend/final underspend between the Transformational Reserve and the Pay/Pensions reserve, noting that it was anticipated that pay increases above the levels currently budgeted for would be agreed for future years.

In response to a question, the Assistant Chief Officer confirmed that the year to date staffing figures were on track. These had not been reported on this occasion due to the time lag between the reporting period and the meeting date the report was being submitted for.

The Assistant Chief Officer explained how the Pay and Pensions Reserve had been used to fund the fire fighters pay award for the current financial year. As at 31 March 2023, this reserve stood at £1.126 million. £1 million had been used in the budget-setting process for 2023/24 so the balance was currently £126,000. The transformational earmarked reserve was also used to help in budget-setting over the medium term to prevent the need for rash savings and efficiencies.

The Chief Fire Officer explained that the constant financial challenges facing the public sector, including the unfunded pay awards, had been a factor in introducing a Lead Member role for Finance, Productivity and Efficiency.

In response to a question about the use of the Pay and Pensions reserve, the Assistant Chief Officer explained that the Service personnel were involved in two pension schemes: the fire fighters pension schemes for operational staff and the Local Government Pension Scheme for non-operational staff. The Local Government Pension Scheme was a funded scheme through which assets were invested. The fire fighters pensions schemes were unfunded schemes supported through the Home Office. It was a Member decision to move funds in and out of the Pay and Pensions reserve so these were not ring-fenced.

In response to a further question, the Assistant Chief Officer expressed the view that there were no capital or revenue schemes not already included in the funded Capital Programme which it would be more beneficial to the Service to fund at the expense of allocating the underspend to reserves to assist in future budget-setting.

It was proposed that items 1-5 be taken en bloc with item 6 being considered separately.

**RESOLVED:**

1. That the updates provided within this report be noted.
2. That the receipt of Business Rates income from central government in excess of budget be noted.
3. That the receipt of Services Grant from central government above the budget be noted.
4. That the unbudgeted Protection uplift Grant for 2023/24 be noted.
5. That the forecast increase in Investment income be noted.
6. That it be agreed to apportion equally the forecast underspend to the Transformation Reserve and Pay/Pensions Reserve.

23-24/FRA/22 2023-2027 Community Risk Management Plan (CRMP) - Briefing for new Members

The Chief Fire Officer briefed Members of the new Fire and Rescue Authority on the 2023-27 Community Risk Management Plan (CRMP) which was approved at the Fire and Rescue Authority's meeting on the 30 March 2023 and subsequently published on the Service website.

In response to a question, Members were advised of the extensive consultation process that had been conducted in relation to the CRMP that had resulted in the highest number of responses received to date for a CRMP consultation. This was undertaken using a number of different methods, including attendance at events, one to one interviews, an online survey and direct consultation with stakeholders, partners, and specific groups, such as young people.

It was confirmed that Town and Parish Councils had been consulted as part of this process.

The Assistant Chief Fire Officer advised that the Service has also set up a Community Panel, which first met in May. This would be a valuable asset in terms of community consultation.

In response to a question about how often the CRMP was reviewed, the Chief Fire Officer replied that progress against the CRMP was reported to the Fire and Rescue Authority on at least a 6 monthly basis. An action plan was prepared for each year, with the main body of the CRMP updated every four years.

A review of the Service estate would be undertaken, given the age and condition of some of the stations. Dunstable was the most modern station, built in 2009, followed by Woburn in 1997. The majority of stations dated from the 1970s, and the stations were not necessarily

located in the areas that would help to improve response times to incidents as the population of Bedfordshire continued to increase. This was a major piece of work in which Members would be fully engaged, and the initial discussions would be held on the Member Development Day on 5 October 2023.

**RESOLVED:**

That the content of the Authority's Community Risk Management Plan covering the period 2023-27 be noted.

23-24/FRA/23 Work Programme

Members received the proposed work programme for 2023/24 and were asked if there were any items they would like to be included.

It was noted that, due to diary conflicts, the next meeting of the Fire and Rescue Authority would be held on 3 October 2023. A meeting of the Executive Committee would now be held on the original meeting date of 21 September 2023.

The Chair emphasised the importance of Members attending Member Development Days and Budget Workshops. These were being held on the following dates:

5 October 2023 – Member Development Day at Luton Community Fire Station

30 November 2023 – Member Development Day and Budget Workshop

25 January 2024 – Budget Workshop

29 February 2024 – Member Development Day

The Chief Fire Officer advised that it was his intention to hold these events in different locations so Members could develop a greater understanding of the Service's estate.

**RESOLVED:**

1. That the work programme for 2023/24 be received and the 'cyclical' agenda items for each meeting in 2023/24 be noted.
2. That it be agreed that the next meeting of the Fire and Rescue Authority be held on 3 October 2023, and the next meeting of the Executive Committee be held on 21 September 2023.

The meeting ended at 11.23 am

**SUBJECT:** EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE

**Author and contact:** Nicky Upton, Democratic and Regulatory Services Supervisor  
[Democratic.Services@bedsfire.gov.uk](mailto:Democratic.Services@bedsfire.gov.uk)

Background Papers: None

Appendix	Title	Protective Marking
1	Minutes of the Executive Committee Meeting held on 21 September 2023	

**Implications**

This table provides a short statement of the impact of the recommendations in this report and/or a reference to the relevant paragraph/s in the report.

Will this report affect any of the following?

	Yes / No	Impact / Reference
Financial Implications	No	
Risk Management	No	
Legal Implications	No	

Privacy and Security Implications	No	
Duty to Collaborate	No	
Health and Safety Implications	No	
Equality, Diversity and Inclusion	No	
Environmental Sustainability	No	
Consultation and Communication	Yes	Minutes publicly available to view on the website

**PURPOSE:**

To receive the Minutes of the Executive Committee held on 21 September 2023.

**RECOMMENDATIONS:**

That the submitted minutes of the meeting held on 21 September 2023 be noted.

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1. Executive Summary

1.1 The minutes of the Executive Committee held on 21 September 2023 are appended for Members' consideration.

1.2 The Executive Committee made no recommendations to the Fire Authority.

**COUNCILLOR J BURNETT**  
**CHAIR OF EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE**

**MINUTES OF EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE  
MEETING HELD ON 21 SEPTEMBER 2023**

Present: Councillors J Burnett (Chair), R Goodchild, M Headley (Vice-Chair) and S Hussain  
CFO A Hopkinson, DCFO C Bigland, ACFO A Kibblewhite, ACO G Chambers, Mr G Britten (MO), Ms L Ehren and Mrs N Upton  
Councillor S Owen was in attendance as an observer

23-24/EC/9 Apologies

There were no apologies for absence.

23-24/EC/10 Declaration of Disclosable Pecuniary and Other Interests

There were no disclosures of interest.

23-24/EC/11 Communications

The Chief Fire Officer referred to the publication of the HMICFRS Inspection Report. This would be discussed later in the meeting.

The Chief Fire Officer reported on the visit of the High Sheriff of Bedfordshire that had taken place the previous week. This had been very positive and the High Sheriff had been impressed with the range of activities undertaken by the Service.

23-24/EC/12 Minutes

The Chair requested confirmation that meetings had taken place with Lead Members and relevant senior Officers following the formal appointment to all Lead Member roles at the last meeting of the Fire and Rescue Authority.

The Chief Fire Officer advised that all meetings had taken place, with the exception of a meeting between the Chair and Jason Tai regarding the Service's fleet and equipment assets.

All Lead Members present confirmed that these meetings had taken place and that additional meetings had been diarised.

**RESOLVED:**

That the Minutes of the meeting held on 11 July 2023 be confirmed as a true record.

23-24/EC/13 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).

23-24/EC/14 HMICFRS inspection outcome

The Chief Fire Officer gave a presentation on the outcome of the recent HMICFRS inspection. Of the eleven strands of inspection, the Service had been judged as good in two areas, adequate in four areas and requires improvement in five areas, with a 'cause of concern' identified, which had been discharged prior to the publication of the report. There was a recognition that the Service was prioritising resources to tackle the identified areas for improvement which when addressed should result in an improved grading for the five areas currently judged as requiring improvement.

In terms of the national context, this Service had been one of the first services to be inspected in Round 3 and HMICFRS had recently published another batch of inspection reports, a summary of which was presented to Members. There had been a number of other Services where the Inspectorate had identified a cause for concern. It was noted that there were two types of causes for concern: the type which had been identified for this Service and was included in the inspection report, and an accelerated cause for concern, whereby these were published prior to the release of the inspection report, as the Inspectorate believed that these could result in a public safety risk and were therefore much more serious.

Councillor Headley commented on the lack of a written report to accompany this item.

In response, the Chief Fire Officer advised a detailed report, building upon this briefing to Executive Committee members and including an action plan, was being prepared for submission to the meeting of the Fire and Rescue Authority on 3 October 2023.

The Principal Officers then gave an update on actions being taken to address the areas for improvement identified in the inspection report. These included:

- The development of a Prevention Plan, with a draft due in October 2023.
- More targeted prevention work, with an increase from 46% to 63% of work now targeted towards higher risk communities using new risk stratification tools.



- Improved quality assessment for Home Fire Safety Visits and protection visits.
- The continued development of the Fire Risk Data Warehouse.
- Further provision of education and engagement with the business community to reduce false alarms.
- Modifying equipment to improve response. An example of this was the introduction of a roaming pump in Luton.
- The re-introduction of a buddy system with Essex Fire and Rescue Service to improve Control business continuity arrangements.
- The continued investment in improving on-call availability.
- The implementation of National Operational Guidance.
- Additional resource being allocated to operational assurance.
- The introduction of a digital platform for fire solution guidance.
- Drafting the budget and underlying documents in such a way as to highlight to the Inspectorate the rationale for the allocation of resources for protection, prevention and response.
- The creation of a Productivity and Efficiency Board.
- Bi-monthly Workplace Planning Group meetings to discuss succession planning.
- The production of a talent management policy and the integration of a talent grid into the appraisal process.
- The revision of the grievance procedure and the creation of a post to lead on investigations of grievances.
- The development of core learning pathways to assist in the professional development of corporate staff.

In response to a comment from the Chair on the difficulties of responding to incidents in certain parts of Luton and Bedford due to the width of the roads and size of fire appliances, the Executive was advised that an education campaign had been run in certain areas whereby a fire appliance was parked in the road on some of the most inaccessible streets, so that residents would be aware of the amount of space required for emergency response vehicles. Staff at Luton Community Fire Station had been given contact details for the local parking enforcement officers to address any illegal parking.

The Deputy Chief Fire Officer reported that, in future, the Service was looking to procure smaller fire appliances that could more easily navigate congested urban roads. This was following the current batch of vehicles which were designed to fit the same chassis but had more powerful engines to support pumps that would be able to respond to incidents at high-rise properties.

The importance of working more closely with the Local Planning Authorities in relation to issues such as road width in new developments and in the allocation of Community Infrastructure Levy funding to support the provision of fire hydrants was also discussed. It was suggested that those Members of the Fire and Rescue Authority who were also Members of the Planning Committees of the constituent authorities could facilitate a closer working relationship between Planning Officers and the Service.

Councillor Headley expressed the view that the actions included in the Action Plan would need to have costs associated with them. This information had not yet been provided to Members.

In relation to the cause for concern, the Assistant Chief Fire Officer reported that this arose from the backlog of fitness tests that had developed during the COVID pandemic. When HMICFRS had conducted the inspection, the percentage of operational staff who had passed a fitness test within the last 12 months had been 95%. This had now improved to 98.6%, with the only outstanding tests relating to individuals on long term sickness absence. A Service Fitness Advisor had recently been appointed to the vacant post and would commence in post later that month. Training would be provided so that each station had a station fitness advisor, and the fitness and wellbeing strategy was being refreshed. It was anticipated with the action already taken, the HMICFRS would agree that the cause for concern could be removed.

It was noted that the cause of concern was the only area for improvement identified in the Values and Culture strand of the inspection.

Councillor Owen, who had been present at the Member briefing on 17 August 2023 following the release of the inspection report, was invited by the Chair to share his views. The Chair expressed her views on that meeting. As an individual, she strongly believed in challenge, but also in motivating and appreciating staff so that collectively, the Service could make the improvements required.

The Chief Fire Officer thanked Members for their feedback. He reported that the next round of inspections was in early 2025, however, as a cause for concern had been identified, a re-inspection of that area only would take place in November 2023. The Service Liaison Lead would periodically visit the Service. He expressed the view that the Service Liaison Lead had not been long in post before the inspection had commenced and therefore did not have a detailed working knowledge of the Service which, in his opinion, could have disadvantaged the Service. The level of expectation in Round 3 appeared to be higher and it could not be ascertained how well the Service had fared in comparison to other fire and rescue services until the majority of inspections had been completed. Members were reminded that there had also been many positive areas of performance included in the inspection report.

Councillor Headley reiterated the importance of Members being provided with costs associated with the actions being proposed and the need for SMART targets to be introduced so that Members could effectively monitor progress.

The Chief Fire Officer reported that the Action Plan was currently being finalised and would be submitted to the Fire and Rescue Authority at its next meeting for approval.

**RESOLVED:**

That the verbal update on the inspection outcome be received.

23-24/EC/15 Bedfordshire Fire and Rescue Service Community Forum Update

The Chief Fire Officer introduced Ms L Ehren, the Interim Head of Communications and Public Affairs, to provide an update on the Service's Community Panel and options for ways forward.

Following a decision of the Fire and Rescue Authority to develop a Community Panel, a Panel had been constituted and had met earlier in the year. This had not achieved the aims for which it had been constituted, and Members were now being approached to reconsider how they wished to proceed.

The Head of Communications and Public Affairs highlighted the importance of meaningful engagement, especially as the Service was already a member of many other Panels at which partner organisations were represented.

Three options were presented for consideration: to collaborate with partners to sit on existing partner panels, forums and resident engagement opportunities; to try again to develop a dedicated Fire and Rescue Service Community Panel or commission the Community Voluntary Service Bedfordshire or Bedfordshire Local Resilience Forum to do this on behalf of the Authority; or to develop a virtual community panel.

The advantages and disadvantages of the options were discussed and Members expressed a preference for a hybrid of Option 1 and 3, noting that there should be a programme of engagement questions/issues to communicate with the Panel outside of the annual CRMP and budget consultations.

It was suggested that, as the Service would continue its representation on various partnership boards, the strategic direction agreed should be Option 3.

The Chair commented that, with the continued migration into the County from London, there would be greater numbers of younger residents who felt more comfortable interacting virtually via remote platforms and social media.

The Chair requested that an update be provided to the Fire and Rescue Authority at its next meeting along with a list of items that could be discussed with such a Panel once it is constituted.

**RESOLVED:**

That the contents of the report be acknowledged, and that, recognising that Option 1 as presented in the report represents business as usual and will continue, Option 3, to develop a virtual community panel, be agreed.

23-24/EC/16 SHOUT - communicating with our constituent authorities

The Chief Fire Officer sought Members' views on how best to communicate with the constituent authorities. This had previously been done by submitting the Minutes of the Authority meetings for the appointed Member to report to the relevant constituent authorities. This was not seen as a very effective way to communicate other topics of interest to the constituent authorities. In this respect, he had asked the Interim

Head of Communications and Public Affairs to review, in consultation with Members, how best to achieve the requirement of reporting back to the constituent authorities.

Councillor Headley reported that, whilst this review was being undertaken, it was important that the Authority continued to fulfil its duty of reporting back to the constituent authorities.

The Chair added that the Members appointed to report back may be asked questions about the recent inspection and that no information had been provided to enable them to do so.

The Chief Fire Officer advised that a briefing note was being prepared for the appointed Members.

The Chair also requested that the Democratic Services teams at each constituent authority be contacted to explain the delay in receiving reports from the Authority. It was noted that reports from the Fire and Rescue Authority was a standing item on both the Bedford Borough Council and Luton Borough Council Full Council agendas.

Councillor Goodchild advised that he could not recall a meeting at Central Bedfordshire Council when a report of the Authority had been submitted.

#### 23-24/EC/17 Work Programme

Members received the updated work programme for 2023/24 and noted the cyclical items.

The Chief Fire Officer advised that an HMICFRS Action Plan update would be submitted to the next meeting of the Executive.

The Chair requested that this be placed as a standing item on Executive and Authority meeting agendas.

#### **RESOLVED:**

1. That the Work Programme 2023/24 be received and the cyclical agenda items be noted.
2. That the HMICFRS Action Plan update be a standing agenda item for meetings of the Executive and the Fire and Rescue Authority.

#### 23-24/EC/18 and 19 LOCAL GOVERNAMENT ACTION 1972, SCHEDULE 12A, PARAGRAPH 3 OF PART 1: EXCLUSION OF THE PUBLIC

#### **RESOLVED:**

That, pursuant to Sections 100A(2) and 100A(4) of the Local Government Act 1972, the public be excluded from the discussion of the following items on the grounds that the matters to be discussed involve the likely disclosure of exempt information as defined in paragraphs 1-3 of Part 1 of Schedule 12A to the Act (as amended):

Item:

23-24/EC/18 ACFO Recruitment

23-24/EC/19 Brigade Managers Local Pay Review (TOR)

The meeting ended at 12:15pm

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

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**REPORT AUTHOR: ASSISTANT CHIEF OFFICER/FRA TREASURER – GAVIN CHAMBERS**

**SUBJECT: 2024/25 REVENUE BUDGET, CAPITAL PROGRAMME AND COUNCIL TAX SETTING**

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

Background Papers: 2023/24 FRA Budget Papers

**Implications:**

This table provides a short statement of the impact of the recommendations in this report and/or a reference to the relevant paragraph/s in the report.

Will this report affect any of the following?

Implications	Yes/No	Impact/Reference
Financial	Yes	Report covers the timetable in place for the delivery of the 2024/25 budget and council tax setting.
Risk Management	Yes	The report will assist in ensuring that the budget and council tax is set.
Legal	No	
Privacy and Security	No	
Duty to collaborate	No	
Health and Safety	No	
Equality, Diversity and Inclusion	No	
Environmental Sustainability	No	
Consultation and Communication	No	

## PURPOSE

To present the current planning arrangements for the 2024/25 Revenue Budget and Capital Programme and agree the timetable accordingly.

## RECOMMENDATION:

That the report and timescales within be reviewed, considered and agreed.

---

### 1. Introduction

- 1.1 On 2 February 2023, the Fire and Rescue Authority (FRA) approved a Revenue Budget Requirement for 2023/24 of £34.898m and a Capital Programme of £2.258m.
- 1.2 For new FRA Members, to provide some background information on the 2023/24 budget, the link below provides detail on the setting of the 2023/24 budget by the FRA in February 2023. As well as council tax setting, the revenue and capital budgets were approved including some use of reserves. Please refer to item agenda item **22-23/FRA/69**.

[Agenda for Fire and Rescue Authority on Thursday, 2nd February, 2023, 10.00 am | Bedfordshire Fire and Rescue Service \(moderngov.co.uk\)](#)

- 1.3 This report introduces the process for 2024/25.

### 2. The 2024/25 Revenue Budget and Capital Programme

#### 2.1 **Funding Updates:**

- 2.1.1 **Revenue** – The 2020/21 to 2023/24 financial years have all been single year funding settlements from the Government. It is anticipated that as the 2024/25 settlement will be the last of the current Comprehensive Spending Review (CSR), it will again

be for only one year. Single year settlements do not enable robust medium term financial planning to take place, due to the uncertainty of grant income in the following years.

2.1.2 **Capital** – There was no capital funding or bidding round since the 2021/22 financial year and it is anticipated that this will be the same position for 2024/25 too. The Authority’s Capital Programme is funded by revenue, unless where a specific grant has been received or there has been a sale of an asset, such as vehicles.

## 2.2 **Timescales:**

2.2.1 For 2024/25, there will be a budget and CRMP consultation presented to and agreed by the FRA on 7th December 2023. The budgets and council tax will finally be set by the FRA, post consultation on 13th February 2024. The Authority will need to consult with the community and businesses. This will again be linked in with the Community Risk Management Plan (CRMP).

2.2.2 In past years a draft budget has been set. This was when multi year settlements were provided by the Department of Levelling Up Housing and Communities (DLUHC). As we have had successive years of single year settlements, with the provisional settlements not made available until late December, the Authority has moved away from this and adopted the budget workshops instead. This ensures that Members are fully engaged and aware of the developing budget position, but not approving an early draft budget that could materially change when the provisional settlement figures are announce shortly after a meeting.

2.2.3 The proposed timetable for the 2024/25 budget process is attached at Appendix 1.

## 2.3 Proposals:

2.3.1 The proposals below are included for discussion and are currently anticipated being part of the 2024/25 revenue and capital budget setting process:

- *2023/24 Budget as Starting Point* – The 2023/24 budget will be presented in summary, FRA Members will then see what additions and reductions are made to it, to reach the 2024/25 budget position. There will also be a medium term, four year look ahead as part of the Medium Term Revenue Plan (MTRP).
- *Scrutiny/Review* – A CMT budget scrutiny process will continue for 2024/25, reviewing the draft 2024/25 budgets, compared to 2023/24 actuals/forecast year end position and 2022/23 final outturn figures. There will also be targeted zero based budget (ZBB) work. As this is a resource intensive activity, there is a need to focus on specific budget areas.
- *Savings/Efficiencies/Income* – CMT will be working on these to present to FRA Members in due course. This will include for transparency and discussion, a list of non-statutory functions that the Service/Authority conducts.
- *Budget Forms* – A short bid form will again be used for initial proposals, so that a limited amount of input is required to get through the first gateway in the bid process. Should CMT approve a bid, for revenue or capital, a more detailed submission will be required. Bids will be on an exception basis for 2024/25, so a general bidding round to all budget managers will not be announced. New bids that need funding, as they are budget pressures, will in turn be presented to the FRA as part of the budget.
- *Planning Assumptions* - A summary list of planning assumptions will be presented to Members during the budget process both for information purposes but also to input and agree on. For example a key one will be pay award assumptions.
- *Capital* – The Capital Programme for 2024/25 onwards needs to be focussed on more than the forthcoming year. The returns to Government ask for our three-year indicative capital expenditure figures.
- *Innovation/Transformation* – it is currently proposed that there will be funding set aside in the 2024/25 budget for transformation/innovation initiatives. Discussions will also take place with Members as in previous years, regarding the allocation of Green/Environmental funds.

3. Summary

3.1.1 This report introduces the 2024/25 budget timetable and process to Members. Members will be kept informed of progress.

**ANDREW HOPKINSON  
CHIEF FIRE OFFICER**

**GAVIN CHAMBERS  
ACO/TREASURER**

**2024/25 BUDGET TIMETABLE**

<b>GROUP</b>	<b>AREA OF REVIEW</b>	<b>DATE</b>
Fire & Rescue Authority (FRA)	Initial budget report setting out timetable	3 <sup>rd</sup> October 2023
Corporate Management Team (CMT)	Discuss forecast budget position, savings/efficiencies/income, assumptions and uncertainties, bids.	September 2023 to February 2024
FRA Lead Member for Finance, Productivity & Efficiency	Regular updates provided up to the February 2024 budget and council tax setting meeting	October 2023 to February 2024
FRA	<b>1<sup>st</sup> Members budget workshop</b> – draft budget discussions.	21st November 2023
FRA	Budget and CRMP consultation questions presented and approved.	7th December 2023
Public Consultation on budget and CRMP	From 8 December 2023 to 31 January 2024.	8th December 2023 to 31st January 2024
	<i>Provisional 2024/25 Settlement Expected from DLUHC, including council tax referendum limits</i>	<i>Late December 2023</i>
CMT	Update to CMT as required.	January 2024
FRA	<b>2nd Members budget workshop</b> – post main consultation period. Draft CRMP post consultation.	25th January 2024
FRA	<b>2024/25 Budget and Council Tax Precept set.</b> CRMP – with consultation outcomes incorporated – Approved at FRA in February or March 2024 meeting.	13th February 2024
	<i>Final settlement from DLUHC expected around this time too.</i>	<i>Early/Mid-February 2024</i>

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

**SUBJECT:** TREASURY MANAGEMENT – ANNUAL REPORT FOR 2022/23

For further information on this Report contact: ACO G Chambers  
Assistant Chief Officer/FRA Treasurer

Background Papers: Treasury Management Strategy 2022/23

**Implications:**

This table provides a short statement of the impact of the recommendations in this report and/or a reference to the relevant paragraph/s in the report.

Will this report affect any of the following?

<b>Implications</b>	<b>Yes/No</b>	<b>Impact/Reference</b>
Financial	Yes	In terms of informative backwards look at the Treasury management activities of 2022/23
Risk Management	No	
Legal	No	
Privacy and Security	No	
Duty to collaborate	No	
Health and Safety	No	
Equality, Diversity and Inclusion	No	
Environmental Sustainability	No	
Consultation and Communication	No	

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**PURPOSE:**

To consider the Authority's Annual Report for Treasury Management for 2022/23.

**RECOMMENDATION:**

That Members review and consider the information presented in the report.

---

**1. Introduction**

- 1.1 This Authority is required by regulations issued under the Local Government Act 2003 to produce an annual treasury management review of activities and the actual prudential and treasury indicators for 2022/23. This report meets the requirements of both the CIPFA Code of Practice on Treasury Management, (the Code), and the CIPFA Prudential Code for Capital Finance in Local Authorities, (the Prudential Code).

During 2022/23 the minimum reporting requirements were that the full Authority should receive the following reports:

- an annual treasury strategy in advance of the year
  - a mid-year (minimum) treasury update report
  - an annual review following the end of the year describing the activity compared to the strategy (this report)
- 1.2 The regulatory environment places responsibility on Members for the review and scrutiny of treasury management policy and activities. This report is therefore important in that respect, as it provides details of the outturn position for treasury activities and highlights compliance with the Authority's policies previously approved by Members.



The Service confirms that it has complied with the requirement under the Code to give prior scrutiny to all of the above treasury management reports by the full Authority. Training can be provided to Members by our Treasury Advisor's, Link Treasury Services, in 2023 at the FRA's request.

2. The Authorities Capital Expenditure and Financing

2.1 The Authority undertakes capital expenditure on long-term assets. These activities may either be:

- Financed immediately through the application of capital or revenue resources (capital receipts, capital grants, revenue contributions etc.), which has no resultant impact on the Authorities borrowing need; or
- If insufficient financing is available, or a decision is taken not to apply resources, the capital expenditure will give rise to a borrowing need.

The actual capital expenditure forms one of the required prudential indicators. The table below shows the actual capital expenditure for 2022/23:

<b>Capital Expenditure by Service</b>	<b>2021/22 Actual £'000</b>	<b>2022/23 Budget £'000</b>	<b>2022/23 Actual £'000</b>
As per Statement of Accounts & Budget Book	1,494	1,357	1,466

3. The Authorities Overall Borrowing Need

3.1 The Authorities underlying need to borrow to finance capital expenditure is termed the Capital Financing Requirement (CFR).

**Gross borrowing and the CFR** – in order to ensure that borrowing levels are prudent over the medium term and only for a capital purpose, the Authority should monitor with the general aim that its gross external borrowing does not, except in the short term, exceed the total of the capital financing requirement in the preceding year (2021/22). This is plus the estimates of any additional capital financing requirement for the current (2022/23) and next two financial years. This essentially means that the Authority is not borrowing to support revenue expenditure. The Treasurer will discuss this indicator and over borrowed position at the next Treasury Strategy meeting. The continued over borrowed position stems from the historical borrowing, the loan of £9.987m predominantly for the build of Dunstable Community Fire Station.

The table below highlights the Authorities gross borrowing position against the CFR. The Authority has complied with this prudential indicator previously agreed by the FRA.

	<b>31 March 2022 Actual £'000</b>	<b>31 March 2023 Budget £'000</b>	<b>31 March 2024 Budget £'000</b>
<b>Prudential Indicator – Capital Financing Requirement</b>			
Borrowing	9,987	9,987	9,987
Other long term liabilities	414	120	167
Total Debt	10,401	10,107	10,154
<b>TOTAL CFR</b>	<b>7,779</b>	<b>7,771</b>	<b>7,625</b>
Under/(over) borrowing	(2,622)	(2,336)	(2,529)

**The authorised limit** – the authorised limit is the “affordable borrowing limit” required by s3 of the Local Government Act 2003. Once this has been set, the Authority does not have the power to borrow above this level. The table below demonstrates that during 2022/23 the Authority has maintained gross borrowing within its authorised limit.

**The operational boundary** – the operational boundary is the expected borrowing position of the Authority during the year. Periods where the actual position is either below or over the boundary are acceptable subject to the authorised limit not being breached.

**Actual financing costs as a proportion of net revenue stream** – this indicator identifies the trend in the cost of capital, (borrowing and other long term obligation costs net of investment income), against the net revenue stream.

	<b>2022/23 £'000</b>
Authorised Limit	12,187
Maximum gross borrowing position during the year	9,987
Operational Boundary	9,987
Average gross borrowing position	9,987
Financing costs as a proportion of net revenue stream	<b>1.30%</b>

#### 4. Treasury Position as at 31 March 2023

4.1 At the beginning and the end of 2022/23 the Authorities treasury position was as follows:

	31 March 2022 Principal £'000	Rate/Return	Average Life yrs	31 March 2023 Principal £'000	Rate/Return	Average Life yrs
Fixed rate funding:						
PWLB	9,987	4.27%	35	9,987	4.27%	34
Other long term liabilities	414			120		
<b>Total debt</b>	<b>10,401</b>			<b>10,107</b>		
<b>CFR* (year-end position)</b>	<b>7,779</b>			<b>7,771</b>		
<b>Over/(under) borrowing</b>	<b>2,622</b>			<b>2,336</b>		
<b>Total investments</b>	<b>17,975</b>	<b>0.45%</b>		<b>19,352</b>	<b>3.70%</b>	
<b>Net debt</b>	<b>(7,574)</b>			<b>(9,245)</b>		

4.2 The maturity structure of the debt portfolio was as follows:

	31 March 2022 Actual £'000	2022/23 Original limits £'000	31 March 2023 Actual £'000
Under 12 months	0	0	0
12 months to 2 years	0	0	0
2 years to 5 years	0	0	0
5 years to 10 years	0	0	0
10 years and above	9,987	9,987	9,987

Investment Portfolio	Actual 31 March 22 £'000	Actual 31 March 22 %	Actual 31 March 23 £'000	Actual 31 March 23 %
<b>Treasury Investments</b>				
UK banks	13,225	74%	13,352	69%
Foreign bank (via Links)	4,750	26%	6,000	31%
<b>Total</b>	<b>17,975</b>	<b>100%</b>	<b>19,352</b>	<b>100%</b>

## 5. The 2022/23 strategy

### 5.1 **Investment strategy and control of interest rate risk**

Investment returns picked up throughout the course of 2022/23 as central banks, including the Bank of England, realised that inflationary pressures were not transitory, and that tighter monetary policy was called for.

Starting in April 2022 at 0.75%, the Bank of England Base Rate moved up in stepped increases of either 0.25% or 0.5%, reaching 4.25% by the end of the financial year, with further increases to date in 2023/24 (the current rate is 5.25%).

The sea-change in investment rates meant local authorities were faced with the challenge of pro-active investment of surplus cash for the first time in over a decade, and this emphasised the need for a detailed working knowledge of cashflow projections so that the appropriate balance between maintaining cash for liquidity purposes, and “laddering” deposits on a rolling basis to lock in the increase in investment rates as duration was extended, became an on-going feature of the investment landscape.

Meantime, through the autumn of 2022, and then in March 2023, the Bank of England maintained various monetary policy easing measures as required to ensure specific markets, the banking system and the economy had appropriate levels of liquidity at times of stress.

Nonetheless, while the Authority has taken a cautious approach to investing, it is also fully appreciative of changes to regulatory requirements for financial institutions in terms of additional capital and liquidity that came about in the aftermath of the Great Financial Crisis of 2008/9. These requirements have provided a far stronger basis for financial institutions, with annual stress tests by regulators evidencing how institutions are now far more able to cope with extreme stressed market and economic conditions.

## 5.2 **Borrowing strategy and control of interest rate risk**

During 2022-23, the Authority maintained an over-borrowed position. This meant that the capital borrowing need, (the Capital Financing Requirement), has been exceeded by loan debt. The strategy for the CFR and the under/over borrowed position going forward will be discussed at the next meeting with our Treasury advisors.

The policy of avoiding new borrowing by funding capital from revenue and using reserves, has served well over the last few years. However, this will be kept under review to avoid incurring higher borrowing costs in the future when this authority may not be able to avoid new borrowing to finance capital expenditure and/or the refinancing of maturing debt.

Against this background and the risks within the economic forecast, caution was adopted with the treasury operations. The ACO therefore monitored interest rates in financial markets and adopted a pragmatic strategy.

Interest rate forecasts, as per the table below from February 2022, had expected only gradual rises in medium and longer term fixed borrowing rates during 2022/23 and the two subsequent financial years until the turn of the year, when inflation concerns increased significantly. Variable, or short-term rates, were expected to be the cheaper form of borrowing until well in to the second half of 2022/23.

Forecasts at the time of approval of the Treasury Management Strategy Report for 2022/23 were as follow:

<b>Link Group Interest Rate View 7.2.22</b>		<b>Jun-22</b>	<b>Sep-22</b>	<b>Dec-22</b>	<b>Mar-23</b>	<b>Jun-23</b>	<b>Sep-23</b>	<b>Dec-23</b>	<b>Mar-24</b>	<b>Jun-24</b>	<b>Sep-24</b>	<b>Dec-24</b>	<b>Mar-25</b>
<b>BANK RATE</b>		1.00	1.00	1.25	1.25	1.25	1.25	1.25	1.25	1.25	1.25	1.25	1.25
<b>3 month ave earnings</b>		1.00	1.00	1.20	1.20	1.20	1.20	1.20	1.20	1.20	1.20	1.20	1.20
<b>6 month ave earnings</b>		1.10	1.20	1.30	1.30	1.30	1.30	1.30	1.30	1.30	1.30	1.30	1.30
<b>12 month ave earnings</b>		1.50	1.60	1.70	1.70	1.60	1.60	1.50	1.40	1.40	1.40	1.40	1.40
<b>5 yr PWLB</b>		2.30	2.30	2.30	2.30	2.30	2.30	2.30	2.30	2.30	2.30	2.30	2.30
<b>10 yr PWLB</b>		2.40	2.40	2.40	2.40	2.40	2.40	2.40	2.40	2.40	2.40	2.40	2.40
<b>25 yr PWLB</b>		2.50	2.50	2.60	2.60	2.60	2.60	2.60	2.60	2.60	2.60	2.60	2.60
<b>50 yr PWLB</b>		2.30	2.30	2.40	2.40	2.40	2.40	2.40	2.40	2.40	2.40	2.40	2.40

For up to date interesting comparison, Link Group Interest Rate forecasts as of August 2023 are as follows:

**LINK GROUP – AUGUST 2023**

	<b>End Q3 2023</b>	<b>End Q4 2023</b>	<b>End Q1 2024</b>	<b>End Q2 2024</b>	<b>End Q3 2024</b>	<b>End Q4 2024</b>	<b>End Q1 2025</b>	<b>End Q2 2025</b>	<b>End Q3 2025</b>	<b>End Q4 2025</b>	<b>End Q1 2026</b>	<b>End Q2 2026</b>
<b>Bank Rate</b>	5.50%	5.50%	5.50%	5.25%	4.75%	4.25%	3.75%	3.25%	2.75%	2.75%	2.50%	2.50%
<b>5yr PWLB Rate</b>	5.60%	5.30%	5.10%	4.80%	4.50%	4.20%	3.90%	3.60%	3.40%	3.30%	3.30%	3.20%
<b>10yr PWLB Rate</b>	5.20%	5.00%	4.90%	4.70%	4.40%	4.20%	3.90%	3.70%	3.50%	3.50%	3.50%	3.40%
<b>25yr PWLB Rate</b>	5.40%	5.20%	5.10%	4.90%	4.70%	4.50%	4.20%	4.00%	3.90%	3.80%	3.80%	3.70%
<b>50yr PWLB Rate</b>	5.10%	5.00%	4.90%	4.70%	4.50%	4.30%	4.00%	3.80%	3.60%	3.60%	3.50%	3.50%

## 6. Borrowing Outturn

- 6.1 It was anticipated at the beginning of 2022/23 that the Authority would have surplus funds available for short-term investment, either within its Special Interest Bearing Account (SIBA) at its bankers or through the money market. As at the 31<sup>st</sup> March 2023 the SIBA account was paying a rate of 1%.

The Authority's call-account with Barclays Bank has been used during 2022/23. As at 31<sup>st</sup> March 2023 the Barclays account was paying a rate of 3.95%

The Authority's 120-Day Interest account with Santander continued to be used during 2022/23. During 2022/23 this account was paying a rate of 0.65% but increased to 0.98% as at 1<sup>st</sup> June and then increased again to 1.10% as at 1<sup>st</sup> July. Notice was given on 1<sup>st</sup> August which then reduced the rate back down to 0.98% and the monies were received back into the Authority on 4<sup>th</sup> November.

The Authority's 180-Day Interest account with Santander continued to be used during 2022/23. During 2022/23 this account was paying a rate of 0.87% but increased to 1.01% as at 1<sup>st</sup> June and then increased again to 1.21% as at 1<sup>st</sup> July. Notice was given on 1<sup>st</sup> August which then reduced the rate back down to 1.91% and the monies were received back into the Authority on 4<sup>th</sup> January 2023.

The Authority had £19.75M investments maturing during 22/23. Three of these investments were placed during 21/22 (£6.75M) via Link Group with Goldman Sachs (£2M) and Qatar National Bank (£4.75M). The remainder of £13M were from new investments placed in 22/23 for either six months or nine months and therefore matured in 22/23, via Link with First Abu Dhabi Bank (£4M), Lloyds Group (£5M) and Standard Chartered Bank (£4M).

The Authority also re-invested or placed new investments of £11M. These matured in early 23/24 and were with First Abu Dhabi (£1M @ 2.24%) that matured in May 2023, Goldman Sachs (£2M @ 3.85%) that also matured in May 2023, Standard Chartered Bank (£1M & £2M @ 3.93% and 4.27% respectively) that matured in May and August 2023 and Qatar National Bank (£3M & £2M @ 4.51% and 4.53% respectively) that matured in July and August 2023.

- 6.2 During 2022/23 the Authority did not use Money Market Funds for short-term investments. Borrowing has not been undertaken in 2022/23 to finance the Capital Programme. The funding for the 2022/23 Capital Programme was through revenue contributions and asset sales such as vehicles disposals.



No debt rescheduling was done during the year as the average 1% differential between PWLB new borrowing rates and premature repayment rates made rescheduling unviable.

## 7. Investment Outturn

7.1 **Investment Policy** – the Authorities investment policy is governed by DLUHC investment guidance which has been implemented in the annual investment strategy for 22/23 approved by Members on 24<sup>th</sup> March 2022. This policy sets out the approach for choosing investment counterparties, and is based on credit ratings provided by the three main credit rating agencies, supplemented by additional market data, (such as rating outlooks, credit default swaps, bank share prices etc.).

The investment activity during the year conformed to the approved strategy, and the Authority had no liquidity difficulties.

7.2 **Resources** – the Authorities cash balances comprise revenue and capital resources and cash flow monies. The Authorities core cash resources comprised as follows:

Balance Sheet Resources (£m)	31 March 2022	31 March 2023
	£'000	£'000
Balances	2,400	2,400
Earmarked reserves	12,724	12,438
Grants and other Contributions unapplied	159	159
Usable capital receipts	548	548
<b>Total</b>	<b>15,831</b>	<b>15,545</b>

### **7.3 Investments held by the Authority**

- The Authority maintained an average balance of £27M of internally managed funds.(including fixed term investments)
- The internally managed funds earned an average rate of return of 1.6%
- The comparable performance indicator is the average Local Authority 365 days backward looking compounded rate which was 0.1470%
- Total investment income was £0.426M higher than the set budget of £0.065M

**ANDREW HOPKINSON  
CHIEF FIRE OFFICER**

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

**SUBJECT:** PERFORMANCE REPORT FOR END OF QUARTER ONE (2023-24)

**Author and contact:** Chris Bigland, Deputy Chief Fire Officer  
[chris.bigland@bedsfire.gov.uk](mailto:chris.bigland@bedsfire.gov.uk)

**Background Papers:** Previous quarterly updates [Fire Authority - Modern Council \(modern.gov.co.uk\)](http://modern.gov.co.uk)

Appendix	Title	Protective Marking
1	Quarter 1 Performance Report	None

**Implications**

This table provides a short statement of the impact of the recommendations in this report and/or a reference to the relevant paragraph/s in the report.

Will this report affect any of the following?

	Yes / No	Impact / Reference
Financial Implications	No	Any adjustments to budgets as a result of this paper will be discussed and cost implications reported to Members in line with our Members Handbook and governance arrangements.
Risk Management	Yes	Our Corporate Risk Register is reviewed monthly by officers and a quarterly update presented to the Audit and Standards Committee.

Legal Implications	No	Our performance is reported in line with the Fire Service Act 2004 and Fire and Rescue Service National Framework 2018.
Privacy and Security Implications	No	Performance reports are produced in line with GDPR and information security legislation. There are no privacy issues or security implications from this report.
Duty to Collaborate	No	The <u>Policing and Crime Act 2017</u> requires the Authority to consider opportunities for collaboration with the police and ambulance services.
Health and Safety Implications	No	Health and safety performance implications are discussed at the Health and Safety Steering Group. Any serious implications for staff and third parties will be reviewed by the Health and Safety Manager and reported to Members.
Equality, Diversity and Inclusion	No	Where performance affects people with protected characteristics under the Equality Act 2010, we will give due regard to the public sector equality duty. A People Impact Assessment (PIA) is produced for all Projects, Strategies and public events. The purpose of a PIA is to support consideration of equality and diversity issues in the design, development and delivery of activity, change, projects, procedures, guidance and technical notes across the Service.
Environmental Sustainability	No	The Natural Environment and Rural Communities Act 2006 requires that a public authority must, in exercising its functions, have regard, so far as is consistent with the proper exercise of those functions, to the purpose of conserving biodiversity. Consider the impact of the proposals on climate change, harmful emissions, consumption of resources and sustainability. The Environment Bill which is scheduled to gain Royal Assent in Autumn 2021 creates a new enforcement regime overseen by the Office for Environmental Protection if a public authority has allegedly failed to comply with environmental law.
Consultation and Communication	No	Our approach to Communications and Engagement is set out in our Comms and Engagement Strategy. This includes our principles of consultation.

## **PURPOSE:**

To present a summary of organisational performance at the end of the first quarter of the 2023-24 financial year.

## **RECOMMENDATIONS:**

That Members:

1. Consider the Service's performance, contained within appendix 1, against the published standards within the Community Risk Management Plan and the wider corporate Key Performance Indicators.

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### 1. Background

- 1.1. Both operational and corporate performance is monitored and managed internally via the regular Corporate Management Team (CMT) meeting.
- 1.2. The Key Performance Indicators (KPI) and targets included within the report attached reflect those established as part of the Authority's 2023/24 planning cycle, and in support of the current strategic aims set out in the Authority's Community Risk Management Plan 2023-2027 (CRMP).
- 1.3. One of the strategic priorities set out in the CRMP is to enable better access to data and performance insight as doing so will help empower staff to greater ownership for delivering performance improvements at a local level. To support this strategic priority, the Service is undertaking a comprehensive review of how it captures and utilises the broad range of risk and performance data available.
- 1.4. Performance data is collected from the Incident Recording System (IRS) and internal databases such as iTrent, Protection and Home Fire Safety Visits database. For a variety of reasons some records take longer than others to upload to the IRS and other databases and therefore totals are constantly being amended (by relatively small numbers). The performance report therefore represents a 'snapshot' based upon the best information available at the point in time this report was prepared.

## 2. Performance Report Template

- 2.1. During 2022/23 the FRA tasked Officers with reviewing the way performance data is presented.
- 2.2. A working group was formed to review the reporting template which considered accessibility and the depth of data presented in areas where improvement was required.
- 2.3. An update was provided to the Executive Committee on Tuesday 14<sup>th</sup> March 2023. The update included a presentation that described the issues with existing reporting, provided examples of benchmarking and proposed a new way to show performance data which would improve performance scrutiny.
- 2.4. Officers created options for the new reporting template, which were presented to the Executive Committee on Thursday 21<sup>st</sup> September 2023.
- 2.5. The report in appendix 1 is presented in the new template for performance reporting.

## 3. Reporting by exception and data methodology

- 3.1 The report presents areas for specific scrutiny with commentary but also includes overall performance in summary.
- 3.2 Where possible, Officers will provide comparable national datasets to evidence where the service fits within national benchmarking. This is only possible where the service target conforms to national KPI definitions.
- 3.3 Where national comparators are not available or relevant, Officers will seek to present trend analysis so Members and the public can easily track service performance.

## 4. Implications

- 4.1 All performance is managed through CMT therefore any areas of improvement will be disseminated through CMT to teams or programme and project boards to seek assurance and evidence of improvement.

- 4.2 Material changes in organisational activity will be captured in specific plans, e.g., On Call Improvement Programme or through the Service HMICFRS Action Plan.
- 4.3 Any implications will therefore be captured in the change process for specific areas or initiatives and presented via the most appropriate governance framework for the size and impact of the change.

**CHRIS BIGLAND**  
**DEPUTY CHIEF FIRE OFFICER**

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# **Bedfordshire** Fire and Rescue Service

## **Performance Report** **2023–24 Quarter 1**


Prevention	3
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No target. For information only	16


The status of each of the metrics is indicated using the following symbols:


Indicator	Status
	On target or better than target
	Off target but within 10% of target
	Off target by more than 10% of target
	No target. For information only

## Prevention

Off target by more than 10% of target

Indicator	Ref	Aim	Quarter 1
<b>Accidental fire fatalities</b>	0013e	Down	<b>1</b> (Target 0) 
<b>Comment:</b>			
<p>There has been one accidental fire fatality as a result of a dwelling fire in Luton in June 2023. The inquest has not yet been held, however fire investigation findings indicate that the cause of the fire was smoking related. BFRS delivered a Home Fire Safety Visit to the household in May 2023 and took all actions practicable to promote home fire safety prior to the incident.</p>			

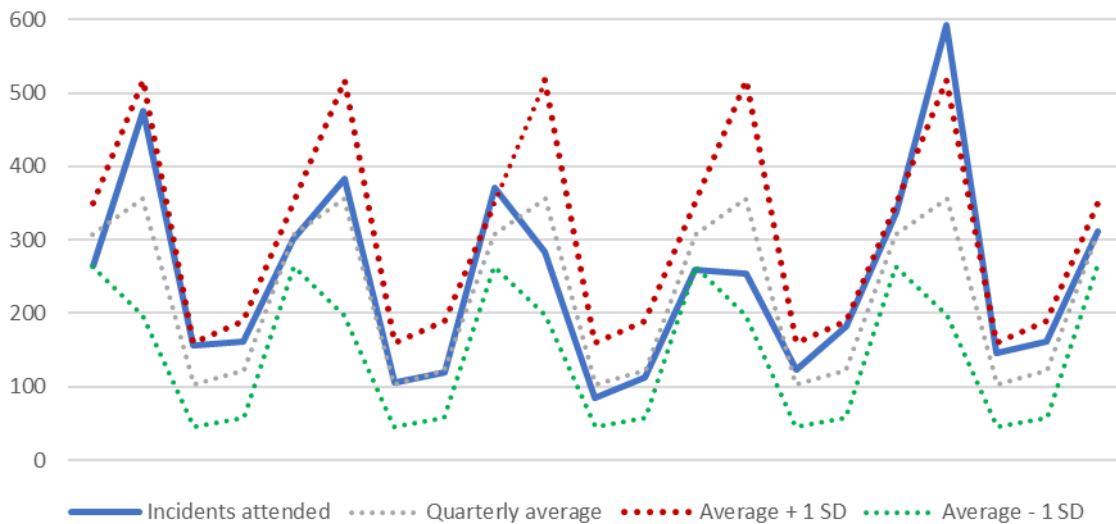
<b>Home fire safety visits delivered</b>	0015	Up	<b>1450</b> (Target 2500) 
<b>Comment:</b>			
<p>The number of home fire safety visits (HFSV) delivered is well below the target for the quarter. The launch of the HFSV PowerApp aligned to the NFCC Person Centred Approach has seen a significant change of focus and approach to HFSV. Much more emphasis is now placed upon delivering a comprehensive visit targeted at more vulnerable households. Whilst the number of visits has reduced, a deeper analysis reveals very positive indicators:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• 68% HFSV delivered to persons age 65+ &amp;/or disabled compared to 46% in 22-23</li> <li>• 77 falls referrals compared to 16 in Q1 previous year</li> <li>• 72 Safeguarding referrals made compared to 34 in Q1 previous year</li> <li>• 42 Bobby Scheme referrals compared to 13 in Q1 previous year</li> <li>• More time is spent on each visit, with the time spent rising in proportion to risk</li> </ul> <p>This change in approach addresses an 'area for improvement' set out in HMICFRS inspection report.</p>			

Indicator	Ref	Aim	Quarter 1
<b>Secondary fires attended</b>	0002b	Down	<b>311</b> <b>(Target 218)</b> 


**Comment:**

Secondary fires are smaller fires which do not involve property or injury to persons. The target has been missed by 93. Secondary fires show a seasonal weather-related trend with more in secondary fires in spring and summer quarters. Over the past 5 years 31% of the total deliberate fires occurred in Q1. Taking account of this seasonality the projection is that the annual target may not be achieved. Of the secondary fires 46% were found to be deliberate. 93% of the fires were in outdoor areas with refuse or refuse containers the most common item involved. There were fewer secondary fires than in Q1 last year (334), but slightly more than the five-year average for the quarter.

Q1 secondary fires within expected range  
(Q1 average  $\pm$  1 standard deviation)



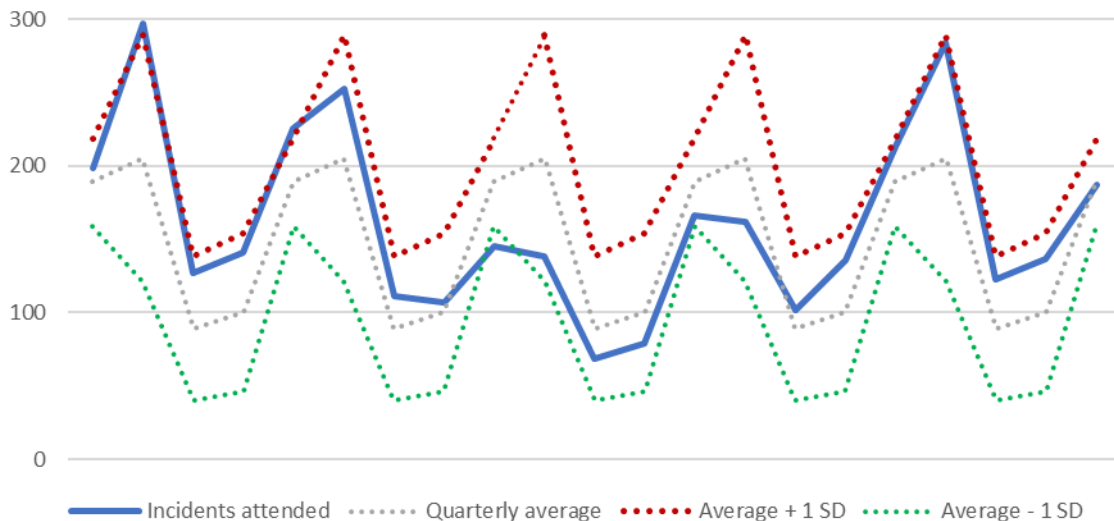
Off target but within 10% of target

Indicator	Ref	Aim	Quarter 1
<b>Deliberate fires attended</b>	0003a	Down	<b>187</b> <b>(Target 172)</b> 

**Comment:**

Deliberate fires are those not considered to have started accidentally. The quarterly target has been missed by 9%. However, the quarterly targets are a linear proportion of the annual target. Deliberate fires show a seasonal weather-related trend with more deliberate fires in spring and summer quarters. Over the past 5 years 31% of the total deliberate fires occurred in Q1. Taking account of this seasonality, the projection is that the annual target will be achieved.


Q1 deliberate fires within expected range  
(Q1 average  $\pm$  1 standard deviation)



<b>Primary accidental dwelling fires attended</b>	0002ai-i	Down	<b>75</b> <b>(Target 74)</b> 
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**Comment:**

The target has been missed by one (1%). Six of the 12 fires were at His Majesty's Prison (HMP) Bedford. Deliberate fire setting is a regular issue at HMP Bedford and the number of incidents is rising compared to last year. The enforcement of the Fire Safety Order at HMP Bedford is the responsibility of the Crown Premises Inspectorate. BFRS will be making contact with the Inspectorate and the Governor to raise our concern over the rising number of incidents attended.

Indicator	Ref	Aim	Quarter 1
<b>Primary deliberate fires attended in other buildings</b>	0002aiii-ii	Down	<b>12</b> <b>(Target 11)</b> 
<p><b>Comment:</b>  The target has been missed by one (9%). Six of the 12 fires were at His Majesty's Prison (HMP) Bedford. Deliberate fire setting is a regular issue at HMP Bedford and the number of incidents is rising compared to last year. The enforcement of the Fire Safety Order at HMP Bedford is the responsibility of the Crown Premises Inspectorate. BFRS will be making contact with the Inspectorate and the Governor to raise our concern over the rising number of incidents attended.</p>			

## Response: Appliance Availability

Off target by more than 10% of target

Indicator	Ref	Aim	Quarter 1
<b>Availability of stations' first on-call pumps</b>	0034	Up	67% (Target 80%) 

### Comment:

This measure considers station availability vs the Actual On-Call availability after receiving standby moves or strategic reserve staff.

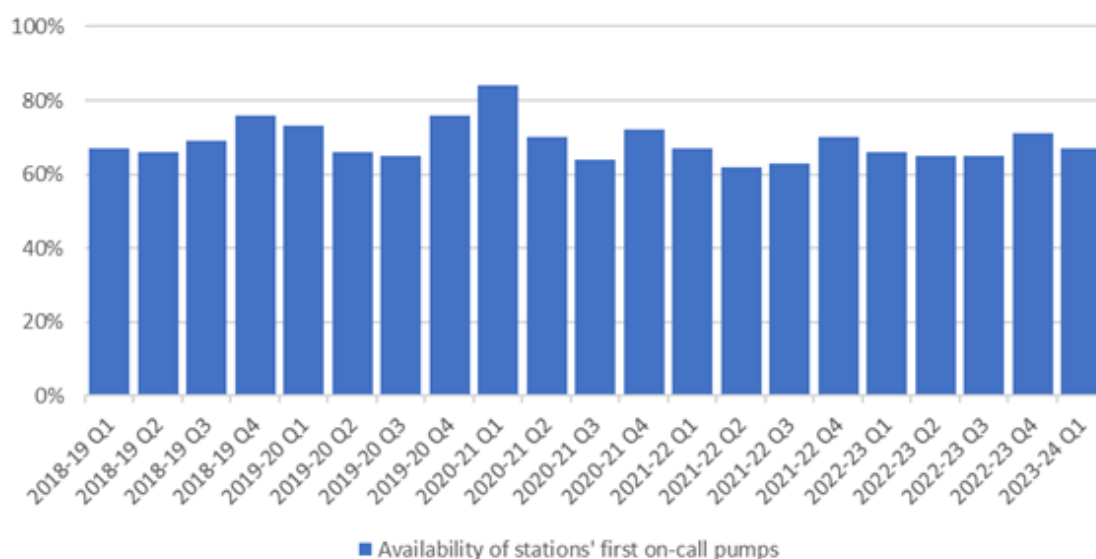
The On Call improvement project team are evolving service policy and making changes to service delivery's day to day procedures to increase availability. These incremental changes will start to bear fruit over the course of this year. However we are already seeing notable increases and stable performance hovering at around 80% or above (actual staff ) at Kempston, Leighton Buzzard, Sandy and Biggleswade.


Shefford remains a key strategic focus with a specific trial taking place which alters the way staff book availability. Currently, even with standby moves, Shefford does not meet the KPI, which is why Officers have prioritised this station for a trial.

The following stations (Toddington, Potton, Woburn, Harrold, Amphill and Bedford) are challenging even after standby moves with availability dragging the service average down. This is largely due to recruitment and retention issues and will be a key focus for the new On Call Liaison Officers and the recruitment team.

The improvement work also includes extra training and skills evenings to maximise engagement with existing staff making the role more attractive to existing staff and attract new members.




Q1 on-call availability typical for non-lockdown Q1s



Indicator	Ref	Aim	Quarter 1
<b>Occasions global crewing enabled 9 riders on two-pump responses (wholetime)</b>	0040	Up	69% (Target 90%) 
<b>Comment:</b>			
<p>This KPI is consciously broken by our Duty Group Commanders to maximise the number of appliances crewed across the County at all times. By doing this we increase the available appliances at On Call stations significantly. This proactive approach to move human resources means that as more appliances are available, travel times to incidents are reduced. This contributes to improving our overall attendance time performance and our service to the communities we serve.</p> <p>Work is underway by officers to recommend altering, removing or improving a number of metrics. This measure is one that will be considered in line with national benchmarking and realignment as well as challenging its value in determining whether or not the service is performing well.</p>			

## Response: Emergency call handling



Off target by more than 10% of target

Indicator	Ref	Aim	Quarter 1
<b>Incidents with call-handling time within 60 seconds</b>	0029e	Up	<b>28%</b> (Target 90%) 
<b>Average call-handling time to mobilise to incidents (in Bedfordshire)</b>	0029	Down	<b>122 s</b> (Target 90 s) 
<b>Emergency calls to primary fires handled within 90 seconds</b>	0029f	Up	<b>75%</b> (Target 90%) 
<b>Comment:</b>			
<p>It has been well documented over the previous reporting cycle that the measures apportioned to the Control team are unrealistic. The service policy to actively call challenge potential false alarms or the impact of a control operator needing to gather further information to keep our people safe and send the correct resources when information from the caller conflicts with other information, all means that time has to be taken to make accurate decisions.</p> <p>The Service's targets are the most challenging targets of those English FRs who publish call-handling targets. The average call-handling time of 122 seconds during Q1 is 6 seconds faster than that of Q1 of 2022/23.</p> <p>These measures are all subject to review as described above. Officers will present options to Members for more appropriate stretch targets aligned to national benchmarking later this year.</p>			



## Response: Incident response time

Off target by more than 10% of target

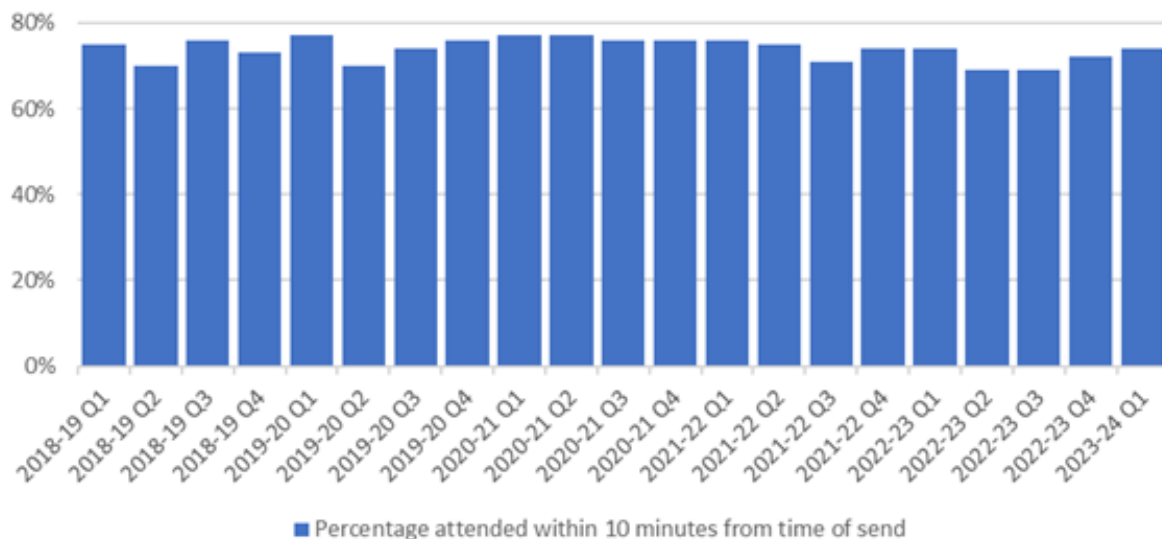
Indicator	Ref	Aim	Quarter 1 From time of call	Quarter 1 From time of send/alert
<b>Primary fires attended within 10 minutes</b>	0030g/k	Up	<b>66%</b> (Target 80%) 	<b>74%</b> (Target 80%) 



### Comment:

Work continues to make incremental improvements in how we respond. There is a focus across all wholetime stations on 'turn out' performance which is seeing a good return. In parallel we are working towards launching our roaming pump trial. This will allow us to place a fire appliance where the Control team see the biggest need, on an hour by hour basis, should service resources be deployed to an incident or moved for business need and a covering move is required to maintain optimum County cover. This roaming pump trial begins in September and will report back to the wider Emergency Cover Review.

We anticipate a positive impact on first pump attendance times to all incident types during the trial.

Primary fires attended within 10 minutes of time of alert continued improving after dipping during summer of 2022

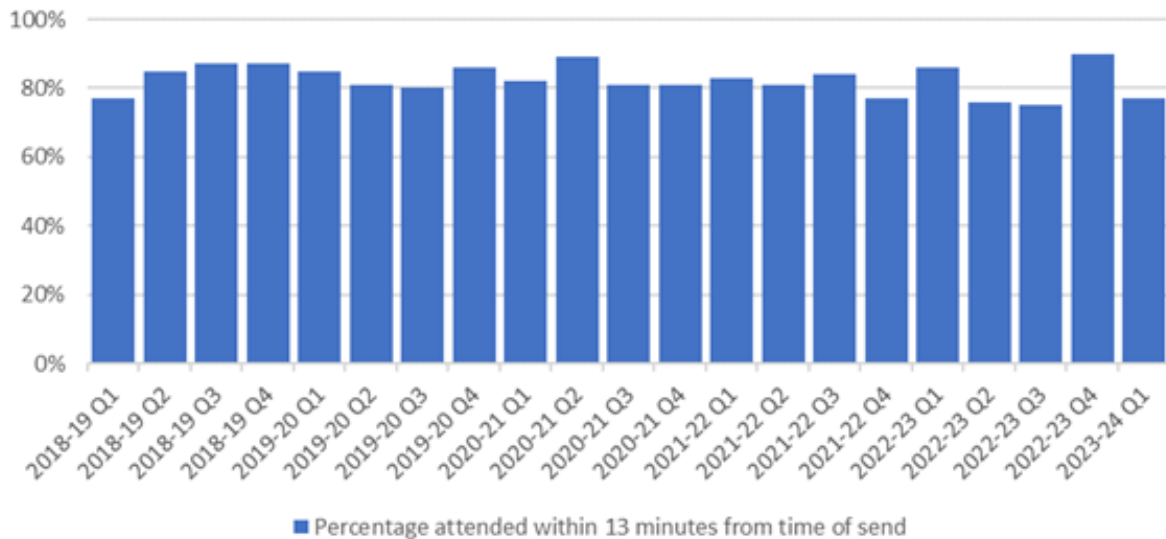


Indicator	Ref	Aim	Quarter 1 From time of call	Quarter 1 From time of send/alert
<b>RTCs attended within 13 minutes</b>	0030f/m	Up	<b>64%</b> (Target 80%) 	<b>77%</b> (Target 80%) 


**Comment:**

Similar to Primary fires we see a mixed picture for average attendance times for RTC's. On Call availability and RTC's in rural areas affect the average across the County. Central Bedfordshire is an area we are focussing on with the roaming pump trial to track tangible improvements in performance that can be shaped into Service proposals for operational change.

**RTCs attended within 13 minutes of time of alert fell back after peaking in 2023-24 Q4**





## Human Resources

Indicator	Ref	Aim	Quarter 1
<b>Percentage of working time lost due to sickness (excluding on-call)</b>	0060	Down	<b>4.6%</b> <b>(Target 4.40%)</b> 
<b>Comment:</b>			
<p>Sadly, following the Pandemic, the level of sickness absence has slowly increased to its present level above the target. With the widely and well reported health care crisis in England, this is not unexpected. There are record numbers of patients unable to book GP appointments within the Government's 2-week target as well as more than 7 million people waiting for NHS hospital treatment.</p> <p>The Service is adapting its approach in recognition of the issue for example by seeking to improve support through a revised Modified Duties programme and investing further in Occupational Health and our health surveillance programme. As well as increasing the resources available in the HR Team to advise managers so that they are better able to support and manage short term sickness absence. We have continued to improve the support for those who are unfit to attend work as well as providing Managers with additional training, advice, and support to up-skill and equip them to be better able to identify issues in advance and provide greater support to hopefully minimise the need for absence.</p>			


## Organisational Development

Off target but within 10% of target

Indicator	Ref	Aim	Quarter 1
<b>Workplace training completed by Control personnel via PDR Pro in last 12 months</b>	T8c	Up	<b>84%</b> (Target 90%) 
<b>Comment:</b>  Although this target has not been met there has been a significant improvement from 71% at the end of Quarter 4 to 84%, now just 6 percentage points off target. The Service Control Manager is working hard to continue this improvement.			
<b>Workplace training completed by senior management roles (SM to SOC) via PDR Pro in last 12 months</b>	T8d	Up	<b>90%</b> (Target 92%) 
<b>Comment:</b>  It is worthy of note that during Quarter 1 the Service's Training and Development Centre has delivered or facilitated 243 training events.			













## Finance




Off target but within 10% of target

Indicator	Ref	Aim	Quarter 1
<b>Uncontested invoices paid within 30 days</b>	0067	Up	<b>92%</b> (Target 93%) 
<b>Comment:</b>  As a 1% variance there is still work to do however the overall direction is improving. Work to upgrade service finance software has commenced and the improved system will automate and improve process which should see this target shift to green and on-track later in the year.			










## On target or better than target

Indicator	Ref	Aim	Quarter 1
Primary fires attended	0002a	Down	<b>177</b> (Target 204) 
Fire injuries where victim went to hospital	0014a	Down	<b>4</b> (Target 8) 
Primary deliberate dwelling fires attended	0002ai-ii	Down	<b>3</b> (Target 8) 
Building Regulations consultations completed on time	0022ai	Up	<b>99%</b> (Target 95%) 
Fire safety audits/inspections completed	PI16	Up	<b>603</b> (Target 600) 
Primary fires in non-domestic buildings	0039	Down	<b>27</b> (Target 28) 
Automatic fire detector false alarms in non-domestic properties attended	0011	Down	<b>152</b> (Target 163) 
Shifts where Service crewing level is sufficient for all wholetime pumps	0040a	Up	<b>100%</b> (Target 100%) 
Emergency calls answered within 7 seconds	0028b	Up	<b>91%</b> (Target 90%) 
Average response time to primary fires (from time of send/alert)	0030h	Down	<b>516</b> (Target 600) 
Average response time to RTCs (from time of send/alert)	0030j	Down	<b>553</b> (Target 780) 
Secondary fires attended within 20 minutes (from time of send/alert)	0030l	Up	<b>96%</b> (Target 96%) 
Average response time to secondary fires (from time of send/alert)	0030i	Down	<b>524</b> (Target 1200) 
Average response time to primary fires	0030a	Down	<b>594</b> (Target 600) 
Average response time to RTCs	0030d	Down	<b>686</b> (Target 780) 
Secondary fires attended within 20 minutes	0030e	Up	<b>97%</b> (Target 96%) 
Average response time to secondary fires	0030b	Down	<b>624</b> (Target 1200) 

Indicator	Ref	Aim	Quarter 1	
On-call employees with 4 or more sickness absences in a 12-month period	0061	Down	<b>1.33%</b> (Target 5%)	
Station-based operational BA wearers who attended a tactical firefighting assessment within last 2 years	T1	Up	<b>99%</b> (Target 98%)	
Qualified EFAD drivers who attended a refresher course within last 2 years	T2	Up	<b>100%</b> (Target 98%)	
Station-based operational BA wearers who attended a water rescue revalidation course within last 3 years	T3	Up	<b>98%</b> (Target 98%)	
Watches/sections at BFRS stations that have at least 60% of operation personnel qualified in trauma care or equivalent	T4	Up	<b>100%</b> (Target 98%)	
Station-based operational staff who attended a working at height or rope rescue revalidation course within last 3 years	T5	Up	<b>98%</b> (Target 98%)	
Level 1 incident commanders who attended an incident command assessment within the required frequency	T6	Up	<b>98%</b> (Target 98%)	
Flexible duty officers who attended an incident command assessment within the required frequency	T7	Up	<b>100%</b> (Target 98%)	
Workplace training completed by wholetime operational personnel via PDR Pro in last 12 months	T8a	Up	<b>93%</b> (Target 92%)	
Workplace training completed by on-call operational personnel via PDR Pro in last 12 months	T8b	Up	<b>91%</b> (Target 90%)	
Workplace training completed by wholetime day duty WMs via PDR Pro in last 12 months	T8e	Up	<b>92%</b> (Target 92%)	
Serious accidents where individual is off sick for more than 28 days (per 1000 employees)	H1	Down	<b>1.83</b> (Target 3.78)	
Working days/shifts lost to accidents per 1000 employees (excluding on-call)	H2	Down	<b>102.28</b> (Target 291.95)	
24-hour cover periods lost to accidents per 1000 on-call employees	H3	Down	<b>123.64</b> (Target 703.62)	
Vehicle collisions involving fire service fleet vehicles, including non-operational assets	H4	Down	<b>17</b> (Target 34.6)	
Grade A defect response time (within 1 hour)	WS1a	Up	<b>97.37%</b> (Target 90%)	
Grade A defect response time (within 2 hours)	WS1b	Up	<b>100%</b> (Target 95%)	
Time when rescue pumping appliances were unavailable for operational use due to annual service, defect or other works (Turnaround time)	WS2a	Down	<b>2.63%</b> (Target 5%)	

Indicator	Ref	Aim	Quarter 1	
Time when aerial appliances and SRU were unavailable for operational use due to annual service, defect or other works (Turnaround time)	WS2b	Down	<b>3.23%</b> (Target 5%)	
Time when other operational appliances unavailable for operational use due to annual service, defect or other works (Turnaround time)	WS2c	Down	<b>0.55%</b> (Target 3%)	
Time the appliance is unavailable for operational response in the reporting period, other than for the time measured under the turnaround time (Idle time)	WS4	Down	<b>0.97%</b> (Target 2%)	
Time when ALL Appliances were available for operational use after turnaround time and idle time are removed from the total time in the period	WS5	Up	<b>97.78%</b> (Target 93%)	
Annual services undertaken	WS6	Up	<b>100%</b> (Target 97%)	
Routine financial reports distributed within 6 working days of period-end closure	0066	Up	<b>100%</b> (Target 90%)	
Outstanding debt over 90 days old	0068	Down	<b>2.43%</b> (Target 3.0%)	
Resolution of Priority 1 incidents within 1 hour (Any incident preventing the mobilisation of any fire appliance or a major ICT incident that causes all users not being able to access critical / vital ICT systems)	0042	Up	<b>100%</b> (Target 96%)	
Resolution of Priority 2 incidents within 2 hours (Any incident reducing the resiliency to mobilise a fire appliance or multiple users unable to perform their role or gain access to key applications and systems)	0043	Up	<b>100%</b> (Target 97%)	
Resolution of Priority 3 incidents within 4 hours (Any incident resulting in degraded performance of an application / system for multiple users; access to an application / system for a single user)	0044	Up	<b>100%</b> (Target 97%)	
Resolution of Priority 4 incidents within 8 hours (Any incident resulting in degraded performance of an application / system for a single user)	0045	Up	<b>94%</b> (Target 93%)	
Availability of core ICT network services	0046	Up	<b>99.9%</b> (Target 98.0%)	
Availability of business applications	0047	Up	<b>98.8%</b> (Target 98.0%)	

## No target. For information only

Indicator	Ref	Aim	Quarter 1
Home fire safety visits delivered to high-risk groups	0016a	Up	<b>375</b> (Last year 579) 
Building Regulations consultations responded to	0022a	N/A	<b>71</b> (Last year 87) 
Prohibition notices served	0023g	N/A	<b>6</b> (Last year 0) 
Enforcement notices served	0023i	N/A	<b>0</b> (Last year 0) 
Incidents attended	0001	N/A	<b>1771</b> (Last year 1900) 
Fires attended	0001a	N/A	<b>490</b> (Last year 567) 
Other non-fire incidents attended	0001b	N/A	<b>655</b> (Last year 665) 
False alarms attended	0001c	N/A	<b>626</b> (Last year 668) 
Emergency calls received	0028	N/A	<b>3875</b> 



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**SUBJECT: ANNUAL REPORT 2022/23**

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Author and contact: Leanne Ehren  
Interim Head of Communication, Engagement and Public Affairs  
leanne.ehren@bedsfire.gov.uk

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Background Papers: NA

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**PURPOSE:**

For FRA Members to consider the Annual Report for the year 2022/23.

**RECOMMENDATION:**

That Members acknowledge the report for information and comment.

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1. Summary

- 1.1 The Annual Report includes monthly highlights, full year key performance information, a functional services and community safety commentary, a financial summary, updates on key projects and programmes and a summary of collaborations.
- 1.2 This is a document that can be used by FRA members to reflect back on the previous year and to showcase achievements with partners and key stakeholders.
- 1.3 An accessible version will be published on the BFRS website.

**LEANNE EHREN**  
**INTERIM HEAD OF COMMUNICATION, ENGAGEMENT AND PUBLIC AFFAIRS**

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# ANNUAL REPORT 2022/23

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**Bedfordshire**  
Fire & Rescue Service



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## OUR MISSION

Working together to keep Bedfordshire safe.

## OUR VALUES



We Are Accountable



We've Got Your Back



Every Contact Counts



We Dare To Be Different

 WE ARE ACCOUNTABLE

 WE'VE GOT YOUR BACK

 EVERY CONTACT COUNTS

 WE DARE TO BE DIFFERENT

# OUR CORE CODE OF ETHICS



## PUTTING OUR COMMUNITIES FIRST

We put the interests of the public, the community, and service users first.



## INTEGRITY

We act with integrity including being open, honest, and consistent in everything that we do.



## DIGNITY & RESPECT

We treat people with dignity and respect, making decisions objectively based on evidence, without discrimination or bias.



## LEADERSHIP

We are positive role models, always demonstrating flexible and resilient leadership. We are all accountable for everything we do and challenge all behaviour that falls short of the highest standards.



## EQUALITY, DIVERSITY & INCLUSION

We continually recognise and promote the value of EDI, both within the FRS and the wider communities in which we serve.

We stand against all forms of discrimination, create equal opportunities, promote equality, foster good relations, and celebrating difference.

# FOREWORD

**Welcome to our Annual Report for the financial year 2022/23 which seeks to highlight our progress and achievements over the past year.**

Reflecting back over the financial year that was 2022/23, it certainly feels like we are in a very different place to a year ago when most of the country was coming out the other side of the Covid pandemic and all the challenges that came with that.

2022/23 was a year that saw us continuing to drive down the risk of fire through our intensive prevention work with the total number of dwelling fires that year down to the second lowest number on record. Working with our partners, our efforts to increase and better target inspections of non-domestic buildings led to us discovering more dangerous premises that did not meet the necessary fire safety standards and which led to us taking enforcement action and prosecuting the persons responsible. 2022/23 saw a big increase in the number of emergency incidents we were called to, due in part to the busy summer of wildfires that were quickly followed by a spate of flooding incidents. We also responded to a number of major incidents, including the explosion in Redwood Grove in Bedford and the high rise fire in Green Court, Luton.

I am incredibly proud of how our firefighters, control operators and support staff really stepped up during a year of unprecedented demand both in the county and beyond, working tirelessly with our partners in new and innovative ways to make a difference and help keep the people of Bedfordshire safe whilst also delivering a wide range of improvement projects,

some of which are highlighted in this report. It is a real honour to be leading such a professional and hardworking team who are delivering great things for our communities and seen by many as a leading light in so many different areas.

Looking forward, in April 2023 we launched our new 4-year Community Risk Management Plan (CRMP) which sets how we intend to improve your fire and rescue service. We have listened to what our communities, businesses, our staff and other stakeholders have told us and taken on board the feedback from our most recent inspection. As a result, our latest CRMP has been developed to respond to this vital feedback and whilst it is clear there is still more to do, I believe we are in good shape to meet the challenges that lie ahead and you have my personal assurance that we will continue to strive to be the best we can be and to deliver on our mission of working together to keep Bedfordshire safe.

You can learn more about our work by checking out our website and following our social media channels and, of course, we welcome any feedback you have.

Yours sincerely



**Andrew Hopkinson**, Chief Fire Officer

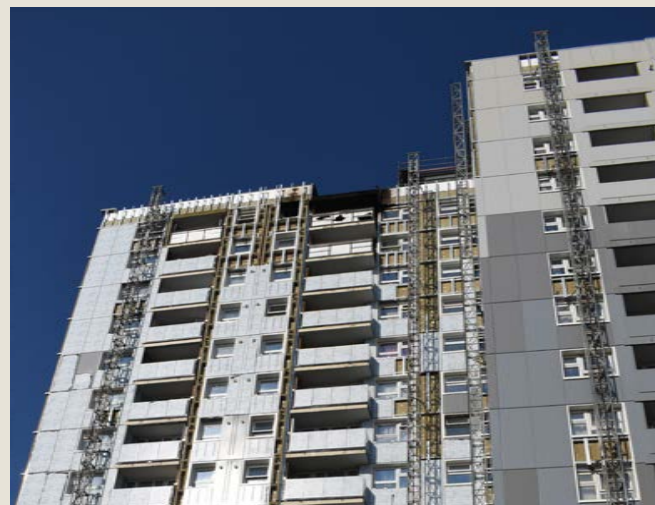


# MONTH BY MONTH HIGHLIGHTS

## April 2022

Bedford Red Watch, Stacey Moore from Prevention and Fire Control created a video on **staying safe in the water when paddle boarding**. This included messaging about getting lessons or instruction beforehand, wear a buoyancy aid, taking a phone in a waterproof pouch and checking weather conditions before you leave.

The Service was called to a fire at a block of flats in Luton. Residents of **Green Court** had to be evacuated and one person sadly lost their life. BFRS worked with Police and Luton Borough Council to ensure the building was made safe and the prevention team undertook a targeted safe and well campaign in the area to reassure residents and talk about home fire safety. Two partnership community meetings were held to hear concerns and reassure residents.



## May 2022

In support of **Deaf Awareness Week** Kempston White Watch created a selection of videos with a British Sign Language interpreter. The videos covered topics such as escape plans, hearing impaired smoke alarms and the emergency text service.

In aid of **Mental Health Awareness Week**, Leighton Buzzard Fire Station and Bedfordshire Fire Cadets invited the local community to meet Frank Bruno, MBE, former professional boxer.

Ahead of the **Platinum Jubilee Weekend**, we issued outdoor safety warnings to the public. Any irresponsible use of fire outdoors can pose a significant risk to public fire safety, this includes taking care when using BBQs at street parties and setting off fireworks.

Prior to the Platinum Jubilee Weekend teams across the service were visited by principal officers and all eligible members were presented with their **Queen Elizabeth II Platinum Jubilee medals**.



## June 2022

**Volunteers Week** is an annual celebration to say thank you and recognise the fantastic contribution all volunteers make to our communities. We shared a few words from our volunteers who dedicate their time to help and support us.

We held our **Staff Values Awards Night** at Mitchell Hall, Cranfield, to recognise those who have gone over and above to support the Service over the last couple of years. The BFRS Staff Values Awards was the first celebratory event since the pandemic where BFRS Authority members and employees gathered together. The necessary restrictions imposed by the pandemic delayed our preparations to celebrate so many wonderful successes over the years.


A pass out parade at Service HQ welcomed friends and family of 10 wholetime and six on-call firefighters.

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## July 2022

Emergency services were called to an explosion and fire in **Redwood Grove**, Bedford. A three-storey block of 20 flats was significantly damaged in the fire, which also caused a large section of the roof to collapse. One person died as a result of the incident and was later confirmed as the perpetrator. Bedford and Kempston firefighters stayed in the area after the event to reassure local residents.

On the **hottest day on record**, BFRS faced unprecedented working conditions and a huge number of incidents. The Chief Fire Officer thanked the workforce on social media: "Thank you to all my amazing control staff, firefighters, officers and corporate staff for their absolutely herculean efforts on the hottest day on record, responding to unprecedented demand both in the county and beyond."




**PETER HAILES**  
VOLUNTEER CADET INSTRUCTOR

This is Peter Hailes. Peter first joined Bedfordshire Fire and Rescue Service in 1983, as an On-Call Firefighter in Leighton Buzzard. Over the years, Peter went on to progress through the ranks and achieve the rank of Watch Commander. He attended countless incidents and has been a role model to many people that are still currently serving firefighters.

Since retiring as an operational Watch Commander in 2012, Peter has continued to pass on his knowledge and experience to our cadets as a volunteer cadet instructor at Leighton Buzzard and has influenced them all.

Thank you Peter.






## August 2022

As **temperatures soared and dry weather continued**, we issued a warning to urge the public to act carefully and responsibly to prevent fires. We advised against having BBQs, bonfires or campfires, properly extinguishing cigarettes and not to leave glass bottles in the sun.

We also collaborated with the NFU county advisers to appeal to local farmers to maintain their vehicles and supervise visits to their land. Many of the fires were on farmland and were standing crops and we wanted to show our support to farmers who may have lost income.

Serious incidents included:

- 🔥 large stubble field fire in Lower Sundon
- 🔥 large field fire in Cranfield, covering about 800 x 800m of standing crop
- 🔥 large fire at a waste management site in Elstow, Bedford
- 🔥 large rubbish fire near Sue Ryder on Ampthill Road, Bedford

## September 2022

On 8 September, the **death of HM Queen Elizabeth II** was publicly announced. The United Kingdom observed a national mourning period of 10 days during which BFRS followed protocols such as officers donning black ties and armbands, a reduction of some daily activities and events, and a social media blackout.

Led by Stopsley White Watch, **Business Safety Week** was a campaign targeted towards businesses who may be failing to comply with fire safety regulations or individuals who rely on a business to provide them with fire protection. Focusing on Park Street in Luton, the watch gave businesses advice and carried out compliance checks for a successful week of campaigning, supported county-wide by social media.

**Beds Fire and Rescue** @BedsFire · Aug 10, 2022  
!! Stay safe during these extremely hot weather conditions !!

!! Don't have bonfires or BBQs  
Avoid the temptation to cool down in open water  
Ensure cigarettes are fully out  
Alcohol and water do not mix  
If you see someone in trouble in the water – call 999  
#Heatwave

Met Office  
0000 Thursday - 2359 Sunday

Amber Extreme Heat



## October 2022

About 60 people were forced to leave their homes because of a **large fire at a recycling centre** in Kingsway, Luton. Eight homes and a block of flats were evacuated while other residents were asked to keep windows closed because of the smoke.

On **World Menopause Day**, BFRS hosted a staff event where we welcomed a guest speaker to encourage a conversation about how menopause can affect everyone.

## November 2022

Students of Sharnbrook Academy were given a **hard-hitting lesson in road safety** by a team from Harrold Community Fire Station. Using a decommissioned car and specialist rescue equipment, the team also cut a teacher volunteer from a simulated car crash site.

Remember, remember, the fifth of November. We ran a campaign educating on the importance of the safe use of fireworks and advised that people should instead attend organised events where possible. This included a video created by Dunstable White Watch highlighting safe steps to using fireworks at home.

## December 2022

During the December cold spell in which snow and ice gripped Bedfordshire, messages about keeping warm safely, driving safely and heating your home were communicated to members of the public. We also issued a warning for people not to venture onto **frozen water** after the tragic death of three children in Solihull in a frozen lake.

Twelve wholetime and two Control firefighters were formally welcomed to Bedfordshire Fire and Rescue Service at a pass out parade.



## January 2023

Toddington Fire Station hosted a **Have a Go Day** for on-call recruitment. Reporters from BBC 3 Counties Radio came along to have a go for their radio show and were put through their paces.

Kempston Fire Station hosted a visit from the **High Sheriff of Bedfordshire, Lady Jane Clifford**. It gave us the opportunity to showcase latest innovations in training and rescue equipment, as well as a visit to Fire Control. She even volunteered to be extricated from a car using the Lukas cutting equipment.

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## February 2023

To mark **National Apprenticeships Week**, we gave a shoutout to some of our apprentices for the work they do, from operational firefighter to support role apprenticeships.

As part of **Random Acts of Kindness Week**, Dunstable Fire Station worked with the charity Small Acts of Kindness to visit vulnerable people in Bedfordshire to assess their safety at home and to deliver winter warmth gift bags.



## March 2023

On **International Women's Day**, we shared the stories of Maisie, who joined BFRS as an on-call firefighter at Leighton Buzzard Fire Station last year, and showcased Aaliyah who recently joined as a wholetime firefighter at Luton Fire Station.

Dunstable Fire Station hosted a **workshop** for Richard Fuller MP and Andrew Selous MP to show them how we are working with the East of England Ambulance Service on urgent medical response and helping people who have fallen in their home.



# PERFORMANCE

## Total number of incidents attended

There were a total of 7,711 incidents attended in the county of Bedfordshire during 2022/23 up by 12% compared to 2021/22 (6,909). This was because of increases in fires, fire false alarms and non-fire incidents attended.

## Accidental dwelling fires

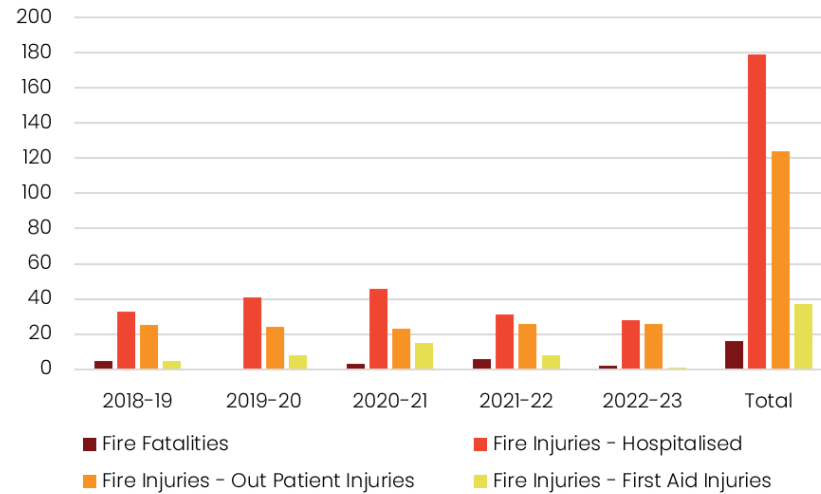
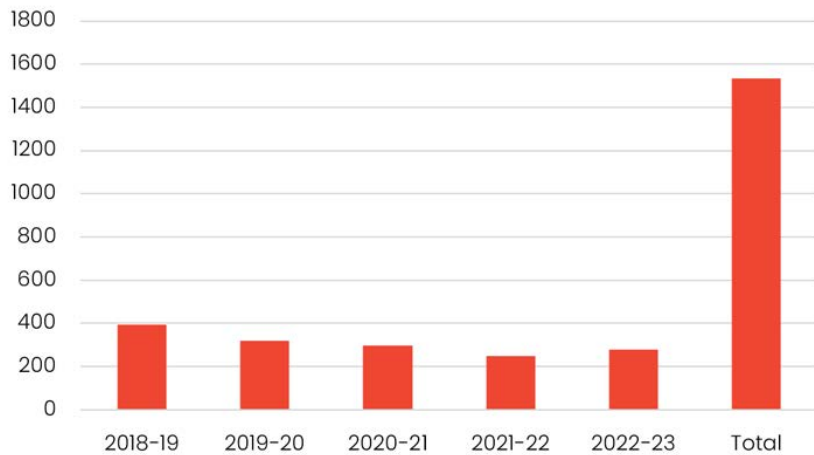
When comparing 2021/22 and 2022/23 data there has been an increase from 249 to 280 in primary accidental dwelling fires (up by 13%).

The 2022/23 total of 280 is 9% below the five-year average.

## Number of fire deaths, injuries and less serious injuries

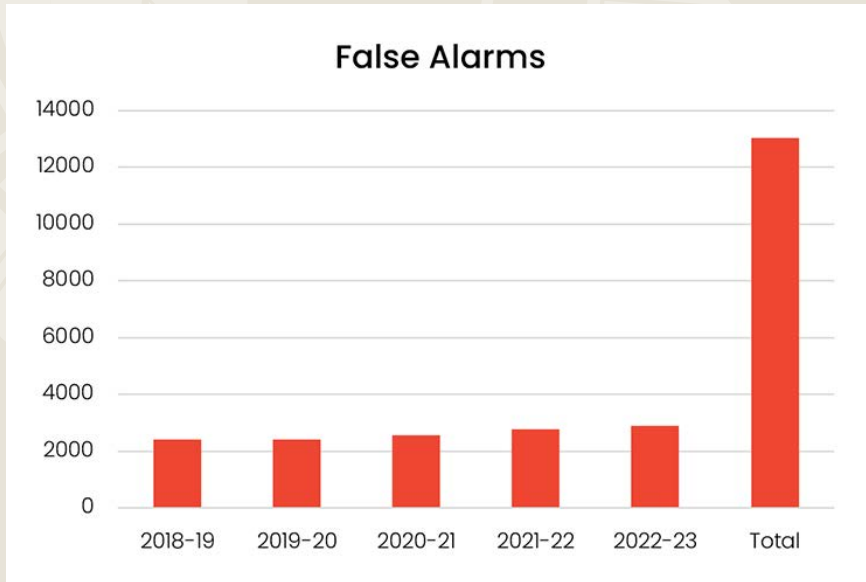
In statistical terms the number of fatalities and casualties is low and prone to fluctuation. In 2022/23 we saw a slight downward trend of injuries.

### Accidental Dwelling Fires (ADF)



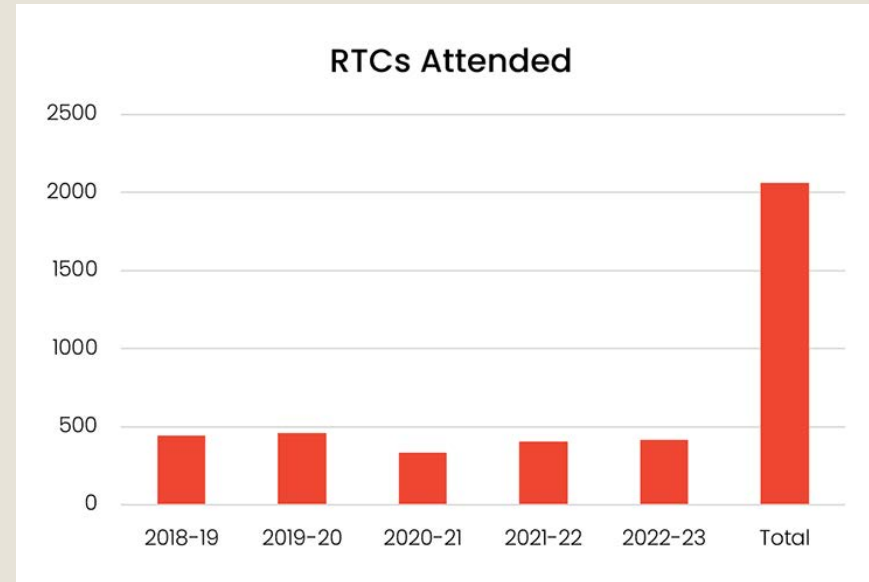
## Number of alarms from AFAs

Attendance to fire false alarms in dwellings has an increasing trend over the five-year period, with a 15% increase in 2022-23 from the previous year alone. This accounts for the highest number of false alarm attendances.



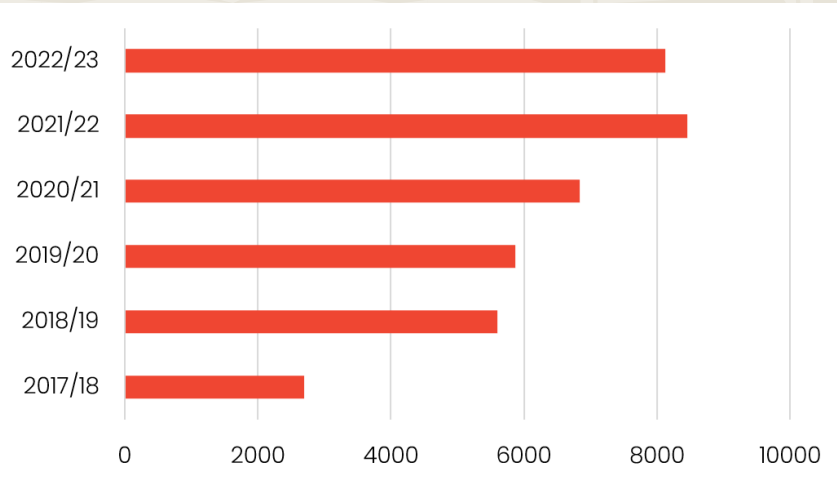
## Road traffic collisions attended

The number of road traffic collisions has generally seen a downward trend during the past five years. However, we have seen a slight increase for 2022/23.



# PREVENTION

## Home Fire Safety Visits



**Delivery of Home Fire Safety Visits (HFSV) has contributed to a significant reduction in the annual number of accidental fires in the home in Bedfordshire.** Our HFSV is fully aligned to the national NFCC Person Centred Framework guidance. In addition, we support community health and wellbeing services by making referrals to specialist services for falls and frailty, alcohol consumption, crime prevention, smoking cessation, and difficulties meeting fuel costs.

We also work with other public sector organisations, such as housing providers and health services to exchange relevant information about people who need support and make sure they receive a visit from the person best placed to help them.

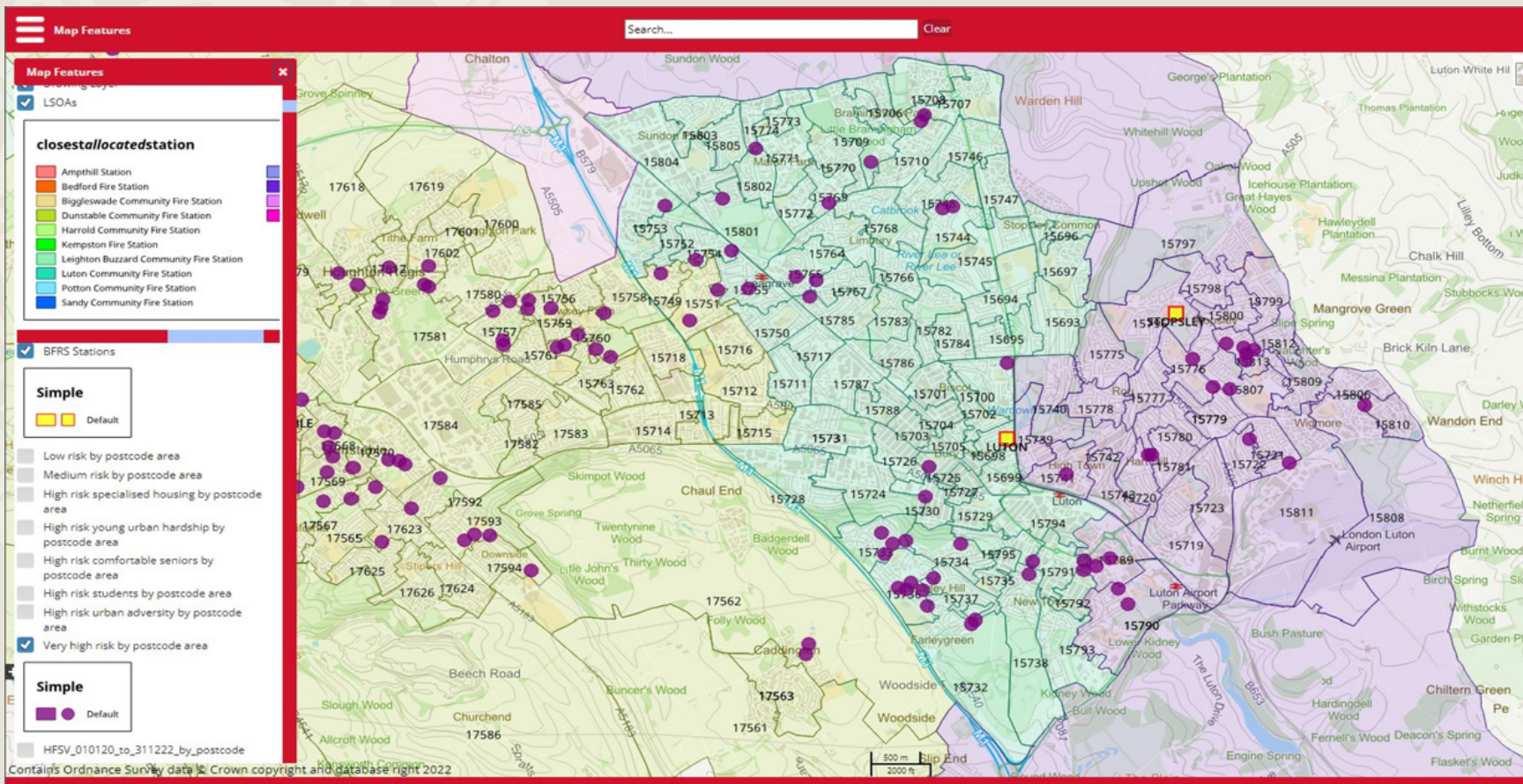
In April 2022 we started using Acorn data for web mapping. Maps help to support prevention activity by targeting the right activities in the right areas to the right people. Acorn data can be filtered by postcode area and shows BFRS where risk groups are located.

## Prevention modelling knowledge base

BFRS has invested in a new customer insight tool from CadCorp geographical information system (GIS) helping us to understand, analyse and manage community risks, and this was implemented on 1 April 2022. We use these new risk groups for prioritising home fire safety delivery and ongoing monitoring. We will use pen portraits of each group to support staff in understanding the types of households most at risk.

The high risk groups can either be searched individually or in any combination depending upon the nature of the planned prevention work. Areas are colour-coded by station ground to allow station-based staff to see where their risk groups are located. A separate index has been created to show sub-areas by their relative deprivation, which, combined with the Acorn risk groups, helps identify the higher risk areas.

The purple circles (data points) in the map on the next page show the location of a particular high risk group by post code area in the Luton, Dunstable and Stopsley station grounds. The users can zoom to find out more about any data point by simply clicking on it.



The ability of the new GIS to readily identify repeat locations and clusters or hot spots is very useful when it comes to planning prevention work as it enables users to quickly see where the problem areas are and thus where to focus prevention activity to maximise the returns for the resources devoted to the campaigns.

February saw the launch of the mobile PowerApp, which forms part of the Service's digital transformation strategy and allows HFSVs to be completed on tablet devices at the time of the visit. As part of this project, referrals to external partners (e.g. safeguarding) are made via the PowerApp without the need for a paper referral form to be completed. The new PowerApp ensures comprehensive risk identification and interventions to address the health, behaviour and social needs of the people we visit.

Prevention has also been involved with dozens of events, safety talks and community engagement groups, covering everything from community runs, to winter warm events, family-focused fun days, to school visits.

## Safeguarding

Safeguarding is everyone's responsibility; we are committed to protecting children, young people and adults from abuse and neglect. We strive to promote the safety, dignity and wellbeing of people in the communities we serve.

Our targeted prevention work results in us interacting more with children, young people and adults who may be at risk of harm. Safeguarding is, therefore, an increasing part of our role.

Since 2022, we have employed a safeguarding advisor and established a safeguarding team. The safeguarding team has enhanced the Service's safeguarding practice by utilising in-depth knowledge and expertise to support those who raise concerns. In addition, it uses data and reports thematically to inform and work with partner agencies to support positive outcomes for victims of abuse and neglect.

Focus for 2023/24:

- Develop training packages reflective of NFCC, NHS and legislative guidance across child and adult safeguarding and to ensure frequency, content and delivery of training is maintained across the Service
- Ensure longevity of safeguarding referral pathways from the Service into the local authority and to continue to develop relationships with other local authority teams to enable a method of referral triage and signposting, where referrals may not necessarily meet safeguarding thresholds
- Ensure our safeguarding data influence and support local authority safeguarding agendas

## Arson reduction

BFRS has an arson reduction officer who leads on delivering the arson reduction strategy. We work in partnership with other agencies to reduce arson by implementing interventions in three key areas:

- **Environmental interventions:** aimed at removing the opportunities for arsonists to commit offences, removing potential targets for arson offences and improving security in respect of targets for arson offences that cannot be removed
- **Investigation-based interventions:** aimed at assisting the police and other partner agencies in the identification of patterns, series and trends in respect of arson offences
- **Educational interventions:** aimed at educating offenders and potential offenders to remove or prevent development of the motivation for engaging in fire setting behaviour

There was an increase from 565 to 759 deliberate fires (up by 34%) compared to 2021/22. Whilst all primary fires have exceeded the 2022/23 target by 2%, they remain under the five-year average.





## Road safety

The community safety officer road safety is supported by the part-time road traffic collision (RTC) reduction officers. The team has been working hard to ensure collaborative working and educational events have continued. These include:

**10 Biker Down courses** have run during 2022-23 with all courses having the full number of participants. There are sixteen spaces on each course, and this has enabled us to engage with 160 people. The course involves education on the science of being seen, what to do at the scene of a collision, basic first aid which includes helmet removal and CPR and the final module that is delivered by BCH Policing and educates riders with regards to road traffic laws.

The team has also worked in partnership with National Highways and supported large events such as Silverstone F1, Moto GP and Motorcycle Live.

The team has been involved with the Road Safety Partnership, which has given us access to different partners we can work closely with as we all have the same priority – to reduce KSI's on Bedfordshire roads.

Partnership courses that BFRS support include:

- **Motivational Observational Reactional Education (MORE) Course** – aimed at young drivers between the ages of 16-30 and is free to those living within Bedfordshire.

- **Project Edward – Every Day Without A Road Death.** BFRS attended with partners from the Bedfordshire Road Safety Partnership. The Project Edward Team filmed a podcast that was released later in the day and starred Assistant Chief Fire Officer Alison Kibblewhite. The event was about vulnerable road users and keeping everyone that uses the road safe.

Throughout the year we follow and support national campaign calendars and work together with partner agencies to have a bigger educational impact on our communities.

Events attended and campaigns facilitated include fire station car washes to give tyre maintenance advice, seatbelt safety campaigns and attending British Superbikes in partnership with National Highways.



## Water safety

There are annual national educational campaign weeks that BFRS support. These include:

- Be Water Aware – NFCC campaign 25 April – 1 May 2022
- RLSSUK Drowning Prevention week and RLSSUK
- Don't Drink and Drown week

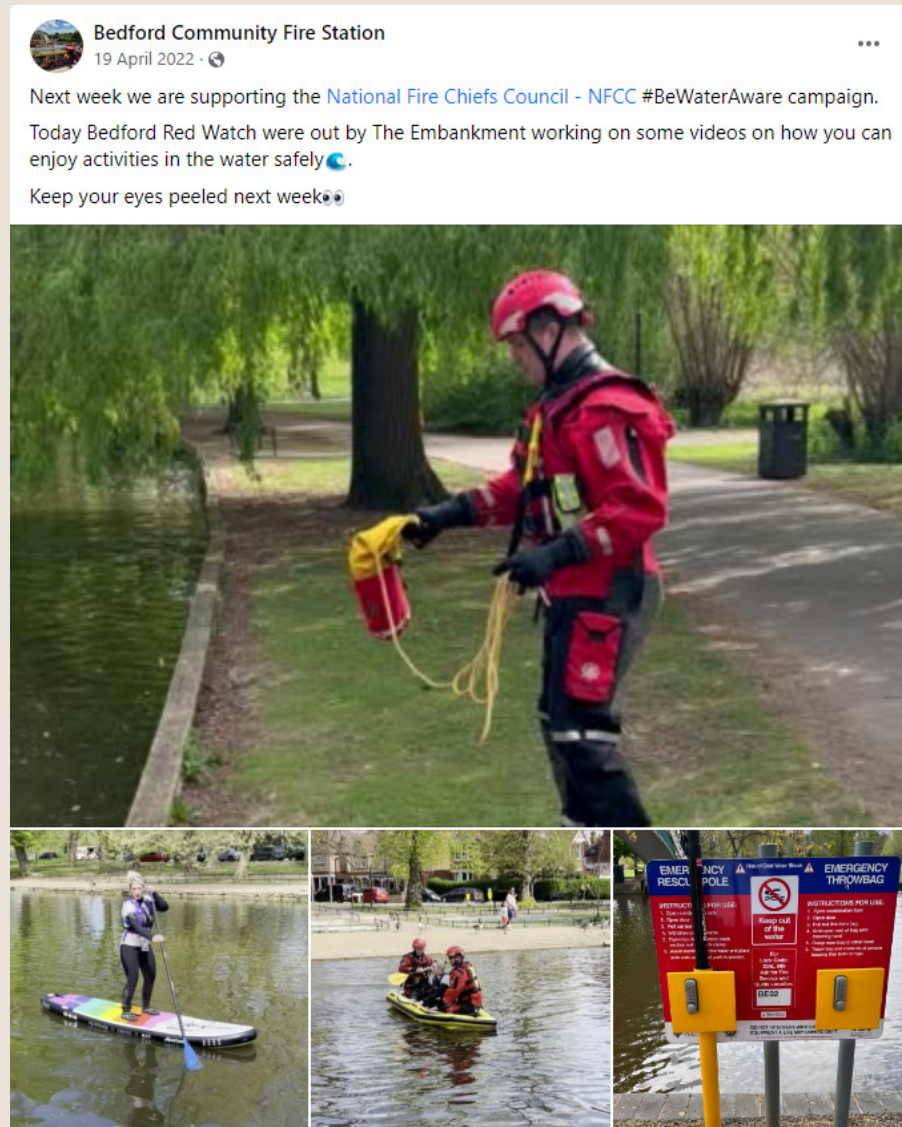
BFRS will also respond to local events if appropriate as part of a multi-agency approach.

## Bedfordshire drowning prevention advisory group

The Service is a key stakeholder in the collaborative partnership and chairs the meetings which include representatives from Luton Borough Council, Bedford Borough Council and Central Bedfordshire Council. Since the last report, representatives from The Environment Agency and various town councils also attend the meetings. The group aims to provide standard water safety messaging across the three authorities and discuss any local issues. The group is still looking for representatives from organisations such as Bedfordshire Police.

Areas where the group has supported include:

- New throwline boards in known areas of risk
- Improved water safety signage in areas of known risk
- Joint attendance at community events



## Youth development and fire cadets

The youth officer has supported a variety of young person interventions this year with the core areas of the role including:

- 18 Safety Awareness and Fire Education (SAFE) referrals - intervention for children and teenagers who set fires
- StayWise scheme - fire safety sessions for all Year 2 primary classes, delivered by operational crews and supported by youth officer and station admins
- Fire cadets
- Early intervention - bespoke sessions that reduce risk and improve outcomes for children and teenagers
- Partnership engagement – working productively with other prosocial organisations in Bedfordshire

Page 83 There have been reviews and updates to the SAFE policy and a review of our early intervention work to align with NFCC.

Internal quality assurance has started on a two-yearly programme to review StayWise Year 2 visits.

## Fire cadets

BFRS has fire cadet units based at Bedford, Sandy, Leighton Buzzard and Luton. The total number of drill sessions undertaken by each of the four units was approximately 40. The cadet units have supported a wide range of community events including fund raising events, and civic occasions such as Remembrance Day Parade.

Cadets have participated in a range of training sessions to support their personal resilience and Development, including first aid and mental health awareness.



## Early intervention

Bespoke sessions have been tailored for the educational need for each intervention. The input, resources and interactive activities draw from a range of sources including the CSOYD's broad experience of teaching and delivering interventions, the latest research in fire safety education and the NFCC guidance.

Examples of interventions this year include:

- Peter Pan Nursery and Cherry Tree Nursery: targeted support sessions following Redwood Grove incident
- YMCA Goldington Nursery: early fire safety messaging for children, support for staff

## Vulnerable/SEND

Areas where the group has supported include:

- 1:1 session for a 16-year-old male in care - threat of arson/smoking/disengaged (1)
- 1:1 visit to 10-year-old male child in own home - ADHD/fear/anxiety (1)
- Bedford College - home fire safety workshop for 15-17-year-olds with SEND needs (40)
- Ivel Valley College - home fire safety assembly and 1:1/small group discussions for 17/19-year-olds with SEND needs (80)
- SEND Open Day at Bedford station

## Partnership engagement

BFRS has engaged with local authorities in and out of Bedfordshire, with police and other agencies such as housing associations, schools, children's homes, foster parents, to support SAFE cases and young people with learning difficulties and disabilities. Amongst other activities, we delivered safety awareness sessions and provided learning resources which included posting BFRS fire safety leaflets, selecting and recommending StayWise resources. Examples include:

- Inspire Camp - Active Luton with 100+ young children engaged together with Stopsley
- CHUMS session undertaken with 11 young carers
- LBC joint meeting to arrange support for CYP affected by Green Court fire



## Protection

BFRS is the enforcing authority for the Regulatory Reform (Fire Safety) Order 2005. The Fire Safety Order requires anyone in control of a premises (the 'responsible person') to carry out a fire risk assessment to determine what steps they need to take to reduce the risk from fire and make sure people can safely escape if there is a fire.

During 2022/23 we continued to refine our Protection approach in response to new legislation and guidance. This includes the Fire Safety Act 2021 (FSA 21), the Fire Safety (England) Regulations 2022 (FSER 22) and the Building Safety Act 2022 (BSA 22).

The Government continued to provide significant grant funding to support an uplift in protection capacity and competency.

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Over the course of 2022/23 BFRS has:

- Established a web portal enabling responsible persons to provide the information in accordance with FSER 22
- Invested a total of £136,800 of government uplift grant, with £112,100 spent on extra posts and £18,400 on training
- Recruited a new Fire Safety Regulator to support work arising from BSA 22
- Continued to refine our processes for effectively targeting protection activity towards higher risk people and places

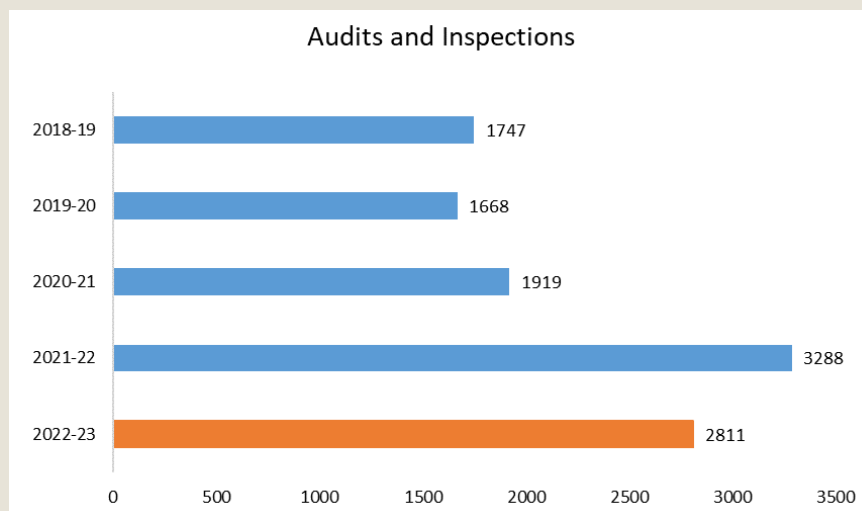
## Audits and inspections

As the enforcing authority, the Service undertakes a range of planned and reactive inspections of premises (normally buildings or parts of buildings) to which the Fire Safety Order applies. The Fire Safety Order applies very widely and there are

more than 26,000 premises within the county of Bedfordshire to which the Fire Safety Order applies. With so many premises, we target our finite resources on those buildings that present the highest risk to life safety in the event of a fire. This is predominantly those buildings used for sleeping or with vulnerable occupants, such as care homes, hotels, hospitals and other residential accommodation. We also sample other types of premises such as offices, factories and shops.

Our risk-based inspection programme includes the following types of activity:

- Planned audits of higher risk premises by specialist fire safety staff
- Basic fire safety checks of lower risk premises by operational staff
- Carrying out 'after fire' inspections
- Inspections to investigate complaints we receive about fire safety standards in premises



## Formal enforcement action

When BFRS finds the requirements of the Fire Safety Order have not been complied with, the action that can be taken ranges from informal advice through to prosecution. BFRS takes a firm but fair approach to enforcement in line with the Regulators Code. Formal enforcement actions include serving the types of notices set out below. It is a criminal offence to fail to comply with these notices.

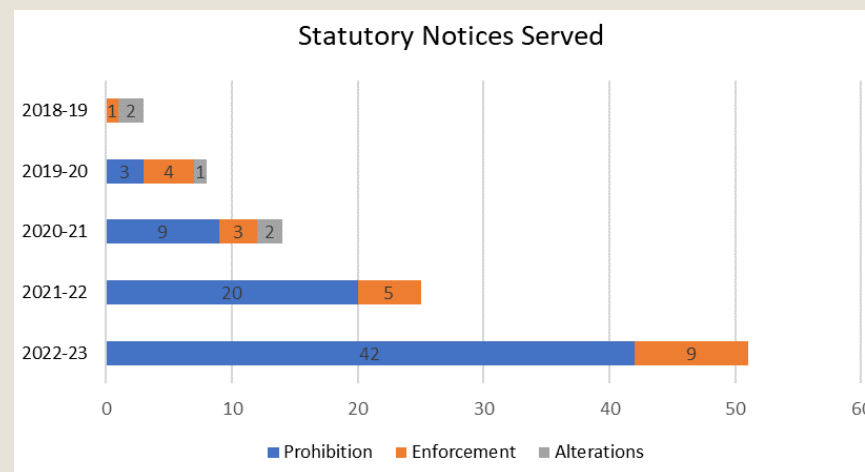
**Prohibition notice** – served where the risk is considered so serious that use of the premises needs to be prohibited or restricted until specified matters have been remedied.

**Enforcement notice** – served where there is a clear breach of the law, where the degree of risk of harm is significant, and where a remedy needs to be secured within a set period of time.

**Alterations notice** – served where there is a serious risk (or there would be with a change to the premises) and may require that before any changes are made details of the proposed changes must be submitted to the fire authority.

During 2022-23 BFRS served a higher numbers of Notices than in any previous year. Prohibition notices were served on 42 premises that were providing sleeping accommodation without adequate fire safety arrangements, such as fire detection and alarm systems, fire doors and escape routes. This includes houses in multiple occupation (HMO), working with the housing authorities to combat rogue landlords.

One premises accepted a caution for failing to comply with the requirements of an enforcement notice issued by BFRS. Where appropriate, cautions can be used as an alternative to prosecution.



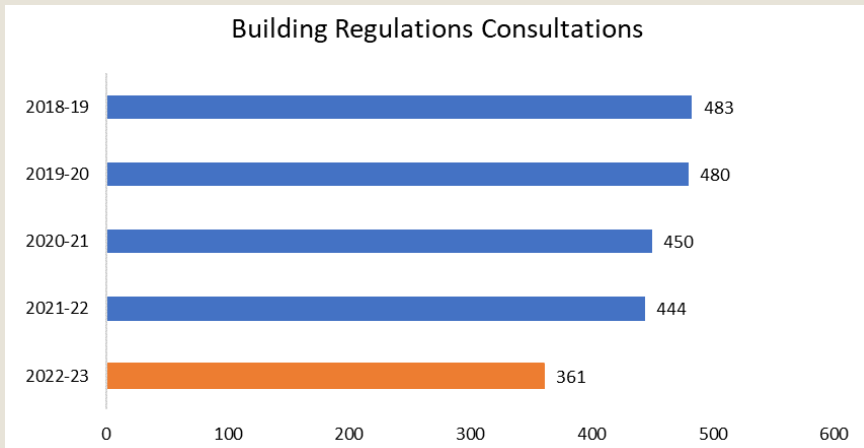
## Statutory consultations

In England and Wales, the Building Act 1984 and its Building Regulations apply to new buildings and to building work such as the erection, extension or material alteration of an existing building. Fire safety requirements are set out in Building Regulations and guidance on meeting the requirements is given in Approved Document B (Fire safety). The building control authority or approved inspector are responsible for checking for compliance with these requirements and undertake statutory consultation with the fire and rescue service as part of that process.

In 2022-23 BFRS made responses to 361 Building Regulations consultations received, which was fewer than in previous years.

Page 87 In addition to Building Regulations consultations, BFRS also responds to other consultations including those relating to licensing, care standards, and Ofsted inspections.

In 22-23 BFRS responded to 162 such consultations.



# FINANCE

## A financial summary of 2022/23

The Bedfordshire Fire and Rescue Authority (FRA) is a precepting authority – this means that its net cost, after receipt of government grant, is met by a proportion of local business rates and council tax via the unitary authorities of in Bedford, Central Bedfordshire and Luton.

The FRA is acutely aware, particularly in the current economic climate, of the need to keep any increase in council tax to the minimum, always bearing in mind the need to adequately fund the fire and rescue service. Resources must, therefore,

be enough to enable this emergency service to be fully operational throughout the year. For the 2022/23 budget, the FRA was able to keep its council tax increase to 1.99%.

A Band D property in 2022/23 paid £104.45 for the annual council tax charge of the Service.

## A financial commentary of 2022/23

The settlement figures for 2022/23 were the fourth single year settlement. A three-year Comprehensive Spending Review (CSR) was carried out over 2021, however a single year's funding information has again provided by to local government. We have been proactive in identifying changes that ensure continuity of our professional services whilst delivering the required efficiencies. Future financial settlements are likely to remain difficult. As such, we continue to plan for a range of financial scenarios that may emerge in the next few years. Our ability to mitigate our risks and realise opportunities is directly impacted

by our resourcing and budgetary make-up. Our current budgetary plans and assumptions determine the speed at which we will deliver our action plans. More information is available on our website. Our financial priorities are to:

- Ensure we deliver a balanced sustainable budget that provides value for money, aligns our resources to risk and supports the delivery of our CRMP;
- Be innovative in developing and delivering on our efficiency plan whilst maintaining a prudent level and utilisation of our reserves. Our medium-term financial strategy (MTFS) is a document that sets the Authority's financial strategy for the next four years. It focuses on the 2022/23 revenue budget and capital programme, but also sets the scene for future years. It covers national events such as the CSR and then breaks down how this impacts locally on the Authority. The MTFS details our reserves policy, planning assumptions behind the budget figures and other considerations that must be considered when setting the strategy, such as inflationary pressures, the tax base, efficiencies and shared services.

### Revenue budget:

For 2022/23 the FRA approved a revenue budget requirement of £33.393m circa 80 per cent of these costs are for employees.



### 2022/23 year end contribution to reserves:

The unaudited year-end contribution to reserves was £126.5k. The underspend was predominantly due to increased income from Treasury investments, grant income, income generated from providing training courses and sales. These income items were offset by some overspends in areas such as inflationary pressures on pay, supplies and services. This underspend had been reported during the year to the FRA and was allocated to the pay/pension reserve.

### Capital budget:

Our capital programme highlights spending on assets such as our fire stations and fire engines. Each year the Authority draws up a rolling four-year programme of capital projects. The capital projects for this year total £1.357m and these are being funded by contributions from the revenue budget and reserves utilisation. Projects for this year include:

- Investment in our vehicle feet, to maintain effective, economic and efficient fire appliances
- Investment in IT
- Investment in equipment
- Investment in the modernisation of our buildings

### Reserves:

The general reserve balance as at 31 March 2023 was £2.4m. This is following work undertaken over the last few years to establish specific earmarked reserves, which as at 31 March 2023 totalled £4.925m. The year-end revenue budget underspend of £125.6k has been allocated to the pension reserve. This is in line with the MTFs, which takes into account the back loaded, and on-going government funding reductions to fire and rescue services.

The capital receipts reserve as at 31 March 2023 was £548k.

*\*These figures (£) are yet to be externally audited as of August 2023, due to the external audit backlog across the public sector.*

A full explanation of the 2022/23 finances are held within the 2022/23 Statement of Accounts. The annual accounts are subject to external audit each year, the Service's external auditors are Ernst & Young. The link below will take you to the relevant page on the Service's website, please see the Statement of Accounts section: <https://www.bedsfire.gov.uk/finance-and-budgets>

*NB; The Fire and Rescue Authority has a responsibility to publish a statement of assurance on an annual basis which sets out the approach taken to ensuring appropriate arrangements are in place in terms of governance and operational delivery. The statement of assurance will be published later this year (link to follow).*



## Where does the money come from?

	2022/2023 (£m)	2021/2022 (£m)
Gross Budget	35.8	34.2
Income	-2.5	-2.5
Budget Requirement	33.3	31.7
Central & Local Government Funding	9.9	9.5
Council Tax	23.4	22.2
Total	33.3	31.7

**65% COUNCIL TAX**

**28% CENTRAL & LOCAL GOVERNMENT FUNDING**

**7% INCOME**



## What the money is spent on?

	2022/2023 (£m)	2021/2022 (£m)
Employees	27	25.1
Premises	0.9	0.9
Transport	0.7	0.6
Supplies & Services	2.5	2.8
Agency & Contracted Services	0.7	0.7
Capital Financing	1.6	1.0
Total	33.4	31.1
Reserves Funding	-0.1	0.6
Budget Requirement	33.3	31.7

**81% EMPLOYEES**

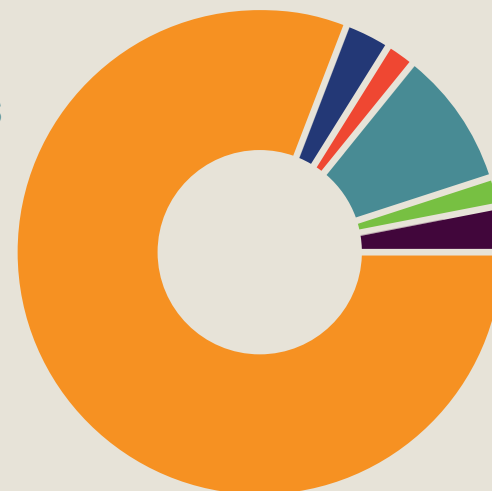
**8% SUPPLIES & SERVICES**

**4% CAPITAL FUNDING**

**3% PREMISES**

**2% TRANSPORT**

**2% AGENCY & CONTRACTED SERVICES**



# HUMAN RESOURCES

Within the HR team, 11 employees received their Long Service and Good Conduct Awards in 2022/2023.

This was another busy year for the resourcing team, at a time when the recruitment market is highly competitive, and roles are becoming increasingly hard to fill. During this time, the team recruited to 49 support roles (Green book), 4 Control posts, 22 on-call firefighters and 26 wholetime firefighters. All this recruitment activity inevitably resulted in pre-employment checks, contracts of employment and other onboarding activity for the HR Operations Team.

Page 91 The dedicated Instagram page called WIREbedsfire (Wellbeing, Inclusion, Recruitment and Engagement) steadily saw its number of followers increase. This social media site is used to promote health messages – mainly targeted at mental health initiatives, both operational and support role vacancies, recruitment events including positive action Have a Go days, and some key corporate messages.

The Employee Relations Team has continued with the cycle of regular review and implementation of organisational policies, ensuring they are proactively developed in line with legislative change. This includes providing relevant training and guidance to promote consistency. They have continued to explore ways to support staff in the cost-of-living crisis, conducting a benefits survey to identify the benefits our staff would be keen to access, then promoting those that are of real value for example discounts on the weekly food shop to holidays.

We have conducted widespread consultation and research to develop a range of papers and guidance on HR procedures to support new ways of working in response to Service projects and improvement initiatives as well as helping the Service to better support employees.

The team worked on several post-pandemic legal and people management issues, advising individual managers and the wider Service and continued to support managers dealing with issues both informally and formally, particularly with the new hybrid working environment.

The Occupational Health Team continued providing support to employees and managers dealing with a wide range of absences and medical conditions. This includes the medical assessment of all new employees to the Service, to ensure they are fit and safe to carry out their roles; as well as ensuring potential recruits who participate in recruitment and selection processes are fit to perform the practical elements of the assessment process. The also continued to work closely with the Trauma Risk Incident Management (Trim) team to support operational and control colleagues exposed to traumatic incidents through their work.

Post Covid and the relaxing of government guidance, we have been able to re-introduce in-person statutory health surveillance and fitness programmes. We have also expanded the mental health and wellbeing support and advice for all employees beyond our Employee Assistance Programme and The Fire Fighters Charity, in collaboration with the public health shared service (Milton Keynes City, Bedford Borough and Central Bedfordshire) and Total Wellbeing – Luton.

Acting on the results of the employee benefit survey the Payroll Team successfully implemented a lifestyle benefits portal to highlight discounts and promotions available to employees ranging from offers on leisure activities to high street savings. They have also prepared for the introduction of a Shared Cost AVC scheme for Local Government Pension Scheme (LGPS) members, this will enable eligible staff to make additional pension contributions in a tax efficient way, at no cost to the Service.

The HR Operations Team kept up to date with the ever-changing landscape for pension schemes and ensured staff have been kept informed of developments within their relevant pension schemes and regularly provided advice and guidance. Both the HR Operations and Payroll Team have worked with pension providers to ensure the correct pension is paid to all existing and former employees in response to the legislative changes being introduced by central Government later in 2023.

### **Empowering – equality and diversity**

Having a representative workforce continues to be a Service priority but also remains a sector wide significant challenge.

The Service continues to actively engage with under-represented community groups, including, where appropriate, positive action initiatives, and we continue to work to improve our community representation to better reflect the diversity of the county for those we serve. The end of the Covid pandemic meant a return to in person events as part of our positive action and recruitment and engagement activity designed to raise awareness of the career opportunities available in the Service. This includes providing attendees opportunities to have a go at some of the more practical activities performed by operational firefighters.

Over the course of the year, seven of the 83 of new starters across the Service were from a minority ethnic background, indicating a drop of less than 1% compared to 2021/22. Performance in relation to the recruitment of women into operational roles was mixed, with a slight improvement in recruitment to on-call roles in comparison with the previous year. Regrettably recruitment to wholetime roles reduced slightly.



# TRAINING & DEVELOPMENT

## Recruits' courses and conversion courses

The Training and Development Centre had an exceptionally busy year reacting to the recruitment needs of the Service, whilst simultaneously delivering new courses to support our advancement of breathing apparatus (BA) training and supporting operational resilience in the extreme hot weather event in summer 2022 and other events.

The Driver Training team had a jam-packed year. As well as training, supporting and revalidating our own blue light drivers, the team led a comprehensive standards review undertaken by the NFCC and also delivered eight driving training instructor courses for other fire and rescue services to allow their instructors to safely teach firefighters to drive on blue light for emergency response.

The Development Team took over responsibility for appraisals from HR towards the end of 2022, as we view appraisals as a development tool rather than a performance tool.

The Training and Development Centre continued to work alongside recruitment to provide courses for new recruits and transferees, including:

- 22 wholetime firefighter apprentices
- 15 on-call firefighters
- Five wholetime transferees

## A total of 42 new firefighters were trained to start with BFRS.

Furthermore, 17 previous wholetime apprentices successfully completed their apprenticeship end point assessments to become fully qualified operational firefighters.

## Training delivered

In 2022/23 the training and development centre delivered or facilitated more than 900 training courses. These ranged from half day basic life support courses, to 14-week wholetime apprenticeship courses.

**April 22** – Delivery of the new tactical firefighting module A course to advance, modernise and align BA training with National Operational Guidance.

**June 2022** – Commencement of the on-call modular course for eight new on-call firefighters and the pass-out of 10 new wholetime firefighter apprentices

**July 2022** – Commencement of the wholetime transferee firefighter course for four transferee firefighters

**September 2022** – Commencement of our first fully in-house wholetime firefighter apprenticeship course for 12 new recruits

**November 2022** – Re-commencement of flexi-duty system refresher modules for operational officers following Covid

**January 2023** – Commencement of the on-call modular course for seven new on-call firefighters

# LEARNING & DEVELOPMENT

## Promotion gateways 2022–23

We have led several promotion gateways in 2022–23, which have enabled 29 successful candidates to enter our talent pool and are now eligible for temporary and substantive promotion.

We have continued to develop and support candidates by creating a development pool. This is designed for candidates that score above a set benchmark to enable them to retake elements of the process. Following feedback and development, these candidates are eligible for temporary promotion. Feedback and development opportunities are offered to support all individuals.

We have introduced the option for staff to be considered for an accelerated pathway, to be offered additional development activities on appointment and to undertake assessments leading to entry to the next level up within 12 months.

The learning and development team has completed **14 recruitment processes** over the past year which have included:

- Training delivery instructors
- Fire safety advisors
- Watch commander strategic support officer
- Temporary on-call crew commanders
- Watch commander NOG support
- Watch commander fire safety inspector
- Crew commander transferees

## Procurement tenders

2022/23 has been a busy year for the procurement team as we continue to support the service to obtain goods and services, and arrange for works to be completed in a compliant but efficient manner.

We have worked with colleagues in the service and across the sector to identify the most appropriate route to market, reviewing collaboration opportunities, framework agreements and the open market.

Highlights for this year's procurement

activity and awarded contracts include:

- Local Area Network Refresh
- New BFRS website
- Liquid Fuels
- Breathing Apparatus
- Thermal Imaging Cameras
- Fireground Radios
- Tyres
- Electric Vehicle Chargers
- Waste and Recycling Collection and Disposal

Market Engagement:

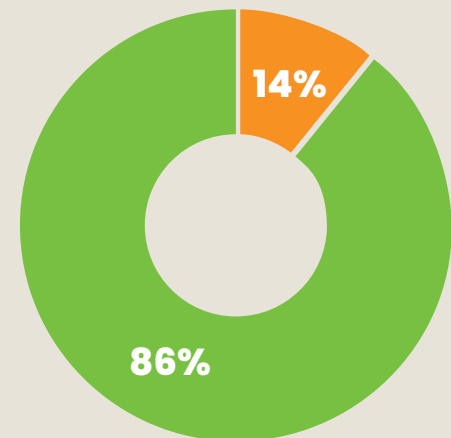
- Clothing
- Decarbonisation
- Fuel monitoring

# PROJECTS & PROGRAMMES

In 2022/23 the BFRS projects portfolio remained healthy and stable with the majority of the corporate projects (86%) on track to deliver their commitments successfully within the agreed tolerances. The picture below represents the portfolio status as of yearend.

Projects	Count of RAG status
Amber	4
Green	25
<b>Total</b>	<b>29</b>

Colour code	Project status key
GREEN	No issues. On course to meet targets.
AMBER	Some issues. May not meet targets.
RED	Outside of agreed targets.



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## iTrent system - residual modules

In 2022/23 we delivered three additional iTrent workstreams:

- iTrent onboarding** - The iTrent onboarding workstream replaced previous paper based on-boarding process with electronic solution on the iTrent system to ensure new employees can acquire the necessary knowledge, skills, and behaviours to become effective organisational staff members. The onboarding data is now safely collated and stored in electronic format in the main iTrent system. The project is entailed process automation and reduced the reliance on paper-based processes, reduced requirements for printing and posting documents to new starters by the HR team thus realizing process efficiencies and consumables costs savings.
- iTrent wholetime (WT) recruitment** - we completed the WT recruitment module configuration and testing in readiness for the planned large WT recruitment campaign 2023. This module introduced an automated workflow to create a streamlined and more efficient WT recruitment process, delivered electronic repository of WT recruitment data on the main iTrent system and implemented a new report, which helped to expedite the shortlisting process.
- iTrent management dashboard** - the dashboard allows BFRS managers to understand the absence trends for their teams and act quickly and easily.

## PDR Pro appraisals project

This project delivered digital transformation of the appraisal process by replacing the paper-based solution with an electronic module on PDR Pro for both Green and Grey Book staff. The new PDR Pro appraisal system went live on 1 April 2023. The appraisals system will embed value led behavioural framework and will support promotion gateways and succession planning process within the Service. It will also enable improved performance due to increased focus on motivation and training needs being met.

## Assets tracking project

We successfully completed the work on the assets tracking project. The assets system is now live across all stations, training centre and HQ stores. The new system enables users to quickly track all BFRS kit across all sites, leading to cost reduction for replacing missing assets.

Key outcomes:

- Created an accurate asset database where BFRS now have a complete test and location history of our equipment assets
- Replaced current task and test paper-based processes leading to a reduced user effort
- Enabled effective task and test management via the assets system
- Reduced effort for administration at station level
- Contributed to the reduction of carbon footprint by reducing the need to use paper and consumables for printing

## GIS, risk and workload modeller and web map project

In 2022/23 BFRS completed the adoption of the Cadcorp GIS, Risk and Workload Modellers and Web Mapping tools within BFRS. This enabled a variety of risk and workflow modelling and web mapping functions, using customer insight and BFRS data, to inform management decisions. We now have a team of trained super users capable of creating models and sharing information with a community of users to aid prevention and protection activities and partnership working.

The implementation of the Cadcorp tools has reduced the BFRS reliance on external suppliers and have enhanced our ability to explore different ways of optimising the use of the BFRS resources in order to improve the services we provide to our community.





## Home Fire Safety Visits Project

The new Home Fire Safety Visits Power App was implemented successfully on 22 February 2023. The HFSV app delivered improved functionality and allowed BFRS to better adopt a person-centred approach to our prevention activity in the home, ensuring we reduce risk and put in place measures which address the health, behaviour, and social needs of the person we visit.

The referrals information is now collated automatically without the need to complete paper forms and the data is submitted electronically to our external partners thus increasing accuracy, improving efficiency, and ensuring data protection. The CFS Ops reporting to Control and child fires information is also generated by the system with less manual intervention.

The HFSV Power App was enabled for use by external partners, which will improve our reach across the community and will allow us to target a wider group of vulnerable people.

The wealth of data captured via the HFSV app gives us the ability to evaluate the effectiveness of our prevention activities at the home by analysing the persons, home, and behaviours factors, and to collate rich risk and performance data.

We continue to improve the HFSV Power App and database by developing additional features and HFSV database improvements which will be implemented during the next financial year.

Key outcomes:

- Digital transformation of the HFSVs and third party referral processes
- Significantly improved ability to identify those most at risk of injury or death in fire to prioritise our visits.
- Ability to collate and analyse richer data and to report on Key Performance Indicators (KPIs) to both internal and external stakeholders
- Enabled mobile working by using tablets and MDTs to complete HFSVs

## National Operational Guidance (NOG) Project

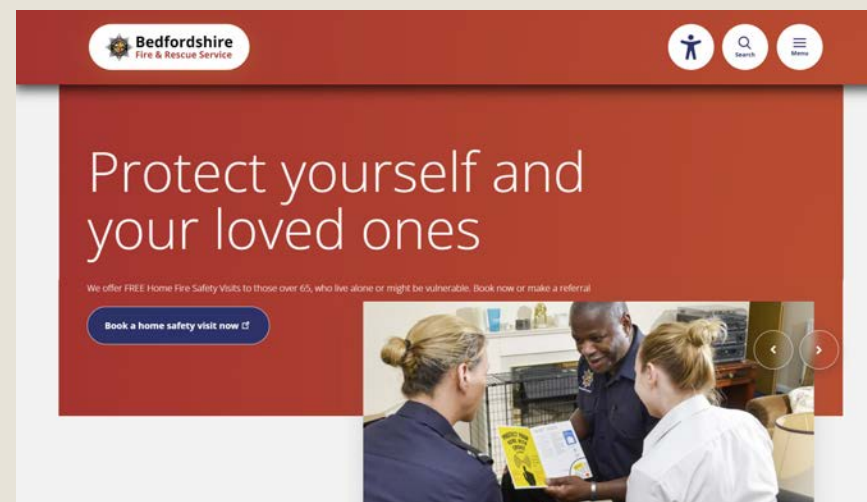
The NOG implementation project team is working together with our colleagues from East Region to ensure the latest national guidance has been adopted and embedded within the organisation, and a process for on-going maintenance has been defined and implemented. The delivery is divided into multiple product packs. In 2022/23 BFRS successfully implemented the incident command national operational guidance and is now actively working on five other product packs, including breathing apparatus and fires in buildings, which will be delivered by the end of 2023.

## Rural Water Tenders (RWTs) Project

The project uplifted the capability of the existing three rural water tenders to be able to attend RTCs and incidents requiring hydraulic rescue equipment, and through this, increased their availability to respond to demand. This was achieved by adding RTC equipment to the vehicles. A policy change enabling the vehicle to be deployed both as a rural water unit with a crew of two – for incidents that required off-road capabilities without the need for full crew, and as a rural water tender with a crew of four.

## BFRS Website Upgrade Project

In 2022/23 the website project delivered the procurement and build of a secure, reliable, and modern website solution which will aid the service significantly in delivering our mission. A new Website supplier was identified, and the project delivery started. By the end of the 2022/23 financial year, we successfully delivered the new Beta website and started parallel run with the current solution.



## Luton Pump Relocation Trial Project

The Luton pump trial delivered a strategic initiative to evaluate the efficiency and practicality of repositioning one of the fire appliances (08P1) from Luton Fire Station to Luton Ambulance Station at Leagrave. The exercise was focused on assessing our operational response capabilities and comparing the projections from Operational Research in Health (ORH) with real-time data. In 2022/23 we successfully completed the initial six months trial and started the data analysis. The analysis of the trial data focused our attention on the turn out times and the impact of the trial on the neighbouring stations and the overall BFRS response times. The project will be completed fully during the next financial year.

## Corporate KPI Data Hub

In 2022/23 we completed the delivery of the last phase of the Corporate KPI Data Hub which now provides performance information across the whole of BFRS and enables viewing of up-to-date performance data. It also provides an interactive display allowing users to explore the data we hold. The system features a new front end within Power BI allowing click-through reporting.

Key outcomes:

- Greater accessibility to performance data
- Time saving in producing Home Office, FRA and other reporting, including management reports
- Accountability and transparency in making data available to all BFRS staff

## MDT Phase 3 Project

This ongoing project delivers the digital transformation of a number of paper forms into Power Apps and e-forms available on MDTs and tablets, to take advantage of emerging technologies and support firefighters to be more effective and efficient at what they do. In 2022/23 we implemented an improved protection fire safety form, incident handover and con4 forms. We also upgraded the Hydra System software, SC Capture, and commenced SSRI Power App and other forms development. The latter will be completed during the next financial years.

## Red Fleet CCTV Cameras Project

This project aims to deliver an improved CCTV data recording system in BFRS appliances with 360-degree coverage and more efficient footage access.

In 2022/23 we successfully produced a requirements specification and completed supplier selection process. The project will be fully implemented during the next financial year.

Key outcomes:

- Eliminate the need to manually download footage by physically taking the storage device off the vehicle thus reducing time and travel costs
- Provide data for active monitoring of driving standards by Service driving Instructors
- Provide data for investigation of external or internal complaints about driving standards
- Provide data for internal, police or insurance investigation following RTC involving Service appliances

- To deter attacks on firefighters and provide data for police investigation in the event of such attacks
- To capture footage of incidents for use in operational debrief
- To reduce vehicles insurance premium
- Provide the ability to live stream footage from the CCVT cameras if required

## Station End Equipment (SEE) Project

The SEE Project was commissioned to procure and implement reliable, fully supported, resilient and GD92 compliant station end equipment, which is user friendly, scalable, future proofed and works effectively with the existing 3TC Guardian Command Mobilising system. Current BFRS SEE equipment is aging and whilst limited support is provided by Telent, this relies of being able to source increasingly scarce components and equipment.

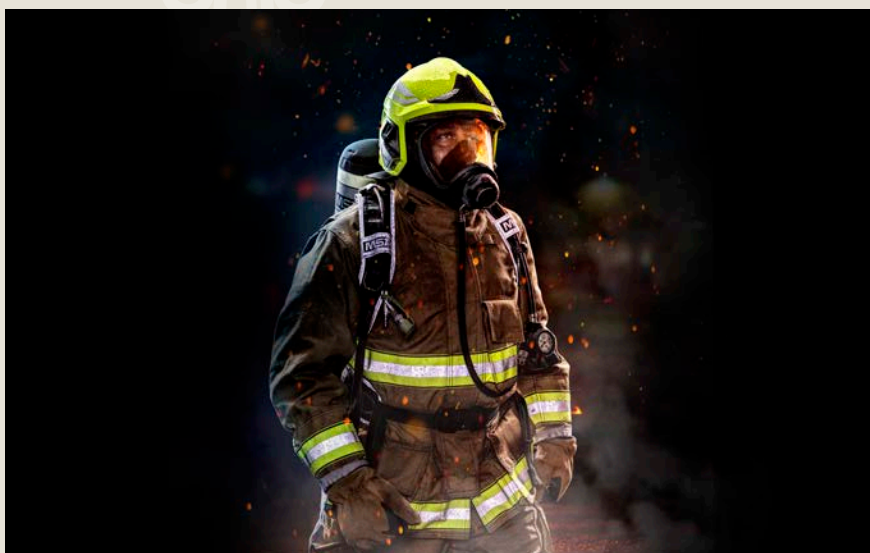
In 2022/23, the project team finalised the business and technical requirements, completed market research and engagement and identified a preferred supplier.

The SEE installation, testing and implementation will be completed during the next financial year.

## Breathing Apparatus (BA) Replacement Project

In 2022/23 we commenced work on the BA replacement project. This project supports the safety and wellbeing of our firefighters. Fire and rescue service personnel operate in dynamic and at times extremely hazardous environments e.g., incidents involving fire, chemicals, biological hazards, radiation etc. The wearing of breathing apparatus by personnel is one of the risk controls measures likely to be employed within the overall operational plan for incidents of this type. Breathing apparatus enables the wearer to breathe safely in an otherwise irrespirable and/or toxic atmosphere. This project also delivers compliance with general Fire and Rescue Services Legislation.

The BA replacement procurement made very good progress during the past financial year with a preferred supplier identified. The new BA kit is expected to be rolled out by the end of 2023.



## Protection Fire Risk Data Warehouse

The project goal is to create a Protection Fire Risk Data Warehouse which would allow BFRS to assess premises foreseeable risk level, and to support a locally determined Risk-Based Inspection Programme for enforcing the Fire Safety Order, in order to meet the service's requirements under The Fire and Rescue National Framework for England (2018). The project delivery made good progress in 2022/23. The first iteration of the fire risk score calculation has been developed. The risk scores are being calibrated and the risk assessment methodology refined further to improve the risk assessment. This project will be completed by the end of the next financial year.

Key outcomes:

- Identify, classify and create a process allowing the service to maintain accurate data on the number and type of premises, and to identify the ones to which the Fire Safety Order applies
- Implement a methodology that generates a risk score based on set criteria to assess risk across all premises to which the Fire Safety Order applies
- Improve the identification and allocation of audits / inspections process efficiency by utilising the output of the Data Warehouse solution and the FloSuite campaign function and batch tagging functionality
- Align the BFRS methodology to the national preliminary guidance on high risk occupancies
- Assure that BFRS has effective systems and processes in place to manage our risk-based inspection programme

- Assure that the BFRS enforcement plan prioritises the highest risks and includes proportionate activity to reduce risk. It should also include appropriate monitoring and evaluation
- Review AddressBase taxonomy vs. Flosuite Taxonomy vs. FSEC and make use of the supplemental codes to establish more granular premises classification

### Pension Data service Project

The fire pensions administrator changed their software provider from Heywood's to Civica to reduce their spend and cost to BFRS in the long-term. Civica requires BFRS to report fire pensions data monthly rather than annually as we previously did.

This project delivers monthly pension reports for Fire Fighters Pension Scheme (FPS) and will also prepare a similar change for the Local Government Pension Scheme (LGPS) reporting.

Retrospective FPS reports have been created and are being tested with the supplier. This project will be fully delivered during the next financial year.

### New Projects Started

In 2022/23 BFRS also commenced work on several new projects which will be delivered in subsequent years:

- **Prevention road safety vehicle virtual reality** – BFRS are continually striving to look at new innovative ways to deliver road safety education. With the collaborative work that we do with our partners on the Beds Road Safety Tactical Group, BFRS have successfully won a funding bid to support the development of a road safety vehicle (RSV) that will utilise modern technology to engage, entertain and educate the young drivers utilising virtual reality videos to enhance the learning experience in various areas of road safety awareness.

A new van has been ordered and quotes have been received for provision of the other elements of the solution.

- **Fire control resilience project** – this project aims to increase Fire Control resilience, remove single points of failure, increase effectiveness and optimise office space.
- **On-call improvements project** – This multi-workstream project aims to improve the on-call availability and ensure that we are using our on-call crews effectively to respond to incidents based on risk, and by empowering more autonomy and decision making to on-call stations.
- **Fleet project** – The aim of the project is to introduce a replacement vehicle servicing and defect system to replace an out of support legacy MIS application and to replace the existing paper-based processes with electronic equivalents, including management of defects, vehicles servicing and MOT and scanning / tracking spare parts in and out of store.
- **Vehicle and equipment workshop project** – This project is in discovery stage which aims to produce a business case to explore opportunities to expand business offering and thereby generate income from the retention of a skilled and specialist workforce, as well as the provision of a suitable and sufficient working space within a prime location to enable growth.

# OUR WORK WITH EAST OF ENGLAND AMBULANCE SERVICE NHS TRUST

It has been another successful year of partnership with EEAST. The relationship continues to develop new ways of working and better outcomes for vulnerable patients. The Service values award evening was attended by Tom Able the Chief Executive of EEAST who presented an award on the night to one of our co-responding teams.

Work completed this year has included:

- Production and lead of a best practice emergency medical response guide for all FRS to use in the Eastern region. BFRS have led and chaired the strategic group for the last 12 months.
- Review and update of our effect entry MOU with Bedfordshire Police and EEAST.
- Procurement of electric vehicles for co-responding with joint livery and badges for EEAST and BFRS.
- Creation of a new health pioneer role hosted by BFRS and funded by EEAST, Delivering prevention activity and medical response to the most vulnerable in Bedfordshire.
- Harrold, Potton and Leighton Buzzard are still successfully co-responding to medical incidents and we are funded by EEAST to deliver this with cost recovery and budget held by BFRS. We have got 25 trained responders across these stations and in 2022-23 helped 591 patients. In some cases, this can be a much quicker response with discharge at scene, allowing EEAST staff to deal with more acute patients.

- Falls team continue to be a success with the team cementing its position as a key fixture. They have changed their delivery format and now dual crew the vehicle with East London Foundation Trust nurses. This has increased the availability of the vehicle and improved the range of treatments for patients and referral pathways available for future support.
- EEAST hosted the redeployment of a BFRS fire appliance at Luton ambulance station to allow us to test some modelling to improve first pump attendance times. The trial lasted for six months, and our teams were made to feel very welcome during the period of the trial. The outputs of this trial will inform the wider risk cover review work.



# CONNECT WITH BFRS



**Bedfordshire**  
Fire & Rescue Service

[www.bedsfire.gov.uk](http://www.bedsfire.gov.uk)

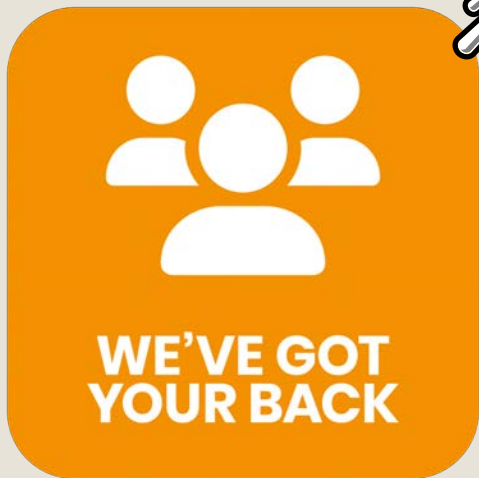
@bedsfire   

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

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 WE DARE TO BE DIFFERENT  
 EVERY CONTACT COUNTS  
 WE'VE GOT YOUR BACK  
 WE ARE ACCOUNTABLE





**REPORT AUTHOR:** CHIEF FIRE OFFICER

**SUBJECT:** 2023 HMICFRS INSPECTION REPORT

For further information on this Report contact: Chief Fire Officer

Background Papers: Previous HMICFRS Inspection Reports;

**Implications:**

Implications	Yes/No	Impact/Reference
Financial	Yes	Fire and rescue services receive no additional funding for the additional workload placed by an HMICFRS visit, including preparation for and resourcing of an inspection team. Items within the draft action plan that require additional funding will be managed through the annual budget bidding process
Risk Management	Yes	This Service has built an effective relationship with HMICFRS. Several findings within the report influence the internal corporate risk management process particularly around resourcing the service change programme and also reputationally given the requires improvement gradings. The cause of concern was addressed prior to the publication of the report so presents no current risks. Progress against the action plan will be managed via the PMO and leadership team meetings with oversight and scrutiny provided by the FRA.
Legal	Yes	The current Fire and Rescue Service National Framework issued under section 21 of the Fire and Rescue Services Act 2004, to which the Authority must have regard when carrying out its functions, states as follows at paragraph 7.5: 'Fire and rescue authorities must give due regard to reports and recommendations made by HMICFRS and – if recommendations are made – <b>prepare, update and regularly publish an action plan detailing how the recommendations are being</b>

		<b>actioned.</b> If the fire and rescue authority does not propose to undertake any action as a result of a recommendation, reasons for this should be given.’[emphasis added] It continues: ‘When forming an action plan, the fire and rescue authority could seek advice and support from other organisations, for example, the National Fire Chiefs Council and the Local Government Association’
Privacy and Security	No	There are no Privacy and Security implications as part of the report.
Duty to collaborate	Yes	Officers have developed our approach to inspection with our regional fire service partners and the NFCC.
Health and Safety	No	There are no Health, Safety or Wellbeing implications from this report. The cause of concern was addressed prior to the publication of the report so presents no current risks.
Equality, Diversity and Inclusion	Yes	There are no further Equality and Diversity implications as part of the report beyond the identified area for improvement which will be addressed via the HMICFRS Action Plan.
Environmental Sustainability	No	There are no Environmental Sustainability implications as part of the report.
Consultation & Communication	Yes	See the comments in the legal section above.

## PURPOSE

To present Members with the report and findings from the 2023 service inspection undertaken by His Majesty’s Inspectorate of Constabulary and Fire & Rescue Services (HMICFRS) and to discuss and agree the proposed action plan to address the areas for improvement identified by the inspectorate.

## RECOMMENDATIONS:

That Members:

1. Note the findings of the HMICFRS as set out in their report, and;
2. To discuss and approve the draft HMICFRS action plan, and;
3. To receive regular updates on progress in delivering against the action plan.

## 1 Introduction

- 1.1 The Government commissions His Majesty's Inspectorate of Constabulary and Fire and Rescue Services (HMICFRS) to inspect all fire and rescue services in England every couple of years.
- 1.2 HMICFRS last inspected Bedfordshire Fire and Rescue Service in January 2021 and inspection report on the service's effectiveness and efficiency and how well it looks after its people was published in December 2021. This latest inspection contains their third assessment of the service's effectiveness and efficiency, and how well the service looks after its people. They have measured the service against eleven areas and given a grade for each.
- 1.3 For this third round of inspections, HMICFRS haven't given separate grades for effectiveness, efficiency and people as they did previously with graded judgments applied only to each of the eleven inspection areas. They have also expanded their previous four-tier system of graded judgments to five (Outstanding, Good, Adequate, Requires Improvement and Inadequate). Their own guidance makes it clear that these changes mean it isn't possible to make direct comparisons between grades awarded in this round of fire and rescue service inspections with those from previous years. A reduction in grade, particularly from good to adequate, doesn't necessarily mean there has been a reduction in performance, unless they say so in the report.

## 2 2023 Inspection Report

- 2.1 This service was one of the first three services to be inspected in this latest round. Given the changes to the assessment criteria and grading system, it will be important to benchmark the judgments for this service against other services as their reports are published over the coming months. The following table summarises the graded judgments for this service in each of eleven areas:

Outstanding	Good	Adequate	Requires improvement	Inadequate
	Understanding fire and risk	Responding to major incidents	Preventing fire and risk	
	Future affordability	Right people, right skills	Public safety through fire regulation	
		Promoting fairness and diversity	Responding to fires and emergencies	
		Managing performance and developing leaders	Best use of resources	
			Promoting values and culture	

2.2 The full HMICFRS inspection report is provided at Appendix 1. A summary of the findings in each of the eleven areas is provided in the following sections:

Area 1	Understanding the risk of fire and other emergencies	Judgment: GOOD
<b>Main Findings</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>The service is good at identifying and understanding community risk</li> <li>The service is improving how it works with its community</li> <li>The service has good processes in place to share risk information across the organisation</li> </ul>	
<b>Areas for Improvement</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>None identified</li> </ul>	

Area 2	Preventing Fire and other Risks	Judgment: Requires Improvement
<b>Main Findings</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The service has introduced a person-centred approach to HFVSS</li> <li>• Staff are confident they have the right skills to make the community safer</li> <li>• Staff are proud of the safeguarding process</li> <li>• The service works well with other organisations to keep people safe</li> <li>• The service works well with other organisations to tackle fire setting</li> <li>• The service is improving its evaluation of prevention activities</li> </ul>	
<b>Areas for Improvement</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The service should develop a clear prevention plan that implements the prevention strategy in its community risk management plan. The prevention plan should target people most at risk and make sure the level of activity is proportionate to reduce that risk.</li> <li>• The service should make sure it targets its prevention work at people most at risk.</li> <li>• The service should make sure it quality assures its prevention activity, so staff carry out safe and well visits and home fire safety visits to an appropriate standard.</li> </ul>	
Area 3	Protecting the public through fire regulation	Judgment: Requires Improvement
<b>Main Findings</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The protection strategy is clearly linked to the risks identified in the CRMP</li> <li>• The service has introduced a quality assurance policy for fire safety</li> <li>• The service is consistently exercising its powers</li> <li>• The service is adapting to new legislation</li> <li>• The service is working effectively with local organisations to take joint action</li> <li>• The building consultations process had been realigned with service priorities</li> </ul>	
<b>Areas for Improvement</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The service should assure itself that it has effective systems and processes in place to manage its risk-based inspection programme.</li> <li>• The service should make sure it has an effective quality assurance process, so staff carry out audits to an appropriate standard.</li> <li>• The service should have effective processes to manage the burden of false alarms (unwanted fire signals).</li> </ul>	

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>The service should make sure it works with local businesses and other organisations to share information and expectations on compliance with fire safety regulations.</li> </ul>	
<b>Area 4</b>	<b>Responding to fires and other emergencies</b>	<b>Judgment: Requires Improvement</b>
<b>Main Findings</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Staff have a good understanding of how to command incidents safely</li> <li>Operational firefighters can access risk information easily</li> <li>The service effectively keeps the public informed about ongoing incidents</li> </ul>	
<b>Areas for Improvement</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>The service should make sure its response strategy provides the most appropriate response for the public in line with its community risk management plan.</li> <li>The service should make sure fire control is sufficiently resourced and has resilience arrangements and appropriate fallback cover.</li> <li>The service should make sure it uses its on-call crews effectively to respond to incidents based on risk in line with its community risk management plan.</li> <li>The service should do more to align with national operational guidance to improve a co-ordinated response to the most high-risk incidents.</li> <li>The service should make sure it has an effective system for learning from operational incidents and assure itself that all areas of the service can contribute to debriefs.</li> </ul>	
<b>Area 5</b>	<b>Responding to major and multiagency incidents</b>	<b>Judgment: Adequate</b>
<b>Main Findings</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>The service is prepared for major and multi-agency incidents</li> <li>The service can respond to major and multiagency incidents</li> <li>The service is working effectively with other fire and rescue services</li> <li>Incident commanders are demonstrating the JESIP principles</li> <li>The service works effectively with LRF partners</li> <li>The service keeps up to date with national learning</li> </ul>	

<b>Areas for Improvement</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The service should make sure it has an effective method to simultaneously share fire survival guidance information with multiple callers and that it has a dedicated communication link in place.</li> <li>• The service should make sure it has an overarching cross-border exercise strategy. The strategy should assure the service that exercise objectives are in</li> <li>• line with community risk management plan risks and that learning is recorded, shared and actioned.</li> </ul>	
<b>Area 6</b>	<b>Making best use of resources</b>	<b>Judgment: Requires Improvement</b>
<b>Main Findings</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The service is taking steps to improve productivity</li> <li>• The service actively collaborates with others</li> <li>• Business continuity arrangements are robust</li> <li>• The service has sound financial management</li> </ul>	
<b>Areas for Improvement</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The service needs to show a clear rationale for the allocation of resources between prevention, protection and response activities. This should reflect, and be consistent with, the risks and priorities set out in its community risk management plan.</li> <li>• The service should have effective measures in place to assure itself that its workforce is productive and that its time is used as efficiently and effectively as possible to meet the priorities in the community risk management plan.</li> <li>• The service should assure itself that all processes in place to support performance management are effective.</li> </ul>	
<b>Area 7</b>	<b>Making the fire &amp; rescue service affordable now and in the future</b>	<b>Judgment: Good</b>
<b>Main Findings</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The service understands future financial challenges</li> <li>• The service has clear arrangements for the use of reserves</li> <li>• The service makes good use of fleet &amp; estate</li> <li>• The service is taking steps to transform but needs to do more to improve efficiency</li> <li>• The service takes advantage of opportunities to secure external funding &amp; generate income</li> </ul>	
<b>Areas for Improvement</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• None identified</li> </ul>	

<b>Area 8</b>	<b>Promoting the right values and culture</b>	<b>Judgment: Requires Improvement</b>
<b>Main Findings</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Values &amp; behaviours are established &amp; culture continues to improve</li> <li>• There is good provision to support workforce wellbeing</li> <li>• The service has appropriate health &amp; safety provision in place</li> <li>• There is a clear process to manage absence</li> </ul>	
<b>Areas for Improvement</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• (Cause of Concern) The Service cannot assure itself that its operational members of staff meet the minimum fitness requirements to perform their roles</li> </ul>	
<b>Area 9</b>	<b>Getting the right people with the right skills</b>	<b>Judgment: Adequate</b>
<b>Main Findings</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The service considers protected characteristics and reasonable adjustments to support learning</li> <li>• There is a positive culture of learning and development</li> </ul>	
<b>Areas for Improvement</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The service should review its succession planning to make sure that it has effective arrangements in place to manage staff turnover while continuing to provide its core service to the public.</li> <li>• The service should assure itself that on-call firefighters are appropriately supported in their initial development.</li> </ul>	
<b>Area 10</b>	<b>Ensuring fairness and promoting diversity</b>	<b>Judgment: Adequate</b>
<b>Main Findings</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The service has improved its overall approach to equality impact assessments</li> <li>• The service has introduced more ways to seek staff feedback</li> <li>• The service has changed its approach and is taking robust steps to improve scrutiny of bullying, harassment and discrimination</li> <li>• The service has reviewed its workplace facilities with respect to EDI</li> </ul>	
<b>Areas for Improvement</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The service should make sure it has effective grievance procedures. It should identify and put in place ways to improve staff confidence in those procedures.</li> </ul>	



	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>The service should have a consistent plan to promote positive action with under-represented groups and make sure staff understand the purpose and benefits of a diverse workforce.</li> </ul>	
<b>Area 11</b>	<b>Managing performance and developing leaders</b>	<b>Judgment: Adequate</b>
<b>Main Findings</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>The service effectively manages individuals' performance</li> <li>The service is improving its approach to fairness in promotion processes</li> <li>The service is adopting fire standards</li> </ul>	
<b>Areas for Improvement</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>The service should ensure it has arrangements in place to identify, develop and support all high-potential staff across the organisation.</li> </ul>	

### 3 Cause of Concern

- 3.1 The Cause of Concern within Area 8, 'Promoting the right values and culture'; relates to the backlog of fitness tests caused by the intentional suspension of annual fitness testing during the COVID pandemic. When HMICFRS had conducted the inspection, the percentage of operational staff who had passed a fitness test within the last 12 months was quite low and an action plan was already in place to address the backlog before the anticipated publication of the report. At no time, was a firefighter allowed to ride a fire appliance without first having undertaken a fitness test. It was simply that some staff had not undertaken one within the previous 12 months and the service had not fully caught up with the backlog.
- 3.2 At the time of writing this report, 98.6% of operational staff had undertaken a fitness test within the past 12 months, with the only outstanding tests relating to individuals on long term sickness absence. A Service Fitness Advisor had recently been appointed to the vacant post and would commence in post later shortly. Further investment has been made in training station fitness advisors and the fitness and wellbeing strategy has been refreshed. HMICFRS are due to revisit the service for this specific area later this year and it is anticipated with the action already taken that HMICFRS will agree to discharge the cause of concern.
- 3.3 It should be noted that no other areas for improvement were identified within the 'promoting the right values and culture' area.

#### 4 HMICFRS Action Plan

- 4.1 Appendix 2 sets out the draft HMICFRS Action Plan designed to address the areas for improvement identified within the latest inspection report. Members should note that officers were already aware of the majority issues identified by HMICFRS with many already captured within existing projects or workstreams including the latest Community Risk Management Plan.
- 4.2 The action plan will be managed as part of the Programme Management Office (PMO), with regular reporting into the chief fire officer and the leadership team. It is proposed that the Authority be kept informed of progress in delivering against the HMICFRS Action Plan via regular reporting to both the Executive Committee and full Authority.
- 4.3 It is anticipated that HMICFRS will next undertake another full service inspection in 2025.

#### 5 Summary

- 5.1 The HMICFRS inspection report highlights many areas of good practice and recognises the improvements made since the last inspection. However, it is evident there is still more to do and members should be assured that officers were well aware of this and whilst some of the graded judgments were disappointing, the feedback from the inspection is accepted in full and officers will continue to strive to deliver the improvements needed be judged good or outstanding in all areas.
- 5.2 It should be also noted that this service was one of the first three services to be inspected in this latest round. Given the changes to the assessment criteria and grading system, it will be important to benchmark the judgments for this service against other services as their reports are published over the coming months.

#### Recommendations

That Members:

1. Note the findings of the HMICFRS as set out in their report, and;
2. To discuss and approve the draft HMICFRS action plan, and;
3. To receive regular updates on progress in delivering against the action plan.

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

# Fire & Rescue Service 2023–25

## Effectiveness, efficiency and people

An inspection of Bedfordshire Fire and Rescue Service

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# Changes to this round of inspection

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We last inspected Bedfordshire Fire and Rescue Service in January 2021. And in December 2021, we published our inspection report with our findings on the service's effectiveness and efficiency and how well it looks after its people.

This inspection contains our third assessment of the service's effectiveness and efficiency, and how well it looks after its people. We have measured the service against the same 11 areas and given a grade for each.

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We haven't given separate grades for effectiveness, efficiency and people as we did previously. This is to encourage the service to consider our inspection findings as a whole and not focus on just one area.

We now assess services against the characteristics of good performance, and we more clearly link our judgments to [causes of concern](#) and [areas for improvement](#). We have also expanded our previous four-tier system of graded judgments to five. As a result, we can state more precisely where we consider improvement is needed and highlight good performance more effectively. However, these changes mean it isn't possible to make direct comparisons between grades awarded in this round of fire and rescue service inspections with those from previous years.

A reduction in grade, particularly from good to adequate, doesn't necessarily mean there has been a reduction in performance, unless we say so in the report.

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

More information on [how we assess fire and rescue services](#) and [our graded judgments](#) is available on our website.

# Overall summary

## Our judgments

Our inspection assessed how well Bedfordshire Fire and Rescue Service has performed in 11 areas. We have made the following graded judgments:

Outstanding	Good	Adequate	Requires improvement	Inadequate
	Understanding fire and risk	Responding to major incidents	Preventing fire and risk	
	Future affordability	Right people, right skills	Public safety through fire regulation	
		Promoting fairness and diversity	Responding to fires and emergencies	
		Managing performance and developing leaders	Best use of resources	
			Promoting values and culture	

In the rest of the report, we set out our detailed findings about the areas in which the service has performed well and where it should improve.

## HMI summary

It was a pleasure to revisit Bedfordshire Fire and Rescue Service, and I am grateful for the positive and constructive way in which the service worked with our inspection staff.

I am satisfied with a few aspects of the performance of Bedfordshire Fire and Rescue Service in keeping people safe and secure from fire and other risks, but there are areas in which the service needs to improve.

We were disappointed to find that the service hasn't made the progress we expected since our 2021 inspection.

My principal findings from our assessments of the service over the past year are as follows:

- There has been a deterioration in the way the service allocates its resources to risk and drives its [community risk management plan \(CRMP\)](#) priorities. We found examples of the service not making expected progress against its 2022/23 CRMP action plan, including developing plans to target its resources at the most [vulnerable](#) and high-risk members of the community.
- The service hasn't taken sufficient action to improve its low [on-call](#) activity and has challenges with maintaining [fire control](#) staffing levels. It isn't meeting its own response standards and call-handling times.
- The service needs to improve its productivity. It has completed two productivity reviews, which identified opportunities for its firefighters and fire control staff to make better use of their time. But progress has been slow. And it is still reliant on several paper-based systems, which are inefficient and don't support productive working.
- The service takes advantage of opportunities to secure external funding and generate income. It is taking steps to make sure it achieves efficiency gains through sound financial management and best working practices. It is actively growing business opportunities in collaboration activities such as estate and fleet.
- The service needs to improve succession planning. It struggles to be competitive in the national recruitment market and is facing challenges in recruiting and retaining a skilled workforce. As such, it doesn't fill staff vacancies quickly enough or have a clear plan for managing the effect of increased workloads. Support staff don't have an effective workforce plan.
- The service has established values and behaviours in line with the [Code of Ethics](#) [Fire Standard](#) developed by the [Fire Standards Board](#). Behaviours that reflect service values are shown at all levels across the service and we found that they were understood by everyone. Staff are proud of the service, its work and their own contribution.
- The service needs to improve diversity in the workforce. The workforce doesn't reflect the diversity of the communities it serves, and more could be done to address disproportionality in recruitment and retention.
- The service needs to be better at handling staff grievances. It doesn't always deal with grievances within the time frame it has set itself. Many staff are frustrated and don't have confidence in using the grievance process.
- Development for on-call firefighters needs to improve. The service has a positive learning culture, and training opportunities are available in order to support staff. However, we found that it didn't do enough to support on-call firefighters to develop.



- The service can't assure itself that its firefighters meet the minimum [fitness requirements](#). There has been a decline in this area, and this is a [cause of concern](#). In view of these findings, we have been in regular contact with the chief fire officer as I don't underestimate how much improvement is needed.

My report sets out the more detailed findings of this inspection. I will continue to check the service's progress in addressing areas for improvement and will monitor the cause of concern and associated recommendation.

**Roy Wilsher**

HM Inspector of Fire & Rescue Services

# Service in numbers



## Profile

	Bedfordshire	England
Area Square miles	477	50,370
Population (thousands) June 2022	706	56,536
Population density Thousands per square mile	1.5	1.1



## Cost

Funding Year ending 31 March 2022	£31.4m	£2.5bn
Expenditure per population Year ending 31 March 2022	£45.75	£41.88

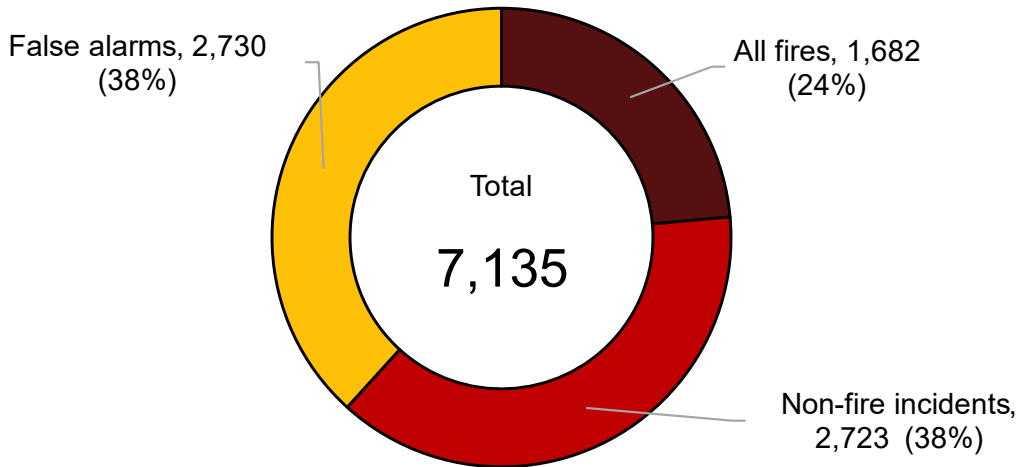


## Response

Incidents attended per 1,000 population Year ending 30 June 2022	10.1	10.3
Home fire safety checks carried out by fire and rescue service per 1,000 population Year ending 31 March 2022	11.8	7.7
Fire safety audits per 100 known premises Year ending 31 March 2022	2.9	2.0
Availability of wholetime pumps Year ending 31 March 2022	97.6%	
Availability of on call pumps Year ending 31 March 2022	46.9%	



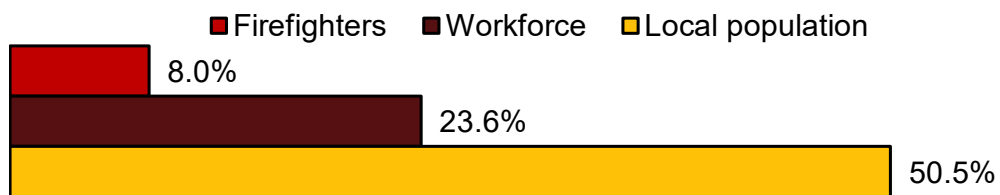
## Incidents attended in the year to 30 June 2022



## Workforce

	Bedfordshire	England
Five-year change in total workforce 2017 to 2022	5.8%	0.2%
Number of firefighters per 1,000 population Year ending 31 March 2022	0.62	0.62
Percentage of firefighters who are wholetime Year ending 31 March 2022	65.7%	65.2%

### Percentage of firefighters, workforce and population who are female as at 31 March 2022



### Percentage of firefighters, workforce and population who are from ethnic minority backgrounds as at 31 March 2022



References to ethnic minorities in this report include people from White minority backgrounds but exclude people from Irish minority backgrounds. This is due to current data collection practices for national data. For more information on data and analysis in this report, please view the [‘About the data’ section of our website](#).

# Understanding the risk of fire and other emergencies

Good

Bedfordshire Fire and Rescue Service is good at understanding risk.

Each fire and rescue service should identify and assess all foreseeable fire and rescue-related risks that could affect its communities. It should use its protection and response capabilities to prevent or mitigate these risks for the public.

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

## Main findings

### The service is good at identifying and understanding community risk

The service has assessed a suitable range of risks and threats using a thorough community risk management planning process. In its assessment of risk, it uses information it has collected from a broad range of internal and external sources and data sets. This includes a [community risk analysis](#) (an assessment of community risk level) and a strategic assessment (an analysis of the external factors called [PESTELO](#)).

### The service is improving how it works with its community

In our last inspection, an [area for improvement](#) was that the service should build a comprehensive profile of risk in its service area to improve how it works with its local community.

In this inspection, we considered how the service has adapted its engagement activity, and we are satisfied the service has addressed this area. The service now has an improved, effective communications and engagement strategy, which is analysed annually against its CRMP.

When appropriate, the service has consulted and held constructive dialogue with its communities and other relevant parties to understand risk and explain how it intends to mitigate it. Since our last inspection, the service has carried out two consultation cycles for its CRMP. It offers a choice of paper-based or online consultation as well as the opportunity to attend community events. It has improved the number of responses from 471 in 2021/22 to 746 in 2022/23.

The service has improved the diversity of the groups it consults with. For example, it has written to and received responses from:

- 52 community groups, including faith, community and youth groups;
- business groups, including Bedfordshire Chamber of Commerce;
- sports clubs, including Luton Town Football Club and the two championship rugby teams;
- infrastructure organisations, including Luton Airport;
- universities and colleges; and
- heritage and arts organisations.

### **The CRMP should have supporting plans to drive activity**

The service identifies and assesses the risks in the community to inform strategy. Once it has assessed risks, it records its findings in the CRMP. This plan describes how the service intends to use its prevention, protection and response activities to mitigate or reduce the risks and threats the community faces both now and in the future. For example, flooding is identified as a high risk by the [local resilience forum \(LRF\)](#). The forum has prepared a multi-agency flood plan to make sure there is an effective, co-ordinated response to significant flooding events. The CRMP includes a comprehensive resourcing strategy. However, the service needs to assure itself that the underpinning plans detail how that strategy will be implemented. For example, we found little evidence explaining how prevention would target high-risk people in the community and what activities were required to achieve this.

### **The service has good processes in place to share risk information across the organisation**

The service routinely collects and updates the information it has about the highest-risk people, places and threats it has identified. This includes its corporate risk register, site-specific information and major incident plans. We note that the service has introduced a business management information system that tracks progress against the risks in the corporate risk register to inform strategic teams.

We sampled a broad range of the risk information that the service collects. We found that risk information on areas such as [Control of Major Accident Hazards \(COMAH\)](#) sites and high-rise buildings was accessible on [mobile data terminals](#) and the [mobilisation](#) system.

This information is readily available for the service's prevention, protection and response staff. This means these teams can identify risk, but they need to do more to reduce and mitigate risk effectively. Where appropriate, the service shares risk information with other organisations. For example, information about buildings that don't comply with fire safety regulations is shared with local authorities and building control teams.

Staff at the locations we visited, including firefighters and [fire control](#) staff, were able to show us that they can access, use and share risk information quickly to help them resolve incidents safely. Staff who were trained in using the applications told us they are confident in the effectiveness of the technology and their ability to use it.

Despite this work, we aren't assured that this results in the service meeting its CRMP priorities of targeting those people most at risk.

### **The service needs to improve how it uses local and national learning to inform its understanding of risk**

The service updates [risk assessments](#) and uses feedback from local and national operational activities to inform its planning assumptions. For example, the senior leadership team meets quarterly to review the corporate risk register, which is reported to the [fire and rescue authority](#).

The service makes sure staff read urgent risk information. It shares national and multi-agency learning from [joint organisation learning](#) and [national operational learning](#) in several ways, for example by using [safety flashes](#) and in-service red bulletin publications. (Red bulletins are aimed at operational firefighters and contain information such as updates and learning from incidents.) However, we found the service could be more consistent in acting on local learning from operational activity.

# Preventing fires and other risks

## Requires improvement

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

Fire and rescue services must promote fire safety, including giving fire safety advice. To identify people at greatest risk from fire, services should work closely with other organisations in the public and voluntary sectors, and with the police and ambulance services. They should share [intelligence](#) and risk information with these other organisations when they identify vulnerability or exploitation.

### Areas for improvement

The service should develop a clear prevention plan that implements the prevention strategy in its [community risk management plan](#). The prevention plan should target people most at risk and make sure the level of activity is proportionate to reduce that risk.

The service should make sure it targets its prevention work at people most at risk.

The service should make sure it quality assures its prevention activity, so staff carry out [safe and well visits](#) and [home fire safety visits](#) to an appropriate standard.

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

## Main findings

### The prevention strategy needs a plan to support and drive activity

The service's prevention strategy is outlined in its CRMP, which aims to target the most [vulnerable](#) high-risk people in Bedfordshire. However, the service's plans don't always reflect this aim, meaning that only a low percentage of high-risk individuals are visited. In 2021/22, the proportion of [home fire safety visits \(HFSVs\)](#) targeted at vulnerable groups is relatively low at 45.7 percent. The service told us that it doesn't collect data on disability effectively.

The service uses station plans to inform operational crews about their required prevention work, but this isn't underpinned by a comprehensive prevention policy. The number of HFSVs in a station plan is decided at a performance management meeting and communicated to staff by the station commander. Some staff reported that station plans were target driven rather than based on those people identified as being most at risk.

The service should develop a clear prevention plan that implements the prevention strategy in the CRMP.

### The service has introduced a person-centred approach to HFSVs

In our last inspection, one of the areas for improvement was that the service should make sure it targets its prevention work at people most at risk. While the service has made some progress, it still needs to be more effective at specifically targeting high-risk members of the community and achieving its own objectives. More work is needed to make sure it continues to improve.

Since our last inspection, we were encouraged to see the contribution that staff have made to progress this work. For instance, the service has:

- introduced an online safe and well referral portal on its website and improved referral routes for other organisations;
- introduced a new person-centred HFSV process that reduces the use of paper and improves productivity;
- provided prevention training, which staff told us has given them the confidence and right skills to carry out prevention activities; and
- implemented a more comprehensive risk-scoring system to make sure it builds an accurate community risk profile.

In February 2023, the service moved away from a safe and well visits process to the new HFSV process. We reviewed prevention records for both processes and found that they weren't consistent. High-risk cases weren't visited within the defined time frames.



Home office data shows that of the 8,418 [home fire safety checks](#) conducted by the service in 2021/22, 3,846 were targeted at vulnerable groups. This means less than half of all home fire safety checks were targeted at the three most vulnerable groups.

Positively, over the last five years, England has seen an overall reduction in dwelling fires, and Bedfordshire has contributed to this. The number of dwelling fires in Bedfordshire decreased from 0.66 per 1,000 population in 2017/18 to 0.4 per 1,000 population in 2021/22. This is a larger decrease than that achieved by any other service.

We recognise that the service has made some improvements. However, it needs to evaluate if these new processes are effective at targeting and prioritising those most at risk and can be achieved within the appropriate time frames.

### **Staff are confident they have the right skills to make the community safer**

The service has recently introduced a new HFSV process. The HFSVs cover an appropriate range of hazards that can put vulnerable people at greater risk from fire and other emergencies. Staff told us they have the right skills and confidence to complete HFSVs. However, this wasn't always the case with the previous process of safe and well checks.

Staff also spoke positively of the improvements in prevention training, which includes e-learning and more detailed guidance, and welcomed the recent implementation of the HFSV power app.

### **Prevention activity requires a quality assurance process that is consistent**

In our last inspection, one of the areas for improvement was that the service should make sure it quality assures its prevention activity so that staff carry out safe and well visits to the appropriate standards.

In this inspection, we found that the service had some informal ways of monitoring safe and well activity. For example, [watch](#) commanders check entries that firefighters have made on the prevention data system, and there is some evidence of quality assurance for the new HFSV process. However, not enough progress has been made.

We found that the service didn't have a quality assurance policy in place. The service told us this is in development, and we look forward to seeing the outcomes.

### **Staff are proud of the safeguarding process**

The service continues to make improvements to [safeguarding](#) arrangements. Staff told us about occasions when they had identified safeguarding problems and felt confident and trained to act appropriately and promptly. We found that the safeguarding policy was robust. Safeguarding training is structured and aligned with national best practice and NFCC guidance.

The service has restructured prevention to include a specialist role that co-ordinates safeguarding activity. Staff have regular contact with the safeguarding officer and receive feedback from them on specific cases.

Staff are proud of the work they achieve and feel valued.

### **The service works well with other organisations to keep people safe**

The service works with a wide range of other organisations to prevent fires and other emergencies. These include the East of England Ambulance Service NHS Trust (EEAST), Bedfordshire Police and National Highways. As part of a road [safety advisory group](#), it leads on [Biker Down](#) and participates in [BikeSafe](#) initiatives.

We found good evidence that it consistently referred people at greatest risk, when identified, to organisations that may better meet their needs. These organisations include the local authority and social care and healthcare providers.

Arrangements are also in place to receive referrals from others such as the home oxygen service from BOC. On receiving a referral, the service has a process in place to contact very high-risk referrals within five days.

The service routinely exchanges information with other public sector organisations about people and groups at greatest risk. The service shares data with EEAST to help with health collaboration activities, in particular to be able to respond to incidents in the community. For example, a dedicated multi-agency trips and falls team responds to vulnerable people who fall in their homes. It has been able to treat life-threatening injuries and prevent some need for hospital admittance. The team operates across Bedford, Central Bedfordshire and Luton. The service has calculated that the social value of the trips and falls team is £1.053m. Of the incidents the trips and falls team attended, 70 percent of patients who were treated were able to stay in their homes without needing hospital admittance.

### **The service works well with other organisations to tackle fire setting**

The service has a range of suitable and effective interventions to target and educate people in specific age groups with different needs who show signs of fire-setting behaviour. For example, safety awareness and fire education target young people who present a risk around fire. The service also participates in a school education programme.

When appropriate, the service routinely shares information with relevant organisations to support the prosecution of arsonists. It uses its website to share arson prevention advice.

## **The service is improving its evaluation of prevention activities**

The service has good evaluation tools in place to measure how effective its activity is. It makes sure all sections of its communities get appropriate access to prevention services.

Prevention initiatives that are part of the programme management office automatically include a learning log and an evaluation.

The service has [evaluated its collaboration with EEAST](#), which includes:

- co-responding to incidents;
- making effective entry to domestic properties to assist ambulance crews;
- the trips and falls team; and
- bariatric complex patient rescue.

The service told us that, in 2020/21, these activities added up to a return on investment of £5.09m in social value, or £7 for every £1 invested.

# Protecting the public through fire regulation

## Requires improvement

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

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

### Areas for improvement

The service should assure itself that it has effective systems and processes in place to manage its risk-based inspection programme.

The service should make sure it has an effective quality assurance process so staff carry out audits to an appropriate standard.

The service should have effective processes to manage the burden of false alarms (unwanted fire signals).

The service should make sure it works with local businesses and other organisations to share information and expectations on compliance with fire safety regulations.

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

## Main findings

### **The protection strategy forms part of the CRMP**

The service's protection strategy is clearly linked to the risks it has identified in its CRMP.

Staff across the service are involved in this activity, effectively exchanging information as needed. For example, operational staff work with protection, prevention and local authority housing teams to conduct joint visits to [houses in multiple occupation](#) that have enforcement notices. The service then uses information to adjust planning assumptions and direct activity between its protection, prevention and response functions.

### **The risk-based inspection programme can't assure the service that all high-risk premises have been identified**

We found protection teams were professional, dedicated and hardworking.

In our last inspection, we said that the service didn't have effective systems and processes in place to manage its risk-based inspection programme.

In this inspection, we found that not enough improvement had been made in this area. The service has an interim risk-based inspection programme, but it can't assure itself that the programme identifies all high risks based on a wide range of data. It has an ongoing project called the 'risk data warehouse' to improve its understanding of risk. It told us that the risk data warehouse should help it to categorise risk and apply this assessment to more than 26,000 buildings in the county. This will help generate a permanent risk-based inspection programme. Staff told us they are expecting the risk data warehouse to identify more high-risk buildings. However, there is no predicted completion date for the risk data warehouse project, and there are no considerations or plans for managing additional workload.

### **The service should make sure fire safety records are audited consistently**

We reviewed a range of audits that the service had carried out at different buildings across its area. These included audits carried out:

- as part of the service's interim risk-based inspection programme;
- after fires at premises where fire safety legislation applies;
- after enforcement action had been taken; or
- at high-rise, high-risk buildings.

Not all the audits we reviewed were completed in a consistent, systematic way or in line with the service's policies.

We identified that premises in the interim risk-based inspection programme hadn't been re-inspected within the specified time periods. The service told us this was due to having a reduced number of staff qualified to complete fire safety audits.

The service isn't following national guidance for auditing high-risk premises. This means that it can't assure itself that it is fully mitigating risk.

### **The service has introduced a quality assurance policy for fire safety**

In our last inspection, one of the areas for improvement was that the service should make sure it has an effective quality assurance process so staff carry out audits to an appropriate standard.

Since then, the service has introduced a new policy that outlines the role, responsibilities and procedures for fire safety quality assurance. However, it is still unable to implement it and so we don't consider that it has made sufficient progress in this area.

### **The service is exercising its powers as an enforcing authority**

In our last inspection, one of the areas for improvement was that the service should assure itself that its enforcement plan prioritises the highest risks and includes proportionate activity to reduce risk. It should also include appropriate monitoring and evaluation. We are satisfied the service has addressed this area.

The service consistently uses its full range of enforcement powers, and when appropriate, it prosecutes those who don't comply with fire safety regulations.

In 2021/22, the service issued no alteration notices, 241 informal notifications, 6 enforcement notices and 21 prohibition notices, and undertook 2 prosecutions.

### **Resourcing is still a challenge, but training is improving**

The service doesn't have enough qualified protection staff to support its audit and enforcement activity. However, it has introduced a competency framework, which is developing staff to meet future demand. Staff get the right training and work to appropriate accreditation.

According to HMICFRS data, the number of competent protection staff declined from 18 in 2020/21 to 13 in 2021/22. Protection staff in development increased from three in 2020/21 to five in 2021/22. Currently, the service doesn't have sufficient numbers of qualified staff to carry out high-risk audits.

## **The service is adapting to new legislation**

Since our last inspection, the [Building Safety Act 2022](#) and the [Fire Safety Regulations 2022](#) have been introduced to bring about better regulation and management of tall buildings.

The Fire Safety Regulations 2022 introduced a range of duties for the managers of tall buildings. These include a requirement to give the fire and rescue service floor plans and inform them of any substantial faults to essential firefighting equipment, such as firefighting lifts.

The service is supporting the introduction of the [Building Safety Regulator](#). We found the service had good arrangements in place to receive this information and update operational staff on risk.

Staff are completing training to adapt to the new legislation as part of their fire safety competency framework. However, the service should update its policies to reflect the current work that is being carried out.

## **The service works with local organisations to take joint action**

The service works closely with other enforcement agencies to regulate fire safety and it routinely exchanges risk information with them. For example, the service works regularly with local organisations in housing and building control to make sure joint fire safety action is taken in new and existing buildings.

## **The building consultations process has been realigned with priorities**

The service doesn't always respond to building consultation requests within statutory limits. According to HMICFRS data collection, in 2021/22 the service responded to only 84.7 percent of its licensing and building regulation consultation requests on time. This means organisations didn't receive a timely response to their consultation requests. Staff told us that this was due to capacity. Since then, the service has realigned consultations with statutory responsibilities, and we found it was meeting 97 percent of requests within the 21-day time frame.

## **The service can improve how it works with local businesses**

The service should improve how it works with local businesses and other organisations to share information and expectations on compliance with fire safety regulations. It doesn't have an overarching business engagement strategy so work is limited in this area.

## Reducing unwanted fire signals

The service is taking only limited action to reduce the number of false alarms (unwanted fire signals). In 2021/2022, according to the Home Office data, 38.7 percent of incidents were false alarms. This has rarely changed since 2016 and indicates the service hasn't taken sufficient action to affect this.

During this inspection, we found that most staff felt the reduction of unwanted fire signals policy wasn't followed and, therefore, wasn't effective.

The service responds to more false alarms than any other type of call. In 2022/23, the service had a higher daily average response rate to false alarms than in previous years. In 2018/19 the average was 10.8 calls; in 2022/23 that rose to 11.9. This means fire engines may not be available to respond to [critical incidents](#) because they are attending false alarms. It also creates a risk to the public if more fire engines travel at high speed on the roads to respond to these incidents.

The service should have effective processes to manage the burden of false alarms.



# Responding to fires and other emergencies

## Requires improvement

Bedfordshire Fire and Rescue Service requires improvement at responding to fires and other emergencies.

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

### Areas for improvement

The service should make sure its response strategy provides the most appropriate response for the public in line with its [community risk management plan](#).

The service should make sure [fire control](#) is sufficiently resourced and has resilience arrangements and appropriate [fallback](#) cover.

The service should make sure it uses its [on-call](#) crews effectively to respond to incidents based on risk in line with its community risk management plan.

The service should do more to align with [national operational guidance](#) to improve a co-ordinated response to the most high-risk incidents.

The service should make sure it has an effective system for learning from operational incidents and assure itself that all areas of the service can contribute to debriefs.

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

## Main findings

### The service is inconsistent in aligning its response strategy with risk

The service's response strategy is linked to the risks it has identified in its CRMP. The principles of the response strategy are sound in theory: the service's fire engines, response staff and working patterns are designed and positioned to respond flexibly to fires and other emergencies with the appropriate resources. However, the service applies the strategy inconsistently.

### The service isn't meeting its response standards

There are no national response standards of performance for the public. But the service has set out its own response standards in its CRMP. During 2021/22, the service stated it will arrive at [primary fires](#) within 10 minutes on 80 percent of occasions.

The service doesn't always meet its standards. Home Office data shows that in 2021/22, the service's average response time to primary fires was ten minutes and five seconds, which is seven seconds slower than the average for a significantly rural service. The service achieved its target on only 61 percent of occasions. In the same year, the service had an average call-handling time for primary fires of 1 minute and 47 seconds. This is 21 seconds slower than the average call-handling time for a significantly rural service.

The service should make sure it reviews its response strategy and provides the most appropriate response for the public in line with its CRMP.

We note that the service has plans to review response times as part of an emergency cover review. We look forward to seeing the outcome.

### The service should improve fire control resilience and [fallback](#) arrangements

Most fire and rescue services have reciprocal arrangements for fallback should their fire control reach capacity as a result of call handling, loss of equipment or the need to change location.

The service has moved to a new cloud-based mobilisation system. As a result, it no longer has an alternative control room that is using the same mobilisation software.

We also found that fire control was understaffed and reliant on pre-arranged overtime to cover shortfalls.

The service should make sure fire control is sufficiently resourced and has resilience arrangements and appropriate fallback cover.

## **The availability of on-call fire engines doesn't support the response standard**

In our last inspection, one of the areas for improvement was that the service should make sure it uses its on-call crews effectively to respond to incidents based on risk, in line with the response standard in its CRMP.

Since our last inspection, the service hasn't made sufficient progress in this area.

The service has 22 fire engines, of which 14 are on-call. It has no on-call availability standard to make sure that these fire engines are available to protect the public.

HMICFRS data collection shows that in the year 2021/22, the service's overall appliance availability was 63.5 percent. Wholtime availability is 97.6 percent and on-call availability is 46.9 percent. This overall availability is significantly lower than the average of all services and is the fourth lowest availability in England.

The service had started an on-call project to address the original area for improvement found in the previous inspection. We found the service had paused the project due to capacity issues but it has now resolved them and restarted it.

## **Staff have a good understanding of how to command incidents safely**

The service has a good process in place to make sure that staff are trained and competent in responding to incidents. It has trained incident commanders, who are assessed regularly and properly. This helps the service safely, assertively and effectively manage the whole range of incidents it could face, from small and routine ones to complex multi-agency incidents.

We found that incident commanders were familiar with risk assessing, decision-making and recording information at critical incidents in line with national best practice and the [Joint Emergency Services Interoperability Principles \(JESIP\)](#). It was encouraging to hear staff speak positively of the guidance and training provided in this area.

The service's training system, PDR pro, routinely checks operational staff are maintaining their training effectively so they are competent in their roles. For example, the service told us that all station-based operational breathing apparatus wearers have attended a suitable firefighting assessment in the last two years.

## **Operational firefighters can access risk information easily**

We sampled a range of risk information, including the information in place for firefighters responding to critical incidents and high-rise buildings and the information held by fire control.

We found that risk information was up to date and detailed. Staff could easily access and understand it. Encouragingly, it had been completed with input from all areas of the service.

The service exchanges risk information with appropriate organisations, such as partner agencies in the LRF.

### **The service should align with national operational guidance**

We reviewed a range of policies and procedures and found that the service had policies to make sure that staff command incidents effectively. Staff have a good understanding of [operational discretion](#).

Five years after the completion of the national operational guidance (NOG) programme, it is disappointing to find that the service has yet to adopt its principles. By not aligning with NOG, the service risks firefighters being unable to identify and eliminate the hazards that are present at incidents.

We found the service's NOG adoption project was insufficiently resourced and two years behind plan. Disappointingly, we found that it had introduced only 2 of the 23 product packs and that fire control guidance wasn't in the scope of the project.

The service should do more to align with NOG to improve a co-ordinated response to the most high-risk incidents.

### **The service needs to improve consistency in evaluating operational performance**

As part of this inspection, we reviewed emergency incidents and training events. The service has an operational assurance team, which identifies and gathers learning from incidents through the process of debriefing. It also makes sure that any learning identified is shared to help improve the service. We were impressed by the knowledge of the operational assurance team. We found the attitude of team members to be positive and hardworking. However, it has limited capacity to complete debriefs within the appropriate time frames. This limits the service's ability to effectively share learning widely.

Operational staff told us they value debriefs. However, we found that key functions weren't invited, such as fire control, health and safety and communications. The service doesn't always use opportunities to gather learning or act on it. We also found that debrief records lacked consistency. This means the service isn't routinely improving its service to the public.

However, we were encouraged to see that the service is working with other services to learn from national trends. For example, it is leading on a regional [national inter-agency liaison officer](#) working group analysing the recommendations from the [Manchester Arena Inquiry](#).

We note that the service had an external audit of its operational assurance function in 2022. The service has taken steps to develop a revised debrief process, but this work is yet to be completed.

The service should make sure it has an effective system for learning from operational incidents and assure itself that all areas of the service can contribute to debriefs.

**The service keeps the public informed about ongoing incidents**

The service has a press office that is staffed 24 hours a day, 7 days a week and is well placed as part of the LRF 'warn and inform' group if a major or multi-agency incident occurs. However, we found that the press office function could be used more effectively to support fire control operators and release them to focus on co-ordinating incidents at all levels.

# Responding to major and multi-agency incidents

## Adequate

Bedfordshire Fire and Rescue Service is adequate at responding to major and multi-agency incidents.

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

### Areas for improvement

The service should make sure it has an effective method to simultaneously share fire survival guidance information with multiple callers and that it has a dedicated communication link in place.

The service should make sure it has an overarching cross-border exercise strategy. The strategy should assure the service that exercise objectives are in line with [community risk management plan](#) risks and that learning is recorded, shared and actioned.

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

### Main findings

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

The service has effectively anticipated and considered the reasonably foreseeable risks and threats it may face. These risks are listed in both local and national risk registers as part of its community risk management planning. For example, the service is an active member of the LRF. The chief fire officer acts as chair and is encouraging the service to take on more responsibility by leading groups.

It is also familiar with the significant risks neighbouring fire and rescue services may face and which it might reasonably be asked to respond to in an emergency. These include local [COMAH sites](#) and high-rise buildings. Firefighters have access to risk information from neighbouring services. This includes risks identified as a result of the service's agreement with neighbouring services to collect and share information on risks within 10 km of their county borders. These are available on mobile data terminals and the [Resilience Direct](#) platform.

### **The service can respond to major and multi-agency incidents**

We found overall that the service had sufficient arrangements in place to respond to major and multi-agency incidents. These include COMAH sites, wildfires, wide area flooding and marauding terrorist events. We found that these arrangements were well understood by staff, accessible on Resilience Direct and accessible to other responders.

### **The service should address all the Grenfell Tower Inquiry recommendations**

In our last inspection, we focused on how the service had collected risk information and responded to the Government's building risk review programme for tall buildings.

In this inspection, we have focused on how well prepared the service is to respond to a major incident at a tall building, such as the tragedy at [Grenfell Tower](#).

We found the service hadn't addressed some [Grenfell Tower Inquiry recommendations](#). Also, the procedures that the service follows when it receives a fire survival call are paper based. Paper-based systems are too open to operator error and could compromise the service's ability to safely resolve a major incident at a tall building.

Encouragingly, we found fire control to be highly skilled, competent and professional in its role. It is able to give callers advice on evacuation when managing individual fire calls. But we also found that there wasn't a dedicated communication link between the senior officer in the fire control room and the incident commander.

At this type of incident, a fire and rescue service would receive a high volume of simultaneous fire calls. The mobilisation systems in place would support receiving calls. However, we found that the fallback arrangements in fire control and resilience cover weren't robust enough to receive and manage this volume of calls.

The service should make sure that it has an electronic system to record fire survival guidance information in fire control and display it simultaneously at the bridgehead and in any incident command units.

## **The service is working with other fire and rescue services**

The service supports other fire and rescue services responding to emergency incidents and can form part of a multi-agency response. For example, Bedfordshire crews were deployed out of county to provide [mutual assistance](#) to Buckinghamshire Fire and Rescue Service, which declared a major incident for wildfire.

The service has successfully deployed to other services and has used [national resilience assets](#) in response to flooding in South Yorkshire, under the [national co-ordination and advisory framework](#).

## **The service could co-ordinate exercises more effectively with improved corporate oversight**

The service is a valued partner and regularly trains and exercises with other members of the LRF. However, it isn't taking the opportunity to transfer learning from LRF debriefs into the service.

We found the service lacks an overarching cross-border exercise plan that links the LRF with neighbouring fire and rescue services to make sure they all work together effectively to keep the public safe.

We found that in 2021/22, the service had completed a range of multi-agency, cross-border and station exercises. However, it didn't have aims and objectives for every exercise or consistently complete and document debriefs.

The service should make sure it has an overarching cross-border exercise strategy. The strategy should assure the service that exercise objectives are in line with CRMP risks and that learning is recorded, shared and actioned.

## **Incident commanders are demonstrating JESIP principles**

We saw evidence that the service consistently follows JESIP. For example, major incident messages include the [M/ETHANE](#) model.

We found that, where the service identifies problems with applying JESIP, it takes appropriate and prompt action to resolve them with other emergency service organisations.

## **The service works with LRF partners effectively**

The service has good arrangements in place to respond to emergencies with partner agencies that make up the LRF. These arrangements include a robust notification system to inform partners when a major incident is declared. This helps the service to set up tactical and strategic co-ordination groups with all key responders.

We found that fire control had robust testing arrangements for multi-agency communication and procedures.



### **The service keeps up to date with national learning**

The service makes sure it knows about national operational updates from other fire and rescue services and joint organisation learning from other organisations, such as the police service and ambulance trusts. The service has a comprehensive process for acting on national operational learning and joint organisation learning. It uses this learning to inform planning assumptions that it makes with partner organisations.

# Making best use of resources

## Requires improvement

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

Fire and rescue services should manage their resources properly and appropriately, aligning them with their risks and statutory responsibilities. Services should make best possible use of resources to achieve the best results for the public.

The service's revenue budget for 2023/24 is £34.748m. This is a 4.06 percent increase from the previous financial year.

### Areas for improvement

The service needs to show a clear rationale for the allocation of resources between prevention, protection and response activities. This should reflect, and be consistent with, the risks and priorities set out in its [community risk management plan](#).

The service should have effective measures in place to assure itself that its workforce is productive and that its time is used as efficiently and effectively as possible to meet the priorities in the community risk management plan.

The service should assure itself that all processes in place to support performance management are effective.

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

## Main findings

### **The service should effectively allocate resources to meet its objectives**

The service builds its financial plans on sound scenarios. They help make sure the service is sustainable and underpinned by financial controls that reduce the risk of misusing public money. Financial planning, financial systems and audit arrangements are all satisfactory.

The service's CRMP has established clear priorities and actions. Financial plans and the resourcing strategy are linked to the objectives in the CRMP. But the supporting plans for prevention, protection and response don't adequately direct resources to meet the service's priorities and manage risk. And the service hasn't effectively allocated resources to progress its CRMP action plan. This has delayed improvements it had planned.

### **The service should use its resources more effectively to manage risk**

The service sometimes uses its resources well to manage risk, but there are several weaknesses that need addressing. For example:

- Fire control is regularly understaffed and relies on overtime to cover shortfalls. The service is becoming more reliant on overtime, and expenditure has increased from around £495,000 in 2020/21 to around £835,000 in 2021/22.
- The service isn't achieving its targets for call-handling or response times.
- The service doesn't have enough qualified protection staff to support its audit and enforcement activity.
- The service can't assure itself that its interim risk-based inspection programme identifies all its high risks.
- The service can't assure itself that prevention activity is targeted at those at highest risk.
- The service has a number of short and long-term vacancies for support staff. This has created single points of failure in some areas of the service, which have affected the progress of projects.
- The service recognises it doesn't have the number of staff it needs. This is affecting its ability to develop and maintain its core functions. Some staff we spoke to said they have unmanageable workloads and their teams don't have the capacity they need.

The service hasn't recently evaluated its mix of crewing and duty systems. Some on-call fire stations have two fire engines. Most of the second fire engines are rarely used or available to attend emergencies. For example, the second on-call fire engines at Biggleswade, Ampthill and Toddington were at incidents less than 1 percent of the time between 1 April 2018 and 30 June 2022. These fire engines also have low availability. In 2021/22, the second fire engine at Ampthill was available less than 18 percent of each month, while those at Biggleswade and Toddington were available less than 10 percent of each month. The service can't show it is managing risk efficiently.

In 2021/22, an on-call improvement project was paused. However, the service has appointed a new project manager to restart the project. The service also told us that it will be reviewing its response cover as part of a project in its next CRMP (2023–27). We look forward to seeing the outcomes of this work.

### **Some performance processes need to be more effective**

The service's arrangements for managing performance don't always link resource use to its CRMP and strategic priorities. But the service is improving these arrangements. For example, it:

- has restructured itself to include a programme management office function, which tracks the CRMP action plan;
- has introduced a business management information system to support the performance management of functions; and
- monitors progress with quarterly updates to the corporate management team.

The 2022/23 CRMP action plan hasn't progressed as the service had intended. Some actions in the plan haven't been started or have been paused due to resourcing. Of the actions that are categorised as 'in progress', many tasks hadn't been achieved within the set time frames.

We found that the implementation of some projects went beyond their initial scope, which contributed to project delays. The service told us that managers would benefit from more support and training to implement project objectives.

Managers told us that the service has a complex reporting structure. They find that making decisions and communicating them are slow. We found that the service's meeting structure could be more efficient in how it operates and more effective at implementing the core functions of the service.

The service should assure itself that all processes in place to support performance management are effective.

## **The service is taking steps to improve productivity but more needs to be done**

In our last inspection, one of the areas for improvement was that the service should make sure it has effective measures to assure itself that its workforce is productive. It should also make sure its time is used as efficiently and effectively as possible to meet the priorities in the CRMP. This relates to the service broadening its focus on productivity to make sure that all its staff are as efficient as they can be and resource plans stay up to date.

Since our last inspection, the service has made some progress to improve staff productivity, but it still needs to do more.

The service has taken steps to understand how firefighters and fire control staff use their time over an average day and night. It has completed two productivity reviews, which considered the daily tasks carried out and identified opportunities to make better use of time. But progress to make these improvements is slow.

The service has yet to action areas which it has categorised as a priority. We were surprised to find it is still reliant on several paper-based systems, which are inefficient and don't support productive working. For example, these include processes in fire control, the fire safety audit system and health and safety checklists used for the induction process.

The service has produced an efficiency and productivity strategy for 2023–27, with an efficiency and productivity board to oversee improvements. We look forward to seeing the results of this work.

## **The service actively collaborates with others**

We were pleased to see the service meets its statutory duty to collaborate. It routinely considers opportunities to collaborate with other emergency responders. For example, the service shares a translation and interpretation service and a data protection officer with Bedfordshire Police.

Collaborative work is aligned with the priorities in the service's CRMP. The service aims to work with other fire and rescue services to make efficiencies through sharing back-office functions where possible. For example, it shares an information and communications technology (ICT) service with Cambridgeshire Fire and Rescue Service.

We are satisfied that the service monitors, reviews and evaluates the benefits and results of its collaborations. The service is collaborating with the EEAST to provide an emergency medical co-response to the community. Firefighters from Leighton Buzzard, Harrold and Potton community fire stations are trained by EEAST with enhanced trauma care skills. According to the Bedfordshire Fire and Rescue Service and EEAST collaboration evaluation, in 2020/21, the service co-responded to 147 incidents, adding a social value to Bedfordshire of £2.244m.

## **Business continuity arrangements are robust**

After our last inspection, one of the areas for improvement was that the service should make sure it has appropriate business continuity arrangements in place which are regularly reviewed and tested and take account of all foreseeable threats and risks.

We were pleased to see the improvements the service has made since our last inspection. The service has introduced a dedicated role that oversees the planning of business continuity arrangements. The service has good business continuity plans that mitigate the high risks and threats identified in its corporate risk register. It regularly reviews, exercises and tests these plans so that staff know the arrangements and their associated responsibilities.

The service also has appropriate business continuity plans for industrial action. It has assured itself and can demonstrate that it has adequate resources available for future periods of industrial action. The plans have been tested in various short-term scenarios and reviewed afterwards. However, it would benefit from testing its plans for scenarios lasting longer than 48 hours.

The service makes sure staff complete a cyber security e-learning module and assessment offered by the National Cyber Security Centre. In addition, using the IASME Consortium's framework, the service completes an annual assessment, called [Cyber Essentials PLUS](#), of how its ICT security controls guard against cyberattacks. This reduces the risk identified in the corporate risk register.

## **The service has sound financial management**

There are regular reviews to consider all the service's expenditure, including its non-pay costs. This scrutiny makes sure the service gets value for money. For example, the fire and rescue authority reviews expenditure on a regular basis. This includes a series of CRMP planning workshops where the authority reviews budgets and financial plans.

The service is taking steps to make sure it achieves efficiency gains through sound financial management and best working practices. It is doing this in important areas such as estates, fleet and procurement. In 2022/23, the service made procurement savings of £172,000. It uses national and regional procurement frameworks to get the best possible purchasing power. For example, it has saved £23,000 on road traffic collision equipment. It has also carried out some [benchmarking](#) with other fire and rescue services to show value for money.

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

Good

Bedfordshire Fire and Rescue Service is good at making the service affordable now and in the future.

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

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

## Main findings

### The service understands future financial challenges

The service has a sound understanding of future financial challenges. It plans to mitigate its main or significant financial risks. For example, it has set aside £1m in a pay and pension reserve to cover the effect of a higher-than-budgeted pay award in both 2022/23 and 2023/24. This reserve will be used to help balance the budget in 2023/24.

The underpinning assumptions are relatively robust, realistic and prudent. They take account of the wider external environment and some scenario planning for future spending reductions. These include assumptions on pay, inflation and future funding.

The service has identified savings and investment opportunities to improve the service to the public and to generate further savings. These include savings and increased income generation totalling £701,000 between 2023/24 and 2026/27. However, the service recognises that the higher-than-budgeted pay award does mean it will require additional savings and income generation after 2023/24 to avoid a budget deficit. It is further developing its plans.

### **The service has clear arrangements for the use of reserves**

The service has a sensible and sustainable plan for using its reserves. It currently aims for the general reserve to be maintained at the 2021/22 figure of £2.4m, which is equivalent to 7 percent of the annual budget requirement. This reserve may be reduced to £2.2m by the end of 2026/27.

The service has earmarked a reserve of approximately £2.5m to support transformation projects and offset any budget gaps. This reserve is currently being used to fund dedicated project management resources.

### **The service makes good use of fleet and estate**

Following our previous inspection, one of the areas for improvement was that the service should have a robust and comprehensive fleet strategy.

We were pleased with the progress made since then. The service has a fleet strategy, and it has also developed a new estate strategy. These strategies have clear links to its CRMP, and the service regularly reviews and evaluates them. Both strategies exploit opportunities to improve efficiency and effectiveness.

The service has a ten-year maintenance schedule to modernise and refurbish its estate. This includes improving facilities for female staff. The service also has plans to install electrical charging points, which will help the gradual replacement of the fleet with hybrid and electric vehicles.

The service has evaluated its buildings to make sure they meet its current and future needs. It has set aside a fund of £112,000 that can be used for any additional requirements or improvements that are outside the scope of the maintenance schedule. These include making its buildings more accessible to its staff and the public.

### **The service is taking steps to transform but needs to do more to improve efficiency**

The service has a comprehensive ICT strategy that considers how changes in technology and future innovation may affect risk. It also seeks to exploit opportunities to improve efficiency and effectiveness presented by changes in technology. For example, the service has a digital, data and technology steering group. This group makes sure the ICT strategy aligns the needs for efficiency and productivity with those in the digital, data and technology strategy 2023–27. Also, at the time of our inspection, the service was introducing a new HFSV electronic system. However, the service still has other processes that are paper based.



The service is taking steps to make sure the workforce's time is as productive as possible. But it has limited capacity and capability to bring about sustainable future change. It has struggled to recruit staff who have the ICT and project management skills it needs. However, it is now using its transformational reserve to fund dedicated project management resources. And it plans to set up a new team for organisational transformation. We look forward to seeing improvements in how the service manages future change.

### **The service takes advantage of opportunities to secure external funding and generate income**

The service actively considers and exploits opportunities for generating extra income. It generates a total of £726,000 annually from collaboration activities, such as:

- £35,000 from sharing a firefighting apprenticeship scheme with Hertfordshire Fire and Rescue Service;
- £135,000 from funding to support the management and provision of LRF;
- £12,000 from property sharing with the police, EEAST and St John's Ambulance; and
- £27,000 from equipment servicing for Essex and Northamptonshire fire and rescue services.

# Promoting the right values and culture

## Requires improvement

Bedfordshire Fire and Rescue Service requires improvement at promoting the right values and culture. This is in relation to the cause of concern given to the service, which states that it should make sure operational staff meet the minimum fitness requirements.

Fire and rescue services should have positive and inclusive cultures, modelled by the behaviours of their senior leaders. Services should promote health and safety effectively, and staff should have access to a range of well-being support that can be tailored to their individual needs.

## Cause of concern

Bedfordshire Fire and Rescue Service can't assure itself that its operational members of staff meet the minimum [fitness requirements](#) to perform their roles.

### Recommendation

Within 28 days, the service should provide an action plan that details how it intends to make sure all staff meet the minimum fitness requirements.

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

## Main findings

### Values and behaviours are established and culture continues to improve

The service continues to have well-defined values, which staff understand. Staff at all levels of the service demonstrate behaviours that reflect service values. Of those who responded to our staff survey, we found 97 percent (206 out of 213) were aware of the service's statement of values and 95 percent (196 out of 206) agreed that their colleagues consistently model and maintain the service's values.

We were also encouraged to see the new values being aligned with NFCC guidance and that they are being included in the appraisal process.

While most staff spoke positively of senior leaders, some staff told us that some senior leaders don't always act as positive role models or demonstrate the values or behaviours of the service. In our staff survey, 87 percent (180 out of 206) of staff agreed that their line manager consistently models and maintains the service's values. However, 44 percent (90 out of 206) of staff didn't agree that senior leaders consistently model and maintain the service's values.

Most staff told us they are proud to work for the service, and recognition for their work is improving with recent changes in leadership. However, some told us they would like to see senior leaders more often because they feel there isn't enough visibility. Staff also feel there is a lack of consideration about how unmanageable workloads affect the workforce. And they feel that there are too many pinch points in the service where work is continually pushed down from the top of the organisation. Some staff told us this results in a negative working culture.

However, we found that there was a positive challenge culture throughout the service. Staff told us they are confident and willing to challenge poor behaviours when they come across them.

### **There is good provision to support workforce well-being**

The service continues to have well-understood and effective well-being policies in place, which are available to staff. A significant range of well-being services are available to support both physical and mental health. For example, the service offers:

- occupational health referrals;
- an employee assistance programme 24 hours a day, 7 days a week (for work and non-work-related matters); and
- physiotherapy.

There are good provisions to promote staff well-being. This is a clear priority for the service and is a focus in the weekly blue bulletins. (Blue bulletins are aimed at all staff and contain information such as news and updates.)

Most staff agree that they can access services to support their mental well-being. We found that 84 percent (178 out of 211) of staff who responded to our survey were confident the service would offer well-being services after a workplace incident.

### **The service has appropriate health and safety provision in place**

The service continues to have effective and well-understood health and safety policies and procedures in place. In our staff survey, 93 percent (197 out of 211) of respondents agreed that they understand the policies and procedures in place to make sure they can work safely.

These policies and procedures are readily available, and the service promotes them effectively to all staff. In our staff survey, 96 percent (203 out of 211) of respondents agreed that they are clear and support them in reporting all accidents, [near misses](#) and dangerous occurrences. However, we found that the service's health and safety investigations were often affected by staff absences. Also, the service's evidencing of workplace accident investigations could be more effective. A review of performance targets to make them more specific would help reflect health and safety activity more accurately.

The service monitors staff who have secondary employment or dual contracts. This makes sure they comply with the secondary employment policy and don't work excessive hours.

### **The service should make sure operational staff meet the minimum fitness requirements**

We are concerned that the service can't assure itself that all members of operational staff can meet the minimum fitness levels required to perform the role of a firefighter. Firefighting is a physically demanding occupation, and it is essential that firefighters have sufficient levels of fitness to help them to carry out their tasks as safely and effectively as possible.

The service has a comprehensive fitness policy, which states firefighters are expected to complete an annual fitness test. The policy is aligned with the NFCC guidelines and standards.

The service provided fitness data that shows that, in 2022/23, 33 percent of firefighters had completed fitness testing. Home Office data shows that, in 2021/22, this was 68.6 percent and in 2020/21 this was 3.47 percent (during COVID-19).

The service told us that some firefighters may not have been tested in a two to three-year period. We found that there had been a vacancy for a service fitness adviser for some time. The role of the fitness adviser is to manage, co-ordinate, monitor and provide the fitness assessment programme as stated in the fitness policy.

The service recognises the need to reintroduce annual fitness testing for staff. We found it had prioritised return-to-work tests using station fitness trainers. However, it has yet to establish a plan to assure itself that operational employees are maintaining the standards required to perform their roles and to support them.

### **There is a clear process to manage absence**

We found there are clear processes in place to manage absences for all staff, which describe a supportive process for staff health and well-being. There is clear guidance for managers, who are confident in using the process. We found that the service managed absences well and in accordance with policy.

# Getting the right people with the right skills

## Adequate

Bedfordshire Fire and Rescue Service is adequate at getting the right people with the right skills.

Fire and rescue services should have a workforce plan in place that is linked to their CRMPs. It should set out their current and future skills requirements and address capability gaps. This should be supplemented by a culture of continuous improvement, including appropriate learning and development throughout the service.

### Areas for improvement

The service should review its succession planning to make sure that it has effective arrangements in place to manage staff turnover while continuing to provide its core service to the public.

The service should assure itself that [on-call](#) firefighters are appropriately supported in their initial development.

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

### Main findings

#### The service would benefit from reviewing workforce plans

The service does some workforce planning and has a comprehensive workforce plan for [wholetime](#) staff. But it doesn't take full account of the skills and capabilities it needs to effectively carry out its CRMP in critical roles. We found that the service's planning could be improved to fully consider workforce skills and overcome any gaps in capability, especially in support roles.

## **The service should review succession plans to make sure it has the staff it needs**

The service needs to do more to improve the way it considers its future needs and succession planning. Across workforce roles, the five-year change in staff was:

- support staff, 20.6 percent;
- firefighters (on-call and wholetime combined), 6.3 percent; and
- fire control staff, -12.5 percent.

We found there is no clear succession plan for support roles, and many specialist roles have vacancies for significant periods.

In 2021/22, more people joined the service (77 people) than left (60 people), and the proportion of leavers was lower than the national average (9.8 percent compared to 10.4 percent). However, the workforce had the perception that there was a high turnover of staff. In 2021/22, 35 on-call firefighters joined the service and 18 left. This is 21 more joiners than the previous year. Staff told us they have witnessed a lot of change recently, which negatively affects their workloads.

In our staff survey, 29 percent (61 out of 213) of respondents wanted to leave in the next 12 months or as soon as possible. And 41 percent (25 out of 61) of respondents said this was due to an unmanageable workload.

The service should review its succession planning to make sure that it has effective arrangements in place to manage staff turnover. It should also make sure staff have appropriate workloads. The results of not doing this would potentially affect the provision of its core service to the public.

## **The service considers protected characteristics and reasonable adjustments to support learning**

The service has a learning and development policy that makes sure the learning needs of staff are considered. We found that the service carried out a training gap analysis for everyone. And as part of the joining instructions for courses, candidates are asked if they require any reasonable adjustments. We found some examples of the service supporting candidates who had self-declared as neurodiverse and required reasonable adjustments to support their learning needs.

Most staff told us that they can access the training they need to be effective in their roles and that it isn't just focused on operational skills. The service's training plans make sure it can maintain competence and capability effectively. For example, all management roles have a competency matrix that displays the skills required for the role, including training in equality, diversity and inclusion (EDI) and in health and safety, which is also reflected in all operational and support roles.

The service monitors staff competence by using PDR pro. Each quarter, this reports progress to senior management.

We found all the records of staff skills and safety-critical capabilities that we reviewed to be up to date, including those for incident command. Operational staff are trained and competent. This approach allows the service to identify gaps in workforce capabilities and resilience. It also means it can make sound and financially sustainable decisions about current and future needs.

We found the service makes sure that staff have completed training courses, although there was limited evidence of refresher training when considering technical skills for supervisory managers, like discipline and grievance training. The service has explored the option of using an external training provider for refresher training and is planning to resolve this in the next 12 months.

### **There is a positive culture of learning and development**

The service promotes a culture of continuous improvement throughout the organisation, and it encourages staff to learn and develop. For example, staff told us they find their one-to-ones with managers useful as they allow them to request and access further development opportunities.

Most staff told us they can access a range of learning and development resources. These include e-learning modules, coaching and mentoring. This allows them to do their jobs effectively.

### **On-call firefighters require more support with their initial development**

On-call firefighters told us that they are happy with the training provided by the service in responding to fires and other emergencies effectively.

We found that on-call firefighters were recording safety-critical training consistently and the service was able to display this on a competency dashboard. However, on-call firefighters told us that at times they struggle for time and capacity to complete all 52 modules on the training system.

Following recruitment, on-call firefighters are expected to complete an initial development portfolio. Staff told us that many on-call firefighters are still in initial development for up to three or, in some cases, five years. The service told us that it has set a different time frame for when it would expect an on-call firefighter to complete their development compared to that for a wholetime firefighter. The service told us that this is due to differences in contract. However, the service's development policy states that the same time frame is expected for both wholetime and on-call firefighters.

On-call firefighters told us that they have fewer opportunities for, and access to, assessment. This affects their pay and we found that wholetime firefighters received their full pay within shorter time frames. Firefighters told us that another consequence of the initial development time frames is the effect on the availability of their fire engines. This is due to the length of time it takes to qualify as a breathing apparatus team leader.

Managers told us that, in reality, on-call initial development portfolios had stopped due to staff vacancies and constant changes in managerial roles. Managers were also finding them difficult to keep on top of with current workloads.

The service should assure itself that on-call firefighters are appropriately supported in their initial development.

It is encouraging that the service has identified that on-call firefighters require more support. The on-call improvement project has recruited two watch commanders who support on-call training and development. The service told us that this should accelerate completion of all phases of development, including gaining skills and maintaining them. We look forward to seeing the outcome of this project.



# Ensuring fairness and promoting diversity

## Adequate

Bedfordshire Fire and Rescue Service is adequate at ensuring fairness and promoting diversity.

Creating a more representative workforce gives fire and rescue services huge benefits. These include greater access to talent and different ways of thinking. It also helps them better understand and engage with local communities. Each service should make sure staff throughout the organisation firmly understand and show a commitment to equality, diversity and inclusion. This includes successfully taking steps to remove inequality and making progress to improve fairness, diversity and inclusion at all levels of the service. It should proactively seek and respond to feedback from staff and make sure any action it takes is meaningful.

### Areas for improvement

The service should make sure it has effective grievance procedures. It should identify and put in place ways to improve staff confidence in those procedures.

The service should have a consistent plan to promote [positive action](#) with under-represented groups and make sure staff understand the purpose and benefits of a diverse workforce.

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

### Main findings

#### **The service has improved its overall approach to equality impact assessments**

In our last inspection, one of the areas for improvement was that the service should have robust processes in place to carry out [equality impact assessments](#) and review any actions agreed as a result.

We are pleased to report that this area for improvement has been addressed. We found the service has sufficient evidence of equality impact assessments, which it calls 'personal impact assessments'. They are stored on a central SharePoint site, which all staff can access. The records we reviewed were aligned with the NFCC framework and were available for projects, policies and community activity. The service has appointed a new EDI manager. The manager has completed some quality sampling and audits of personal impact assessments and has given appropriate feedback to managers to improve standards.

### **The service has introduced more ways to seek staff feedback**

The service has developed several ways to work with staff on issues and decisions that affect them, such as staff surveys, CRMP workshops and ICT customer satisfaction feedback. These include methods to build all-staff awareness of fairness and diversity as well as targeted initiatives to identify matters that affect different staff groups. It is pleasing to see the service has invested more in developing EDI networks and improving their influence. For example, a senior manager currently chairs the neurodiversity network to make sure its voice is heard at a corporate level.

The service has taken action to address matters raised by staff. For example, staff told the service that reasonable adjustments are taking a long time to implement. In response, the neurodiversity network is helping the service identify delays in the 'access to work' process. This process enables the purchase of computer hardware and software for staff with disabilities.

### **The service should improve staff confidence in the grievance process**

Representative bodies and staff associations reported that they would like better involvement from the service in grievance matters.

We found that staff and representative bodies were aware of the grievance policy but weren't confident that grievances would be resolved, especially when dealing with EDI issues. When we conducted a review of grievances, we found that five formal grievances were recorded in 2021/22. A small number of grievances submitted in a service can indicate that staff aren't confident using the grievance process. We noted also that the service doesn't always meet the allocated time frame for dealing with a grievance.

The service should take steps to resolve this problem and increase staff confidence in using the grievance process.

## **Disciplinary processes are effective, but staff still need reassurance the service is taking action**

Although the service has clear policies and procedures, staff have limited confidence in how well it can deal effectively with cases of bullying, [harassment](#) and discrimination as well as grievances and discipline. In 2021/22, the average time taken to complete a formal investigation (which the service calls a level 3 investigation) was 207 days, compared to 135 days in 2020/21.

From our staff survey, 83 percent (176 out of 213) of respondents agreed they are treated fairly at work. However, the survey also told us the following:

- 15 percent (32 out of 213) of staff have felt bullied or harassed at work in the last 12 months. 75 percent (24 out of 32) of respondents attributed the main source to someone more senior than themselves. Respondents thought the most common factors that the bullying or harassment was related to were physical appearance, gender, neurodivergence, age and performance at work.
- 14 percent (29 out of 213) of staff have felt discriminated against at work in the last 12 months. Respondents thought the most common factors that the discrimination was related to were gender and age.

Of those who said they felt bullied, harassed or discriminated against, the primary reason for non-reporting was that the respondent thought that nothing would happen.

## **The service has changed its approach and is taking robust steps to improve scrutiny of bullying, harassment and discrimination**

It is promising that the service has recognised the issues described above and is taking seriously its responsibility for eliminating them. We found it was taking robust steps to improve scrutiny of bullying, harassment and discrimination cases.

The service has introduced improvements to make sure people are confident to come forward to report these types of unacceptable and unwarranted behaviour. It has introduced scrutiny at each level of investigation:

- An investigating commissioning manager will make sure that all these types of allegations are investigated as fully and completely as possible.
- The service has sought independent reviews of larger cases by a legal team. It has reviewed the feedback from these, which confirmed discipline cases are being handled appropriately.
- The service is promoting to staff an anonymous reporting tool to raise any incidence of bullying and harassment.

It is encouraging to see that the service is taking national reports seriously, such as the [Independent Culture Review of London Fire Brigade](#) and [Values and culture in fire and rescue services](#). It has reviewed these reports and produced an action plan to address the findings or recommendations.

## **The service could do more to increase diversity at all levels of the workforce**

There is an open, fair and honest recruitment process for staff or those wishing to work for the fire and rescue service. The service has an effective system to understand and remove the risk of disproportionality in recruitment processes. We found evidence that the service evaluates its recruitment campaigns to understand if there are any barriers for under-represented groups so it can improve future application rates.

The service has acted positively to improve diversity. For example, in 2021 positive action activity began six months before the wholetime firefighter recruitment campaign opened. This included a 'register your interest' list before applying.

The service told us that:

- of the 332 applicants for wholetime roles, 182 (55 percent) were on the register your interest list before applying, 37 (20 percent) of those were from ethnic minority backgrounds and 24 (13 percent) were female;
- of the 332 applicants, 42 were White British or Irish females, 5 were females from ethnic minority backgrounds and 45 were males from ethnic minority backgrounds; and
- it hosted some engagement days called 'have a go', aimed at women.

However, despite the above actions, the percentage of staff who have self-declared as being female or from an ethnic minority background has stayed broadly the same.

During this inspection, some staff couldn't explain what positive action is or give examples of how it is being used to recruit and retain a more diverse workforce. We also found that positive action wasn't always practised. The service should make sure it has a consistent plan to promote positive action with under-represented groups and make sure staff understand the purpose and benefits of a diverse workforce.

The service knows it needs to do more to increase diversity at all levels in the workforce. There has been limited progress to improve ethnic and gender diversity.

## **The workforce needs to reflect the diversity of the community it serves**

For the whole workforce, as at 31 March 2022:

- 23.6 percent were women, which is significantly above the England average of 18.6 percent;
- only 6.6 percent of wholetime firefighters and 10.7 percent of on-call firefighters were women, which is disappointing. The proportion of female firefighters increased slightly from 7.4 percent (32 people) in 2020/21 to 8 percent (35 people) in 2021/22;

- 9 percent were from an ethnic minority background compared to 38 percent of the local population. Bedfordshire is a very diverse area, but this isn't reflected in the service's workforce;
- 7.3 percent of firefights (31 people) were from an ethnic minority background, which remained the same compared to the previous year at 7.4 percent (31 people); and
- 77 people had joined the service in 2021/22. 12 percent of these joiners were from ethnic minority backgrounds.

The service could make better use of exit interviews to understand why staff leave the organisation and use them to learn from.

### **The service has a reasonable approach to EDI**

The service has improved its approach to EDI. It makes sure it can support staff with protected characteristics and can offer the right services to its communities. For example, it has held road traffic collision events for disabled drivers.

We were pleased that the service collects some diversity data from the community and staff, although this could be more consistent and used more effectively. The service produces an annual report on equality data.

The service makes e-learning available to staff, covering equality in the workplace and the [Equality Act 2010](#). We found that 73 percent of staff had completed an EDI training module.

Positively, we found that staff generally felt a sense of inclusion and belonging at work. There are staff networks in place that support staff and raise awareness of gender, sexuality and race. These also support staff with well-being, the menopause and retirement. The service encourages and supports female staff to attend national network events.

### **The service has reviewed its workplace facilities with respect to EDI**

In our inspection, we found that, as part of the estates strategy, there has been an EDI assessment of all buildings. The property manager has worked with the EDI manager to prioritise this work. They have secured a £112,000 budget for EDI improvements in addition to improvements scheduled in the ten-year maintenance plan.

In our staff survey, we found 98 percent (207 out of 211) of respondents agreed that they have access to gender-appropriate workplace facilities.

# Managing performance and developing leaders

## Adequate

Bedfordshire Fire and Rescue Service is adequate at managing performance and developing leaders.

Fire and rescue services should have robust and meaningful performance management arrangements in place for their staff. All staff should be supported to meet their potential and there should be a focus on developing staff and improving diversity into leadership roles.

### Area for improvement

The service should ensure it has arrangements in place to identify, develop and support all high-potential staff across the organisation.

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

### Main findings

#### The service effectively manages individuals' performance

There is a good appraisal system in place, which covers the service's values, the NFCC's [Core Code of Ethics](#) for fire and rescue services and the NFCC's [national leadership framework](#). Each individual must complete a formal annual appraisal between April and July.

The service told us that in 2021/22, they had an appraisal completion rate of 93 percent, which allows them to effectively develop and assess the individual performance of all staff. There are detailed outcomes and procedures to follow for poor performance, new starters and those developing in their roles.

During this inspection, we spoke to staff working in fire stations and other areas of the service. They told us that they have regular discussions with their managers and

that these are meaningful. They also told us that each staff member has individual goals and objectives and regular performance assessments. Most staff feel confident in the performance and development arrangements in place.

### **The service is improving its approach to fairness in promotion processes**

The service has put considerable effort into developing its promotion and progression processes so that they are fair and all staff can understand them. The service uses a gateway process for promotion in operational roles. Operational staff told us this is a positive change. We found that all staff who passed the promotion gateway were entered into a talent pool. Some candidates can be selected from here to fill short-term resourcing gaps. The service supports each applicant with a training development activity plan. The service plans the frequency of the gateway process, using workforce planning activities and considering vacancies anticipated in the next 12 months.

The service manages selection processes consistently. It has introduced the role of assessment and selection co-ordinator to make sure the promotion process holds up to scrutiny and that interviewers' training is up to date. All interviewers complete [unconscious bias](#) training. The assessment and selection co-ordinator is keeping good records of all the promotion processes for operational staff and providing assurance to the service that the processes are fair.

The service uses the external recruitment company VCA for its senior promotion processes to make sure there are impartiality and diversity in decision-making.

The service has effective succession-planning processes for operational staff, which allow it to effectively manage their career pathways, including roles needing specialist skills.

However, these processes aren't consistent with those for support roles, and the service finds it difficult to fill short or long-term vacancies in support roles.

Some staff told us they feel there is little incentive to apply for promotion and they are particularly concerned about the increased workloads of temporary management positions.

### **The service should do more to diversify leadership**

We note that the service is recognising and developing some internal candidates that could progress to senior leadership roles.

The service needs to encourage applicants from diverse backgrounds into middle and senior-level positions. We found the service does advertise externally and invites all candidates to an awareness session. However, it tends to fill these positions internally, so it isn't making the most of opportunities to make the workforce more representative.

## **The service could do more to develop leadership and high-potential staff for support roles**

In our last inspection, one of the areas for improvement was that the service should make sure it has arrangements to identify, develop and support all high-potential staff across the organisation.

In this inspection, we found that the selection, development and promotion processes focused primarily on operational staff. Therefore, this area for improvement will remain.

The service needs to improve the way it actively manages the career pathways of all staff, including those with specialist skills and those with potential for leadership roles. It has some talent management schemes, such as the gateway process, to develop leaders and high-potential staff. It also provides the option for candidates applying for promotion to indicate whether they want to participate in an accelerated promotion process. However, although these are consistently available for operational roles, they aren't available for support staff.

The service told us that it will be changing its appraisal for support staff. This will incorporate a talent grid and support career pathways. However, there is no promotion process for support staff, only operational staff. We look forward to seeing this work progress.

## **The service uses temporary promotions to fill vacancies**

Since our last inspection, the average length of a temporary promotion has increased. As at 31 March 2022, the average length was 688 days, which was higher than the average for England. In the year ending 31 March 2022, 7.1 percent of the workforce (44 members of staff) were on temporary promotion. This could mean the service is providing good development opportunities, or it could mean it is struggling to fill roles permanently. The service should consider the effect on those staff filling temporary roles.

## **The service is adopting fire standards**

It is encouraging to see that the service has a governance framework to understand what action is required to adopt the Fire Standards Board's fire standards. It has made good progress and, of the 14 standards released, it has reviewed 12. In December 2022, the service completed a gap analysis of the [leading the service](#) and the [leading and developing people](#) standards and planned their implementation.

The service has also reviewed its values and code of ethics against the Code of Ethics Fire Standard developed by the Fire Standards Board and the NFCC's Core Code of Ethics for fire and rescue services. It told us that it will have full compliance with the fire standards in 2023. We look forward to seeing this work progress.



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**SUBJECT: COMMUNITY PANEL UPDATE**


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## Background Papers:

[Agenda for Executive Committee on Thursday, 21st September, 2023, 10.00 am | Bedfordshire Fire and Rescue Service \(moderngov.co.uk\)](#)

[Agenda for Executive Committee on Tuesday, 14th March, 2023, 10.00 am | Bedfordshire Fire and Rescue Service \(moderngov.co.uk\)](#)

**Implications**

This table provides a short statement of the impact of the recommendations in this report.  
Will this report affect any of the following?

	<b>Yes / No</b>	<b>Impact / Reference</b>
Financial Implications	Yes	Purchase of email marketing suite (not solely for this purpose)
Risk Management	Yes	Reputational risk – engaging with public/not listening to customers
Legal Implications	No	
Privacy and Security Implications	No	
Duty to Collaborate	Yes	Opportunity for collaboration with partner organisations

Health and Safety Implications	No	
Equality, Diversity and Inclusion	Yes	Diverse representation of communities, engaging with seldom-heard groups
Environmental Sustainability	No	
Consultation and Communication	Yes	Engaging with key stakeholders in researching options available within Bedfordshire. Communication following community engagement to close the loop of topics raised.

### **PURPOSE:**

To update members on the Service's community panel way forward following a decision made at FRA Executive Committee 21 September 2023.

### **RECOMMENDATION:**

That Members acknowledge the contents of the report.

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#### 1. Executive Summary

- 1.1 The Service wants to have meaningful engagement with the communities it serves; to listen to their concerns, get their feedback on decisions taken by the Authority about the future plans and priorities of the fire service, and to increase strategic visibility amongst the public.
- 1.2 The first community panel was held earlier this year and it did not meet the objective as set out to FRA in March.
- 1.3 The CRMP 23-27 has been consulted on with the public of Bedfordshire.
- 1.4 This report aims to give Authority Members an update following the first panel and to understand the plan moving forward.

## 2 Background

- 2.1 Bedfordshire Fire and Rescue Authority in March this year (March 2023) requested the Service establish its own community panel to support community engagement activity to involve the public in “developing ideas earlier and get regular sense checking on activity that affects their communities”.
- 2.2 Less than a handful of fire and rescue services in England host its own in-person community panel/forum.
- 2.3 A community panel was hosted by the Service in May 2023 and was attended by 14 representatives from partner organisations.
- 2.4 A presentation was delivered about the Service and the proposed CRMP, before a discussion held about the risks/challenges faced by organisations who attended and the communities of Bedfordshire that we all serve.
- 2.5 It was suggested the panel be renamed the Community Partner Panel to reflect membership.
- 2.6 No further meetings of this panel or the development of a panel for residents/the public have taken place.
- 2.7 Bedfordshire Fire and Rescue Service attends partnership panels, meetings and engagement opportunities at a number of levels across the Service, including at senior management level and through the community fire safety team (partnerships manager). Some of these welcome members of the public to represent their community.
- 2.8 There is currently no central coordination of community engagement activity of this nature by the Service. Recording of this activity as a Service is therefore limited.
- 2.9 The Interim Head of Communications has engaged with counterparts in blue light services, local authorities and other fire and rescue services to understand best practice as well as what opportunities are available locally. Opportunities are available to strategically sit on resident/community panels that are already hosted and are being developed by partner organisations.

## 3 FRA Executive Committee decision

- 3.1 The FRA Executive Committee on 21 September 2023 voted to both continue to collaborate with partners to sit on existing partner panels, forums and resident engagement opportunities and to establish a virtual community panel.
- 3.2 It was highlighted the need for attendance at existing panels to be better coordinated and recorded moving forward to enable BFRS to strategically manage attendance, themes discussed and act upon local issues raised in such forums.
- 3.3 The benefits of attending established panels include:
  - Alignment with vision statement about Working Together, and this includes working with partners
  - Raises profile of FRA activity and strategy with public and partners

- Our CRMP consultation in January 2023 resulted in the highlighting of various efficiencies which included collaboration with other public services
- Cost savings and the costs associated with supporting and paying for this
- Integrates agendas and will avoid duplication
- Collaborative solutions can be held to public account

#### 3.4 Risks include:

- Agendas may have limited FRS coverage and airtime may be limited
- The public may confuse responsibility/activity of partner organisations
- The Authority may have less control over terms of reference
- May have to repeat the process a number of times (e.g., three council community citizen panels, ICB, and policing)

3.5 The development of a virtual community panel was supported by the FRA Executive Committee to enable the organisation to have access to a group of engaged members of the public at regular intervals throughout the year to survey, consult and ask for opinions on a range of topics.

#### 3.6 The benefits of a virtual community panel include:

- Can be run alongside any other community engagement approach
- Can be set up quickly with a recruitment campaign across existing channels/events/contacts
- Can ask questions ad-hoc (TOR two times a month maximum) on a range of subjects, as and when needed
- More flexible for panel as does not require panel members to commit to attending a meeting (virtual or in-person) at a specific time and place
- Requires less time, effort and cost compared with traditional panel meets
- Ready-made test group for a range of subjects
- GDPR compliant data storage
- Successfully used by neighbour Cambridgeshire FRS – can build on their learning/utilise model
- Will get more response (measurable) to key questions from a larger sample of general public

#### 3.7 The risks include:

- Will need to invest in suitable email-marketing software (already being explored to support BFRS external communication)
- May not get a diverse range of people take part unless targeted advertising during recruitment

- Duplication in responses
- May need to refresh recruitment drive for panel members yearly

3.8 The FRA Executive Committee requested a plan of implementation be brought for information to the full FRA.

#### 4 Plan

4.1 The intention now is to put a detailed communication and engagement plan into place to cover the launch and first 12 months of the panel.

4.2 The next three months will be spent procuring and putting in place a GDPR-compliant email marketing system (something that is already being explored by the Service to improve its external communication with businesses and the public following the most recent HMICFRS inspection). The community engagement panel will utilise this technology also.

4.3 Once in place, estimated early 2024, the Communication Team will use a combination of technologies to put together an online form to allow people to sign up to receive periodic questions and surveys about the Service's activities, known as 'Hot Topics'. This short form will capture equality data, based on the recent UK census fields, to allow the team to monitor the demographic make-up of the people signing up to the group. This data is password protected and stored securely.

4.4 There will be a six-week sign up period, encouraging members of the public to join. This opportunity will be shared on existing social media platforms, on the BFRS website, through engagement with local media and shared with existing contact distribution lists obtained through a range of Service departments including prevention, protection and partnerships.

4.5 During the sign-up period, people will be given the opportunity enter a prize draw as a reward for signing up.

4.6 The aim will be to have 100 people signed up by the end of the six-week period.

4.7 A page will be created on the website with information about the panel aim and objectives and the continual opportunity to sign up, enabling the group to naturally grow over time. The team will also plan in to its schedule (recommended twice yearly) promotion of the panel to support natural growth.

4.8 The aim will be to have one engagement – whether it be a survey, a question with a free text box, or poll – every three months (every quarter), aligned to the CRMP and organisational objectives, or hot topics for what is trending either in industry or locally connected to the fire service.

4.9 The first series of engagement topics could be as follows:

- Awareness of our CRMP and priorities in the community
- Response times
- Understanding of on-call fire stations/crews

- How operational crews spend their time (exploring the range of activities and importance of HFSV in the community, linked to role of the firefighter, recruitment and FRS awareness)
- How we use social media

(Please see here from Cambridgeshire FRS as an example of how we will ensure the panel will have a good understanding of the fire service for answering questions that cover more complex situations: [Document.ashx \(cmis.uk.com\)](#) )

- 4.10 No more than an average of two emails a month will be sent. They will vary in length and complexity, ranging from a single question to a more structured survey.
- 4.11 Staff of Bedfordshire Fire and Rescue Service will not be eligible to join the panel.
- 4.12 Growing the forum will be a key priority for Communication Team for the next year. The plan will be to try and increase participation with harder to reach groups using targeted advertising. This will then allow the forum to provide a representative view of activities and help shape plans moving forward.

## **5 RECOMMENDATION:**

- 5.1 That Members acknowledge the contents of the report.

**LEANNE EHREN**  
**INTERIM HEAD OF COMMUNICATION, ENGAGEMENT AND PUBLIC AFFAIRS**



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**SUBJECT:**                   **WORK PROGRAMME 2023-24**

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**Author and contact:**     **Nicky Upton, Democratic and Regulatory Services Supervisor**  
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Background Papers:       None

Appendix	Title	Protective Marking
1	FRA Work Programme	N/A
2	Executive Committee Work Programme	N/A
3	Audit & Standards Committee Work Programme	N/A
4	Member Development Work Programme	N/A
5	Budget Workshop Work Programme	N/A

**Implications**

This table provides a short statement of the impact of the recommendations in this report and/or a reference to the relevant paragraph/s in the report.

Will this report affect any of the following?

	Yes / No	Impact / Reference
Financial Implications	No	
Risk Management	No	

Legal Implications	Yes	Meetings/committees set in accordance with The Bedfordshire Fire Services (Combination Scheme) Order 1996 (now amended by Variation Order 2012) in order to carry out functions specified within the Fire and Rescue Services Act 2004
Privacy and Security Implications	No	
Duty to Collaborate	No	
Health and Safety Implications	No	
Equality, Diversity and Inclusion	No	
Environmental Sustainability	No	
Consultation and Communication	Yes	Agenda items will be either statutory items for consideration, topical items or other subject matters raised via Corporate Management Team and/or Principal Officer discussions. Following initial liaison with the Chair of the Meeting/Committee, items will be added to the respective work programme with Fire Authority Members being given the opportunity at each meeting to request any additional topics for consideration or training requirements

**PURPOSE:**

To review and report on the work programme for 2023-24 and to provide Members with an opportunity to request additional reports for the Fire Authority meetings.

**RECOMMENDATION:**

It is recommended that the work programme for 2023-24 and the 'cyclical' Agenda Items for each meeting in 2023-24 be noted.

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

**FIRE AND RESCUE AUTHORITY - WORK PROGRAMME 2023/24**

**FRA Meeting**  
**Dates**  
**07.12.23**

Cyclical Agenda Items	Agenda item (locked for editing)	CFO Review (select from drop down list)	Notes
	Communications Minutes from 21.09.23 Executive Minutes from 03.10.23 and 23.11.23 ASC Minutes from 17.10.23 (inc Statement of Assurance) CRMP Consultation Proposals 2023/24 Revenue Budget and Capital Programme Monitoring Q2 2023/24 Performance Report (July to September) Programme Board Update Mid Year Treasury Management report Public Sector Equality Duty Report Lead Member update: TBC Work Programme		
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Additional/Commissioned Items			

**FRA Meeting**  
**Dates**  
**13.02.24**

Cyclical Agenda Items	Agenda item (locked for editing)	CFO Review (select from drop down list)	Notes
	Communications Minutes from 07.12.23 ASC Minutes from 04.01.24 Executive Minutes from 22.01.24 CRMP Update including consultation responses The 2024/25 Revenue Budget, Capital Programme and Council Tax setting Members' Allowances Scheme Localism Act 2011 – Pay Policy Statement 2023 Calendar of Meetings for 2024/25 Proposed Indicators and Targets for 2024/25 Lead Member update: TBC Work Programme		
<hr/> <b>Additional/Commissioned Items</b>			

**FRA Meeting**  
**Dates**  
**16.04.24**

Cyclical Agenda Items	Agenda item (locked for editing)	CFO Review (select from drop down list)	Notes
	Communications Minutes from 13.02.24 Executive Committee Minutes from 14.03.24 ASC Minutes from 26.03.24 2023/24 Revenue Budget and Capital Monitoring Programme Treasury Management Strategy and Practices Q3 2022/23 Performance Report Update (Sept – Dec) Business Continuity Planning Disposal of Assets under the Scheme of Delegated Authority Asset Management Strategy (reviewed every 3 years, next review 2022/23) Lead Member Update: TBC Work Programme		
<hr/> <b>Additional/Commissioned Items</b>			

**EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE - WORK PROGRAMME 2023/24**

Executive Committee  
15.11.23

Cyclical Agenda Items	Agenda item (locked for editing)	CFO Review (select from drop down list)	Notes
	Communications Executive Committee Minutes from 03.10.23 CRMP Update Work Programme  Update on new Corporate Risk Register CRMP Update	Deferred Deferred	CFO raised at 11.07.23, proposed date suggested by BSM who will report - deferred from September meeting. Deferred from September meeting.
<b>Additional/Commissioned Items</b>	Progress on review of Independent Review of Governance and MO role		CFO raised at 11.07.23, proposed date suggested by BSM

Executive Committee  
22.01.24

Cyclical Agenda Items	Agenda item (locked for editing)	CFO Review (select from drop down list)	Notes
	Communications Executive Committee Minutes from 15.11.22 CRMP Update Work Programme		
<b>Additional/Commissioned Items</b>			

Executive  
Committee  
14.03.24

<b>Cyclical Agenda Items</b>	<b>Agenda item (locked for editing)</b> Communications Executive Committee Minutes from 22.01.24 2024/25 KPIs update Work Programme	<b>CFO Review (select from drop down list)</b>	<b>Notes</b>
<b>Additional/Commissioned Items</b>			

**AUDIT AND STANDARDS COMMITTEE - WORK PROGRAMME 2023/24**

**Audit &  
Standards  
Committee**  
**Meeting Date**  
**17.10.23**

Cyclical Agenda Items	Agenda item (locked for editing)	ACO Review (select from drop down list)	Notes
	Communications ASC Minutes from 06.07.23 Update to the Authority's Finance Regulations (Biennial review – due 2023) Internal Audit Progress Report Internal Audit Actions Update Statement of Assurance Review of Code of Conduct and Annual Report on Standards Review of Fire Authority's Effectiveness (Biennial review – due 2024/25) Fire Standards Board update Corporate Risk Register - Exception Report Work Programme	Deferred  Removed Deferred	Move to next year meeting  Removed from agenda and work programme Deferred to January meeting
<b>Restricted</b>			
<b>Additional/Commissioned Items</b>			

**Audit &  
Standards  
Committee**  
**Meeting Date**  
**04.01.24**

Cyclical Agenda Items	Agenda item (locked for editing)	ACO Review (select from drop down list)	Notes
	Communications ASC Minutes from 17.10.23 Audit Results Report (E&Y)(Results of 2022/23 audit including any matters outstanding) Internal Audit Progress Report (RSM) Review of the Effectiveness of the Fire & Rescue Authority's Internal Auditors Review of Fire Authority's Effectiveness (Biennial review - due 2024/25) Internal Audit Actions Update  Review of Monitored policies (next review to be September 2024 to provide full year) Report on Registration of Interests and Gifts/Hospitality Fire Standards Board update Corporate Risk Register - Exception report Work Programme		Provisional date for 22/23 audit: Sept/early October 2023  Deferred from October meeting
<b>Restricted</b>			
<b>Additional/Commissioned Items</b>			

Audit &  
Standards  
Committee  
Meeting Date  
26.03.24

Cyclical Agenda Items	ACO Review (select from drop down list)	Notes
<b>Agenda item (locked for editing)</b> Communications ASC Minutes from 04.01.24 External Audit Plan 2024/25 (E&Y/KPMG) Ernst & Young Quality Assurance Processes Internal Audit Progress report Internal Audit Strategy 2024/25 to 2026/27 Internal Audit Actions Update Corporate Risk Register - Exception report Work Programme		Restricted
<b>Additional/Commissioned Items</b>		



**MEMBER DEVELOPMENT DAYS 2023/24**

Member Dev 05.10.23 (2)	Cyclical Agenda Items	Agenda item (locked for editing)	CFO Review (select from drop down list)	Notes
		Audit Training		
Additional/Commissioned Items				

Member Dev (3) plus Budget Workshop 21.11.23 (1)	Cyclical Agenda Items	Agenda item (locked for editing)	CFO Review (select from drop down list)	Notes
		Data Literacy and Budget (In house: Steve Frank and Gavin Chambers) Workshop Preparation (In house: Gavin Chambers) EDI (In house: Soomitra Kawal)		
Additional/Commissioned Items				

Member Dev 29.02.24 (4)	Cyclical Agenda Items	Agenda item (locked for editing)	CFO Review (select from drop down list)	Notes
		CRMP (In house: Steve Frank and Ian Evans)		
Additional/Commissioned Items				

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## BUDGET WORKSHOP 2023/24

Budget  
Workshop (1)  
Combined with  
Member  
Development  
Day (3) 21.11.23

<b>Cyclical Agenda Items</b>	<p><b>Agenda item (locked for editing)</b> EDI Session</p> <p>The ACO will provide Members with an update on the 2024/25 budget workshop that has been undertaken to date and a forward look at the early stage of forecast revenue and capital budgets, reserves, funding, assumptions and budget gaps</p>	<b>CFO Review (select from drop down list)</b>	<b>Notes</b> Session presented by Soomitra Kawal. Requested earlier slot due to another engagement in the evening.
<b>Additional/Commissioned Items</b>	Position with reserves		Raised at FRA on 19.07.23

Budget  
Workshop  
25.01.24

<b>Cyclical Agenda Items</b>	<p><b>Agenda item (locked for editing)</b> Introduction Council Tax Consultation - summary of responses (to date) Revenue Budget Capital Programme 2024/25 - 2027/28 Summary and next steps</p>	<b>CFO Review (select from drop down list)</b>	<b>Notes</b>
<b>Additional/Commissioned Items</b>			

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