



Bedfordshire
Fire and Rescue Service

STATEMENT OF ASSURANCE 2019/20



Statement of Assurance 2019/20

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1. Introduction

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

2. Financial Assurance

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

3. Governance Framework

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

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

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

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

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

The seven core principles are:

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

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

3.1 Annual Governance Statement

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

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

3.2 Internal Audit

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

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

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

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

3.3 External Audit

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

The inspection framework is built around three key questions:

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

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

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

3.4 Committee and Groups

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

- Prevention and Protection;
- Operational Performance and Preparedness;

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

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

3.5 Review of Authority Effectiveness

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



3.6 Internal Control Framework

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

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

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

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

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

Other forms of measures include:

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

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

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

3.7 Data Transparency

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

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

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

4. Operational Assurance

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

4.1 Performance Summary

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

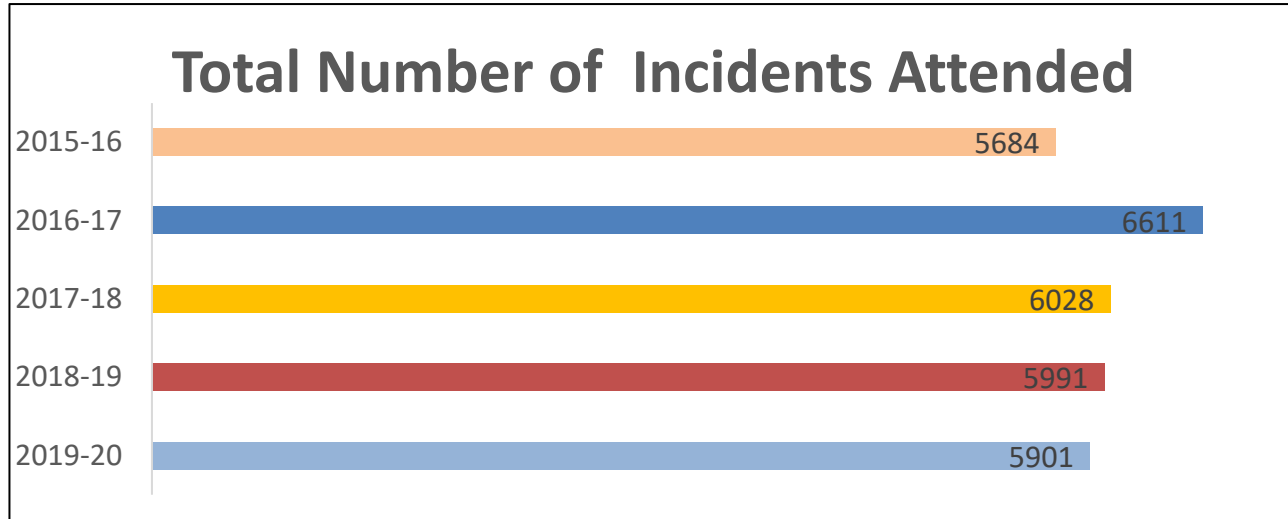
The Service Delivery PIs were reviewed for 2019/20. Full details of the Service's performance for 2019/20 and comparison against performance for 2018/19 is reported within the [Annual Overarching Performance Report 2019/20.](#)

4.2 Overview of Service Activity

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

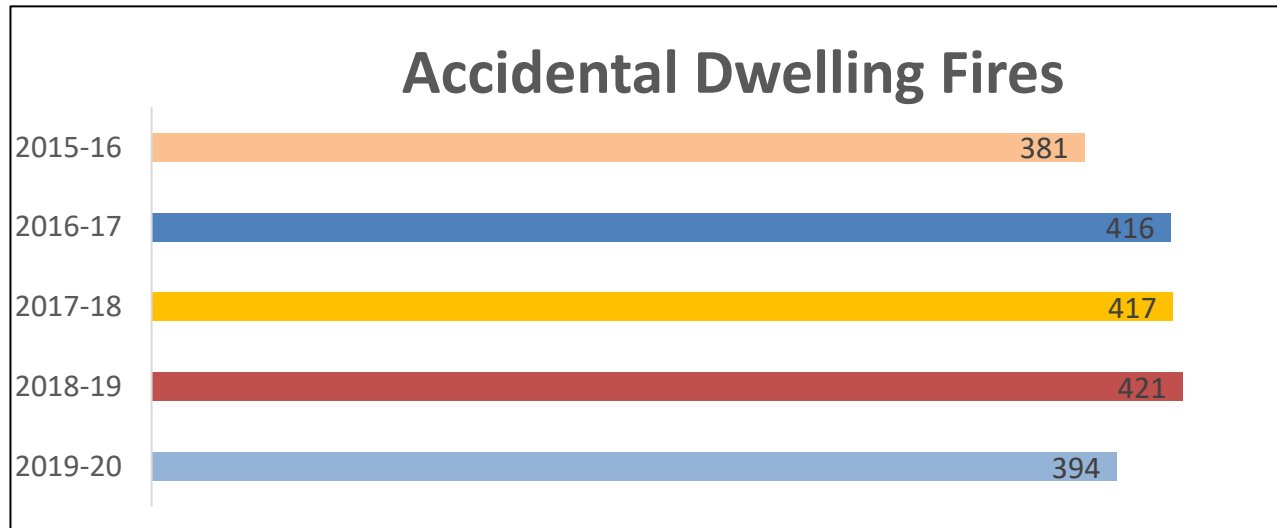
4.2.1 Total Number of Incidents Attended

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



4.2.2 Accidental Dwelling Fires

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

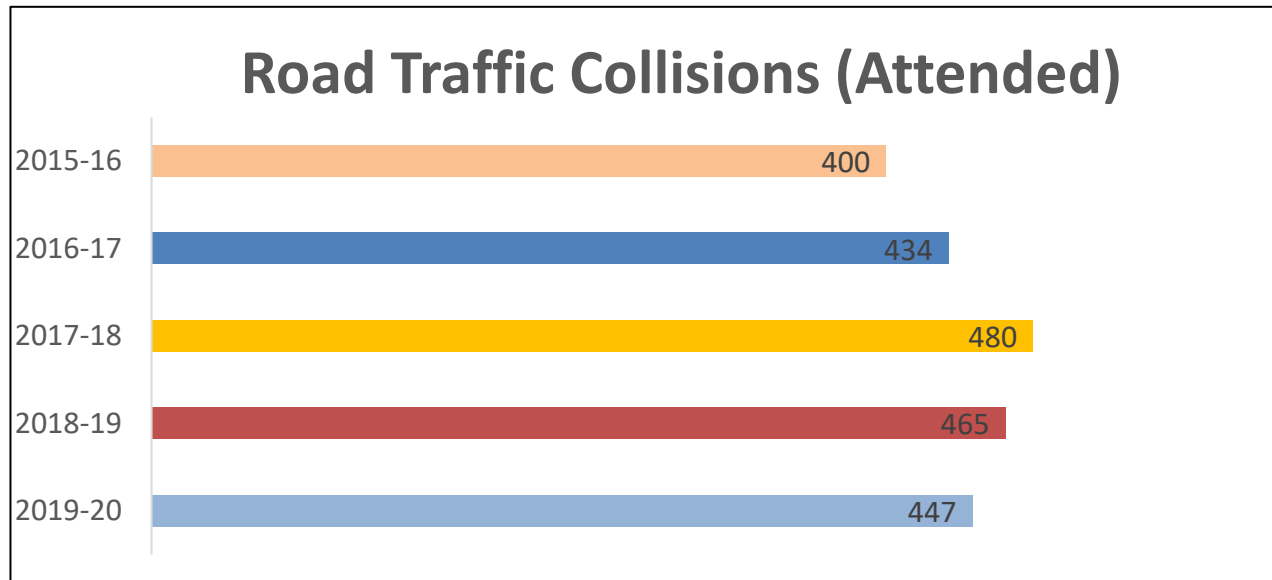
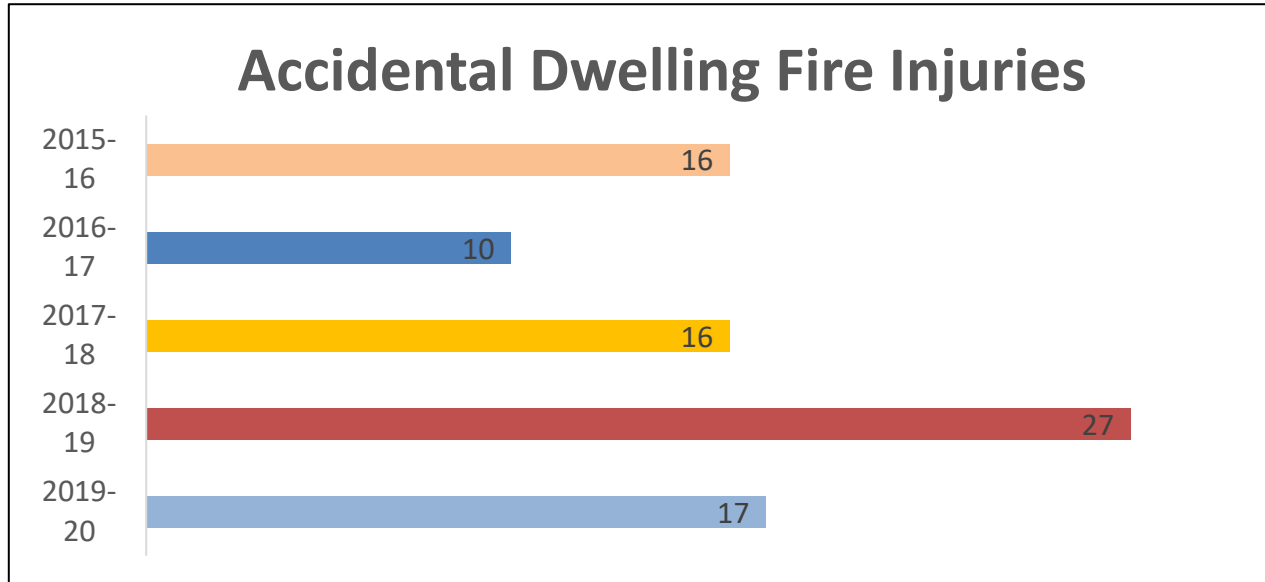


4.2.3 Accidental Dwelling Fire Injuries

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

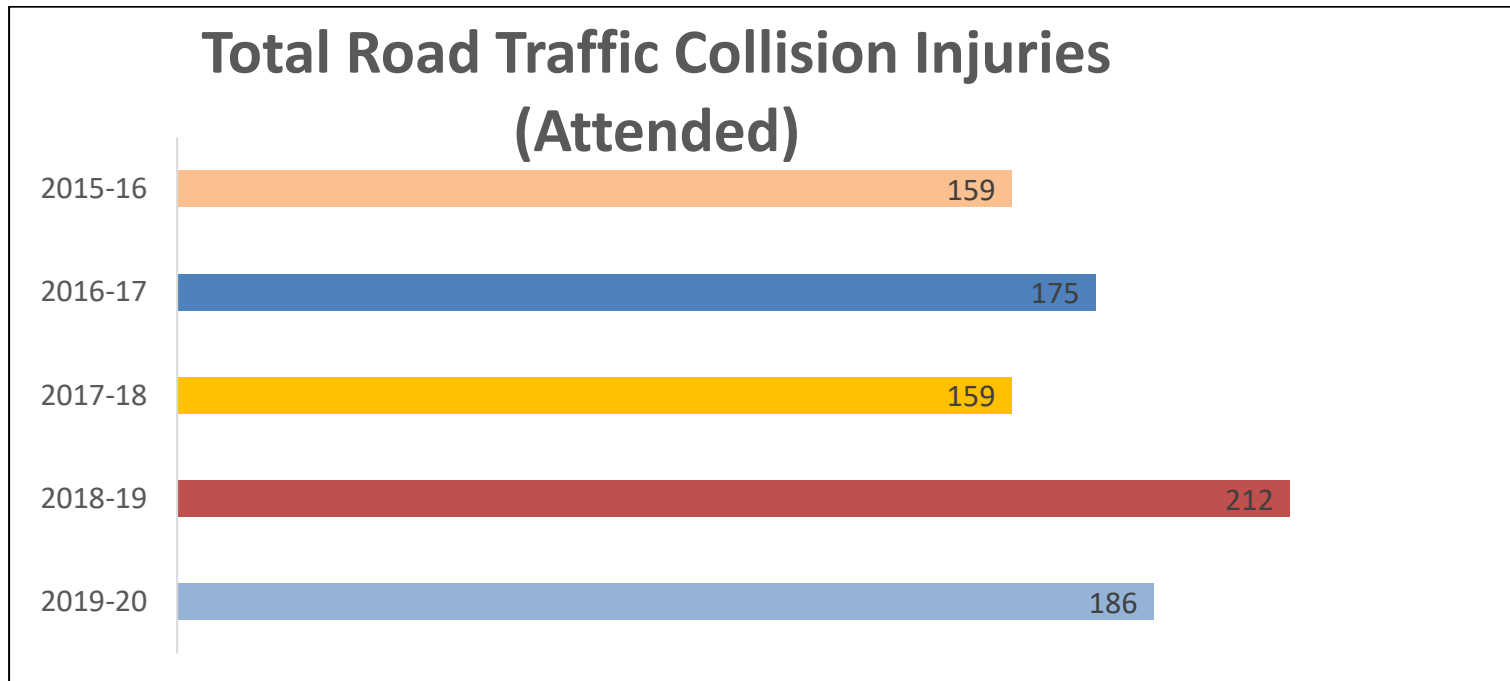
4.2.4 Road Traffic Collisions (Attended)

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



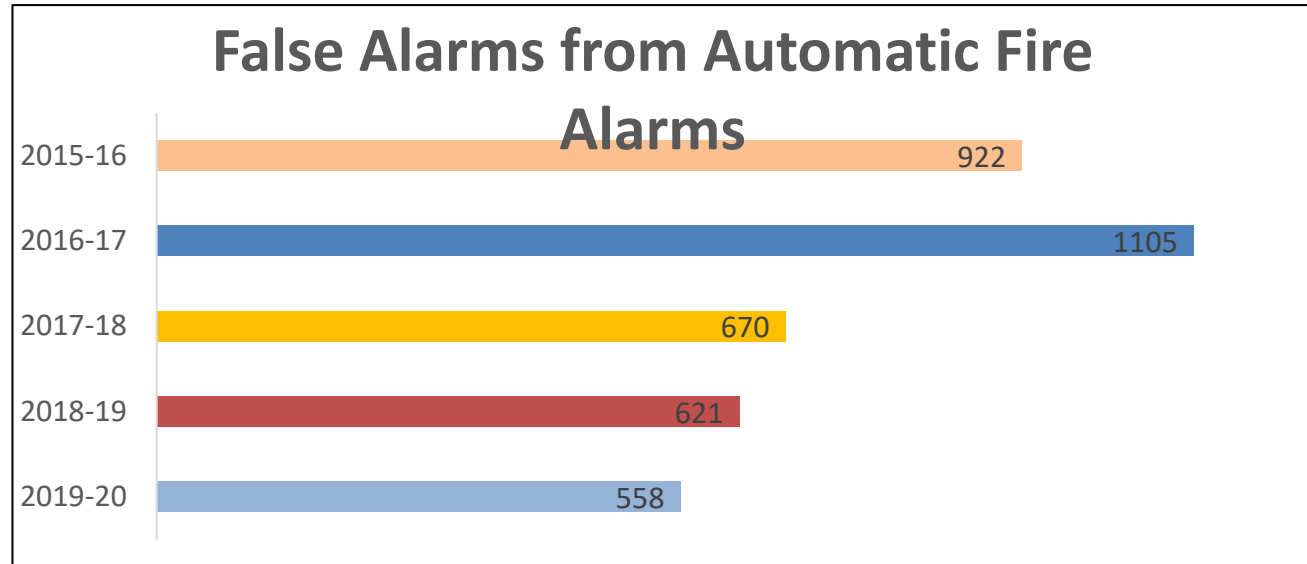
4.2.5 Road Traffic Collision Injuries (Attended)

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



4.2.6 False Alarms from Automatic Fire Alarms

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



4.2.7 Total Home Fire Safety Checks/Safe and Well Visits

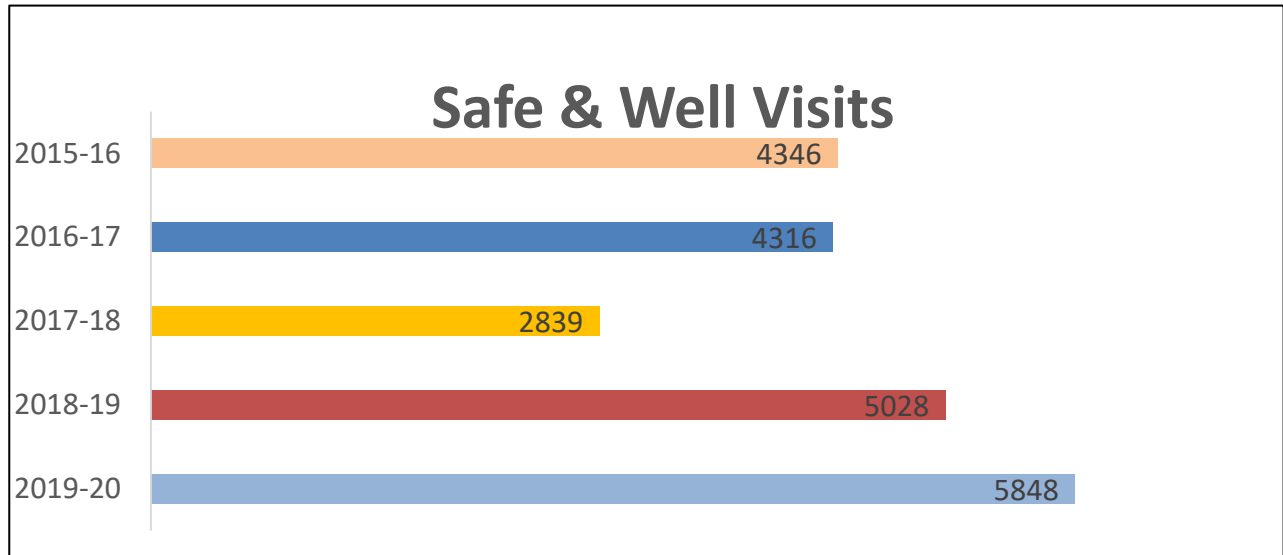
The Service uses a variety of preventative risk reduction activities in its continued commitment to keep the communities' of Bedfordshire safe.

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

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

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

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



4.3 Community Risk Management Plan

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

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

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

communities.

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

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

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

4.4 Mutual Aid and Reinforcement Schemes

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

4.5 Business Continuity Arrangements

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

4.6 National Resilience

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

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

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

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

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

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

5. Awards and Commendations

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

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



6. Future Improvements

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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



7. Conclusion

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

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

Signed
Chief Fire Officer



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

Signed
Chair of the Bedfordshire Fire and Rescue Authority

GLOSSARY

AGS - Annual Governance Statement

BFRA - Bedfordshire Fire and Rescue Authority

BFRS – Bedfordshire Fire and Rescue Service

BLRF - Bedfordshire Local Resilience Forum

BCM - Business Continuity Management

CIPFA - Chartered Institute of Public Finance and Accountancy

CRMP - Community Risk Management Plan

C&AG - Comptroller and Auditor General

CMT - Corporate Management Team

EEAST - East of England Ambulance Service Trust

FSOT – Fire Service Operations Team

FRA - Fire and Rescue Authority

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

HR - Human Resources

IFRS - International Financial Reporting Standards

PIs - Performance Indicators

VFM - Value for Money