



Shropshire and Wrekin

Fire and Rescue Authority

Section 1

Purpose, Aims and Public Value Measures

Particulars, Functions and Powers of the Fire and Rescue Authority

Shropshire and Wrekin Fire and Rescue Authority is a statutory fire authority constituted under the Fire and Rescue Services Act 2004 and The Shropshire Fire Services (Combination Scheme) Order 1997 ('the combination scheme'). Fire authorities derive their operational powers from the Act and other fire safety regulations, whilst the Combination Scheme establishes the Fire Authority and the fire brigade for the combined area of Shropshire. The Fire Authority's principal decision-making powers, affecting members of the public, are contained within the Act and the Combination Scheme, and they should be referred to when detailed information is sought.

The composition of the Fire Authority is determined in accordance with the provisions of the Combination Scheme, which allows for up to 25 Members to be appointed to the Fire Authority by Shropshire Council and Telford & Wrekin Council, the 'constituent authorities'. Fire Authority Members are expected to bring a relevant area of expertise to activities of the Fire Authority or gain specific skills during their period of appointment. The number of representative members from each authority (17 in total) is proportionate to the number of local government electors in the area of the two constituent authorities (11 from Shropshire and 6 from Telford & Wrekin Council).

The Fire Authority is responsible for the overall corporate governance of the organisation, including its strategic direction, setting its budget, establishing goals for management and monitoring the achievement of those goals. The Fire Authority's Code of Corporate Governance and other codes, policies and statements can be found later in this Section of the Handbook.

The Fire and Rescue Services Act 2004

During 2002, at the request of local employers and with the approval of central government, Professor Sir George Bain led an independent review of the Fire Service. His findings were generally scathing, referring to an *"unsatisfactory industrial relations environment, a weak management system and a lack of feeling of ownership by those involved in managing the service"*. He also recognised, however, that these findings were not universal and commented that:

"We have seen examples of good practice by fire brigades and fire authorities around the country. We have found clear evidence of fire authorities promoting change and innovation against the obstacles of unhelpful legislation, and authorities funding the local Fire Service well in excess of the funding level assumed by central government. Individual Chief Officers have achieved improvements on the ground without the support they deserve. And individual fire-fighters and their union have conducted impressive local community campaigns to encourage better fire safety."

Professor Bain proposed a number of changes to the Service, which he envisaged would provide the capacity for the Service to continue to reform itself in response both to the Government's drive to improve public services generally and to the needs of local communities. As a result, in June 2003, the Office of the Deputy Prime Minister published its White Paper entitled 'Our Fire and Rescue Service', which set out the Government's vision for the Fire and Rescue Service of the future.

The Fire and Rescue Service Act 2004, which came into force on 1 October 2004, gave effect to the majority of proposals contained within the White Paper. Full details of the Act can be found on the following website:

<http://www.legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/2004/21/contents>

The Act repealed the Fire Service Act 1947 and contains seven parts as follows:

Part 1 – Fire and rescue authorities (sections 1 to 5)

This determines which body is the fire and rescue authority for an area, and provides for the combination of two or more fire and rescue authorities by order. A combination scheme under this section may be made only if it appears to the Secretary of State that, in the interests of:

- a) economy, efficiency and effectiveness, or
- b) public safety

there should be a single fire and rescue authority for the combined area.

Part 2 – Functions of fire and rescue authorities (sections 6 to 20)

This sets out the duties and powers of fire and rescue authorities which, amongst other things, have been expanded to include duties to promote fire safety, to make provision for rescuing people from road traffic accidents and to respond to other emergencies (which may be outside the authority's area) as defined by the Secretary of State by Order. Other emergencies have since been specified as chemical, biological, radiological and nuclear incidents; search and rescue events; major flooding incidents; and major transport incidents, including at sea.

Part 3 – Administration (sections 21 to 31)

This provides for the preparation of a Fire and Rescue National Framework, setting out the strategic priorities of the Fire and Rescue Service, and for the supervision of fire and rescue authorities. It makes supplementary provision for the Secretary of State to provide equipment and training centres for fire and rescue authorities.

Part 4 – Employment (sections 32 to 37)

This deals with employment by fire and rescue authorities, in particular the creation of negotiating bodies to determine the terms and conditions of employees, and pension schemes.

Part 5 – Water supply (sections 38 to 43)

This imposes duties on fire and rescue authorities and water undertakers to ensure an adequate supply of water for firefighting activities.

Part 6 – Supplementary (sections 44 to 54 and Schedules 1 and 2)

This concerns the powers of fire and rescue authority employees to undertake rescue work and investigations, as well as a number of consequential provisions and repeals, including the abolition of the Central Fire Brigades Advisory Council.

Part 7 – General (sections 55 to 64)

This makes general provision in relation to pre-commencement consultation, interpretation, statutory instruments, territorial extent etc.

The Fire and Rescue Services National Framework

The Government's Fire and Rescue Services National Framework sets clear priorities and objectives for the Service and lays out:

- The Government's expectations for the Fire and Rescue Service;
- What Fire and Rescue Authorities are expected to do; and
- What support Government will provide.

The Government's new fire Public Service Agreement (PSA) target for England came into effect on 1 April 2005. The target is:

By 2010, reduce the number of accidental fire related deaths in the home by 20% and the number of deliberate fires by 10%.

The National Framework is a strategic plan, outlining how the PSA and other objectives can be delivered. Its three principal objectives remain:

- To provide clarity about the outcomes and objectives the Government wants to be achieved;
- To set out what the Government expects Fire and Rescue Authorities and Regional Management Boards to do in order to meet these objectives; and
- To explain what the Government will do to support Fire and Rescue Authorities and Regional Management Boards to meet these objectives.

The document is not a national blueprint but gives Fire and Rescue Authorities the flexibility to meet the specific needs of their local communities. The Framework is designed to give authorities a firm foundation on which to build local solutions.

The Fire and Rescue Services Act 2004 has given statutory effect to the National Framework and requires the Secretary of State to report against it. The relevant sections of the Act are as follows:

Section 21 requires the Secretary of State to prepare and keep current a National Framework setting out priorities and objectives for Fire and Rescue Authorities, with the aim of promoting public safety, and the economy, efficiency and effectiveness of authorities and their functions.

He must consult representatives of the authorities and their employees before making significant revisions, and must give them effect by statutory instrument. For their part, Fire and Rescue Authorities must 'have regard' to the Framework when carrying out their functions.

Section 22 provides the Secretary of State with the power to intervene, if he considers a Fire and Rescue Authority is failing, or is likely to fail, to act in accordance with the Framework. While Fire and Rescue Authorities are expected to make progress in all areas set out in the Framework, references to what authorities 'must' or 'should' do indicate those areas that Ministers consider most important, with 'must' being stronger. Any use of intervention powers will be in accordance with the principles of the Local Government Intervention Protocol as agreed with the Local Government Association. These powers would only be used as a measure of last resort.

Section 23 requires the Secretary of State to consult on, and publish, an intervention protocol. This requirement has been fulfilled by consultation on the application of the Local Government Intervention Protocol to these powers.

Section 24 explicitly extends the Audit Commission's powers to inspect – contained within the Local Government Act 1999 – to include performance expectations in the Framework that might not be covered by the Best Value inspection powers in the 1999 Act. These expectations were taken into account by the Audit Commission during the Fire Comprehensive Performance Assessment process.

Section 25 requires the Secretary of State to report to Parliament on the extent to which Fire and Rescue Authorities are acting in accordance with the Framework, and any steps taken by him to ensure that Section 21 of the Fire and Rescue Service Act 2004 requires the Secretary of State to prepare and consult upon a Fire and Rescue Service National Framework, to which fire and rescue authorities **must** have regard in carrying out their functions. The explanatory notes state that "the purpose of the Framework is to provide strategic direction from central government whilst ensuring that authorities continue to make local decisions".

National Framework 2004/05

A draft version of the first National Framework was published by the Government in December 2003, with the final version being published in July 2004.

In referring to the introduction of Comprehensive Performance Assessment (CPA) for the Service, the Framework made clear that "the expectations set out in the National Framework will be central to assessing the performance of authorities".

National Framework 2005/06

Through the issue of Fire and Rescue Service Circular 27-2004, the Government consulted upon revisions to the 2004/06 National Framework and published the 2005/06 Fire and Rescue National Framework in December 2004.

The 2005/06 National Framework reflected progress made since the publication of the 2004/05 document and took into account comments received in response to the consultation exercise.

National Framework 2006/08

In April 2006 the Government published the Fire and Rescue Service National Framework 2006/08.

The Framework was divided into nine chapters:

- **Chapter 1** - Fire prevention and risk management
- **Chapter 2** - Working together: the regional approach
- **Chapter 3** - Effective response
- **Chapter 4** - Resilience and New Dimension
- **Chapter 5** - Fire and rescue staff
- **Chapter 6** - Workforce development
- **Chapter 7** – Finance
- **Chapter 8** - Performance management
- **Chapter 9** – Research

Each section addressed the Government's objectives; what the Government would do to help; and action for Fire and Rescue Authorities and Regional Management Boards.

National Framework 2008/11

Following consultation in November 2007 upon revisions to the 2006/08 document, the Government published the National Framework 2008/11. The main changes to the previous document included:

- Scaling down the narrative to key 'must/should' messages;
- Lifespan – moving to a three-year document, to run alongside the Fire and Rescue Service's financial commitments; and
- Structure – moving away from nine to four new chapters focused on key strategic priorities:

Chapter 1 - Prevention, Protection and Response

Chapter 2 - Resilience

Chapter 3 - Diversity and Workforce

Chapter 4 - Governance and Improvement

The key priorities for fire and rescue authorities set out within the Framework are ensuring that public expectations of fire and rescue authorities are met and ensuring delivery of an enhanced resilience capability. The Framework also cites equality and diversity as a key priority, with the Government looking to see a step change in this area from fire and rescue authorities between 2008 and 2011.

The Government still sees a role for regional management boards and views them as essential to delivering efficiency, effectiveness and an enhanced resilience capability for fire and rescue authorities. The Framework recommends that regional management boards now 'take stock' of how effectively they have delivered the core functions, which were set out for them in the Fire White Paper, Our Fire and Rescue Service in 2003.

National Framework 2012

In July 2012, the Government published the Fire and Rescue National Framework for England which has an open-ended duration.

The priorities set out in the Framework are for fire and rescue authorities to:

- identify and assess the full range of foreseeable fire and rescue related risks their areas face, make provision for prevention and protection activities and respond to incidents appropriately
- work in partnership with their communities and a wide range of partners locally and nationally to deliver their service
- be accountable to communities for the service they provide

The Framework is divided into four chapters

- **Chapter 1** – Safer Communities
- **Chapter 2** – Accountable to Communities
- **Chapter 3** – Assurance
- **Chapter 4** – Context, timescales and scope

S T A T U T O R Y I N S T R U M E N T S

1997 No. 2702

FIRE SERVICES

**The Shropshire Fire Services (Combination Scheme)
Order 1997**

Made - - - -

8th November 1997

Coming into force

9th November 1997

Whereas it appears to the Secretary of State that it is expedient in the interests of efficiency that a combination scheme should be made for the areas of the fire authorities referred to in paragraph 3 of the scheme set out in the Schedule hereto ("the scheme"), and a scheme has not been submitted to him by those authorities;

And whereas notice of the general nature of the scheme has been given in accordance with section 6(2) of the Fire Services Act 1947(a) ("the 1947 Act");

And whereas the Secretary of State has been notified by the fire authorities concerned of their assent to the scheme;

And whereas a draft of the Order containing the draft scheme has been laid before Parliament for a period of forty days pursuant to section 6 of the Statutory Instruments Act 1946 (b), and that period has expired without either House resolving that the Order be not made;

Now, therefore, in exercise of the powers conferred upon him by sections 6, 8 and 10 of the 1947 Act, and section 7(2) of the Fire Services Act 1959 (c), the Secretary of State hereby makes the following Order:

Citation

1. This Order may be cited as the Shropshire Fire Services (Combination Scheme) Order 1997 and shall come into force on the day after the day on which it is made.

Combination Scheme

2. The combination scheme set out in the Schedule to this Order, which shall be known as the Shropshire Fire Services Combination Scheme, shall have effect.

Home Office
8th November 1997

George Howarth
Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State

-
- (a) 1947 c.41. Sections 6 and 10 of the 1947 Act were amended respectively by paragraphs 1 and 2 of Schedule 3 to the Local Government Act 1992 (c.19). For the purposes of making the scheme set out in the Schedule to this Order, sections 5(2) and 10 of the 1947 Act have effect as indicated in article 4 of the Shropshire (District of The Wrekin) (Structural Change) Order 1996 (S.I. 1996/1866).
- (b) 1946 c.36.
- (c) 1959 c.44.

SCHEDULE

THE SHROPSHIRE FIRE SERVICES COMBINATION SCHEME

PART I

CITATION, COMMENCEMENT AND INTERPRETATION

Citation and commencement

1. This scheme may be cited as the Shropshire Fire Services Combination Scheme and shall come into force –

- (a) for the purposes of constituting an authority as the fire authority for the combined area constituted by the scheme, and the performance by that authority of any functions necessary for bringing the scheme into full operation on 1st April 1998, on the day on which the Shropshire Fire Services (Combination Scheme) Order 1997 (a) comes into force, and
- (b) for all other purposes, on 1st April 1998.

Interpretation

2. In this scheme any reference to a paragraph or a Part is a reference to a paragraph or a Part of this scheme, and –

- "the Authority" means the fire authority constituted for the combined area by virtue of paragraph 4;
- "the combined area" means the fire authority area comprising the areas referred to in paragraph 3;
- "the combined fire service fund" means the combined fire service fund established by virtue of paragraph 6;
- "constituent authority" means a council referred to in paragraph 3; and
- "the fire brigade" means, unless otherwise indicated, the fire brigade established for the combined area by virtue of paragraph 5.

PART II

GENERAL

The combined area

3. The areas of the following councils, namely the council of the district of The Wrekin and Shropshire County Council shall be combined and shall become the combined area.

Combined Fire Authority

4. - (1) There shall be constituted as the fire authority for the combined area an authority to be known as the Shropshire and Wrekin Fire Authority.

- (2) The Authority shall be constituted in accordance with the provisions of Part III.

Fire brigade for combined area

5. - (1) There shall be established a fire brigade for the combined area which shall be known as the Shropshire Fire and Rescue Service, or by such other name as the Authority may determine.

- (2) The first chief officer of the fire brigade shall be I. H. Kerr Esq.

(3) The Authority shall submit an establishment scheme for their area to the Secretary of State in accordance with section 7 of the Fire Services Act 1959(b).

Financial provisions etc.

6. - (1) The expenses of the Authority shall be paid out of a combined fire service fund constituted and administered in accordance with the provisions of Part IV.

(2) Contributions shall be paid into the combined fire service fund by constituent authorities in accordance with the said provisions.

7. The Authority shall appoint a treasurer of the combined fire service fund.

(a) S.I. 1997/2702. b) 1959 c.44.

Officers and employees

8. The provisions of Part V shall have effect with respect to officers and employees of the Authority.

9. The Authority may appoint such other officers and employees as they think necessary for the efficient discharge of their functions.

10. The Authority may make arrangements with any constituent authority for the use by the Authority of the services of officers and employees of the constituent authority and for the making of contracts and payments on behalf of the Authority by the constituent authority.

PART III

CONSTITUTION OF COMBINED FIRE AUTHORITY

11. - (1) The Authority shall consist of not more than 25 members save that, where the minimum number of members of the Authority resulting from the operation of paragraph 12 would be greater than 25, the Authority shall consist of that number of members.

(2) Each member of the Authority shall be appointed by a constituent authority from its own members in accordance with this Part.

12. Each constituent authority shall, so far as is practicable, appoint such number of representatives to be members of the Authority as is proportionate to the number of local government electors in its area in relation to the number of such electors in the other constituent authority's area.

13. A member of the Authority shall come into office on the date of his appointment and shall, subject to paragraphs 14 to 16, hold office for such period or periods as shall be determined by the constituent authority which appoints him.

14. A member of the Authority may resign his membership by giving notice in writing to that effect to the officer of the Authority whose function it is to receive such notice.

15. - (1) A member of the Authority who ceases to be a member of the council which appointed him shall cease to be a member of the Authority.

(2) A person shall be disqualified from being a member of the Authority if he holds any paid office or employment (other than the office of chairman or vice-chairman), appointments to which are or may be made or confirmed by the Authority, by any committee or sub-committee of the Authority, or by a joint committee or board on which the Authority are represented.

16. - (1) Subject to sub-paragraph (2), if a member of the Authority resigns, becomes disqualified or otherwise ceases to be a member of the Authority before the expiry of his period of office, the council which appointed him shall appoint a representative to replace him, who shall come into office on the date of his appointment and, unless he resigns, becomes disqualified or otherwise ceases to be a member of the Authority, shall hold office for the remainder of the period for which his predecessor would have held office had he not resigned, become disqualified or otherwise ceased to be a member of the Authority.

(2) If a member of the Authority resigns, becomes disqualified or otherwise ceases to be a member of the Authority within six months before the end of his period of office, the council which appointed him shall not be required to appoint a representative to replace him for the remainder of such period unless, on the occurrence of the vacancy (or in the case of a number of simultaneous vacancies, the occurrence of the vacancies) the total number of unfilled vacancies in the membership of the Authority exceeds one third of the number of members of the Authority referred to in paragraph 11.

17. - (1) The Authority shall elect a chairman, and may elect a vice-chairman, from among its members.

(2) The chairman and the vice-chairman, if elected, shall, subject to paragraphs 13 to 16, hold office for such period not exceeding one year as the Authority shall determine.

(3) Sub-paragraph (2) shall not prevent a person who holds or has held office as chairman or vice-chairman, as the case may be, from being elected or re-elected to either of those offices.

(4) On a casual vacancy occurring in the office of chairman or vice-chairman, the Authority shall elect from its members a person to replace the chairman, and may so elect a person to replace the vice-chairman, as the case may be.

(5) The election to replace the chairman under sub-paragraph (4) shall take place not later than the next following ordinary meeting of the Authority.

18. The first meeting of the Authority shall be held as soon as it is practicable to do so and shall be convened by the Head of Administration and Legal Services of The Wrekin Council and subsequent meetings shall be convened in such a manner as the Authority shall determine.

19. At a meeting of the Authority the quorum shall be one third of the total number of members of the Authority, or such greater number of members as the Authority may determine, including at least one representative from each constituent authority.

20. - (1) The following provisions of the Local Government Act 1972 (a), namely sections 82(1), 94 to 98, 101 to 106, 99 and Part VI of Schedule 12 shall, subject to sub-paragraph (2), apply to the Authority and its members as if references in those provisions to a principal council or to a local authority, other than references to a parish council, were references to the Authority.

(2) Section 101(6) of the Local Government Act 1972 shall have effect, by virtue of sub-paragraph (1), as if for the words "levying, or issuing a precept for, a rate" there were substituted the words "assessing or varying the contributions to be paid into the combined fire service fund by the constituent authorities".

PART IV

COMBINED FIRE SERVICE FUND

21. - (1) Each constituent authority shall, in respect of each financial year, pay into the combined fire service fund, in accordance with the provisions of this paragraph, a contribution equal to its appropriate proportion of the net expenses of the Authority in respect of that year.

(2) The Authority shall, before 31st December in any year, submit to each constituent authority an estimate of its net expenses for the next financial year, and shall subsequently, before 15th February, give notice to each constituent authority of the amount of the contribution to be paid by that authority under this paragraph in the next financial year.

(3) Subject to sub-paragraphs (4) and (5), each constituent authority shall, at such intervals as are agreed between it and the Authority, make an interim payment into the combined fire service fund of such an amount as is so agreed on account of the said contribution.

(4) Subject to sub-paragraph (5), if a constituent authority and the Authority fail to agree, or subsequently disagree, as to the intervals at which payments should be made under sub-paragraph (3) or as to the amounts of such payments, each payment shall, until the end of the financial year or subsequent agreement between the two authorities, whichever is sooner –

(a) be made on the first working day of each month, and

(b) be of such an amount as would, if added to payments of an equal amount made on the first working day of each remaining month of the financial year, equal the outstanding balance of the contribution to be paid by the constituent authority under this paragraph.

(5) Notwithstanding the provisions of sub-paragraphs (3) and (4) any payments made under those sub-paragraphs shall be made at such times, and shall be of such amounts, as are at all times sufficient to enable the financial obligations of the Authority to be met.

(6) The Authority may, after consultation with each constituent authority, revise the estimate referred to in sub-paragraph (2) at any time before the end of the financial year to which that estimate relates and shall, as soon as is practicable, give notice in writing to each constituent authority of the revised amount of the contribution to be paid by that authority under this paragraph.

(7) Where a constituent authority receives notice under sub-paragraph (6) the interim payments payable thereafter under sub-paragraph (3) or (4) shall, subject to sub-paragraph (5), be so increased or reduced as to adjust to the difference.

(8) If the Authority makes arrangements with any constituent authority under paragraph 10 for the making of payments on behalf of the Authority by that constituent authority, the interim payments to be made by that constituent authority under this paragraph shall, subject to sub-paragraph (5), take into account payments made by that constituent authority on behalf of the Authority.

(a) 1972 c.70.

(9) For the purposes of this paragraph the net expenses of the Authority, in respect of any financial year, shall be the amount of its expenditure in respect of that year less all income which is credited to the combined fire service fund in respect of that year, other than contributions paid or payable under sub-paragraph (1), but may, for the purposes of preparing the estimate referred to in sub-paragraph (2) and if the Authority so resolve, include such amount or amounts as the Authority consider appropriate with a view to minimising any upward revision of an estimate under sub-paragraph (6).

(10) In this paragraph -

"appropriate proportion" means the proportion of the total amount of the constituent authorities' council tax base which is represented by the council tax base of the constituent authority in question;

"council tax base" means the council tax base for the year calculated by the Secretary of State for the Environment for Revenue Support Grant purposes in accordance with the local government finance report for that year made under section 78A of the Local Government Finance Act 1988 (a);

"financial year" means the period of twelve months beginning on 1st April; and

"working day" means a day other than a Saturday or a Sunday, Good Friday, Christmas Day or a day which is, or is to be observed as, a bank holiday, or a holiday under the Banking and Financial Dealings Act 1971 (b) in England and Wales.

22. The Authority shall have the power to pay out of the combined fire service fund compensation to persons employed by Shropshire County Council who in consequence of this scheme, or anything done thereunder, suffer direct pecuniary loss by reason of the determination of their appointments or the diminution of their emoluments.

PART V

OFFICERS AND EMPLOYEES OF THE AUTHORITY

23. There shall be transferred –

(a) to the fire brigade members of the fire brigade maintained by Shropshire County Council, and

(b) to employment by the Authority persons employed by that council wholly or mainly for the purposes of the fire brigade maintained by that council.

24. The following provisions of the Local Government Act 1972, namely sections 114, 115, 116, 117(1), (2) and (3), 118 and 119, shall apply to the officers and employees of the Authority as if references in those provisions to a local authority, other than references to a parish council, were references to the Authority.

PART VI

PROPERTY, RIGHTS AND LIABILITIES

25. There shall be transferred from Shropshire County Council to the Authority any property which is held by that council solely in connection with the provision of fire services, and rights and liabilities held or incurred by that council in respect of -

(a) any contract of employment with a person transferred in accordance with paragraph 23;

(b) the Firemen's Pension Scheme as set out in Schedule 2 to the Firemen's Pension Scheme Order 1992(c); and

(c) any contract for the provision of services or the delivery of goods solely in connection with the provision of fire services.

(a) 1988 c.41. Section 78A was inserted by the Local Government Finance Act 1992 (c.14), section 104 and Schedule 10, paragraph 10.

(b) 1971 c.80.

© S.I. 1992/129.

EXPLANATORY NOTE

(This note is not part of the Order)

This Order makes a scheme which combines the areas of the council of the district of The Wrekin (which would otherwise become an individual fire authority on 1st April 1998 by virtue of the Local Government Act 1992) and the Shropshire County Council into a combined fire area. The scheme comes into force on the same day as the Order comes into force for the purpose of doing anything which is necessary to bring the scheme fully into operation on 1st April 1998. The scheme establishes a fire authority for the combined area, to be known as the Shropshire and Wrekin Fire Authority, and provides for the appointment and terms of office of its members, and for meetings of the Authority. The scheme establishes a fire brigade for the combined area, to be known as the Shropshire Fire and Rescue Service or by such other name as the Authority determines, appoints its first chief officer, and provides for the submission of an establishment scheme to the Secretary of State. The scheme establishes a combined fire service fund and provides for the administration of the Authority's finances. The scheme also provides for the transfer of staff, and certain property, rights and liabilities, directly from the Shropshire County Council (the fire authority for the same area as the combined area prior to 1st April 1998) to the new combined authority.



Shropshire and Wrekin Fire Authority Annual Plan 2025/26

As in previous years, 2024 presented the Service with a range of local and national challenges as well as being an extraordinarily busy period.

The Service received its latest report from His Majesty's Inspectorate of Constabulary and Fire and Rescue Services (HMICFRS), which identified areas where work is required to improve performance. Action plans have been put in place to ensure that we meet these recommendations, which will in turn contribute to continual improvement and greater support for our communities.

This year, 2025/2026, we will launch our Community Risk Management Plan, which will set direction linked to managing operational risk for the next 3 years, with a focus on improved capability, whilst ensuring value for money.

Despite predictable and unpredictable external factors, the Service will continue to identify opportunities to improve, and this will be through key areas of work over the coming 12 months, supported by a greater demand on data to inform decision making.

The key focus for the next 12 months will be:

- To commence work on priority areas within the Community Risk Management Plan (CRMP) 2025-2028.
- To continue to address areas for improvement and cause of concern identified within our HMICFRS inspection report.
- To deliver against our strategic priorities for 2025/2026 and invest in our people and systems.
- To undertake a review of the Service's structure to enable the delivery of the CRMP and strategic priorities for 2025/2026 and future years.

We will continue to prioritise our resources and activities to ensure operational excellence, to achieve our vision of Making Shropshire Safer.



David Minnery - Chair
Shropshire and Wrekin Fire Authority



Simon Hardiman
Chief Fire Officer

Priorities for 2025/26

- Implement the Structural Review so that resources required for Service objectives, HMICFRS requirements and CRMP recommendations are quantified within revenue budget and capital programme
- Undertake a Value for Money exercise to ensure efficient and effective working across the Service
- Develop and introduce the Person Centric Safe & Well application
- Grenfell Tower Recommendations continue to be implemented. Evaluate the Grenfell Tower Inquiry Phase 1 Action Plan and review and implement Phase 2 recommendations
- Review Strategic Aerial appliance capability
- Develop and implement Quality Assurance Strategy to enable continued assurance and learning from Service activity supported by an improvement in the operational debriefing app
- Develop and implement evaluation framework for prevention and protection interventions aligned to the Quality Assurance Strategy
- Embed, review and identify learning from changes made across individual, professional and leadership development processes to support effective progression and performance management across the Service
- Build a culture of engagement, inclusion and trust by strengthening staff engagement processes and mechanisms, reflecting the voices of the wider workforce, addressing cultural review priorities themes
- Review and implement a more robust approach to the provision of people data, reporting and intelligence, to support effective workforce planning
- Develop the Estate's Strategy (Year 1) and deliver this (by Year 3) to improve security, welfare and reduce environmental impact
- Undertake the review of the corporate training facilities to determine the current and future needs of the Service
- Develop and implement a suite of Corporate Performance Indicators to support measurement of Service Plan and performance management (to include environmental targets)
- Support the implementation of new Command & Control (as part of the Fire Alliance) and move of Fire Control to Telford Central
- Begin phase 1 of the digital strategy – develop a strong data quality culture in line with the Government Data Quality Framework
- Improve data awareness and digital skills for managing change
- Launch the Information Security Policy and programme for raising awareness amongst all staff
- Introduce new MDT software, plus tablets to compliment them for improved access to information and data capture from any location
- Begin implementation of a consistent approach to integrated security access control across the estate
- Implement changes to strengthen water rescue capabilities in response to climate change (CRMP), meet the challenges of new energy systems - training equipment for EV and BESS, adjust to the effects of climate change - strengthen our wildfire preparation and response

Our Goals

Service Delivery Goals

Response We will respond quickly, safely and effectively to emergency incidents with competent, prepared and well-informed teams.

Prevention We will help the community to stay safe by making fire safety advice available to all and targeting our interventions at those most vulnerable.

Protection We will support businesses to protect people from harm and when necessary, use enforcement to keep communities and our firefighters safe.

Enabling/Corporate Services Goals

People Our culture will be purposefully diverse, collaborative and inclusive, building confidence in our values and performance.

We will nurture the talent of our staff and leaders, providing them with the right range of skills, to enable change for the next generation

Data and Digital Data is readily used and relied upon to inform decision making.

We will provide new systems capabilities to support increased automation of processes.

We will stay protected from emerging and sophisticated cyber threats and attacks.

Environment We will reduce our carbon footprint, adapt to the changing climate and protect the environment.

Finance and Resources We will provide a value for money service to the communities of Shropshire, through the most effective use of resources.

Corporate Performance Indicators

- The Service will aim to reduce the overall number of fires
- The Service will aim to reduce the number of accidental dwelling fires
- The Service will aim to reduce the incidence of deliberate fire setting
- The Service will mitigate against any fire deaths or serious injuries
- The Service will monitor and learn from every occasion when a fire is not confined to the room of origin
- The Service will monitor and learn from every occasion when an injury occurs during operational activity
- The Service will aim to meet its response standards of
Urban – first engine in 10 minutes
Town and fringe – first engine in 15 minutes
Rural – first engine in 20 minutes
- The Service will monitor the level and effectiveness of its enforcement activity
- The Service will monitor and report against establishment, composition, competence and attendance levels

Our Purpose

Save and protect life, property and the environment from fire and other emergencies

Our Core Values

The Service fully supports the national fire and rescue service core values of:

- Service to the community
- Valuing people
- Valuing diversity
- Valuing improvement at all levels

CONTENTS

| | |
|----|--|
| 4 | Foreword |
| 5 | Introduction – Vision and Strategic Intent |
| 6 | Purpose |
| 8 | Values and Behaviours |
| 10 | Internal Drivers for Change |



Shropshire
Fire and Rescue Service

OUR 9 HIGH LEVEL OBJECTIVES.



Developing
Leadership
Capacity



Organisational
Development &
Engagement



Resourcing the
Service



Equality,
Diversity and
Inclusion



Health, Safety,
Wellbeing and
Fitness



Skills,
Education and
Training



New Ways of
Working



Monitoring
Evaluation



Measuring
Effectiveness

FOREWORD.

The People Strategy sets out how Shropshire Fire and Rescue Service (SFRS) will support and develop all our people throughout their time with the Service.

To achieve this, we will use innovative solutions to attract, recruit and retain individuals, to promote diversity and inclusion in all that we do.

There is work to do within the Service, however, our approach of putting our people at the centre of everything we do will support organisational development and continuous improvement.

We are fully committed to valuing each member of our team and want SFRS to be recognised as a great place to work.

Our aim is to have a skilled workforce, that are agile and adaptable to change and able to capitalise on improvement opportunities that will assist with personal, team and organisational development, whilst remaining resilient and with a focus on the health and wellbeing of all our people. This approach will support the Service vision of 'Making Shropshire Safer'.

Culture is our greatest asset, but can also be our biggest weakness, and it is recognised that the way we lead, manage performance and behave are fundamental elements of creating the culture of the Service.

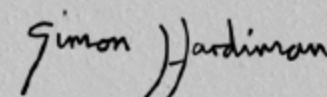
This is represented within our values and the behaviours set out within the Workplace Charter, which has been created by our staff for our staff.

The Service and the wider fire sector are in a state of constant change and reform, and the pace and depth of change is likely to increase into the future. The People Strategy will support the Service and our people to adapt, evolve and respond effectively to a changing landscape, which can be difficult for all.

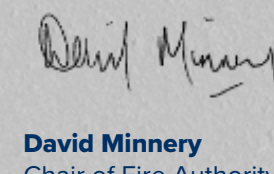
Our People Plan to support the strategy will set out our policies and will be guided by the priorities, declarations and critical success factors set out within this document.

It is important that the contents of this strategy are communicated to all staff, and all our people have opportunity to engage and feedback their views, as this will support reviewing and amending existing policies and processes collaboratively.

OUR LEADERSHIP TEAM.



Simon Hardiman
Chief Fire Officer



David Minnery
Chair of Fire Authority

OUR VISION AND STRATEGIC INTENT.

The quality of our people is the key driver to our success.

At SFRS we strive to create an environment in which our people can grow and develop in their work to deliver an outstanding service to the public and our communities. We operate within a defined set of values and behaviours which drive our business practices.

Our vision 'Making Shropshire Safer' can only be achieved with the appropriate numbers of motivated and skilled staff.

SFRS are committed to developing the organisation to achieve excellence in people and performance management, working collaboratively to deliver an efficient service.

We actively focus on employee engagement, using our Staff Survey results to develop strategies and increase engagement. We have built a shared sense of purpose and give people a meaningful voice on matters that affect their working lives.

At SFRS we encourage learning and innovation to motivate employees to reach their full potential. Our staff are engaged and empowered to make a difference on their own.

We will work with and support our leaders to encourage a culture of trust, people development and wellbeing to enable all our staff to be their very best at work.

We seek out innovative ways to substantiate our commitment to Equality, Diversity and Inclusion by removing barriers and celebrating differences, to include all in the workplace to share in our success.

OUR STRATEGIC GOALS.

SERVICE DELIVERY GOALS

Response

We will respond quickly, safely and effectively to emergency incidents with competent, prepared and well-informed teams.

Prevention

We will help the community to stay safe by making fire safety advice available to all and targeting our interventions at those most vulnerable.

Protection

We will support businesses to protect people from harm and when necessary, use enforcement to keep communities and our firefighters safe.

ENABLING/CORPORATE SERVICES GOALS

People

Our culture will be purposefully diverse, collaborative and inclusive, building confidence in our values and performance.

We will nurture the talent of our staff and leaders, providing them with the right range of skills, to enable change for the next generation

Data and Digital

Data is readily used and relied upon to inform decision making.

We will provide new systems capabilities to support increased automation of processes.

We will stay protected from emerging and sophisticated cyber threats and attacks.

Environment

We will reduce our carbon footprint, adapt to the changing climate and protect the environment.

Finance and Resources

We will provide a value for money service to the communities of Shropshire, through the most effective use of resources.

OUR PURPOSE.

The purpose of our People Strategy is to support all that we do to attract, recruit, develop, retain, support and reward our employees to meet our future goals and aspirations.

This document offers a response to the significant changes in service provision by reframing what we want from our people over the next three years.

The People Strategy allows us to plan and facilitate the evolving demands of the wider workforce.

Employees are looking for meaningful work, flexible working options, personal development opportunities and a working environment that facilitates upskilling and training.

Our People Strategy provides a framework to support the aims and objectives of the Service as outlined in the Community Risk Management Plan (CRMP). This strategy details how the Service intends to achieve this by:

- 1. Developing leadership capacity**
- 2. Organisational development and engagement**
- 3. Resourcing the Service**
- 4. Equality, diversity and inclusion (EDI)**
- 5. Health, safety, wellbeing and fitness**
- 6. Skills, training and education**
- 7. New ways of working**

OUR VALUES & BEHAVIOURS.

Through defined core values, SFRS sets out what is expected of employees. We also fully support the national fire and rescue core values of:

| Service to the Community | Valuing all our people | Valuing diversity in the Service and the Community | Valuing improvement at all levels |
|--|--|--|---|
| We value service to the community by. <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Working with all groups to reduce risk.• Treating everyone fairly and with respect.• Being answerable to those we serve.• Striving for excellence in all we do. | We value all our employees by practicing and promoting. <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Fairness and respect.• Recognition of merit.• Honesty, integrity and mutual trust.• Personal development.• Co-operative and inclusive working. | We value diversity in the service and community by. <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Treating everyone fairly and with respect.• Providing varying solutions for different needs and expectations.• Promoting equal opportunities in employment and progression within the Service.• Challenging prejudice and discrimination. | We value improvement at all levels of the Service by; <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Accepting responsibility for our performance.• Being open-minded.• Considering criticism thoughtfully.• Learning from our experience.• Consulting others. |

WORKPLACE CHARTER.

The Workplace Charter is a commitment to changing the way we all think and act in the workplace. It seeks to promote higher standards of behaviour throughout the workplace.

The Workplace Charter is supported by the vision statement and the core values and while many positive behaviours are already regularly demonstrated across the Service, this charter provides specific guidance, setting a standard of behaviour and conduct for people ensuring everyone feels valued and respected.

The charter captures what staff themselves feel is appropriate and reflects the National Fire Chiefs Council's (NFCC) Leadership Framework and Core Code of Ethics.

The Workplace Charter behaviours are a condensed set of statements that have come from the NFCC Leadership Framework which outline behaviours that employees are expected to demonstrate in a modern fire and rescue service.



The Fire and Rescue National Framework for England sets out the Government's priorities and objectives for fire and rescue authorities. This provides the overall strategic direction to authorities which includes the driving forward of workforce reform.

Where practicable Shropshire & Wrekin Fire Authority supports the achievement of national strategies applicable to the Fire and Rescue Service whilst balancing this with a focus on providing a service that makes Shropshire Safer.

To that end, the following strategies and frameworks have informed the development of our People Strategy:

- NFCC People, Leadership and Culture Programme
- Fire and Rescue Service National Framework for England: 2023 progress report
- Community Risk Management Plan 2025 - 2028
- Local Government Association – Fire Vision 2024
- State of Fire and Rescue - The Annual Assessment in England 2023
- NFCC Leadership Framework
- NFCC Core Code of Ethics
- NFCC Culture Action Plan
- Leading the Service Fire Standard
- Leading and Developing People Fire Standards
- HMICFRS Values and culture in fire and rescue services
- HMICFRS Standards of Behaviour – The handling of misconduct in fire and rescue services

This strategy doesn't stand alone and is supported and contributed to by other plans derived from, or informed by these include the:

- Health and Wellbeing Plan
- Equality, Diversity and Inclusion Plan
- Workforce & Resourcing Plan
- Organisational Development Plan
- Training Needs Analysis

These plans are reviewed annually and support the overall delivery of the People Strategy and provide clear goals, time scales, and measures of success.

More detailed planning and activities to support the achievement of our organisational strategy can be found in the human resources and corporate support plan, the training and development departmental plan and the Digital and Data and the Communication strategies.

WORKPLACE CHARTER.

Shropshire Fire and Rescue Service have created the Workplace Charter which incorporates the core code of ethics for Fire and Rescue Services in England. It sets out the standards of behaviour expected in the workplace and is supported by the representative bodies.

ORGANISATIONAL EFFECTIVENESS



We will explore and embrace alternative ways of working, to achieve our common purpose using the benefits of technology

We will listen to our colleagues and the public and communicate information to them that is lawful, relevant and timely

We understand how our roles contribute to the aims of the Service

We are responsible for the health, safety and wellbeing, of ourselves and others

OUTSTANDING LEADERSHIP



We will create an inclusive environment where people can be the best they can be, supporting each other through encouragement and motivation

We will recognise and challenge inappropriate behaviour, providing support to those who do raise it

We are open to giving and receiving constructive feedback

We will be visible, accessible, honest and transparent in order to build trust

We are accountable for our actions and behaviours

SERVICE DELIVERY



We will share our ideas to create improvement and development opportunities

We will share responsibility to work together to solve problems effectively

We are committed to, and understand, our responsibility towards safeguarding

We will provide an efficient and productive service considering the needs of our colleagues and our communities

PERSONAL IMPACT



We consider the impacts of our actions on others and always welcome alternative views and feedback

We contribute to an inclusive culture remaining respectful of any differences we may have

We will remain professional at all times and act with integrity

We will encourage discussion to improve our wider understanding of health and wellbeing

We will take care of, and protect, our personal data

We are responsible for our own development and that of others



INTERNAL DRIVERS FOR CHANGE.

Nationally there is a clear focus on the need to improve culture and inclusion across the fire sector.

Shropshire Fire and Rescue Service has this same challenge and recognises that change will only come from effective leadership, embedding the right behaviours, enabling diversity and inclusive ways of working to ensure all our people can contribute to change. By achieving this we can create an environment where the health and wellbeing of our staff is supported, nurturing talent for the future.

Our staff are our greatest asset and are professionals in the work they do. We understand from internal reviews, staff surveys and cultural work that there is more for us to achieve in creating a truly inclusive workplace where staff feel confident and positive behaviours are expected and displayed.

Our most recent HMICFRS (His Majesty's Inspectorate for Constabularies and Fire and Rescue Services) Inspection has identified areas for improvement which demonstrate some of the current challenges we face in recruiting, developing and engaging a diverse workforce.

The priorities set out in this People Strategy highlight some of our internal drivers for change:

- Our aspirations in engaging a workforce that is representative of the communities we serve. Increase female and BAME representation across uniformed roles
- Enable Female and BAME progression. Identify through workforce planning how we support an ageing workforce and we mitigate this through ongoing recruitment
- Enable a more diverse pool of recruitment for senior leaders.
- How we continue to develop our workforce despite public sector funding pressures.
- How Changes in new technology will help us to maximise productivity and enable flexibility.





DEVELOPING LEADERSHIP CAPACITY

Our intention is that our leaders will have the ability to lead, inspire, coach and develop others in the organisation.

They will be visible, demonstrate strong leadership skills, showcasing accountability, honesty, openness, and transparency in their decision making. Leaders will be effective in performance management of their employees.

Our developmental culture enables us to recognise that our success hinges on the capabilities of our people. Therefore, we will support our leaders to grow and invest in their personal and professional development.

LEADERSHIP DEVELOPMENT.

We will:

Review, evaluate and refresh leadership and management programmes ensuring they reflect the core values, the Workplace Charter, Core Code of Ethics, and strategic direction.

Develop our leaders to ensure operational and non-operational leadership capacity is in place to manage the organisation into the future.

Work in accordance with the NFCC Leadership Framework, Core Code of Ethics and other NFCC People, Culture and Leadership products to develop leaders who are both professionally and operationally competent and who have the ability to inspire and motivate others.

Ensure that all leaders and managers have access to appropriate development and training which supports the Service's strategic outcomes and corporate priorities.

Ensure that senior managers are visible and demonstrate service values through their behaviours

Review our performance management practices to ensure our leaders and managers can effectively manage staff performance.



COACHING AND MENTORING.

We will:

Continue to embed coaching and mentoring to support performance improvement and the demonstration of desired values and behaviours.

Continue to encourage the use of coaching and mentoring to support the Individual Performance and Development Review (IPDR) process.

Promote the NFCC Coaching and Mentoring portal and encourage all to access to support continuous improvement.

CRITICAL SUCCESS FACTORS.

Increase completion rates in leadership development programmes and activities both internally and externally in line with the agreed framework.

Increased levels of operational competence for our leaders.

Managers and leaders demonstrate increased visibility, knowledge and understanding of people management activities and behaviours as outlined in staff survey through being open, approachable and effectively manage performance.

Percentage increase in evidence of senior managers adhering to SFRS's values as indicated in the Staff Survey.

Increased levels of staff obtaining successful Career Progression Gateway passes.

Increased use of external coaches.

Increased use of the performance management procedures resulting in improved performance levels.

ORGANISATIONAL DEVELOPMENT & ENGAGEMENT

Organisational development helps us focus on how we can maximise the value gained from our resources.

HR activity can be redesigned to bring about change that the Service needs, and it helps create better alignment with the organisation's goals and activities. If employees feel engaged, we expect our workforce to be healthier, more fulfilled, and more motivated.

If we allow our employees a voice and to bring ideas to the table this will enable individuals to contribute to innovation at work.

STAFF ENGAGEMENT.

We will:

Continue to undertake the Staff Survey at regular intervals, analysing the results and keeping our people updated regularly on progress. We are committed to listening to and acting on what our staff tell us and want to encourage openness and honesty in communication.

Work to maintain effective employment relations with employees and representative bodies and we will engage with staff to ascertain and improve levels of satisfaction and motivation.

Ensure employees are empowered and that they have the autonomy, flexibility and accountability to make a positive difference in their day-to-day environment.

Managers will be expected to proactively engage with Service wide people management processes to support effective service delivery and personal/professional development/career progression.

Review the Workplace Charter/introduce Core Code of Ethics as a standalone entity

Implement and embed all elements of the Cultural Action Plan

REWARD AND RECOGNITION.

We will:

Support improvements in staff physical and mental wellbeing to offer a holistic work life balance for our people therefore becoming an employer of choice.

We are committed to ensuring staff feel valued and recognised, we will continue to recognise the importance of praise via annual awards events and long service awards.

Support the development of the national pay arrangements which recognise the contribution of all employees.

Continue to support and monitor performance management and identify high potential through the IPDR process.

Continue to seek suggestions and improvements from our staff in all areas of the Service.

Work with staff and their representatives to further consider opportunities to recognise and reward those who innovate and go above and beyond their roles to deliver excellence and support the Service's values.

Continue to monitor and report on complaints and compliments.

CRITICAL SUCCESS FACTORS.

Improved staff satisfaction, engagement score and number of respondents from the Staff Survey.

Increased number of staff respondents to HMICFRS surveys.

Increased number of staff suggestions and active participation in Service and community events

More staff being recognised for their individual and team achievements.

Improved percentage of staff feeling valued and recognised for the work they do as outlined through the Staff Survey.

Improved numbers of compliments received by the Service.

Implementation and embedding of all recommendations within the Cultural Action Plan

RESOURCING THE SERVICE

Resourcing is about attracting and selecting people for the right role, at the right time, with the right skills and capacity, and at the right cost in order to successfully manage change and risk.

Our resourcing activities will be focused on understanding the employee experience, designing effective assessment and selection processes, and making effective recruitment decisions.

Our workforce planning data will inform our decision making and succession planning. By managing talent strategically our organisation can build a high-performance workplace, encourage continuous learning, and create meaningful work and growth opportunities for employees.

WORKFORCE PLANNING.

The Workforce Plan sets out how the Service will meet both current and future workforce demands in line with the Community Risk Management Plan (CRMP).

We will:

Continue to use appropriate performance management data to inform workforce and succession plans and to mitigate any potential risks of inadequate staffing numbers.

Continue to analyse current and future workforce needs and identify deficiencies in the current Workforce Plan and its alignment with the CRMP

We will maximise resilience through a proactive and supportive approach to attendance management with a focus on employee wellbeing.

Review non-operational resources to improve capacity to bring about sustainable change

We will review and ensure our promotion processes are fit for purpose, accessible, and inclusive for all employees.

RECRUITMENT AND ATTRACTION.

We will:

Attract, recruit, select, and retain talent with critical skills needed to deliver the service while adapting to significant changes in workforce needs.

Work with managers to ensure effective recruitment, retention, and progression. We will use proven modern methods of recruitment, making the best use of technology and marketing techniques to ensure robust systems are in place across the Service.

Identify ways to make jobs more flexible/agile to improve work life balance by enabling staff to have greater flexibility over where, when and the hours they work.

Identify and overcome barriers to equal opportunity, so the workforce better represents its community.

Analyse recruitment equality data and use this data to inform future recruitment processes eg positive action.

TALENT MANAGEMENT AND SUCCESSION PLANNING.

We will:

Seek to attract, identify, develop, engage, retain, and deploy individuals, taking into account areas of single points of failure.

Support the development of our organisation to improve productivity and manage performance through the Individual Performance and Development Review (IPDR) process and use of the NFCC People Culture and Leadership products.

Review the current IPDR process and support managers to effectively complete IPDRs recognising and nurturing our people's potential and any identified career aspirations.

Create an open and fair process to identify, develop and support high potential staff and aspiring leaders.

WIDENING PARTICIPATION.

We will:

Seek to give opportunities to individuals who have the ability and desire, to enter into a fire service career.

Create opportunities and identify career pathways for young people and other talented members of the community to enter into the Service.

Look to increase the number of apprentices and provide additional opportunities for work experience, working with local partners, schools and agencies.



CRITICAL SUCCESS FACTORS.

Increased capacity in resources to bring about sustainable change

Workforce shortages/gaps are minimal, and risks including single points of failure are managed.

Improved confidence in promotion processes that are timely, fair and transparent.

Reduction in the percentage turnover rate of all staff groups.

Improved attendance levels across all absence categories.

Improved use of modern methods of recruitment techniques and technology.

Increased number of applicants for roles from under-represented groups.

Reduction in the use of agency staff.

Reduction in turnover rates across all groups. Increase in the number of completed IPDRs.

Future talent and supporting succession plans in place, aligned to workforce needs.

Increase number of apprentices and opportunities for work experience.

Increase the number of flexible/agile working requests to include different contract types, shift patterns and working practices.

Increased access to the NFCC Interactive Career Pathways (ICP) (due for launch in March 2025) to encourage recruitment into the sector and also provide information around career pathways for existing fire and rescue sector employees.

Increased understanding, application and completion of IPDRs.

EQUALITY, DIVERSITY, AND INCLUSION.

SFRS wants to create a culture where everyone feels welcomed, accepted, valued, and can bring their whole self to work. Equality, diversity, and inclusion (EDI) are three principles that help to create a fair society where everyone gets equal opportunities.

Equality is about equal opportunities and protecting people from being discriminated against while diversity is about recognising, respecting and valuing differences in people. Meanwhile, inclusion refers to an individual's experience within the workplace and in a wider society, and the extent to which they feel valued and included.

We will:

Promote equality, diversity and inclusion within the workforce and value the benefits this brings.

Strengthen our ability to provide an excellent service by welcoming a diverse workforce, promoting inclusion, and creating a fair and equal place to work.

Review and continue to deliver positive action programmes to attract, retain and develop under-represented groups.

Engage and maintain connections with community groups as part of the Service's positive action programme

Use demographic data and community knowledge to assist with providing equality of access to services and employment for specific protected characteristics.

Improve employee equality monitoring data

Review policy and ensure managers understand the importance of completing Equality Impact Assessments and the value this will bring the Service and our communities.

Review the Equality Impact Process

Ensure under-represented groups are heard and have influence.

Ensure our recruitment processes are appropriate, transparent, and inclusive.

Review current training packages and promote opportunities for further EDI training

CULTURE AND VALUES.

We will:

Promote cultural values and behaviours which make the Fire and Rescue Service a great place to work for all our people.

Promote a culture of dignity and respect with both the public and our workforce so engagement may flourish, making us more flexible, innovative and create environments where people feel valued and are able to bring their true self to work.

Listen to our staff, use their feedback to grow the ideal workplace environment.

Not tolerate bullying, harassment or discrimination in the workplace

Strengthen the anti-harassment and bullying policies, procedures and support

Support staff that report bullying and investigate cases quickly and fairly.

Ensure staff are aware of, and follow the Core Code of Ethics, including through all policies and procedures

Review and strengthen the misconduct and grievance policies, procedures and welfare support

CRITICAL SUCCESS FACTORS.

Members of staff understand and act in accordance with our values and standards of behaviour, this will be reflected in a variety of ways including the results of our staff survey, numbers, and types of disciplinary and grievances.

Further engagement and effective use of the Voices groups throughout the Service.

Increase workforce diversity at all levels and number of applicants for roles from under-represented groups.

Increased number and quality of Equality Impact Assessments, the creation of positive action events targeted at specific groups based on demographic data and see a reduction in the Gender Pay Gap.

Increase in positive feedback in our Staff Survey regarding support for employees going through harassment or bullying cases

Increase in the number of employees declaring their monitoring data, increased awareness and understanding of the Core Code of Ethics and increased confidence, knowledge, understanding and effective management of misconduct and grievance procedures

HEALTH AND SAFETY.

The Health and Safety section of the People Strategy is fundamental to the Authority's, the Chief Fire Officer's and the Service's commitment to protecting its people, ensuring operational excellence, and fostering public trust.

To do this effectively, we adopt the Health and Safety Executive (HSE) guidance to ensure a cohesive, legally compliant, and high-quality approach to managing health and safety.

Core Guidance:

- Managing for Health and Safety (HSG65): A structured 'plan-do-check-act' model for risk management.
- Leading Health and Safety at Work (INDG417): Emphasises leadership's role in driving health and safety culture and standards.



Key Actions:

1. Plan:

- Establish clear policies integrating health and safety into our vision, objectives, and activities.
- Conduct gap analyses to identify risks and align with legal and sector standards.
- Develop scalable systems for continuous improvement without duplication.

2. Do:

- Prioritise risks by identifying significant hazards and mitigation strategies.
- Cultivate a safety culture through leadership, training, clear communication, and active engagement.
- Ensure adequate resources and competency development at all levels.

3. Check:

- Monitor performance with active (proactive inspections) and reactive (incident analysis) methods.
- Implement robust systems for regular audits and evaluations.

4. Act:

- Review performance regularly and after major incidents.
- Celebrate successes and address shortcomings to maintain effective systems.

We will:

Adopt Best Practices: Implement the HSE's Managing for Health and Safety (HSG65) and Leading Health and Safety at Work (INDG417) frameworks to ensure a systematic, compliant approach to health and safety management.

Maintain and Develop Clear Policies: Establish health and safety policies integrated into our vision and values, outlining responsibilities at all levels.

Enhance Risk Management: Regularly assess and prioritise risks, ensuring effective mitigation strategies and resources are in place.

Foster a Safety Culture: Strengthen leadership accountability, communication, and workforce engagement to embed a proactive and inclusive health and safety culture.

Deliver Effective Training: Provide comprehensive training programs tailored to roles and operational requirements, ensuring competency across all levels.

Monitor and Improve: Implement robust monitoring and audit systems to evaluate performance, identify areas for improvement, and ensure continuous development.

Leverage Collaboration: Partner with external organisations and stakeholders to align with best practices and enhance health and safety outcomes.

Recognise Success: Celebrate achievements and innovations that advance health and safety standards across the organisation.

CRITICAL SUCCESS FACTORS.

- Health and safety practices are aligned with HSE guidance, legal requirements, and national standards across the organisation.
- Senior Leadership Team visibly drives health and safety as a core priority, demonstrating accountability and active engagement.
- Health and safety policies are seamlessly embedded into all organisational activities, supporting a consistent and practical approach to managing risks.
- A robust approach to risk management is in place, resulting in fewer incidents and greater confidence in safety measures.
- An engaged and informed workforce takes shared responsibility for health and safety, actively contributing to a safer working environment.
- A trained and competent workforce maintains safety standards and responds effectively to emerging risks.
- Monitoring and auditing systems drive consistent improvement, adapting swiftly to new challenges and ensuring ongoing effectiveness.
- Strong partnerships with external stakeholders enhance health and safety outcomes through innovation, shared learning, and joint initiatives.
- Efficient and integrated systems track health and safety performance, providing reliable data for informed decision-making.
- A Health and Safety culture that recognises achievement, learns from incidents, and showcases improvements across the organisation, reinforcing the importance of health and safety.



HEALTH, WELLBEING AND FITNESS.

Fostering employee health, wellbeing and fitness in the organisation can help prevent stress and create positive working environments where individuals can flourish.

Healthy workplaces help people to thrive and reach their full potential. Our intention is to continue to invest in employee wellbeing to increase resilience, reduce and prevent sickness absence and in turn increase productivity and performance.

We will:

Continue to develop and offer a range of wellbeing initiatives to support the mental and physical wellbeing of staff.

Continue to provide timely access to occupational health, fitness, physiotherapy and counselling service, ensuring early interventions to prevent sickness absence or support those already absent.

Develop managers' skills to raise awareness of achieving staff wellbeing and train them to recognise the signs and symptoms of mental health issues to support their teams.

Continue to develop employees' awareness and training opportunities for suicide prevention.

Use HR data to inform policy and planning.

Continue to monitor and support changes to the firefighter fitness testing programme and provide additional support to staff to ensure they remain physically fit for their roles.

Review and implement the NFCC Health and Wellbeing strategy.

Ensure we have an effective Occupational Health provision in place through an external provider

Proactively monitor working hours (including overtime) to improve staff wellbeing

CRITICAL SUCCESS FACTORS.

Reduction in all absences

Increase in the number of flexible working requests to manage work life balance.

Percentage increase in staff believing SFRS do enough to support their mental and physical health at work as outlined in the Staff Survey.

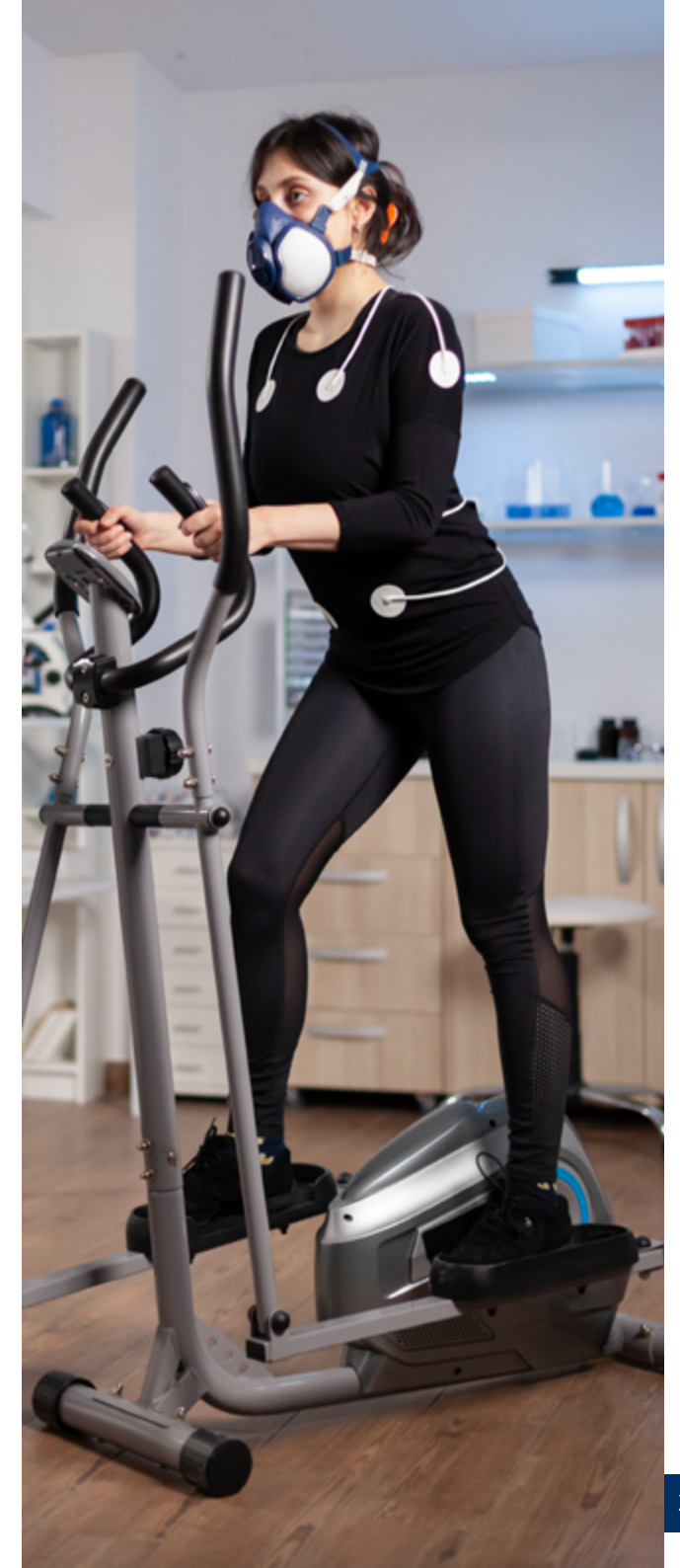
Increased numbers of mental health (MH) First Aiders/MH Awareness Training/TRIM (min. 10% of the workforce).

Increased number of our people trained in Suicide Awareness; Suicide First Aid Lite for operational colleagues.

A clear supportive fitness testing programme is in place and an increase in fitness levels across operational teams.

Smooth transition from one Occupational Health provider to another, ensuring staff have access to services that support both their mental and physical wellbeing.

Staff aren't working excessive hours on dual contracts.





SKILLS, TRAINING AND EDUCATION.

Driven by the Service Vision, we prioritise Operational Excellence through high standards in training and development, fostering a unified culture of respect, integrity, and inclusivity.

Guided by the risks identified within the CRMP and the objectives of the People Strategy, we target our training to address operational demands and enhance preparedness.

Emphasising professionalism, continuous improvement, and accountability, we leverage innovation and collaboration to ensure our teams are trained and developed to meet evolving challenges and deliver exceptional service.

Learning and Education

We will:

Prioritise a digital approach and streamline training and development data reporting systems, offering a blend of online, practical, classroom based, and remote learning opportunities to increase accessibility and flexibility.

Establish clear career pathways where opportunities exist, outlining education, training, and technical requirements for all roles, ensuring clarity of progression for staff.

Explore opportunities to innovate and improve Training and Development paper-based activities and processes to reflect a more efficient and accurate modern method of recording personnel information enabling accurate auditing, reporting and trend analytics to better understand strengths and areas for improvement.

Host a range of teaching delivery, demonstration and assessment methods to accommodate the spectrum of learners ensuring not to disadvantage those with any neuro diversity.

Create opportunities for lateral development, including secondments and collaborative development initiatives, to broaden skills and experience.

Promote opportunities for further education and training, providing funding for role-specific academic studies to enhance professional development.

Develop and implement a three-year phased approach to training, beginning with a digital-first strategy to roll out online platforms, followed by localised training, and concluding with facility-based training at Telford to ensure operational readiness.

Establish clear career pathways outlining education, training, and technical requirements for all roles.

Mandatory Role Based Training

We will :

Improve and enhance training facilities by implementing a three-year program to refurbish operational training centres, beginning with securing budgetary provisions and developing a detailed refurbishment plan in the first year.

Develop safe and realistic training programs that respond to and provide standardised, relevant, effective and realistic learning and development opportunities in a safe environment that meets the demands of each role map and best practice guidance for our sector.

Maintain sector relevance for new and emerging risks assuring review of equipment, guidance, procedures, techniques, policy and training keeps pace with the change in demand.

Provide opportunities and support for the training, development, and maintenance of professional skills for all staff.

Provide robust quality assurance mechanisms to uphold the delivery standards of all training and development activities.

Strengthen competency recording and assurance processes by introducing simplified, scalable tools for tracking development and activity for all personnel across the Service particularly for on-call colleagues.

Ensure an appropriately sized and trained internal quality assurance (IQA) cadre, capable of conducting regular assurance visits to validate training effectiveness, address learning gaps, and ensure continuous improvement.

Collaborate with strategic partners and external training providers to enhance the quality and diversity of training opportunities.

CRITICAL SUCCESS FACTORS.

Alignment with training and operational standards that comply with legislative requirements, National Joint Council national operational standards, national operational guidance, fire standards and accredited awarding bodies.

Improved and modernised training facilities, providing realistic, relevant, and safe environments for staff and instructors.

A Developed program for competence maintenance across all roles and specialist functions ensuring the best possible operational standards for safety of our teams and wider community

Streamlined training and development administration and data intelligence, improving efficiency and accessibility for all staff.

Closer alignment and enhanced collaboration with bordering FRSs and external partners, providing increased frequency of multi-agency training events, fostering inter-agency coordination.

Clarity regarding career pathways for both Grey and Green Book staff, supporting professional growth and progression, providing transparent routes that support professional development, growth, and progression where relevant.

Further development of career pathways for Grey and Green Book staff.

NEW WAYS OF WORKING.

Technology, processes, and the existing talent pool are considerations in the implementation of the People Strategy.

Technology not only influences the work employees carry out but can also change the full working environment by facilitating more agile working.

Our approach to transformation is an ongoing process for continuous improvement. Our leaders will actively create the right environment for change to happen and we will engage early with staff to motivate staff to overcome their frustrations and challenges.

Learning and adapting the new ways of working takes energy to maintain a continual business momentum.

MANAGING CHANGE.

We will:

When initiating major change programmes, review the risks and the composition of our workforce and adapt to affect these changes.

Consider opportunities for workforce redesign and transformation following the introduction of new technologies and different ways of working.

Review organisational systems, processes, and procedures to identify efficiencies and productivity savings and enable staff to work innovatively and responsively to the changing environment.

Use HR data to understand the nature of our workforce and support our decision making.

Create more flexible and adaptive services by shifting emphasis from fixed duty systems to contract types which help create a more flexible response.

Continue to work with the National Joint Council and Trade Union representatives to ensure reform and changes are introduced effectively.

Continue to support the Local Pension Board to monitor the provision of pensions to existing employees and retired members and ensure we have an effective pensions provision in place through the external scheme administrator and the pensions officer.

INFORMATION SYSTEMS.

We will:

Work with colleagues to continue to develop and realise the benefits from computerised systems such as the HR dashboard and Resource Link.

Increasingly simplify processes through digital transformation, continually moving towards 'paperless' processes.

ORGANISATIONAL PERFORMANCE METRICS.

We will:

Continue to use the dashboards to improve HR, Training and Development, LEO and Health and Safety metrics to support HMICFRS data collection.

Develop a set of Corporate Health Indicators.

CRITICAL SUCCESS FACTORS.

Provide HR policies that facilitate innovative workforce change.

Duty systems will be flexible to meet the needs of the Service.

Increased usage of technology to provide useful workforce data to aid decision making.

Further development of computerised systems to reduce reliance on paper-based processes and improve efficiency.

Introduction of a range of focussed and relevant HR Corporate Health indicators to further develop benchmarking of HR performance.

Adoption of a national set of professional standards.

Percentage increase in the number of staff showing an understanding for change at SFRS given the challenges faced by the Service as outlined in the Staff Survey.

MONITORING AND EVALUATION.

The HR, EDI and Training and Development teams will work with managers to influence and contribute to Service strategy ensuring that the workforce agenda is appropriately considered.

The team will regularly engage with relevant stakeholders, internally and externally to ensure workforce issues are addressed.

Our team will continually develop to ensure a progressive, professional and competent approach to the delivery of all HR systems, processes and practices.

Heads of departments and line managers are responsible and accountable for the effective management of their staff and teams and will be held to account for the delivery of effective HR performance in their areas of responsibility.

Delivery and actions will be monitored through the workforce plan and monthly people management meetings.

This will inform the annual business planning cycle and corporate objective setting process which will encompass all elements of the workforce team's delivery areas.

All departmental plans are monitored by the Service Management team through exception reporting.

An annual report on the People Strategy will be considered by the Strategy and Resources Committee.

The plans that underpin this strategy will be reviewed on an annual basis taking into account any major organisational changes, providing the Service with the most relevant workforce today and in the future. Critical success factors will be reviewed annually to ensure that they remain fit for purpose and will be updated accordingly.

The People Strategy is available to all staff and will be published on the Portal and on our website at www.shropshirefire.gov.uk

There will be ongoing consultation with the Representative Bodies regarding the implementation of specific elements within the strategy through annual plans. Any supporting plans to the strategy will be reviewed on an annual basis.

MEASURING EFFECTIVENESS.

WE WILL KNOW OUR STRATEGY HAS BEEN EFFECTIVE IF WE FIND:

**WE ARE ACHIEVING
AGAINST THE CRITICAL
SUCCESS FACTORS.**

**OVERALL STAFF ENGAGEMENT SHOWN
THROUGH THE STAFF SURVEY IS GOOD AGAINST
BENCHMARKS AND CONTINUES TO IMPROVE.**

**SICKNESS ABSENCE LEVELS, INCLUDING STRESS-
RELATED ABSENCE ARE LOW COMPARED TO
BENCHMARK ORGANISATIONS.**

**OPERATIONAL RESPONSE
AND PERFORMANCE
TARGETS ARE MET.**

PEOPLE STRATEGY

2025-28



Shropshire
Fire and Rescue Service

Shropshire Fire and Rescue Service

Draft Code of Corporate Governance 2024/25

| Principle 1 - Behaving with integrity, demonstrating strong commitment to ethical values, and respecting the rule of law | |
|--|---|
| Local government organisations are accountable not only for how much they spend, but also for how they use the resources under their stewardship. This includes accountability for outputs, both positive and negative, and for the outcomes they have achieved. In addition, they have an overarching responsibility to serve the public interest in adhering to the requirements of legislation and government policies. It is essential that, as a whole, they can demonstrate the appropriateness of all their actions across all activities and have mechanisms in place to encourage and enforce adherence to ethical values and to respect the rule of law. | |
| 1.1 Behaving with integrity | Supporting Text |
| 1.1.1 Ensuring members and officers behave with integrity and lead a culture where acting in the public interest is visibly and consistently demonstrated thereby protecting the reputation of the organisation | <p>The Authority has a wide range of codes, policies and procedures governing the conduct of members and officers, including:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Published Core Values, Core Code of Ethics and Workplace Charter Code of Corporate Governance Members' Code of Conduct Employee Code of Conduct Members' Protocol and Officers policy on Gifts and Hospitality Complaints procedures and log Discipline and Grievance policies Anti-Harassment and Bullying Policy Whistle-blowing policy Freedom of Information and Data Protection Alcohol and Drugs Policy. Confidential Reporting Line NFCC Leadership Framework <p>The ongoing review of Fire Authority Governance Arrangements will support service and authority to continue to enable a culture of transparency</p> |

| | |
|---|--|
| <p>1.1.2 Ensuring members take the lead in establishing specific standard operating principles or values for the organisation and its staff and that they are communicated and understood. These should build on the Seven Principles of Public Life (the Nolan Principles)</p> | <p>The Authority is committed to the principles of good corporate governance and has adopted this Code of Corporate Governance, which is reviewed and used by Internal Audit to inform their overall risk assessment for scrutiny by the Standards, Audit and Performance (SAP) Committee.</p> <p>The standards of the Authority are made clear in its Core Values, which are fundamental to all it does. Each Member must complete a register of interests.</p> <p>The Authority has a Member / Officer Protocol in place which supports, and is clear about the management of, effective relationships which support good governance. The ongoing Governance Review includes a review of the Member / Officer Protocol to ensure that it remains relevant and fit for purpose.</p> |
| <p>1.1.3 Leading by example and using the above standard operating principles or values as a framework for decision making and other actions</p> | <p>Both the Member and Employee Codes of Conduct state clearly that they must not be influenced by prejudice, bias, or conflicts of interest in any matter relating to the Authority. The Service's EQIA processes ensures that all decisions undertaken are impact assessed to enable scrutiny and assurance around decision making.</p> <p>Each Member must complete a Register of Interests, which is held at Service headquarters and is open to public inspection. The Register, which is also accessible via the Service's website is updated as necessary, in accordance with the Members Code of Conduct.</p> |
| <p>1.1.4 Demonstrating, communicating and embedding the standard operating principles or values through appropriate policies and processes which are reviewed on a regular basis to ensure that they are operating effectively</p> | <p>The Code of Corporate Governance is reviewed annually. Core Values are reviewed annually through the Annual Plan.</p> <p>Officers adhere to Contract Standing Orders and Financial Regulations which are reviewed and updated annually.</p> <p>There is a clearly defined review process for Service policies and procedures that are part of the Brigade Order system. All Brigade Orders are required to be reviewed by the responsible author, on a regular basis, which ranges between 6 months and 3 years, dependent on the significance of the policy / procedure. This regular review cycle helps to ensure that the Service's policies and procedures remain current and</p> |

| | |
|---|---|
| | <p>effective. Reviews are also undertaken as and when needed, for example to reflect changes in legislation.</p> <p>There is a similarly robust review process for policies that are owned by the Fire Authority, such as the Member / Officer Protocol. These are reviewed by Officers on an annual basis, with proposed amendments reported to the Fire Authority for ratification. The review dates for such policies are set out in the Fire Authority's annual workplan.</p> |
| 1.2 Demonstrating strong commitment to ethical values | Supporting Text |
| 1.2.1 Seeking to establish, monitor and maintain the organisation's ethical standards and performance | <p>The Fire Authority's systems and processes comply with ethical standards set down in legislation and Government guidance or derived from best practice. Appropriate Members and/or officers regularly review procedures and codes to ensure their relevance and effectiveness.</p> <p>Ethical standards are included within our procurement policies and our environmental management system.</p> <p>SFRS will at all times endeavour to ensure that employees achieve and maintain a high standard of performance. The Performance Management Policy outlines the procedure followed when employees do not perform to the required standards or behaviours. This policy is aligned to the Core Values and our Core Code of Ethics which is the Workplace Charter.</p> <p>Individual Performance and Development Review (IPDR) is a formal performance assessment that takes place on annual basis, aligning personal objectives with the delivery of the Service strategy. The Service is committed to supporting the development and progression of all staff and ensuring a fair and consistent approach to performance and promotion. The IPDR process initially focusses on action planning, agreeing the behaviours required in meeting these objectives outlined in the Workplace Charter, together with development and career aspirations. The behaviours reflect those outlined in the National Fire Chiefs Council (NFCC) Leadership Framework.</p> |

| | |
|--|--|
| | Monitoring of IPDRs is managed through the People Management meeting and data to ensure that under performance and allegations of misconduct are robustly managed and the learning applied. |
| 1.2.2 Underpinning personal behaviour with ethical values and ensuring they permeate all aspects of the organisation's culture and operation | <p>The Workplace Charter was revised in 2023 in consultation with employees and Representative Bodies and is included at employees' induction, setting out expected standards of behaviour at the outset. The NFCC Leadership Behaviours are also incorporated into the Services' IPDR process, ensuring that consistently reminded of standards of behaviour and expectation.</p> <p>The actions from the 2024 staff survey around behaviours and culture were taken forward into a wider piece of work around cultural improvement.</p> <p>To ensure that Equality, Diversity and Inclusion is mainstreamed throughout the Service, it has a strategic Equality, Diversity and Inclusion Steering Group that meets 4 times a year to discuss and take forward all Equality, Diversity and Inclusion initiatives throughout its business and monitors and oversees the Equality Action Plan. The Service have an employee Voices group which represents a range of employees and who attend the EDI Steering Group.</p> <p>The Authority has in place policies, procedures and plans to ensure compliance with relevant legislation and guidance, associated targets for improvement and systems to monitor effectiveness and progress.</p> <p>Officers operate standardised recruitment policies and processes, including employee reference checks, Disclosure and Barring Service checks for designated posts and Right to Work checks.</p> <p>Ethical standards are included within our procurement policies and our environmental management system.</p> |
| 1.2.3 Developing and maintaining robust policies and procedures which place emphasis on agreed ethical values | The Equality, Diversity and Inclusion (EDI) Steering Group (which has Union representation and EDI Member Champion) discuss issues and initiatives relating to ethics, values, and relevant agenda items. |

| | |
|---|---|
| | <p>The SAP Committee ensures that the core values of the Authority are at the heart of its decision making.</p> <p>There are quarterly meetings between union representatives and senior management, and staff are consulted on policy changes and major service developments. The Executive Team also meet with the Representative Bodies (RBs) on a monthly basis to discuss more general issues of note.</p> <p>Consultation with staff sits at the core of the Community Risk Management Planning, thus ensuring that staff are fully engaged.</p> <p>Ethical standards are included within our procurement policies and our environmental management system.</p> |
| 1.2.4 Ensuring that external providers of services on behalf of the organisation are required to act with integrity and in compliance with ethical standards expected by the organisation | <p>Ethical standards are included within our procurement policies and our environmental management system.</p> <p>The Service requires its suppliers to adopt its Code of Conduct for Suppliers, which is based on International Labour Organisation conventions. The Service requires its suppliers to adopt this, or an equivalent Code of Conduct, and commit to continuous improvement towards compliance with the labour and environmental standards specified both in their own companies and those of their suppliers. Monitoring of the Code will be included in the Contract Management Plans for major contracts.</p> |
| 1.3 Respecting the rule of law | Supporting Text |
| 1.3.1 Ensuring members and staff demonstrate a strong commitment to the rule of the law as well as adhering to relevant laws and regulations | <p>The Authority has two statutory officers; the Monitoring Officer whose duties include ensuring the legality and fairness of decision making, and a Treasurer who as the most senior Finance professional is responsible for the proper administration of the financial affairs of the Authority. In addition, the Service has a Deputy Monitoring Officer and Deputy S151 Officer.</p> <p>The Monitoring Officer or the Deputy Monitoring Officer attends all meetings of the full Authority and reviews reports to the Authority and its Committees prior to publication.</p> |

| | |
|--|--|
| | <p>Relevant legal obligations are communicated to staff through policy and relevant training e.g., in recruitment and driving.</p> <p>Internal and External Audit provide assurance that proper probity exists, and legal obligations are met.</p> <p>The Data Protection Officer role is contracted in for the provision of data protection legal duties including informing and advising, monitoring compliance, raising awareness and provision of training to staff and as a contact to the Information Commissioner's Office (ICO). The Senior Information Risk Owner role is undertaken by the Assistant Chief Fire Officer which provides senior level accountability and assurance that information asset risks are managed.</p> |
| 1.3.2 Creating the conditions to ensure that the statutory officers, other key post holders, and members, are able to fulfil their responsibilities in accordance with legislative and regulatory requirements | <p>The general roles, rights and obligations of Members are contained in the Protocol on Member / Officer Relations and the Code of Conduct.</p> <p>The more specific roles of Members, Members with special responsibilities and of Member Champions are set out in the role descriptions.</p> <p>There is also a Role Description for the Fire Authority's Independent Person, who will be consulted on the decision to investigate complaints and before a decision on an investigated complaint is made. The Independent Person may also be consulted on other standards matters, including by the Member, who is subject to an allegation.</p> <p>Financial Regulations Standing Orders set out specific financial and other duties / functions of the Fire Authority, its committees, the Chief Fire Officer, Monitoring Officer and Treasurer. Delegations to specific officers are documented in the Scheme of Delegation to Officers.</p> <p>A full governance framework is in place to enable Members to undertake their roles as required in legislation. This is guided as above and through the Authority's constitution. The Service provides technical and administrative support in the operation of this framework and in support of the role of statutory officers.</p> <p>Job descriptions are in place for all senior officers, which clearly state their respective roles and responsibilities including political restrictions placed upon them.</p> |

| | |
|--|--|
| | <p>Pay Policy Statement is reviewed by the full Combined Fire Authority (CFA) and published annually as required by the Local Government Act 2011.</p> <p>The Authority has service level agreements (SLAs), detailing the roles and responsibilities of its Clerk, Monitoring Officer and Solicitor, and a Protocol for the Role of Monitoring Officer. It also has a service level agreement, setting out the role of its Treasurer and Section 151 Officer. There is an ongoing review of the services provided through these SLAs during the final quarter of 2024/25.</p> <p>Details of allowances payable to Members of the Authority are laid down in the Scheme for the Payment of Members' Allowances.</p> |
| <p>1.3.3 Striving to optimise the use of the full powers available for the benefit of citizens, communities and other stakeholders</p> | <p>The Authority is committed to openness in all its dealings and to this end has adopted a procedure for public participation at its meetings and those of its committees, which the public may attend. The procedure is set out in its Standing Orders for the Regulation of Proceedings and Business. It also has in place a policy relating to filming, photographing, recording, and using social networks at its meetings.</p> <p>Its agendas and reports are available to the public and publicised on its website and intranet in advance of meetings. The Fire Authority also has very clear rules governing access to information and the grounds on which information should be excluded from the public domain.</p> <p>All meetings of the Fire Authority and its Committees are held in public. The public will only be excluded if information to be considered is classed as exempt under Schedule 12A of the Local Government Act and the public interest in maintaining an exemption outweighs the public interest in disclosing the information, or where a government minister has directed that information is to be classed as confidential.</p> <p>Rules concerning exempt information are clearly laid down in the Fire Authority's constitution with a presumption that items will remain open to the public unless they meet specific criteria.</p> <p>A Chair's Report is produced after scheduled Fire Authority meetings. The report sets out the notable decisions made at the meeting with a short explanatory text giving</p> |

| | |
|--|--|
| | <p>background / context to the issue and decisions made. Shropshire Council receive this report at their full Council meetings, ensuring that locally elected councillors are aware of developments and/or innovations within the Fire Service that may affect their local constituents and communities. The same process needs to be embedded with Telford & Wrekin Council to ensure parity across the constituent authorities.</p> |
| 1.3.4 Dealing with breaches of legal and regulatory provisions effectively | <p>The Authority has appointed a Monitoring Officer and Deputy Monitoring Officer, whose duties include ensuring the legality and fairness of decision making. The Monitoring Officer is the Associate Director: Policy and Governance, and the Deputy, Service Delivery Manager: Legal & Democracy.</p> <p>The Monitoring Officer, or Deputy, attends all meetings of the full Authority and reviews reports to the Authority and its committees prior to publication. They provide advice and guidance on new legal developments and have access to specialist legal officers. This ensures that all decisions made by the Fire Authority will have received effective legal advice ensuring against breaches.</p> <p>The ACFO (Corporate Support) is the Senior Information Risk Owner (SIRO) for the Service and logs and monitors relevant breaches for action and learning. These are appropriately discussed at the Systems Governance Group.</p> |
| 1.3.5 Ensuring corruption and misuse of power are dealt with effectively | <p>Officers and Members of the Authority should lead by example and ensure adherence to legal requirements, rules, procedures, and practices.</p> <p>All individuals coming into contact with the Authority should act with integrity and without thought or actions involving fraud, bribery, and corruption.</p> <p>The Authority encourages a culture of honesty and opposition to fraud, bribery, and corruption.</p> <p>The Authority's governance framework is designed to ensure that there is openness, transparency and scrutiny in its decision making</p> <p>The Authority has in place an Anti-Fraud, Bribery and Corruption Strategy and a Reporting of Illegality and Malpractice (Whistleblowing) Policy which set the expected</p> |

| | |
|--|--|
| | <p>behaviours of staff when conducting themselves and what they should do if they become aware of, or suspect that, fraud, bribery or corruption are occurring. Both of these policies are reviewed on an annual basis and are published on the Staff Portal.</p> <p>There is a Code of Conduct in place for Authority Members which aligns to the Seven Principles of Public Life, also known as the Nolan Principles, which all Authority Members undertake to abide by. The Standards, Audit and Performance Committee's remit includes promoting and maintaining a high standard of conduct by Members, overseeing the Register of Members' Interests and overseeing the effectiveness of the Authority's procedures for investigating and responding to complaints about Members</p> |
| Principle 2 - Ensuring openness and comprehensive stakeholder engagement | |
| Local government is run for the public good, organisations therefore should ensure openness in their activities. Clear, trusted channels of communication and consultation should be used to engage effectively with all groups of stakeholders, such as individual citizens and service users, as well as institutional stakeholders. | |
| 2.1 Openness | Supporting Text |
| 2.1.1 Ensuring an open culture through demonstrating, documenting and communicating the organisation's commitment to openness | <p>The Core Values and Core Code of Ethics are communicated in the Authority's plans. The complaints procedure is used and monitored.</p> <p>The Service has an active social media presence engaging in dialogue around key issues such as diversity in recruitment.</p> <p>All Authority meeting papers are published on the website along with other data transparency requirements.</p> <p>The employee engagement survey enabled staff to voice their opinions and allowed the Service to identify where future work should be targeted. An action plan was created, and a number of workshops were held with staff to create the workplace charter.</p> <p>NFCC Core Code of Ethics principles have been incorporated into induction, Member Development and IPDR / talent management processes.</p> |

| | |
|--|---|
| | <p>Considerable public consultation is undertaken when considering changes and assessing risk.</p> <p>An employee Voices group has been created to ensure that all employees are able to share their views and contribute to making changes to the Service. Voices members are invited to attend the EDI steering group and assist with creating events to support employees. The Service have an open seat on the EDI Steering Group. There is a specific area on the intranet where all employees can find more out about the Voices group and its activities.</p> <p>Data is published by the Service under the Local Transparency Code on the website.</p> |
| 2.1.2 Making decisions that are open about actions, plans, resource use, forecasts, outputs and outcomes. The presumption is for openness. If that is not the case, a justification for the reasoning for keeping a decision confidential should be provided | <p>The Authority is committed to openness in all of its dealings and to this end has adopted a procedure for public participation at its meetings and those of its committees, which the public may attend. The procedure is set out in its Standing Orders for the Regulation of Proceedings and Business. It also has in place a policy relating to filming, photographing, recording, and using social networks at its meetings.</p> <p>Agendas and reports are available to the public and publicised on its website and intranet in advance of meetings. The Fire Authority also has very clear rules governing access to information and the grounds on which information should be excluded from the public domain.</p> <p>All meetings of the Fire Authority and its Committees are held in public. The public will only be excluded if information to be considered is classed as exempt under Schedule 12A of the Local Government Act.</p> <p>Rules concerning exempt information are clearly laid down in the Fire Authority's constitution with a presumption that items will remain open to the public unless they meet specific criteria.</p> <p>Consultation of partners, the community and staff informs decision making of the Fire Authority and the Service. This consultation process involves a survey available online and in paper format, as well as through focus groups made up of the</p> |

| | |
|--|--|
| | community to reflect diversity of experiences and opinions. The staff stakeholder group is also engaged during the consultation process which has resulted in attendance of CRMP discussions by senior leaders and fire authority members. |
| 2.1.3 Providing clear reasoning and evidence for decisions in both public records and explanations to stakeholders and being explicit about the criteria, rationale and considerations used. In due course, ensuring that the impact and consequences of those decisions are clear | <p>There is a standard format for all committee reports, which includes sections for legal comment and financial implications, prompting the writer to seek advice in these areas. The impact of decisions on the delivery of the Authority's Community Risk Management Plan (which is publicly consulted on) and Strategy are set out clearly in all reports</p> <p>Prior to publication Authority and Committee reports are assessed by a solicitor representing the Clerk and Monitoring Officer and legal comment added, where appropriate.</p> <p>The Treasurer/Head of Finance reviews those with financial implications.</p> <p>The S151 and Monitoring Officer receive the papers and are invited to attend the monthly meetings of the Service Management Team, enabling them also to have input to the decision-making process at this level.</p> |
| 2.1.4 Using formal and informal consultation and engagement to determine the most appropriate and effective interventions/ courses of action | <p>Community Risk Management Planning</p> <p>Since 2004, all Fire and Rescue Authorities have been required to produce Integrated Risk Management Plans, now referred to as Community Risk Management Plans (CRMP). In its CRMP each Fire Authority sets out how it will 'identify and assess all foreseeable fire and rescue related risks that could affect its community, including those of a cross-border, multi-authority and/or national nature. The plan has regard to the Community Risk Registers produced by Local Resilience Forums and other local risk 'analysis', as defined in the terms of the Home Office Fire and Rescue National Framework document.</p> <p>The Fire Authority's CRMP combines with its financial and transformation plans to set the Service Plan 2025-2028 for Shropshire Fire and Rescue Service.</p> <p>The current plan is in its first year and work is ongoing to deliver the next CRMP for 2025-28.</p> |

| | |
|--|--|
| | <p>Detailed data analysis, alongside public and workforce engagement has shaped the CRMP plan, following the latest National Fire Chiefs Council (NFCC) guidance.</p> <p>Emerging areas for inclusion, consist of:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Adoption of NFCC Domestic Dwelling Fire and Road Traffic Collision (RTC) Risk Methodology • Managing the Emerging Threat of Lithium Batteries. • Increasing SFRS Confined Space and Rescue from Height Capability. • Extending SFRS Water/Flood Rescue, Wildfire Capability. • Water Availability for Firefighting During Prolonged Drought • Increasing Medical Response capability. • Revised attendance standard. <p>The programme will be supported and managed through the Service Plan and included in annual departmental plans.</p> |
| 2.2 Engaging comprehensively with institutional stakeholders | Supporting Text |
| 2.2.1 Effectively engaging with institutional stakeholders to ensure that the purpose, objectives and intended outcomes for each stakeholder relationship are clear so that outcomes are achieved successfully and sustainably | <p>Each partnership entered into is supported by a partnership agreement, which sets out clearly and succinctly what the partnership aims to achieve and what each of the partners will do. The agreement also states to which of the Fire Authority's strategic aims the partnership contributes.</p> <p>Officers have developed a method of assessing partnerships to ensure that officers, Members, and partners are clear in the aims and purpose of any partnership working and know their respective responsibilities and commitments. Partnership agreements formally set out the aims of the partnership, expectations, roles, and reporting requirements.</p> <p>The partnership process has been developed, this includes a new register and a brigade order that include internal audit recommendations.</p> |

| | |
|---|--|
| <p>2.2.2 Developing formal and informal partnerships to allow for resources to be used more efficiently and outcomes achieved more effectively</p> | <p>Each formal partnership is supported by a partnership agreement, which sets out clearly and succinctly what the partnership aims to achieve and what each of the partners will do and to which of the Fire Authority's strategic aims the partnership contributes.</p> <p>The Authority also engages in collaborations in some areas which tend to have less formal arrangements to enable opportunities to be seized. The strategic alliance with Hereford and Worcester Fire and Rescue Service (H&WFRS) is progressing in key areas like the Command and Control project.</p> <p>Officers have developed a method of assessing partnerships to ensure that officers, Members, and partners are clear in the aims and purpose of any partnership working and know their respective responsibilities and commitments. Partnership agreements formally set out the aims of the partnership, expectations, roles, and reporting requirements.</p> |
| <p>2.2.3 Ensuring that partnerships are based on:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Trust • a shared commitment to change • a culture that promotes and accepts challenge among partners <p>and that the added value of partnership working is explicit</p> | <p>Each partnership is supported by a partnership agreement, which sets out clearly and succinctly what the partnership aims to achieve and what each of the partners will do. The agreement also states to which of the Fire Authority's strategic aims the partnership contributes.</p> <p>Officers have developed a method of assessing partnerships to ensure that officers, Members, and partners are clear in the aims and purpose of any partnership working and know their respective responsibilities and commitments. Partnership agreements formally set out the aims of the partnership, expectations, roles, and reporting requirements.</p> <p>The partnership brigade order and register are helping to facilitate an ongoing assessment to ensure all partnerships are GDPR compliant. The Service has produced a standard checklist based on the ICO data sharing code of practice for personal data. There is also a quick stop guide to partnerships on the intranet that sets out guidance regarding GDPR.</p> |

| 2.3 Engaging with individual citizens and service users effectively | Supporting Text |
|--|--|
| <p>2.3.1 Establishing a clear policy on the type of issues that the organisation will meaningfully consult with or involve communities, individual citizens, service users and other stakeholders to ensure that service (or other) provision is contributing towards the achievement of intended outcomes</p> | <p>The Authority is required to consult with ‘persons subject to non-domestic rates’ as part of its budget setting strategy – Local Government Finance Act 1992. The Authority consults with the public about its budget on the website and through social media.</p> <p>The Authority consults with all relevant stakeholders on all relevant matters pertaining to its proposals for change within its Community Risk Management Plan.</p> <p>The Service uses its Equality Impact Assessment (EQIA) process to inform on its consultation with relevant protected characteristics who may be impacted by changes to current policies.</p> <p>Stakeholders are covered in the CRMP where their challenges meet our risk. Stakeholders have individual risk reviews that sit behind the CRMP. These risk reviews are available on the CRMP tile of the Portal.</p> |
| <p>2.3.2 Ensuring that communication methods are effective and that members and officers are clear about their roles with regard to community engagement</p> | <p>The Service uses a range of methods and channels to communicate and engage with external and internal audiences in line with its Corporate Communications Strategy and Communications Action Plan.</p> <p>An inter-active, online survey platform is used to consult and engage staff. These survey and consultation projects are actively supported and promoted by means of the Service's intranet, internal newsletter, and email. Issue-specific staff surveys of different kinds are conducted each year such as the Staff survey.</p> <p>New and more modern forms of internal communications have been developed including a Service Update vlog to make information clear and accessible to all staff.</p> <p>This is supported by the traditional methods of communication as mentioned above. Strategic plans are put into place for significant Service wide issues or projects, such as the HMICFRS inspection or the independent Culture Review.</p> |

| | |
|---|--|
| | <p>A range of online and "conventional" communication methods are used to inform and engage the public and other external audiences. These methods include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Press releases • Media interviews • Social Media activity across all platforms • External Surveys accessible via social media (e.g. Facebook) • Service website • Live Events: Open Days, Recruitment Events, Campaign Events • Email subscription updates <p>The Service has held a wholetime recruitment campaign and positive action taster sessions to inform the public about the role of on call and wholetime firefighter posts. A new external campaign strategy has been developed and implemented with a robust evaluation process which focuses on engagement rather than just incident figures. The use of social media and other channels is reviewed as part of these evaluations. The strategy was trialed over the last twelve months and has now been adopted for the next year.</p> <p>Work is also underway to develop a new website which will be more accessible to the public with a view to improving two way engagement.</p> <p>The internal newsletter and external press releases are now sent out via Granicus software which means they are centralised and have analytics which are monitored and used for evaluation biannually.</p> <p>Training for Operational officers, regarding warn and informing and public engagement has been highlighted as an issue over the last six months and has been added to the Communications Strategy Action Plan.</p> |
| <p>2.3.3 Encouraging, collecting, and evaluating the views and experiences of communities, citizens, service users and organisations of different backgrounds including reference to future needs</p> | <p>As part of developing the CRMP a full consultation programme is undertaken prior to publication.</p> <p>The Service has engaged with a multitude of partners and is currently working with following groups. This is by no means an exhaustive list.</p> |

| | |
|--|---|
| | <p> Shropshire Connectors Shropshire Safeguarding Partnership Board Shropshire Neglect and exploitation sub group Shropshire Domestic Abuse Strategic Priority Group West Midlands Fire NHS and Baywater Partnership meeting Telford Connectors Telford and Wrekin Interfaith Council Telford White Ribbon Group Team Shrewsbury Telford Crime Reduction Neighbourhood Partnership East and West Midlands Regional Safeguarding Group East and West Midlands Community Safety Managers Group Domestic Homicide Review Panel #Morse (multi agency partnership) Suicide Prevention Shropshire Early Help Partnership Board Shropshire Strengthening Families Telford and Wrekin Drug and Alcohol Group Telford and Wrekin Healthy Lives Steering Group </p> <p> Shropshire Council Telford and Wrekin Council West Mercia Police </p> <p> Asian Fire Service Association (AFSA) Shropshire Disability Network Shropshire, Telford and Wrekin Dementia Action Alliance Safe and Ageing No Discrimination (SAND) Shropshire Rainbow Film Festival Shrewsbury LGBT History Telford Equality, Diversity and Inclusion Partnership Telford Employer Group Mental Health at Work Commitment White Ribbon Accreditation Women in the Fire Service </p> |
|--|---|

| | | |
|--|---|--|
| 2.3.4 | Implementing effective feedback mechanisms in order to demonstrate how views have been taken into account | See comments for 2.3.2 and 2.3.3 |
| 2.3.5 | Balancing feedback from more active stakeholder groups with other stakeholder groups to ensure inclusivity | The Service consults with a large range of stakeholders from constituent authorities to small local groups and individual members of the public. In addition to that we use the local Rainbow Film Festival groups, Shropshire Disability Network, Safe and Ageing No Discrimination (SAND) and the national Asian Fire Service Association (AFSA), Telford and Wrekin Interfaith Council and Women in the Fire Service (WFS) where necessary and other local groups where identified. |
| 2.3.6 | Taking account of the impact of decisions on future generations of tax payers and service users | The long-term financial consequences of capital projects are considered when making strategic financial decisions, as detailed in the Authority's Capital Strategy. Where possible, authority reserves and balances have been used to fund capital projects to avoid debt charges for up to 50 years. |
| Principle 3 - Defining outcomes in terms of sustainable economic, social, and environmental benefits | | |
| The long-term nature and impact of many of local government's responsibilities mean that it should define and plan outcomes and that these should be sustainable. Decisions should further the organisation's purpose, contribute to intended benefits and outcomes, and remain within the limits of authority and resources. Input from all groups of stakeholders, including citizens, service users, and institutional stakeholders, is vital to the success of this process and in balancing competing demands when determining priorities for the finite resources available. | | |
| 3.1 Defining outcomes | | Supporting Text |
| 3.1.1 | Having a clear vision, which is an agreed formal statement of the organisation's purpose and intended outcomes containing appropriate performance indicators, which provide the basis for the organisation's overall strategy, planning and other decisions | <p>The fundamental purpose of the Fire Authority is to provide and maintain a fire and rescue service capable of fulfilling the statutory requirements of the Fire and Rescue Services Act 2004.</p> <p>Our Vision is most readily identifiable through our logo and strapline "Making Shropshire Safer" which is displayed on all letter headings, compliments slips, corporate documents, vehicles, and buildings.</p> |

| | |
|--|--|
| | The Service Plan defines our purpose, aims, measures and targets, while the Annual Plan sets our immediate priorities and what actions we are going to take to deliver the Service Plan in a timely manner. |
| 3.1.2 Specifying the intended impact on, or changes for, stakeholders including citizens and service users. It could be immediately or over the course of a year or longer | <p>The Service uses Corporate Performance Indicators to set out the expected outcomes. These are in the form of ambitious reductions in the numbers of fire related incidents, the response standard and injuries to both the public and our staff. The Service uses a range of Corporate Performance Indicators to monitor and improve performance. These are set out against key areas covering Prevention, Protection, Response and People.</p> <p>The overall aim of this approach is to ensure a reduction in the number of fire related incidents and injuries to both the public and our people, through analysing and interrogating data to make intelligence led decisions.</p> |
| 3.1.3 Delivering defined outcomes on a sustainable basis within the resources that will be available | The development of the CRMP is complemented by a Service Plan that sets out how Officers intend to deliver the CRMP over its 3-year lifecycle. CPIs support the understanding of how Service Plan goals are being delivered. |
| 3.1.4 Identifying and managing risks to the achievement of outcomes | <p>As part of the strategic planning process a review of the risk register is undertaken along with the ear marked reserves to cover against any foreseeable risks.</p> <p>These Corporate Risks are monitored on an ongoing basis to support their management and where needed the most effective mitigation, through effective and early planning to ensure outcomes can be achieved.</p> |
| 3.1.5 Managing service users' expectations effectively with regard to determining priorities and making the best use of the resources available | The Authority's strategic planning process demonstrates the effects of today's decisions on medium to long term budgets. Prudent funding assumptions are used to ensure that an honest picture of the financial position can be shown to members and the public. This means that the Authority's consultation processes are meaningful and useful. |

| 3.2 Sustainable economic, social and environmental benefits | Supporting Text |
|--|---|
| 3.2.1 Considering and balancing the combined economic, social and environmental impact of policies and plans when taking decisions about service provision | <p>The Service has Sustainability and Environmental Policies.</p> <p>Initial impact assessments and financial comments are included in all authority reports and decision documents.</p> <p>These are supported by a full environmental management system, which includes sustainability assessments.</p> |
| 3.2.2 Taking a longer-term view with regard to decision making, taking account of risk and acting transparently where there are potential conflicts between the organisation's intended outcomes and short-term factors such as the political cycle or financial constraints | <p>Members will consider the medium and long term effects of any strategic financial decision that is made in the short term. Strategic planning models are available to demonstrate how planning decisions will affect a number of years.</p> <p>The combination of the CRMP and the Medium Term Financial Plan (MTFP) encourage the service to take a longer term view and to factor in the potential effects of both a change in risk profile and a change in financial resources. Committee reports will demonstrate that the Fire Authority has consistently taken an approach that is best for the Service.</p> <p>The more formal planning process is also supported by the Strategic Advisory Group (StAG) which allows Members and officers to explore the more uncertain aspects of the future and consider very early on what mitigation or development may need to be considered.</p> |
| 3.2.3 Determining the wider public interest associated with balancing conflicting interests between achieving the various economic, social and environmental benefits, through consultation where possible, in order to ensure appropriate trade-offs | <p>CRMP is subject to a wide-ranging consultation process the outcome of which informs the activities of the Service Plan.</p> <p>The economic, environment and social issues would be discussed at meetings that are accessible to the public.</p> |

| | |
|---|---|
| 3.2.4 Ensuring fair access to services | Equality, Diversity and Inclusion support with harder to reach and vulnerable communities. Completing Equality Impact Assessments to identify any potential areas of negative impact to specific groups. |
| Principle 4 - Determining the interventions necessary to optimise the achievement of the intended outcomes | |
| Local government achieves its intended outcomes by providing a mixture of legal, regulatory, and practical interventions (courses of action). Determining the right mix of these courses of action is a critically important strategic choice that local government has to make to ensure intended outcomes are achieved. They need robust decision- making mechanisms to ensure that their defined outcomes can be achieved in a way that provides the best trade-off between the various types of resource inputs while still enabling effective and efficient operations. Decisions made need to be reviewed frequently to ensure that achievement of outcomes is optimised. | |
| 4.1 Determining interventions | Supporting Text |
| 4.1.1 Ensuring decision makers receive objective and rigorous analysis of a variety of options indicating how intended outcomes would be achieved and associated risks. Therefore, ensuring best value is achieved however services are provided | <p>The Service Management Team (SMT) consider reports and supporting information in their decision making provided by the specialists within the Service. SMT consists of the most senior members of all teams with a mix of operational and non-operational remits to properly consider issues in the round.</p> <p>The StAG considers and debates issues and options to challenge Officers to provide all appropriate and necessary information for decision making before reports are prepared for the full Authority.</p> <p>Currently there is no separate scrutiny function and so all Members are sighted on all matters through their attendance at meetings, and by receipt of meeting papers and minutes.</p> |

| | |
|---|---|
| <p>4.1.2 Considering feedback from citizens and service users when making decisions about service improvements or where services are no longer required in order to prioritise competing demands within limited resources available including people, skills, land, and assets and bearing in mind future impacts</p> | <p>Through the CRMP consultation process proposals relating to significant changes to the current resourcing of the Service are consulted upon with all relevant stakeholders. This specifically includes those stakeholders potentially impacted by that change e.g. closure of fire stations, removal/relocation of fire appliances and changes to response standards.</p> <p>Improvements in targeting particular vulnerable groups are discussed and delivered through collaborative working with other organisations and strategic planning groups around the county, thereby ensuring that customer needs are placed at the centre of the decision making e.g. change from 'Home Fire Safety Checks' to 'Safe and Well' visits.</p> <p>Feedback from these consultation processes is captured and considered in the strategic planning for the future delivery of services.</p> |
| <p>4.2 Planning interventions</p> | <p>Supporting Text</p> |
| <p>4.2.1 Establishing and implementing robust planning and control cycles that cover strategic and operational plans, priorities and targets</p> | <p>The Authority has a well-defined strategic planning process which is agreed by the CFA at its annual meeting. The report sets out timescales for developing the annual plan, department plans and CPIs. The report gives an overview of the planning documents that are produced and what information will be reported to each committee throughout the year.</p> |
| <p>4.2.2 Engaging with internal and external stakeholders in determining how services and other courses of action should be planned and delivered</p> | <p>CRMP proposals and objectives were scrutinised by the public through a consultation period which was independently facilitated by ORS. As a result of the consultation and the final report to SMT, amendments were made to the CRMP to address feedback.</p> <p>The Service also proactively engages with a broader group of stakeholders to identify where synergies exist between its objectives and others with a duty for community inclusivity, health, and welfare.</p> |

| | |
|---|--|
| <p>4.2.3 Considering and monitoring risks facing each partner when working collaboratively, including shared risks</p> | <p>Each partnership entered into is supported by a partnership agreement, which sets out clearly and succinctly what the partnership aims to achieve and what each of the partners will do. The agreement also states to which of the Fire Authority's strategic aims the partnership contributes.</p> <p>Officers have developed a method of assessing partnerships to ensure that officers, Members, and partners are clear in the aims and purpose of any partnership working and know their respective responsibilities and commitments. Partnership agreements formally set out the aims of the partnership, expectations, roles, and reporting requirements.</p> <p>Partnership register contains details on financial, legal reputational and resource based risks.</p> |
| <p>4.2.4 Ensuring arrangements are flexible and agile so that the mechanisms for delivering goods and services can be adapted to changing circumstances</p> | <p>The Service uses NHS Exeter Data to support vulnerability targeting. The data provided is 65 years plus, however the Service will use a pragmatic approach in order to service the safe and well visits in the county, this data set is in excess of 100,000 residents.</p> <p>Agreement has been reached between Telford & Wrekin Council to offer a Safe and Well visit to those receiving an annual Care Package and have given their consent to share their details with SFRS.</p> <p>Shropshire Council also provide data from Adult Social Care on the same principle as Telford which is clients that have given their consent to share their data.</p> <p>This will assist with matching resources to risk rather than to just age profiles.</p> <p>Lone Working has been successfully expanded across the On-Call areas.</p> <p>The Safe and Well process has linked the Prevention Team to both Local Authorities. This is an automated secure electronic pathway that is underpinned by data sharing agreements. In addition to Safe and Well, referral mechanisms are in place for public health, police, and housing partners. This is becoming increasingly useful in hoarding cases.</p> |

| | |
|--|--|
| | <p>Servicing of response (operational) incidents is planned and managed daily in such a way to ensure that changing circumstances aligned to community risk can be resourced effectively.</p> <p>Where additional support is needed reinforcement agreements for operational incidents are in place with all bordering Fire and Rescue Services through a legal framework as part of the Fire and Rescue Services Act 2004.</p> <p>Outside of the Section 13, 16 Agreements the Service also has access to and provides resources to other FRS nationally through National Resilience and the NCAF Framework.</p> |
| 4.2.5 Establishing appropriate key performance indicators (KPIs) as part of the planning process in order to identify how the performance of services and projects is to be measured | Corporate Performance Indicators (CPIs) are developed as part of the annual strategic planning process. They are agreed by S&R in March each year and progress is monitored by SAP quarterly. |
| 4.2.6 Ensuring capacity exists to generate the information required to review service quality regularly | <p>There is an operational monitoring and debriefing process which includes improvements and lessons learnt. This looks at identifying the quality of service delivered at the operational level, using expected minimum standards as the indicator, against which gaps (and best practice) are identified and, where necessary disseminated wider.</p> <p>A quality performance measures fires confined to room of origin. This judges the speed of response and how successful the Service's education strategy is in terms of the 'get out stay out' message, as well as the effectiveness of fire safety campaigns regarding the importance of locations of fire alarms.</p> |
| 4.2.7 Preparing budgets in accordance with objectives, strategies and the medium term financial plan | The budget setting process is one element of the strategic planning process and ensures that the Service's plans are quantified. The Authority takes a strategic view of the Service's financial requirements and these requirements are managed within the resources available over the planning period. |

| | | |
|------------|---|---|
| 4.2.8 | Informing medium and long term resource planning by drawing up realistic estimates of revenue and capital expenditure aimed at developing a sustainable funding strategy | Strategic financial planning for the Authority includes a planning tool which models varying revenue and capital scenarios. This allows members and officers to flex the amounts and timings of its service decision within the funding streams available. |
| 4.3 | Optimising achievement of intended outcomes | Supporting Text |
| 4.3.1 | Ensuring the medium term financial strategy integrates and balances service priorities, affordability and other resource constraints | The medium term strategy is designed to quantify the plans within the Service, and will incorporate the Service's strategic objectives, workforce planning, CRMP, asset management and fleet planning, and service improvement. In some of these areas, such as CRMP, cuts have been necessary in previous planning periods to remain within the funding available. In others, such as Assets and Fleet and SPB, the Authority's reserves strategy has ensured that funds are available to pay for replacements and improvements without the need for additional costs within the revenue budget. |
| 4.3.2 | Ensuring the budgeting process is all-inclusive, taking into account the full cost of operations over the medium and longer term | The budget setting process includes an annual review of the base budget and any committed costs to ensure that current operations are accounted for correctly. It also considers the full revenue cost of any new capital schemes, including borrowing costs, any ongoing running costs, and where applicable, replacement costs, into the longer term. Officers are also instructed to consider the longer term effects of any decision making in the short term. |
| 4.3.3 | Ensuring the medium term financial strategy sets the context for ongoing decisions on significant delivery issues or responses to changes in the external environment that may arise during the budgetary period in order for outcomes to be achieved while optimising resource usage | The use of short to medium term planning ensures that officers and members can consider the impact of any decisions or events both now and over the foreseeable planning period. The longer term planning estimates cannot be used with any certainty in the current climate and should not be used to base any future decisions on. However, as an estimate, it can give an indication of what may need to be considered in the long term and may be used to formulate options. |
| 4.3.4 | Ensuring the achievement of 'social value' through service planning and commissioning | SFRS have been able to work with other agencies to ensure our combined staffing is used to best effect across multiple service agendas. This has provided access to all the below groups: |

| | |
|--|--|
| | <p>Shropshire Safeguarding Partnership Board Shropshire Neglect and exploitation sub group Shropshire Domestic Abuse Strategic Priority Group West Midlands Fire NHS and Baywater Partnership meeting Telford Employer Group Telford Crime Reduction Neighbourhood Partnership Telford White Ribbon Group Team Shrewsbury East and West Midlands Regional Safeguarding Group East and West Midlands Community Safety Managers Group Domestic Homicide Review Panel #Morse (multi agency partnership) Early Help Partnership Board Shropshire Strengthening Families Telford and Wrekin Drug and Alcohol Group Telford and Wrekin Healthy Lives Steering Group Telford and Wrekin Council now commission the Service to use its Fire Control facility for its Out of Hours calls service.</p> |
|--|--|

Principle 5 - Developing the entity's capacity, including the capability of its leadership and the individuals within it

Local government needs appropriate structures and leadership, as well as people with the right skills, appropriate qualifications, and mindset, to operate efficiently and effectively and achieve intended outcomes within the specified periods. A local government organisation must ensure that it has both the capacity to fulfil its own mandate and to make certain that there are policies in place to guarantee that its management has the operational capacity for the organisation as a whole. Because both individuals and the environment in which an organisation operates will change over time, there will be a continuous need to develop its capacity as well as the skills and experience of individual staff members. Leadership in local government is strengthened by the participation of people with many different types of backgrounds, reflecting the structure and diversity of communities. As outlined in the People Strategy our intention is that leaders will have the ability to lead, inspire, coach and develop others in the organisation. They will be visible, demonstrate strong leadership skills, accountability, honesty, openness and transparency in their decision making. Leaders will be effective in performance management of their employees.

| 5.1 Developing the entity's capacity | Supporting Text |
|--|--|
| <p>5.1.1 Reviewing operations, performance and use of assets on a regular basis to ensure their continuing effectiveness</p> | <p>The Service has clearly defined its aims and the activities it will carry out to achieve those through its Strategic planning process. The effectiveness of activities is reviewed through debriefing and performance review meetings.</p> <p>The asset management strategy and supporting plans have been developed to ensure the provision, availability, and reliability of assets to support the identified activities. Asset provision is reviewed when potential improvements or efficiencies are identified through the debriefing or review processes.</p> <p>The Service reviews its performance through debriefing, operational monitoring, and corporate performance indicators against its aims.</p> <p>It develops asset management plans to ensure it provides assets to meet identified needs.</p> |
| <p>5.1.2 Improving resource use through appropriate application of techniques such as benchmarking and other options in order to determine how resources are allocated so that defined outcomes are achieved effectively and efficiently</p> | <p>The Service continues to use comparative data where it is available within the sector.</p> <p>This includes information on Health and Safety and whole sector financial information through the NFCC.</p> <p>The sector has developed a benchmarking tool that will provide comparisons nationally as well as groupings of similar services. This will create the foundation for further analysis to identify efficiencies and productivity improvements.</p> |
| <p>5.1.3 Recognising the benefits of partnerships and collaborative working where added value can be achieved</p> | <p>Reinforcement agreements for operational incidents are in place with all bordering Fire and Rescue Services through a legal framework as part of the Fire and Rescue Services Act 2004.</p> <p>Outside of the Section 13, 16 Agreements the Service also has access to and provides resources to other FRS nationally through the NCAF Arrangements.</p> <p>The Service has entered into a range of collaborations and partnerships incorporating Local Authority, NHS and other Emergency Services as well as volunteer organisations, Housing Associations & the Police and Crime Commissioner.</p> |

| | |
|---|---|
| | <p>Many examples of operational collaboration between local partners, particularly with regards to protecting vulnerable people, are evident through partnerships such as Multi Agency Risk Assessment Conference (MARAC) and the Health and Wellbeing Boards. Initiatives such as Serious and Organised Crime Joint Action Group (SOCJAG) (aimed at “County Lines” drug gangs) and Multi Agency Targeted Enforcement Strategy (MATES) (Operational specific aims for Fire safety, police, trading standards and immigration) have been developed by West Mercia Police and are supported by the Service.</p> <p>Future workstreams will target best practice in developing evaluation and measurement of collaboration and partnerships.</p> |
| 5.1.4 Developing and maintaining an effective workforce plan to enhance the strategic allocation of resources | <p>A People Strategy is in place to ensure that activity and resources are focused on identified priorities. The People Strategy for 2021- 2025 is about to close and a new People Strategy for 2025 – 2028 is ready to be launched, aligned to the delivery of the CRMP and Service Plan.</p> <p>Workforce planning is an approach for managing the workforce’s changing needs in conjunction with the People Strategy. Workforce Planning aims to ensure that the future human resource requirements of the Service are met at the right time and at the right cost. Regular establishment meetings including retirement planning and forecasting and succession planning. This feeds into our Bi-monthly People Management meetings where discussion takes place regarding Establishment / Strength / Vacancies / Post Changes / Recruitment / Requests for Growth / Departmental Restructures / Development.</p> <p>A three-year core module training programme is in place to ensure workforce competence</p> <p>A HR Dashboard has been developed to give real-time access to information and trends to improve the ability to forecast and plan.</p> |

| 5.2 Developing the capability of the entity's leadership and other individuals | Supporting Text |
|--|---|
| <p>5.2.1 Developing protocols to ensure that elected and appointed leaders negotiate with each other regarding their respective roles early on in the relationship and that a shared understanding of roles and objectives is maintained</p> | <p>The Authority's Protocol on Member / Officer Relations sets the tone for Member / officer relations generally. The Chair, Vice Chair and the Leaders of the Opposition Groups attend a Chair's Briefing with the senior officers once a month.</p> <p>There are agreed role descriptions for each chair and vice chair position.</p> <p>The Chief Fire Officer meets with the Chair on a regular basis as well as a holding a Chairs brief on a monthly basis.</p> |
| <p>5.2.2 Publishing a statement that specifies the types of decisions that are delegated and those reserved for the collective decision making of the governing body</p> | <p>Financial Regulations Standing Orders 5.1 set out the specific matters reserved for the collective decision of the Authority.</p> <p>Delegations to specific officers are documented in the Scheme of Delegation to Officers and the Financial Regulations Standing Order.</p> <p>Each of the Authority's Committees has terms of reference which clearly state their powers and any authority delegated to them.</p> |
| <p>5.2.3 Ensuring the leader and the chief executive have clearly defined and distinctive leadership roles within a structure whereby the chief executive leads in implementing strategy and managing the delivery of services and other outputs set by members and each provides a check and a balance for each other's authority</p> | <p>The Chief Fire Officer's job description and the Scheme of Delegation to Officers state that the CFO is responsible and directly accountable to the Authority for all aspects of operational management.</p> <p>The role of the Chair is specified in the Member Handbook.</p> <p>The Protocol on Member/Officer relations also supports the understanding of the delineation of roles.</p> |
| <p>5.2.4 Developing the capabilities of members and senior management to achieve effective leadership and to enable the organisation to respond successfully to changing legal and policy demands as</p> | <p>As members receive comprehensive training and development from their constituent authorities, the Fire Authority provides an induction for new members which focusses specifically on the Fire Service, in order to avoid duplication of resources. In addition, members regularly receive presentations and development sessions on various topics to ensure that their knowledge is kept up to date.</p> |

| | |
|---|---|
| <p>well as economic, political and environmental changes and risks by:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • ensuring members and staff have access to appropriate induction tailored to their role and that ongoing training and development matching individual and organisational requirements is available and encouraged • ensuring members and officers have the appropriate skills, knowledge, resources and support to fulfil their roles and responsibilities and ensuring that they are able to update their knowledge on a continuing basis • ensuring personal, organisational, and system-wide development through shared learning, including lessons learnt from governance weaknesses both internal and external | <p>The ongoing review of Fire Authority Governance Arrangements includes an evaluation of Member training and induction to ensure that it continues to be relevant and appropriate.</p> <p>Specialist training is provided to members of Committees, to improve knowledge on technical issues and update members on new developments.</p> <p>There is a tailored induction and a programme of organised training for officers. Further learning will be identified through skills assessments.</p> <p>Applications from Area Managers and above to attend the Executive Leadership Programme through Warwickshire University are encouraged ahead of each new cohort, to provide strategic leadership development to senior managers.</p> <p>Group Managers undertake the Level 7 Diploma in Senior Leadership. Middle Managers undertake an accredited ILM Level 5 in Leadership and Management, delivered on site. Supervisory managers undertake the ILM Level 3 Leadership and Management following a decision to implement this in 2018. The Service is currently trialling the NFCC's Supervisory and Middle Leadership Development Programmes as opposed to the ILM Levels 3 and 5. This has been in direct response to feedback received from delegates on these programmes. A paper will be presented to SMT in May / June 2025 to look at options going forward.</p> <p>Managers, and the training and development teams attend dyslexia awareness training. Managers have EQIA training.</p> <p>There is an appraisal system in place for officers, part of which is to consider training and development needs. The Development Officer and Training and Development Co-ordinator (Learning and Development) organise and deliver a wide range of professional and personal development courses including management development.</p> <p>There is also regular 1-2-1 supervision for staff by their line managers.</p> <p>Members of staff in specialist roles such as finance and human resources maintain their Continuous Professional Development as required by their own professional</p> |
|---|---|

| | |
|---|--|
| | <p>body.</p> <p>A debrief process exists for operational incidents and exercises.</p> <p>SIRO breaches log and shared experience at SGG</p> <p>Officers use Internal Audit in a constructive manner to invite scrutiny in any areas of concern as well as maintaining regular audit of key areas such as finance and payroll .</p> |
| 5.2.5 Ensuring that there are structures in place to encourage public participation | <p>This process starts with the CRMP and continues into the transparency associated with the governance model, but the Authority has many ways of encouraging and promoting public participation, both in the community and as part of the democratic process.</p> |
| 5.2.6 Taking steps to consider the leadership's own effectiveness and ensuring leaders are open to constructive feedback from peer review and inspections | <p>The Authority and each Committee has a work plan for the year, with an end of year report brought to show activity against that work plan.</p> <p>External Audit's annual Value for Money conclusion considers and gives an assessment on economy, efficiency, and effectiveness.</p> <p>Staff engagement survey provides feedback from those employed with the Service</p> <p>Findings from the Grenfell Tower enquiry are co-ordinated through the NFCC which has resulted in the establishment of an internal steering group to implement recommendations.</p> <p>Recent HMICFRS inspection outcomes identify areas for improvement and a cause for concern. Each of these areas have been accepted by Service leaders and Fire Authority members and a robust action plan in place for each area. An approach to monitoring and reviewing progress is in place both internally and through Fire Authority scrutiny.</p> |

| | |
|--|--|
| <p>5.2.7 Holding staff to account through regular performance reviews which take account of training or development needs</p> | <p>All staff are offered an annual appraisal, which provides a one to one opportunity for managers and staff to contribute to the production of mutually agreed personal development plans, focussing on development/training needs, wellbeing and objectives for the 12 months ahead. Managers are also encouraged to hold regular 1-2-1's with their staff.</p> |
| <p>5.2.8 Ensuring arrangements are in place to maintain the health and wellbeing of the workforce and support individuals in maintaining their own physical and mental wellbeing</p> | <p>Occupational Health (OH) services are available to all Authority employees including the services of a nurse, suitably qualified OH physician and counsellors and Physiotherapy. The Service will be starting with a new OH Provider from April 2025.</p> <p>Staff conditioned to the Grey Book also have an annual fitness assessment and a general medical every three years.</p> <p>The People Strategy 2021 – 2025 provides a framework to support the aims and objectives of the service as outlined in the CRMP. One of the plans underpinning this strategy is the Health and Wellbeing Action plan. Through this plan the Service continues to introduce new initiatives to support staff's psychological and physical health, working with partner agencies and the Trade Unions. A new Health and Wellbeing Plan is being created to underpin the new People Strategy for 2025 – 2028.</p> <p>The Service has signed up to the Disability Confident Employer Scheme, MIND Blue light pledge, the Mental Health at Work Commitment and action plan, White Ribbon Accreditation and the SAND Covenant. The Service also have Mental Health First Aiders and Voices representatives who support Mental Health, along with other physical activities to support health and wellbeing.</p> <p>There is also a module available on Learning Environment On-line (LEO) for all staff to access, entitled Leading and Managing Change and Transition.</p> |

Principle 6 - Managing risks and performance through robust internal control and strong public financial management

Local government needs to ensure that the organisations and governance structures that it oversees have implemented, and can sustain, an effective performance management system that facilitates effective and efficient delivery of planned services. Risk management and internal control are important and integral parts of a performance management system and are crucial to the achievement of outcomes. Risk should be considered and addressed as part of all decision making activities.

A strong system of financial management is essential for the implementation of policies and the achievement of intended outcomes, as it will enforce financial discipline, strategic allocation of resources, efficient service delivery and accountability.

It is also essential that a culture and structure for scrutiny are in place as a key part of accountable decision making, policy making and review. A positive working culture that accepts, promotes, and encourages constructive challenge is critical to successful scrutiny and successful service delivery. Importantly, this culture does not happen automatically, it requires repeated public commitment from those in authority.

| 6.1 Managing risk | Supporting Text |
|---|---|
| 6.1.1 Recognising that risk management is an integral part of all activities and must be considered in all aspects of decision making | Up until mid-year the Service had an established Risk Management Group (RMG) which was responsible for ensuring the Authority has an effective risk management process in place. Corporate risk management is being fundamentally reviewed and aligned to the strategic performance and risk forum. Corporate risks are now reported to PRG and programme and project risks are reported to SPB. Corporate Risk management reports are taken to SAP committee. |
| 6.1.2 Implementing robust and integrated risk management arrangements and ensuring that they are working effectively | <p>The risk management process is subject to a bi-annual assessment by Internal Audit. The process is underpinned by the monitoring of the corporate, departmental and programme risk registers.</p> <p>Statements of Assurance are completed in line with the development of the Annual Plan and supporting Departmental Plans. The statements of assurance are signed off by the departmental head and lead executive officer and include departmental risks. Up until mid-year progress was monitored by RMG and RMG minutes were forwarded to SMT. Progress is now monitored by PRG and reported to SMT. The corporate risk register is monitored by SAP quarterly.</p> <p>Officers and Members also receive training from the Service's insurance provider Zurich.</p> |

| | |
|---|--|
| | All operational incidents are debriefed in line with the Service Policy. Any incident attended by a Flexible Duty Officer is also subject to operational monitoring procedures, all findings, both those of merit and development needs, are recorded and managed through an action plan and the Service's Operational Learning Board. Where necessary Significant Event Investigation can be instigated by the Duty Area Manager to provide a formal comprehensive report into specific events or incidents. |
| 6.1.3 Ensuring that responsibilities for managing individual risks are clearly allocated | All risks on the corporate risk register are assigned a risk owner. Departmental risks are updated by the Head of Department and signed off by the Executive Lead through statements of assurance. |
| 6.2 Managing performance | Supporting Text |
| 6.2.1 Monitoring service delivery effectively including planning, specification, execution and independent post implementation review | <p>An established performance management process exists, which provides reports to meetings of the PRG and the SAP committee on the Service's performance against service tolerances.</p> <p>The Authority has agreed nine corporate performance indicators and agreed tolerances in order to monitor service delivery. In addition, there are supporting objectives, which are managed through departmental plans.</p> <p>Major projects are monitored through SPB with reviews carried out and system user feedback captured for lessons learned purposes.</p> |
| 6.2.2 Making decisions based on relevant, clear objective analysis and advice pointing out the implications and risks inherent in the organisation's financial, social and environmental position and outlook | There is a standard format for all committee reports, which includes background to the report and any recommendations for decision together with reasons behind those recommendations. All reports contain a section for legal comment and financial implications and list the background papers, which are integral to understanding the report. EQIAs are completed where appropriate. |
| 6.2.3 Ensuring an effective scrutiny or oversight function is in place which provides constructive challenge and debate on policies and objectives before, during and after decisions are | SMT offers oversight on policy and performance and SPB oversees all major delivery projects within a programme of change. Both groups are made up of executive officers and departmental leads. Minutes and actions are taken at both meetings to capture discussions and decisions. |

| | |
|--|--|
| <p>made thereby enhancing the organisation's performance and that of any organisation for which it is responsible. (Or for a committee system) Encouraging effective and constructive challenge and debate on policies and objectives to support balanced and effective decision making.</p> | <p>S&R Committee offers oversight on strategic direction, Value for Money, and monitoring of budget and financial performance. SAP Committee provides independent assurance and independent scrutiny.</p> <p>The current review of Fire Authority governance arrangements will seek to put into place a specific scrutiny function for the Fire Authority.</p> |
| <p>6.2.4 Providing members and senior management with regular reports on service delivery plans and on progress towards outcome achievement</p> | <p>SMT meets every month and SPB meets every 3 months. Management reports and progress reports against major projects are reported. Progress on the Capital Programme is reported to S&R Committee.</p> |
| <p>6.2.5 Ensuring there is consistency between specification stages (such as budgets) and post implementation reporting (e.g. financial statements)</p> | <p>A robust and structured budget setting and management system is in place and is well documented through Authority and senior management reporting. Officers ensure that the budget that is set at the beginning of the financial year is consistent through to the Statement of Accounts.</p> |
| <p>6.3 Robust internal control</p> | <p>Supporting Text</p> |
| <p>6.3.1 Aligning the risk management strategy and policies on internal control with achieving objectives</p> | <p>Statements of Assurance are completed in line with the development of the Annual Plan and supporting Departmental Plans. The Statements of Assurance are signed off by the departmental head and lead executive officer and include departmental risks and areas for improvement.</p> <p>Alignment of risk management and reporting to the progress of projects and departmental action plans takes place through SPB and departmental reporting processes.</p> |
| <p>6.3.2 Evaluating and monitoring risk management and internal control on a regular basis</p> | <p>The Risk Management Brigade Order and the Risk Management Protocol are reviewed annually.</p> <p>Up until mid-year progress was monitored by RMG and RMG minutes were forwarded to SMT. Progress is now monitored by PRG and reported to SMT Corporate risk is a standing item on the RMG and PRG agenda.</p> |

| | |
|---|--|
| | The Annual Governance Statement is reviewed annually, and the accompanying improvement plan is reviewed quarterly. |
| 6.3.3 Ensuring effective counter fraud and anti-corruption arrangements are in place | A comprehensive Anti-Fraud, Bribery and Corruption Strategy and Fraud Plan is in place and is reviewed every financial year. This is approved by Members and widely circulated amongst staff. |
| 6.3.4 Ensuring additional assurance on the overall adequacy and effectiveness of the framework of governance, risk management and control is provided by the internal auditor | The Risk Management and Statements of Assurance processes are reviewed bi-annually by Internal Audit. Any recommendations/actions are monitored by RMG. |
| 6.3.5 Ensuring an audit committee or equivalent group/ function, which is independent of the executive and accountable to the governing body: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • provides a further source of effective assurance regarding arrangements for managing risk and maintaining an effective control environment • that its recommendations are listened to and acted upon | <p>The terms of reference for SAP includes scrutiny of the corporate risk register and the AGS improvement plan on a quarterly basis.</p> <p>The Chair of SAP who is also the Member champion.</p> |
| 6.4 Managing data | Supporting Text |
| 6.4.1 Ensuring effective arrangements are in place for the safe collection, storage, use and sharing of data, including processes to safeguard personal data | <p>An all-round approach of electronic safeguards through permissions, training for staff; and established agreements for sharing data with other agencies covers risks from an electronic, personnel and legislative angle.</p> <p>There are courses on the Learning Environment Online (LEO) platform that staff are required to complete, including:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Information Security including FOI • GDPR |

| | |
|--|--|
| | <p>A GDPR quarterly update is published on the Service's internal newsletter and there is also a GDPR page on the Portal that offers advice and guidance.</p> <p>There is an information asset register which is updated annually.</p> |
| 6.4.2 Ensuring effective arrangements are in place and operating effectively when sharing data with other bodies | <p>Data sharing protocols and regular scrutiny by SMT, as well as monitoring through the Statements of Assurance ensures that arrangements in place are monitored.</p> <p>There are courses on the LEO platform that staff are required to complete, including:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Information Security including FOI • GDPR <p>A GDPR quarterly update is published on the Service's internal newsletter and there is also a GDPR page on the Portal that offers advice and guidance.</p> <p>There is an information asset register which updated annually.</p> |
| 6.4.3 Reviewing and auditing regularly the quality and accuracy of data used in decision making and performance monitoring | <p>The Service has developed a data warehouse that supports the monitoring and improvement of data quality. It acts as a central repository that stores data from key departmental systems. Departmental systems have assigned System Owners and System Administrators who are responsible for ensuring data quality standards.</p> <p>The data warehouse also allows System Administrators to more easily query data from their systems and check the data for problems. As the data warehouse pulls in data from multiple sources then the data from different systems can be compared.</p> <p>The process of developing the data warehouse itself helped data and system owners understand how their data might be used, determine definitions for reporting and identify any data entry or data quality issues which they needed to resolve before reports could be created.</p> |

| 6.5 Strong public financial management | Supporting Text |
|--|--|
| 6.5.1 Ensuring financial management supports both long term achievement of outcomes and short-term financial and operational performance | The use of short to medium term planning ensures that officers and members can consider the impact of any decisions or events both now and over the foreseeable planning period. Plans will be put in place for current organisational requirements but reserves and precept strategies will ensure that future financial commitments can also be met. |
| 6.5.2 Ensuring well-developed financial management is integrated at all levels of planning and control, including management of financial risks and controls | A robust and structured budget setting and management system is in place and is well documented through Authority and senior management reporting. In addition, project management processes include financial implications and monitoring. The Service will be introducing a new Portfolio Management Officer and developing its portfolio and project management processes. In terms of financial risks and control, the corporate and departmental risk registers and the Authority's reserves are aligned. |
| Principle 7 - Implementing good practices in transparency, reporting, and audit to deliver effective accountability | |
| Accountability is about ensuring that those making decisions and delivering services are answerable for them. Effective accountability is concerned not only with reporting on actions completed but also ensuring that stakeholders are able to understand and respond as the organisation plans and carries out its activities in a transparent manner. Both external and internal audit contribute to effective accountability. | |
| 7.1 Implementing good practice in transparency | Supporting Text |
| 7.1.1 Writing and communicating reports for the public and other stakeholders in a fair, balanced and understandable style appropriate to the intended audience and ensuring that they are easy to access and interrogate | <p>The Fire Authority and its Committees each has an annual work plan which sets out the reports required for each meeting and the officers involved in producing them. The information provided by officers in these reports is to a standard format and is relevant, timely and clear, thus facilitating the decision-making process.</p> <p>Prior to publication, Authority and Committee papers are assessed by Legal Services and the Head of Finance, for legal and financial comment.</p> <p>Agendas and reports are available to the public and publicised on its website and intranet in advance of meetings.</p> |

| | |
|---|---|
| | <p>Meetings are minuted to a standard format and include a summary of debate, motions, results, and decisions resolved.</p> <p>Officers at all levels have been offered plain English and grammar check skills courses. Report writing forms part of the Management Development Programme.</p> |
| 7.1.2 Striking a balance between providing the right amount of information to satisfy transparency demands and enhance public scrutiny while not being too onerous to provide and for users to understand | <p>The Information Officer (Planning and Programmes Officer) ensures that the requirements of the Transparency Scheme and the Publication Scheme are met.</p> <p>The Authority and Monitoring Officers preference is that as far as possible information should be considered in public session with exempt reports kept to a minimum.</p> <p>To avoid conflicts of interest, the Fire Authority requires that, having disclosed a pecuniary interest in a matter, a Member should leave the room whilst the matter is discussed.</p> <p>Specialist officers are available at public meetings to expand the information contained within reports.</p> <p>Reports are written in a clear consistent manner and the use of technical terms and acronyms is kept to a minimum.</p> |
| 7.2 Implementing good practice in reporting | Supporting Text |
| 7.2.1 Reporting at least annually on performance, value for money and stewardship of resources to stakeholders in a timely and understandable way | <p>The Authority and its Committees receive quarterly reporting on operational and financial performance. Value for money is also reported by external auditors as part of their Annual Audit Report.</p> <p>Reports detailing Use of Assets are taken to the S&R Committee.</p> |
| 7.2.2 Ensuring members and senior management own the results reported | <p>Each report has a main author named on the front of the report as a point of contact for further information. The author will present the report at the meeting and take questions from Members.</p> |

| | |
|---|---|
| 7.2.3 Ensuring robust arrangements for assessing the extent to which the principles contained in this Framework have been applied and publishing the results on this assessment, including an action plan for improvement and evidence to demonstrate good governance (the annual governance statement) | Internal Audit carry out a bi-annual review and produce a report on the Annual Governance Statement. Any recommendations/actions falling out of the review will be monitored by RMG and progress reported to SAP. Any high-level actions that carry a significant risk would be included within the AGS improvement plan and reported to SAP on a quarterly basis. |
| 7.2.4 Ensuring that this Framework is applied to jointly managed or shared service organisations as appropriate | The Service maintains a strategic alliance with H&WFRS. Any joint workstreams as a result of the alliance will be covered by this framework. |
| 7.2.5 Ensuring the performance information that accompanies the financial statements is prepared on a consistent and timely basis and the statements allow for comparison with other, similar organisations | The Statement of Accounts contains a narrative report, which details the Authority's performance over the financial year. This is consistent with budgets set and reported upon during the year. The backward-looking Annual Report also includes financial information, which is consistent with other financial reporting. |
| 7.3 Assurance and effective accountability | Supporting Text |
| 7.3.1 Ensuring that recommendations for corrective action made by external audit are acted upon | On completion of the external audit on the Statement of Accounts, the external auditor produces an audit findings report. Where recommendations are made within the report, these are incorporated into the following year's closedown process. |
| 7.3.2 Ensuring an effective internal audit service with direct access to members is in place, providing assurance with regard to governance arrangements and that recommendations are acted upon | The Authority's internal audit function is carried out by Worcestershire Internal Audit Shared Services. The audit plan is based on a risk assessment carried out by officers and auditors. Timely audit reports are issued, and any recommendations acted upon and monitored by RMG. Audit Services provide an annual assurance based on the audits carried out and this feeds into the AGS. There is an arrangement in place whereby both internal and external audit can meet with Members without officers present, to discuss any relevant issues. |

| | |
|--|---|
| <p>7.3.3 Welcoming peer challenge, reviews and inspections from regulatory bodies and implementing recommendations</p> | <p>The Service is subject to audit and review by the Fire Service Inspectorate and actions plans are developed as a result of their findings.</p> <p>The Service is a participant in a Regional Health and Safety inspection programme which encourages the implementation of best practice. However, during 2020/21 and early 2022 this was put on hold due to the pandemic. The first Regional Health and Safety Peer Review audit following the pandemic was conducted in October 2022 within Staffordshire FRS and the second conducted within Shropshire FRS in May 2023. The programme will continue to be ongoing.</p> <p>The Service actively engages with external bodies such as British Standards Institute for environmental assessment and fleet transport association for fleet compliance.</p> |
| <p>7.3.4 Gaining assurance on risks associated with delivering services through third parties and that this is evidenced in the annual governance statement</p> | <p>The Service risk assesses contracts and contract providers to establish appropriate contract and risk management strategies.</p> |
| <p>7.3.5 Ensuring that when working in partnership, arrangements for accountability are clear and the need for wider public accountability has been recognised and met</p> | <p>Each partnership entered into is supported by a partnership agreement, which sets out clearly and succinctly what the partnership aims to achieve and what each of the partners will do. The agreement also states to which of the Fire Authority's strategic aims the partnership contributes.</p> <p>Officers have developed a method of assessing partnerships to ensure that officers, Members, and partners are clear in the aims and purpose of any partnership working and know their respective responsibilities and commitments. Partnership agreements formally set out the aims of the partnership, expectations, roles, and reporting requirements.</p> <p>Included on the partnership agreement template is a section that requires each partner to provide named individuals for complaints.</p> <p>The partnership process has been re-designed to include all the internal audit recommendations. Periodic audits are undertaken of the process and a partnership report is taken to the CFA annually.</p> |

Abbreviations

| | | | |
|--------|---|------|---|
| AGS | Annual Governance Statement | LGA | Local Government Association |
| AFSA | Asian Fire Service Association | LEO | Learning Environment Online |
| ACFO | Assistant Chief Fire Officer | MTFP | Medium Term Financial Plan |
| CFA | Combined Fire Authority | NCAF | National Co-ordination Advisory Framework |
| CFO | Chief Fire Officer | NFCC | National Fire Chiefs Council |
| CFS | Community Fire Safety | OH | Occupational Health |
| CPIs | Corporate Performance Indicators | ORS | Opinion Research Services |
| CRMP | Community Risk Management Plan | PRG | Performance and Risk Group |
| DPO | Data Protection Officer | RDS | Retained Duty System |
| EDI | Equality, Diversity and Inclusion | RMG | Risk Management Group |
| EQIA | Equality Impact Assessment | S&R | Strategy and Resources Committee |
| FOI | Freedom of Information | SAND | Safe and Ageing No Discrimination |
| FRA | Fire and Rescue Authority | SAP | Standards Audit Performance Committee |
| FRS | Fire and Rescue Service | SFRS | Shropshire Fire and Rescue Service |
| GDPR | General Data Protection Regulation | SGG | Systems Governance Group |
| HSWV | Home Safe and Well Visit | SIRO | Senior Information Risk Officer |
| H&WFRS | Hereford and Worcester Fire & Rescue Service | SPB | Service Programme Board |
| ICO | Information Commissioner's Office | SMT | Service Management Team |
| ILM | Institute of Leadership and Management | STAG | Strategic Advisory Group |
| IPDR | Individual Performance and Development Review | S151 | Section 151 Officer |
| IRMP | Integrated Risk Management Plan | WFS | Women in the Fire Service |

Anti-Fraud, Bribery and Corruption Strategy

Introduction

Shropshire and Wrekin Fire and Rescue Authority employs over 600 staff, and manages a revenue budget of over £30m per year. In administering its responsibilities, the Authority has a zero tolerance approach to fraud, bribery and corruption, whether it is attempted from inside or outside of the organisation. To this end, it is committed to an effective anti-fraud, bribery and corruption strategy designed to:

- encourage prevention
- promote detection and
- identify a clear pathway for investigation.

Work to counter fraud, bribery and corruption links closely to the Fire Authority's Core Values, which are:

Service to the Community

We value service to the community by:

- Working with all groups to reduce risk
- Treating everyone fairly and with respect
- Being answerable to those we serve
- Striving for excellence in all we do

People

We value all our employees by practising and promoting:

- Fairness and respect
- Recognition of merit
- Honesty, integrity and mutual trust
- Personal development
- Co-operative and inclusive working

Diversity

We value diversity in the Service and the community by:

- Treating everyone fairly and with respect
- Providing varying solutions for different needs and expectations
- Promoting equal opportunities in employment and progression within the Service
- Challenging prejudice and discrimination

Improvement

We value improvement at all levels of the Service by:

- Accepting responsibility for our performance
- Being open-minded
- Considering criticism thoughtfully
- Learning from our experience
- Consulting others

The key objectives of this Strategy are to minimise losses through fraud, bribery and corruption, and to embed further the management of fraud risk within the culture of the organisation.

This Strategy is based on a series of comprehensive and inter-related procedures, designed to prevent, detect and deter fraud and to take effective action against any attempted or actual fraudulent act affecting the Authority:

- Code of Conduct for Employees
- Members Code of Conduct
- Registration and declaration of disclosable pecuniary interests
- Contract Standing Orders
- Financial Regulations
- Whistleblowing Policy
- Disciplinary Procedure
- Protocols on Gifts and Hospitality for Members and Staff
- Core Code of Ethics
- Workplace Charter

What is Fraud, Bribery and Corruption?

Fraud is a crime and involves a deception, which is deliberate and intended to provide a direct or indirect personal gain, for example false expenses, exaggerated pay claims, altering accounting records, bogus invoices, forged cheques, fixing tender results, contract irregularities etc.

Bribery is an inducement or reward offered, promised or provided to gain personal, commercial or regulatory advantage.

Corruption is the deliberate misuse of someone's position for direct or indirect personal gain, such as offering, giving, requesting or accepting a bribe or reward, which influences a person's actions or someone else's.

Theft is where a person steals cash or other property belonging to someone else with no intention of returning it.

Scope

It is expected that all officers (permanent and temporary) and Members of the Authority will lead by example, and ensure adherence to legal requirements, rules, procedures and practices.

The Authority also expects that the individuals and organisations that it comes into contact with (i.e. suppliers, contractors, service providers and consultants) will act towards the Authority with integrity and without thought or actions involving fraud, bribery or corruption.

Authority

The responsibility for an anti-fraud, bribery and corruption culture is the joint duty of those involved in giving political direction, determining policy and management. The Standards, Audit and Performance Committee is key in recommending that sufficient authority is given to anti-fraud, bribery and corruption activity. The Authority's management teams are responsible for ensuring a strong anti-fraud culture within their areas, and that staff accept their responsibility for preventing and detecting fraud, bribery and corruption.

In order for the Authority to deal effectively with suspected incidents of fraud, those responsible for investigating matters must be fully supported by all officers and Members.

Culture

The Authority encourages a culture of honesty and opposition to fraud, bribery and corruption. Members and officers at all levels are expected to lead by example in ensuring adherence to established rules and procedures and to ensure that all procedures and practices are legally sound and honest.

The Authority's employees are an important element in its stance on fraud, bribery and corruption, and they are positively encouraged to raise any concerns that they may have on these issues, where they are associated with the Authority's activity.

The Authority's Brigade Order, "Reporting of Illegality and Malpractice (Whistleblowing)", gives details about the support and safeguards that are available to those, who do raise concerns.

Members of the public can also report concerns through the Authority's complaints procedure, external audit or the Local Government Ombudsman, or, where the conduct of Members is concerned, through the Fire Authority's Monitoring Officer.

The Authority participates in the National Fraud Initiative, the Cabinet Office's bi-annual data matching exercise, which seeks to detect fraudulent payments from the public purse. In addition, the Authority proactively incorporates anti-fraud work into its Internal Audit plans.

Prevention

Staff

A key preventative measure in the fight against fraud, bribery and corruption is to take effective steps at the recruitment stage to establish, as far as possible, the previous record of potential staff, in terms of their propriety and integrity. In this regard, temporary and casual staff are treated in the same manner as permanent staff.

Once officers are recruited in accordance with Human Resources guidelines, they must adhere to the Authority's procedures, practices and policies. Officers, who are members of professional bodies, must follow that body's Code of Conduct. Officers may also voluntarily register membership of other bodies. The Authority's Brigade Order on "Gifts and Hospitality" outlines the procedure to be followed by officers, if they are offered gifts or hospitality from a supplier or other stakeholder.

Members

Members are subject to the Authority's Code of Conduct. Any allegations of breach of the Code are dealt with by the Fire Authority's Monitoring Officer and may, in certain instances, be referred on to its Standards, Audit and Performance Committee. Members are also required to declare their interests in accordance with the law and with the provisions of the Code of Conduct.

A register of interests of Members is maintained by the Fire Authority's Monitoring Officer and is available for inspection by the public at Service Headquarters.

The register is also accessible on the Service's website at the following link:

<http://www.shropshirefire.gov.uk/managing-service/fra-members>

The Fire Authority also has in place a detailed Protocol on Gifts and Hospitality for Members and staff.

The agenda for every meeting of the Authority includes an item on disclosable pecuniary interests, at which point Members must declare if they have an interest in any business to be considered at that meeting in accordance with statutory provisions. Having declared a disclosable pecuniary interest in an item, a Member must leave the meeting room, prior to commencement of the debate on that item.

Members are also required annually to declare any related party transactions.

Systems and Procedures

Financial regulations and standing orders relating to contracts and for the regulation of business are in place to ensure that Members and officers act in accordance with best practice, when dealing with the Authority's affairs. The Authority has a statutory duty under section 151 of the Local Government Act 1972 to make arrangements for the proper administration of its financial affairs, and ensure that one of its officers has responsibility for the administration of these affairs. The Authority's designated Chief Finance Officer is the Treasurer. In the absence of the Treasurer the Head of Finance acts as the deputy section 151 officer.

The Authority has developed systems and procedures, which incorporate efficient and effective internal controls and which include adequate segregation of duties. The Treasurer is responsible for the operation and documentation of such systems. Their existence and appropriateness is independently reviewed and reported upon by Internal Audit Services.

Members and officers should avoid any situations where there is potential for a conflict of interest.

Reporting of Financial Malpractice

The Authority is committed to ensuring the prevention and detection of fraud, bribery and corruption, and will investigate all potential occurrences in a prompt and timely manner.

In the event that an employee is concerned about suspected unlawful conduct, they should speak in the first instance to their line manager, or, if this is not appropriate, to a senior manager.

Senior management are responsible for following up any allegation of fraud, bribery or corruption received, and will deal with it urgently, referring it to the Treasurer, or, if this is not appropriate, to Internal Audit Services. This person must also refer the matter to the Head of Human Resources and Administration.

The Treasurer has statutory duties in relation to financial administration and stewardship on behalf of the Authority.

Section 114 of the Local Government Finance Act 1988 requires the Treasurer to report to the Authority, if one of its officers:

- has made, or is about to make, a decision, which involves incurring unlawful expenditure
- has taken, or is about to take, an unlawful action, which has resulted or would result in a loss or deficiency to the Authority
- is about to make an unlawful entry in the Authority's accounts

Outcomes

There are a number of possible outcomes to a fraud investigation.

- Criminal prosecution
- Disciplinary action
- Recovery through civil or criminal proceedings
- Identification of weaknesses in systems of controls, which require improvement

Full details of outcomes are set out within the Fraud Response Plan below.

Conclusion

This Strategy demonstrates that Shropshire and Wrekin Fire and Rescue Authority has systems and procedures in place to assist in the fight against fraud, bribery and corruption. The Strategy will be brought to the attention of all employees and Members, and will be reviewed at least annually by the Standards, Audit and Performance Committee, to ensure that its contents remain up-to-date.

This policy will be made available in other formats and languages on request.

When implementing this policy, the Service will ensure that reasonable adjustments are considered during the investigation process.

Fraud Response Plan

The Fire Authority has a zero tolerance approach to fraud, bribery and corruption, whether it is attempted from inside or outside of the organisation.

This Response Plan is part of the Authority's Anti-Fraud, Bribery and Corruption Strategy, and gives advice and information to employees and Members about what to look for, and how to act, if fraud or corruption is suspected.

Fraud might happen in the following areas:

Invoices for goods or services

- Claiming for services not performed or goods not received
- Claiming for a higher level of service from that performed or a higher specification of goods than that received
- Claiming for a service or goods provided to an employee on a personal basis

Travel and expense claims

- False journey claimed / same journey claimed twice
- Mileage inflated
- Excessive or inappropriate expenses claimed
- Two employees claiming for a journey taken together
- Altering documentation to disguise theft of cash

Procurement Cards

- Use of a card for payment of non Fire Authority expenditure

Payroll

- 'Ghost' employees introduced onto the payroll system, the salary being paid to the perpetrator
- Hours worked overstated – misuse of flexible working or overtime systems
- Changing employee pay rates or hours without authorisation

Ordering

- Goods ordered for personal use or from a specific supplier in return for some form of benefit
- Goods ordered from own, relatives' or friends' businesses
- Accepting a lower number of items than ordered, but certifying an invoice for a higher number
- Creating / certifying false invoices, for which no order has been raised

Stocks and assets

- Using a computer, fax or telephone for running a private business or for other private purposes
- Using a franking machine for personal mail

Claims for damages

- Personal injury claims falsely alleged as work related or wrongly inflated
- Claims for damage to personal effects falsely alleged as work related or wrongly inflated
- Sick pay / loss of earnings / claims falsely alleged as work related or wrongly inflated.

The following controls should be in place to prevent and detect fraud:

- Procedures should be documented and staff trained in their use.
- Managers should ensure compliance with those procedures.
- Duties should be segregated between staff, to avoid a single employee being solely responsible for the initiation to the completion of a task.
- An independent check should be made to verify calculations and documentation of employees, i.e. travel claims should be checked by managers.
- Unused parts of claim forms should be crossed through, to ensure that no additions are made following approval.
- Cash holdings should be minimised, and cash and cheques banked regularly.
- Budget statements and any associated trends should be reviewed.

If you suspect fraud, you should speak in the first instance to your line manager, or, if this is not appropriate, to a senior manager.

Senior management are then responsible for following up any allegation, and will be expected to deal with it urgently, referring to the Treasurer, or if this is not appropriate, to Internal Audit Services. This person must also refer the matter to the Head of Human Resources and Administration.

Procedures are in place within Internal Audit Services to investigate any allegations presented to them. The Treasurer, together with Internal Audit Services, will:

- Undertake an independent investigation
- Deal promptly with the matter
- Record all evidence received
- Ensure that evidence is sound and adequately supported
- Ensure security of all evidence collected
- Contact other agencies where necessary, e.g. the Police
- Implement the Authority's disciplinary procedures with the Head of Human Resources and Administration, where appropriate.

There are a number of possible outcomes to a fraud investigation.

Criminal prosecution

The Treasurer, in consultation with the appropriate manager and Internal Audit Services, will authorise the referral to the Police for investigation.

Disciplinary action

At the end of the investigation, Internal Audit Services will produce an investigation report. If this involves an employee and fraud is proven, the likely outcome will be dismissal. If fraud is not proven, there may still be matters, which need to be considered under the Fire Authority's disciplinary procedures.

Recovery through civil or criminal proceedings

The Fire Authority will seek to recover all losses, subject to legal advice and where it is cost effective to do so. It will recover any loss caused by an employee through salary, pension or insurance.

Identification of weaknesses in systems of controls, which require improvement

An action plan will be produced to address any system or management weaknesses and to reduce the risk of fraud and error in the future.