

Service Assurance Framework: Domain Confidence Position September 2026

Report of the Chief Fire Officer

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1 Executive Summary

This report presents the calibrated confidence position for all 24 Service Assurance Framework domains following the senior leadership deep dive held on 22 September 2026. It summarises the current ratings, trajectories, movement since the previous assessment, corporate risk links and the domains requiring formal monitoring.

The Fire Authority is asked to note the position and endorse the proposed monitoring arrangements. The assessment records 5 domains as Good, 10 as Adequate, 9 as Requires Improvement and none as Inadequate.

2 Recommendations

The Fire Authority is asked to:

- a) Note the calibrated confidence position across all 24 Service Assurance Framework domains;
- b) Endorse the monitoring cohort of 13 domains and the requirement for concise, evidence-led updates at the next Performance and Assurance meeting; and
- c) Support continued focus on measurable outcomes, evidence of embedding, independent validation and active management of links between domain confidence and corporate risk.

3 Background

The Service Assurance Framework provides a consistent means of assessing how effectively each part of the Service is operating. It groups activity into 24 domains across People, Place, Tools and Enablers and aligns those domains to the seven Service Goals.

Each domain is assessed using evidence against Fire Standards and other relevant standards, HMICFRS findings, Areas for Improvement and Causes of Concern, performance information, and independent assurance. Appendix 1 provides a concise description of each domain and what it covers to support interpretation of the findings in this report.

On 22 September 2026, senior leaders reviewed all 24 domains against the available evidence. Ratings were retained, improved or reduced according to the strength of assurance rather than the volume of activity. The resulting position was reconciled to the SMT paper “Domain Deep Dive Outcome” dated 23 September 2026 and the Service Domains Register.

4 Domain Confidence Position and Findings

The calibrated headline position is: 5 Good, 10 Adequate, 9 Requires Improvement and 0 Inadequate. Compared with the previous assessment, seven ratings improved, fifteen were unchanged and two were reduced. All three domains previously rated Inadequate have moved to Requires Improvement. Appendix 2 provides the complete at-a-glance position for all 24 domains, including rating, trajectory and corporate risk links.

Trajectory is considered separately from rating movement. Twelve domains are improving, nine are stable and three are declining. The declining domains are Prevention, Protection, and Leading and Developing People. Prevention and Protection were reduced from Adequate to Requires Improvement because the evidence did not yet support the confidence claimed; this represents an assurance recalibration rather than a sudden deterioration in operational delivery.

Seven ratings improved. Fire Control, Vehicles, Equipment and PPE, and Premises and Facilities moved from Inadequate to Requires Improvement. Finance, Operational Competence, Safeguarding and Operational Learning moved from Requires Improvement to Adequate.

The assessment identified five recurring assurance themes: the need to consolidate evidence against Fire Standards; stronger outcome measures and reliable data; greater independent validation; workforce resilience and succession; and proof that improvements are embedded in normal practice.

Thirteen domains form the formal monitoring cohort because they are rated Requires Improvement or below, have a declining trajectory, or are linked to an active corporate risk. These are EG22, EG23, PCR09, PCR10, PCR11, PL01, PL02, PR14, PW05, TA20, TA21, TD18 and TD19. Each will return to the next Performance and Assurance meeting with a concise, evidence-led update.

Active corporate risk links are recorded for Internal Governance and Assurance, Leading the Service, Health, Safety and Wellbeing, Premises and Facilities, and Data Management. A corporate risk link is also recorded in the deep dive register for Digital and Cyber.

A material reduction in domain confidence will prompt notification to the corporate risk owner, while activation or material change in a corporate risk will trigger review of the linked domain confidence statement.

5 Conclusions

The September deep dive demonstrates a more mature assurance culture and a shared understanding of strengths, risks and evidence gaps. The absence of any Inadequate rating is positive, but it should not be interpreted as full compliance with every relevant standard. The next assurance cycle should maintain focus on measurable outcomes, embedding, independent validation and corporate risk alignment.

The Fire Authority is, therefore, asked to note the calibrated position, endorse the monitoring arrangements for the 13-domain cohort and support the priorities set out in this report.

6 Capacity

The monitoring arrangements will require domain leads to prepare concise updates and strengthen evidence, data and independent assurance. This will be managed through existing governance arrangements; any material capacity pressures should be escalated through the relevant domain and corporate risk owners.

7 Fire Alliance / Collaboration / Partnership Working

Several domains rely on regional, peer, partnership or third-line assurance. Existing collaboration through the Local Resilience Forum, regional partners, the National Fire Chiefs Council and external assurance providers should be used to strengthen validation and resilience where identified.

8 Financial Implications

There are no direct financial implications arising from noting this report. Any resource or investment requirements emerging from individual domain improvement plans will be considered through the established budget and governance processes.

9 Legal Comment

There are no direct legal implications arising from this report. The framework supports transparent oversight of compliance, controls and improvement activity; legal advice will be sought where a domain update identifies a specific legal issue.

10 HMICFRS Areas For Improvement, Cause of Concern, External Audit Recommendations

The assessment incorporates relevant HMICFRS findings, Areas for Improvement, Causes of Concern and external audit evidence. The removal of the governance Cause of Concern and HMICFRS revisit evidence support the Internal Governance and Assurance position. Grant Thornton audit findings, with no material issues recorded, support the improved Finance rating. Domain owners remain responsible for evidencing progress against applicable AFIs and external recommendations.

11 Communications

The domain confidence position will be communicated to Fire Authority members and staff using clear explanations of ratings, trajectories and movement. Communications should emphasise that reduced ratings reflect evidence gaps rather than necessarily a sudden fall in service delivery, and that no domain being rated Inadequate does not mean full compliance with every standard.

12 Community Safety

The framework supports community safety by identifying where assurance is strong and where targeted improvement is required across prevention, protection, response and enabling services. Particular attention is required for Prevention and Protection, both rated Requires Improvement with declining trajectories.

13 Environmental

There are no direct environmental impacts arising from this report. The framework nevertheless provides oversight of domains aligned to the Environment Service Goal, including Community Risk Management, Vehicles, Equipment and PPE, and Premises and Facilities.

14 Equality Impact Assessment

There are no direct equality or diversity implications arising from noting this report. Equality, Diversity and Inclusion is assessed as a specific domain and is currently rated Good with a stable trajectory.

An e-EQIA is not required for the reporting of the assurance position. Equality impacts arising from individual improvement actions will be assessed through the relevant project or decision process.

15 Health and Safety

The report strengthens oversight of health and safety through the Health, Safety and Wellbeing domain, which is rated Requires Improvement with a stable trajectory and an active corporate risk link. The next update should address performance and outcome data, the action plan, regional assurance and control effectiveness.

16 Fire Standard Core Code of Ethics and Human Rights (including Data Protection)

The report supports the Core Code of Ethics through transparent, evidence-led assurance and clear accountability. No adverse human rights or data protection impacts have been identified from reporting the domain position.

17 ICT

There are no direct ICT changes arising from this report. Digital and Cyber is rated Good and improving, while Data Management is rated Requires Improvement and improving; both remain within the monitoring cohort because of their corporate risk links.

18 Insurance

There are no direct insurance implications arising from this report. Any insurance implications identified through specific domain improvement activity will be managed through established arrangements.

19 The On Call Service

There are no direct changes to the On Call Service arising from this report. Relevant findings on operational preparedness, competence, workforce resilience and facilities will inform assurance of on-call service delivery through existing governance.

20 Public Value / Service Delivery

The Service Assurance Framework strengthens public value and service delivery by bringing risk, controls, performance and evidence into one consistent view. It directs oversight towards the domains where improvement or further assurance is most needed.

21 Reputation

Transparent reporting of the calibrated assurance position supports organisational credibility. Reputational risk will be managed by communicating clearly that ratings reflect the strength of evidence and by demonstrating timely follow-through on identified gaps.

22 Security

There are no direct security changes arising from this report. Digital and Cyber remains rated Good and improving, with continued monitoring of investment, legacy equipment, cyber controls and business continuity evidence.

23 Training

The report identifies training and competence dependencies in several domains, including Operational Competence, Fire Control, Emergency Preparedness and Resilience, Fire Investigation and Safeguarding. These will be progressed through the relevant improvement and workforce plans.

24 Appendices

Appendix 1

Service Assurance Framework domain definitions

Appendix 2

All 24 domains at a glance

25 Background Papers

There are no background papers associated with this report.

Service Assurance Framework domain definitions

This appendix explains the purpose and scope of each of the 24 domains referenced in the report. The domains are grouped under People, Place, Tools and Enablers.

People domains		
Ref	Domain	What it covers
PL01	Leading the Service	Covers how the Service is led and directed, including strategic clarity, decision-making, and how leaders set expectations and culture across Shropshire Fire and Rescue Service.
PL02	Leading and Developing People	Focuses on how the Service develops its people, builds leadership capability, and plans for future skills and succession to support safe and effective service delivery.
PL03	Core Code of Ethics	Concerned with how values, behaviours and ethical standards are lived in practice, including fairness, transparency, and how the Service maintains trust with staff and the public.
PW04	Safeguarding	Ensures the Service protects vulnerable people and staff, with clear safeguarding arrangements, trained personnel and effective referral pathways when concerns arise.
PW05	Health, Safety and Wellbeing	Covers how the Service manages risks to the health, safety and wellbeing of its workforce, including accident prevention, wellbeing support and learning from incidents.
PC06	Equality, Diversity and Inclusion	Focuses on fairness and inclusion in how the Service operates, treats its workforce and engages with communities, ensuring equal access, opportunity and respect.
PC07	Communication and Engagement	Covers how the Service communicates and listens, internally with staff and externally with communities and partners, to build understanding, confidence and trust.

Place domains		
Ref	Domain	What it covers
PCR08	Community Risk Management	Sets out how the Service understands risk in Shropshire and translates that understanding into plans, priorities and resource decisions to keep communities safe.

PCR09	Prevention	Covers the Service's work to reduce risk before incidents occur, including targeted prevention activity, safe and well visits and partnership working.
PCR10	Protection	Focuses on how the Service enforces fire safety legislation and manages risk in regulated buildings to protect people, property and the local economy.
PCR11	Fire Investigation	Ensures the Service investigates fires effectively, identifies causes and learning, and shares outcomes to improve safety and reduce repeat incidents.
PR12	Operational Preparedness	Covers how the Service prepares for incidents, including planning, resourcing and readiness, so crews can respond safely and effectively when needed.
PR13	Operational Competence	Focuses on ensuring staff are trained, competent and current for their roles, so skills and knowledge match the risks faced across Shropshire.
PR14	Fire Control	Covers how emergency calls are received, mobilised and managed, ensuring incidents are handled accurately, promptly and safely from first contact.
PR15	Emergency Preparedness and Resilience	Ensures the Service is ready for major incidents and emergencies, including multi-agency working, exercising and maintaining specialist capabilities.
PR16	Emergency Response Driving	Focuses on how the Service manages the risks associated with emergency driving, including training, standards and learning from vehicle incidents.

Tools domains		
Ref	Domain	What it covers
TL17	Operational Learning	Covers how the Service captures, analyses and acts on learning from incidents, exercises and near misses to continually improve safety and performance.
TD18	Digital and Cyber	Focuses on how digital systems and information are protected, governed and maintained so they reliably support service delivery and decision-making.
TD19	Data Management	Ensures data used by the Service is accurate, reliable and well governed, supporting informed decisions, performance reporting and public accountability.
TA20	Vehicles, Equipment and PPE	Covers how operational vehicles, equipment and protective gear are provided, maintained and managed so they are safe, compliant and fit for purpose.

TA21	Premises and Facilities	Focuses on the safety, suitability and availability of stations and other premises so staff can work and respond effectively.
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Enablers domains		
Ref	Domain	What it covers
EG22	Internal Governance and Assurance	Covers how the Service assures itself and the Fire Authority that risks are managed, controls are effective and performance is properly scrutinised.
EG23	Procurement and Commercial Management	Focuses on how the Service buys goods and services, manages contracts and demonstrates value for money while supporting operational needs.
EG24	Finance	Covers the assurance of financial matters against the CIPFA standard.

All 24 domains at a glance

This table summarises the calibrated confidence rating, trajectory and corporate risk link for each Service Assurance Framework domain as of 22 September 2026.

Ref	Category	Domain	Rating	Trajectory	Corporate risk link
PL01	People	Leading the Service	Adequate	→ Stable	Active
PL02	People	Leading and Developing People	Adequate	↓ Declining	—
PL03	People	Core Code of Ethics	Good	→ Stable	—
PW04	People	Safeguarding	Adequate	↑ Improving	—
PW05	People	Health, Safety and Wellbeing	Requires Improvement	→ Stable	Active
PC06	People	Equality, Diversity and Inclusion	Good	→ Stable	—
PC07	People	Communication and Engagement	Adequate	↑ Improving	—
PCR08	Place	Community Risk Management	Good	→ Stable	—
PCR09	Place	Prevention	Requires Improvement	↓ Declining	—
PCR10	Place	Protection	Requires Improvement	↓ Declining	—
PCR11	Place	Fire Investigation	Requires Improvement	↑ Improving	—
PR12	Place	Operational Preparedness	Adequate	→ Stable	—
PR13	Place	Operational Competence	Adequate	↑ Improving	—
PR14	Place	Fire Control	Requires Improvement	↑ Improving	—
PR15	Place	Emergency Preparedness and Resilience	Adequate	↑ Improving	—
PR16	Place	Emergency Response Driving	Good	→ Stable	—
TL17	Tools	Operational Learning	Adequate	↑ Improving	—
TD18	Tools	Digital and Cyber	Good	↑ Improving	Recorded*
TD19	Tools	Data Management	Requires Improvement	↑ Improving	Active
TA20	Tools	Vehicles, Equipment and PPE	Requires Improvement	↑ Improving	—
TA21	Tools	Premises and Facilities	Requires Improvement	↑ Improving	Active
EG22	Enablers	Internal Governance and Assurance	Adequate	→ Stable	Active
EG23	Enablers	Procurement and Commercial Management	Requires Improvement	→ Stable	—
EG24	Enablers	Finance	Adequate	↑ Improving	—

* Corporate risk link recorded in the domain deep-dive register. “Active” denotes alignment to an active corporate risk; “—” denotes no corporate risk link recorded.