

# Community Risk Management Plan 2023-27

## Table of Contents

<b>Community Risk Management Plan 2023-27</b> .....	1
Foreword.....	4
About Us .....	5
Bedfordshire Fire & Rescue Authority.....	5
Bedfordshire Fire & Rescue Service.....	5
Our Values and Behaviours.....	6
Our Approach to Future Planning and Risk Management – Towards 2050.....	7
Community Risk Management Planning.....	7
Statutory Drivers - Legislation .....	7
Strategic Assessment.....	9
Collaboration & Partnerships.....	10
Accountability.....	10
Summary of our Community Risk Analysis 2022 .....	11
Our County and Communities .....	11
Accidental Dwelling Fires .....	12
Deliberate fires.....	12
Non-fire incidents (e.g., assisting other agencies, animal rescues, flooding/water rescues, persons locked out, chemical incidents) .....	12
Road Traffic Collisions (RTC).....	13
False Alarms .....	13
Commercial and industrial building fires .....	14
Heritage Risks.....	14
Climate Change – extreme weather-related incidents.....	15
Wider Community Risks .....	15
Risk of Terrorist Attack .....	15
Emerging Technology Risks.....	15
Our Strategic Direction .....	16
Our Mission and Strategic Commitments .....	16
Prevention Strategy: Preventing fires and other emergencies from happening ....	17
Protection (Building Safety) Strategy: Protecting people and properties when fires happen .....	19

Response Strategy: Responding to fires & other emergencies quickly & effectively .....	20
Engaging & building closer relationships with our communities, businesses and partners .....	22
People Strategy: Investing in our people to be the best they can be, to serve you better .....	24
Making every penny count, using our resources in an environmentally sustainable way .....	26
Assets & Environmental Strategy.....	28
Digital, Data, And Technology Strategy .....	30
Appendix One - Our focus for 2023/24 .....	31
Connect with BFRS.....	34

### Version Control

Version	Date	Notes
0.1	12 <sup>th</sup> October 2022	1 <sup>st</sup> draft shared with Principal Officers
0.2	24 <sup>th</sup> October 2022	Updated after CRMP Steering Group action planning
0.3	3 <sup>rd</sup> November	Updated following CRMP Steering Group
0.4	7 <sup>th</sup> November	Updated following CMT Away day and CRMP Steering Group comments on Strategic Risk Assessment
0.5	9 <sup>th</sup> December	Updated following feedback from CFO and CRMP Steering Group action planning
0.6	23 <sup>rd</sup> February 2023	Updated following discussion at CMT on 15 <sup>th</sup> Feb
0.7	24 <sup>th</sup> February 2023	Updated following HMICFRS self-assessment process
0.8	16 <sup>th</sup> March 2023	Updated following FRA Exec meeting
0.9	22 <sup>nd</sup> March 2023	Final Drafting prior to presentation to FRA 30 <sup>th</sup> March 2023
0.91	28 <sup>th</sup> March 2023	Further proofreading revealed minor typos which have been corrected and reissued to FRA
0.92	11 <sup>th</sup> May 2023	Completion of quality assurance of all statistics and numerical data for 2022-23

## Foreword

Welcome to Bedfordshire Fire and Rescue Authority's latest Community Risk Management Plan (CRMP) which sets out the key challenges and risks facing our communities and how we intend to meet and reduce these risks over the next 4 years and beyond. We seek to show how we will use our resources, delivered through our core services of prevention, protection, and emergency response, to target the most vulnerable and help keep our communities in Bedfordshire safe.

It is a real honour to be leading such a professional and hardworking team who are delivering great things for our communities and seen by many as a leading light in so many different areas. Over the last 4-5 years, we have sought to improve the self-awareness of the Service and ensure it is more data driven and evidence based in its decision making with the aim of being fit and ready for the future. Reflecting, we are immensely proud of how our amazing team really stepped up to the challenges of the Covid pandemic, the cost-of-living crisis, the wildfires and flooding events of 2022, the numerous major incidents declared across the county and how we are providing more and more support to our health partners including the East of England Ambulance Service Trust (EEAST).

Although there is still much to do, we believe we are in good shape to meet the challenges that lie ahead despite a challenging financial outlook. An independent review by the Local Government Association in Sept 2022 reported that the Authority's governance of its fire and rescue service is "effective" and "decision making processes are clear". Key to our success will be continuing to invest in our people - our biggest asset – in order that they can serve our communities better. This next CRMP seeks to ensure the Service is more outward looking, agile, inclusive, financially prudent, more longer term focused and resilient to the range of possible futures that may lie ahead. A huge thanks also to our partners, with whom we can do so much more together.

Thank you to everyone who took part in the range of consultations during 2022. We have listened to what communities and stakeholders are telling us and as a result, this CRMP is different to ones you might have read before.

There is much to be proud of amongst the diverse communities of Bedfordshire and your fire and rescue service will continue to strive to improve what we do and how we do it whilst *working together to keep Bedfordshire safe*.

Cllr Paul Duckett, Chair of Bedfordshire Fire & Rescue Authority

Andrew Hopkinson, Chief Fire Officer

## About Us

### Bedfordshire Fire & Rescue Authority

Bedfordshire Fire and Rescue Authority (the Authority) is the statutory body established by the Fire & Rescue Services Act 2004 which sets the overall strategic direction of the Bedfordshire Fire & Rescue Service, approving its budget, promoting its core values, and holding the Chief Fire Officer to account, ensuring the Service is delivered effectively, efficiently and provides value for money. The Authority comprises twelve elected councillors, known as Members, appointed from each of the three unitary authorities, whose numbers are proportional to the populations they represent. Three are from Bedford Borough Council, five from Central Bedfordshire Council and four from Luton Borough Council.

Once appointed to the Authority, Members represent the whole community, not just the area they serve as a local councillor. They serve as a valuable link between communities and the Fire and Rescue Service.

More information on the role and responsibilities of the Authority is available on our website ([HERE](#)).

### Bedfordshire Fire & Rescue Service

We provide services from 14 fire stations and have a Fire Control mobilising centre at our headquarters site at Kempston which also hosts our training centre and technical services hub. We operate a range of duty systems to ensure we have the right number of firefighters available at the right time and place to respond to emergencies. Duty systems include:

- 24-hour shift which gives immediate 24-hour response using full-time firefighters.
- Day-crewing giving immediate daytime response using full-time firefighters Monday to Friday with an on-call firefighter response at night and weekends.
- On-Call firefighters providing a response within five to six minutes.
- Our fleet includes 25 Fire Appliances, 22 Specialist Vehicles, 35 Vans, 23 Cars and 2 Welfare units.
- 288 wholetime firefighters, 95 on-call firefighters, 27 control staff, 192 support staff, and 4 principal officers. This adds up to 606 staff (full time equivalents)
- 477 square miles of surface area

We work to **PREVENT** fires and other emergencies from occurring. Our firefighters and other front-line staff undertake home fire safety visits each year, carry out safety talks in schools, and work with partners to inform our communities about fire and road safety.

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

We **RESPOND** to emergencies including fires, road traffic collisions, air and rail crashes, water rescues and flooding, hazardous chemical incidents, and many other types of emergencies. Our firefighters regularly train, maintain and test equipment to ensure they always remain operationally ready to respond to emergencies. We also work closely with our partners such as Bedfordshire Police, the East of England Ambulance Service, local councils and our neighbouring fire and rescue services to make sure we can respond effectively and competently to any emergency.

## Our Values and Behaviours

We are a Values led organisation. Our Values are the qualities that we believe are the most important to us, and describe the expectations the public have of us, and that we have of each other. Our values have been developed with our staff and our communities.

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

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

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

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

The Authority has adopted the national Core Code of Ethics for Fire and Rescue Services in England which was developed in partnership with the National Fire Chiefs Council, Local Government Association, and the Association of Police and Crime Commissioners to support a consistent approach to ethics, including behaviours, by fire and rescue services in England. The diagram over the page shows how the core Code of Ethics maps across to our Values, NFCC Leadership Framework, and our behaviours framework. This approach guides everything we do from strategic planning through to staff appraisals.

## Our Approach to Future Planning and Risk Management – Towards 2050

We take a collaborative and proactive approach to planning and risk management to ensure we are well positioned to respond positively to future challenges in an agile and effective way which reflects the changing risk and demand in our communities. Our 'Towards 2050' approach seeks to take a longer-term view of the range of potential futures that may lie ahead and ensure we are resilient to whichever future becomes the reality.

We have a rigorous yet flexible process that permits the Service to assess and respond to opportunities and threats. The process must allow for adjustments as the environment in which we operate evolves.

The planning framework sets out the various sources of information which inform the planning process and the inter-dependencies between the various elements of planning strategy.

### Community Risk Management Planning

This Community Risk Management Plan 2023 – 2027 (CRMP) sets out how we intend to deliver our mission of *Working together to keep Bedfordshire safe* and helps us meet the responsibilities placed on us by the Fire and Rescue National Framework for England which requires us to produce plan that identifies and assess all the foreseeable fire and rescue related risks and challenges which may arise.

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

We use a range of quantitative and qualitative analysis, the outcomes from which are detailed in our Community Risk Analysis (CRA) document. Our CRA directly informs what we, and our partners, are doing to ensure we are doing the right thing, using the right people and resources, provided in the right place and at the right time to help keep Bedfordshire safe. Our CRMP should be read in conjunction with the CRA. A summary of our 2022 CRA is available on our website.

Our conceptualisation of risk is based on the national Fire Standard on Community Risk Management Planning which identifies five main components of the planning process:

Collectively this is known as the conceptualisation of risk, and this is further explained in the National Fire Chief's Council's document "Fit for the Future".

### Statutory Drivers - Legislation

We keep abreast of our extensive legislative framework which includes:

The [Fire and Rescue Services Act 2004](#) explains how we; respond to fires and other emergencies; prevent fires and other emergencies (home and community safety); protect (commercial and public building) and educate and inform the public.

The Fire and Rescue Service (Emergencies) (England) Order 2007 places a duty on fire and rescue services (in England) to have the capability to remove chemical, biological, radiological, nuclear, and explosive contaminants from people at an emergency. There is also a duty to contain water used for decontamination for a reasonable time. Fire and rescue services must take steps to prevent or limit environmental damage when decontaminating people.

The Civil Contingencies Act 2004 explains how we work with other agencies to deal with emergencies.

The Regulatory Reform (Fire Safety) Order 2005 applies to all premises other than single private dwellings and places expectations on responsible persons to keep people in and around their premises safe from the risk of fire. The Fire Safety Act 2021 has clarified that the Order now includes the external wall systems and dwelling front doors in multi-occupied residential buildings. This, along with the Fire Safety (England) Regulations 2022 and the introduction of the Building Safety Act 2022 represents a major overhaul the regulation of higher-risk buildings and construction products following the tragic Grenfell Tower fire in London in 2017.

The Health and Safety at Work Act 1974 is the primary piece of legislation covering occupational health and safety in Great Britain. It sets out the general duties which employers have towards employees and members of the public, to themselves and to each other.

The Fire and Rescue National Framework 2018 requires us to produce an Integrated Risk Management Plan (this CRMP fulfils that requirement) that identifies and assess all the foreseeable fire and rescue related risks and challenges which may arise, and to set out how we plan to mitigate these risks using our available resources.



## Strategic Assessment

Assessing all the foreseeable changes on the horizon that could affect what we are able to deliver to our communities is important and helps us plan better for the future. Our communities and stakeholders are telling us they would like to see us do more long-term planning. To help us think what the future might look like we reviewed a range of documents and data, including:

<p>The NFCC document “Fit for the Future”</p> <p>Bedfordshire 2050 Think Piece and resulting strategy</p> <p>Fire Standards published by the National Standards Board for Fire and Rescue Services</p> <p>Our partner’s strategic plans</p> <p>Data from the Office of National Statistics, and census info</p> <p>The national threat &amp; risk assessment produced by UK Govt</p> <p>The threat and risk assessment produced by the Bedfordshire Local Resilience Forum</p> <p>Community Risk Analysis &amp; Assessment of Community Risk Level</p>	<p>Annual Strategic Risk Assessment</p> <p>Our own data on incidents we have attended</p> <p>Our internal debrief from our activities during COVID</p> <p>HMICFRS annual “State of Fire” and Inspection reports</p> <p>A host of assurance, evaluation and assessment work including Internal audit reports</p> <p>Engagement across the organisation and with stakeholders</p> <p>Emergency Cover Review</p> <p>Our People impact assessments</p> <p>Corporate Risk Register</p> <p>Our annual Horizon Scanning exercises</p>
--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------	--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------

We are constantly horizon-scanning to assess the drivers of change at the local and national levels. We use the PESTELO framework (Political, Economic, Sociological, Technological, Environmental, Legal and Organisational) to assess the key external factors likely to impact upon us. In addition to the evolving legislative framework, key contributors driving national change include the Home Office, the National Fire Chiefs Council (NFCC), HMICFRS, the Fire Standards Board, HM Coroner Inquests, and new or amended regulations. We will continue to engage with key stakeholders, to influence and lead locally, regionally, and nationally.

Key strategic threats include:

- A challenging financial outlook caused by rising inflation and short-term funding settlements.
- Growing cyber and digital security threat.
- Needing to invest in more environmentally sustainable assets, goods, and services.
- Potential damage to our brand and reputation caused by negative media coverage of FRS culture.
- Challenges in recruiting, developing, and retaining an increasingly younger and more transient workforce.
- Needing to keep pace with modern technologies and improve digital & data literacy.
- Needing to invest in an ageing estate that has not kept pace with the needs of a modern and inclusive FRS.
- Needing to keep pace with a constantly evolving risk and demand profile across a fast-growing county.
- Social discontent and lack of trust in authority.

## Collaboration & Partnerships

Collaboration means working together with other people or organisations to create, or achieve, something of mutual benefit which enhances what either party could have achieved on their own. We embrace collaboration as a key enabler to achieving our mission of *Working together to keep Bedfordshire safe* and we have a strong track record of working with others to make a real difference to the communities across Bedfordshire and we will continue to explore opportunities to work together to improve our services.

The Policing and Crime Act 2017 places a legal duty on blue light services to collaborate efficiently and effectively. We work closely with our blue light colleagues in Bedfordshire Police and the East of England Ambulance Service NHS Trust (EEAST), as well as our local authority colleagues in Bedford Borough Council, Central Bedfordshire Council and Luton Borough Council. We also work in partnership with other fire and rescue services on both front line and support services, such as our shared strategic operational command arrangements and shared Information and Communications Technology (ICT) service with Cambridgeshire Fire and Rescue Service. These arrangements have not only improved services but allowed us to make efficiency savings.

Our partnerships may either be Statutory or non-Statutory in nature. 'Statutory' partnerships are those where there is a legal duty for Bedfordshire Fire and Rescue Service to collaborate with other agencies to achieve certain goals, such as Community Safety Partnerships established under the Crime and Disorder Act 1998. 'Non statutory' partnerships are entered into voluntarily to support achieving organisational targets and goals. We aim to evaluate our partnerships regularly to ensure that they are effective in delivering the expected benefits and outcomes.

## Accountability

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

To support the delivery of our CRMP, we have a range of measures known as Key Performance Indicators (KPIs) which align to the strategies underpinning the CRMP and reported to the FRA every quarter. You can view these ([Here](#)), and the targets set by the FRA on our website. The Authority sets challenging targets for a range of key performance indicators which help them to provide oversight and scrutinise our performance, both in terms of activity outputs and outcomes. This ensures the Service is effectively scrutinised to ensure it is functioning efficiently and effectively and delivering our CRMP.

Every year we publish an Annual Report on our performance that explains progress with key performance indicators and our CRMP.

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

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

## Summary of our Community Risk Analysis 2022

### Our County and Communities

Bedfordshire occupies a geographically central position and is part of the Eastern region within the UK. Bordering four other counties and covering an area of 1,234 km<sup>2</sup> (476.94 mi<sup>2</sup>). Bedfordshire is largely rural and agricultural, including areas of outstanding natural beauty.

Bedfordshire comprises three unitary authority areas:

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

Over 70% of the ethnically diverse population live in its larger towns including the two major towns of Luton and Bedford, and in several smaller market towns. These towns lie within often picturesque rural settings which also includes many villages that add to the areas diversity of places to live, work and play.

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

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

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

There are major growth plans that will see over 78,000 new homes built across Bedfordshire in the next decade or so, along with continued expansion in the number of industrial and commercial sites that will create an extra 53,400 jobs. The road, rail and waterway infrastructure include the M1 and A1 main arterial roads, and three major rail routes, including Thameslink, one of the busiest commuter rail links in the country running south from Bedford to London and beyond. London Luton Airport, which already handles circa 18 million passengers a year, is also expanding to accommodate this growth with a plan to deliver 32 million by 2039 including the opening of the new mass transit system in 2023 to help achieve this.

The five counties around the line between Oxford, Milton Keynes and Cambridge are known as the Oxford-Cambridge Arc. The area comprises Bedfordshire, Buckinghamshire, Cambridgeshire, Northamptonshire, and Oxfordshire. The arc has one of the fastest-growing economies in England. It supports more than two million jobs and adds over £110 billion to the economy every year.

### Accidental Dwelling Fires

- There was an average of 307 accidental dwelling fires (ADF) attended each year over the five-year period.
- Numbers of ADF attended shows a reducing trend, 2022-23 saw the 277 ADFs, the second lowest in the reporting period. The rate of accidental dwelling fires in 2022-23 at 4.14 per 10,000 population was below the national average of 9.3, now ranked at 36 out of 44 fire services in England. On this measure, back in 2018 BFRS was significantly higher than average.
- Bedfordshire ADF fatalities align to nationally prevalent risk factors: householders aged over 65, living alone, smoking, alcohol, impairment, no working smoke alarm, being male.
- Cooking related causes have consistently been the most frequent cause of accidental dwelling fires over the five-year period 2016-17 to 2020-21, accounting for almost half (45%) of all accidental dwelling fires and responsible for 25% of all accidental dwelling fire fatalities (2 deaths) and 13% of all injuries (12 injuries) However these percentages are slowly declining over time.
- Whilst 'smoking related' fires have only accounted for 6% of accidental dwellings fires they have been responsible for 75% of all accidental dwelling fire fatalities (6 deaths) and 42% of all injuries.
- Analysis using commercial customer insight data suggests 16% of the county's population live in households with well above average fire risk.
- Analysis using commercial customer insight data suggests BFRS is effective in delivering Home Fire Safety Visits with 27% of visits made to the highest risk groups in 2022-23.
- Poorer pensioners representing 2.1% of Bedfordshire population have been found to be the single highest risk group from ADF.
- BFRS has identified that dementia, fuel poverty, falls in the home and deprivation all contribute to an increase in the risk from fire and are therefore relevant to its home fire safety risk reduction activity:

### Deliberate fires

- Deliberate fires overall showed a significant downward trend from 2018-19 to 2021-22 but a substantial rise in 2022-23.
- Both deliberate road vehicle fires and deliberate outdoor fires show the same trend.
- Deliberate dwelling fires numbers are stable; for the first time in five years there was a fatality in this category in 2022-23.

### Non-fire incidents (e.g., assisting other agencies, animal rescues, flooding/water rescues, persons locked out, chemical incidents)

- The volume of incidents involving firefighter making forcible entry into homes to allow ambulance crews to reach patients is stable at around 180 incidents per year.
- Co-responding (which restarted in 2020) continued with 88 incidents attended in 2022-23. Previous evaluations have shown the community benefit of co-responding both in terms of reducing response times and improving patient outcomes.

- A Falls Response Team pilot began in January 2020 with around 8 incidents per month attended in 2020-21. The falls response team trial has been evaluated have been successful in meeting its aims.
- Technical rescues assisting ambulance service (including bariatric) shows a steady number of incidents with 79 incidents attended in 2022-23
- Revised call handling policy introduced in 2017 has reduced attendances to persons stuck in lifts incidents and numbers remain broadly static at a five-year average of 74.
- Effecting entry/exit incidents (including to persons locked in/out) show signs of a small increase over the five year reporting period.
- The number of animal rescues remains static with an average of 50 incidents attended per year.
- The number of Hazardous Materials incidents attended is slowly increasing with an average of around 42 incidents per year.
- An average of 134 Flooding incidents per year have been attended over the five-year period. 2022-23 saw 192 flooding incidents attended, higher than the previous record in 2020-21 when 163 flooding incidents were attended following a significant flooding event in December 2020 in Bedford Borough.
- An average of 14 water rescue incidents are attended per year Great Ouse Bedford Town Centre is a hotspot.

#### Road Traffic Collisions (RTC)

- The COVID-19 pandemic reduced traffic volume and the number of persons Killed or Seriously Injured (KSI) in RTC in 2020-21. This is consistent with national trends. Although the number of RTC incidents has increased from 2020-21 levels, this remains below the average number attended pre-COVID.
- Prior to 2020-21 there was an apparent increasing RTC KSI trend, particularly in Central Bedfordshire.
- RTC vulnerabilities are in line with the national profile, with pedestrians, cyclists, powered two wheelers, young drivers, older drivers at relatively greater risk.
- The proportion of pedestrian casualties highest in Luton Borough, cyclists in Bedford Borough and cars and goods vehicles casualties in Central Bedfordshire.
- The number of RTC attended has a five-year average of 412 per year and appears to show a decreasing trend, with a similarly decreasing trend in extrications performed, but 2020-21 reductions are likely to be associated with pandemic social restrictions and more data is needed to have confidence this pattern will endure.
- BFRS attends less than half of all fatal RTC and less than one fifth of KSI RTC

#### False Alarms

- False alarms are the most common type of incident attended with an average of 2,604 incidents attended per year over the five-year period.
- Attendance to fire false alarms in dwellings has an increasing trend over the five-year period, with a 15% increase in 2022-23 from the previous year alone. This accounts for the highest number of false alarm attendances.

- The property types of purpose-built flats shows a proportionally higher increase in false alarms attended over the five-year period.
- Attendances to dwellings in response to Automatic Fire Detector (AFD) which were found to be fires decreased by 21% compared to the previous year and by 60% compared to the five-year average.
- Attendance to AFD false alarms 'due to apparatus' decreased in 2022-23 compared to the high figure from 2021-22 but remains above the five-year average.
- The most common reason recorded for both false alarm due to apparatus and good intent fire false alarm is Smoke/Condensation.
- Malicious false alarms saw a substantial drop in 2020-21 but these have returned to prior values with a five year average of 91 – so the dip is likely to be COVID-related.

#### Commercial and industrial building fires

- There was an average of 116 fires in non-domestic premises per year over the five-year period, although a 14% reduction in 2022-23 compared to the previous year.
- BFRS Rate of non-domestic fires per 1,000 population is lower than the national average (1.92 compared to 2.22).
- Sleeping-use premises have higher rates of fire per 1,000 known premises than non-sleeping premises.
- BFRS use of formal enforcement has increased significantly over the five-year period with 42 Prohibition notices issued in 2022-23 of which 18 remained in force at year end.
- Following a review of our method for determining risk, a new data warehouse has been built to compare overall risk levels by pooling our sources of information together, and this will continue to be refined in 2023-24.
- BFRS specialist fire safety regulators complete around 600 audits per year and operational staff undertake around 1200 basic fire safety checks.
- There continues to be a significant deliberate fire problem at HMP Bedford (enforcement of the Fire Safety Order for HMP Bedford is undertaken by Crown Premises Fire Inspectorate).
- Shops, factories, and offices are the most common type of non-domestic premises accounting for around half of the total number of premises in Bedfordshire.
- There is a five-year average of 26 fires per year in high rise residential buildings, however the 2022-23 numbers were lower at 23.
- An estimated 10,500 Houses in Multiple Occupation (HMOs) exist in our area, with 1,500 meeting the criteria for mandatory licensing.
- There are House in Multiple Occupation sub-standard accommodation issues across the county.
- BFRS served 27 prohibition notices on HMOs in 2022-23. This compares with a total of 13 in the five-year period 2016/17 to 2020/21.

#### Heritage Risks

- We also work hard to protect the heritage of Bedfordshire. There are 107 Grade I, 76 Grade II and 93 Grade II\* listed buildings in our area. Heritage buildings were usually built in an era when fire safety was not a priority and as a result, they can be more vulnerable to fire. Our fire safety officers work with the owner/operators of these sites to ensure they comply with

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

#### Climate Change – extreme weather-related incidents

- We anticipate that we will see an increase in emergency response demand between 2023 and 2027 because of growing impacts of climate change, leading to increased levels of wildfire, severe gales, storms, snowfall and flooding related emergencies. This is likely to put increased pressure on biodiversity, infrastructure, water resources and local economies.

#### Wider Community Risks

The Bedfordshire Local Resilience Forum (BLRF) has assessed local 'very high' from influenza-type pandemic and a failure of national electricity transmission system. The BLRF 'high' risks is worldwide volcanic eruption impacts.

The BLRF 'medium' risks include cyber-attack, aviation crash, fluvial (river) flooding, severe space weather, storms, industrial action affecting fuel supply, public disorder.

#### Risk of Terrorist Attack

This is a complex area due to the frequency of new threats being identified and enacted internationally. Events over the last few years, both at home and abroad, have increased the risk of terrorist or self-motivated attack activity impacting on our society. BFRS plays a major role in protecting the community in the event of such an incident, and along with the other blue light services contributes significantly to the planning and training for such events. A special team of firefighters have been trained to operate under the conditions of a terrorist incident. Emergency services work closely with the Security Services and Government to identify threats and provide effective warning, informing and response planning. Our Service supports this with national incident liaison officers (NILO), who can work closely with emergency service partners, and currently provides a local and national capability for mass casualty injuries and decontamination processes.

#### Emerging Technology Risks

Rising demand for wind turbines, e-scooters, electric and autonomous vehicles, solar charging and mass battery storage and the increasing use of lithium batteries in a wide range of domestic and commercial settings giving rise to increasing likelihood of fire service personnel responding to incidents which require different firefighting tactics and impact on prevention and protection work.

## Our Strategic Direction

### Our Mission and Strategic Commitments

Our Mission and strategic commitments were developed as a direct result of community risk management planning and stakeholder engagement. It is clear from not just our own analysis and experience of working with partners but our extensive consultation with businesses, partners and the public over the past year have made it very clear, if we are to be successful in reducing risk and keeping our communities safe, we must work closely and effectively with a range of stakeholders.

Our Mission is therefore simply: **Working together to keep Bedfordshire safe**

In delivering our range of services over the life of this plan, we make six strategic commitments to you that will focus and shape everything we do with the first three focused on the delivery of our core services and the latter three focused on enabling the delivery of those services to you.

We will focus our resources on:

1. **PREVENTING** fires and other emergencies from happening.
2. **PROTECTING** people and property when fires happen.
3. **RESPONDING** to fires and other emergencies promptly and effectively.

We will achieve this by:

4. **ENGAGING** and building closer relationships with our communities, businesses, and partners.
5. **INVESTING** in our people to be the best they can be, to serve you better; and,
6. **MAKING** every penny count, exploiting technology, and using our resources in an environmentally sustainable way.



Prevention Strategy: Preventing fires and other emergencies from happening

Our prevention priorities are to:

- Reduce the number and impact of fires in the home.
- Reduce the number of people killed or seriously injured on our roads.
- Reduce the number of people killed or seriously injured in water related incidents.
- Reduce the number and impact of deliberate (arson) fires.
- Positively engage with and educate young people to support their development, reduce risk and promote good citizenship.
- Support community health and wellbeing when delivering our home fire safety visits.
- Improve the reach, output, and effectiveness of our prevention activity.
- Improve our understanding of community risk.

Our approach is to:

- Use an intelligence led, risk-based approach to target the vulnerable and most at risk from fire and other emergencies.
- Maximise our capacity and reach through use of specialists, firefighters, volunteers, and partners.
- Work collaboratively with other agencies and partners to deliver more effective prevention activities.
- Ensure continuous improvement through quality assurance and evaluation of our prevention activities.
- Investigate the cause of fires and support the detection and prosecution of arson offences.
- Align our prevention activity to national fire standards and best practice.

### **Home Safety**

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

We also work with other public sector organisations, such as housing providers and health services to exchange relevant information about people who need support and make sure they receive a visit from the person best placed to help them. In 2020 we launched a new on-line safe and well portal to enable the public and partners to easily request a HFSV and in 2023 have launched a new 'e-form' to collect data more efficiently and accurately during our HFSVs.

### **Arson Reduction**

Deliberate fires account for a large proportion of the emergency incidents we attend. Our prevention strategy is focused on working with partners including the police, local authorities, and other agencies to understand where the areas of greatest risk are, and to work together to reduce the number of deliberate fires that occur, analysing data and investigating fire related crimes to ensure appropriate action is taken against offenders. We also deliver targeted educational activities

to change the behaviours of those people who are likely to commit arson. Although the smaller fires we attend are, to some extent, linked to the prevailing weather conditions, there is a recognised link between deliberately set small fires and other forms of antisocial behaviour. Data shows that young people start a large proportion of these fires so education and engagement with this group is key to reducing these incidents.

### **Road Safety**

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

Examples include 'Biker Down' and 'Bike Safe' delivered by our Fire Bike team of Road Traffic Collision Reduction Officers (RTCRO). Road safety education is now delivered using virtual reality technology. We are actively supporting national and local road safety campaigns through social media and live events.

### **Our Fire Cadets**

We have four Fire Cadet Units based at Bedford, Leighton Buzzard, Luton, and Sandy Community Fire Stations. We focus on teaching practical skills to young people and developing positive behaviours to create role models in society. As well as learning about the fire and rescue service, Cadet's support Fire Station Open Days, charitable events and fundraising and civic events.

### **Safeguarding**

Safeguarding is everyone's responsibility; we are committed to protecting children, young people and adults from abuse and neglect. We strive to promote the safety, dignity, and wellbeing of people in the communities we serve. Our targeted prevention work results in us interacting more with children, young people and adults who may be at risk of harm, safeguarding is, therefore, an increasing part of our role. Since 2022, we have employed a safeguarding advisor and established a Safeguarding Team. Our Safeguarding Team have enhanced our safeguarding practice by utilising in depth knowledge and expertise to support those who raise concerns. In addition, our Safeguarding team utilise data and report thematically to inform and work with partner agencies to support positive outcomes for victims of abuse and neglect.'

Protection (Building Safety) Strategy: Protecting people and properties when fires happen

Our protection priorities are to:

- Reduce the risk to our business community from fire through our programme of audits of higher risk premises.
- Use our powers of legal enforcement and prosecution, where this is appropriate to ensure public safety.
- Fulfil our duty to respond to statutory fire safety consultations from other regulators.
- Work with premises responsible persons to reduce excessive levels of unwanted fire signals.
- Expand our protection team competencies and increase our protection activity output.
- Improve the effectiveness of our risk profiling and resource targeting.
- Implement assurance processes to ensure that our protection activity is effective and consistent.

Our approach is to:

- Use an intelligence led, risk-based approach to target premises which pose the greatest risk to life in the event of fire.
- Promote regulatory compliance by engaging with and educating local businesses,
- Take a consistent, fair, and proportionate approach to enforcement of the Fire Safety Order.
- Work together with other regulators and stakeholders to reduce risk.
- Maximise capacity and firefighter safety by using operational crews to undertake fire safety checks and audits.
- Ensuring all staff undertaking protection activity are appropriately qualified and competent to perform their role.
- Ensure continuous improvement through effective evaluation of protection activities.
- Align our protection activity to national fire standards and best practice.

In discharging our statutory responsibilities under the Regulatory Reform (Fire Safety) Order 2005 and the more recent Fire Safety Act 2021 and the Building Safety Act 2022, we will work with our partner including the new Building Safety Regulator, duty holders and, if necessary, use our enforcement powers to make premises safe. This helps to protect people, property, and the environment by preventing fires from occurring and limiting the effects when they do. We maintain a comprehensive database of premises and use a range of data sources to assess their relative risk. Our risk-based inspection programme ensures that our protection activities prioritise those premises where persons are most at risk from fire. To increase capacity, our full-time firefighters undertake basic fire safety checks on lower risk buildings. Our dedicated fire safety inspectors focus on premises that are more complex and higher risk. This makes the most appropriate use of resources we have available, enabling us to ensure we allocate resources according to risk.

We have taken proactive activity within education to improve compliance and community safety. We engage and share information with businesses and the public through business action days, NFCC Safety Weeks, Social media, our website; and attending business, residents, and landlord forums.

Response Strategy: Responding to fires & other emergencies quickly & effectively

Our response and resilience priorities are to:

- Ensure we always provide an effective and timely response to fires and other emergencies.
- Improve our specialist response capability by optimising the special appliance fleet.
- Work with Bedfordshire Local Resilience Forum partners to effectively plan and prepare for local and national emergencies.
- Work with partners to broaden our response role and capabilities; and
- Ensure our response resources and crewing arrangements are aligned to current and future risks.

Our approach is to:

- Deliver the outcomes of our Emergency Cover Review, pilots and trials, and special appliances review.
- Have effective operational policies and procedures aligned to National Operational Guidance.
- Provide firefighters with fast access to accurate, relevant, and timely operational risk information.
- Align with the Fire Standards and National Operational Guidance.
- Maintain a positive Health and Safety culture, ensuring we continuously learn from incidents.
- Continue to invest in appliances, equipment, training, and development to ensure our crews respond safely and effectively.
- Continue to test and maintain effective business continuity plans.
- Proactively collaborate with multi- agency and cross-border partners.
- Continue to develop and maintain our national resilience assets and capabilities.

### **Our Emergency Response Standards**

Prior to 2004, targets for response times to fires and other emergencies were based on a prescriptive framework of national standards. It is more than a decade since we established our own local emergency response standards that set out how quickly we aim to respond to key emergencies within our area. The standards relate to the time it takes to get the first fire appliance to the scene from the time it is alerted by our Fire Control Centre.

For emergency calls, we will:

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

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

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

For road traffic collisions (RTCs), we will:

- Arrive within 13 minutes on 80% of occasions.

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

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

It is clear from the initial analysis of our Emergency Cover Review that these response standards need updating to enable us to effectively benchmark ourselves against other fire and rescue services in England. For example, there is no comparable and nationally agreed definition of a 'critical fire incident'.

Our response strategy is designed to provide a prompt and effective emergency response if an incident does occur. The type of incidents responded to by BFRS can broadly be split into three areas:

- Fires - defined as either primary or secondary.
- Non-fire incidents which cover a wide range of incidents including road traffic collisions, rescues from height, from water, providing medical assistance, flooding, incidents involving hazardous materials and other calls to protect life, property, and the environment.
- False alarms which include false reports of all incident types originating from both automatic fire detection systems and by human error.

The number of incidents attended by the Service has fluctuated over the five years and had been showing a three- year downward trend. The number of incidents is now on the increase, due primarily to undertaking more collaborative activity in support of our partners and through expanding our capabilities to deal with a broader range of incidents (e.g., forced entry for medical emergencies, Co-responding and falls, and assisting the Police with missing persons).

We have reviewed and implemented a range of improvements to maintain operational availability giving more flexibility and efficiency including:

- Reviewing our 24-hour shift system first introduced in 2012 which resulted in a 10% reduction in posts.
- Reviewing and implementing a revised officer rota which since 2015 resulted in a 20% reduction in officer posts.
- Maintaining a shared Strategic Command rota with Cambridgeshire FRS first introduced in 2016.
- Better availability of on-call fire appliances through new ways of working (recruitment, strategic reserve, standby schemes, dual contracts, self-rostering and phased alerting).
- On-call availability management improved through use of new software systems, and in 2022 trialling flexible leave arrangements, different training delivery options, new support posts for On Call and alternative employment contracts.

Engaging & building closer relationships with our communities, businesses and partners

During our CRMP consultation our stakeholders and communities told us they have a positive view of the fire and rescue service, but many admit this is from a narrow point of view. In addition, we are being encouraged to demonstrate more visible community leadership. In response we are better matching our services to community and user needs including:

- Increasing access to all our services based on People Impact Assessment.
- Harnessing customer insight to improve our services.
- Tailoring services designed to meet the needs of all our customers, whoever they are; and
- Using the latest technology to engage with customers through targeted campaigns.

We will continue to improve our internal and external communications in a changing environment and constantly look for new ways to showcase the work BFRS does, reach new audiences and engage with our staff. All whilst protecting the reputation of the Service. Our communication and engagement priorities are to:

- Make a step change in strategic corporate communication and engagement which supports Bedfordshire Fire and Rescue Service's (BFRS) mission and strategic commitments.
- Enables BFRS to become an established and identifiable brand by staff, our partners, and our communities.
- Tailor communications to different audiences to maximise impact; and
- Raise the profile of BFRS at community events, stakeholder meetings and engagement activity; and
- Promote the work of the fire and rescue authority.

Our approach is to:

- Develop new channels of communication including co-designing and building a new website, use video and podcasts, and strengthen our social media presence.
- Support the Service's vision by preventing deaths and injuries through community safety campaigns and interventions.
- Support public consultation and engagement through improved and accessible communication and engagement.
- Develop new approaches to communication which reduces costs whilst providing effective and measurable results.
- Align with the new Fire Standard on communication and engagement.
- Maintain excellent relationships with all employees through open and timely two-way communications, bridging the gap between green and grey book and striving to improve the strategy of staff recognition within the Service.
- Promote and celebrate the success of the organisation and to enhance its reputation.
- Provide the tools, resources, and communications channels to allow us to work with Fire Control, crews, and partners to deliver accurate and timely public information on operational incidents and emergencies.
- Support the work of our partners and play our part in campaigns and initiatives aimed at improving public safety.

- Supporting the Authority's priorities which ensure that the service performs efficiently and in the best interests of the public and community it serves.

Through our consultation activity we will work to the Gunning principles which are:

- When we consult, we consult on plans and options at a formative stage i.e., before they have been decided.
- We will explain simply and clearly why a consultation is taking place and provide enough information to enable people to understand the proposals or plans being consulted on. Information will be made available in a range of formats and in 'plain English' so that people can provide considered responses to a consultation.
- We will allow people enough time to respond. We will hold our consultations for long enough to enable as many who wish to submit a response to do so including statutory consultations.
- The results from a consultation will be considered by the appropriate decision makers within the organisation and considered when a decision is being reached. The results of a consultation will be properly considered.
- We will let people know what happened because of our consultation. We will provide feedback on the results of the consultation, the decisions that were made and what has happened or will happen as a result. We will do this through our existing communications channels and stakeholders.

People Strategy: Investing in our people to be the best they can be, to serve you better

During our CRMP consultation our stakeholders and staff told us they want us to continue our support to staff on welfare and wellbeing issues including mental health support

In response our people priorities are to:

- Develop a positive and inclusive workplace culture which responds positively to change.
- Develop all our people to consistently demonstrate the behaviours in the Code of Ethics, the behaviours which underpin the Service Values.
- Become an employer of choice, attracting, recruiting, retaining, and developing a highly skilled and diverse workforce.
- Continue to develop a shared understanding across the Service of the value of diversity, and demonstrate the behaviours, skills, knowledge, and attributes required in a modern fire and rescue service.
- Embed a positive and inclusive learning culture where staff are developed to achieve their full potential and encouraged to have a voice.
- Ensure our firefighter workforce meets the Services emergency response requirements in terms of being highly skilled, capable of responding to different types of emergencies safely and who can deliver at times of business continuity.
- Provide a safe and healthy working environment with low levels of absence, accidents, and injuries.
- Develop our managers to recognise their staff's talent, provide stretch and challenge, foster growth, and support their teams to fulfil their potential.
- Continue to invest in providing all our staff with the appropriate training and development opportunities.
- Develop our leaders to understand and use coaching as their preferred leadership style, to support individuals' development.

Our approach will be to:

- Embed the Service Values, behaviours, and the Code of Ethics making BFRS a place where everyone feels valued and included.
- Promote the Service as an employer of choice and strive to recruit a workforce which is diverse, and which meets the needs of the people of Bedfordshire.
- Develop the capability and resilience of leaders who can energise their teams, who encourage flexibility, innovation and who promote continuous improvement.
- Align with the Fire Standard on Leadership and People.
- Embed talent management and succession planning, shaping the workforce to meet Service needs and supporting individuals to achieve their full potential.
- Promote a resilient and healthy workforce; and
- Actively engage with our workforce by responding to feedback and involving staff in the shaping of our plans and decision making.

The retirement profile of the Service shows a high number of staff are likely to retire in the next few years. This profile presents a risk around potential loss of skills and experience and therefore our robust workforce planning is essential. However, it also presents an opportunity to reform our ways



of working to ensure that the Service can attract and retain a more diverse workforce equipped with the skills to deliver a modern fire and rescue service.

We will be working to align our existing staff development programmes with the new NFCC leadership framework whilst maintaining career pathways that are underpinned with technical skills, knowledge and understanding, giving our staff the confidence and opportunities necessary.

Since 2019 our new wholetime firefighters have benefited from attending initial training through an apprenticeship standard, developed by the sector to meet our expectations, and externally accredited by Skills for Justice. We will explore further opportunities to benefit from modern apprenticeship standards to support a range of staff development.

Making every penny count, using our resources in an environmentally sustainable way Financial sustainability is the top-rated threat according to our strategic risk assessment. In response we have been proactive in identifying changes that ensure the continuity of our core services whilst delivering the required efficiencies. Future financial settlements are likely to remain difficult. As such, we continue to plan for a range of financial scenarios that may emerge in the next few years.

Our ability to mitigate our risks and realise opportunities is directly impacted by our resourcing and budgetary make-up. Our current budgetary plans and assumptions determine the speed at which we will deliver our action plans.

Our Medium-Term Financial Strategy (MTFS) is a document that sets out the Authority's financial strategy for the next four years. It focuses on the 2023/24 Revenue Budget and Capital Programme, but also sets the scene for future years. It covers national events such as the Comprehensive Spending Review (CSR) and then breaks down how this impacts locally on the Authority. The MTFS details our reserves policy, planning assumptions behind the budget figures and other considerations that must be considered when setting the strategy, such as the tax base, efficiencies, and shared services.

#### Where does the money come from?

	2023/2024 (£m)	2022/2023 (£m)
<b>Gross Budget</b>	<b>37.6</b>	35.8
Income	<b>-2.7 (7%)</b>	-2.5
<b>Budget Requirement</b>	<b>34.9</b>	33.3
Central & Local Government Funding	<b>9.9 (28%)</b>	9.8
Council Tax	<b>25 (65%)</b>	23.4
Total	<b>34.9</b>	33.3

Our revenue budget sets out the money necessary for the day to day running of the Service. The increase in the 2023-24 council tax of £5 is equivalent to an increase of just under 10p per week for a Band D household.

There has been a small increase in Government grant to the Authority compared to 2022-23 of £244k, and the effect of inflation which is forecast to increase our costs this year by £1.891m.

In their latest Annual External Audit Letter our auditors, Ernst & Young, awarded the Fire and Rescue Authority an 'unqualified conclusion', meaning that we were judged to have satisfactory arrangements in place in all areas for 2021.

What the money is spent on	2023/2024 (£m)	2022/2023 (£m)
Employees	29.4 (80%)	27
Premises	0.9 (3%)	0.9
Transport	0.7 (2%)	0.7
Supplies & Services	3.2 (8%)	2.5
Agency & Contracted Services	0.5 (1%)	0.7
Capital Financing	2.3 (6%)	1.6
Total	<b>37</b>	33.4
Reserves Funding	<b>-2.1</b>	-0.1
Budget Requirement	<b>34.9</b>	<b>33.3</b>

The Band D council tax for 2023/24 is £109.45 or approx. £2.10 p/week.

Our capital programme highlights spending on assets such as our fire stations and fire engines. Each year the Authority draws up a rolling four-year programme of capital projects.

Our financial priorities are to:

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

### **Efficiency and Productivity**

Total achieved and planned savings and efficiencies between 2010/11 and 2022/23 total £7.599m, with a further savings and efficiencies of £701k by 2026/27.

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

- Savings in managerial and support staff costs through shared service arrangements, organisational restructure, and improvements to working systems.
- Savings in firefighter crewing arrangements.
- Savings to the public through collaborative work.
- Procurement savings from new contracts.
- Income Generation

Our priorities for efficiency and productivity are:

- identify and deliver efficiency and productivity gains to support a balanced sustainable budget that provides value for money, aligns our resources to risk, and supports the delivery of our CRMP.
- Be innovative in developing and delivering on our Efficiency and Productivity Action Plan whilst maintaining a prudent level and utilisation of our reserves.
- We will conduct a review of all administrative roles and posts and seek to improve capacity, capability, consistency, efficiency, productivity, and resilience.
- Involve staff, Members, and key stakeholders in the process of identifying efficiencies.
- Identify and understand unit costs, spending patterns and trends, and operating costs; and
- Deliver the outcomes of the station productivity and service productivity assessments.

Our approach to finding efficiencies and productivity is based on the UK Government's Treasury approach to Improving public sector efficiency and guidance provided by the National Fire Chiefs Council (NFCC).

## Assets & Environmental Strategy

Our Assets and Environmental Strategy seeks to ensure we are supporting our staff to perform in their roles by providing the right equipment, in the right places and buildings located across Bedfordshire.

This Service has invested in providing innovative new vehicles and equipment to improve the effectiveness of our emergency response services and to keep our firefighters safe. We are used to challenging and achieving value for money on everything we buy. And we look for innovation and the best deals available to meet our specified needs.

Our estate is made up of fire stations, some houses, stores and workshops, training venues and office buildings. The majority of were built in the 1950s and 1960s and are being to show their age. Despite making alterations to our fire stations to make them better to work in and more inclusive to meet the needs of our diverse workforce, and to facilitate sharing with our partners from the police and ambulance service, we recognise many simply do not meet our current and future needs. The Covid pandemic has led us to change how and when we use our buildings, and we are keen to reduce our running costs and carbon footprint. We want to encourage everyone that can, to balance working from home and from different office spaces, in a way which best meets our business needs and their personal preferences.

We have secured agreement with Bedfordshire Police and East of England Ambulance Service Trust to establish a Blue Light Estates strategy for Bedfordshire which puts co-location and collaboration at the heart of our estate's investment plans for the next two to three decades. We will continue to provide space for partners and other agencies to work and explore opportunities to share and collaborate where we can, as well as provide modern, inclusive, and fit for purpose emergency response bases for the Service.

Our estates priorities include:

- Deliver a proactive programme of refurbishment and improvement to all our existing fire stations to promote more hybrid and peripatetic working.
- Improve the energy efficiency of our buildings.
- Continue to minimise any contamination at fire stations by particulates when firefighters return from incidents.
- Embed inclusion and dignity at work in all property works.
- Produce a roadmap to achieve carbon neutrality by 2030.
- Respond to the outcomes of the emergency cover review, identifying any alternative locations and defining outcome specifications for new or refurbished stations.
- Review options for funding our future accommodation needs.
- Identify options for investing in larger fleet and equipment workshops.
- Establish the business case for a collaborative training centre.

Our approach will be to:

- Ensure collaboration and co-location is at the heart of all our estates projects.
- Embed inclusion and dignity at work in all property works via inclusive design processes involving stakeholder consultation.
- Allocate strategic resource in 2023 to pump-prime this important workstream.

In fleet and equipment terms we continue our efforts to ensure effective fleet and asset management helps us support our front-line services and keeps our communities safe. Our Fleet Management Strategy 2023–2027 intends to ensure our Fleet assets are procured, renewed, and replaced to meet:

- Current and future operational needs
- End user requirements
- The needs of the communities we serve.

The management of the Service’s fleet assets are controlled from a single fleet workshop facility at Kempston, which maintains & repairs the fleet of fire appliances, specialist response and other vehicles. The fleet management team are responsible for maintaining the statutory elements of road vehicle use. This includes insurance, vehicle excise duty and maintaining sufficient fuel supplies and monitoring and recording fuel related statistics.

Our Workshops also undertake the management and control of cars, pool vehicles and vans. Our Health and Safety department assists with this by reporting on accident statistics and driving license checks. There has been much needed investment and support during the previous four years across the Service resulting in much more effective fleet and asset management including procurement, maintenance, and training.

Our Fleet and Equipment priorities are:

#### **Environmental**

- reducing our carbon footprint by replacing Internal Combustion Engine (ICE) cars and combo size vans from 2023 with only hybrid or fully electric alternatives.
- Reduce our carbon footprint by utilising local suppliers where possible.
- Recycle and upcycling vehicles and vehicle parts where possible.

#### **Operational**

- BFRS will determine the disposition and use of our fleet by utilising the results of our emergency cover review.
- Locate our fleet in the most strategic locations to best serve the demands of the community and associated partners.
- The type of vehicles is suited to provide the requirements of the needs of the community and the infrastructure of the area that they are located in.

## Digital, Data, And Technology Strategy

Investing in the right Digital, Data and Technology (DDaT) solutions can act as real enablers, not only speeding up our processes but also insight richer insight into many areas thereby allowing more evidence-based decisions to be made about where best to utilise our limited resources to the greatest effect. For us, digital transformation means the integration of digital technology into all areas of an organisation, fundamentally changing how we operate and deliver value to our customers. Our DDaT strategy underpins all BFRS business from front-line response to the targeting of our community interventions; from how we manage risk to how we look after our most important asset, our people. We aim to be a digital by design organisation also known as Digital First.

Our DDaT priorities are to:

- Become a 'fast follower', adopting industry noteworthy practices in key areas through collaboration, whilst building capacity to be a public service leader.
- Improve overall staff engagement and digital literacy to enable our workforce to be more productive and use modern and effective digital tools.
- We will agree data standards and implement them to further improve our community analysis.
- Alignment with the Fire Standard on data management.
- We will improve our Data Governance to improve our data quality.
- Create a paper-lite workforce, eradicating re-keying of data to central systems.
- Build a more visible brand with the creation of digital services and new website.
- Enable better public access to data and performance insight; and
- Support the Environmental aims of BFRS with Green ICT initiatives.

Our approach will be to:

- Capture and exploit the rich Datasets all around us using the "Collect Once, Use Numerous Times" (COUNT) principle in line with our information governance policies and service value of Every Contact Counts.
- Invest in Technology, which is secure, reliable, intuitive and supports agile working.
- Understand and align with the Fire Standard for Data Management.
- Integrate our systems effectively to enable record once, use many so we have a single version of working documents.
- Develop our approach to understanding, and utilising, open data.
- Expand our data analysis capabilities, collaborating within and across sectors.
- Use more Benchmarking data across fire and rescue services and partners to support service delivery.
- Ensure our digital transformation is underpinned by strong governance and effective cyber security procedures.
- Influence and support delivery of the national DDaT Strategy; and
- Encourage the use of Green ICT by reducing energy consumption, disposing of the equipment responsibly and switching to greener solutions with dynamic power switching.

## Appendix One - Our focus for 2023/24

Each year, we prepare an Annual Action Plan that outlines what we intend to do during that particular year to support the delivery of our CRMP. Our Annual Performance Report and Statement of Assurance will explain how well we did in delivering on our plans.

We continue to adapt how we deliver our services and mitigate the risks brought about by local change. We regularly assess our immediate environment through intelligence driven reporting and working collaboratively with local stakeholders, for example the Bedfordshire Chief Executives Forum, the Southeast Midlands Local Economic Partnership, Community Safety Partnerships, and the Bedfordshire Local Resilience Forum.

### **Consultation feedback**

#### **Community & Stakeholder Engagement**

We carried out 30 community engagement events throughout 2022/23. The stakeholders and community leaders we spoke to have a positive view of the fire and rescue service, but many admit this is from a narrow point of view. There is an opportunity to explain why we collaborate with partners as there are misconception from some about why we do it.

During our CRMP consultation our stakeholders and communities also told us about their concerns about safety in the home, and about road safety, about the importance of supporting business and the economic wellbeing of Bedfordshire. Developing community resilience and tailoring our offer to the business community are the two top opportunities in the next 4-5 years. They told us about their concerns about not responding quickly enough to emergencies, and about the impact of extreme weather on public and firefighter safety.

In addition, we are being encouraged to demonstrate more visible community leadership and they want us to continue our support to staff on welfare and wellbeing issues including mental health support.

The results of our Community Concerns survey in July 2022 based on a total of 798 responses tell us:

- Extreme weather is the public's top concern.
- The impact of poverty and deprivation on community safety is second, and a particular concern raised by younger people.
- Third is not receiving a prompt response to emergency incidents.
- Deteriorating mental health is the biggest health concern.
- Anti-social behaviour is a high concern, especially to people in the LU1 and MK42 postcode areas.
- Concern about the wellbeing impacts of the cost-of-living crises is a concern across all locations, ages, and ethnicity, and more frequently raised by women.
- Civil unrest and social discontent are a high concern by older people.

The results of our CRMP survey in January 2023 based on a total of 439 responses tell us:

- 87% of those responding agreed or strongly agreed to the £5 increase in Council Tax.
- A variety of comments were given related to suggestions for making efficiencies, such as collaboration with other services, and in boosting organisational productivity.

- 88% agreed or strongly agreed that the Authority has considered the right community risks.
- 91% agreed or strongly agreed with the new mission statement.
- 95% agreed or strongly agreed with the six new strategic commitments.
- 93% agreed or strongly agreed with investing in the estate.
- 89% agreed or strongly agreed to expand the capacity of fleet and equipment workshops; and
- 56% agreed or strongly agreed with further trials to pinpoint the best location for any new or upgraded fire station.

### **Staff Engagement**

Staff engagement based on 12 CRMP engagement workshops in October to November 2022, eight station visits by principal officers in 2022-23, five manager's listening events, four staff engagement forums, and four chief officer listening events highlight the following proposals and issues that came directly from staff and including the need for:

- Maintaining focus on improving resource availability
- Culture change from Task to People based culture.
- Continuing the support to staff welfare and wellbeing issues including mental health support
- Evaluation and communicating the impact of prevention activity.
- Improving ICT systems integration and face-to-face training

### **Preventing fires and other emergencies from happening**

1. In 2023/24 we will make better use of technology to improve our engagement with our communities and with businesses so we can build closer relationships, showcase more about who we are and the wide variety of services we provide to help keep people safe.
2. We will also use technology to build a better risk profile of our communities so we can target our prevention services to the most vulnerable which will also help us better evaluate the effectiveness of our prevention work.
3. Supported by funding from the Office of the Police and Crime Commissioner, we will take delivery of a new Road Safety Vehicle which provides children and young drivers with an innovative and powerfully immersive virtual reality road safety experience to raise awareness of the dangers and the consequences of poor behaviour when driving.

### **Protecting people and properties when fires happen**

4. You have told us we could do more to support businesses and the local economy so we will be prioritising raising awareness amongst building owners and occupiers about their new responsibilities under the new Fire Safety Act and the Building Safety Act and the associated regulatory framework.
5. We will focus on embedding the new fire and building safety regulatory regime within our Service throughout 2023, ensuring we have the right capacity and capability in our specialist



protection teams, focusing our resources on those premises that represent the greatest risk to life in case of fire.

### **Responding to fires & other emergencies quickly & effectively**

6. We will deliver tangible improvements in the availability of our on-call fire appliances to improve response times to emergencies. Many of our fire stations rely on on-call firefighters who respond from their home or workplace to their local fire station when an emergency occurs. Although it is challenging to recruit and retain on-call firefighters, we are confident there is more we can do.
7. In response to your feedback, we will present clear proposals to improve our emergency response performance with a focus on keeping pace with the growth in our county and to reduce response times.
8. We will present clear proposals to update the range of specialist capabilities we have to deal with more complex incidents such as water rescues, chemical incidents, wildfires, and terrorist attacks to ensure they keep with pace with current and emerging risks such as climate change and electric vehicle fires.
9. From April 2023, BFRS will host the Bedfordshire Local Resilience Forum (LRF) and continue to be chaired by the Chief Fire Officer. Our focus for 2023 is about embedding the LRF into BFRS and delivering the UK Government Resilience Strategy.

### **Investing in our people to be the best they can be, to serve you better.**

It is important we continue to invest in how we recruit, develop, and retain the talented, motivated, diverse, and inclusive workforce we need to succeed. The London Fire Brigade Cultural Review report and subsequent national media coverage has highlighted there is more to do improve the organisational culture within the fire and rescue service. Although we have delivered a great deal in recent years to improve how we treat and develop our staff and ensure we are an employer of choice, this year we will go further by:

10. Delivering mandatory training in cultural awareness and equality, diversity, and inclusion (EDI) to all staff, using our Service values and behaviours framework to set clear standards and expectations for all staff, from firefighter to the Chief Fire Officer.
11. Investing in new ways to communicate and engage with our staff to ensure their voice is heard and they feel valued, safe, and confident to be themselves at work and to call out inappropriate behaviours, knowing we will respond swiftly and effectively.
12. Establishing a professional standards unit in collaboration with at least one other fire and rescue service to improve the quality and speed in which disciplinary and grievance investigations are handled and to provide a level of independence to give our staff greater confidence that we are serious about rooting out inappropriate conduct and behaviours within our Service.
13. Seeking more ways in which to provide support and advice to our staff during the continuing 'cost of living' crisis.

### **Making Every Penny Count**

The effects of high inflation and national pay awards is forecast to increase our costs this year by £1.891m. To ensure we are financially fit for the future and avoid drawing down on our capital reserves (our savings) which we would prefer to invest in providing new buildings, vehicles and equipment. This year we will establish a Productivity & Efficiency Board, chaired by the Assistant Chief Officer, with the aim of:

14. Setting out how we will deliver 2% of non-pay efficiencies and to increase productivity by 3% by the end of 2024/25,
15. Identifying ways to ensure a balanced budget over the life of this CRMP.

### **Changing our Estate**

To support the delivery of the outcomes from our Emergency Cover Review, our efforts to improve the working environment for our staff, and invest in expanding our Fleet & Equipment Workshop and our Training Centre, this year we will:

16. Present the business cases for a new Workshops and a multi-agency Training Centre.
17. Identify the location of at least 3 new or refurbished fire stations and present the business case for investment,
18. Continue to invest in environmentally sustainable solutions to reduce our carbon footprint and reduce running costs.

### **Connect with BFRS**

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

Contact: <https://www.bedsfire.gov.uk/contact.aspx>

Social: @bedsfire

HQ Address: BFRS Headquarters, Southfields Road, Kempston, Bedford MK42 7NR