



Bedfordshire

Fire & Rescue Authority

05 February 2024

Members of Fire and Rescue Authority.

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

Central Bedfordshire Councillors: K Gurney, R Goodchild, 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, 13 February 2024** starting at **10.00 am**, for the transaction of the following business:

Graham Britten
Monitoring Officer

Public Document Pack

A G E N D A

Item	Subject	Lead	Purpose of Discussion
1.	Apologies	Business Support Manager	

Item	Subject	Lead	Purpose of Discussion
2.	Declarations of Disclosable Pecuniary and Other Interests	Chair	Members are requested to disclose the existence and nature of any disclosable pecuniary interest and any other interests as required by the Fire Authority's Code of Conduct (see note below).
3.	Communications	Chair	
4.	Minutes for 15 December 2023	Chair	To confirm the Minutes of the meeting held on 15 December 2023 (Pages 5 - 16)
5.	Public Participation	Chair	To receive any questions put to the Authority under the Public Participation Scheme
6.	Audit and Standards Committee 4 January 2024	Cllr Ali	To receive the minutes of the Executive Committee meeting held on 4 January 2024 (Pages 17 - 28)
7.	Executive Committee meeting 22 January 2024	Chair	To receive the minutes of the Executive Committee meeting held on 22 January 2024 (Pages 29 - 34)
8.	Home Office Response to the White Paper Consultation 'Reforming our Fire & Rescue Service'	CFO	To consider a report (Pages 35 - 86)
9.	The 2024/25 Revenue Budget, Capital Programme and Council Tax setting	ACO	Report to follow
10.	Localism Act 2011 - Pay Policy Statement 2023	ACFO	To consider a report (Pages 87 - 100)
11.	Serious Violence Duty	DCFO	To consider a report (Pages 101 - 108)
12.	Calendar of Meetings for 2024/25	Monitoring Officer	To consider a report (Pages 109 - 116)
13.	Work Programme	CFO	To consider a report (Pages 117 - 126)

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

To consider whether to pass a resolution under Section 100(A) of the Local Government Act 1972 to exclude the public from the remainder of the meeting on the grounds that consideration of the following items of business is likely to involve the disclosure of exempt information as defined in Paragraphs 1, 2 and 3 of Part 1 of Schedule 12A to the Act as amended.

Item	Subject	Lead	Purpose of Discussion
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| 14. | Executive Committee Meeting 5 January 2024 | Chair | To receive the minutes of the Executive Committee meeting held on 5 January 2024 (Pages 127 - 138) |
| 15. | ACFO Recruitment and Succession Planning | CFO | Report to follow |

Next Meeting 10.00 am on 28 March 2024 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 15 DECEMBER 2023**

Present: Councillors J Burnett (Chair), G Coombes, R Goodchild, K Gurney, M Headley (Vice-Chair), M Hussain, S Owen, A Sultan and R Wenham

CFO A Hopkinson, DCFO C Bigland, T/ACFO J Tai, ACO G Chambers and Mr G Britten

23-24/FRA/37 Apologies

An apology for lateness was received from Councillor Owen, who arrived at the meeting at 10.50am.

An apology for absence was received from Councillor Versallion and Councillor Saima Hussain.

Councillor Coombes joined the meeting remotely via Teams.

23-24/FRA/38 Declarations of Disclosable Pecuniary and Other Interests

There were no declarations of interest.

23-24/FRA/39 Communications

Home Office Response to Consultation White Paper ‘Reforming our Fire and Rescue Services’

The Chair reported that the Government response to the White Paper had recently been published and would be circulated to all Members of the Authority for information. She emphasised that PCCs would not be mandated to take over the Governance of fire and rescue authorities to merge with the Police.

The Chief Fire Officer added that, whilst there was no mandate, it remained the Government’s intention to make it easier for PCCs to do so. In addition to the governance issues, the White Paper sought to establish a National College of Fire and Rescue and make provision for

operational independence for Chief Fire Officers, undertake a review of the National Joint Council pay bargaining machinery and implement a new statutory Core Code of Ethics to improve integrity and culture in the fire and rescue sector.

A report would be prepared for Members of the Authority in the new year highlighting the implications for the Service and Authority.

In response to a question about the response from the Fire Brigades Union, the Chief Fire Officer expressed the view that the union may have views the intention to review the national pay bargaining machinery.

Christingle Service and Passing Out Parade

The Chair invited Members to the Christingle Service at Woburn Parish Church and the Passing Out Parade at Fire and Rescue Headquarters in Kempston, both of which were taking place the following week.

Council Tax Referendum Limit and Local Government Finance Settlement

The Assistant Chief Officer and Treasurer advised that the Service had received confirmation that the Council Tax referendum cap had been set at 3%, rather than £5. The Service was also expecting an announcement on the provisional local settlement for Finance statement on Monday, 18 December 2023. He would be liaising with the Lead Member for Finance on the local impact once this had been determined.

In response to a question, the Assistant Chief Officer reported that the Service could have generated up to £400,000 in additional Council Tax income if the authority had been given the £5 precept flexibility.

Members expressed disappointment that no explanation had been offered as to why the higher cap of £5 had not been allowed.

The Chief Fire Officer confirmed that, now the cap limit had been announced, the Service's Corporate Management Team would be analysing the projects in the Capital Programme to determine if any should be paused or stopped as a result of the budget announcement.

23-24/FRA/40 Minutes

The Chair asked for an update on the RAAC investigations referred to in Minute 23-24/FRA/26.

The Assistant Chief Officer and Treasurer reported that inspections continued and to date, no RAAC concrete had been identified in any Service buildings.

RESOLVED:

That the Minutes of the meeting of the Fire and Rescue Authority held on 3 October 2023 be confirmed as a true record.

23-24/FRA/41 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/42 Audit and Standards Committee 17 October 2023

Members received the Minutes of the meeting of the Audit and Standards Committee held on 17 October 2023. The Committee had made no recommendations to the full Authority.

RESOLVED:

That the Minutes of the meeting of the Audit and Standards Committee held on 17 October 2023 be received.

23-24/FRA/43 Executive Committee meeting 23 November 2023

The Chair presented the Minutes of the meeting of the Executive Committee meeting held on 23 November 2023.

Mr G Britten, the Monitoring Officer, apologised for the late distribution of the confidential version of the Minutes.

RESOLVED:

That the Minutes of the meeting of the Executive Committee held on 23 November 2023 be received.

23-24/FRA/44 2023/24 Revenue Budget and Capital Programme Monitoring

The Assistant Chief Officer and Treasurer introduced his report on the forecast year-end budget monitoring position as at 31 October 2023 and presenting the 2024/25 budget/council tax consultation question for consideration by Members.

The draft budget consultation question was as follows:

“The Fire and Rescue Authority, like you, has faced increasing costs due to inflationary pressures. In particular we have seen cost increases in electricity, gas, vehicle fuel, supplies & services and pay impact on our budgets. In order to assist in managing these cost increases, the Fire and Rescue Authority are currently planning our budget for next year and are considering a council tax increase of 2.99%, which would be £3.28 per year for a Band D property. This would increase the Band D council tax charge for your Fire and Rescue Service from £109.45 to £112.73 per year. Would you support this increase to invest in and protect your local Fire and Rescue Service?”

The Authority had previously been advised of the additional £460,000 of business rate income received, a £9,000 service grant, £153,000 Protection Grant, and £707,000 of additional investment income. This, however, was partially offset by the additional salary costs arising from the recent pay awards.

In relation to the Capital Programme, Members approval was sought for the early purchase of four response vehicles, currently scheduled for purchase in 2024/25, as this was identified as an area of potential operational risk.

The Assistant Chief Officer explained the unbudgeted expenditure on kitchens in Stopsley, Luton, Dunstable and Bedford as a result of environmental audits was funded through an earmarked reserve.

In response to a question about whether staff were at risk prior to these urgent property works being undertaken, the Assistant Chief Officer advised that he would provide a full written response to Members detailing the reasons for the works taking place. This would include the frequency of environmental audits on Service buildings.

The Chair referred to paragraph 3.9 of the report and emphasised the importance of ensuring that the Service estate was accessible to all. She sought assurances that all works to enhance service user experiences and comfort should be completed as a matter of priority.

The Assistant Chief Officer stated that the Property Manager had met with the Equality, Diversity and Inclusion (EDI) Manager regarding works required and that these would be progressed.

The Chief Fire Officer added that the Service was currently working towards the development of a model specification for our fire stations blueprint and that this would include EDI considerations. A more collaborative approach around estates was being proposed and this had been the topic of a Chief Executives Forum workshop facilitated by the Service. A further workshop on estates would be held in the New Year.

RESOLVED:

1. That the updates provided within the report and the forecast year end position be acknowledged.
2. That the early purchase of four response vehicles currently scheduled for 2024/25 be approved.
3. That it be noted that the unbudgeted expenditure on kitchens is due as a result of Environmental Audits and covered by Earmarked Reserves.
4. That the 2024/25 budget consultation question as set out in paragraph 4 be approved.

23-24/FRA/45 Q2 2023/24 Performance Report (July to September)

The Deputy Chief Fire Officer introduced the summary of organisational performance at the end of the second quarter of the 2023-24 financial year, highlighting the good performance that had been achieved in relation to deliberate fires and injuries and protection activity. The emergency call handling measure on calls answered within 7 seconds had been met during the quarter. This was important within the context of the next report on the agenda, which proposed changes to the Service's published response standards.

Strong performance had also been achieved against training, development and HR indicators.

The Deputy Chief Fire Officer then reported on indicators on an exception basis as follows:

- The number of Home Fire Safety Visits delivered was under the target for the quarter; however, as a result of the recent inspection, the Service was now focusing on targeted delivery of these visits to the most vulnerable in the County.
- The secondary fires attendance standard had not been reached for the quarter. It was recognised that performance against this indicator was affected by seasonality and it was anticipated that the target would be reached by year-end.
- Additional training was being provided to on-call firefighters on a monthly basis to develop their competencies more quickly.

In response to a question about the number of fires at HMP Bedford, the Deputy Chief Fire Officer advised that the Service worked with the prison management at a local level and also formally expressed its concerns to the Governor of the prison to seek improvements to the prison's management systems, behaviour management and housekeeping to prevent incidents of fire occurring at the prison, recognising that it was a challenging environment.

Stuart Auger, Head of Response added that a meeting had been held on 21 November 2023 with the prison management to address concerns around the operation of the Memorandum of Understanding between the two organisations and to emphasise the Service's expectations.

He also reassured the Authority that the mental health of prisoners was taken into account, although provision of services to prisoners was complicated by the method the Integrated Care Board had to use to commission these services.

In terms of availability, the Service was utilising a roaming pump to cover areas that were deficient.

In response to a concern raised about the level of cover at Bedford Fire Station, the Authority was advised that a large percentage of cover had previously been provided by two individuals who had left the Service, one as a result of retirement and the other had moved away from the area. This had a disproportionate impact on availability at that station. It was also difficult to recruit on-call firefighters to the station as it

was surrounded by commercial properties and due to the way that resources were allocated to calls. As it was located so close to Kempston, the whole-time pumps would often be allocated by the system rather than the on-call pump at Bedford.

In an attempt to counteract this, the Service had relocated some whole-time specialist day to day roles to work from Bedford from Kempston and the Service was actively seeking to increase the presence at Bedford.

Councillor Goodchild mentioned a Town Council meeting that had been attended by the Deputy Chief Fire Officer where Home Fire Safety Visits had been discussed and local community agents had been mentioned as a method for identifying appropriate households. He asked if any agents or other local residents had contacted the Deputy Chief Fire Officer in this respect.

The Deputy Chief Fire Officer commented that he welcomed this sort of assistance from any Authority Members, as they were the representatives of their local communities.

RESOLVED:

That the Service's performance against the published standards within the Community Risk Management Plan and the wider corporate Key Performance Indicators be acknowledged.

23-24/FRA/46 Response Standards

The Deputy Chief Fire Officer presented a report providing Members with information to support changes to the Service Emergency Response Performance standards in consultation with the public and key stakeholders.

If agreed, consultation would commence on changes to the response times and ridership factor and removal of old descriptors and control measures to bring the Service in to line and facilitate benchmarking with other services.

The Authority was advised that the response measures and ridership factor had not been reviewed since 2007 and that the proposed standards had been based on five years of performance data, assessment and a benchmarking exercise.

In response to a question on whether the changes in ridership being proposed, to reduce from five to four which would increase the number of appliances operationally available, would be supported by the Fire Brigades Union, the Deputy Chief Fire Officer commented that this standard had been set in 2007 in response to the Carse Report, which recommended a minimum of nine firefighters. The Service would send a three-pump response to a house fire, which meant that, at a minimum, if the new standard was adopted, there would be twelve firefighters at the incident. This was considered to be in accordance with safe operating procedures. He emphasised that four would be the minimum, and many appliances would still have five.

The Deputy Chief Fire Officer expressed the view that the union was likely to support retaining the current policy; however, Members were asked to support the change as it enabled the Service to increase its operational flexibility and improve its ability to respond to incidents.

Members sought assurance about the communications plan for the consultation, as it appeared that certain issues, such as ridership, could be quite complicated for lay people to understand.

The Deputy Chief Fire Officer reported that a full communications plan had been developed, including explanatory videos, FAQs, key points and a range of other tools to engage with the public. Regular reminders to respond to the consultation would be provided, and the length of the consultation had been increased to 8 weeks in recognition of the Christmas period. The consultation could not be delayed as it was hoped to implement any changes agreed before the start of the next reporting year.

In response to a comment from Councillor Owen, the Chair mentioned a previous visit for Members to the Control Room and suggested that another visit be arranged for those Members who had been able to attend, as it would improve their understanding of call handling challenges if they were able to observe Control staff in action.

Members thanked the Deputy Chief Fire Officer and his team for their extensive work in this area and the view was expressed that the proposed changes would bring the Service's measurement of response standards more in line with the expectations of the Inspectorate.

The Chief Fire Officer confirmed that the changes to ridership proposed would not result in a safety concern, as four was the agreed minimum standard for safe systems of work, especially as there had been improvements in technology, particularly the breathing apparatus (BA) sets.

In this respect, Stuart Auger, Head of Response advised that the new BA sets enabled live data from the BA wearers to be monitored remotely to improve safety at the incident site.

Consultation responses would be reviewed regularly by the Service's Corporate Management Team, with a view to updating the Authority's meeting in February 2024.

Members were advised that the communications plan included information being submitted to the constituent councils asking them to distribute to their Members and stakeholder networks.

RESOLVED:

1. That consultation be approved on the following proposed new operational response performance measures:
 - Mobilise to primary fires within 120 seconds 85% of the time.
 - First fire engine to arrive in 12 minutes to primary fires on 80% of occasions, measured from time of call. (incorporating the existing time of alert measure with the new call handling measure).

- RTCs we will arrive in 15 minutes on 80% of occasions, measured from time of call. (incorporating the existing time of alert measure with the new call handling measure).
 - For secondary fires one fire engine will arrive in 20 minutes on 96% of occasions, measured from time of call.
 - The removal of old descriptors that do not follow the national recording and benchmarking definitions e.g. a move from 'critical incidents' to 'primary and secondary fire'.
 - The removal of the old control measure to answer 90% of 999 calls in 7 seconds or less, as this will now be superseded by the control measure above.
 - The removal of '5 riders' being part of any performance measure due to the limiting nature of such a measure when maximising the amount of fire engines available to the whole County.
2. That consultation also take place on whether the Service should publicly measure the arrival of a subsequent fire engine should the pre-determined attendance require more than one fire engine at the time of the call. If this is required, then the following measure may be applied:
 - Second fire engine to arrive in 16 mins to primary fires on 80% of occasions, from time of call.
 3. That an 8-week consultation period which allows for the LGA 6 weeks best practice period but is extended by two weeks due to Christmas, thus ensuring sufficient time for stakeholders to engage with the consultation, be approved, noting that the consultation will be commenced following the Authority meeting that considers the content of this paper and will be formed of the proposals that are agreed from the above recommendations.

23-24/FRA/47 Programme Board Update

The Deputy Chief Fire Officer submitted an update on the Service Corporate Programme covering the first two quarters of the financial year 2023/24, detailing progress and current status of all major projects. Good progress had been made, with 91% of active projects on track to deliver their objectives on time.

In noting the excellent performance against the programme, the query was raised as to whether the Service was trying to accomplish too much.

The Chief Fire Officer acknowledged that, given the recent announcement on the Council Tax referendum cap and the forthcoming provisional settlement announcement, consideration would have to be given as to which projects were continued. He expressed the view that the Service was currently in a period of consolidation.

The Deputy Chief Fire Officer agreed and commented that, when the Service was able to determine the impact of the settlement announcement, there may be difficult decisions regarding the prioritisation of the programme to be made.

The Chair added that it was important that staff resources were not over-allocated and that she had highlighted the importance of staff mental health and wellbeing in her Christmas message.

The Chief Fire Officer confirmed that the Service's most important asset was its staff.

In response to a question on the FSO 50 trial, the Deputy Chief Fire Officer advised that the trial had created 650 additional crewing hours over a three-month period. The trial had been so successful that it would be rolled out to three additional stations.

RESOLVED:

That the progress made on the Corporate Programme be noted.

23-24/FRA/48 Mid Year Treasury Management report

The Assistant Chief Officer and Treasurer provided an update on the Authority's Treasury Management to 30 September 2023.

Following agreement by Members, a date for treasury management training had been set for 25 January 2024. This would be provided by Link Asset Services.

The long-term borrowing position continued to be approximately £10 million, with £9.987 million still outstanding on loans taken out in 2006/2007 to fund the build of Dunstable Community Fire Station. Debt rescheduling opportunities continued to be reviewed, although the early repayment charges were prohibitive.

The Authority held short-term accounts with several banking institutions, such as First Abu Dhabi Bank, Goldman Sachs, Standard Chartered Sustainable Account, Lloyds and Qatar National Bank. Standard Chartered had been selected for environmental, social and corporate governance aspirations.

In response to a question from Councillor Wenham on reporting against CIPFA prudential indicators, the Assistant Chief Officer confirmed that not all indicators were applicable to the Authority, and that this could be highlighted in future reports.

In response to an additional question on Capital Financing Requirement (CFR) and the impact of the borrowing on this calculation, the Assistant Chief Officer reported that, when the Authority made future property investments, the CFR would reduce and over the next 3-4 years the situation would correct itself.

Councillor Headley, as the Lead Member for Finance, expressed the view that this situation could not be avoided once the initial decision to borrow had been agreed.

Councillor Wenham requested that additional text be included in the next treasury management report to explain this.

RESOLVED:

That the report be noted.

23-24/FRA/49 Public Sector Equality Duty Report

The Temporary Assistant Chief Fire Officer submitted the Public Sector Equality Duty Report for 2022/23 and drew Members' attention to the pages of the report that listed the Service's achievements over the 2022/23 reporting year. These included: adopting the National NFCC Maturity model to assess equality, diversity and inclusion (EDI) performance and inform the EDI improvement plan; reviewing the EDI awareness training programme in line with the Service Culture Change plan; reviewing the People Impact assessment process and guidance and the EDI Policy. A new EDI Manager was appointed in 2023.

In response to concerns raised by Councillor M Hussain on the gender balance of Service staff, and percentage of staff from ethnic minority backgrounds, Ms R Barker, Head of Human Resources, expressed the view that the Service was engaging in positive action, although attraction remained a challenge.

The Temporary Assistant Chief Fire Officer reported that the percentage of female staff had increased from 23.3% in 2021/22 to 27.9% in 2022/23 and the Chief Fire Officer reported that, whilst the percentage of staff from ethnic minority backgrounds was lower than the Service would like, the promotion rate for those individuals was comparable to the overall level of representation in the Service.

The Chair commented that she had discussed the issue of maternity pay with the Chief Fire Officer. This was an issue that was agreed at a local level. As this could be an important consideration for female staff, further consideration would be given to the level of pay awarded, whilst being mindful of the budget envelope.

Analysis of the reasons why females and those from ethnic minority backgrounds who had expressed an interest in working for the Service, but then did not go on to apply for positions, was being undertaken and the feedback, expected in the final quarter of the year, would be reported to Members either at a Member Budget Workshop or at the Authority's meeting in March 2024.

RESOLVED:

That the content of the Public Sector Equality Duty Report (2022/23) report be noted and the publication of the Report be approved.

23-24/FRA/50 Procurement Policy and Contract Procedures

Ms R Radia, the Service's Procurement Manager, introduced a report setting out proposed amendments to the Procurement Policy. As there were extensive changes proposed, the version circulated with the agenda had not been track changed and simplified the former version.

The Procurement Manager advised that the review of the Policy to ensure that it was compliant with the Procurement Bill, expected to become law in October 2024, was already underway. Important in this was the engagement with small and medium sized enterprises (SMEs).

In response to a question on the figures set out in the policy, the Procurement Manager stated that these had not changed, except for VAT being included as required by regulations governing procurement.

In relation to social value, the Assistant Chief Officer clarified that this was not included in the revised policy and was being worked on separately. It was intended that a separate document would be provided on the procurement intranet page to make it readily accessible to procuring managers.

The Procurement Manager added that she was working with a group co-ordinated through the Home Office that supported smaller organisations with social value. The Chair requested that an update be provided to Members on this work, as it could have an EDI impact.

It was suggested that the engagement work with representatives of local businesses currently being conducted in relation to building safety could be included to engage them, as local SMEs, in the Service's procurement process.

RESOLVED:

That the amendments to the Procurement Policy be approved.

23-24/FRA/51 Work Programme

Members considered the updated Work Programme, noting the cyclical items.

The Chief Fire Officer confirmed that a report on the Government's response to the White Paper consultation would be programmed into a future meeting.

Members discussed the content of presentations provided at a recent Member Development Day.

The Chief Fire Officer reported that work was still progressing in relation to the station-based projects. Subject to the conclusion of this, it was anticipated that Members would receive an update at the next Member Development Workshop, following which a report would be presented to a future meeting of the Authority. It was noted that this was predicated on changes to the response standards, so could not have been progressed until Member agreement had been provided.

Members also discussed the possibility of having more Member Development Days so that all presentations and topics submitted could be given adequate consideration. It was agreed that these could be half days, noting that Members would require advance notice due to a multitude of other diary commitments.

RESOLVED:

That the work programme for 2023-24 and the 'cyclical' agenda items for each meeting in 2023-24 be noted.

The meeting ended at 12.14pm

SUBJECT: AUDIT AND STANDARDS COMMITTEE

Author and contact: Nicky Upton, Business Support Manager, Democratic.Services@bedsfire.gov.uk

Background Papers: None

Appendix	Title	Protective Marking
1	Minutes of the Audit and Standards Committee Meeting held on 4 th January 2024	N/A
2	Restricted Minutes of the Audit and Standards Committee Meeting held on 4 th January 2024	Restricted

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	All minutes publicly available to view on the website, with the exception of the Restricted Minutes which are exempt from publication under paragraphs 3 of Part 1 of Schedule 12A (as amended) of the Local Government Act 1972.

PURPOSE:

To receive the minutes of the Audit and Standards Committee held on 4 January 2024.

RECOMMENDATIONS:

That the submitted minutes of the meeting held on 4 January 2024 be noted.

1. Executive Summary

- 1.1 The draft minutes of the meeting of the Audit and Standards Committee held on 4 January 2024 are appended for Members' consideration.
- 1.2 The Audit & Standards Committee made no recommendations to the Fire Authority.

COUNCILLOR A ALI
CHAIR OF AUDIT AND STANDARDS COMMITTEE

**MINUTES OF AUDIT AND STANDARDS COMMITTEE
MEETING HELD ON 4 JANUARY 2024**

Present: Councillors A Ali (Chair), G Coombes, K Gurney, M Hussain and S Owen
CFO A Hopkinson, Mr G Britten, Mr J Pekszyk, Mr T Warner, Mrs N Upton and Ms S Rowlett

23-24/ASC/28 Apologies

Apologies for absence were received from Councillors Versallion and Wenham.

The Assistant Chief Officer and Debbie Hanson of EY were unable to attend the meeting.

Councillor Owen expressed the view that, given the low level of attendance at the previous two meetings of the Committee, Members should be reminded of the importance of fulfilling their duties by attending meetings of Committee they have been appointed.

The Chair advised that he would request the Chair of the Authority to provide such a reminder to all Members at the next meeting of the Authority.

23-24/ASC/29 Declarations of Disclosable Pecuniary and Other Interests

There were no declarations of interests.

23-24/ASC/30 Minutes

RESOLVED: That the Minutes of the meeting held on 17 October 2023 be confirmed as a true record.

23-24/ASC/31 Communications

Mrs S Rowlett presented RSM's analysis of emergency services risk registers 2023 for information. RSM had been collecting this information for the previous eight years. Many of the risks, including operational and workforce risks, remained the same, along with finance and ICT related risks.

It was important for Members, in noting these risks, to take a forward look at emerging risks and ensure that these were included in the Authority's Corporate Risk Register.

Councillor Owen requested that some analysis should be undertaken on communications submitted by RSM to the Committee by Officers so that how the communications related to local issues and the operation of Bedfordshire Fire and Rescue Service were highlighted for Members' consideration prior to the meeting.

In relation to a question from Councillor Coombes about the new public procurement legislation and the value of contracts held by the Service, the Chief Fire Officer reported that he would provide a written response confirming the anticipated timescales of the new Procurement Bill and detailing the value of the contracts held by the Service.

Councillor Hussain joined the meeting at 10:06am.

RESOLVED:

That the communications be received.

23-24/ASC/32 Public Participation

There were no members of the public present at the meeting.

Councillor Owen expressed concern about the lack of public engagement at meetings and suggested that consideration be given to how this could be improved.

Mr G Britten, the Authority's Monitoring Officer, advised that, following the governance review undertaken in March 2023, the section dealing with public participation in the Authority's Standing Orders had been expanded and, in his recollection, there had been a meeting within the previous year at which a member of the public submitted a question to the Authority.

The Chief Fire Officer added that one of the duties of the recently appointed Head of Communications and External Affairs was to increase engagement with the business community and other stakeholders and he would ask her to investigate how the Authority could improve its engagement with the general public.

Councillor M Hussain suggested that members of the public could be advised of their right to attend and ask questions at meetings of the Authority at the public events attended by the Service.

23-24/ASC/33 Internal Audit Progress Report

Mrs S Rowlett of RSM introduced a report on progress made against the internal audit plan for 2023/24.

Two audits were in their final stages and would be submitted to the next meeting of the Committee, these being strategic approach to partnership and collaboration and contaminants and staff health and safety.

In response to a question, Mrs Rowlett explained that the audits had been slightly delayed due to illness; however, she confirmed that the audit plan would be concluded as agreed by the end of the financial year.

RESOLVED:

That the report be noted.

Councillor Gurney joined the meeting at 10:19am.

23-24/ASC/34 Internal Audit Actions Update

Mr J Pekszyk, Head of Strategic Support and Asset Management, presented the Committee with a summary of actions arising from internal audit reports over the last three fiscal years together with any exception report on those actions currently in progress, progress to date on current action plans, proposals to extend the original timing for completion and those that have been completed since the last meeting.

It was noted that extension requests had been received in relation to actions arising from the data management (actions covering the questionnaire and training needs analysis to identify training requirements) to 31 March 2024 and key financial controls (action covering debt chasing activity) to 30 April 2024.

In response to questions, the Committee was advised that the Head of ICT was the Head of Service responsible for the data management actions and that the draft roll-out plan would be updated and implemented following the completion of those actions.

RESOLVED:

1. That the progress made to date against action plans be acknowledged.
2. That the extension requests relating to data management actions 2 and 3 to 31 March 2024 and Key Financial Controls action 3 to 30 April 2024 be approved.

23-24/ASC/35 Review of the Effectiveness of the Fire & Rescue Authority's Internal Auditors

The Committee considered a report on the effectiveness of the effectiveness of its Internal Audit arrangements.

In reference to issues highlighted in paragraphs 5.5 and 5.6 of the report, the Head of Strategic Support and Asset Management reported that the area in need of improvement was not the effectiveness of the internal audit arrangements but the processes in which the Service prioritised the various action plans it was responsible for implementing. He confirmed that the Service was satisfied with the current internal audit arrangements.

The Chair requested that the review of effectiveness take place bi-annually, i.e every 2 years.

RESOLVED:

That the report be noted and that the Committee's satisfaction with the level of internal audit provided by RSM be recorded.

23-24/ASC/36 Report on Registration of Interests and Gifts/Hospitality

Mr G Britten, the Monitoring Officer, presented the annual report on the registration of interests and gifts/hospitality by Members and Officers during the past year.

There had been no returns received from Members. The gifts/hospitality received by Officers were set out in an appendix to the report and a further narrative was circulated to Members at the meeting. Two of the items related to trips abroad. The reasons for these were set out in the report. No costs had been incurred by the Service.

In response to a question, the Chief Fire Officer reported that any request for participation in trips overseas had to be approved by him and that there was no requirement for this to be in writing.

RESOLVED:

That the contents of the report be noted.

23-24/ASC/37 Work Programme

The Committee received its work programme for 2023-24.

RESOLVED:

That the work programme for 2023-24 and the 'cyclical' Agenda Items for each meeting in 2023-24 be noted.

23-24/ASC/38 Corporate Risk Register

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 item on the grounds that the matters to be discussed involve the likely disclosure of exempt information as defined in Paragraph 3 of Part 1 of Schedule 12A to the Act (as amended):

Item

Corporate Risk Register

The meeting ended at 11.30 am

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

Document is Restricted

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SUBJECT: EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE

Author and contact: Nicky Upton, Business Support Manager, Democratic.Services@bedsfire.gov.uk

Background Papers: None

Appendix	Title	Protective Marking
1	Minutes of the Executive Committee Meeting held on 22 January 2024.	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	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	All minutes publicly available to view on the website, with the exception of the Restricted Minutes which are exempt from publication under paragraphs 3 of Part 1 of Schedule 12A (as amended) of the Local Government Act 1972.

PURPOSE:

To receive the Minutes of the Executive Committee held on 22 January 2024.

RECOMMENDATIONS:

That the submitted minutes of the meeting held on 22 January 2024 be noted.

1. Executive Summary

1.1 The minutes of the Executive Committee held on 22 January 2024 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 22 JANUARY 2024**

Present: Councillors J Burnett (Chair), R Goodchild, M Headley (Vice-Chair), S Hussain and A Sultan
CFO A Hopkinson, DCFO C Bigland, T/ACFO J Tai, ACO G Chambers, Mr G Britten and Mrs N Upton

23-24/EC/35 Apologies

There were no apologies for absence.

23-24/EC/36 Declaration of Disclosable Pecuniary and Other Interests

There were no declarations of interests.

23-24/EC/37 Communications

HMICFRS Cause of Concern: progress update

The Chief Fire Officer reported that correspondence had been received from His Majesty's Inspectorate of Constabulary and Fire and Rescue Services (HMICFRS) to confirm that the Cause of Concern in relation to Fire Fitness Testing had been discharged. This information was embargoed until 19th January 2024 when it was published on the HMICFRS website. That confirmation was testament to the hard work and focus of all staff.

Office of the Police and Crime Commissioner for Bedfordshire (PCC)

The Chair confirmed that both herself and the Chief Fire Officer would be attending the PCC Annual Business Conference on 13 February 2024.

MATTERS ARISING ON MINUTES 23 NOVEMBER 2023:

The Chair noted page 6 that the HMICFRS had provided an update on how the current tranche of inspections was progressing and on the thematic review of handling of misconduct cases. Ten fire and rescue services had been selected to take part in this review.

The Chair noted page 8 and the report on culture for submission to the full Authority and that an update be provided when that was ready for submission.

The Chief Fire Officer responded that there would be a People and Culture Member Development event on 29 February along with a Budget Workshop on 25 January 2024 and an additional Member Development event on 8 March 2024 covering Emergency Cover Review and Estates Programme.

The workshop on 29 February would include an update on progress with the Culture Improvement Action Plan at which time there would be agreement on what would go to a public meeting as an outcome of the Workshops.

The Chair noted page 9 that the 360-degree feedback sessions had taken place with staff from Group Manager and above, with additional sessions to be held for staff below this level at future dates.

Officers confirmed that sessions had taken place for middle and senior managers and no specific patterns were presently apparent although there was to date a fairly small pool of participants. The Chair proposed this be further considered at a future Member Development event.

RESOLVED:

1. That the Minutes of the Executive Committee held on 23 November 2023 be confirmed as a true record.
2. That the Minutes of the Executive Committee held on 5 January 2024 be confirmed as a true record.

23-24/EC/39 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).

The Chief Fire Officer confirmed that following the publication on 19th January 2024 of the letter from HMICFRS discharging their Cause of Concern in relation to firefighter fitness testing, that Item 7 - HMICFRS Action Plan Update would take part in the public part of the meeting.

RESOLVED:

That Item 7 to be considered by the Committee in the public part of the meeting.

23-24/EC/40 Work Programme

Members considered the updated Work Programme, noting the cyclical items.

The Chief Fire Officer confirmed that following the Government's response to the White Paper consultation further items of work would be programmed over the next 2 to 3 months.

The Chair added that there may be additional Items following the Workshops.

RESOLVED:

That the work programme for 2023-24 and the 'cyclical' agenda items for each meeting in 2023-24 be noted.

23-24/EC/41 HMICFRS Action Plan Update

The Chief Fire Officer introduced the report to provide an update on the progress made against the Service HMICFRS Action Plan that addressed the Areas for Improvement identified in the 2023 inspection report. Following the introduction, he proposed to ask Officers to assist with responses to questions relevant to their specific areas.

The key sections of the report with the relevant page numbers were set out for the Committee to refer to.

A Cause of Concern had been issued under "Promoting the right values and culture" and a recommendation had been given that within 28 days the service should provide an action plan that detailed how it intended to make sure all staff met the minimum fitness requirements.

The Service had a fitness policy which required all firefighters to pass a fitness test on appointment and annually thereafter or after an absence from work of 28 days or more. There was a backlog of fitness tests caused by the intentional suspension of annual fitness testing during the COVID pandemic. Since then, the Service had utilised an external provider to address the backlog of fitness tests. An action plan had already been 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.

In a meeting between the Chief Fire Officer and HMICFRS on 2 January 2024 it had been confirmed that the Cause of Concern would be discharged, and a draft letter was being issued at the time of publication of this report. That letter confirming the discharge was published by HMICFRS on 19th January 2024.

In response to a question from the Committee it was confirmed by Officers that a numbering system would be added to reports to assist in referencing sections when asking questions.

Concern was expressed in a comment from a Member of the Committee that working timelines had been delayed or deferred (in one case by a whole year) and it was asked whether the now revised dates were secure or whether there was doubt as to whether they would be met.

A discussion took place on the dates set out within the report before the Committee. The Chief Fire Officer explained that these extensions to the target completion dates had not been brought to his attention to approve prior to the meeting but he took full responsibility for the content of the report.

Given that the dates in the report would therefore generally need to be reviewed and updated, the Chair proposed that review should take place before the Committee substantively consider the report and that it therefore be deferred to the next meeting.

RESOLVED:

That Item 7 be deferred for consideration at the next meeting of the Committee.

23-24/EC/42 Item 4 Confidential Minutes 23 November 2023 and 5 January 2024

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 item on the grounds that the matters to be discussed involve the likely disclosure of exempt information as defined in Paragraph 1 and 3 of Part 1 of Schedule 12A to the Act (as amended):

Item

Item 4 Confidential Minutes 23 November 2023 and 5 January 2024

The meeting ended at 11:02am

SUBJECT: Home Office Response to the White Paper Consultation 'Reforming our Fire & Rescue Service'

Author and contact: John-Joe Pekszyk, Head of Strategic Support and Asset Management
john.joe.pekszyk@bedsfire.gov.uk

Background Papers: Home Office Response to the White Paper Consultation 'Reforming our Fire & Rescue Service'

Implications:

Implications	Yes/No	Impact/Reference
Financial	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	Future outcomes of the White Paper may potentially involve significant work for the Service and will affect items on the corporate risk register.
Legal	Yes	The Home Office Response to the White Paper Consultation details potential changes to the Service's governance.
Privacy and Security	No	There are no Privacy and Security implications as part of the report.
Duty to collaborate	No	The Policing and Crime Act 2017 requires the Authority to consider opportunities for collaboration with the police and ambulance services
Health and Safety	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	Yes	The Home Office Response to the White Paper Consultation details potential changes staff recruitment, development and progression to support a more diverse and inclusive workforce.
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 brief members on the contents of the Home Office Response to the White Paper Consultation 'Reforming our Fire & Rescue Service'.

RECOMMENDATIONS:

That Members consider and comment on the contents of the report.

1 Background

- 1.1 The consultation paper “Reforming Our Fire and Rescue Service” was published on 18 May 2022 to seek views on Government’s ideas for reform, building on lessons from independent inspection, concerning national reports and the Grenfell Tower Inquiry. It laid out the Government’s vision for fire reform and was built on our ambition to strengthen fire and rescue services.
- 1.2 A total of 290 responses to the consultation paper were received and in addition to the consultation itself the Home Office conducted a programme of engagement with fire professionals. Discussions on the future of fire professionalism involved interviews, service visits and online workshops with over 220 people from 32 fire and rescue services.

2 Contents of report

2.1 The Fire Reform White Paper consulted on the government's vision for fire reform and centred around three main themes:

- People – improving systems, flexibility and culture.
- Professionalism – helping fire professionals to best serve their communities.
- Governance – strengthening oversight and leadership.

2.2 The report includes a summary the government's strategy for reform and the changes outlined to support both the public and fire and rescue professionals. The report also includes a detailed breakdown on the quantitative and qualitative responses to the consultation questions.

3 People

3.1 The aim of the White Paper was to outline plans to help fire professionals to further develop their skills and ensure that everyone could thrive in their work. This included clarifying the role of fire and rescue services, unlocking talent and improving representation within services.

3.2 Talent and inclusion

- The White Paper set out the government's intention to build effective leadership of the sector and building capability, embedding values and nurturing talent within services.
- Direct entry was a divisive issue for some consultation respondents; however, fire already has a strong track record in this area with several fire and rescue services being successfully run by non-operational leaders. The Home Office is funding the

development, and piloting of wider direct entry schemes through the NFCC, bringing new perspectives into services alongside the many talented professionals already serving.

- The Home Office will continue to work with the NFCC and others to develop talent management schemes for both new recruits and those already working in fire and rescue.

3.3 Pay and Role

- The government's fundamental position that the role of the fire and rescue service in England is clear – laid out comprehensively in legislation across three key acts of Parliament that address fire, community safety and civil contingencies.
- The government wants a flexible system to enable chiefs to make local level decisions about staffing, whilst working productively with unions. The aim is for fire and rescue services to be able to play a full role in protecting the community, working with health, police and other partners without getting tied up in red tape.
- The government wants to work with the full range of both fire employers and unions to address the call for change that has come through in the consultation responses in relation to the operation of the National Joint Council (NJC). In the first instance, government will support the fire and rescue authorities and unions to critically review the NJC's own mechanisms, operations and transparency. This should be an inclusive process and should be completed by early 2024. If this process does not result in meaningful change, the government will explore other routes to ensure a modern, fair pay system that constructively enables role reform in England.

4 Professionalism

- 4.1 Proposals in the Professionalism section of the White Paper centred around the creation of an independent body for fire professionals. These proposals will build on the work of both the Fire Standards Board (FSB) and the National Fire Chiefs Council (NFCC), who will have an enduring and important role in future.

4.2 Creating a College of Fire and Rescue

- A College of Fire and Rescue was proposed to strengthen the development of individuals and the overall professionalism of fire and rescue services, setting the direction on data, research, leadership, ethics and professional standards.
- It was proposed that a College of Fire and Rescue could be given powers mirroring those of the College of Policing, to help it drive change. The consultation showed an overwhelmingly positive response to the creation of a College.
- The Home Office will work openly with sector leaders, the frontline and existing comparable organisations such as the College of Policing, as we develop the most appropriate delivery model.

4.3 Raising standards

- The White Paper proposed creation of a statutory code of ethics, the case for which is bolstered by inspection findings of HMICFRS and serious lapses of integrity in parts of our fire and rescue services. The majority of respondents were supportive of this course of action.
- The Home Office will place future responsibility for professional standards with the College of Fire and Rescue and will create powers to place elements of professional standards such as a code of ethics on a statutory basis when parliamentary time allows.

5 Governance

- 5.1 The White Paper detailed the government's position to open debate on strengthening or simplifying fire governance. It indicated government's view that single point accountability would allow for better link up between services, more efficient use of resources and clearer accountability to the public.

5.2 The White Paper identifies that the process of submitting business cases for governance transfers can be complex, costly and time consuming. The White Paper also confirms the government's intention to deliver on the independent inspectorate's recommendation that chief officers should be afforded operational independence, similar to their policing counterparts.

5.3 Governance change

- The Home Office states it is committed to supporting moves towards a single point accountability in fire. However, the government's position is it will not mandate transfer of FRA functions to Police and Crime Commissioners (PCCs), Mayors or single elected individuals at this stage.
- The Home Office's intention is to encourage PCCs and Mayors who want to take on fire governance functions, where the areas are co-terminus, in order to enable the Home Office to assess readiness and support change.
- The Home Office will explore ways to simplify processes and incentivise voluntary transfers, which could be achieved by radically streamlining the business case process or exploring legislative means to remove them altogether.
- The Home Office, as part of the Government's Levelling Up agenda, intends to continue to support locally led devolution deals and any fire governance transfers that result from these deals.

5.4 Operational Independence.

- The government's position is that the proposals in the White Paper set out to clarify the responsibilities of fire authorities and chief officers and aim to create a framework that complements existing structures while providing greater clarity and transparency in the division of responsibilities.
- Under the proposal the fire and rescue authority will be responsible for their fire service at all times, with the chief officer effectively responsible for operationalising the authority's strategic directions. Operational independence would provide chief officers with the ability to make decisions on practical and management issues.

- The Government will seek to legislate, at the earliest opportunity, to give chief officers operational independence. The Home Office's intention is to take action to make the responsibilities of the fire and rescue authority and the chief officer clearer, with regard to a clearer separation of strategic and operational planning requirements and the governance of services.

6 Other notable 'next steps from the detailed analysis'

- 6.1 The Home Office Response to the White Paper Consultation 'Reforming our Fire & Rescue Service' also includes a detailed breakdown on the quantitative and qualitative responses to the 48 consultation questions. The detailed breakdown contains some statements of intent for next to be undertaken by the government, some of these are summarised below:
- The government's position is to work alongside fire and rescue services across the UK, DHSC, NHS England, NHS Wales and regional Ambulance trusts to support the work of the ambulance services in a way that increases public safety.
 - The government is taking action to introduce minimum service levels for fire and rescue services which are intended to provide a specified level of cover on strike days.
 - Following the consultation process the government does not intend to take the proposal for a fire and rescue service oath forward.
 - The consultation process considered alternative governance models proposed by respondents, particularly independent Fire Commissioners. However, the government will not be mandating governance transfers to models aligning to our criteria of a single, (directly) elected individual at this stage.
 - The Government will not pursue ring-fencing of operational budgets within fire and rescue services run by county councils and unitary councils. However, the government intends to amend the Fire and Rescue National Framework for England to the effect that FRAs with 'parent authorities' are asked to publish their allocated budgets on their website prior to the start of each financial year.

- Whilst the Home Office will pursue operational independence of chief fire officers, it does not intend to further pursue the proposal of chief fire officers having corporation sole status.
- The Government will explore legislation, when parliamentary times allows, to amend and clarify responsibilities with regards to the production of strategic and operational plans. The current legal requirement for a separate strategic plan is already set out in statute for Combined Authority Mayors (MCAs) and Police, Fire and Crime Commissioners (PFCCs). The Home Office wish to legislate so that this requirement applies to all categories of FRA listed in the FRSA 2004 and to clarify the name and responsibility for the operational plan, whereby the 'Integrated Risk Management Plan' (IRMP) will become the 'Community Risk Management Plan' (CRMP). The change in will be reflected in legislation at the earliest opportunity and updated in the National Framework.

7 Bedfordshire's Police and Crime Commissioner (PCC)

- 7.1 Is worthy of note that the next elections for Bedfordshire's Police and Crime Commissioner are planned in May 2024.
- 7.2 The current PCC, Festus Akinbusoye, has confirmed in the press that he is seeking re-election for a second term, stating he will not be pursuing previous plans to become the Conservative candidate for MP of Mid-Bedfordshire.
- 7.3 It is a foreseeable risk that if there is a change in Bedfordshire's Police and Crime Commissioner that a new PCC may have a different standpoint regarding single point accountability for fire. Should a proposed single point accountability wish to compile a business case for a change of governance the learning from other service's would indicate a significant resource requirement from the service to meet the required information requests.

JOHN-JOE PEKSZYC
HEAD OF STRATEGIC SUPPORT AND ASSET MANAGEMENT



Home Office

A profession we can all be proud of - Reforming our Fire & Rescue Service

Government consultation response to the Fire Reform White Paper

December 2023

CP 993



A profession we can all be proud of
- Reforming our Fire & Rescue Service

Government consultation response to the
Fire Reform White Paper

Presented to Parliament
by the Secretary of State for the Home Department
by Command of His Majesty

December 2023

CP 993



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Introduction and contact details

This document is the post-consultation report for the consultation paper, Reforming Our Fire and Rescue Service.

It will cover:

- Introduction
- The background to the consultation
- A summary of the consultation responses
- A detailed response to the specific questions raised in the report
- The next steps following this consultation.

Further copies of this report and the consultation paper can be obtained by contacting the Fire Strategy & Reform Unit at the address below:

Fire Strategy & Reform Unit
Home Office
2 Marsham Street
London SW1P 4DF

Email: firereformconsultation@homeoffice.gov.uk

This report is also available at <https://www.gov.uk/government/consultations/reforming-our-fire-and-rescue-service>

Complaints or comments

If you have any complaints or comments about the consultation process, you should contact the Home Office at the above address.

Ministerial Foreword



As the Minister for Crime, Policing and Fire, I have the privilege of overseeing one of the most important duties of government – keeping people safe. I have witnessed first-hand the hard work and dedication of our emergency services as they protect their communities. Fire and rescue professionals play a crucial role in keeping the public safe - whether they are firefighters or fire staff and whether working as first responders, in corporate functions or in vital prevention and protection roles - and they deserve to be supported to be their best.

There is no doubt that our fire and rescue services are made up of brave, dedicated people. However, there is more to be done to ensure everyone is supported, respected and valued in the workplace. We need look no further than London's Independent Culture Review, shocking media reporting and the independent fire inspectorate's findings on culture and values to see the scale of the challenge. And whilst Government investment following the Grenfell Tower Tragedy has allowed us to invest in improving vital protection services and has driven real change through the Fire Standards Board and the National Fire Chiefs Council, there is more to do to ensure fire professionals have the training and support they need to respond to the evolving challenges we face. Reform is necessary to ensure that this becomes reality.

The Fire Reform White Paper set out the government's vision for fire and rescue service reform. Launched last summer, the White Paper asked for views on a range of proposals. I would like to thank everyone who took the time to respond to the consultation – your input has helped shape the next steps on reforming a vital public service.

Although our plan was already strongly focussed on making sure that fire and rescue is a great profession which values its people, we have refined our approach to take recent changes and reports into account. We have focussed our efforts on the reform steps that will have the most impact for the public and for fire professionals: supporting dedicated fire staff to develop a profession to be proud of and ensuring that fire services do more to put the public first.

This means setting up a professional body to continue to raise standards. It means putting integrity and leadership front and centre with great training, consistent and more open recruitment practices and a statutory code of ethics. It means helping fire professionals to keep their community safe by giving chiefs operational control of their service. It means helping sector leaders to manage pay fairly without getting caught up in bureaucracy. It means playing a full role in protecting the community, working with health, police, and other partners. It means enabling more directly elected leaders to bring public focus and economic rigour to fire and rescue services.

But publishing this reform strategy is just the start. To deliver this ambitious plan we will need joint effort between operational and political leaders and a commitment to change at the front line. The Home Office worked closely with stakeholders from fire and rescue

services during the development of the White Paper, and we will continue to do so as we move forward to develop policy detail and deliver solutions.

Our fire and rescue service professionals put themselves on the line for their communities. We need to ensure that they are supported as professionals in a changing world - it is the least they deserve. The strategy set out in this consultation response is a major step in delivering reform, and I look forward to working together to make it happen.

Background

The case for reform

The consultation paper “Reforming Our Fire and Rescue Service” was published on 18 May 2022 to seek views on Government’s ideas for reform, building on lessons from independent inspection, concerning national reports and the Grenfell Tower Inquiry. It laid out a vision for fire reform and was built on our ambition to strengthen fire and rescue services. However, the fire reform challenge has become clearer since the launch of the White Paper. Evidence gathered during the consultation stage and a number of key reports and events have provided further insight into the issues set out in the White Paper which have informed our strategy for reform.

In addition to the consultation itself, the Home Office has conducted a significant programme of engagement with fire professionals across the country, at all levels and ranks. Our discussions on the future of fire professionalism involved interviews, service visits and online workshops with over 220 people from 32 fire and rescue services in England and other linked organisations.

As a result, we have focussed our efforts and our thinking on the reform steps that will have the biggest impact for the public and for fire professionals: supporting employers and employees to develop a profession to be proud of and ensuring that fire services do more to put the public first. We will continue to use all tools available to us to drive improvements, including legislation where appropriate, through revisions to the National Framework and building on wider sector plans, such as Fit for the Future. This report summarises the consultation responses and sets out the Government’s strategy for reform. It is right that we address the integrity and industrial action issues that have since been brought to attention.

Integrity Matters

Autumn 2022 saw the publication of the Independent Culture Review of London Fire Brigade, finding widespread and disturbing bullying, harassment and discrimination. Whilst the findings were troubling, it is right that senior leaders gripped the issue at hand. It quickly became apparent that these issues were not confined to London, far from it.

In response to this review, and other allegations in multiple services, the Minister for Crime, Policing and Fire commissioned His Majesty’s Inspectorate of Constabulary and Fire & Rescue Services (HMICFRS) to produce a “Spotlight” report on values and culture. The Report was published in March 2023 and highlighted widespread unacceptable behaviour. HMICFRS also raised serious concerns around the misconduct process, background checks, and leadership across services.

The Home Secretary therefore commissioned HMICFRS to conduct a thematic inspection of the handling of misconduct in fire and rescue services. This will examine the effectiveness and consistency of the misconduct processes.

The Home Office will prioritise the actions needed to ensure fire and rescue services are welcoming, respectful workplaces that enable all individuals who work in them to thrive and will expect all partners and sector leaders to play their part.

Keeping communities safe during strikes

This year has also seen services in a period of uncertainty and the public potentially placed at undue risk due to strike threats. Although a high pay offer from fire employers ended the current pay dispute without industrial action, this has highlighted the need for more robust business continuity planning and a more modern, transparent pay mechanism. Employees should have the right to strike, but it is essential that the public remain protected, and business critical services can continue to be delivered.

With fire and other public services in mind, this Government took steps to protect the public with the introduction of minimum service levels legislation into Parliament. In the event of industrial action, these measures would ensure a sufficient level of staffing to keep the public safe.

A public consultation concluded on 11 May 2023 and on 20 July 2023 the Strikes (Minimum Service Level) Act 2023 received Royal Assent in Parliament, ensuring workers maintain the ability to strike whilst giving the public access to the essential services they need. We are continuing to work through what the policy design for fire and rescue minimum service levels could look like.

A profession we can all be proud of – our strategy for reform

Setting the course for reform

The Fire Reform White Paper consulted on the government's vision for fire reform, centred around three main themes:

People – improving systems, flexibility and culture.

Professionalism – helping fire professionals to best serve their communities.

Governance – strengthening oversight and leadership.

Although our proposals focussed strongly on making sure that fire and rescue is a great modern profession, recent reports have illustrated how central these issues should be in our strategy for reform. The changes we outline here will support both the public and fire and rescue professionals: building a profession we can all be proud of.

People

The White Paper outlined plans to help fire professionals to further develop their skills and ensure that everyone could thrive in their work. This included clarifying the role of fire and rescue services, unlocking talent and improving representation within services.

The Home Office is already taking significant steps: with grant funding to support new standards, leadership programmes at all levels and embedding the Code of Ethics. The Home Office has also worked with the Ministry of Justice, National Fire Chiefs Council (NFCC) and the Disclosure and Barring Service to introduce legislation, supported by new guidance, expanding eligibility for background checks on Fire and Rescue Authority (FRA) employees in the interests of both staff and public safety.

Talent and inclusion

The White Paper set out our intention to build on existing progress to provide effective leadership of the sector and building capability, embedding values and nurturing talent within services.

There are a great many skilled and talented people working in fire and rescue services, but it cannot be that all talent can only come from within services. The White Paper sought to support the development of established staff and to widen the talent pool from which services hire, ensuring that our workplaces are open and inclusive.

Direct entry was a divisive issue for some consultation respondents; however, fire already has a strong track record in this area with several fire and rescue services being successfully run by non-operational leaders. The Home Office is funding the development and piloting of wider direct entry schemes through the NFCC, bringing new perspectives into services alongside the many talented professionals already serving. The Home Office will continue to work with the NFCC and others to develop talent management schemes for both new recruits and those already working in fire and rescue.

The Home Office will also work with service leaders to consider consistent entry requirements, including barriers in current entry requirements.

Pay and role

The consultation laid out the Government's fundamental position that the role of the fire and rescue service in England is clear – laid out comprehensively in legislation across three key acts of Parliament that address fire, community safety and civil contingencies. While the law may be clear, its implementation is hampered by cumbersome pay and conditions machinery and a lack of clear accountability for fire operations and resources. The system needs to be flexible to enable chiefs to make local level decisions about staffing, whilst working productively with unions. We need fire and rescue services to be able to play a full role in protecting the community, working with health, police and other partners without getting tied up in red tape. We saw how this could work during the later stages of the pandemic, when chiefs could protect their staff and support the community without getting caught up in bureaucracy.

We want to work with the full range of both fire employers and unions to address the call for change that has come through in the consultation responses in relation to the operation of the National Joint Council (NJC). In the first instance, we will support the fire and rescue authorities and unions to critically review the NJC's own mechanisms, operations and transparency. This should be an inclusive process and should be completed by early 2024. It is clear from this consultation that the right answer cannot simply be a defence of the status quo. We will want the review to actively consider the changes that it is clear consultation respondents want to see and to explore whether there needs to be more scope for variation and self-determination including by types of services and by location. If this does not result in meaningful change, we will need to explore other routes to ensure a modern, fair pay system that constructively enables role reform in England.

Professionalism

Proposals in the Professionalism section of the White Paper centred around the creation of an independent body for fire professionals. These proposals will build on the important and ongoing work of both the Fire Standards Board (FSB) which has developed a strong suite of Fire Standards ranging from operational matters to culture and ethics, and the National Fire Chiefs Council (NFCC), who will have an enduring and important role in future.

Creating a College of Fire and Rescue

A College of Fire and Rescue was proposed to strengthen the development of individuals and the overall professionalism of fire and rescue services, setting the direction on data, research, leadership, ethics and professional standards. It was also proposed that a College could be given powers mirroring those of the College of Policing, to help it drive change. The consultation showed an overwhelmingly positive response to the creation of a College, which could develop practice across the prevention, protection and response functions that fire professionals undertake.

The Home Office will continue to work openly with sector leaders, the frontline and existing comparable organisations such as the College of Policing, as we develop the most appropriate delivery model.

Raising standards

The White Paper proposed creation of a statutory code of ethics, the case for which is bolstered by inspection findings of HMICFRS and serious lapses of integrity in parts of our fire and rescue services. The majority of respondents were supportive of this course of action. In matters of integrity and elsewhere, the Home Office wants to see professional standards which drive consistency and drive-up performance and professionalism.

The Home Office will place future responsibility for professional standards with the College of Fire and Rescue and will create powers to place elements of professional standards such as a code of ethics on a statutory basis when parliamentary time allows.

Governance

The White Paper opened debate on strengthening or simplifying fire governance. It indicated that single point accountability allows for better link up between services, more efficient use of resources and clearer accountability to the public. The current process of submitting business cases for governance transfers can be complex, costly and time-consuming. The White Paper also confirmed our intention to deliver on the independent inspectorate's recommendation that chief officers should be afforded operational independence, similar to their policing counterparts.

Governance change

The White Paper outlined the value of single point accountability in fire and the Home Office is committed to supporting moves towards this. We will not, however, take forward the mandatory transfer of FRA functions to Police and Crime Commissioners (PCCs), Mayors or single elected individuals at this stage.

The Home Office will encourage PCCs and Mayors who want to take on fire governance functions, where the areas are co-terminous, to step forward, in order to enable the Home

Office to assess readiness and support change. The Home Office will also work proactively with PCCs and the Association of Police & Crime Commissioners to explore ways to simplify processes and incentivise voluntary transfers. This could be done by radically streamlining the business case process or exploring legislative means to remove them altogether. The Home Office will also, as part of the Government's Levelling Up agenda, continue to support locally led devolution deals and any fire governance transfers that result from these deals.

Operational Independence

The proposals in the White Paper set out plans to clarify the responsibilities of fire authorities and chief officers. The aim is to create a framework that complements existing structures while providing greater clarity and transparency in the division of responsibilities. At all times, the fire and rescue authority will be responsible for their fire service. The chief officer is effectively responsible for operationalising the authority's strategic directions. Operational independence would provide chief officers with the ability to make decisions on practical and management issues.

The Government will seek to legislate, at the earliest opportunity, to give chief officers operational independence. The Home Office will also take action to make the responsibilities of the fire and rescue authority and the chief officer clearer, with regard to a clearer separation of strategic and operational planning requirements and the governance of services.

Detailed Question Analysis

A total of 290 responses to the consultation paper were received. The online survey did not collect any personal data. 77% (86 out of 111) of survey responses sent by letter or email were provided by the fire and rescue service or their governing authority.

The Impact Assessment accompanying the fire reform consultation has been updated to take account of evidence provided by stakeholders during the consultation period and individual impact assessments will be completed for each proposal.

This section provides a statistical breakdown of the responses received and outlines our proposed next steps for each consultation question. As these figures are rounded to the nearest whole number, the rounding may result in a 1% disparity between the individual percentages shown in the tables and where responses are aggregated.

People

Q1: To what extent do you agree/disagree that fire and rescue services should have the flexibility to deploy resources to help address current and future threats faced by the public beyond core fire and rescue duties?

Strongly agree		Agree		Neither agree nor disagree		Disagree		Strongly disagree	
#	%	#	%	#	%	#	%	#	%
133	53	76	30	15	6	11	4	18	7

1. This question sought views on our proposal to expand the role of fire and rescue services in relation to the range of incidents faced by the public. The current role of fire and rescue services is to keep the public safe through prevention, protection and response work with a duty to collaborate with other Blue Light services where this will improve public safety outcomes, and the legislative framework is clear and coherent. However, some working practices have been found to be highly inflexible when faced with emerging threats or new opportunities. HMICFRS have also highlighted the need for clarity and flexibility.
2. With 83% of respondents strongly agreeing or agreeing with the proposal, and 11% disagreeing or strongly disagreeing, it is evident that the sector is in favour of clarifying the extent of the role of the fire and rescue services.
3. The most recurring themes from the qualitative responses were that the sector needs to be more flexible to protect the public more efficiently. Some respondents mentioned that bureaucracy often gets in the way of change and is holding the sector back. The conflation of issues of role and pay through the NJC was felt to add to bureaucratic hurdles.

Next Steps:

4. The Government believes the law is clear – but its implementation is hampered by cumbersome pay and conditions machinery and a lack of clear accountability for fire operations and the tasking of fire professionals. We will continue to work with the sector to address this as well as to identify and explore opportunities and action which will benefit public safety.

Q2: To what extent do you agree/disagree that fire and rescue services should play an active role in supporting the wider health and public safety agenda?

Strongly agree		Agree		Neither agree nor disagree		Disagree		Strongly disagree	
#	%	#	%	#	%	#	%	#	%
110	43	77	30	19	8	22	9	25	10

5. This question was aiming to establish whether our proposal of expanding the role of fire and rescue services should involve having a more active role in the wider health and public safety agenda.

6. Again, a large proportion of respondents (74%) either strongly agreed or agreed with this proposal and 19% of respondents disagreed or strongly disagreed.

7. It is clear that the sector acknowledges that greater interactions with other emergency services facilitates an even more valuable and efficient fire and rescue service.

Next Steps:

8. We will work together with the Department of Health and Social Care (DHSC) and other partners to explore options further. We will also work alongside fire and rescue services across the UK, DHSC, NHS England, NHS Wales and regional Ambulance trusts to support the work of the ambulance services in a way that increases public safety. Operational independence for CFOs will also help facilitate fire and rescue services playing a wider role in the health and public safety agenda, as they will have the powers to deploy resources in their local areas.

Q3: To what extent do you agree/disagree that the business continuity requirements set out in the Civil Contingencies Act 2004 provide sufficient oversight to keep the public safe in the event of strike action?

Strongly agree		Agree		Neither agree nor disagree		Disagree		Strongly disagree	
#	%	#	%	#	%	#	%	#	%
30	12	52	22	64	27	74	31	21	9

9. This question sought to understand whether the sector felt that it was well prepared to keep the public safe in the event of industrial action. The Civil Contingencies Act 2004 places a duty on Fire and Rescue Authorities, as Category 1 responders, to assess the risk of and respond to emergencies. They have a duty to maintain business continuity plans and emergency plans to ensure, so far as is reasonably practicable, that if an emergency occurs, they are able to continue to perform its functions. The freedom to take part in industrial action is important but we believe that public safety needs to be ensured regardless. Assessing the robustness of Business Continuity

Plans – owned by fire and rescue services and authorities, is currently undertaken by the National Resilience Assurance Team (NRAT), a team of seconded fire professionals led by Merseyside FRS, with support from the NFCC and Home Office.

10. For this proposal, 34% of respondents either strongly agreed or agreed that the sector’s plans were robust enough, while 39% either disagreed or strongly disagreed. The stark divide in responses indicate a need for each service’s business continuity plans to be reviewed to ensure that they are comprehensive and instil confidence in both the public and fire and rescue professionals.

Next Steps:

11. The government is taking action to introduce minimum service levels for fire and rescue services which are intended to provide a specified level of cover on strike days. In the meantime, the Home Office will continue to work closely with key partners to ensure business continuity plans enable services to keep the public safe in the event of industrial action.

Q4&5: To what extent do you agree/disagree that the current pay negotiation arrangements are appropriate?

Strongly agree		Agree		Neither agree nor disagree		Disagree		Strongly disagree	
#	%	#	%	#	%	#	%	#	%
32	13	32	13	49	20	59	24	74	30

12. This question sought to establish the extent to which the sector considered the current pay negotiation arrangements appropriate.

13. The breakdown of the quantitative responses shows that 26% either strongly agreed or agreed and 54% either disagreed or strongly disagreed. The responses clearly show an appetite for a reform of current pay negotiation arrangements.

14. Qualitative responses provided context with some respondents saying that the current process is outdated, slow and opaque. Other responses suggested that pay should be negotiated nationally and that negotiations for uniformed and non-uniformed fire and rescue employees should be carried out in tandem in the interest of fairness. The introduction of pay scales and of an annual review of the negotiation process are other recurring suggestions.

15. Those that supported the current pay negotiation arrangements were keen to underline their belief that any changes to the current set-up could negatively impact on national collective bargaining and questioned the effectiveness of other forms of pay negotiation bodies such as the existing Pay Review Bodies in certain public sectors are for their respective workforces.

Next Steps:

16. We want to work with fire employers and unions to address the call for change that has come through in the consultation responses in relation to the operation of the National Joint Council. In the first instance, we will support the National Joint Council secretariat to rapidly review its mechanisms, operations and transparency whilst considering the changes that it is clear consultation respondents want to see. This includes but is not limited to how to better reflect the specific needs of England in pay negotiations and decisions and to account for different FRA circumstances.

Q6&7: To what extent do you agree/disagree that minimum entry requirements should be set for fire and rescue service roles?

Strongly agree		Agree		Neither agree nor disagree		Disagree		Strongly disagree	
#	%	#	%	#	%	#	%	#	%
77	30	112	44	31	12	25	10	12	5

17. This question sought to understand whether respondents agreed with the proposal that minimum entry requirements should be set for fire and rescue service roles.

18. Quantitative responses showed that 74% either strongly agreed or agreed with the proposal, while 14% either disagreed or strongly disagreed. The apparent lack of consistency, the importance of striking the right balance between operational and academic experience and the need for more inclusive standards were recurring themes in the qualitative responses. Respondents who were against the proposal were primarily concerned that minimum entry requirements could have an adverse impact on recruiting from diverse backgrounds or those without academia.

Next Steps:

19. The sector would benefit greatly from having consistent and flexible standards to attract and promote talent from a more diverse pool. The Home Office will continue to explore options and engage with key stakeholders to determine how best to implement this proposal with a focus on consistency.

Q8: To what extent do you agree/disagree that other roles, in addition to station and area managers, would benefit from a direct entry and talent management scheme?

Strongly agree		Agree		Neither agree nor disagree		Disagree		Strongly disagree	
#	%	#	%	#	%	#	%	#	%
32	13	70	28	38	15	49	20	57	23

20. This question sought to establish the extent at which respondents agreed or disagreed with the notion that other roles, in addition to station and area managers would benefit from a direct entry and talent management.

21. Quantitative responses showed that 41% either strongly agreed or agreed, while 43% either disagreed or strongly disagreed. With responses almost evenly split, it was important to understand the rationale behind them.

22. Respondents were mostly supportive of direct entry and talent management schemes, but some were also uncomfortable about the scheme being introduced at a senior level.

Next Steps:

23. Direct entry and talent management schemes would achieve a more diverse workforce to the sector at all levels, if carefully developed and implemented. The Home Office will explore options and engage with key stakeholders to determine how best to implement this proposal, taking into account lessons and experiences from the pilot that is being run by NFCC.

Other themes arising from the consultation

24. In addition to the questions posed in the White Paper, many respondents commented on other issues affecting how they could improve or enhance their services and public safety. We will continue to work with the sector to explore these issues further and identify any additional action necessary.

Equality, Diversity and Inclusion

25. Inclusion is essential within a modern fire and rescue service. The sector would benefit from better representation across the workforce; there is much work to be done to have a fire service that reflects the community it serves and that everyone is treated with fairness and respect, in an environment where they can thrive. We will continue to work with key partners in the sector to ensure this remains at the forefront of any recruitment and development schemes.

On-Call

26. Respondents highlighted concerns regarding on-call firefighter recruitment and retention as a major issue affecting the sector. We will work with key partners, including the NFCC which is considering this issue through its People programme to explore potential solutions.

Professionalism

In addition to the consultation responses captured on these questions, we have continued engagement with frontline partners over the last six months through our work to strengthen professionalism in the fire and rescue sector.

Our debate on the future of fire professionalism has involved interviews, service visits and online workshops with over 220 people in a range of roles from 32 fire and rescue services and other linked organisations. Where appropriate and linked to the questions, we have highlighted these insights as additional reflections from the sector.

Q9&10: To what extent do you agree/disagree with the proposed introduction of a 21st century leadership programme?

Strongly agree		Agree		Neither agree nor disagree		Disagree		Strongly disagree	
#	%	#	%	#	%	#	%	#	%
74	30	110	44	31	12	16	6	18	7

27. This question sought views on our proposal to introduce a standardised leadership programme for assistant chief fire officers and chief fire officers. A leadership programme aims to provide a standardised approach to how services identify and prepare the next generation of leaders. Completion of a course could make it easier to move between leadership roles in fire and rescue services

28. The majority of respondents agreed or strongly agreed with this proposal, with a combined total of 74% in support. 12% neither agreed nor disagreed, while a combined total of 14% were unsupportive of this proposal.

29. Some of the prominent themes that emerged included the need for talent spotting and progression and the benefits of standardised leadership training. Some respondents highlighted that this could boost consistency. A response from one FRS suggested that standardised leadership training could make it easier to transfer between services and would offer a structured route for high potential employees to progress. However, some respondents felt that leadership training should be open to a wider range of staff.

Next Steps:

30. It is clear that there is support for a refreshed leadership programme. The qualitative responses have provided us with a range of suggestions which we will take into consideration as we develop this proposal further with the NFCC, which has already commenced work to enhance the leadership learning offer.

Q11: To what extent do you agree/disagree that completion of the proposed 21st century leadership programme should be mandatory before becoming an assistant chief fire officer or above?

Strongly agree		Agree		Neither agree nor disagree		Disagree		Strongly disagree	
#	%	#	%	#	%	#	%	#	%
69	28	61	25	49	20	39	16	29	12

31. This question sought to build on the previous question and asked respondents whether completion of a leadership programme should be mandatory before becoming an assistant chief fire officer or above.

32. 53% of respondents agreed that a leadership programme should be mandatory. 20% neither agreed nor disagreed, and 28% did not support the proposal.

Next Steps:

33. The Government will work with partners to ensure chief officers are equipped with the necessary skills to lead their Service effectively and protect the public.

Q12: To what extent do you agree/disagree that each of the activities outlined above are high priorities for helping improve the use and quality of fire and rescue service data?¹

Pre-Fix (18 – 27 May)²

Answer Choice	A national data analytics capability	Data-focused training	Consistent approaches to structuring data	Clear expectations for data governance	Securing data-sharing agreements	Response Total
Strongly agree	20	3	6	2	10	41
Agree	10	6	6	9	4	35
Neither agree nor disagree	5	7	9	8	5	34
Disagree	3	7	1	6	7	24
Strongly disagree	5	2	4	4	7	22

¹ This question is as written in the consultation; each of the activities mentioned are outlined in the tables

² When the online survey first launched it only allowed respondents to allocate one unique response for each activity (i.e., if “A National Data Analytics Capability” was given a Strongly Agree, the highest response “Data-Focused Training” could receive would be Agree). As a substantial number of Qualitative responses (Q15) was dedicated to allowing users to submit Strongly Agree for all areas, we decided it would be best to allow users to respond as freely as they liked and therefore provide more relevant answers to the qualitative question. This issue and change also affected Questions 14 and 25.

Post Fix (28 May – 26 July)

Answer Choice	A national data analytics capability	Data-focused training	Consistent approaches to structuring data	Clear expectations for data governance	Securing data-sharing agreements	Response Total	Pre & Post fix combined
Strongly agree	100	98	112	99	103	512	553
Agree	60	63	60	69	58	310	345
Neither agree nor disagree	23	19	20	16	19	97	131
Disagree	6	7	2	4	6	25	49
Strongly disagree	5	5	7	7	5	29	51

Q13: What other activities, beyond those listed above, would help improve the use and quality of fire and rescue service data? Please give the reasons for your response.

34. Sir Thomas Winsor's 2019 *State of Fire* Report highlighted how the fire sector was lacking an effective national strategy for utilising data, which was therefore proving to be a missed opportunity. The quantitative responses to both data tables show that there is significant support for all five proposed activities with very little to separate them.

Next Steps:

35. It is evident that there is a significant appetite and need to modernise and offer national support for gathering and sharing data to ensure it can be consistent across the country and accessible to not only fire and rescue services but potentially to other blue light services as well. For this reason, the Home Office has already begun work with the NFCC and is developing plans for data to become a key pillar of a College of Fire and Rescue.

FRONTLINE INSIGHTS

In our interviews we heard that people wanted to understand how to use data to make better decisions, to have faith in the quality of shared data, and to have an agreed way of measuring data. Further, people also wanted help identifying national trends and accessing useful datasets to help inform their work.

The workshops conducted in services identified data training and common data sharing agreements as the most valuable solutions. People hoped they could work to common standards, share data more easily and help everyone understand the value of data.

Q14: To what extent do you agree/disagree that each of the activities outlined above are high priorities for improving the use and quality of fire evidence and research?

Pre-Fix (18 – 27 May)

Answer Choice	Collaborating	Commissioning	Conducting	Collating	Response Total
Strongly agree	30	3	4	3	40
Agree	6	11	10	5	32
Neither agree nor disagree	0	6	9	6	21
Disagree	2	2	6	8	18
Strongly disagree	4	1	1	1	7

Post Fix (28 May – 26 July)

Answer Choice	Collaborating	Commissioning	Conducting	Collating	Response Total	Pre & Post Fix Combined
Strongly agree	95	87	92	91	365	405
Agree	63	65	61	64	253	285
Neither agree nor disagree	23	27	26	24	100	121
Disagree	4	7	6	5	22	40
Strongly disagree	6	6	5	5	22	29

Q15: What other activities, beyond those listed above, would help improve the use and quality of evidence and research on fire and other hazards?

36. Responses highlighted there are several organisations who aim to provide up to date research and relevant evidence to fire services. However, there is the concern that we are lacking a suitable method to collate all of this information and ensure that the work being undertaken is suitably joined up.

37. Similar to the quantitative tables seen with our *Data* questions, the public's response suggests that all four activities proposed to improve the quality of evidence and research of fire and other hazards are high priority.

38. The two most prevalent themes emerging from the qualitative responses were also fairly well aligned. The most popular theme (32) outlined several ways in which both data and research could be taken forward in a consistent way. The second most popular theme (31 total responses) called for links with other research groups, both domestically (particularly the NFCC’s Academic Collaboration, Evaluation and Research Group) and internationally.

FRONTLINE INSIGHTS

Based on the research interviews conducted by the Home Office, it is clear there is a strong case to form an entity that can conduct and commission research, gather data and build an evidence base that will be helpful for the sector to forward plan. There is a desire to have research areas prioritised for the sector, providing access to high quality and reliable data that can be shared across the sector to support research.

Next Steps:

39. It is little surprise that Research has proven to be a topic with high public investment, and it will therefore be a key pillar of our work within the College of Fire and Rescue and building on the recent establishment of the Academic Collaboration Evaluation and Research Group.

Q16: To what extent do you agree/disagree with the creation of a statutory code of ethics for services in England?

Strongly agree		Agree		Neither agree nor disagree		Disagree		Strongly disagree	
#	%	#	%	#	%	#	%	#	%
76	32	67	28	46	19	25	10	25	10

40. This question sought views on the creation of a statutory code of ethics that all fire and rescue services should embed in their work. The current code, created in response to an inspectorate recommendation, is non statutory.

41. 60% of respondents agreed with the creation of placing the code on a statutory basis. 19% neither agreed nor disagreed, while 21% disagreed.

FRONTLINE INSIGHTS:

Introducing a statutory code of ethics was a popular idea in our workshops with services. In interviews and workshops, people said that they hoped they could change the culture of the fire and rescue service to create a more open and supportive environment. Participants also wanted to ensure their services had the capacity and training in place to meet expectations and told us they also needed to trust the development process and that it needs to be easy to understand whether you are meeting the Code.

42. Respondents identified the importance of any intervention leading to meaningful change and of engaging with the sector in the creation of a Statutory Code of Ethics.

Next Steps:

43. As a result of this feedback, the Home Office will make the delivery of a statutory code of ethics a key early priority for the College of Fire and Rescue. This will be pursued in close collaboration with partners in the fire and rescue sector. We will seek to establish the appropriate powers and to place a code on a statutory basis when parliamentary time allows.

Q17: To what extent do you agree/disagree that placing a code of ethics on a statutory basis would better embed ethical principles in services than the present core code of ethics?

Strongly agree		Agree		Neither agree nor disagree		Disagree		Strongly disagree	
#	%	#	%	#	%	#	%	#	%
58	24	57	24	47	20	46	19	32	13

44. This question builds on the previous proposal. 48% of respondents were in agreement that a statutory code of ethics would ensure ethical principles were better embedded in fire and rescue services, while 20% neither agreed nor disagreed and 33% did not agree. The data suggests that although a substantial majority of respondents agreed the code of ethics should be placed on a statutory footing, some were unsure that it would help embed the principles of the code within services.

Q18: To what extent do you agree/disagree that the duty to ensure services act in accordance with the proposed statutory code should be placed on operationally independent chief fire officers?

Strongly agree		Agree		Neither agree nor disagree		Disagree		Strongly disagree	
#	%	#	%	#	%	#	%	#	%
52	22	87	36	49	20	19	8	33	14

Q19: To what extent do you agree/disagree with making enforcement of the proposed statutory code an employment matter for chief fire officers to determine within their services?

Strongly agree		Agree		Neither agree nor disagree		Disagree		Strongly disagree	
#	%	#	%	#	%	#	%	#	%
43	18	97	41	39	16	24	10	35	15

45. If the code was placed on a statutory basis, the duty to have regard to it would be most effectively placed on identified individuals. The two questions above sought views on whether that duty should be placed on operationally independent chief fire officers who it was proposed could also be responsible for the enforcement of the code.

46. There was support for placing the duty to have regard to the code and responsibility for enforcement of the code with the chief fire officer; 58% and 59% of respondents were supportive of these questions respectively. Only 22% were unsupportive of giving CFOs the duty to ensure their services follow the code and 25% were against giving CFOs responsibility to determine enforcement.

Next Steps:

47. As indicated in the Governance chapter of this response, we are committing to providing chief fire officers with the operational independence they need to lead their services. For this reason, it would seem appropriate that the duty to have regard to a statutory code of ethics is placed on operationally independent chief fire officers who would also take on responsibility for applying it in their services.

Q20&21: To what extent do you agree/disagree with the creation of a fire and rescue service oath for services in England?

Strongly agree		Agree		Neither agree nor disagree		Disagree		Strongly disagree	
#	%	#	%	#	%	#	%	#	%
40	17	38	16	55	23	49	20	58	24

Q22: To what extent do you agree/disagree that an Oath would embed the principles of the Code of Ethics amongst fire and rescue authority employees?

Strongly agree		Agree		Neither agree nor disagree		Disagree		Strongly disagree	
#	%	#	%	#	%	#	%	#	%
31	13	53	22	45	19	50	21	59	25

Q23: To what extent do you agree/disagree with an Oath being mandatory for all employees?

Strongly agree		Agree		Neither agree nor disagree		Disagree		Strongly disagree	
#	%	#	%	#	%	#	%	#	%
33	14	45	19	38	16	51	21	71	30

Q24: To what extent do you agree/disagree that breach of the fire and rescue service oath should be dealt with as an employment matter?

Strongly agree		Agree		Neither agree nor disagree		Disagree		Strongly disagree	
#	%	#	%	#	%	#	%	#	%
30	13	88	37	42	18	30	13	48	20

48. This proposal sought views on introducing a fire and rescue service oath in England. The oath would be a promise undertaken by fire and rescue authority employees to uphold the principles in the statutory code while undertaking tasks on behalf of fire and rescue authorities, to help address the cultural challenges identified above and provide a positive commitment to the role services can play in their communities.

49. This proposal was not supported by respondents, with only 33% of respondents in agreement that this would help. Similarly, during our frontline engagement sessions, a common comment was that people could take the oath, but it was not clear what it would achieve. A larger proportion of respondents either disagreed or strongly disagreed with the creation of the oath with a combined total of 45%. This trend continues with the following two quantitative questions; 46% believed that the oath would not embed the principles of the Code of Ethics and 51% did not think the oath, if introduced, should be mandatory.

50. On the qualitative responses, respondents felt that whilst the intended outcome of improved integrity in services is right, the delivery mechanism of the oath was not. The second complements this by suggesting that wider cultural change within fire and rescue services would be needed alongside introducing the oath to ensure consistently high levels of integrity.

Next Steps:

51. After considering the findings of the consultation, it is clear that respondents have concerns regarding the oath and that it may not address the challenges within the sector as desired. The Home Office will therefore not be taking this proposal forward at this time.

Q25: To what extent do you agree/disagree that the five areas listed above are priorities for professionalising fire and rescue services?

Pre-Fix (18 – 27 May)

Answer Choice	Leadership	Data	Research	Ethics	Clear Expectations	Response Total
Strongly agree	25	3	1	3	6	38
Agree	6	2	3	7	9	27
Neither agree nor disagree	3	4	5	7	6	25
Disagree	0	9	6	3	3	21
Strongly disagree	0	5	9	4	1	19

Post-Fix (28 May – 26 July)

Answer Choice	Leadership	Data	Research	Ethics	Clear Expectations	Response Total	Pre & Post Fix Combined
Strongly agree	89	59	58	63	77	346	384
Agree	76	90	97	83	83	429	456
Neither agree nor disagree	10	22	19	22	18	91	116
Disagree	7	9	6	11	6	39	60
Strongly disagree	12	14	13	17	13	69	88

Q26: What other activities, beyond the five listed above, could help to professionalise fire and rescue services?

52. Throughout this chapter we explored a series of proposals dedicated to facilitating the further professionalisation of fire and rescue services. These proposals can ultimately be captured under the five distinct themes of: Leadership, Data, Research, Ethics and Clear Expectations. While the Home Office considers all these areas important, we wanted to know whether one should take precedence, and if another vital area of work had been overlooked.

53. When the Pre-Fix data is incorporated, we can further see the importance placed on Leadership; the Strongly Agree responses hugely outnumber the combined total for the other four activities. Whilst the qualitative responses did not reinforce these

statistics further, they raised a number of equally popular themes. The need for better training facilities and learning opportunities was raised as frequently as the need for better pay (17).

FRONTLINE INSIGHTS

People working in services told us that they want:

1. Support for services to meet national standards
2. Focussed efforts on services struggling to meet the standards
3. To seek ways to enforce standards, for example, legislation
4. Engagement with the sector on what the priorities are for reviewing and developing standards
5. To ensure standards are developed using robust research data and evidence
6. Measures to evaluate the impact of new standards

Next Steps:

54. The qualitative findings clearly demonstrate that the proposed five strands of work are widely considered to be valuable to fire and rescue services. The Home Office will therefore continue to progress these areas of work with our partner organisations, including the NFCC, and within our development of a College of Fire and Rescue. Consideration will also be given to how the proposed work could link more effectively to learning and training approaches for professionals.

Q27&28: To what extent do you agree/disagree with the creation of an independent College of Fire and Rescue to lead the professionalisation of fire and rescue services?

Strongly agree		Agree		Neither agree nor disagree		Disagree		Strongly disagree	
#	%	#	%	#	%	#	%	#	%
73	31	105	44	30	13	9	4	20	8

51. The qualitative responses to these questions demonstrated high levels of support for the proposal to create a College of Fire and Rescue to be the independent, dedicated body to lead the fire and rescue profession, with 75% of respondents in favour or strongly in favour.
52. In the qualitative responses, key themes included: the importance of clear lines of accountability, learning from other public services who have their own professional bodies, and retaining a public service ethos.

Next Steps:

53. The Home Office will be proceeding with the creation of a College of Fire and Rescue to provide fire services and professionals with the support they need. We are working closely with our partner organisations and comparator bodies, such as the College of Policing, to consider the most appropriate delivery option for a College.
54. Government will explore legislation, when parliamentary time allows, to provide the College of Fire and Rescue with the statutory powers to enable it to lead the profession, including to create a statutory code of ethics and to set standards on leadership. We also consider these powers could be valuable to set professional standards.
55. As part of the ongoing work on the future of fire professionalism, the Home Office has been working with hundreds of people across the fire and rescue sector to consider what a College of Fire and Rescue could do to best support fire and rescue services and professionals. This has ensured our proposals are well founded on both consultation responses from organisations and lived experiences from the frontline. The Home Office will continue to take an open approach to developing policy and keep engaging the sector on these important issues, including the matters raised in qualitative responses.
56. We also recognise there will be an enduring and important role for the NFCC within the sector and will ensure that a future College builds on important work of both the NFCC and the FSB.

Governance

Q29: To what extent do you agree/disagree that Government should transfer responsibility for fire and rescue services in England to a single elected individual?

Strongly agree		Agree		Neither agree nor disagree		Disagree		Strongly disagree	
#	%	#	%	#	%	#	%	#	%
48	19	29	11	53	20	34	13	95	37

Q30: What factors should be considered when transferring fire governance to a directly elected individual? Please provide the reasons for your response.

57. The White Paper proposed to transfer responsibility of fire and rescue services from committee style governance seen in many fire and rescue authorities (FRAs), including in county council, combined and unitary FRAs, to a single, (directly) elected, individual. The rationale for this proposal was to improve accountability and transparency in the governance arrangements of fire and rescue services and to simplify the governance landscape by reducing the number of models in operation.
58. The White Paper outlined three potential governance models: Police and Crime Commissioners (PCCs), Mayoral Combined Authorities (MCAs) or an Executive Councillor model. The last model allowed for county council and unitary FRAs to retain responsibility for fire within their council structures but these FRAs would be required to nominate a single councillor who would hold responsibility for fire. We also asked respondents to provide suggestions on alternative models of governance which are not outlined in the White Paper.
59. Half of respondents, a total of 50% of all responses, either disagreed or strongly disagreed with the proposal to transfer responsibility of fire to a single, (directly) elected, individual with respondents' views on factors we should consider when pursuing this proposal highlighted a number of concerns.
60. When compared against the existing committee style governance model, many respondents felt that there were problems inherent in the single, (directly) elected, model. Respondents raised concerns around competence in fire matters, relative priorities, political interference and the potential for local relationships to be disrupted. Respondents also challenged the evidence base and costs.
61. For the minority of respondents agreed with this proposal, a total of 30% of responses, noted a number of factors to consider to ensure successful delivery. This included ensuring a clear division between political oversight and operational decision making, ensuring sector competence and effective scrutiny.

Next steps:

62. After considering the findings from the consultation, the Home Office does not intend to mandate governance transfer to a single, (directly) elected, individual at this time.
63. However, the Home Office will proactively support any PCC or Mayor who is interested in effecting a voluntary transfer and where the areas are co-terminous and will explore options to simplify the process and incentivise transfers. Further, as part of the Government’s Levelling Up agenda, we will continue to support locally led Mayoral devolution deals and any fire governance transfer that result from these deals, or from other Local Government reform.

Q31: Where Mayoral Combined Authorities already exist, to what extent do you agree/disagree that fire and rescue functions should be transferred directly to these MCAs for exercise by the Mayor?

Strongly agree		Agree		Neither agree nor disagree		Disagree		Strongly disagree	
#	%	#	%	#	%	#	%	#	%
14	6	40	16	80	33	35	14	75	31

64. As outlined previously, we consulted on the potential to transfer responsibility of fire to one of the three potential governance models that fitted our criteria of a single, (directly) elected individual. This was the Combined Authority Mayor (MCAs) model for those areas where MCAs already exist.
65. The majority of respondents, a total of 45% of all responses, either disagreed or strongly disagreed with this proposal as opposed to 22% of all respondents who agreed or strongly agreed.
66. For those respondents who opposed this proposal, the previous qualitative question (Q.30) highlighted several concerns respondents had with the MCA model, namely concern of political interference and lower priority for the service, given the breadth of a Mayor’s mandate over local issues.

Next steps:

67. As previously stated, the Home Office will not be mandating governance transfer to a single, (directly) elected, individual but will proactively support locally led Mayoral devolution deals as part of the Government’s Levelling Up agenda.
68. Furthermore, the Levelling Up and Regeneration Bill, currently going through Parliament will introduce a new category of Mayor, combined county Mayors, who

will also have the ability to assume FRA functions for their area with Home Office support where appropriate.

Q32: To what extent do you agree/disagree that Government should transfer responsibility for fire and rescue services in England to police and crime commissioners?

Strongly agree		Agree		Neither agree nor disagree		Disagree		Strongly disagree	
#	%	#	%	#	%	#	%	#	%
49	19	18	7	41	16	30	12	119	46

69. The majority of respondents, a total of 58% of all responses, either disagreed or strongly disagreed with this proposal, compared to 26% of respondents who agreed or strongly agreed. Concerns were similar to those expressed above.

70. Supportive respondents felt that if fire transferred under a PCC model it would increase accountability and transparency, lead to clearer strategic direction for the service and increase focus on delivering for the public.

Next steps:

71. As well as supporting locally led Mayoral devolution deals and PCC transfers the Home Office will explore ways to simplify the current business case process for PCCs to take on local oversight of their fire and rescue service.

Q33: Apart from combined authority mayors and police and crime commissioners, is there anyone else who we could transfer fire governance that aligns with the principles set out above?

Yes		No	
#	%	#	%
80	35	150	65

Q34: If yes, please explain other options and your reasons for proposing them.

72. The consultation invited respondents to provide suggestions on alternative models of governance which met our need for a clear executive – rather than committee – leadership.

73. The majority of respondents, a total of 65% of responses, provided no alternative options as opposed to 35% of respondents who did. These ranged from creating

broad regional fire services with an elected regional lead or a regional board to creating directly elected Fire Commissioners.

74. It should be noted that in the same qualitative question, a number of respondents highlighted strong support to retain the existing mix of governance structures.

Next steps:

75. Whilst it is illuminating to consider the alternative governance models proposed by respondents, particularly independent Fire Commissioners, we will not be mandating governance transfers to models aligning to our criteria of a single, (directly) elected individual at this stage.

Q35&36: To what extent do you agree or disagree that the legal basis for fire and rescue authorities could be strengthened and clarified?

Strongly agree		Agree		Neither agree nor disagree		Disagree		Strongly disagree	
#	%	#	%	#	%	#	%	#	%
51	21	110	45	54	22	13	5	17	7

76. The White Paper outlined the opportunity to better clarify the legal basis against which fire and rescue authorities operate. We proposed to clarify in statute the role of the authority, the service and the chief fire officer, and to clarify the relationship between political oversight and operational decision making.

77. The majority of respondents, a total of 66% of all responses, either agreed or strongly agreed with this proposal, as opposed to 12% of respondents who either disagreed or strongly disagreed.

78. For those respondents who supported this proposal, it was outlined it would remove ambiguity, clarify understanding on legal responsibilities and improve accountability and transparency.

79. For the minority of respondents who disagreed with this proposal, the primary view was that for some county council FRSs, the Fire and Rescue Services Act (FRSA) 2004 laid down the basic duties and functions of FRAs and through local county council constitutions, they have already laid out the role and responsibilities between the FRA and CFO.

Next steps:

80. The Home Office will seek to better clarify the legal role of fire and rescue authorities in the oversight of their local service. This will be achieved through a proposed demarcation of responsibility when seeking to grant operational independence to chief fire officers.

Q37: To what extent do you agree/disagree that boundary changes should be made so that fire and rescue service areas and police force/combined authorities (where present) areas are coterminous?

Strongly agree		Agree		Neither agree nor disagree		Disagree		Strongly disagree	
#	%	#	%	#	%	#	%	#	%
50	20	64	25	72	29	17	7	48	19

81. The White Paper considered the boundary implications of mandating governance change which would require boundaries to be coterminous. The majority of respondents, a total of 45% of all responses, either agreed or strongly agreed with this proposal, as opposed to 26% of respondents who either disagreed or strongly disagreed.

Next steps:

82. Although the proposal is supported by 45% of respondents, the government position not to pursue mandatory governance transfers limits the value of this proposal. As we will not be mandating changes to governance models there will be no need to enforce boundary changes which would prove disruptive and controversial. Whilst we will be proactively supporting voluntary transfers of FRA functions to PCCs or Mayors in those areas which are co-terminous with FRAs, those areas which are not co-terminous will remain under their current governance arrangements and we will work with them to explore options to improve transparency and accountability within current structures.

Q38&39: To what extent do you agree/disagree with ring-fencing the operational fire budget within fire and rescue services run by county councils and unitary authorities?

Strongly agree		Agree		Neither agree nor disagree		Disagree		Strongly disagree	
#	%	#	%	#	%	#	%	#	%
114	46	64	26	40	16	23	9	8	3

83. The majority of respondents (71%) either 'strongly agreed' or 'agreed' with the idea of ring-fencing operational fire budgets in county councils and unitary authorities. However, responses from fire & rescue services and councils directly impacted by the proposal were not supportive of the change as it was seen to reduce budget flexibility.

84. In preference to budget ring-fencing, some of those directly impacted by the proposal said that they would welcome greater transparency around the reporting of fire budgets in county councils and unitary authorities.

Next Steps:

85. The Government will not pursue ring-fencing of operational budgets within fire and rescue services run by county councils and unitary councils. Instead, taking into account what those directly impacted by this proposal have said, we will focus on improving transparency of reporting around how fire and rescue services are funded at local level. We will do this by amending the Fire and Rescue National Framework for England to the effect that FRAs with ‘parent authorities’ are asked to publish their allocated budgets on their website prior to the start of each financial year, and then again if the budget is changed mid-year.

86. The Government will review the effectiveness of this new practice in due course and may consider the introduction of further measures to increase the transparency of funding arrangements, if necessary.

Q40: To what extent do you agree with this proposed approach (as outlined in the table)?

Strongly agree		Agree		Neither agree nor disagree		Disagree		Strongly disagree	
#	%	#	%	#	%	#	%	#	%
41	17	100	41	45	18	20	8	40	16

Task	Responsible
<u>Setting priorities</u>	<u>Executive leader</u>
<u>Budget setting</u>	<u>Executive leader</u>
<u>Setting precept</u>	<u>Executive leader</u>
<u>Setting response standards</u>	<u>Executive leader</u>
<u>Opening and closing fire stations</u>	<u>Executive leader*</u>
<u>Appointment and dismissal of chief fire officer</u>	<u>Executive leader</u>
<u>Appointment and dismissal of other fire service staff</u>	<u>Chief fire officer</u>
<u>Allocation of staff to meet strategic priorities</u>	<u>Chief fire officer</u>
<u>Configuration and organisation of resources</u>	<u>Chief fire officer</u>
<u>Deployment of resources to meet operational requirements</u>	<u>Chief fire officer</u>
<u>Balancing of competing operational needs</u>	<u>Chief fire officer</u>
<u>Expenditure up to certain (delegated) levels</u>	<u>Chief fire officer</u>

*Opening and closing of fire stations could be a joint decision; operationally fire chiefs could be responsible for decisions on moving teams, whilst ultimate political and executive responsibility lies with the executive leader.

Q41: Do you have any other comments to further support your answer?

Q42: Are there any factors we should consider when implementing these proposals?

Q43: What factors should we consider when giving chief fire officers (CFOs) operational independence? Please provide the reasons for your opinions.

87. The White Paper proposed a leadership model which balanced political and operational accountability. It was proposed this demarcation of responsibility would be outlined in statute.
88. The majority of respondents, a total of 57% of responses, either agreed or strongly agreed with this proposal as opposed to 24% of respondents who either disagreed or strongly disagreed.
89. For those respondents who agreed it was felt that demarcation in statute would provide clarity on roles and responsibilities. However, in the view of some respondents, certain responsibilities need further clarification and should either be reallocated or jointly held between the FRA or CFO.
90. The minority of respondents who disagreed with the proposal noted that for some county council led services, a demarcation of responsibility already exist in their local constitutions in the form of 'schemes of delegation'.
91. A summary question invited respondents to provide any additional views on the proposals outlined so far in the Governance chapter of the White Paper. To improve accountability and transparency, some respondents suggested that a monitoring mechanism should be in place, potentially overseen by HMICFRS, to assess the working relationship between the fire authority and operationally independent chief fire officer in order to determine whether it is providing the intended benefits.
92. A sizeable number of respondents emphasised the need to ensure clarity, by way of providing guidance, on roles and responsibilities. It was highlighted that appropriate checks and balances need to be in place to ensure an operationally independent chief officer is held to and that effective scrutiny arrangements are needed. Equally, respondents felt that chief officers would need training and support.

Next steps:

93. The Government will legislate at the earliest opportunity to give CFOs operational independence. This will include a new statutory definition of a Chief Fire Officer and a Fire and Rescue Service. Currently, the requirement for the provision of all fire and rescue functions is attributed to FRA in the FRSA 2004.
94. Through our provisions on Operational Independence, we will outline clear demarcations of responsibility. We will facilitate the introduction of a standardised

scheme of delegation, supported by regulations and guidance setting out the detail of this demarcation. The intention for this is to create clear lines of responsibility where they do not already in exist and to strengthen existing schemes of delegation already in place.

Q44: What factors should we consider should we make chief fire officers corporations sole?

- 95. In delivering operational independence for CFOs, the White Paper outlined an additional proposal to complement this, that is to make the role of CFO a corporation sole.
- 96. The intention behind this proposal was to create a model of operational independence, which mirrored the existing structure in policing, that is that the chief constable of a police force is operationally independent from their PCC and has corporation sole status, making them the employer of their police force with staff under their direct control. A significant portion of respondents noted the complications this would add to existing governance arrangements for fire services. In addition, a number of respondents stated there was no evidence to suggest the policing model would be effective for fire governance arrangements. For those respondents who were either supportive or had a more nuanced approach to this proposal, it was highlighted that the legal duties needed clarity and that training would be needed.

Next steps:

- 97. Whilst the Home Office will pursue operational independence and a clear demarcation of in legislation, it would not be possible to uniformly apply corporation sole status in all governance models and as such we will not pursue this proposal.

Q45: To what extent do you agree or disagree that the responsibility for strategic and operational planning should be better distinguished?

Strongly agree		Agree		Neither agree nor disagree		Disagree		Strongly disagree	
#	%	#	%	#	%	#	%	#	%
64	26	93	38	40	16	26	11	21	9

Q46: To what extent do you agree or disagree that the strategic plan should be the responsibility of the fire and rescue authority?

Strongly agree		Agree		Neither agree nor disagree		Disagree		Strongly disagree	
#	%	#	%	#	%	#	%	#	%
83	34	84	34	44	18	18	7	15	6

Q47&48: To what extent do you agree or disagree that the operational plan should be the responsibility of the chief fire officer?

Strongly agree		Agree		Neither agree nor disagree		Disagree		Strongly disagree	
#	%	#	%	#	%	#	%	#	%
107	44	87	36	24	10	9	4	16	7

98. The White Paper proposed a clearer separation of strategic and operational planning responsibilities. It was proposed that all authorities be required to produce a strategic plan outlining the priorities for the service and that the chief fire officer would be responsible for the operational plan, to deliver those strategic priorities. It was also proposed that the operational plan, currently called an 'Integrated Risk Management Plan' would be changed by legislation to a 'Community Risk Management Plan'.

99. On better distinguishing the responsibility for strategic and operational planning (Q45), a majority of respondents, a total of 64% of responses, either agreed or strongly agreed with this proposal, as opposed to 19% of respondents who either disagreed or strongly disagreed. The trend of support for this proposal continues into the following questions, especially on the need for clear operational planning accountability.

100. However, whilst there was strong amount of support, a concern raised by respondents was that chief officers should be held accountable for how they are operationalising the strategic plan.

Next steps:

101. The Government will explore legislation, when parliamentary times allows, to amend and clarify responsibilities with regards to the production of strategic and operational plans. The current legal requirement for a separate strategic plan is already set out in statute for Combined Authority Mayors (MCAs) and Police, Fire and Crime Commissioners (PFCCs). The Home Office wish to legislate so that

this requirement applies to all categories of FRA listed in the FRSA 2004 and to clarify the name and responsibility for the operational plan, whereby the 'Integrated Risk Management Plan' (IRMP) will become the 'Community Risk Management Plan' (CRMP). The change in will be reflected in legislation at the earliest opportunity and updated in the National Framework. These next steps will only apply to England, as fire and rescue is a devolved issue in Wales, Northern Ireland and Scotland.

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SUBJECT: LOCALISM ACT 2011 – PAY POLICY STATEMENT FOR 2024

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Background Papers:

- Hutton Review of Fair Pay in the Public Sector March 2011 (available on request)
- DCLG Openness and accountability in local pay: Draft guidance under Section 40 of the Localism Act November 2011 (available on request)
- Localism Act 2011 Chapter 20 Part 1 Local Government, Chapter 8 Pay Accountability (available on request)
- Localism Act Pay Policy Statements guidance for Local Authority Chief Executives November 2011 (available on request)
- Policy on Principal Officer Salary reviews – March 2009 (available on request)
- 2023 Pay Policy Statement (available on request)
- Localism Act 2011 – Pay Policy Statement FRA paper February 2023 (available on request)
- Local Government Association Pay Policy and Practice in local authorities 2013 (available on request)
- Local Government Transparency Code 2015

Appendix	Title	Protective Marking
1	Annual Pay Statement	

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	Statutory obligation to publish this annual report.
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	No	The approved annual report will be published on the BFRS website in accordance with our statutory obligations

PURPOSE:

To advise the Fire Authority of the requirement to agree and publish an annual pay policy statement and its constituent parts for the financial year 2024/25.

RECOMMENDATION:

That the submitted proposed pay policy statement for 2024/25 be approved.

1. Executive Summary

- 1.1 Section 38 (1) of the Localism Act 2011 requires English and Welsh local authorities to produce a pay policy statement for 2012/13 and for each financial year thereafter. This is Bedfordshire Fire and Rescue Service's thirteenth annual Pay Policy Statement.
- 1.2 The Department for Communities and Local Government (DCLG) Guidance on Section 40 of the Localism Act clarified that each local authority is an individual employer in its own right and has the autonomy to make decisions on pay that are appropriate to local circumstances. The provisions in the Act do not seek to change this, determine what decisions on pay should be taken, or what policies individual authorities should have in place. Rather, they require that authorities are more open about their local policies and how decisions are made.
- 1.3 Bedfordshire Fire and Rescue Authority's proposed pay policy statement is derived from the 'model' pay policy statement contained in the Local Government Association Document 'Pay Policy and Practice in Local Authorities' which was recommended to Fire and Rescue Authorities by the Head of Workforce at the Local Government Association via the principal negotiating officer of the National Joint Council for Fire and Rescue Authorities in November 2013.

2. Pay Policy Statement Content

- 2.1 Matters that must be included in the statutory pay policy statement are:
- Information on the approach to Chief Officer remuneration at recruitment, salary, bonus/performance related pay, charges, fees allowances, benefits in kind and enhancement to pension at termination. The definition of chief officer is not limited to heads of paid service or statutory chief officers; it includes those who report directly to them;
 - Local authority's policy on the level and elements of remuneration for each chief officer;
 - Local authority's policy on the remuneration of its lowest-paid employees (together with its definition of 'lowest-paid employees' and its reasons for adopting that definition); and
 - A local authority's policy on the relationship between the remuneration of its chief officers and other officers.
- 2.2 The Act does not require the pay policy statement to include numerical data on pay; the statement is about policy and not the actual pay of individuals.
- 2.3 It is a requirement of the Localism Act that the data from the preceding year must be used to calculate the pay multiple, therefore this annual pay policy statement is based on the data from **1 April 2022 to 31 March 2023**.

2.4 Information that has changed since the last Annual Pay Policy Statement is highlighted in bold as has previously been requested by the Fire Authority.

3. Process for Annual Adoption of a Pay Policy Statement

3.1 The Localism Act also prescribes that the pay policy statement must be approved formally by a meeting of Members. In the case of a Fire and Rescue Authority, it cannot be delegated to any sub-committee and must be approved by the end of March each year and can be amended in-year. It must also be published on the Authority's website (and in any other way the Authority chooses) and must be complied with when the Authority sets the terms and conditions for a Chief Officer.

4. Information

4.1 Nationally negotiated pay increases for employees covered by the Green Book (National Joint Council for Local Government Services National Agreement on Pay and Conditions), are applied as advised by the National Joint Council. In **February 2023 the National Employers' responded to the union's pay claim with a 'full and final' offer of a 3.88% increase on all NJC Pay Points effective from 1 April 2023. The Employers deliberately called their offer 'full and final' in order to provide clarity from the outset that this was the maximum offer they were able to make. All three unions initially rejected the pay offer. Members of UNISON and GMB went on to vote to accept this offer. For the second consecutive year members of Unite voted against the offer but this did not prevent a collective agreement being reached and implemented on 1 November 2023 (back dated to 1 April 2023), as the majority of the trade union side were in favour of accepting the offer.**

4.2 Nationally negotiated pay increases for employees covered by the Grey Book (National Joint Council for Local Authority Fire and Rescue Services) are applied as advised by the National Joint Council. **An offer of 2% was made by the National Employers on all basic pay rates and Continuous Professional Development (CPD) payments in June 2022. This offer was rejected by the FBU and an improved offer of 5% was made by the Employers in October 2022. In December 2022 this offer was also rejected and FBU members voted in favor of taking industrial action. A further enhanced pay offer of 7% on all basic pay and CPD payments was made in February 2023. The pay dispute ended in March 2023 when this offer was accepted by FBU members. The 7% increase was backdated to 1 July 2022.**

The 2023 pay award for employees covered by the Grey Book, was agreed as part of the revised offer made by the National Employers in February 2023 and accepted by FBU members in March 2023. With effect from 1 July 2023, a 5% increase was applied to all pay rates and CPD payments.

- 4.3 **In November 2023, the FRA confirmed that with effect from 1 January 2023, all Principal Officers (the Chief Fire Officer, Deputy Chief Fire Officer, Assistant Chief Fire Officer and Assistant Chief Officer) will follow a twin-track approach to their salary progression. In accordance with the Gold Book, the first part of this is a cost-of-living increment, as determined nationally. The second element of the twin-track approach is determined locally by the FRA.**

In accordance with nationally negotiated pay awards advised by the National Joint Council (NJC) for Brigade Managers of Local Authority Fire and Rescue Services, **the National Employers made an offer to the Fire Leaders Association in March 2023 of a 4% increase on basic pay with effect from 1 January 2022 and a 3.5% increase on basic pay with effect from 1 January 2023. This pay offer was accepted and the pay award, including retrospective payments, was made in August 2023 to Gold Book employees (the Chief Fire Officer, Deputy Chief Fire Officer, Assistant Chief Fire Officer and Assistant Chief Officer).**

For the second element of the twin-track approach, the FRA confirmed in November 2023 a local pay award of 2.5% increase on basic pay, backdated to 1 January 2023.

The FRA confirmed in November 2023, that the remuneration of the Deputy Chief Fire Officer is to be calculated at 82% of the Chief Fire Officer's salary. The remuneration of the Assistant Chief Fire Officer is set at 75% of the Chief Fire Officer's salary and the Assistant Chief Officer is set at 70% of the Chief Fire Officer's salary. This is effective from 1 December 2023.

- 4.4 **In March 2023, it was agreed by the Chief Fire Officer and the Chairman of the FRA that the post of Assistant Chief Officer would attract an Enhanced Car Allowance with effect from 1 April 2022. As a result of this decision the post would no longer be eligible to receive an Essential Car Allowance.**
- 4.5 As requested by the FRA, we have sought to obtain comparative pay multiple information from across our Fire region and the 3 local authorities that make up the county of Bedfordshire. This has been collated using information published for **2022/23** on each authority's website.

The Annual Pay Statement and Pay Multiple data for BRFS is easily accessible on the BFRS Website. However, it was not as readily accessible for some of the other authorities due to the way in which they report.

In order to be as accurate and transparent as possible, the BFRS pay multiple is calculated using the actual salary of the lowest paid employee and the salary of the Chief Fire Officer/Chief Executive. Other authorities choose to calculate and publish the pay multiple using either the median salary (the middle value of all salaries in the organisation) or mean salary (the average of all salaries paid in the organisation) of paid employees at the authority, against the salary of the Chief Executive/Chief Fire Officer. This makes comparing like for like data difficult. In order to be able to compare the pay multiples, where an authority has calculated using the mean or median salary, further salary data has been obtained from the authority's website or published annual accounts and the pay multiple re-calculated using the lowest and highest salaries.

Pay Multiples for Fire and Rescue Services across our region for 2022/23

<u>Authority</u>	<u>Pay Multiple</u>	<u>Figures used for calculating pay ratio</u>
Bedfordshire Fire & Rescue Service	1:7.34	Actual lowest salary & highest salary (CFO)
Cambridgeshire Fire & Rescue Service	1:8.12	Actual lowest salary & highest salary (CFO)
Buckinghamshire Fire & Rescue Service	1:8.39	Actual lowest salary & highest salary (CFO)
Essex County Fire & Rescue Service	1:7.53	CFO salary & Lowest salary point on NJC Pay Grade
Hertfordshire County Council	1:7.04	Director, Community Protection (CFO) salary & Lowest salary point on NJC Pay Grade

Pay Multiples for local authority councils in the region for 2022/23. Whilst not comparing like for like they represent the local area.

Luton Borough Council	1:9.5	Chief Executive salary & Lowest salary point on NJC Pay Grade
Central Bedfordshire Council	1:10	Chief Executive salary & Lowest salary
Bedford Borough Council	1:8.45	Chief Executive salary & Lowest salary point on NJC Pay Grade

Based on the above data, the average Pay Multiple of the local authorities is **1:9.31**. The average pay multiple of the Fire and Rescue Services in the region listed above is **1:7.68**. The BFRS Pay Multiple for the **2022/23** statement is below the average of the region's Fire Services and remains lower than the public sector averages of 8:1 to 12:1 identified by Lord Hutton in 2011.

4.6 The Fire Authority is asked to consider and approve the proposed pay policy statement at Appendix 1.

JASON TAI
ASSISTANT CHIEF FIRE OFFICER

ANNUAL PAY STATEMENT OF BEDFORDSHIRE FIRE AND RESCUE SERVICE

1. Introduction and Purpose

This is the Pay Statement of Bedfordshire Fire and Rescue Service covering the period April **2024** to March **2025**.

This Pay Statement (the 'statement') sets out Bedfordshire Fire and Rescue Service's (the Service) approach to pay policy in accordance with the requirements of Section 38 of the Localism Act 2011.

This pay statement has been approved by Bedfordshire Fire and Rescue Authority and is effective from 1 April **2024**. It will be reviewed annually and in accordance with new or proposed legislation to ensure that it remains relevant and effective.

2. Accountability and Decision Making

Decision making in relation to the recruitment, pay, terms and conditions and severance arrangements in relation to employees of the Service is determined by the Fire Authority who have delegated some powers to the Chief Fire Officer through a scheme of delegation.

3. Responsibility and Scale

The Service is directly responsible for a budget of **£34.748m** and for the employment of **593** staff.

4. The Service Pay Strategy

In determining the pay and remuneration of its employees the Service will comply with all relevant employment legislation this includes the Equality Act 2010, the Part Time Employment (Prevention of Less Favourable Treatment) Regulations 2000 and The Agency Workers Regulations 2010.

The Service takes the following approach to determining overall pay levels.

4.1 Firefighting Roles - Salary and Remuneration

This relates to the following roles within Bedfordshire Fire and Rescue Service:

Firefighter, Crew Manager, Watch Manager, Station Manager, Group Manager and Area Manager, regardless of duty system (e.g. wholetime, day duty, retained or flexible duty) and Control specific roles. The pay structure for employees conditioned to the Scheme of Conditions of Service for Local Authority Fire and Rescue Services (Grey Book) provides a three point pay structure at Firefighter level and a two point pay structure for all other roles. Rates of pay are based on defined stages of development such as training, development and competent pay levels. After all the applicable functions have been assessed as having been achieved, and a quality assured process is in place, competence is deemed to have been demonstrated and competent salary rate applied.

Pay awards applied to the salary scales are as agreed through the national joint council and notified to Authorities.

4.2 Support Roles - Salary and Remuneration

Salary and remuneration levels for support staff roles are determined in accordance with the National Joint Council for Local Government Services (NJC) National Agreement on Pay and Conditions of Service (Green Book).

The pay structure is aligned to the National spinal column point system. In 2005 Bedfordshire Fire and Rescue Service applied the Korn Ferry (formerly Hay) analytical job evaluation process that systematically ranked each job objectively and fairly. This evaluation system is a recognised best practice non-discriminatory method of ranking jobs against a pre-determined scale. The system is used in over ninety countries and within the public and private sector. In 2018 Korn Ferry were commissioned to quality assure the job evaluation scheme and reviewed the ranking of all Green Book roles against the pre-determined scale to ensure the job evaluation scheme was being applied correctly.

Spinal column points are configured into groups to provide incremental pay points. The incremental rises occur on 1 April, subject to National pay bargaining. Starting salary may be uplifted along the incremental structure if experience and knowledge warrant this approach.

In 2019 Green Book employers were required to implement a new National pay spine, which entirely replaced the existing pay spine. The Service assimilated employees from their existing spinal column point to their new spinal column point on 1 April 2019. For some time, the Service has experienced recruitment difficulties in certain Green Book posts, this has primarily been 'professional' posts in areas like HR, Finance and Property and there were concerns at Corporate Management Team level that

salaries were no longer competitive in the local labour market. Therefore, as part of the assimilation exercise the Service took the opportunity to compare the pay line to other organisations that also use the Korn Ferry Job Evaluation Scheme, by undertaking a salary benchmarking exercise. This resulted in the application of the 2% NJC pay award to employees at Grade 12 and below, whilst Grades 13-17 were aligned to the 60th percentile of the Industrial and Service Sector.

4.3 Chief Fire Officer and Principal Officer - Salary and Remuneration

The National Joint Council (NJC) for Brigade Managers of Local Authority Fire and Rescue Authorities will publish annually recommended minimum levels of salary applicable to Chief Fire Officers/Chief Executives employed by local authority fire and rescue authorities. The Fire Authority recognises that there is a two-track approach for determining levels of pay for Chief Fire Officer/Chief Executives and Director roles.

- i. At national level, the NJC shall review annually the level of pay increase applicable to all those covered by the Gold Book. Any increase agreed by the NJC will be communicated to fire authorities by circular.
- ii. Pay increases will be considered for local negotiation on an annual basis. All decisions about the level of pay and remuneration to be awarded to individual Chief Fire Officer and Principal Officer roles will be taken by the Fire Authority paying due regard to the information circulated by the NJC.

Details of senior salaries is published on the Transparency pages of our website and can be accessed on the internet at [Salary Details as at 31.03.2023 \(1\).pdf \(bedsfire.gov.uk\)](#)

Alternatively, at page 60 of the Annual Statement of Accounts [Pre-Audited Statement of Accounts 2022-23.pdf \(bedsfire.gov.uk\)](#)

5. All Roles - Allowances, Expenses, Bonuses and Performance Related Pay

The Chief Fire Officer and Principal Officers are employees of Bedfordshire Fire and Rescue Service and are not self-employed. The Fire Authority (the Authority) will not award bonuses or Performance Related Pay (PRP) additional to base salary, as the Authority expects excellent performance of its Principal Officers at all times in line with the Authorities objectives. Individual performance will be reviewed via the performance management framework.

When legitimately incurred in the performance of their duties all employees are able to claim a restricted range of legitimate expenses. These are reimbursed in accordance with the relevant terms and conditions specified in the Gold, Grey or Green Book. All expenses have the usual audit requirements with the requirement to produce receipts, authorisation of all

expenditure and the requirement to retain records. Eligible Operational officers can utilise pool cars to undertake their operational duties and responsibilities or can access the car leasing scheme. Use of a pool car for non-official purposes will require reimbursement to the Service.

A range of allowances are payable subject to employees meeting relevant criteria. These include:

- Shift allowances for Green Book employees working unsocial hours;
- Flexible Duty System supplement for fire officers conditioned to the flexible duty system;
- Overtime allowances for employees required to work additional hours;
- Continuous Professional Development (CPD) payments for Grey Book employees who meet the qualifying criteria and are able to demonstrate and provide evidence of continuous professional development in four key areas prescribed by the NJC;
- **Car allowances:** Essential user car allowance, **Enhanced car allowance or (for officers on the flexible duty system or strategic operational commander rota)** access to a lease car scheme for employees required to use their own vehicle on official business;
- Honoraria payments to recognise employees acting up to a higher role, special projects involving work outside the job role and outstanding contribution;
- Additional Responsibility Allowance to reward additional skills and responsibilities outside of the requirements of Grey Book job roles;
- Acting up and temporary promotion allowances for employees performing the duties of a higher role.
- Mileage, travel expenses, subsistence and other expenses (e.g. Professional expenses) reimbursed when appropriate and in accordance with service procedure on expenses.
- Additional Holiday Payment for employees working overtime or additional hours paid on a monthly basis when eligible.

(Strategic Operational Commanders, Area Manager B) are paid an Additional Responsibility Allowance. This is to reflect the additional responsibility they undertake in the performance of Service operational command cover and for working a locally agreed rota that provides the Service with additional managerial hours.

6. Severance Arrangements

Provision for severance arrangements exist in the Local Government Pension Scheme applicable to Green Book and Control employees. The Fire Authority has previously agreed policy in relation to The Local Government (Early Termination of Employment) (Discretionary Compensation) (England and Wales) Regulations 2006. Regulation 7 states that employing authorities must formulate, publish and keep under review discretionary powers that they apply in the exercise of their discretionary powers under regulations 5 and 6. They provide the discretions that local authorities can use in awarding compensation to employees whose employment is terminated early as the result of redundancy, early retirement on the grounds of efficiency.

There is currently no provision for enhanced redundancy payments in the Firefighters Pension Scheme.

7. Pension Schemes

The Service operates pension schemes for Grey Book employees (Firefighters' Pension Scheme) and Green Book employees (Local Government Pension Scheme). New employees are automatically enrolled into the relevant occupational pension scheme as defined by their terms and conditions of employment on appointment and qualifying employees are automatically re-enrolled during their employment.

Employer contribution rates for each scheme are set by Actuaries and subject to regular review. As at 1 April **2023** the employer contribution rates are 37.30% for 1992 Fire Fighters Pension Scheme, 27.4% for the 2006 New Fire Fighters Pension Scheme, 28.8% for the Firefighters Pension Scheme 2015, 37.30% for the Retained Modified Pension Scheme and 20.6% for the Local Government Pension Scheme. Employee contribution rates are defined by statute and vary across the different pension schemes. Current employee contribution rates as at 1 April **2023** for the 1992 Firefighters pension scheme range from 11% –17%, contribution rates for the 2006 New Firefighter Pension Scheme are 8.5% - 12.5%, Firefighters Pension Scheme 2015 contribution rates range from 11% - 14.5%, contribution rates for the Retained Modified Pension Scheme are between 11% - 17%. The employee contribution rates for the Local Government Pension Scheme are presently 5.5% to 12.5%.

8. Abatement and Re-engagement

The Service will consider re-employment of retired employees in accordance with the relevant pension scheme orders and governance arrangements. There is no automatic right to be re-employed; the decision will be strictly based on organisational needs and will usually follow an advertising and selection process. Bedfordshire Fire and Rescue Service apply re-

engagement and abatement rules for Grey Book employees in line with the requirements of the relevant pension scheme and in line with all Government guidance.

Abatement and re-engagement is a provision within the Firefighters' Pension Schemes that enables a retired member of the pension scheme to be re-employed. This means that the pensioner receives their commutation (lump sum) upon retirement. Pensioners who are re-engaged following their retirement are subject to the Abatement Rules under the terms of the relevant pension scheme. This requires that the current pension plus current pay cannot be more than pay on retirement, so any excess is abated (reduced). In 2019 the Fire and Rescue Authority determined that the Service will not reappoint Principal Officers after retirement to their previous, or a similar, post save for in exceptional circumstances when such a decision is necessary in the interests of public safety. Any such appointment must be transparent, justifiable and time limited.

9. Low Pay Definition

The lowest paid employees of the Service are employed on full time (37 hours) equivalent salaries in accordance with the minimum scale point in use within the Service grading structure. As at 1 April **2023**, this is Grade 6, spinal column point 5 **£12.18** per hour, **£23,500** per annum. The Service believe that this is the most easily understood definition of low pay as it is the lowest pay grade routinely used for substantive roles.

10. Pay Multiples

The Service uses an established process to determine job size and salary levels. This process determines the relationship between the rate of pay for the lowest paid employee and the highest paid Chief Officer, described as a pay multiple.

It is a requirement of the Localism Act that the current pay multiple to be applied for this annual pay policy statement must use data from the preceding year, therefore data from **1 April 2022 to 31 March 2023**. **The pay multiple between the lowest paid employee and the current highest paid Chief Officer (current Chief Fire Officer) is 1:7.34**. This ratio can be measured as being lower than the public sector averages of 8:1 to 12:1 identified by Lord Hutton in March 2011.

BFRS pay multiple for the lowest earner has been calculated using all taxable earnings for the given year, including base salary, allowances, overtime and the cash value of any benefits-in-kind; pro-rated to a full time equivalent, compared to the unabated Chief Fire Officer full time equivalent.

11. Part-Time Employees

The salary and remuneration of part-time employees is the same as those of full-time employees (pro-rata where appropriate) unless otherwise stated.

12. Code of Recommended Practice for Local Authorities on Data Transparency

Bedfordshire Fire and Rescue Service is committed to the three principles enshrined in the Code:

- Responding to public demand;
- Releasing data in open formats available for re-use; and
- Releasing data in a timely way.

Data on senior salaries is published in the annual statement of accounts and the most recently produced can be accessed on the internet at page 60 of the Annual Statement of Accounts [Pre-Audited Statement of Accounts 2022-23.pdf](#) (bedsfire.gov.uk)

The approved Pay Policy Statement will also be available from [Information we Publish | Bedfordshire Fire and Rescue Service](#) (bedsfire.gov.uk) as well as the intranet site. In addition a range of information relating to Bedfordshire Fire and Rescue Services responsibilities under the local Government Transparency Code can be found on [Information we Publish | Bedfordshire Fire and Rescue Service](#) (bedsfire.gov.uk)

SUBJECT: **Serious Violence Duty**

Author and contact: **Chris Bigland, DCFO**
chris.bigland@bedsfire.gov.uk

Background Papers: [2023/24 KPIs Update](#)

Appendix	Title	Protective Marking
A	Specified Authorities and overview	
B	Organogram	

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.

	Yes / No	Impact / Reference
Financial Implications	No	None
Risk Management	No	None
Legal Implications	Yes	The service is required to meet the Duty as described in the report

Privacy and Security Implications	No	None
Duty to Collaborate	Yes	The <u>Policing and Crime Act 2017</u> requires the Authority to consider opportunities for collaboration with the police and ambulance services. Meeting the duty is dependent on collaboration.
Health and Safety Implications	No	None
Equality, Diversity and Inclusion	Yes	Positive impact to all communities as the service will identify and support more of the people who need our help most, ensuring we make every contact count by delivering evidence-based interventions that will promote the safety of individuals and the community.
Environmental Sustainability	No	None
Consultation and Communication	No	None

PURPOSE:

To provide Members a high-level brief on the Serious Violence Duty (SVD) and how Bedfordshire Fire and Rescue Service is supporting the delivery of positive outcomes for the people of Bedfordshire across the partnership.

RECOMMENDATIONS:

1. Members are asked to note the contents of the report.
-

1. Background

- 1.1 The Duty is part of the Police, Crime, Sentencing and Courts Act 2022. At the centre of the Duty is the principle of collaboration and the focus on the needs of the individual. The SVD places a new legal responsibility on 'specified authorities' to collaborate and plan to prevent and reduce serious violence.
- 1.2 The Duty builds upon the service's core function to protect and support our communities and to fully realise our safeguarding responsibilities. Underpinning the intent is an expectation that all agencies work together to share information and identify warning signs, so relevant authorities can get involved earlier ultimately reducing harm and protecting our communities.
- 1.3 Appendix A illustrates the Specified Authorities and the high level approach to the Duty for Bedfordshire.

2. Service involvement to date

- 2.1. The County benefits from hosting a Violence and Exploitation Reduction Unit which means Bedfordshire already had significant infrastructure and governance in place to advance work related to the SVD, see appendix B.
- 2.2. In March 2023 the Home office commissioned a series of interviews through Crest Advisory. This was a national pulse survey to determine engagement and progress against compliance with the Duty. The DCFO and Head of Prevention were interviewed to gauge service engagement and partnership progress against the requirements.
- 2.3. Core to this was whether the service had been engaged in the creation of the county strategy and the local plans to deliver the strategy. Officers were able to describe the governance in the county and evidence the service is participating in the work of the Serious Harm Board (SHB) and its sub groups. Officers also described the work already underway to support vulnerable individuals through Prevention activity linked to our own Community Risk Management Plan and our participation in the work of the Community Safety Partnerships (CSP).
- 2.4. The service has been engaged in CSPs since their establishment under the Crime and Disorder Act 1998 and as such attends each of the three CSPs covering the county. It was determined that although the SHB sits across the county, due to the difference between the three unitary areas, a CSP level strategy and plan would be developed for each.

- 2.5. The CSPs in Bedford Borough, Central Bedfordshire and Luton, have worked together, with the support of Crest Advisory and the OPCC to incorporate the VERU Strategy into their respective 2024/25 delivery plans for consistency in implementing the Duty and the service has contributed to each of these delivery plans.
- 2.6. The SVD is governed at county level through the SHB which is chaired by the Chief Executive Officer of Luton Borough Council. The BFRS representative at the strategic board is the DCFO. A sub board sits to direct the work against the plan and the Head of Prevention sits on this board as the service lead.
- 2.7. To ensure that the board and sub-board are able to make decisions based on evidence a data group has been established. The Data & Intelligence Group on Violence and Exploitation Reduction in Bedfordshire (DIGVERB) was established last year, and the service is represented at this group by the Business Applications Manager.

3. Service activity in support of the Duty

- 3.1 The service already works with children and young people (CYP) through well-established models, working with partners to use intelligence to identify CYP and adults who are at higher risk of serious violence and engage them in interventions, activities, and education to reduce their likelihood of becoming involved with serious violence and associated anti-social behaviour.
- 3.2 These interventions include the service schools programmes, cadets and other youth settings, and our fire setters interventions.
- 3.3 The service has developed close links with the Childrens and Adults Safeguarding Boards to support risk reduction services for those identified as vulnerable and at risk from exploitation or abuse.
- 3.4 All staff are required to complete e-learning to better equip them with an understanding of harm and vulnerability. This means our workforce can spot signs and symptoms when conducting our routine activity. These learning materials cover:
 - PREVENT
 - Modern Day Slavery

- Human Trafficking
- Domestic Abuse
- Child Sexual Exploitation
- Hoarding

- 3.5 Our home safety check programme and the range of intelligence gathered can be pushed to appropriate agencies automatically to ensure the Bedfordshire system can act swiftly to protect and support our citizens.
- 3.6 Finally, the service is working with the Project Manager for the SVD to consider a funding bid to deliver an early intervention programme. This is something that has been run in the past by the service but was withdrawn. The bid seeks to run a pilot course on the existing template model of Fire Break, this would see a weeklong programme based around fire service activity to help develop the young persons life skills and distance individuals from poor decision making and exposure to harm. Ultimately supporting a transition away from NEET or criminal behaviour.

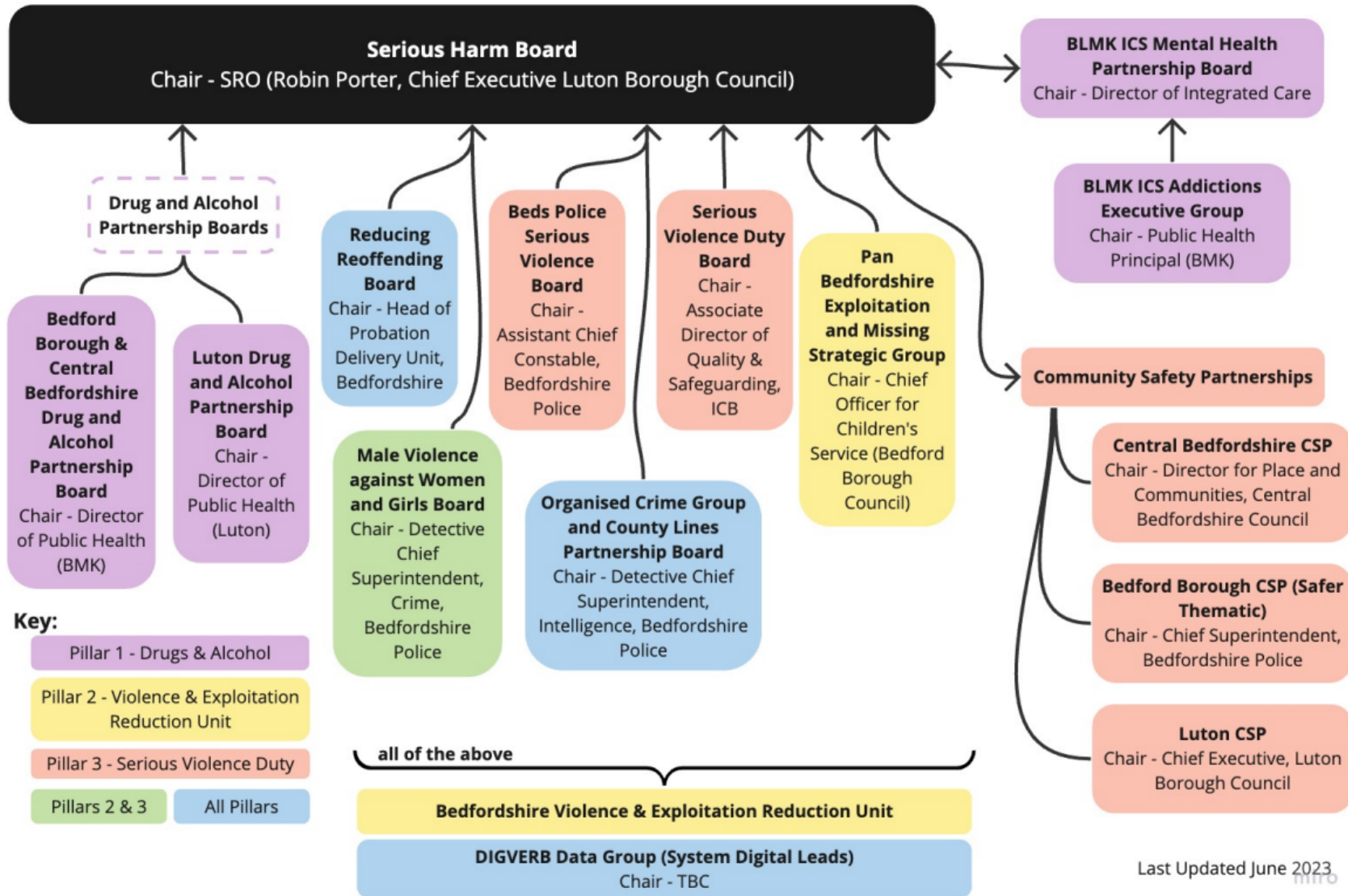
CHRIS BIGLAND
DEPUTY CHIEF FIRE OFFICER

Appendix A



Appendix B

Bedfordshire Drug, Violence and Exploitation Governance Structure



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SUBJECT: CALENDAR OF MEETINGS 2024/25

Author and contact: Nicky Upton, Business Support Manager
Democratic.Services@bedsfire.gov.uk

Background Papers: None

Appendix	Title	Protective Marking
1	FRA Calendar of Meetings 2024-25	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	The Democratic Services team has liaised with the respective teams at the three constituent authorities, to ensure clashes of Local Authority and Bedfordshire Fire and Rescue Authority meetings are removed for 2024/25. The CFO, ACO, Chair and MO have all been consulted on the dates proposed. Once dates approved by the Fire Authority, they will added into calendars, including Moderngov on the website, so easily accessible to Members and members of the public. Notices displaying the dates and times of the meetings will also be displayed outside of HQ and Dunstable Community Fire Station.

PURPOSE:

To consider a calendar of meeting dates for the Fire Authority in 2024/25.

RECOMMENDATION:

It is recommended that the submitted provisional calendar of dates for meetings of the Fire and Rescue Authority and its associated Committees for the forthcoming year be approved.

1. Executive Summary

- 1.1 A calendar for all meetings of the Authority for 2024/25 of the full Fire and Rescue Authority, including meetings of committees, is submitted for Members' consideration.

- 1.2 The constituent Councils were contacted in the preparation of the proposed programme of meetings and their meetings were taken into account where available.
- 1.3 A programme of regular Members' visits to Fire Stations will be put in place, in due course, by the CFOs office.
- 1.4 Five Member Development (half) Days, one of which will again be combined with a Budget Workshop, along with a second Budget Workshop, have been included:

Member Development:	9 July 2024, 4 September 2024, 1 October 2024, 25 February 2025
Combined Member Development & Budget Workshop (1):	27 November 2024
Budget Workshop (2):	28 January 2025

GRAHAM BRITTEN
MONITORING OFFICER

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FRA MEETING CALENDAR 2024/25

Public Meetings noted in bold type

May 2024			Notes
Executive Committee Meeting	Fire and Rescue Service Headquarters, Conference Room	16 May 2024 (10:00)	Will only be called if urgent business arises.
June 2024			
FRA Meeting (Annual Meeting)	Dunstable Community Fire Station, Lecture Theatre	11 June 2024 (10:00)	
Executive Committee Meeting	Fire and Rescue Service Headquarters, Conference Room	25 June 2024 (10:00)	
July 2024			
Members' Development Day (1)	Luton Community Meeting Room, Luton Fire Station	9 July 2024 (10:00)	
FRA	Dunstable Community Fire Station, Lecture Theatre	16 July 2024 (10:00)	
Audit and Standards Committee	Fire and Rescue Service Headquarters, Conference Room	30 July 2024 (10:00)	
August 2024			
No meetings			
September 2024			

BEDFORDSHIRE FIRE AND RESCUE AUTHORITY
Contact: Nicky Upton 07768 560590 democratic.services@bedsfire.gov.uk

FRA MEETING CALENDAR 2024/25

Members' Development Day (2)	Luton Community Room, Luton Fire Station	4 September 2024 (10:00)	
FRA Executive Committee Meeting	Fire and Rescue Service Headquarters, Conference Room	12 September 2024 (10:00)	
Audit and Standards Committee	Fire and Rescue Service Headquarters, Conference Room	26 September 2024 (10:00)	
October 2024			
Members' Development Day (3)	Dunstable Community Fire Station, Lecture Theatre	2 October 2024 (10:00)	
FRA	Dunstable Community Fire Station, Lecture Theatre	9 October 2024 (10:00)	
November 2024			
FRA Executive Committee Meeting	Fire and Rescue Service Headquarters, Conference Room	19 November 2024 (10:00)	
Combined Members' Development Day (4) / Budget Workshop (1)	Dunstable Community Fire Station, Lecture Theatre	27 November 2024 (10:00)	
December 2024			
Audit and Standards Committee	Fire and Rescue Service Headquarters, Conference Room	3 December 2024 (10:00)	

FRA MEETING CALENDAR 2024/25

Full FRA	Dunstable Community Fire Station, Lecture Theatre	17 December 2024 (10:00)	
January 2025			
FRA Executive Committee Meeting	Fire and Rescue Service Headquarters, Conference Room	21 January 2025 (10:00)	
Budget Workshop (2)	Dunstable Community Fire Station, Lecture Theatre	28 January 2025 (10:00)	
February 2025			
FRA (Draft Budget)	Dunstable Community Fire Station, Lecture Theatre	13 February 2025 (10:00)	
Members' Development Day (5)	Dunstable Community Fire Station, Lecture Theatre	25 February 2025 (10:00)	
March 2025			
Audit and Standards Committee	Fire and Rescue Service Headquarters, Conference Room	4 March 2025 (10:00)	
FRA Executive Committee Meeting	Fire and Rescue Service Headquarters, Conference Room	6 March 2025 (10:00)	
FRA	Dunstable Community Fire Station, Lecture Theatre	26 March 2025 (10:00)	

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SUBJECT: WORK PROGRAMME 2023-24

Author and contact: Nicky Upton, Democratic.services@bedsfire.gov.uk

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

28.03.24

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) 2024/25 CRMP Annual Action Plan Business Continuity Planning Disposal of Assets under the Scheme of Delegated Authority Proposed Indicators and Targets for 2024/25 Emergency Response Standards Review of Wholetime Firefighter Campaign 2023 Members' Allowances Scheme Work Programme		HSSAM Deferred from February meeting DCFO ACFO Deferred from February meeting
Additional/Commissioned Items			

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EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE - WORK PROGRAMME 2023/24

Executive Committee
14.03.24

Cyclical Agenda Items	Agenda item (locked for editing)	CFO Review (select from drop down list)	Notes
	Communications Executive Committee Minutes from 22.01.24 'Strikes' Minimum Service Levels' Act 2023 Firefighters Pension Scheme 2024/25 KPIs update Work Programme Succession Planning	Deferred	DCFO - briefing only paper for 08.03.24 Mem Dev as per PO mtg 17.01.24 Deferred from 22.01.24 Executive meeting Requested by CFO 16.01.24
Additional/Commissioned Items	HMICFRS Action Plan Update Principal Officers Annual Pay Review (next review due February 2025)		Requested by Executive Committee 21.09.23 Requested by Executive Committee 23.11.23 (Timeline proposed by ACO)

Executive Committee
16.05.24
Provisional for any urgent business

Cyclical Agenda Items	Agenda item (locked for editing)	CFO Review (select from drop down list)	Notes
	Provisionally held for any urgent business before Annual Meeting in June		
Additional/Commissioned Items			

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AUDIT AND STANDARDS COMMITTEE - WORK PROGRAMME 2023/24

Audit &
Standards
Committee
Meeting Date
04.03.24

Cyclical Agenda Items	Agenda item (locked for editing)	ACO Review (select from drop down list)	Notes
Additional/Commissioned Items	Communications ASC Minutes from 04.01.24 Audit Results Report (E&Y)(Results of 2022/23 audit including any matters outstanding) External Audit Plan 2024/25 (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	Removed	KPGMs audit of 2023/24 in 2024/25 Restricted Deferred from January

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MEMBER DEVELOPMENT DAYS 2023/24

Member Dev
29.02.24 (4)
People &
Workshop

Cyclical Agenda Items	Agenda item (locked for editing) Code of Ethics presentation (30 mins) EDI Firefighter Pensions Briefing	CFO Review (select from drop down list)	Notes Moved from November's event at the request of the ACO Requested by the FRA at the 03.10.23 meeting
Additional/Commissioned Items	Staff Dev/Recruitment/Gateway Cultural Improvement Action Plan Maternity Pay Provision		Requested by ACFO 17.01.24 Requested by CFO 16.01.24 Requested by CFO 16.01.24

Member Dev
08.03.24 (5)
ECR & Estates
Workshop

Cyclical Agenda Items	Agenda item (locked for editing) Emergency Cover Review update Estates strategy update Briefing on 'Strikes' Minimum Service Levels' Act 2023 - ? Part 2 paper	CFO Review (select from drop down list)	Notes Requested by CFO 16.01.24 Requested by CFO 16.01.24 DCFO
Additional/Commissioned Items			

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of the Local Government Act 1972.

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of the Local Government Act 1972.

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