BUCKINGHAMSHIRE AND MILTON KEYNES FIRE AUTHORITY
BUCKINGHAMSHIRE FIRE AND RESCUE SERVICE

Director of Legal & Governance, Graham Britten
Buckinghamshire Fire & Rescue Service
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Chief Fire Officer and Chief Executive
Louise Harrison

To: Members of Buckinghamshire and Milton Keynes Fire Authority

> **MEMBERS OF THE PRESS AND PUBLIC**
>
> **Please note the content of Page 2 of this Agenda Pack**
>
> **To contact our Communication Team, please email cteam@bucksfire.gov.uk**

2 December 2024

Dear Councillor

Your attendance is requested at a **MEETING** of the **BUCKINGHAMSHIRE AND MILTON KEYNES FIRE AUTHORITY** to be held at **MILTON KEYNES CITY COUNCIL CHAMBER, 1 SAXON GATE EAST, CENTRAL MILTON KEYNES, MK9 3EJ** on **11 DECEMBER 2024** at **11 AM** when the business set out overleaf will be transacted.

Yours faithfully

Graham Britten
Director of Legal and Governance

Health and Safety:
There will be limited facilities for members of the public to observe the meeting in person. A recording of the meeting will be available after the meeting.

Chairman: Councillor Rouse
Councillors: Adoh, Bagge, Bailey, Banks, Carroll, Chapple OBE, Exon, Hall, Hussain OBE, Khan, Lambert, Lancaster, McLean, Stuchbury, Sullivan and Walsh

MAKING YOU SAFER

To observe the meeting as a member of the Press and Public

The Authority supports the principles of openness and transparency. To enable members of the press and public to see or hear the meeting this meeting will be recorded. Please visit: https://www.youtube.com/channel/UCWmIXPWAscxpL3vliv7bh1Q

The Authority also allows the use of social networking websites and blogging to communicate with people about what is happening, as it happens.

Adjournment and Rights to Speak – Public

The Authority may adjourn a Meeting to hear a member of the public on a particular agenda item. The proposal to adjourn must be moved by a Member, seconded and agreed by a majority of the Members present and voting.

A request to speak on a specified agenda item should be submitted by email to gbritten@bucksfire.gov.uk by 4pm on the Monday prior to the meeting. Please state if you would like the Director of Legal and Governance to read out the statement on your behalf, or if you would like to be sent a 'teams' meeting invitation to join the meeting at the specified agenda item.

If the meeting is then adjourned, prior to inviting a member of the public to speak, the Chairman should advise that they:

> (a)   speak for no more than four minutes,
> (b)   should only speak once unless the Chairman agrees otherwise.

The Chairman should resume the Meeting as soon as possible, with the agreement of the other Members present. Adjournments do not form part of the Meeting.

Rights to Speak - Members

A Member of the constituent Councils who is not a Member of the Authority may attend Meetings of the Authority or its Committees to make a statement on behalf of the Member's constituents in the case of any item under discussion which directly affects the Member's division, with the prior consent of the Chairman of the Meeting which will not be unreasonably withheld. The Member's statement will not last longer than four minutes. Such attendance will be facilitated if requests are made to enquiries@bucksfire.gov.uk at least two clear working days before the meeting. Statements can be read out on behalf of the Member by the Director of Legal and Governance, or the Member may request a 'team's meeting invitation to join the meeting at the specified agenda item.

Petitions

Any Member of the constituent Councils, a District Council, or Parish Council, falling within the Fire Authority area may Petition the Fire Authority.

The substance of a petition presented at a Meeting of the Authority shall be summarised, in not more than four minutes, by the Member of the Council who presents it (as above). If the petition does not refer to a matter before the Authority, it shall be referred without debate to the appropriate Committee.

Questions

Members of the Authority, or its constituent councils, District, or Parish Councils may submit written questions prior to the Meeting to allow their full and proper consideration. Such questions shall be received by the Monitoring Officer to the Authority, *in writing,* at least two clear working days before the day of the Meeting of the Authority or the Committee.

COMBINED FIRE AUTHORITY - TERMS OF REFERENCE

1.   To appoint the Authority's Standing Committees and Lead Members.

2.   To determine the following issues after considering recommendations from the Executive Committee, or in the case of 2(a) below, only, after considering recommendations from the Overview and Audit Committee:

(a) variations to Standing Orders and Financial Regulations;

(b) the medium-term financial plans including:

    (i)   the Revenue Budget;

    (ii)   the Capital Programme;

    (iii)   the level of borrowing under the Local Government Act 2003 in accordance with the Prudential Code produced by the Chartered Institute of Public Finance and Accountancy; and

(c) a Precept and all decisions legally required to set a balanced budget each financial year;

(d) the Prudential Indicators in accordance with the Prudential Code;

(e) the Treasury Strategy;

(f) the Scheme of Members' Allowances;

(g) the Integrated Risk Management Plan and Action Plan;

(h) the Annual Report.

(i) the Capital Strategy

3.   To determine the Code of Conduct for Members on recommendation from the Overview and Audit Committee.

4.   To determine all other matters reserved by law or otherwise, whether delegated to a committee or not.

5.   To determine the terms of appointment or dismissal of the Chief Fire Officer and Chief Executive, and deputy to the Chief Fire Officer and Chief Executive, or equivalent.

6.   To approve the Authority's statutory pay policy statement.

AGENDA

Item No:

1. **Apologies**

2. **Minutes**

   To approve, and sign as a correct record the Minutes of the meeting of the Fire Authority held on 9 October 2024 (item 2) **(Pages 7 - 18)**

3. **Matters Arising from the Previous Meetings**

   The Chairman to invite officers to provide verbal updates on any actions noted in the Minutes from the previous meeting.

4. **Disclosure of Interests**

   Members to declare any disclosable pecuniary interests they may have in any matter being considered which are not entered onto the Authority's Register, and officers to disclose any interests they may have in any contract to be considered.

5. **Chairman's Announcements**

   To receive the Chairman's announcements (if any).

6. **Petitions**

   To receive petitions under Standing Order SOA6.

7. **Questions**

   To receive questions in accordance with Standing Order SOA7.

8. **Extend the period of the BFRS Automatic Fire Alarm pilot**

   To consider item 8 **(Pages 19 - 22)**

9. **People Strategy 2020-2025 - Year four update**

   To consider item 9 **(Pages 23 - 62)**

10. **Health, Safety and Wellbeing Annual Report 2023-24**

    To consider item 10 **(Pages 63 - 86)**

11. **His Majesty's Inspectorate of Constabulary and Fire and Rescue Services (HMICFRS) - Buckinghamshire Fire and Rescue Service (BFRS) 2023-2025 Update**

To consider item 11 **(Pages 87 - 102)**

12. **Member Update on the Fire Brigades Union Improvements Agenda 2024**

To consider item 12 **(Pages 103 - 130)**

13. **Community Risk Management Plan 2025-2030**

To consider item 13 **(Pages 131 - 258)**

14. **Exclusion of Press and Public**

To consider excluding the public and press representatives from the meeting by virtue of Paragraph 1 of Part 1 of Schedule 12A of the Local Government Act 1972, as the presentation and minutes contain information relating to any individual; and Paragraph 3 of Part 1 of Schedule 12A of the Local Government Act 1972, as the presentation and minutes contain information relating to the financial or business affairs of a person (including the Authority); and on these grounds it is considered the need to keep information exempt outweighs the public interest in disclosing the information.

15. **Exempt Minutes**

To approve, and sign as a correct record the Exempt Minutes of the meeting of the Fire Authority held on 9 October 2024 (item 15)

16. **Potential Investment in a Local Training Venue**

To receive a presentation.

17. **Date of Next Meeting**

To note that the next meeting of the Fire Authority will be held on Wednesday 12 February 2025 at 11 am at Milton Keynes City Council Chamber, 1 Saxon Gate East, Central Milton Keynes, MK9 3EJ

If you have any enquiries about this agenda please contact: Katie Nellist (Democratic Services Officer) – Tel: (01296) 744633 email: knellist@bucksfire.gov.uk

BUCKINGHAMSHIRE AND MILTON KEYNES FIRE AUTHORITY

ROLE DESCRIPTION

LEAD MEMBERS

1. To take a lead role in providing support and constructive challenge to senior officers in the development of strategies and plans and contributing towards the strategic direction of the Authority, within the Authority's overall policy objectives.

2. To act as a 'sounding board' for senior officers on issues within the portfolio, and be supportive in dealing with any problems at a strategic level.

3. To review, in conjunction with senior officers, the service within the portfolio.

4. To keep abreast of related developments and policies at national, regional and local level.

5. To take the lead in reporting to the Authority, one of its committees, or panels on issues within the portfolio.

6. To attend the Overview and Audit Committee, at its request, in connection with any issues associated with the portfolio which is the subject of scrutiny.

7. To act as a spokesperson for the Authority on issues within the portfolio.

8. To represent the Authority on bodies, at events and at conferences related to the portfolio, as appointed by the Executive Committee and to feedback to the Authority any issues of relevance / importance.

(Approved 8 June 2007)

Buckinghamshire & Milton Keynes Fire Authority

MINUTES OF THE MEETING OF THE BUCKINGHAMSHIRE AND MILTON KEYNES FIRE AUTHORITY HELD ON WEDNESDAY 9 OCTOBER 2024 AT 11 AM.

Present: Councillors Adoh, Bagge, Bailey, Carroll, Chapple OBE, Hussain OBE (part), Lambert, McLean (Vice Chairman), Rouse (Chairman), Stuchbury, Sullivan and Walsh

Officers: L Harrison (Chief Fire Officer), S Tuffley (Assistant Chief Fire Officer), G Britten (Director of Legal and Governance), A Carter (Head of Technology, Transformation and PMO), R Davidson (Director of Human Resources and Organisational Development), A Stunell (Head of Human Resources), D Buchanan (Head of Protection, Assurance and Development), P Scanes (Head of Prevention and CRMP), C Newman (Data Intelligence Team Manager), and K Nellist (Democratic Services Officer)

Online: M Hemming (Director of Finance and Assets), A Hussain (Deputy Director of Finance and Assets),

Apologies: Councillors Banks, Exon, Hall, Khan and Lancaster

The Chairman advised that although members of the public were able to attend and observe in person, following the meeting, a video recording would be uploaded to the Authority's YouTube Channel.

https://www.youtube.com/channel/UCWmIXPWAscxpL3vliv7bh1Q

FA31   **(a) MINUTES**

RESOLVED –

That the Minutes of the meeting of the Fire Authority held on 12 June 2024, be approved, and signed by the Chairman as a correct record.

(b) MINUTES

RESOLVED –

That the Minutes of the Extraordinary meeting of the Fire Authority held on 11 September 2024, be approved, and signed by the Chairman as a correct record.

FA32   **MATTERS ARISING FROM THE PREVIOUS MEETINGS**

MINUTES – 12 JUNE 2024 - FA18 – SAFETY CENTRE IMPACT REPORT – The chairman asked for a visit to the Safety Centre be arranged for Members – This had been arranged for Thursday 21 November at 2pm and Members had been invited.

FA19 – PERFORMANCE MANAGEMENT – Q4 2023/24 – The Assistant Chief Fire Officer advised that this work had not yet been addressed but tolerance levels would be looked at and brought back to a future meeting.

The Chairman confirmed that officers were working through the FBU's Manifesto. The FBU representative would be invited to the December Fire Authority meeting and the progress the Service had made would be discussed.

MINUTES – 11 SEPTEMBER 2024 - FA27 - HIS MAJESTY'S INSPECTORATE OF CONSTABULARY AND FIRE AND RESCUE SERVICES (HMICFRS) – VALUES AND CULTURE UPDATE - The Head of Human Resources advised Members that a positive action plan was carried out for the last cohort of apprentices, details of which were presented to the last Authority meeting but would be shared again with the Member – this has been shared with the Member.

FA28 - HIS MAJESTY'S INSPECTORATE OF CONSTABULARY AND FIRE AND RESCUE SERVICES (HMICFRS) – STANDARDS OF BEHAVIOUR - The Vice Chairman asked about number 13b (by 1 February 2025, fire and rescue authorities and chief fire officers should make sure all service managers and members of fire and rescue authorities who hear appeals receive appropriate training) and what type of training would be available to Members - The Head of Human Resources advised that if procedures are introduced that require Members involvement in appeals, training would be provided.

FA33 DISCLOSURES OF INTERESTS

None.

FA34 CHAIRMAN'S ANNOUNCEMENTS

The Chairman announced that the Authority welcomes Councillor James Lancaster onto the Authority who has been appointed by Milton Keynes City Council to replace Councillor Hannah O'Neill who has stepped down from her position on the Authority.

On 23 September 2024 Ronnie Davidson joined the Strategic Management Board as the Director of Human Resources and Organisational Development. Ronnie comes with a wealth of public sector experience and is looking forward to working closely with staff across the Service, along with meeting Members and stakeholders.

The Service has achieved the Gold Standard in the Employers Network for Equality and Inclusion, Talent Inclusion and Diversity Evaluation ENEI TIDE awards. Every year stakeholders from across the Service complete an EDI benchmarking survey and submit evidence to support it. Year on year we have improved; last year we achieved Silver and the three years before that Bronze.

The Service has been ranked 56th in the Top 100 Apprenticeship Employers, the highest position among Fire and Rescue Services in the country. The rankings highlight England's top apprenticeship employers, recognising their dedication to creating opportunities, promoting diversity, and ensuring apprentice success. Our apprenticeships are crucial to our Service as they enable us to build a skilled, diverse workforce that is integral to maintaining the high standards of safety and response our communities rely on. Appearing in the Top 100 Apprenticeship Employers is a significant accolade for us, as it helps future apprentices identify opportunities with leading organisations.

On 3 September the Chief Fire Officer and I were written to by the Rt Hon Dame Diane Johnson DBE MP following the publication of His Majesty's Inspectorate of Constabulary and Fire & Rescue Services report on their Thematic Inspection into the handling of misconduct. The letter reinforces the need for Chiefs and Chairs of all Fire and Rescue Authorities to use their respective leadership roles to drive change to ensure that all staff can operate in a safe and secure environment. A copy of the letter is attached.

The Chief Fire Officer advised Members that the Service supported what the Prime Minister was looking to achieve, and senior leaders of the organisation would be driving standards of professional behaviour. The organisation took a zero-tolerance approach to bullying and misogyny, and that tolerance would definitely impact the culture that was being driven in Buckinghamshire.

The Long Service Awards Ceremony was held on Thursday 3 October at The Gateway in Aylesbury. The event was well

attended with family, friends, the Chairman, Vice Chairman, Chief Fire Officer and members of the senior leadership team along with senior officers, all celebrating the achievements of those receiving their Long Service and Good Conduct medals and Long Service Certificates. The Awards were presented by Countess Howe, His Majesty's Lord Lieutenant of Buckinghamshire, who gave a moving speech highlighting some of the achievements of the Service.

(Councillor Hussain OBE joined the meeting)

FA35   **LATE URGENT ITEM – NEW MEMBER OF THE AUTHORITY**

By reason of being notified on the 30 September 2024 of the appointment by Milton Keynes City Council of Councillor James Lancaster to the Authority, the Authority confirms the appointment of Councillor Lancaster onto the Executive Committee in accordance with his Group Leader's wishes.

FA36   **RECOMMENDATIONS FROM COMMITTEES**

EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE – 11 SEPTEMBER 2024

PERFORMANCE MANAGEMENT – Q1 2024/25

The Data Intelligence Team Manager advised Members that this report was for quarter one 2024/25 (April – June). The report had changed, there was now more commentary to support some of the information in the report, and also provided, were three additional highlighted measures.

The first highlighted measure was the availability of On-Call, this was for newer Members and gave a bit more information as to why the figures looked the way they did, and a look forward as to how they would be addressed.

The second highlighted measure was regarding appraisal completion, highlighting how important they were to the Service, it was a way of thanking staff, but also developing them.

The third highlighted measure was bank shift costs. The establishment numbers were in a good position now, and this had a positive impact on reducing the bank shift costs. In the first quarter alone, the Service was £100k below the same period last year.

A Member asked how the Service would address On-call in 2025/26.

The Assistant Chief Fire Officer advised Members that On-Call would be a big focus in the coming months. In the draft Community Risk Management Plan (CRMP) On-Call was something that would be looked at over the next five years. Officers wanted to bring the focus back into the Service after focusing over the last eighteen months on wholetime recruitment and workforce planning which was now in a good place.

The Authority had supported the transformation funding to improve the access to training courses, which would be used to boost recruitment for On-Call firefighters. A lot of work had been done on social media in targeting and 'have a go' days.

A Member asked if the appraisal completion improved in the next quarter.

The Data Intelligence Team Manager advised that the Service achieved 95% on both objectives and end of year appraisals by the end of Quarter two which was incredible. This had been a main focus which had worked well.

A Member asked about 'non-domestic property fire accidental' in June the figure was red. As the Service no longer responded to automatic fire alarms (AFAs) without charge, was there a correlation between those two things.

The Data Intelligence Team Manager advised that it was hard to get the target tolerances correct as they were very small numbers. The AFA pilot did not start until 8 July, so would not have affected the figures in the first quarter. The AFA pilot was going well, and of all the calls challenged, only one turned out to be a real incident.

A Member asked about fire safety audits as it was still red through the first quarter.

The Head of Protection, Assurance and Development advised that he had introduced the target in light of feedback from HMICFRS, and there not being a reliable risk-based inspection programme in place. A year on, the risk-based inspection target had been met for the very high risk and managing the demand led activity in terms of post fire inspection and complaints, and the number of audits undertaken in the last twelve months had doubled compared to the previous twelve months.

The Chairman asked about the high-risk site information, which was an area the Service had been criticised for in the

HMICFRS report, as it was showing a deterioration on level 4 and also was the level 3 target sufficiently stretching.

The Data Intelligence Team Manager advised that for a level 4 high risk site, the Service would visit on an annual basis to familiarise itself with the risk. This relied on crews being available, and not being called out and the buildings staff being able to accommodate the crew as well. Sometimes the delays were not due to the Service, but not being able to get access to the site. It was a high priority, and dashboards were provided to each station so they knew what sites would be coming up. The Service was also moving to a new system, which was a lot more informed.

The Chairman asked about the internal audits measure which had only been green or blue twice in the last twelve months, was this in hand.

The Director of Finance and Assets advised that to give Members reassurance, it was measuring overdue actions as a percentage of total outstanding actions. In terms of total audit actions, it had come down, but as a percentage it was still relatively high for the ones that were overdue. There might be a new audit report come in with a number of actions on it which would make the figure go back up. These were scrutinised and closed off at every Overview and Audit Committee meeting.

The Chairman asked when Members would be able to see the 2023/24 Carbon Emission figures to measure the current ones against.

The Director of Finance and Assets advised that there had been some issues in getting figures out of the energy company and officers continued to chase them. On a positive note, smart meters had been installed at all sites.

The Chairman asked if it would be possible, where there were measures that were of concern or a highlighted measure, was there a way of bringing a rolling month update, so that Members could understand whether the trend was continuing?

The Data Intelligence Manager advised that he would look into it.

RESOLVED -

That the Performance Management – Q1 2024/25 be noted.

FA37 **GRENFELL TOWER INQUIRY – PHASE ONE AND PHASE TWO RECOMMENDATIONS**

The Head of Protection, Assurance and Development advised that the Service had invested a significant amount of time and resource to ensure the necessary improvements across 34 recommendations that were reportable to the National Fire Chiefs Council (NFCC) from the Phase one inquiry had been managed. From a protection perspective, the Service had responded to its legislative requirements and officers continued to monitor and regulate high rise buildings as appropriate.

In terms of Phase two, the current understanding of the recommendations was that most of them were directed towards fire and rescue services and were almost confirmation of Phase one actions. They were, for example, asking HMICFRS to look at London Fire Brigade's (LFB) response to Phase one and if LFB had implemented the things that were required of them at that stage.

There were some other recommendations that were new for consideration. Officers were starting to put some internal governance around the Phase two recommendations and were also awaiting further understanding from the NFCC in terms of reporting requirements nationally.

The Head of Protection, Assurance and Development assured Members that across its service delivery of prevention, protection and response, the Service was doing everything in its gift and responsibility to make buildings safe, and if they do have fires, staff were operationally prepared, and operational competent as best they could be to deal with them.

A Member asked that his thanks be put on record to everyone from Buckinghamshire Fire and Rescue Service in getting the Authority to the position it was in now.

A Member felt that one of the extraordinary things was the provision of water and how London Fire Brigade understood where and what hydrants it had. Where was this Service in determining whether it knew where all its hydrants were for the provision of water.

The Head of Protection, Assurance and Development advised that the Service had already looked at water provision, and the understanding was that there were

some training gaps at that time in London Fire Brigade that do not exist in this Service. Adequate training was provided for new starters around water provision and there were also online training packages available for staff that should be renewed when appropriate. The SSRI information that the Service holds on its high-rise premises, maps out exactly where the hydrants were, and indeed also the dry risers should they be needed.

A Member asked about airwave, fire ground radios and communication in high-rise buildings.

The Head of Protection, Assurance and Development advised that communications was one of the complexities around high-rise buildings as found with Grenfell. Airwave and fire ground radios, both had slightly different challenges in high rise buildings. Airwave was the multi agency interaction with Fire Control. Fire ground radios were for commanders and teams on scene. Fire ground radios had been procured in collaboration with Royal Berkshire Fire and Rescue Service, Oxfordshire Fire and Rescue Service may join in that procurement exercise at a later date. They had functionality to be either analogue or digital which certainly the science and the evidence at the moment suggests that digital had a greater chance of being successful in those environments.

The Head of Technology, Transformation and PMO advised Members that whilst the emergency services network programme was in a state of hiatus at present, the Service still had close links with the programme team and coverage was one of the most important pieces being looked at. The National programme team were testing various scenarios.

A Member asked about learning and how to implement that learning at the Fire Service College.

The Head of Protection, Assurance and Development advised there was a clear link between operational preparedness, competence and operational learning. Gap analysis had been undertaken against all fire standards that oversee those three response areas and were comfortable where we were as a Service. At lot of work had been undertaken around the Operational Assurance Improvement Plan, and also just launched internally was a consultation on a revised operational learning framework aligned to the fire standard.

A Member asked about risk assessment and who would be informing the residents who live in these buildings, was it something readily done, planned for, how was it done.

The Head of Protection, Assurance and Development advised that hopefully the report gave an indication of some of the prevention work that was being done and continued to be done around this. There was a lot of work done initially after the incident to visit high rise residential properties and offer support to residents and home fire safety checks to residents. Members could also help by signposting people to information on the Service's website about lots of prevention areas and of course, some dedicated to living in high rise properties.

The Chairman noted the Service was supporting a colleague in getting a fire engineering degree but was it a one-person capability at present. Was there a plan of how this would be made an embedded capability with the Service, i.e. more people doing it.

The Head of Protection, Assurance and Development advised that for the size of this Service, it was important to balance demand versus capability. It was a four year commitment for the officer that was currently undertaking it. It was something to look at from a Thames Valley perspective, as there was not the capability in the other two services.

The Chairman advised was there a growing risk with all these Inquiries and recommendations (Grenfell, Manchester Arena), that lead to check lists and requirements of things the Service had to do, could the Service end up in a form of institutional complacency, that if the checklist had been done, the Service had done what was expected of it. What do officers think that the Authority and the Service should be doing to make sure that as well as working through these inquiries and actions, it also creates the space to step back and challenge itself around what else does the Service need to be worrying about, what was on the risk horizon that had not been seen yet, rather than check list complacency.

The Assistant Chief Fire Officer advised that there had been a lot of action plans that had come through over recent years, and there was a tendency to work through these action plans and there was a vulnerability there. The day after the Grenfell fire, officers were already thinking, what

does this mean for the Service, getting to know those risks really forensically and upping the risk in terms of anything over six storeys, looking at equipment, policies and procedures and how staff were trained, how it was assured and how to exercise it. There was a year of thematic exercising, working in high rises. It's about the organisation and the Authority giving staff the confidence to make those decisions.

The Chief Fire Officer advised Members that exercising was a key part of making sure the Service was operationally confident and competent and going forward the ethos was the Service could never be complacent about it, there has got to be a continual learning cycle.

RESOLVED -

That the report be noted.

FA38   EXCLUSION OF PRESS AND PUBLIC

That the public and press representatives be excluded from the meeting by virtue of Paragraph 1 of Part 1 of Schedule 12A of the Local Government Act 1972, as the report and minutes contain information relating to any individual; and Paragraph 3 of Part 1 of Schedule 12A of the Local Government Act 1972, as the report and minutes contain information relating to the financial or business affairs of a person (including the Authority); and on these grounds it is considered the need to keep information exempt outweighs the public interest in disclosing the information.

FA39   EXEMPT MINUTES

RESOLVED –

That the Exempt Minutes of the meeting of the Fire Authority held on 12 June 2024, be approved, and signed by the Chairman as a correct record.

FA40   INDUSTRIAL ACTION PLANNING UPDATE

The Authority considered the briefing, details of which were noted in the exempt minutes.

FA41   DEPUTY CHIEF OFFICER APPOINTMENT

The Authority considered the report, and approved the recommendations, details of which were noted in the exempt minutes.

RESOLVED –

That the Authority approve the appointment of Simon Tuffley, to the role of Deputy Chief Fire Officer commencing on 1 November 2024 on the salary package detailed.

FA42 **INTERIM SENIOR MANAGEMENT TEAM (SMT) ARRANGEMENTS**

The Authority considered the report, and approved the recommendations, details of which were noted in the exempt minutes.

FA43 **DATE OF NEXT MEETING**

To note that the next meeting of the Fire Authority will be held on Wednesday 11 December 2024 at 11 am at Milton Keynes City Council, 1 Saxon Gate East, Central Milton Keynes. MK9 3EJ

THE CHAIRMAN CLOSED THE MEETING AT 12.20 PM

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Buckinghamshire & Milton Keynes Fire Authority

Meeting and date: Fire Authority, 11 December 2024

Report title: Extend the period of the BFRS Automatic Fire Alarm pilot

Lead Member: Councillor Simon Rouse

Report sponsor: Deputy Chief Fire Officer Simon Tuffley

Author and contact: Group Commander Stuart Grosse sgrosse@bucksfire.gov.uk

Action: Decision

Recommendations:

That the Fire Authority approve an extension to the Automatic Fire Alarm (AFA) pilot, from 8 January 2025 until 12 February 2025.

Executive summary:

On 14 February 2024, the Fire Authority approved (see background papers) a mobilising policy review project and six-month pilot for amending Automatic Fire Alarm (AFA) mobilisations.

The pilot started on the 08 July 2024 and is currently planned to run until 08 January 2025.

Further to the pilot, a six-week public consultation on how Buckinghamshire Fire & Rescue Service (BFRS) responds to AFA's commenced on 21 October 2024 and is scheduled to end on 02 December 2024.

This report is to request that the pilot period is extended until 12 February 2025 so that BFRS does not need to revert to the previous AFA mobilising response (mobilise to all AFA's) prior to the results from the AFA public consultation being presented to the Fire Authority on the 12 Feb 2025.

With the extension of the pilot until the 12 February 2025, should the Fire Authority accept the results and recommendations of the AFA public consultation, the AFA pilot will move seamlessly into business as usual for AFA response.

Three months into the AFA mobilisation pilot, initial findings are positive. From June 2024 (last full month of mobilising to all AFA's) compared to August and September 2024, BFRS has seen a 47% drop in attendance at false alarms in non-domestic premises.

Financial implications:

It is anticipated that any direct costs associated with the project (and any extension) will be met by existing budgetary provision.

Any identified financial savings and other success criteria will be captured as part of the project evaluation.

Financial savings are unlikely to be significant and the main success criteria will instead be the extent to which staff time can be redirected to more productive activities.

Risk management:

By not extending the AFA mobilising pilot, BFRS would need to request that Thames Valley Fire Control Service (TVFCS) revert to mobilising BFRS appliances to all AFA calls until the results of the AFA consultation are known. This will increase the work burden of TVFCS as they will have to change the call handling procedure back to how it was previously managed. Then, subject to approval, change back to the current pilot mobilising.

Royal Berkshire Fire and Rescue Service (RBFRS) and Oxfordshire Fire and Rescue Service (OFRS) have now permanently changed their AFA response to the BFRS pilot model, to revert will move BFRS away from alignment.

Legal implications:

As part of the extension to the AFA pilot, legal implications were considered but no additional legal implications were identified.

Privacy and security implications:

There are no additional privacy or security implications to the extension of this pilot period.

Duty to collaborate:

By extending the mobilisation pilot, BFRS will continue to align its mobilisation pilot with RBFRS and OFRS, with the aim that at the end of the extended pilot, and subject to approval, all three services will be permanently aligned.

Health and safety implications:

There are no additional Health and Safety implications for extending this pilot period.

Environmental implications:

The anticipated environmental benefit from attending fewer incidents is a reduction in fuel emissions and reduced wear and tear on vehicles.

Equality, diversity, and inclusion implications:

The AFA pilot has an Equality Impact Assessment which has been reviewed as part of this extension with no changes required.

Consultation and communication:

Staff consultation regarding the pilot proposal was conducted through the Service's Joint Consultation Forum before going live. The extension for the AFA pilot will be communicated to all BFRS staff through BFRS intranet.

Public consultation on the proposed permanent changes commenced on 22 October 2024 and will run until 2 December 2024.
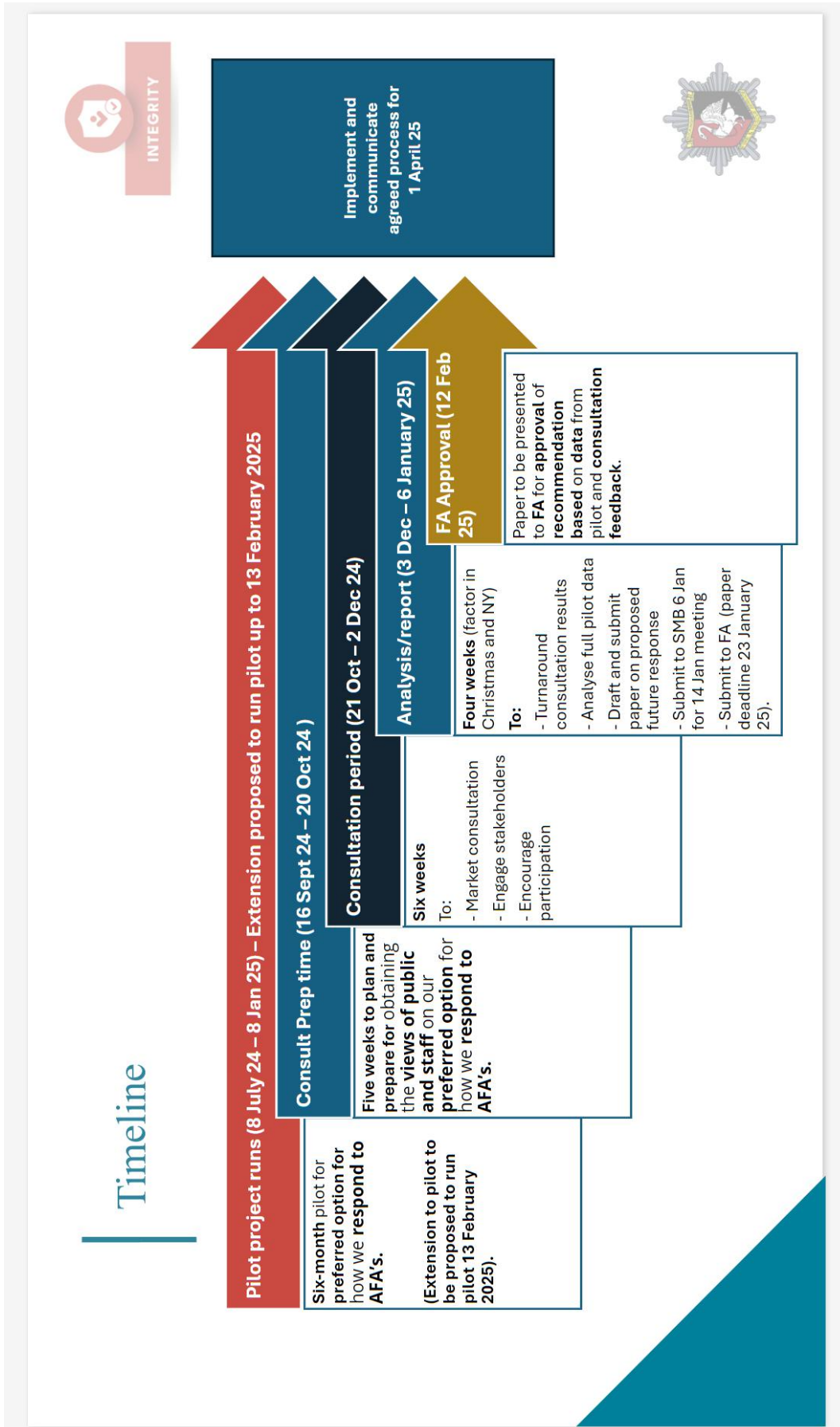
Background papers:

https://bucksfire.gov.uk/wp-content/uploads/2024/03/fire-authority-14-february-2024-item-12-afa-mobilising-policy-review-project-1.pdf

Appendix	Title	Protective Marking
1	Consultation Timeline	Not protectively marked

Appendix 1

Below is the timeline for the AFA consultation and results

Timeline

INTEGRITY

Pilot project runs (8 July 24 – 8 Jan 25) – Extension proposed to run pilot up to 13 February 2025

Six-month pilot for preferred option for how we **respond to AFA's.**

(Extension to pilot to be proposed to run pilot 13 February 2025).

Consult Prep time (16 Sept 24 – 20 Oct 24)

Five weeks to plan and prepare for obtaining the **views of public and staff** on our **preferred option** for how we **respond to AFA's.**

Consultation period (21 Oct – 2 Dec 24)

Six weeks

To:
- Market consultation
- Engage stakeholders
- Encourage participation

Analysis/report (3 Dec – 6 January 25)

Four weeks (factor in Christmas and NY)

To:
- Turnaround consultation results
- Analyse full pilot data
- Draft and submit paper on proposed future response
- Submit to SMB 6 Jan for 14 Jan meeting
- Submit to FA (paper deadline 23 January 25).

FA Approval (12 Feb 25)

Paper to be presented to **FA** for **approval** of **recommendation based** on **data** from pilot and **consultation feedback.**

Implement and communicate agreed process for 1 April 25

Buckinghamshire & Milton Keynes Fire Authority

Meeting and date: Fire Authority, 11 December 2024

Report title: People Strategy 2020-2025 – Year four update

Lead Member: Councillor Gary Hall, Lead Member for People, Equality and Diversity and Assurance

Report sponsor: Ronnie Davidson, Director of Human Resources and Organisational Development

Author and contact: Station Commander – Human Resources Projects – Oli Finch
Ofinch@bucksfire.gov.uk

Action: Noting

Recommendation: That the report be noted.

Executive summary:

The People Strategy 2020-2025 (referred to henceforth as the Strategy), was approved at the October 2020 Fire Authority. It sets out a framework for engaging and developing employees of Buckinghamshire Fire & Rescue Service (the Service). The Strategy supports cultural changes to help the Service better deliver its vision and strategic priorities, while ensuring our Promise, Values and Behaviours are adhered to.

The framework maintains the existing five key areas; however, they were reworded to better reflect our values.

- Key area one – Equality, Diversity, and Inclusion (EDI)
- Key area two – Employee Engagement
- Key area three – Organisational Development and Resourcing
- Key area four – Training, Learning and Development
- Key area five – Employee Health and Wellbeing

Updates for each key area are provided in the attached appendices.

The current Strategy can be found on the Service's external website.

There has been notable progress made in all key areas. Examples include:

- The launch of our new Promise, Values and Behaviours.
- People and Culture Officer now in place with a key focus on EDI training, staff networks, EDI on station

- Culture Board established
- 12-month Recruitment Plan

This update outlines the closure of our People Strategy 2020-2025 and its alignment with the new Community Risk Management Plan (CRMP) 2025-2030, which incorporates our updated People Strategy.

The new CRMP is designed to address emerging risks and enhance community resilience. Our updated People Strategy is integrated into this plan, ensuring that our workforce is equipped to meet future challenges.

Financial implications:

There are no direct financial implications arising from this report.

Cost and benefits implications for each initiative outlined in the Strategy will be considered as part of the supporting individual business cases if the requirement for further funding is identified. People Strategy updates will be delivered from existing budgets.

Risk management:

The Strategy complements our EDI objectives, which were reviewed and updated in 2023. Arrangements are in place to ensure language and content are inclusive and appropriate.

The successful implementation of the Strategy depends on buy-in and support of everyone concerned, therefore employee consultation and engagement will continue to enable its development.

Quality assurance arrangements are in place which ensure the Service can govern the content of the Strategy and how it is used, this will allow opportunities for further development through collaborative working.

Following the Independent Culture Review of London Fire Brigade Culture by Nazir Afzal OBE in November 2022 and subsequent news articles into allegations at South Wales and Dorset and Wiltshire Fire and Rescue Services, the service reviewed what was in place for employees and what actions needed to be taken.

A report was presented to September Extraordinary Fire Authority which showed our work to date and planned on the His Majesty's Inspectorate of Constabulary and Fire & Rescue Services (HMICFRS) published 'Values and culture in fire and rescue services.'

The risks identified in the Exploring our Culture, the HMICFRS Values and culture report and the actions associated with this has been added to the Human Resources Risk Register and the Corporate risk register.

Legal implications:

There are no legal implications arising from this update.

Privacy and security implications:

No personally identifiable information is contained within the Strategy. Data Protection Impact Assessments exist for each key area, these will be revised and updated where required.

Duty to collaborate:

The Policing and Crime Act 2017 requires the Service to consider opportunities for collaboration with the police and ambulance services.

Collaboration opportunities arising from the Strategy are identified and actioned proactively and as they present themselves. The Service continues to work closely with our Thames Valley partners in a range of areas and collaborate through the Five Shires collaboration partnership "Addressing Inequalities" collaboration (Buckinghamshire, Royal Berkshire, Gloucestershire, Warwickshire and Oxfordshire Fire and Rescue Services) which was originally set up in August 2020.

The Service continues to support the Armed Forces Covenant and promises to actively champion the Armed Forces community. It acknowledges that we recognise the value serving personnel, reservists, veterans, and military families can bring to our Service. The Service was presented the Gold Award in the Defence Employer Recognition Scheme in recognition of this partnership.

Health and safety implications:

There are no implications with regard to health and safety.

Environmental implications:

There are no environmental implications.

Equality, diversity, and inclusion implications:

The Service has a statutory obligation under equality legislation to eliminate unlawful discrimination. The Strategy, policies, and procedures aim to support the meeting of these requirements.

If the Service has greater representation of our diverse communities, it will be better equipped to find solutions to barriers in relation to employment and accessing services. This can be achieved through effective recruitment procedures and on-going employee engagement, enabling the Service to identify and address any actual or perceived barriers for employees from under-represented groups.

Diversity was one of our core values and a key area in the 2020 – 2025 People Strategy. Our new Promise, Values and Behaviours were introduced in April 2024. The dedicated Culture Board is fully embedded and meets quarterly to progress EDI objectives.

The Strategy aligns to and complements our EDI Policy and objectives.

Equality Impact Assessments are conducted in the five key areas to ensure equalities are fully considered. An Equality Impact Assessment was completed for this update.

Consultation and communication:

The author has collaborated and consulted with key stakeholders to ensure the information provided regarding the five key areas has the relevant detail and is representative of progress made over the previous twelve-month period.

This paper was presented 12 November 2024 Strategic Management Board and will be reviewed and considered for approval at the 11 December 2024 Fire Authority meeting.

Background papers:

Public Safety Plan 2020 - 2025
[New five-year Public Safety Plan launched - Buckinghamshire Fire & Rescue Service (bucksfire.gov.uk)](#)

Corporate Plan 2020 – 2025
[Corporate Plan](#)

Fire Authority report 14 October 2020. People Strategy 2020 – 2025.
[Fire Authority Meeting October 2020 People Strategy](#)

Fire Authority Update 15 February 2023 - Apprenticeship Programme Update
[Apprenticeship Update](#)

Fire Authority report 13 October 2021. People Strategy 2020 – 2025 – Year one update.
[Fire Authority Meeting - 13 October 2021 - Buckinghamshire Fire & Rescue Service (bucksfire.gov.uk)](#)

Fire Authority report 12 October 2022. People Strategy 2020 – 2025 – Year two update.
[Fire Authority Meeting 12 October 2022. People Strategy 2020-2025 - Year two update](#)

Fire Authority report 11 October 2023. People Strategy 2020 – 2025 – Year three update.
[Fire Authority Meeting - 11 October 2023. People Strategy 2020-2025 - Year three update](#)

Buckinghamshire Fire and Rescue Service HMICFRS report – Dec 2021
[BFRS HMICFRS 2021 Report (bucksfire.gov.uk)](#)

Funding Phase 2 Leadership & Management Development Programme – 23 March 2022

https://bucksfire.gov.uk/wp-content/uploads/2024/03/executive-committee-agenda-and-reports-230322.pdf

Equality, Diversity, and Inclusion Objectives 2020-2025 – Year two update – June 2022
https://bucksfire.gov.uk/wp-content/uploads/2024/03/executive-committee-agenda-and-reports-230322.pdf

Equality, Diversity, and Inclusion Objectives 2020-2025 – Year three update – June 2023
Fire Authority Meeting June 14. Equality, Diversity, and Inclusion Objectives 2020-2025 - year three update - June 2023

Appendix	Title	Protective Marking
1	Equality, Diversity, and Inclusion	
1a	Equality, Diversity and Inclusion data	
2	Employee Engagement	
3	Organisational Development and Resourcing	
4	Training, Learning and Development	
5	Employee Health and Wellbeing	

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<u>Appendix 1 – Equality, Diversity and Inclusion</u>

The Service is committed to equality, diversity, and inclusion (EDI). There are a range of workstreams across the Service to achieve the EDI objectives. Following a strategic review in early 2024 the EDI group rationalised some of the EDI objectives and aligned this with our HMICFRS action plan, to give the Service one document to continue this strong focused approach for its work towards EDI.

People and Culture Officer Appointed
The Service appointed a new People and Culture Officer to support the development of a positive and inclusive organisational culture. This role focuses on fostering effective partnerships both within the service and with external stakeholders. Through a proactive approach, the People and Culture Officer champions initiatives that empower staff, ensuring their voices are heard and valued. They collaborate closely with the senior management team to facilitate meaningful cultural change, addressing the needs of the workforce while aligning with the service's broader objectives. This position aims to build a more cohesive, engaged, and supportive work environment that reflects the Promise, Values and Behaviours of Buckinghamshire Fire & Rescue Service.

Culture Board
A Culture Board has been established which allows us to work with staff, staff networks and national networks to provide:
- Strategic Leadership: Providing vision and direction for embedding EDI into the core values and operations of the Service.
- Policy Oversight: Guiding the creation and execution of a comprehensive Equalities Action Plan to ensure that strategic priorities are met and continuously improved.
- Culture Development: Fostering a supportive environment through strategic initiatives and staff networks that drive systemic change and enhance our organisational culture.

EDI Station Visits
The People and Culture Officer and Station Commander - Human Resources Projects are working on a programme of visits throughout the Service to embed our new Promise, Values and Behaviours. This gives employees the opportunity to discuss any concerns they have around culture within the Service.

Promise Values and Behaviours
The Service launched its new Promise, Values and Behaviours, to ensure at the core of everything we do we are committed to providing an excellent, modern, and agile Fire & Rescue Service for our community and employees.

Staff Networks
Staff Networks are being rolled out with a focus on peer support, reviewing procedures and developing an inclusive environment. There are also dedicated Teams channels for members to discuss ideas in a safe environment.

The networks listed below:
- Race, Ethnicity, Religion and Belief Network
- Women's Network Launch on the 1 November at 10:30 – Bystander Intervention Training is being rolled out this month + White Ribbon
- Wellness, Accessibility, Neurodiversity and Disability Network
- Family, Parenthood and Carers Network
- LGBTQ+ & Gender Identity Network
- Men's Network

Positive Action Programme- Policy Statement
The Service ran a programme of Positive Action initiatives that have supported applicants during our operational recruitment and selection process, the success of this programme is demonstrated in the makeup of the successful candidates that started with the Service in September.

Equality Impact Assessments
The Service has invested in training additional employees through the NFCC, this allows for a robust monitoring procedure. EIA's form part of our governance process and procedural documents.

Training
An external EDI specialist reviewed our current EDI eLearning packages; they have been updated to reflect the recommendations. Bystander Intervention and Neurodiversity training has been agreed and will be delivered to all employees within the Service by March 2025.

EDI calendar
There is an established EDI calendar which enables the Service to share information about EDI dates and events via the "Valuing Our Diversity" section of the Intranet. They signpost employees to linked Service activities such as Islamic calendar events or Pride, providing employees with the opportunity to support the planning process and/or to attend and support. The EDI calendar is reviewed by the People and Culture Officer. This includes reviewing articles to identify good practice and areas where engagement has been most effective by reviewing interaction data.

Community engagement to increase the diversity of the Service
The Service delivers a range of positive action events to support recruitment and community engagement activities. There have been targeted On-Call familiarisation events, "have a go" days and public engagement sessions to promote both Wholetime and On-Call vacancies within the Service.

Careers events are supported by the Service's recruitment team; this is supplemented by other opportunities including stands at the Bucks. County Show, National Apprenticeship Show and Fire Station open days.

The Service's focus is to continue with the ongoing engagement within the South Asian community to advance the Services presence in the community and promoting careers opportunities in the Fire & Rescue Service. This has so far proved a significant success promoting community engagement, gathering data about what may affect someone's interest in applying to work for the Service. These activities, alongside local school visits and further follow up activities at local mosques, should help to further raise the profile within the community. A range of Asian Fire Service Association (AFSA) events are attended by employees and learning, and resources are shared with employees across the service.

The Service continues to support the LGBTQ+ community and attended the Milton Keynes Pride Festival in September 2024 with an estimated attendance of 20,000 people. Employees support and attend other Pride events in the region and the Service has invested in promotional materials to ensure the Services presence is visible whilst encouraging effective engagement at these events.

Employers Network for equality and inclusion (ENEI) Talent Inclusion and Diversity Evaluation (TIDE)

In 2024 we were awarded the Gold Standard by ENEI which highlights the excellent work carried out to develop us as an employer of choice. TIDE is ENEI's self-assessment, evaluation, and benchmarking tool, designed to help organisations assess and enhance their culture, focusing on progress and strategies in promoting diversity and inclusion.

Gender and Ethnicity Gap Reports
There continues to be progress made regarding addressing inequalities, the 2023 gender pay gap report presented to the Executive Committee in March 2024 was approved for publication. Data was appropriately published by the annual deadline date of 30 March. This was the seventh year of undertaking gender pay gap reporting. For the Service in 2023 this has decreased by 1.57 percentage points to 11.8 per cent (13.4 per cent in 2022), and 7.56 percentage points from the first year of reporting (19.4 per cent in 2017). This is positive and takes the Service 2.5 percentage points below the UK average gender pay gap of 14.3 per cent for 2023.

White Ribbon
We have spent the last six months working on our White Ribbon (WR) three-year action plan and recently received notification that this has been approved by White Ribbon UK. They have provided feedback, and we will be incorporating this into our plans.

Following the very successful series of events that took place on White Ribbon Day, and the subsequent 16 days of action last year, we have been planning our events again for 2025. This year's campaign will focus on the role of allyship and how men and boys can speak up in support of women and girls. The events planned include attendance at a partnership event at MK Council and at the WR Vigil organised by the Parks Trust in Milton Keynes. We will be repeating our attendance at the Beaconsfield Services on the

M40 where we will take the WR stand and engage with members of the public and the Wycombe Women's Aid drop in event at High Wycombe fire station. Our main event will be a BFRS attendance at an Aylesbury United home match, where we will be taking the WR stand and engaging with supporters along with an appliance from Chesham. The teams will wear the White Ribbon armbands provided by the Service, and we will have a page in their virtual programme. The details of this event have been shared with the WR organisation for further publicity.

Armed Forces Covenant
Our Service proudly holds the Defence Employer Recognition Gold Award, a distinction we have maintained for the past two years. The Defence Employer Recognition Scheme promotes employer support for the armed forces and encourages others to follow suit. This scheme offers bronze, silver, and gold awards to organisations that pledge, demonstrate, or advocate for support of the armed forces community, aligning their values with the Armed Forces Covenant.

We remain committed to upholding our pledge under the Armed Forces Covenant by recognising and valuing our serving personnel, reservists, veterans, military families, and Cadet Force Adult Volunteers. Our dedication to developing and implementing "forces-friendly" initiatives includes the employment of veterans, assistance for individuals transitioning from military service to civilian careers and providing flexibility for reservists and Cadet Force Adult Volunteers through time off for training essential to their roles.

For the past three years, our Service has operated monthly veteran walk-in centres located at West Ashland, Aylesbury and Marlow Fire Stations. These centres are supported by partners including Milton Keynes University Hospital, Op Courage, the Royal British Legion, SSAFA, and numerous other veteran charities and services.

The Service have supported three cadet training programs based in Aylesbury, High Wycombe, and West Ashland. These programs rely on the dedication of our Armed Forces Champions, who volunteer their time to ensure each cadet receives training and experiences that are transferable into their future careers. The feedback received from parents and Cadets has been amazing and provides those firefighters that have volunteered their time all the reward and recognition that they require.

EDI data
Collection of EDI data, the collection of equality data from the workforce is essential to help identify where to focus the Services resources. It allows the Service to assess the value of diversity strategies, measuring progress and maintaining transparency. A review was undertaken, benchmarking against other organisations and best practice; the data fields were consulted on, amendments made and agreed. The data is used to ensure a diverse and fair Service, to understand employees better. There has been an increase (10%) our employees sharing there EDI data following engagement.

Facilitates and Welfare work

The following have been addressed after being raised at the Culture Board:

- £25k per annum has been made available in the Property capital budget to support identified EDI related adjustments.
- Newport Pagnell, Gerrards Cross and Buckingham have been identified for the use of the EDI budget for adjustments to be used on to assist in the creation of individual resting room, expanding the locker room, changing facilities and increased signage.
- Welfare cages on Operational Support Units, to provide welfare provisions for protracted incidents.

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Buckinghamshire Fire & Rescue Service
Equality, Diversity & Inclusion Workforce Data

Buckinghamshire Fire & Rescue Service (BFRS) Workforce data

The data provided in this report is set at 31 March 2024.

The majority of BFRS employee figures within this document count employees once only based on their primary role in the organisation. This, however, does not account for our entire On-Call population as Wholetime and Support employees may have secondary employment in On-Call roles at BFRS. To reflect the diversity of On-Call as an entire group, the On-Call figures include *all* employees with On-Call roles counted once only. Please note employees with more than one role, e.g., Wholetime with an On-Call role, will be included in more than one group.

BFRS does not hold enough available information to report on all the protected characteristics within BFRS (specifically religion, sexual orientation, and disability). Therefore, these have not been included in this report.

Nomis population data

Population information is extracted from a range of data available on the Nomis website, based on the 2021 Census to provide the make up of our local communities (Milton Keynes and Buckinghamshire) which is used to compare with BFRS diversity.

Please note that for the purpose of this report, figures have been rounded to one decimal place which may affect some of the totals shown.

1. BFRS vs. Public (working population)

The following charts examine how well diversity within BFRS reflects that of our local communities (Milton Keynes and Buckinghamshire) according to the 2021 Census.

1.1 Ethnicity

The following chart depicts the ethnic breakdown of employees as a percentage of all staff. It compares BFRS against the working age population (Age 16 to 74).

Please note percentages in the below chart are calculated on the number of employees at BFRS for whom we hold data. 10.8 per cent of employees have not declared their ethnicity ("Not stated" or "Prefer not to say") and are excluded from these figures, as there are no equivalents within the comparison data.
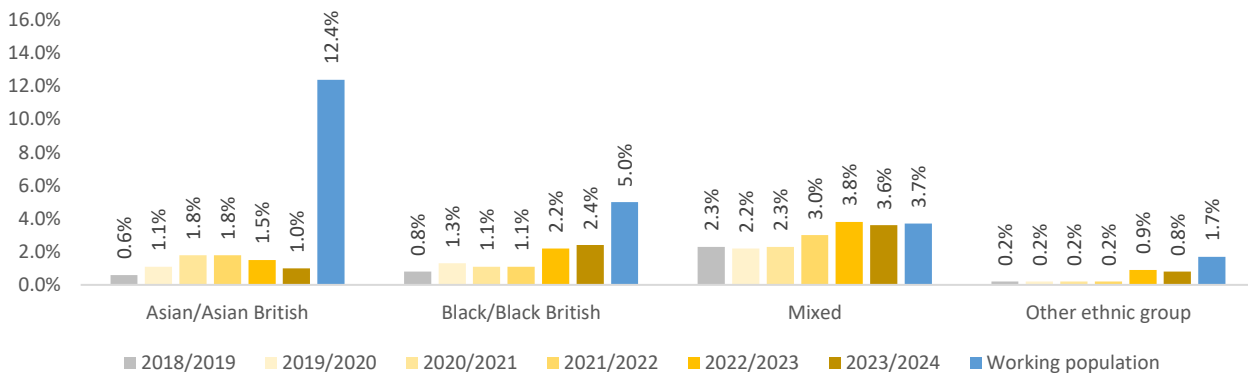

**The "Wholetime" group in this report includes all ranks across BFRS, Apprentice firefighters, flexi firefighters, day-crewed firefighters and secondees.
Data Source: HR & Payroll system for BFRS employee data; Nomis population data taken from the 2021 Census.
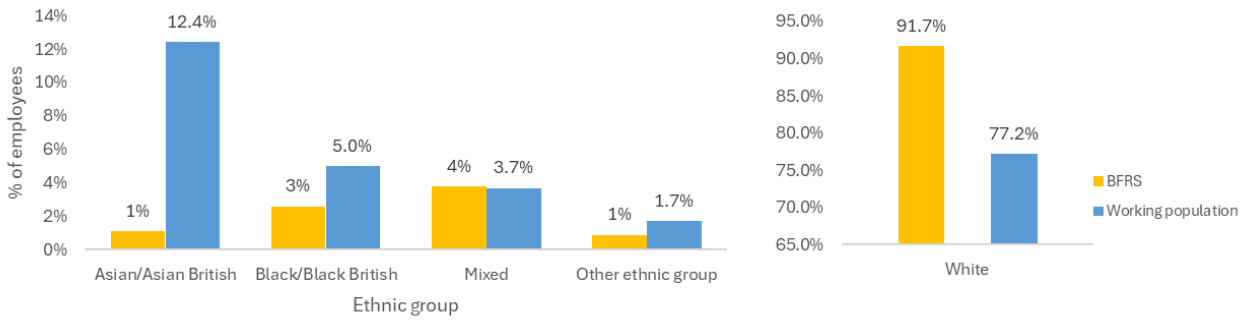
The largest minority ethnic origin group in the working population is Asian or Asian British. At BFRS, mixed ethnic origin employees form the largest group after white, with the percentage closely matching that of the working population.
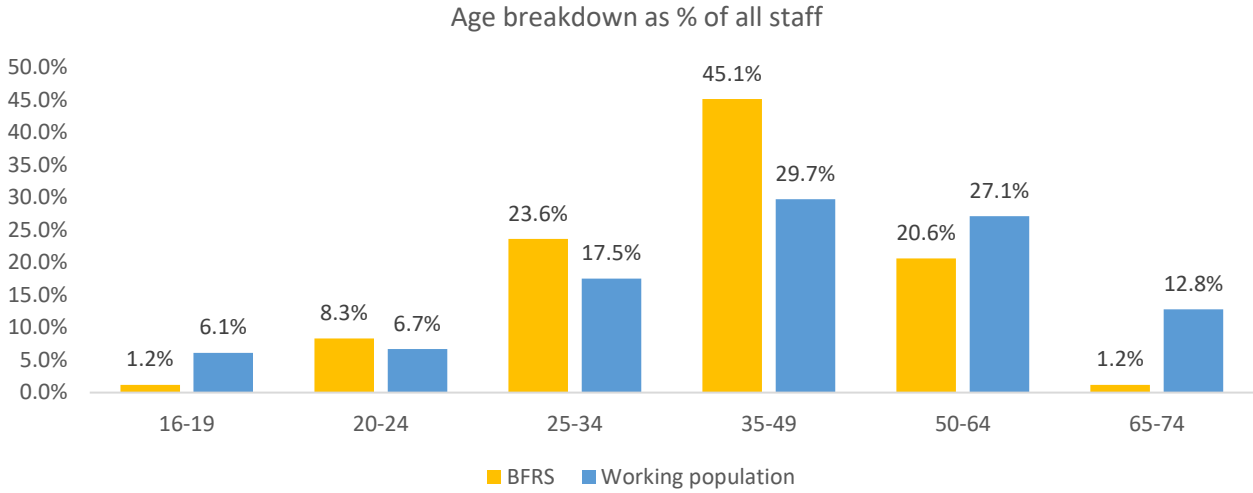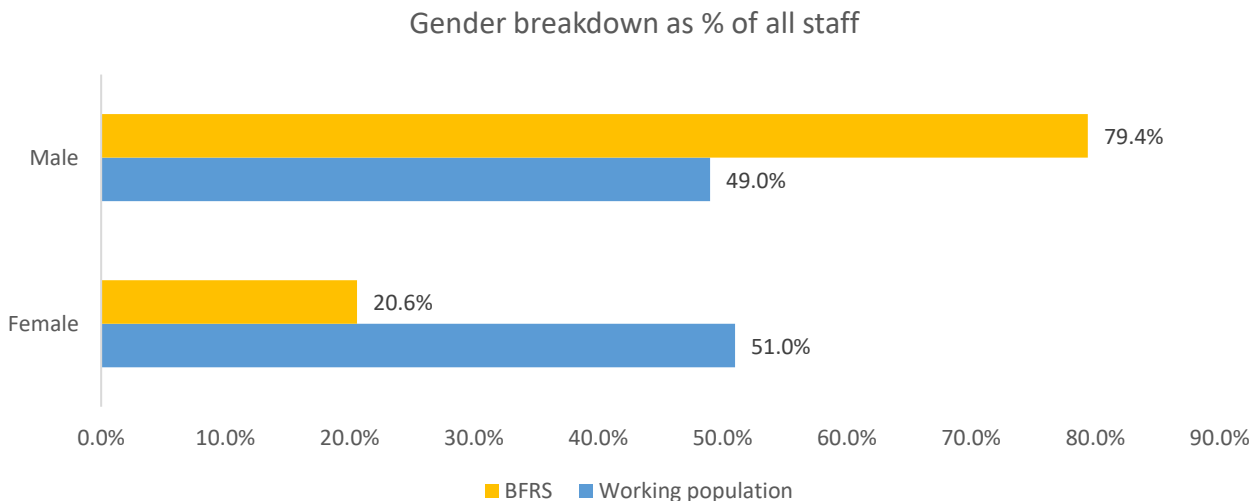

Ethnicity breakdown as % of all staff vs. working population

**The "Wholetime" group in this report includes all ranks across BFRS, Apprentice firefighters, flexi firefighters, day-crewed firefighters and secondees.

Data Source: HR & Payroll system for BFRS employee data; Nomis population data taken from the 2021 Census.

1.2 Age

The largest proportion of staff at BFRS falls within the 35-49 age bracket. This is also the highest age range of the working population of Buckinghamshire and Milton Keynes.

Age breakdown as % of all staff

1.3 Gender

At BFRS, the number of male employees outweighs that of female employees, with the current male population making up just under 80 per cent of the organisation. In contrast, although quite evenly split, fractionally more females make up the working population (51 per cent).

Gender breakdown as % of all staff

**The "Wholetime" group in this report includes all ranks across BFRS, Apprentice firefighters, flexi firefighters, day-crewed firefighters and secondees.
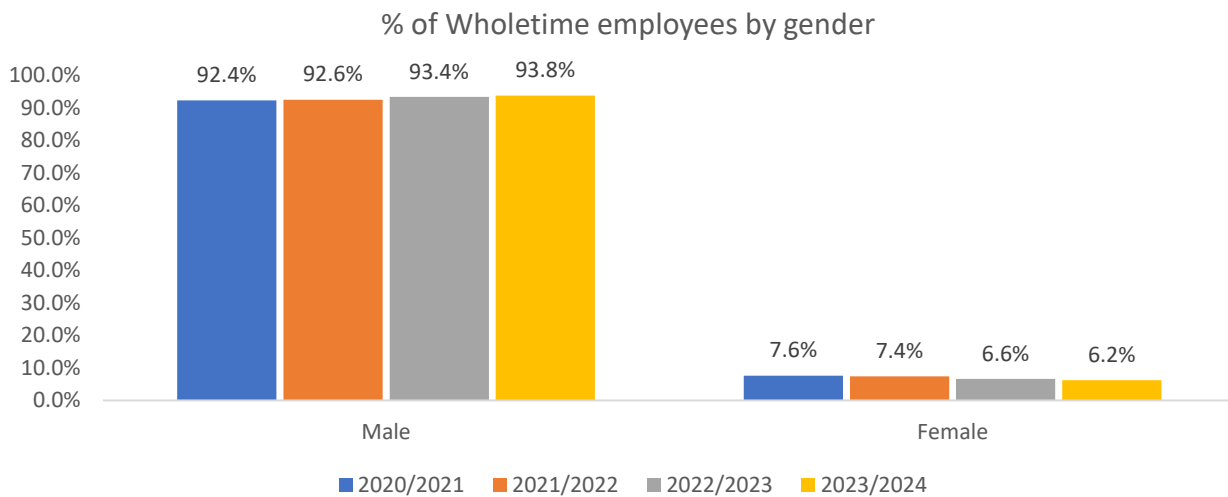Data Source: HR & Payroll system for BFRS employee data; Nomis population data taken from the 2021 Census.

2. Diversity of BFRS workforce

The remaining charts in this report focus entirely on the diversity of BFRS employees within each of the core employee groups: - Wholetime (including Apprentices), On-Call (all employees with On-Call roles) and Support services staff.

Employees with more than one role have been counted once within each of the relevant groups. For instance, a Wholetime employee with an additional On-Call role is counted in both the Wholetime and On-Call groups.

Age ranges in this section is based on those used in the Home Office operational statistics returns, and differ slightly from those used in the Census data comparisons.

2.1 Wholetime employees

2.1.1 Ethnicity

% of Wholetime employees by ethnicity
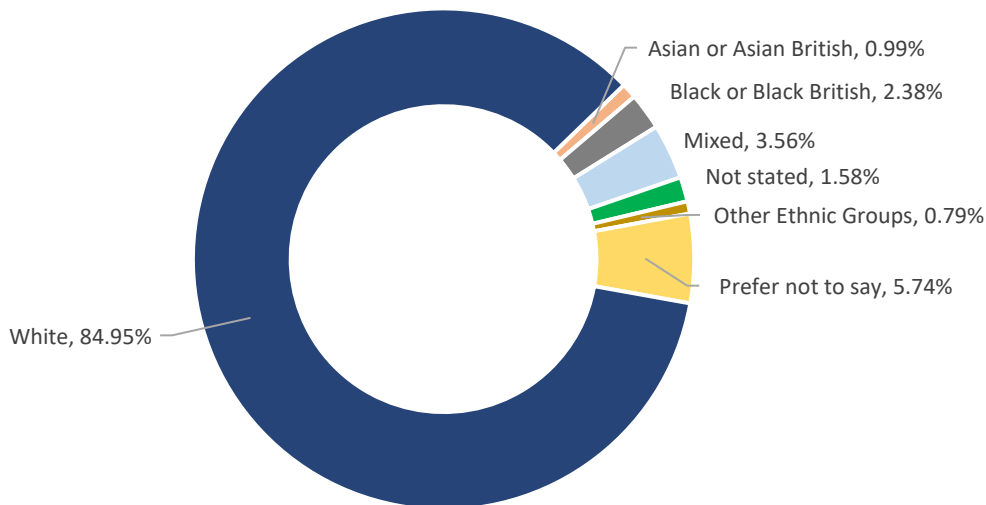
The above chart provides a breakdown of ethnicity for Wholetime employees in 2023/2024. The total number of employees in minority ethnic groups make up 7.7 per cent of the group, an increase of 2.8 percent from 2022/2023.

**The "Wholetime" group in this report includes all ranks across BFRS, Apprentice firefighters, flexi firefighters, day-crewed firefighters and secondees.
Data Source: HR & Payroll system for BFRS employee data; Nomis population data taken from the 2021 Census.
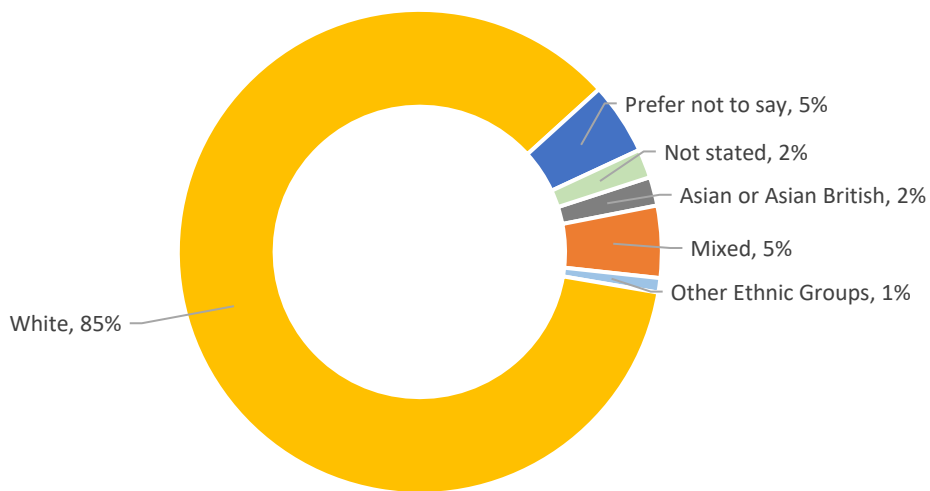
4

2.1.2 Age

% of Wholetime employees by age range
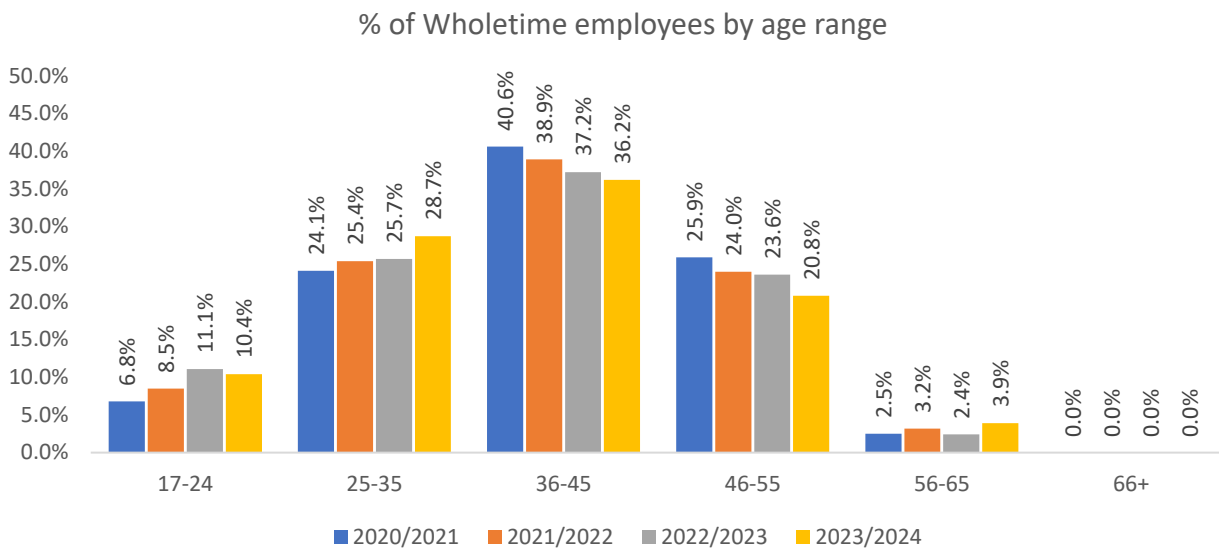
The majority of Wholetime firefighters fall within the 36–45 age bracket, with the average age of a BFRS Wholetime firefighter standing at 38 at the end of March 2024. The number of employees in the younger age ranges have seen small increases in recent years with the introduction of Apprentice cohorts.

2.1.3 Gender

% of Wholetime employees by gender

The percentage of female Wholetime employees fell for the third consecutive year in 2023/2024, and by 0.8% compared to 2022/2023.

**The "Wholetime" group in this report includes all ranks across BFRS, Apprentice firefighters, flexi firefighters, day-crewed firefighters and secondees.
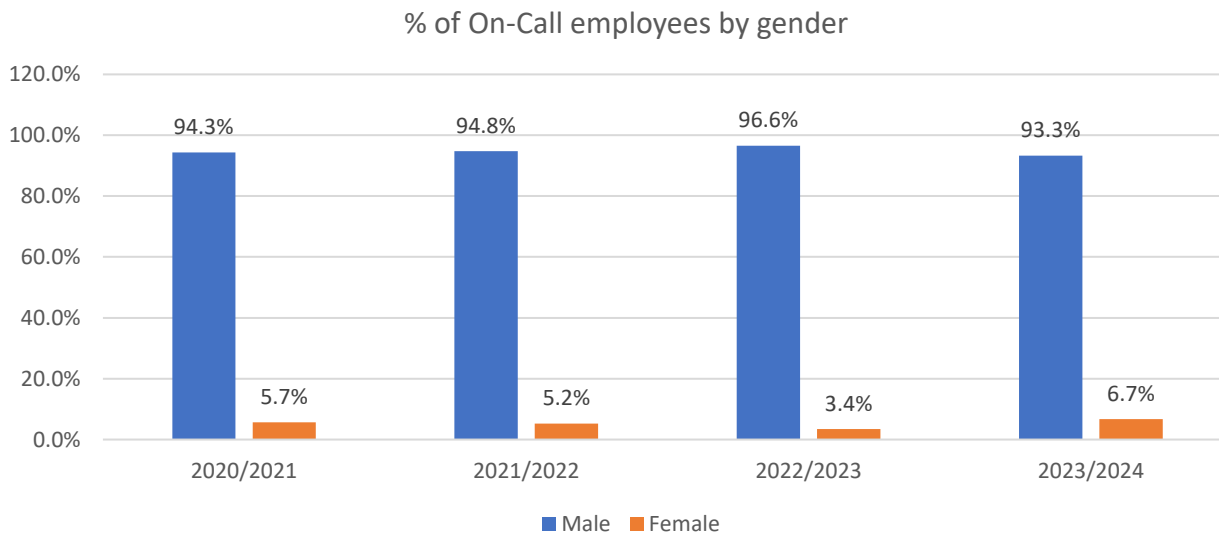Data Source: HR & Payroll system for BFRS employee data; Nomis population data taken from the 2021 Census.

2.1.3 Gender *continued*

Female Wholetime firefighters make up just 3.8 per cent of the total organisation, the same as in 2022/2023. Male Wholetime firefighters have seen little change in numbers since 2021 and make up 57 per cent of the organisation.

2.2 On-Call employees

2.2.1 Ethnicity

% of On-Call employees by ethnicity

Prefer not to say, 5%
Not stated, 2%
Asian or Asian British, 2%
Mixed, 5%
Other Ethnic Groups, 1%
White, 85%

Numbers of On-Call employees within the minority ethnic groupings are low, making up just 7.7 per cent of the group, a reduction of 0.1 per cent from 2022/2023.

2.2.2 Age

In 2023/2024, the age breakdown of On-Call employees places the highest percentage in the 36-45 age range. This is partly because the On-Call group includes employees whose primary role is within Wholetime, and who have secondary On-Call roles.

2.2.2 Age *continued*

% of On-Call employees by age range

	17-24	25-35	36-45	46-55	56-65	66+
2020/2021	10.6%	33.3%	35.8%	13.8%	6.5%	0.0%
2021/2022	8.7%	28.7%	38.3%	16.5%	7.8%	0.0%
2022/2023	9.5%	31.0%	37.1%	16.4%	6.0%	0.0%
2023/2024	8.7%	28.8%	38.5%	19.2%	3.8%	1.0%
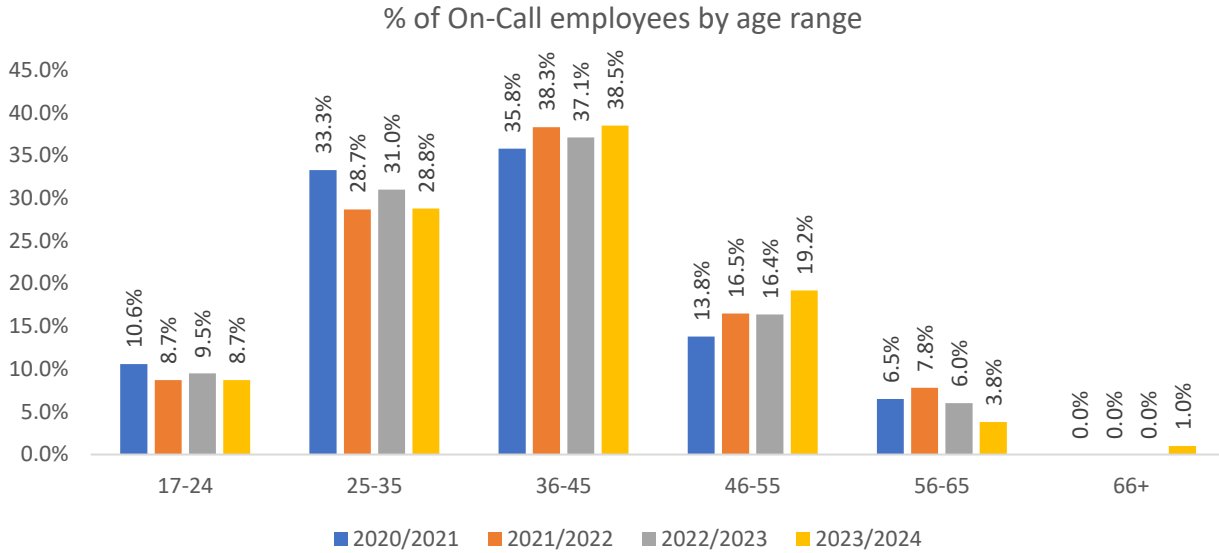
2.2.3 Gender

The number of female On-Call employees increased by 3.3 per cent from 2022/2023. As with the Wholetime group, On-Call employees are predominantly male, representing 93.3 per cent of all On-Call employees in 2023/2024. It is worth noting that On-Call diversity is constantly changing due to turnover.
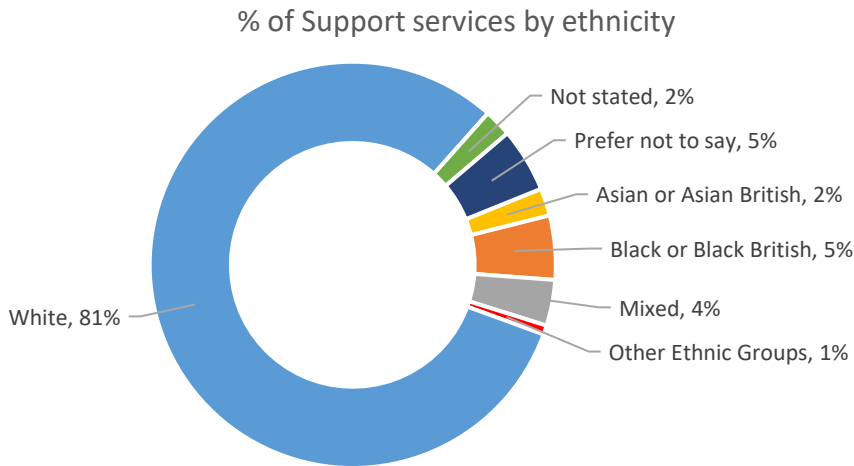
% of On-Call employees by gender

	2020/2021	2021/2022	2022/2023	2023/2024
Male	94.3%	94.8%	96.6%	93.3%
Female	5.7%	5.2%	3.4%	6.7%

**The "Wholetime" group in this report includes all ranks across BFRS, Apprentice firefighters, flexi firefighters, day-crewed firefighters and secondees.
Data Source: HR & Payroll system for BFRS employee data; Nomis population data taken from the 2021 Census.
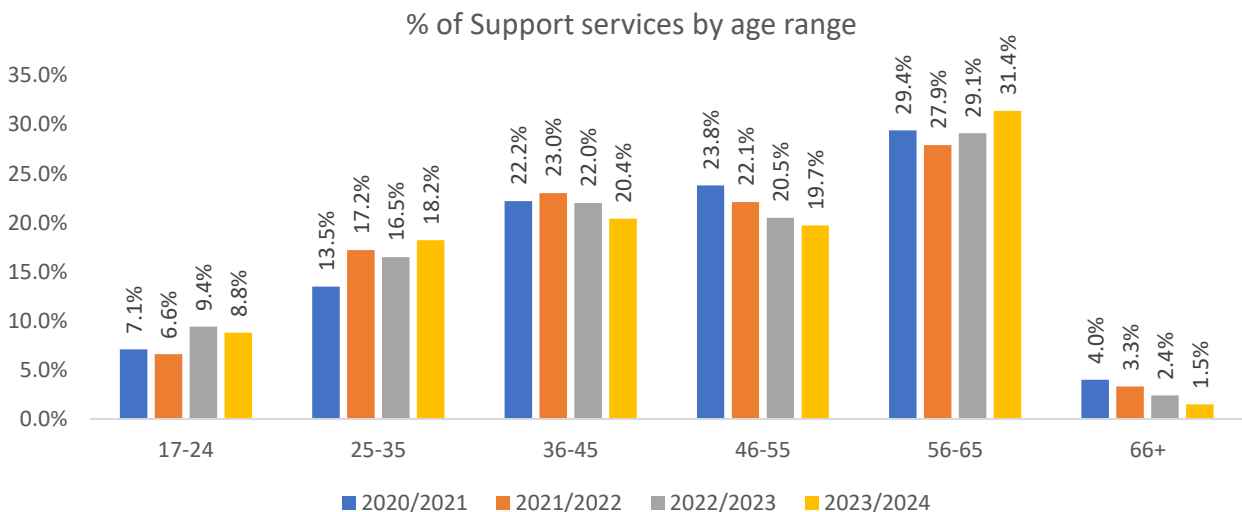
2.3 Support services employees

2.3.1 Ethnicity

In 2023/2024, Support services remain the most diverse of the core groups with representation in each of the ethnic groupings. Minority ethnic groups make up 11.7 per cent of all Support services employees.

% of Support services by ethnicity

- Not stated, 2%
- Prefer not to say, 5%
- Asian or Asian British, 2%
- Black or Black British, 5%
- Mixed, 4%
- Other Ethnic Groups, 1%
- White, 81%

2.3.2 Age

Most Support services employees range between ages 36 and 65, with the highest number of employees in the 56 to 65 age range, as shown below.

% of Support services by age range

Age range	2020/2021	2021/2022	2022/2023	2023/2024
17-24	7.1%	6.6%	9.4%	8.8%
25-35	13.5%	17.2%	16.5%	18.2%
36-45	22.2%	23.0%	22.0%	20.4%
46-55	23.8%	22.1%	20.5%	19.7%
56-65	29.4%	27.9%	29.1%	31.4%
66+	4.0%	3.3%	2.4%	1.5%

**The "Wholetime" group in this report includes all ranks across BFRS, Apprentice firefighters, flexi firefighters, day-crewed firefighters and secondees.
Data Source: HR & Payroll system for BFRS employee data; Nomis population data taken from the 2021 Census.

2.3.3 Gender

Support services is currently the only core group within BFRS containing more females than males, accounting for 57.7 per cent of the group in 2023/2024, a one per cent increase from 2022/2023.
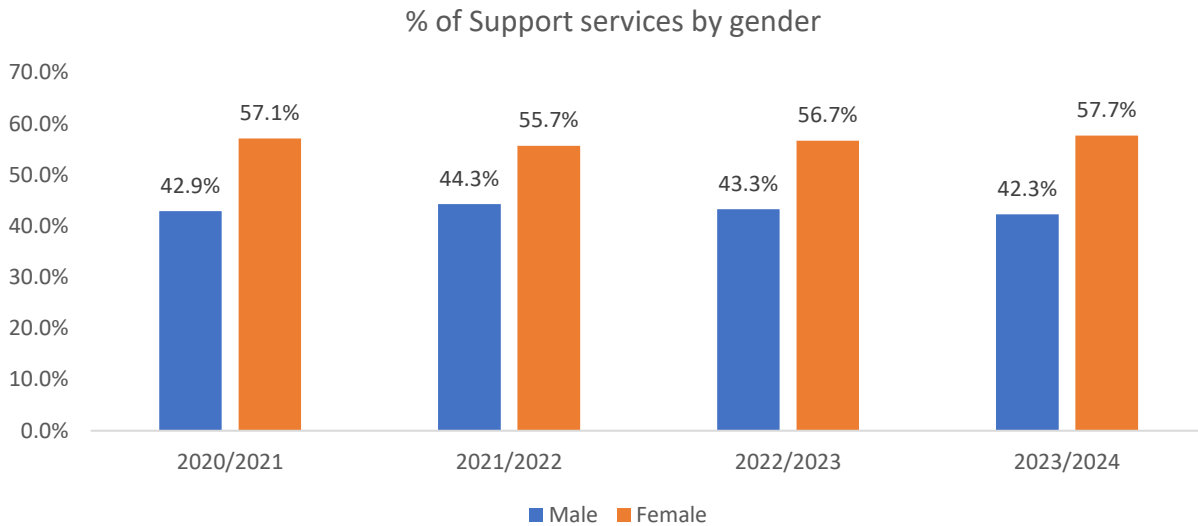
% of Support services by gender

**The "Wholetime" group in this report includes all ranks across BFRS, Apprentice firefighters, flexi firefighters, day-crewed firefighters and secondees.
Data Source: HR & Payroll system for BFRS employee data; Nomis population data taken from the 2021 Census.

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Appendix 2 - Employee Engagement

Joint Consultation Forum

Policies and procedures are widely circulated for consultation with employees in advance of going through our formal governance process. This is to give as many employees as possible the opportunity to comment on new, updated or amended documents.

The Service continues to run regular Joint Consultation Forum (JCF) meetings, providing the opportunity for recognised representative bodies to be consulted on forthcoming papers, policies and procedures. This allows constructive two-way dialogue in the early stages with the intention of preventing disagreements or disputes.

Staff Survey

The Service moved to annual staff survey in 2024. Following a robust tender processs we awarded Realworld Employee Survey (Realworld) to run the survey for the next 3 years.

The 2024 Staff survey took place in April 2024 with results being shared with the service quickly after the survey closed. As part of moving to a new supplier several teams took the opportunity to have a session with Realworld to review their results and agree how they would take action from them.

The wider Service results were reviewed by the Strategic Management Team and fed into our planning process.

The next survey will take place in 2025.

There are a number of ways we look to engage with staff in different settings, these include:

- Station visits: These are documented and shared at the weekly Strategic Management Team meetings
- Staff network: We continue to look at how we can utilise staff networks either our own networks or supporting staff attending national networks.

People Awards 2024

The 2024 People Awards took place on Friday 19 July and celebrated the work our employees do across the Service.

The event was attended by over 100 employees and feedback has been positive.

We'd like to thank the 2 sponsors of this year's event for their support:

- Delta Fire
- Critico

We continue to recognise and reward staff at various times in the year and throughout their career.

Each year we hold a long service awards ceremony celebrating the achievements of those receiving their Long Service and Good Conduct medals and Long Service Certificates.

The Awards were presented by Countess Howe, His Majesty's Lord-Lieutenant of Buckinghamshire.

Aylesbury Fire Station became the latest BFRS venue to help celebrate success and recognise the contribution our staff and their families make, 365 days a year, when it hosted more than 50 adults and children for a Children's Christmas Party.

This was a great opportunity to bring staff together and offer an opportunity for friends and relatives to join the fun.

Appendix 3 - Organisational Development and Resourcing

Apprenticeships

The apprenticeship programmes offered by the Authority demonstrate the level of investment in new and existing employees across the service which enables succession planning, resilience, and future proofing.

The Authority has already seen success with identifying further funding opportunities through securing a transfer of levy arrangement with Santander – one of Milton Keynes largest employers - to fund the enrolment of three employees onto Cranfield apprenticeships and Santander transfer the full levy cost to fund this.

In addition to this, the OD team have been exploring opportunities with local employers to fund our Firefighter apprentices and we are pleased to confirm that we have secured a levy transfer of £168k from Milton Keynes Council to fund our cohort 12 Firefighter Apprentices.

We are also thrilled to announce that we have been ranked 56th in the Top 100 Apprenticeship Employers, the highest position among Fire and Rescue Services in the country.

Our apprenticeships are crucial to our Fire and Rescue Service as they enable us to build a skilled, diverse workforce that is integral to maintaining the high standards of safety and response our communities rely on. From 2023/24 we had over 80 apprentices in a variety of departments across our Service, by investing in apprenticeships across various departments, from Fire Safety and ICT to operational Firefighters, we not only equip new talent with essential skills but also provide our existing staff with opportunities to advance their careers and provide vital mentoring roles to share knowledge and experience.

The success of our apprenticeship programmes is further evidenced by our recent recognition at the National Fire Chiefs Council (NFCC) Apprentice Awards. We were honoured to receive the National Outstanding Apprentice Projects Award.

Staff Development Pathway

The Staff Development Pathway project commenced in March 2023, with its aim being to:

• build a pathway that would provide clarity to all staff looking to develop themselves either within their existing role, or with aspiration for the next level role – whether that is within BFRS or another organisation.

- by removing some of the perceived barriers to staff development, this pathway will help to promote staff retention, increase levels of engagement, and improve communication.

- The pathway will improve the effectiveness and efficiency of existing managers as well as provide development opportunities and pathways for future managers and leaders of the organisation.

- It will address the development areas identified within the most recent HMICFRS report, as well as the feedback on our current development process, received via staff engagement sessions.

- It will ensure we have the right people, with the right skills, knowledge, and experience, in the right roles.

The new Staff Development Pathway contains processes, resources, and tools that are inclusive of all staff and are available to help identify, develop and effectively manage our talented people. The pathway supports staff now and throughout their career with us, helping them grow and excel in a dynamic and respectful environment.

Our Staff Development Pathway is underpinned by our new Behavioural and Leadership Framework, the framework is designed to provide all our staff with clear and consistent direction on the behaviours we value, shaping daily actions and decisions across our Service.

Behavioural and Leadership Framework

Our Behavioural and Leadership Framework ensures that our workforce embodies our core values of **integrity, compassion, and respect,** which are fundamental to being an excellent fire service and maintaining a healthy and positive workplace culture.

The framework brings together our Promise, Core Values and Behaviours, alongside the National Fire Chiefs Council (NFCC) Leadership Framework. It aims to ensure there is clear and consistent guidance on how we expect staff to behave while working for us, shaping daily actions and decisions across the service.

Within each behaviour, there are excellent and poor examples given. These are not exhaustive, however can be used as indicators to support. These same behaviours are expected of everyone, regardless of role or seniority.

The NFCC Leadership Framework is arranged in four levels of increasing complexity. These all provide examples of how the behaviour might be demonstrated.

The Behavioural and Leadership Framework's purpose is to provide support to all staff, both now and throughout their career.

The behaviours contained within the framework will form the basis of the criteria assessed at the Assessment and Development Centre and Selection processes. From next year, these behaviours will also be embedded within our appraisal process.

Appraisals

We believe that everyone selected to become an employee at BFRS has talent, and it is our collective responsibility to help every one of us uncover, recognise and nurture our existing natural abilities, while also striving to learn and develop new skills and expertise – putting us in the best possible position to continuously deliver on our public promise to have the right people, at the right time, with the right skills to keep our community safe.

This year for the first time ever we achieved our KPI of 95% appraisal returns. That means:

- 95% of our workforce have been set objectives for 2024/25 meaning they have clarity on what is expected of them to deliver.

- 95% of our workforce have had a dedicated discussion on Equality, Diversity & Inclusion, what they can do to support us and what we can do to support them.

- 95% of our workforce reviewed their performance during 2023/24 with their line manager

- 95% of our workforce have discussed with their line manager their career aspirations, development areas and support needed

In addition, this year we have included a dedicated Equality, Diversity & Inclusion section and a Talent Management section to the appraisal pack. This is to promote and encourage the importance of these areas as part of the appraisal conversation.

Assessment and Development Centre

Our Assessment and Development Centre process is designed to be transparent, fair, and consistent, ensuring every decision is made with integrity and inclusivity. We are dedicated to creating an environment where everyone has the opportunity to thrive.

The Assessment Development Procedure details the revised process for **all staff** to access their development journey.

The Assessment Development Centre assesses current and past skills, knowledge and behaviours, giving an insight into how individuals are likely to behave in the future, and if this is in-line with our Promise, Values and Behaviours.

It is the assessment of potential, readiness for and commitment to developing.

The new procedure provides clarity, consistency and details new methods of assessment, all enabling us to develop the best people and ensuring we have the right people, with the right skills, attitudes, and behaviours, to deliver our priorities.

This procedure is the first step to achieving an inclusive pathway that enables talent development and will drive a strong leadership culture with the highest professional standards possible.

We are committed to employing fair, objective, reliable and valid methods of assessment to enable us to develop the best people. To ensure objective assessment processes, which focus on the criteria contained within the Behavioural and Leadership Framework, assessors are trained to follow the ORCE (Observe, Record, Classify, Evaluate) methodology, which breaks down the assessing process into component parts and helps avoid bias.

Training Needs Analysis (TNA)

Each year, we gather staff training needs through the Training Needs Analysis (TNA), which is reviewed quarterly by the Training Strategy Group (TSG).

Department managers submit their prioritised learning programs, which the TSG approves and ensures alignment with our business priorities, continuity succession plans, and budget.

The TNA process starts with Department Managers evaluating their team's and the organisation's training needs for the upcoming year, considering potential leavers and succession plans. Managers rate the priority of each training request as high, medium, or low, keeping in mind that our training budget is limited and under pressure due to rising costs. Therefore, only role-critical training should be requested.

These submissions are then compiled by the Organisational Development team and reviewed by the TSG, which examines each request and its justification following by quarterly meetings

This process is monitored on a quarterly basis to ensure ongoing alignment and effectiveness.

This year we received over £430k training requests to review and assess against organisational priorities and a budget of £260k.

A paper was approved at the June Fire Authority meeting, requesting an additional £190k of investment to fund the transformational bids. While not deemed as business as usual, they were considered a requirement to progress organisational priorities and make necessary improvements.

Leadership and Management Development Programme

We believe that when staff are developed and supported, they perform better, are more productive, and feel more engaged. This not only enhances their experience but also makes them more likely to stay with us.

Our leadership and management development programme sets out our approach to leadership and management development for all staff, at all levels across the service. This brings consistency across roles and ensures we are developing our staff to drive a strong leadership culture with the highest professional standards possible.

Our leadership and management development programme is aimed at enhancing skills, competencies, and knowledge by providing a structured programme of learning and development opportunities across all levels to ensure we have the right people, in the right roles with the right skills, behaviors, and values.

 The programme details the mandatory, complementary, and equivalent leadership and management learning requirements at supervisory, middle, and strategic manager level.

The Supervisory Leadership Development Program (SLDP) and the Middle Leadership Program (MLP)

These are comprehensive development initiatives designed collaboratively by the National Fire Chiefs Council (NFCC) and the Chartered Management Institute (CMI) to enhance leadership skills within the UK fire and rescue service.

The SLDP is a self-directed program aimed at developing the knowledge, skills, and behaviours of supervisory leaders, offering a wealth of support for day-to-day leadership and management activities through a variety of learning materials. It is inclusive and accessible to all supervisory leaders, regardless of role or location, and is built around the NFCC Leadership Framework.

The MLP, on the other hand, focuses on middle leaders, providing a structured pathway to develop strategic thinking, decision-making, and leadership effectiveness.

Both programs include online resources, self-assessments, and practical application opportunities, with continuous support from your line manager and your Learning & Development Team.

These initiatives ensure that leaders at all levels are well-equipped to handle the demands of their roles, fostering a strong leadership culture within our service.

12 Month Recruitment Plan

Effective workforce planning means we have the right people, with the right skills, behaviours and values in the right role.

This empowers our staff to perform their role to the highest possible standard.

In September 2024, the Senior Management Board approved a 12-month recruitment plan which proposed a blended approach to operational recruitment including; Supervisory Manager transferees (external), Supervisory Manager promotions (internal and external), FF apprentice recruitment.

The supervisory manager campaigns will go live in November 2024 and the FF campaign in January 2025.

These evidence-based plans have been made based on existing vacancies, known leavers, forecasted unplanned leavers and potential retirements.

Safe to command

Safe to command is a pilot program aimed at enhancing our service's resilience by introducing firefighter positions with level 1 incident command skills across the service and seeks to improve fire appliance availability and broaden development opportunities for firefighters.

On occasions where an 'Officer in charge' skill set cannot be resourced or sufficiently filled, a safe to command firefighter may act up on an ad-hoc/temporary basis and will be expected to perform to the same roles and responsibilities as per the Crew Commander role map for that period.

Through the "Safe to Command" program, firefighters can develop a range of valuable skills beyond incident command. These include:

1. **Supervision and Management**: Enhancing your ability to manage and supervise staff effectively.

2. **Safety Management**: Gaining knowledge in safety protocols through courses like IOSH Managing Safely.

3. **Leadership**: Building leadership capabilities through the Supervisory Manager Acquisition Programme.

4. **Safeguarding**: Understanding and implementing safeguarding practices with Safeguarding Level 2 training.

5. **Continuous Learning**: Maintaining and updating your competencies regularly, ensuring you stay current with best practices and new developments in your field.

6. **Mentoring and Coaching**: Developing skills in mentoring and coaching by working closely with Supervisory Managers during shadow shifts.

The safe to command pilot has received significant interest and a number of applications from staff. An evaluation will be undertaken as to the success of the programme, the potential benefits to operational resourcing and the experiences of those who have undertaken the role.

360 Feedback:

360 Feedback is designed to help understand strengths and areas for growth, which can support the foundation of ongoing development. One of the most important benefits of receiving 360 feedback is increased self-awareness.

Our 360 Feedback is now integrated into our Staff Development Pathway,

Diverse feedback helps uncover blind spots and offers actionable insights, enabling the recipient to create specific development plans. By enhancing their self-awareness and comparing their self-assessment with others' perceptions, they gain a deeper understanding of their skills and competencies.

360 feedback has been embedded as business as usual via the Talent Management discussion of the appraisal and when 'Potential to move to next level' is selected and signed off by the line manager, those are then invited to complete a 360.

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Appendix 4 – Training, Learning and Development

Operational Training Department

The operational training team is committed to increasing the Services operational establishment with competent, professional employees that are coached, mentored and developed to serve the public at their time of need.

The training team are proud to have completed:

- Firefighter Development Programme (FFDP), using Service instructors at the Fire Service College (FSC) and on our own Fire Stations. This FFDP had a total of 12 apprentices which will become part of our resource capability in Jan 2025.
- Two On-Call training courses per year, increasing the establishment of the On-Call and providing greater resilience during periods of peak demand as per the Resourcing Model.
- Publication of a new Training Delivery Plan 2024 – 2027, this overarching document details how BFRS will train its operational staff reference maintenance of skills and competency in the core areas. This plan is in accordance with Fire Standards.
- Publication of multiple new procedures which detail how BFRS aims to adhere to the Delivery Plan. These procedures inform operational staff regarding expectations and timeframes to work to.
- All the current Area Trainers are trained to the required standard.
- All Breathing Apparatus and Incident Command re-validations were achieved as per the FSC contract.
- Multiple Incident Command foundation courses were completed to match the requirement from BFRS resourcing needs.

The department will continue to set expectations and standards covering all areas of what it means to be an operational firefighter in BFRS in both skills and competency.

Operational Training Assurance

Training Assurance primary focus is on Maintenance of Competency (MOC) assuring all training being delivered is aligned to national best practice and standards and this supports employees training, learning and development.

The team's focus has been weighed towards ensuring compliance with MOC and the Service achieving its target when recording competence, using Key Performance Measure (KPM) - R.3.01 - Maintenance of Operational Competence to determine success. Staff engagement helped the team understand issues and barriers to attaining

target completion rates. To enable staff to train and record competence and to ensure compliance the team set and achieved the following objectives:

- Updated and extensively modified the Learning Management System (LMS), The Hub of Education and Training (HEAT) – including but not limited to:
  - Improved functionality/navigation making for a more intuitive user experience, specifically when navigating to record competence
  - Changed recording of competence from the calendar year to the financial year, aligning many of the Services existing measures of success with maintaining competence and the Training Needs Analysis process
  - Unlocked and amended competency recording frequencies, enabling staff to train more flexibly and record more fluently across the year
  - Continued updates of learning materials aligned to National Operational Guidance (NOG), NFCC best practice, all in accordance with Fire Standards
  - Implemented a comprehensive library of Operational Information Note (OIN) presentations aligned to NOG
- Introduced staff engagement workshops setting expectations and responsibilities reference MOC, whilst creating additional support networks for existing and new supervisory managers

The above has resulted in the Service achieving its target completion rate and KPM for the first time in three years. Work continues to enhance the LMS with the view to separate eLearning and recording of competence onto separate platforms, this will provide a more robust recording and reporting function and bring greater clarity for staff.

The team continue to conduct robust quality assurance checks on training materials, practical training sessions and provide guidance on processes and procedures.

Additionally, the Training Assurance department has recently introduced a new Watch Commander Area Trainer responsible for Incident Command, with responsibilities to include improving command confidence and competence across the Service and standardisation of training aligned to NOG and NFCC best practice.

The Training Assurance team strive for excellence and will continue to support all the key areas of the People Strategy maintaining a people focused approach.

Operational Assurance Department

The Operational Assurance Team is committed to improving the safety, efficiency and effectiveness of the service by making recommendations for change identified through monitoring and feedback on incidents and exercises.

The Operational Assurance Team are proud to have completed the following

- Delivered improvements in the process for recording and managing of recommendations in the Operational Assurance Improvement Plan (OAIP).
- Adopted the College of Policing debriefing methodology, which has streamlined the debriefing process, bringing a greater focus on the learning identified and reduced the workload on our Station Commanders in completing the reports.
- Developed a highlight report showing the key metrics relating to our area of work, allowing us to measure our effectiveness.
- Run interactive tabletop exercises for all operational staff to assist in the adoption and roll out of JOPs 3, our response to Marauding Terrorist Attacks (MTA).
- Run several large exercises, including a multi service & multi agency MTA exercise.
- Improved our MS forms-based feedback and incident monitoring forms, delivering a better closed loop feedback process.
- Shared Joint Operational Learning (JOL) and National Operational Learning (NOL) with our operational staff.
- Increased the amount of time we spend with crews, sharing good practice and capturing areas of improvement.
- Have communicated best practice and learning through Newsletters and Operational assurance Bulletins to get key information to crews in a timely manner.
- The team plays a pivotal role in sharing best practice and notable events across the Thames Valley through the Thames Valley Operational Learning and Assurance Group.

Going forward we will continue to improve our process and delivery through a review of our current procedures and delivery plan, aligning to the National Fire Standards. Delivering improvements identified from our learning in a timely, effective and efficient manner.

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Appendix 5 - Employee Health and Wellbeing

The Service continues to promote the value of health and wellbeing with employees throughout all roles and committed to establishing a positive health and wellbeing culture within the workplace, which include promoting awareness and understanding of wellbeing, implementing effective and fair processes, and instilling positive behaviour by all. The Service recognises that mental and physical health and wellbeing are equally important and acknowledges the potential impact that work can have on both.

All long-term sickness absence cases are flagged within Human Resources, who then work with the line manager, employee, and Occupational Health in managing the employee's absence and return to work. All employees with over 28 days sickness absence are managed under the Attendance Management procedure and referred to Occupational Health.

For any sickness due to stress, anxiety or depression, the employee is automatically referred to Occupational Health regardless of the length of their absence. Occupational Health determines how work, or the workplace might impact on an employee, as well as how health, lifestyle or personal circumstances may impact on their ability to attend work or to return to work. The Service will seek advice from Occupational Health to guide in the management and progression of attendance management cases, ensuring employees receives appropriate support.

Measures are in place to support employees, and a safe place of work is provided; however muscular skeletal sickness absence resulting away from the workplace cannot be mitigated by actions taken by the Service. Working with Occupational Health, the line manager and employee, every effort is made to get the employee back to work as soon as reasonably practicable. Where appropriate and when recommended by Occupational Health, physiotherapy is provided to employees. For cases of long-term sickness absence relating to stress, anxiety, and depression and PTSD, and when recommended by Occupational Health, specialist counselling can also be provided.

All employees have access to an employee assistance programme, a free, independent, and confidential service, available 24/7, 365 days a year, online or over the phone. The service offers expert advice, guidance, and support to help resolve a wide range of issues, and they will aim to answer any questions immediately or refer the employee to the most appropriate advisor, counsellor, or source of information. In addition, monthly newsletters, podcasts and webinars on a variety of topics are available to employees via the Health Assured App and online, and regularly published on the Service's Intranet.

To strengthen our commitment to fostering a safe and supportive environment, a new confidential reporting line has been introduced via Safecall. An independent, confidential, external reporting service where employees can raise concerns about potential wrongdoing within the workplace, where they feel unable to raise these concerns directly with someone within the Service.

The Service's Welfare Officer is an additional point of contact to ensure employees have access to appropriate welfare support arrangements by providing advice, guidance, and assistance to those absent from work, returning to work, or going through difficult personal circumstances. In addition, the Welfare Officer will provide advice and guidance to line managers to assist with individual cases where welfare support is required, including return to work plans and ongoing support. The Welfare Officer, along with members of the Service's mental wellbeing support network (another source of support) can signpost employees to appropriate wellbeing support.

The mental wellbeing support network has 37 mental health first-aiders across the Service, and new members join the team throughout the year as they complete the relevant training. The names of those trained is shared with employees throughout the Service, with names posted on noticeboards in all Service Premises and available via the Intranet. All members of the team are easily identifiable with dedicated lanyards being worn.

By the very nature of the work of the Fire & Rescue Service, employees will be at risk of exposure to potentially distressing events. Physical, emotional and psychological reactions to these events are normal and individuals will be able to manage their own reactions and feelings by drawing on experiences and existing coping strategies, such as peer support. There is however a need, particularly for operational employees, lone working officers and Co-responders, to understand and be aware of the potential impact from being exposed to distressing incidents where normal existing coping strategies may not be satisfactory. Therefore, we have 20 trauma support debriefers across the Service to facilitate debriefs as and when requested.

The Service has introduced regular supervision to a number of key roles. Supervision is well documented as helping mitigate the risk of vicarious trauma and the emotional residue of exposure that employees have from working with people in crisis, fear and possible trauma. Supervision is an ongoing source of positive support that allows for debriefing and provides a non-judgemental safe space that is supportive of self-care. By providing this support, it enables reflection and assists individuals to maintain quality of work, further develop practice and help them feel supported and understood within their role. Our supervision services are outsourced and provided by highly experienced, professional and empathic supervisors with first-hand knowledge and frontline insight of the different types of work carried out within frontline services to the public.

Service procedures and guidance documents that support the wellbeing of employees continue to be updated or created. The Stress in the Workplace procedure and supporting documentation has been reviewed, updated and published. The Trauma Support Guidance Note, supporting documentation and e-learning package has been reviewed to ensure document remain relevant for employees and debriefers and currently going through governance.

The Service continues to work closely with The Fire Fighters Charity as the help and support the health and wellbeing of past and present UK fire service employees. The Charity provides residential programmes throughout the year, which is beneficial to those requiring support for physical rehabilitation, reset, nursing and rest and recharge stays. In addition, they provide online programmes and workshops and a number of specialised programmes at their three centres. The Charity has introduced a 24/7, 365 days a year confidential and independent suicide crisis line, a service providing immediate and ongoing suicide and mental health crisis care. Working with representatives from The Fire Fighter Charity, the "living well" groups continue to be run, a facility providing a regular meeting place for former employees to network and access support.

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Buckinghamshire & Milton Keynes Fire Authority

Meeting and date: Fire Authority, 11 December 2024

Report title: Health, Safety and Wellbeing Annual Report 2023-24

Lead Member: Councillor Keith McLean

Report sponsor: AC Douglas Buchanan, Head of Protection, Assurance and Development

Author and contact: Calum Bell cbell@bucksfire.gov.uk

Action: Noting

Recommendations: That the health, safety and wellbeing performance as detailed in the Health, Safety and Wellbeing Annual Report for 2023/24 be noted.

Executive summary: The Health, Safety and Wellbeing Annual Report covers the period 1 April 2023 to 31 March 2024 including:

- Statistical overview
- Protecting against Contaminants
- Training Investment

Financial implications: If risks are not managed and controlled effectively, they can potentially lead to serious injury and breaches of legislation which can have significant financial implications by way of claims or fines for the Authority.

Risk management: Risk management involves understanding, analysing and addressing risk to ensure the Service can achieve its objectives.

Legal implications: The safety management system is well embedded throughout the Service and its performance is subject to regular audit by peer fire and rescue services to ensure it remains fit for purpose, as well as ensuring compliance with legislation. If this scrutiny does not take place, it is possible that breaches of health and safety legislation may occur.

Privacy and security implications: A Data Protection Impact Assessment for this report exists and has been reviewed. There are no personal details provided in this report and statistical data is generic rather than specific to protect the identity of those involved. The data collected as part of personal injury safety events is name, date of birth, gender and home address when required for Reporting of Injuries,

Diseases and Dangerous Occurrences Regulations (RIDDOR) reporting – a legislative requirement.

Duty to collaborate: Collaboration work continues with our Thames Valley FRS counterparts and this report highlights the on-going collaboration work. Additionally, our H&S team are active members of the South-East region H&S Committee.

Health and safety implications: The report highlights safety event trends and details the analysis of these within the organisation. Ensuring the reporting of this data assists in the investigation process to create actions to prevent recurrence to ensure the safety of all staff and help ensure the working environment is as safe as it can be.

Environmental implications: None identified.

Equality, diversity, and inclusion implications: The data collected as part of personal injury safety events is name, date of birth, gender and home address when required for RIDDOR reporting. Where the number of personal injury safety events is so low that there is the potential for affected individuals to be identified, they are reported generically rather than specifically. However, in the course of the H & S Team continually monitoring safety events they also consider if there is any corelation with the events and any protected characteristics.

Consultation and communication: As this is a report on Health, Safety and Wellbeing for the year 2023/24 there is no requirement to consult with other stakeholders. However, we are reviewing how we can improve on raising the awareness and accessibility of the Report, internally and externally.

Background papers:

Appendix	Title	Protective Marking
1	Health, Safety and Wellbeing Annual Report 2023/24	

2023-24

Health, Safety and Wellbeing Annual Report

Contents:

Section Page

Forewords

I am very pleased to be writing my fifth foreword to the annual Health, Safety and Wellbeing report.

The small, dedicated and professional Health and Safety team continues to support firefighters with changes to develop better welfare offerings at incidents. It is also pleasing to report again the low level of health and safety incidents across the Service. This is testament to how <u>all</u> employees understand that health, safety and wellbeing is paramount to themselves and to the public that we serve. As always, the key message is prevention but if incidents do occur, it is crucial that lessons are learnt and acted upon to inform future preventative initiatives.

The HMICFRS inspector provided an update in October 2023 that included: **The service has a positive health and safety culture.**

This is a credit to all employees and a great reflection on the Health and Safety team's work!

> Councillor Keith McLean
> Lead Member for Health, Safety and Wellbeing, 2024
> Buckinghamshire & Milton Keynes Fire Authority

"Buckinghamshire Fire and Rescue Service are committed to ensuring the highest standards of health and safety are in place to keep our staff safe in the workplace. We take a pro-active approach to risk management and invest in training and equipment to reduce the likelihood and severity of accidents and injuries. We also work closely with colleagues from across the fire sector to identify best practice. As such, it is really pleasing to see a positive trend in our overall safety events in 23/24.

Where safety events do occur, we investigate, and we monitor trends to promote a learning culture to support future activities. One of the big challenges the sector currently faces is the management of contaminants, and the Service have made good progress in mitigating and managing the associated impacts, working collaboratively with colleagues from other fire and rescue services, to keep our staff safe.

A cost cannot be placed against death or serious injury, which is why we must continue to maintain a positive health and safety culture which is inclusive for all."

> Louise Harrison
> Chief Fire Officer and Chief Executive
> Buckinghamshire & Milton Keynes Fire Authority

Executive summary

Our Performance: The safety event statistics for the year 2023/24 identify that there has been a **decrease** in the number of Accident/Injuries **by 27.3 %** against the previous year. This is an excellent result; however, there has been a **34.2% increase** in the number of vehicle damage incidents, compared with the previous year, which continues to be an area of concern.

Protecting Firefighters Against Contaminants

The H & S department continue to provide support to the project that is focusing on reducing the exposure and risk from contaminants that may result from work activity, thereby reducing the risk for all staff. This work builds upon the robust processes that are already in place and factors in regional and national best practices.

Training Investment

As part of the ongoing commitment to ensure all staff are afforded the best opportunity to perform their role as safely as they can the Service invested over £42k in H & S related training. This included staff from supervisory/team leader to senior managers, directors and members of the Fire Authority.

4

Our performance at a glance:

HEALTH AND SAFETY
2023/2024

INJURY RATE

Decrease from 90.5 to 63.7 per 1000

ACCIDENT / INJURY

27.3%

Decrease from 44 to 32 reports

RIDDOR

23.1%

Decrease from 13 to 10 RIDDOR reportable events

NEAR MISS

Decrease from 45 to 31 reports

ACTS OF VIOLENCE

Decrease from 3 to 1 report

VEHICLE DAMAGE

34.2%

Increase from 38 to 51 reports

EQUIPMENT DAMAGE

11.1%

Decrease from 54 to 48 reports

Performance overview

In 2023/24 the number of incidents attended was 10,020 and the number of mobilisations was 10,717. These figures do not include co-responding incidents or officer mobilisations.

Overall, there has been a reduction in six of the seven H&S monitored categories. Vehicle damage safety events have unfortunately increased; however, there has been pleasing decreases in the number of equipment damage safety events and personal injury safety events. There has also been a decrease in the total number of acts of actual violence, and the number of events that come under the Reporting of Injuries, Diseases and Dangerous Occurrences Regulations (RIDDOR) as detailed in "*Our performance at a glance"* graph above. The number of "near-miss" reports has decreased this year from 45 to 31. An overview of the figures is provided below.

Personal injury: The *injury rate* is determined by calculating the number of incidents reported; divided by the number of employees and multiplied by 100,000 as set out by the Health and Safety Executive (HSE). For the year 2023/24 the *injury rate* is 63.7 per 1000 employees compared to 90.5 in 2022/23 which is a significant decrease which is pleasing to note. In terms of the actual numbers of personal injury safety events, there has been a decrease from 44 in 2022/23 to 32 in 2023/24.

The severity of a safety event is determined by multiplying the 'likelihood' of the safety event occurring again by the 'severity' of the injury sustained.

The resulting figure is known as the risk factor score:

- 1 to 5 is deemed a minor event
- 6 to 12 is moderate and
- 15 to 25 is a major event

Of the 32 personal injury safety events, 20 have been recorded as minor in nature and 12 as moderate, 2 of which occurred at the Fire Service College – a significant decrease from 6 moderate events from the College last year which is testament to the work the Service has done through working with them to reduce reoccurrence. 2 moderate safety events also occurred at Lee Valley (where the Service does some of its water rescue training and assessment), but these events were isolated with no trends being highlighted. It is also pleasing to note that the proportion of moderate personal injury safety events to minor events has reduced as well as the amount of moderate personal injury safety events which occurred during the year 2023/24.

Serious workplace injuries, occupational diseases and specified dangerous occurrences are reportable to the HSE under the RIDDOR Regulations.

The number of RIDDOR reportable events for 2023/24 is 10, which is a decrease from 13 in 2022/23. Analysis of these events resulted in:

- 3 dangerous occurrences relating to Breathing Apparatus

- 2 "major" injuries (blistering and heat-induced illness)

- 5 'over 7 days' sickness absences

2023/24 has seen an increase in the number of vehicle safety events with 51 safety events compared to 38 in 2022/23. 43 were of a minor nature, 7 were classified as moderate, and 1 as major. Of the 51 events, 20 events were as a direct result of driving from BFRS employees, 21 incidents were as a result of vehicle damage being found whilst driving or on routine checks, and 10 were as a result of third parties causing damage to BFRS vehicles.

Slow speed manoeuvres continue to be a problem for fire and rescue services nationally; however, there was a significant reduction in these from 20 events in 2022/23 to 8 events in 2023/24 which is pleasing to note. During this period, there was a significant increase in the number of minor vehicle damage events reported, as well as a major vehicle safety event occurring with an incident involving the water tanker; however, the number of moderate events decreased despite the increase in the total number of events.

There has been a decrease in the number of equipment damage safety events compared with 2022/23 from 54 to 48 in 2023/24; 41 of these were of a minor nature and 7 were moderate. Analysis carried out by the Health and Safety team identified that the moderate events have decreased from last year which is pleasing and that they were mostly isolated incidents with 3 of the 7 incidents related to issues highlighted with USB-C charging connectors for the BA boards.

In the category "Acts of violence against firefighters", there was 1 incident to report this year which was a reduction from 3 in 2022/23. This event was as a result of a member of the public throwing a blow to the face towards an operational member of staff where they made contact with the helmet visor which protected the individual's face. The incident was reported to Thames Valley Police.

For the year 2023/24 there has been a decrease in the number of "near-miss" reports of 31, compared to 45 in 2022/23. This result highlights that there is a need to continue to highlight to staff to report more "near misses" as inevitably this will have a positive impact on reducing safety event numbers. This will be picked up as part of the planned *Tool-Box-Talks.* The percentage decrease of "near misses" (31.1%) is higher than the percentage decrease in safety events (27.3%).

Working Time Regulations compliance: The Resource Management Team monitor the hours worked by operational personnel focusing on those who have more than one contract with the Service. This is managed via the resource management system and has proved to be very successful in eliminating breaches of the Working Time Regulations.

A breach may occur when a worker does not have a full 24-hour uninterrupted rest break in any 7 days or 48 hours in 14 days, or the total of hours worked per week exceeds 84. The Service has implemented a limit on the number of hours worked at 78 per week to build in extra protection against fatigue for staff. Two periods of 24-hour uninterrupted rest are also given in line with the national terms and conditions for firefighters – the Grey Book.

From April 2023 to March 2024 there were 2,690 Bank shifts worked and of those there were 0 breaches. This is the 2nd consecutive year running that there haven't been any breaches, which provides assurance of the positive work the Service has taken to ensure compliance with the Working Time Regulations.

Performance Statistical data: The performance statistical data received from the Home Office for 2023/24 **relates solely to operational personnel** and is displayed as league tables of fire and rescue services with similar numbers of employees to provide a more accurate comparison of performance between BFRS and its peers.

There has been a decrease in the **total number of persons injured** from 35 in 2022/23 to 24 in 2023/24. Of these, 15 occurred at training events, 2 during routine activities, 3 at fires and 4 from non-fire incidents. Overall, this resulted in BFRS remaining in moving up to joint second position in the league table.

The total number of **injuries at fires** has decreased from 8 in 2022/23 to 3 in 2023/24 resulting in BFRS moving from fifth position to first position of the National Peer Group Performance Comparison table detailed in Appendix 1.

The total number of **injuries at non-fire incidents** has increased from 1 in 2022/23 to 4 in 2023/24. With this increase, BFRS are sixth position in the league table.

There has been a decrease in the total number of **injuries during training events** from 17 in 2022/23 to 15 in 2023/24 resulting in BFRS moving up from seventh position to fifth position in the league table.

In terms of **injuries during routine activities** there has been a decrease in the figures from 9 in 2022/23 to 2 in 2023/24 which has resulted in BFRS moving up from seventh position to second position in the league table.

Injuries over 7-day absence figures have increased from 4 in 2022/23 to 5 in 2023/24 which places BFRS in sixth position in the peer table which was the same result as last year.

Finally, there were 2 *major injuries* for the year 2022/23 resulting in BFRS taking tenth position in the league table.

Health and safety performance is reported quarterly at the Health, Safety and Wellbeing Committee chaired by the Deputy Chief Fire Officer. Key stakeholders, the representative bodies and the Representative of Employees are invited to attend these meetings. Governance is via the Performance and Senior Management Boards on a six-monthly basis. The reports include statistical data on the number and type of safety events occurring at operational incidents, training and routine activities and the number and types of safety events involving Support staff.

Employee Wellbeing

The Service continues to promote the value of health and wellbeing with employees throughout all roles and committed to establishing a positive health and wellbeing culture within the workplace, which include promoting awareness and understanding of wellbeing, implementing effective and fair processes, and instilling positive behaviour by all. The Service recognises that mental and physical health and wellbeing are equally important and acknowledges the potential impact that work can have on both.

All long-term sickness absence cases are flagged within Human Resources, who then work with the line manager, employee, and Occupational Health in managing the employee's absence and return to work. All employees with over 28 days sickness absence are managed under the Attendance Management procedure and referred to Occupational Health.

For any sickness due to stress, anxiety or depression, the employee is automatically referred to Occupational Health regardless of the length of their absence. Occupational Health determines how work, or the workplace might impact on an employee, as well as how health, lifestyle or personal circumstances may impact on their ability to attend work or to return to work. The Service will seek advice from Occupational Health to guide in the management and progression of attendance management cases, ensuring employees receives appropriate support.

Measures are in place to support employees, and a safe place of work is provided; however muscular skeletal sickness absence resulting away from the workplace cannot be mitigated by actions taken by the Service. Working with Occupational Health, the line manager and employee, every effort is made to get the employee back to work as soon as reasonably practicable. Where appropriate and when recommended by Occupational Health, physiotherapy is provided to employees. For cases of long-term sickness absence relating to stress, anxiety, and depression and PTSD, and when recommended by Occupational Health, specialist counselling can also be provided.

All employees have access to an employee assistance programme, a free, independent, and confidential service, available 24/7, 365 days a year, online or over the phone. The service offers expert advice, guidance, and support to help resolve a wide range of issues, and they will aim to answer any questions immediately or refer the employee to the most appropriate advisor, counsellor, or source of information. In addition, monthly newsletters, podcasts and webinars on a variety of topics are available to employees via the Health Assured App and online, and regularly published on the Service's Intranet.

To strengthen the commitment to fostering a safe and supportive environment, a new confidential reporting line has been introduced via Safecall. An independent, confidential, external reporting service where employees can raise concerns about potential wrongdoing within the workplace, where they feel unable to raise these concerns directly with someone within the Service.

The Service's Welfare Officer is an additional point of contact to ensure employees have access to appropriate welfare support arrangements by providing advice, guidance, and assistance to those absent from work, returning to work, or going through difficult personal circumstances. In addition, the Welfare Officer will provide advice and guidance to line managers to assist with individual cases where welfare support is required, including return to work plans and ongoing support. The Welfare Officer, along with members of the Service's mental wellbeing support network (another source of support) can signpost employees to appropriate wellbeing support.

The mental wellbeing support network has 37 mental health first-aiders across the Service, and new members join the team throughout the year as they complete the relevant training. The names of those trained is shared with employees throughout the Service, with names posted on noticeboards in all Service premises and available via the Intranet. All members of the team are easily identifiable with dedicated lanyards being worn.

By the very nature of the work of the Fire & Rescue Service, employees will be at risk of exposure to potentially distressing events. Physical, emotional and psychological reactions to these events are normal and individuals will be able to manage their own reactions and feelings by drawing on experiences and existing coping strategies, such as peer support. There is however a need, particularly for operational employees, lone working officers and co-responders, to understand and be aware of the potential impact from being exposed to distressing incidents where normal existing coping strategies may not be satisfactory. Therefore, 20 trauma support debriefers have been established across the Service to facilitate debriefs as and when requested.

The Service has introduced regular supervision to a number of key roles. Supervision is well documented as helping mitigate the risk of vicarious trauma and the emotional residue of exposure that employees have from working with people in crisis, fear and possible trauma. Supervision is an ongoing source of positive support that allows for debriefing and provides a non-judgemental safe space that is supportive of self-care. By providing this support, it enables reflection and assists individuals to maintain quality of work, further develop

practice and help them feel supported and understood within their role.

Our supervision services are outsourced and provided by highly experienced, professional and empathic supervisors with first-hand knowledge and frontline insight of the different types of work carried out within frontline services to the public.

Service procedures and guidance documents that support the wellbeing of employees continue to be updated or created. The Stress in the Workplace procedure and supporting documentation has been reviewed, updated and published. The Trauma Support Guidance Note, supporting documentation and e-learning package has been reviewed to ensure document remain relevant for employees and debriefers and currently going through governance.

National campaigns are supported and communicated to employees throughout the year via a variety of mediums, such as the Intranet, posters, posts on social media.

On a regular basis education and training is provided to new employees and supervisory managers on key topics such as wellbeing, attendance management, occupational health, trauma support.

The Service continues to work closely with The Fire Fighters Charity as the organisation that provides help and support for the health and wellbeing of past and present UK fire service employees. The Charity provides residential programmes throughout the year, which is beneficial to those requiring support for physical rehabilitation, reset, nursing and rest and recharge stays. In addition, they provide online programmes and workshops and a number of specialised programmes at their three centres. The Charity has introduced a 24/7, 365 days a year confidential and independent suicide crisis line, a service providing immediate and ongoing suicide and mental health crisis care. Working with representatives from The Fire Fighters Charity, the "living well" groups continue to be run, a facility providing a regular meeting place for former employees to network and access support.

Risk Management

Health and Safety audits and Fire Risk Assessments – are conducted across all stations and sites on an annual basis. The audit form was updated to ensure that the question set remains relevant with additional questions added mainly in relation to the management of contaminants on station.

This year these were conducted by the Station Commander or site manager who hold a National Examination Board in Occupational Safety and Health (NEBOSH) General Certificate, in conjunction with a member of the Health and Safety team and Property team. In addition, and in the interest of positive industrial relations, FBU H&S representatives are invited to support these audits. On submission of the completed audit both the Health and Safety and Property teams devise an action plan to remedy any issues that have been highlighted. Outcomes and progress on the identified actions are discussed at the quarterly Health, Safety and Wellbeing Committee meetings.

Protecting Firefighters against contaminants Background – In September 2021, the FBU launched their "DECON" campaign to help firefighters protect themselves and others from harmful contaminants encountered when fighting fires. "DECON" encourages firefighters to make simple changes at work and at home that can help to prevent cancer and other diseases.

This campaign and research were carried out in conjunction with Professor Anna Stec from the University of Central Lancashire (UCLan) to investigate rates of cancer and other diseases in UK firefighters; understand the long-term health effects of fire contaminants and find ways to reduce exposure to contaminants whilst fighting fires.

In January 2023, following a survey of over 10,000 serving firefighters and researching Scottish firefighters' death certificates it was reported that:

- Firefighters' mortality rate from all cancers is 1.6 times higher than the general public
- Deaths from heart attacks are five times the rate of the general public, and three times the rate from strokes
- Firefighters are developing cancer at higher rates at younger ages
- Serving longer in the fire service increases risks of developing cancer
- Contaminants are causing higher rates of mental health issues, with firefighters three times more likely to suffer from depression, and twice as likely to suffer with anxiety

Internally, there is a dedicated project established to address the issue of contaminants management and the H&S department continue to support and provide professional advice.

Some key achievements to date are:

- Issuing of dedicated Personal Protective Equipment Bins sited at every operational station.

- Issuing of advice on specialist medical codes for staff to give to their GP practice, identifying them as workers at greater risk, which should prompt GPs to consider cancer as the cause of presenting symptoms.

- All stations have now completed a draft Contaminants Zoning Plan, identifying areas that are at risk of low, medium and higher levels of contamination, with controls in place to reduce this as far as is reasonably practicable.

- Agreement to trial the provision of shower gel at every operational station to assist staff in removing any residual contaminants they may not have been able to do at the incident.

- Creating a new draft exposure recording form for all staff to use following attendance at an exercise or incident whereby they may have been exposed to some form of contamination. This is in addition to that which is already being monitored and recorded.

As improvements are identified which can mitigate the risk of exposure to contaminants, the Service will take a consistent and positive approach across all its stations, sites and at incidents to ensure it enables staff to protect themselves within the workplace so far as is reasonably practicable.

The Service continues to work closely within the South-East Region Health and Safety group with regards to implementing measures to reduce the risk from contaminants within the workplace. This group is steered by the National Fire Chiefs Council (NFCC) in implementing any measures that they produce. The NFCC have initiated working groups for contaminants where the South-East region is leading on safe systems of work and risk assessments.

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Working With Others

Peer Audits: In line with the NFCC South-East Region Health and Safety Audit Protocol, along with the more recent Guidance for Fire and Rescue Services (FRS) specific H & S Audits. There is an agreement that every FRS in the South-East region will invite a peer H & S audit every five years.

This year the H & S Manager and one other member of the department, along with three other H & S managers/practitioners, were invited into audit Oxfordshire Fire & Rescue Service.

These audits follow the principles of ISO 45001, as such are classed as Stage 2 peer audits. These are extremely beneficial as not only do they highlight areas of good practice but also areas for development with the production of a report containing recommendations for improvement. The results of these audits will provide a benchmark against which FRSs can measure improvement.

Regional Arrangements: The H & S department are active members of the NFCC SE Region H & S Committee who meet quarterly to share information, trends, best practice, receive and share information with the National H & S committee.

Local Arrangements: The Driving Centre, which is a partnership with Oxfordshire Fire and Rescue service (OFRS) delivering a common and shared approach to emergency response driving training, continues to monitor trends to ensure avoidable safety events can be reduced and improve driving performance and standards.

Safety Event Reporting System: The H & S department continues to work closely with the developer of the safety event reporting and investigation system, Visor, as well as OFRS who also use it, to refine and improve the system. The most recent change is the introduction of automating the escalation reporting when deadlines are not achieved, the benefits of which are starting to be seen.

Health and Safety Training

Health and safety training is provided to all employees as part of an induction programme when joining the Service and regularly for Manual Handling and Display Screen Equipment as a legislative requirement.

Additionally, any health and safety training relevant to role is provided, ideally, as acquisition training prior to an individual going into role. Alternative methods of training delivery and acquisition of relevant H & S qualifications has been considered; based on feedback from delegates, and the quality of outcomes, this

is a subject that works best in a face to face, participative classroom environment. For the same reasons, this is a similar approach to that adopted in the South-East Region.

The original funding allocation for H & S related training was set at £31,053, however, due to an identified gap and need to invest, additional funding was provided through the Protection Uplift Grant to train 17 members of staff to carry out Fire Risk Assessments. This not only included staff from the Protection department, but also a number of middle managers as they have a duty to fulfil this requirement for the sites, they are responsible for, no different to what would be expected from any other commercial premises.

External providers

Two **Institute of Occupational Safety and Health (IOSH) Managing Safely,** courses: total of 23 staff, operational and support.

One **Institute of Occupational Safety and Health (IOSH) for Executives and** Directors: total of 12, comprising of 11 staff and one member of the Fire Authority.

Two **National Examination Board in Occupational Safety and Health (NEBOSH) General Certificate** courses: total of 9 staff, in partnership with Oxford Fire and Rescue Service.

One **Level 2 accident investigator** course: total of 12 staff.

Working closely with the Organisational Development department, these five qualifications are now fully embedded in the relevant Career Development Pathway/s.

One **Level 3 Fire Risk Assessor (FRA)** course: total of 17 staff, operational and support, including three from the Protection department.

One member of the Health and Safety department successfully achieved their Noise Risk Assessor qualification, which provides the Service with two qualified users of the specialist equipment.

And there is now have one member of staff who successfully achieved the ISO 45001, Lead Auditor qualification. This is a recognised industry standard to lead on H & S audits and is aligned to the NFCC framework.

Internally

The Health & Safety department have supported other workstreams and development through the delivery of risk critical training on the likes of the Safe to Command, Supervisory Managers acquisition and IOSH courses.

A Look Forward

Peer Audits: As mentioned previously, the Service is an advocate of the NFCC South-East Region Health and Safety Audit Protocol and have agreed to support the next peer audit which is due to be Hampshire Fire and Rescue Service.

The South-East Region has been viewed as exemplars in its adoption of the peer audit protocol and have been requested by a service in another region to pull together a team to carry out an audit of their service. The Service has agreed in principle to support this through the provision of one member of staff for the duration of the four-day audit in the spring of 2025.

BFRS are scheduled to be peer audited in the autumn of 2025 and work is already underway to start to prepare for that. Further updates will follow when more details are finalised.

Station Audits: Following a similar approach to the Service's Protection department, the H & S department will be refining the current arrangements for station audits and will be looking to move from H & S auditing every site every year, to a risk-based audit programme.

This will be informed by the likes of, number and type of safety events, premises and equipment defects and absence rate due to injury. This will not remove the requirement for every station to carry out its own annual H & S audit and review its Fire Risk Assessment.

Tool-Box-Talks: members of the H & S department will be planning in more station visits to share information, provide advice and support in person, which is hoped will reduce the number of Safety Events, increase the number of Hazard Reports and as well as further improve the quality of incident reporting.

Performance Indicators

Budgets

The Health and Safety budget for the year 2023/24 resulted in an underspend of almost £27K mostly due to the part year vacancy of the Health and Safety Manager role.

The total spent on H & S related training was £42,756. Through support from the Finance department and sound financial governance, the team ensured the Service got maximum benefit for this investment from optimising numbers on each course and sharing costs and places through collaborating with OFRS on the two NEBOSH courses and Surrey FRS on the Noise Risk Assessor course.

Health and Safety Key Performance Indicators (KPIs)– 2023/24

The objectives set for the year 2023/24 were in line with the Public Safety Plan in terms of managing risk. They were:

1. Investigations to be completed within the set timeframes of 2 weeks for a level 1 investigation and 4 weeks for a level 2- achieved on 75% of occasions with a 10% tolerance.

2. Health and safety acquisition training to be completed prior to going into role on 85% of occasions and 100% of occasions on substantiation of the role.

3. Health and Safety training packages to be completed on 90% of occasions with a 10% tolerance.

Progress on these KPIs were reported on quarterly at the Health, Safety and Wellbeing Committee meetings.

The above departmental objectives are under review to align them better with measures that are within the department's control/influence. Any proposed changes will follow established performance management governance processes and be regularly reported on at each Health, Safety and Wellbeing Committee meeting.

Appendix 1
National peer group performance comparison tables 2022/23 and 2023/24

The Health and Safety department was required to report on BFRS end of year accident statistical returns to the Home Office on 31 May 2024 for the period 1 April 2023 to 31 March 2024.

Summary:

The Health and Safety department provided returns for:

HS1 - total injuries from operational personnel, encompassing both Wholetime and On-Call employees and sub-divided into injuries at fires, at road traffic collisions and at other Special Service calls.

HS2 - injuries during training and routine activities also encompassing Wholetime and On-Call employees and sub-divided into injuries during operational training, fitness training and routine activities.

Findings:

HS1 – The year 2023/24 has seen a decrease in the *total number of operational personnel injured* from 35 to 24. Injuries at fires decreased from 8 to 3, whereas injuries at non-fire incidents increased from 1 to 4.

Outcome: In the national peer group league tables for *total number of injuries*, BFRS has improved to joint second position in 2023/24. For *injuries sustained at fires* BFRS has moved up from second position to first position with a decrease of 5 from 8 to 3 injuries. *For injuries sustained at non-fire incidents* BFRS experienced an increase from 1 to 4, and placing it in sixth position.

HS2- *Injuries at training events* has decreased from 17 to 15 in 2023/24. *Injuries sustained during routine activities* has decreased from 9 to 2 in 2023/24.

Outcome: BFRS' position in the peer group table for *injuries at training events* has improved to fifth position from seventh position. For *injuries during routine activities*, BFRS improved also to second position from seventh position.

Below are the league tables which provide a visual image of the overall safety performance of BFRS in the operational arena compared to their peer group. BFRS are in the top three of three of the seven categories.

Please note the Services shown in the tables below are placed in alphabetical order where the totals are the same.

Total number of persons injured	2022-23	2023-24
Oxfordshire	6	7
Buckinghamshire	**35**	**24**
Warwickshire	38	24
West Sussex	45	38
Suffolk	37	41
Berkshire	42	45
Norfolk	57	46
Northamptonshire	29	48
Hereford and Worcester	43	50
Bedfordshire	63	52
East Sussex	60	59
Cambridgeshire	47	85

Total number of injuries at fires	2022-23	2023-24
Buckinghamshire	**8**	**3**
Oxfordshire	1	3
West Sussex	15	3
Berkshire	11	6
Warwickshire	17	6
Hereford and Worcester	9	9
Norfolk	13	10
Suffolk	11	11
Northamptonshire	14	13
Bedfordshire	17	14
East Sussex	9	21
Cambridgeshire	29	22

Total number of injuries at non-fire incidents	2022-23	2023-24
Oxfordshire	1	1
Suffolk	4	1
Warwickshire	1	2
West Sussex	6	2
Berkshire	1	3
Buckinghamshire	**1**	**4**
Norfolk	15	4
Northamptonshire	5	6
Hereford and Worcester	6	6
Cambridgeshire	13	12
Bedfordshire	16	13
East Sussex	22	23

Total number of injuries during training	2022-23	2023-24
Oxfordshire	3	2
East Sussex	11	12
Warwickshire	11	12
Northamptonshire	1	14
Buckinghamshire	**17**	**15**
Bedfordshire	14	17
Suffolk	21	18
Berkshire	20	20
West Sussex	20	23
Norfolk	21	27
Hereford and Worcester	22	30
Cambridgeshire	2	32

Total number of injuries during routine activities	2022-23	2023-24
Oxfordshire	1	1
Buckinghamshire	**9**	**2**
East Sussex	18	3
Hereford and Worcester	6	5
Norfolk	8	5
Warwickshire	9	5
Bedfordshire	16	8
West Sussex	4	10
Suffolk	1	11
Northamptonshire	9	15
Berkshire	10	16
Cambridgeshire	3	19

Total number of over 7-day injuries	2022-23	2023-24
Berkshire	7	1
Suffolk	5	2
Warwickshire	0	3
Norfolk	1	3
Northamptonshire	2	4
Buckinghamshire	**4**	**5**
Bedfordshire	3	7
Oxfordshire	6	7
West Sussex	6	8
East Sussex	5	9
Cambridgeshire	6	9
Hereford and Worcester	3	14

Total number of major injuries	2022-23	2023-24
Bedfordshire	1	0
Berkshire	1	0
Cambridgeshire	1	0
East Sussex	5	0
Oxfordshire	0	0
Suffolk	0	0
Warwickshire	1	0
West Sussex	0	0
Norfolk	0	1
Buckinghamshire	**4**	**2**
Hereford and Worcester	0	2
Northamptonshire	0	4

Buckinghamshire & Milton Keynes Fire Authority

Meeting and date: Fire Authority, 11 December 2024

Report title: His Majesty's Inspectorate of Constabulary and Fire and Rescue Services (HMICFRS) – Buckinghamshire Fire and Rescue Service (BFRS) 2023-2025 Update

Lead Member: Councillor Simon Rouse, Chairman

Report sponsor: Chief Fire Officer, Louise Harrison

Author and contact: Anne-Marie Carter, Head of Technology, Transformation and PMO – acarter@bucksfire.gov.uk

Action: Noting

Recommendations:

That the HMICFRS update, and the Buckinghamshire Fire and Rescue Service: Causes of concern progress letter 8 November 2024 (Appendix 1), be noted.

Executive summary:

In July 2017, HMICFRS extended its remit to include inspections of England's fire and rescue services. They assess and report on the efficiency, effectiveness and people of the 44 fire and rescue services in England.

HMICFRS published the BFRS Round 3/2023-2025 report on 19 October 2023. The report can be found here: BFRS 2023-2025 - HMICFRS. This report sets out HMICFRS inspection findings for Buckinghamshire Fire and Rescue Service following the inspection during May and June 2023. The latest report for the Service identifies three causes of concern, accompanied by 10 recommendations, and 26 areas for improvement. The report was noted at the Extraordinary Fire Authority meeting on 24 October 2023.

As per requirements set out in the report covering letter to the Chairman and Chief Fire Officer on 17 October 2023, a copy of the action plan detailing how the Service will address the recommendations must be submitted to HMICFRS within 28 days of the report. A copy of the action plan was sent to HMICFRS within 28 days of the report publication; on the 15 November 2023.

On 21 November 2023, HMICFRS informed the Service that it will now be entering the supportive Engage process. The Engage process provides additional scrutiny and support from the Inspectorate.

Revisit

HMICFRS revisited the Service, in May and September 2024, to review the progress made against the recommendations. Following a strategic briefing, they met with teams from Response, Prevention, Protection and EDI.

On the 21 October 2024, the Chief Fire Officer and the Chairman attended the Fire Performance Oversight Group (FPOG) to give an update on our progress.

The HMICFRS have now shared an update on their findings (Appendix 1):

Prevention:
- Substantial improvements have been made in identifying and prioritising those most at risk of fire and other emergencies. Referrals are now triaged and prioritised based on risk, ensuring that those in greatest need receive timely support.
- All recommendations related to Prevention have been successfully completed, and this <u>cause of concern is now closed</u>.

Protection:
- Good progress has been made in how BFRS prioritise risk within protection activities. Fire safety audits have increased and there is a clear plan to audit very high and high-risk premises.
- A new role has been introduced in the protection team to support training and policy development, enhancing the overall effectiveness.

Equality, Diversity, and Inclusion (EDI):
- BFRS have made good progress in promoting EDI. The introduction of a People and Culture Officer and a Director of Human Resources and Organisational Development will help coordinate these efforts across all departments.
- Ambitious plans to further promote EDI are well underway, and HMICFRS look forward to this important work continue.

The inspectors have noted the robust governance arrangements BFRS have in place to monitor the Service's progress, with regular strategic improvement board meetings chaired by the CFO. They have also acknowledged the Service's comprehensive action plan, which includes clear responsibilities, deadlines, and progress updates for each task.

Action Plan

The HMICFRS action plan focuses on the 3 Causes of Concern. As of October 2024, the Service has made the following progress against the HMICFRS action plan:

	Prevention	Protection	EDI
Complete	7	12	18
In Progress/On Track	-	-	3
Risk to progress	-	-	-

The detailed HMICFRS action plan update can be seen in Appendix 2

HMICFRS will continue to monitor progress through regular contact and a virtual revisit in January 2025 to assess the impact of the changes implemented.

Financial implications:

The prioritisation of improvements to address the specific recommendations raised within the causes of concern may introduce additional financial implications, either through reprioritisation of other projects, or through new workstreams.

Consideration will be given to ensure associated costs, both direct and indirect, are fully understood and managed effectively.

Risk management:

There remain reputational corporate risks to the organisation. The Service continues to take steps to mitigate this through having extensive internal and external audits of a number of areas of the Service, in addition to the HMICFRS inspections. The internal audit plan for 24/25 can be found here: Internal Audit plan

Legal implications:

The current Fire and Rescue Service National Framework issued under section 21 of the Fire and Rescue Services Act 2004, to which the Authority must have regard when carrying out its functions, states as follows at paragraph 7.5:

'Fire and rescue authorities must give due regard to reports and recommendations made by HMICFRS and – if recommendations are made – prepare, update and regularly publish an action plan detailing how the recommendations are being actioned. If the fire and rescue authority does not propose to undertake any action as a result of a recommendation, reasons for this should be given.'

It continues: 'When forming an action plan, the fire and rescue authority could seek advice and support from other organisations, for example, the National Fire Chiefs Council and the Local Government Association'.

Privacy and security implications:

No privacy or security implications have been identified that are directly associated with this report or its appendices.

The report and its appendices are not protectively marked.

Duty to collaborate:

Each fire and rescue service is inspected individually. However, the latest report includes findings relating to the Service's ability to collaborate effectively with partners. The report states: "We were pleased to see the service meets its statutory duty to collaborate. It continues to consider opportunities to collaborate with other emergency responders."

Health and safety implications:

The HMICFRS report states:

- The service provides good well-being provisions to its workforce, but work-related stress is not being fully addressed.
- The service has a positive health and safety culture.

The areas for improvement relating to working hours and secondary contracts will feed into the health, safety and wellbeing group.

Environmental implications:

The HMICFRS report states:

"The service didn't identify all the potential climate impacts and mitigation measures required in its 2020–2025 public safety plan. This is what it calls its integrated risk management plan. It has now recognised that it needs a different range of equipment to be ready to respond to this risk both now and in the future."

Equality, diversity, and inclusion implications:

The Service has been judged as 'requires improvement' in the area relating to ensuring fairness and promoting diversity, along with a cause of concern and four recommendations relating to equality, diversity and inclusion. All the findings from the HMICFRS round three inspection report have been fully considered and prioritised to ensure continual improvement is established and maintained.

The Authority's equality, diversity, and inclusion objectives 2020-2025 – year 3 progress was presented to the Fire Authority on 14 June 2023.

Consultation and communication:

Specific areas identified for Service improvement are being captured in relevant plans and will be reported on in line with the recommendations.

Background papers:

HMICFRS BFRS Home Page: [Buckinghamshire - His Majesty's Inspectorate of Constabulary and Fire & Rescue Services (justiceinspectorates.gov.uk)](justiceinspectorates.gov.uk)

16 February 2022 – Fire Authority: Her Majesty's Inspectorate of Constabulary and Fire and Rescue Services (HMICFRS) – Buckinghamshire Fire and Rescue Service (BFRS) Inspection Report 2021

https://bucksfire.gov.uk/documents/2022/02/fa-item-10-16022022.pdf/

24 October 2023 – Extraordinary Fire Authority: His Majesty's Inspectorate of Constabulary and Fire and Rescue Services (HMICFRS) – Buckinghamshire Fire and Rescue Service (BFRS) Inspection Report 2023

Extraordinary Fire Authority Meeting – 24 October 2023 - Buckinghamshire Fire & Rescue Service/

6 December 2023 – Fire Authority: His Majesty's Inspectorate of Constabulary and Fire and Rescue Services (HMICFRS) – Buckinghamshire Fire and Rescue Service (BFRS) 2023 Action Plan

Fire Authority Meeting - 6 December 2023 - Buckinghamshire Fire & Rescue Service

8 February 2024 – Executive Committee: His Majesty's Inspectorate of Constabulary and Fire and Rescue Services (HMICFRS) – Buckinghamshire Fire and Rescue Service (BFRS) 2023 Update

Executive Committee – 8 February 2024 - Buckinghamshire Fire & Rescue Service

13 March 2024 – Overview and Audit Committee: His Majesty's Inspectorate of Constabulary and Fire and Rescue Services (HMICFRS) – Buckinghamshire Fire and Rescue Service (BFRS) 2023 Update

https://bucksfire.gov.uk/documents/2024/02/overview-and-audit-committee-13-march-2024-item-9-hmicfrs-bfrs-2023-2025-update.pdf/

09 May 2024 - State of Fire and Rescue: The Annual Assessment of Fire and Rescue Services in England 2023

State of Fire and Rescue: The Annual Assessment of Fire and Rescue Services in England 2023 - His Majesty's Inspectorate of Constabulary and Fire & Rescue Services (justiceinspectorates.gov.uk)

12 June 2024 - Fire Authority: His Majesty's Inspectorate of Constabulary and Fire and Rescue Services (HMICFRS) – Buckinghamshire Fire and Rescue Service (BFRS) 2023-2025 Update

(Public Pack)Agenda Document for Buckinghamshire & Milton Keynes Fire Authority, 12/06/2024 11:00 (bucksfire.gov.uk)

30 July 2024 – HMICFRS Buckinghamshire Fire and Rescue Service: Causes of concern revisit letter

Buckinghamshire Fire and Rescue Service: Causes of concern revisit letter - His Majesty's Inspectorate of Constabulary and Fire & Rescue Services (justiceinspectorates.gov.uk)

01 August 2024 - HMICFRS Standards of behaviour: The handling of misconduct in fire and rescue services

[Standards of behaviour: The handling of misconduct in fire and rescue services - His Majesty's Inspectorate of Constabulary and Fire & Rescue Services (justiceinspectorates.gov.uk)](justiceinspectorates.gov.uk)

11 September 2024 – Extraordinary Fire Authority: HMICFRS Update
[(Public Pack)Agenda Document for Buckinghamshire & Milton Keynes Fire Authority, 11/09/2024 11:00 (bucksfire.gov.uk)](bucksfire.gov.uk)

07 November 2024 - Overview and Audit Committee: His Majesty's Inspectorate of Constabulary and Fire and Rescue Services (HMICFRS) – Buckinghamshire Fire and Rescue Service (BFRS) 2023 Update
[OVERVIEW AND AUDIT COMMITTEE - 7 NOVEMBER 2024 - Buckinghamshire Fire & Rescue Service](#)

Appendix	Title	Protective Marking
1	Buckinghamshire Fire and Rescue Service: Causes of concern progress letter, 8 November 2024	N/A
2	HMICFRS Round 3 Action plan October 2024	N/A

![HMICFRS logo — His Majesty's Inspectorate of Constabulary and Fire & Rescue Services. Making communities safer]

23 Stephenson Street
Birmingham B2 4BH

Roy Wilsher OBE QFSM
His Majesty's Inspector of Constabulary
His Majesty's Inspector of Fire & Rescue Services

Louise Harrison
Chief Fire Officer
Buckinghamshire Fire and Rescue Service

8 November 2024

Dear Louise,

Buckinghamshire Fire and Rescue Service: progress made against causes of concern

Between May and June 2023, we inspected Buckinghamshire Fire and Rescue Service. During our inspection, we identified that the causes of concern relating to prevention and equality, diversity and inclusion issued after our inspection in 2021 hadn't been fully addressed. We also identified a new cause of concern about the service's protection activity. On 19 October 2023, we issued the causes of concern and made the following recommendations:

Prevention cause of concern

Some improvements in prevention have been made since our last inspection. The service has revised its prevention strategy, and this is giving its prevention and response teams better direction. But the service is still not adequately identifying and prioritising those most at risk from fire.

Recommendations

Within 28 days, the service should review its action plan to make sure that:

- it has an effective system to define the levels of risk in the community; and
- its systems and processes for dealing with referrals from individuals and partner agencies effectively manage and prioritise those referrals with the highest identified risk.

Protection cause of concern

The service hasn't done enough since our last inspection to address its areas for improvement and provide clear direction to make sure that its teams can prioritise work according to risk.

1

Recommendations

Within 28 days, the service should provide an action plan that:

- clearly defines its risk-based inspection programme, within a revised protection strategy, which is aligned to its next public safety plan;

- makes sure its increased number of staff complete a proportionate amount of activity to reduce risk and work to effective targets;

- assures the system to record fire safety activity is robust and well supported to enable prioritisation of highest risk;

- makes sure it has an effective quality assurance process so that staff carry out audits to an appropriate standard.

Equality, diversity and inclusion cause of concern

The service hasn't made enough progress since our last inspection to improve equality, diversity and inclusion. The service has done enough to complete one of our recommendations by reviewing its [equality impact assessment](#) process. But the other recommendations still require action to be taken or completed.

Recommendations

Within 28 days, the service should review its action plan, detailing how it will:

- give greater priority to how it increases awareness of equality, diversity and inclusion across the organisation;

- make sure that it has appropriate ways to engage with and seek feedback from all staff, including those from under-represented groups;

- make improvements to the way it collects equality data to better understand its workforce demographics and needs; and

- be more ambitious in its efforts to attract a more diverse workforce that better reflects the community it serves.

On 15 November 2023, you submitted an action plan setting out how you would address the causes of concern and our recommendations.

Between 20 and 24 May 2024, we carried out a revisit to review progress against the action plan. During the revisit, we interviewed staff who were responsible for developing this plan, including you as chief fire officer. We also interviewed managers and staff with responsibility for prevention, protection and equality, diversity and inclusion, together with colleagues from their teams. On 31 May 2024, we shared our initial findings with you.

We have continued to review your progress through continued engagement, a checkpoint visit on 23 September and your presentation at the Fire Performance Oversight Group meeting on 22 October. This letter provides an update on our findings.

Governance

We again found appropriate and robust governance arrangements in place to monitor progress of your action plan. You, as chief fire officer, chair the His Majesty's Inspectorate of Constabulary and Fire & Rescue Services (HMICFRS) strategic improvement board meetings, which have been held regularly since December 2023.

Action plan

The service has an action plan that covers all the causes of concern. The plan identifies senior responsible officers, deadlines and people assigned to each task. It includes updates on the progress of actions made against each cause of concern and the associated recommendations. The service continues to monitor its progress against the areas for improvement we identified in our last inspection.

Progress against the causes of concern

Prevention

The service has made good progress against the remaining recommendations associated with the cause of concern. It has improved the way it identifies and prioritises those most at risk of fire and other emergencies.

Referrals are quickly triaged, added to the system and prioritised for a visit by staff. All referrals are now prioritised on a highest-risk basis rather than on a first-come, first-served basis.

The service has started to train all firefighters and staff involved with processing referrals and is regularly assessing the quality of this work.

The key performance indicators help the service to effectively manage these changes and the impact they will have on its performance and on the public. All the recommendations have now been completed and the cause of concern is closed.

Protection

The service has made good progress in improving how its teams prioritise risk. It has used support from the National Fire Chiefs Council and other fire and rescue services to help it review its ways of working.

It has introduced a risk-based inspection programme that identifies very high-risk and high-risk premises that should be prioritised for annual audit. The service told us in the year to September 2024, it had audited 95 percent of these premises.

The service has introduced a new role in the protection team to support how it develops training and policy and create a standardised approach. Although it has made good progress, we want to be assured that improvements are sustainable and understood and accepted by everyone in the service. We will carry out a virtual revisit to determine whether this new role and the continuation of quality assurance procedures have improved how the service manages its protection activity.

Equality, diversity and inclusion

The service has made good progress to improve the way it promotes equality, diversity and inclusion.

It now has a people and culture officer and a director of HR and organisational development. These two roles are relatively new but will help the service to focus on its work on equality, diversity and inclusion and make sure it is co-ordinated across the service's departments.

The service has ambitious plans to further promote equality, diversity and inclusion. We look forward to seeing this promising work continue.

Conclusion

We were pleased to see the significant steps the service has taken in response to the causes of concern we issued. The action taken to address the prevention cause of concern has made sure that the service is now prioritising those most at risk of fire for a home visit. This cause of concern is closed.

We will continue to monitor the service's progress against the remaining causes of concern in protection and fairness and diversity through regular contact and attendance at its improvement boards. And we will carry out a virtual revisit in January 2025 to examine the outcome of the changes the service has made. We will assess whether Buckinghamshire Fire and Rescue Service has made satisfactory progress with its action plan and if the service it provides to the public has improved.

This letter will be published on our website.

Yours sincerely,

Roy Wilsher OBE QFSM
His Majesty's Inspector of Constabulary
His Majesty's Inspector of Fire and Rescue Services

Area	Ref	Action	Strategic Owner	Responsible Officer	Start Date	Deadline (End of)	Success and Impact measures	Commentary - October 24	Progress RAG End of Oct 24
		It has an effective system to define the levels of risk in the community							
Prevention	1.1.1	Implement the Prevention Risk Stratification (PRS) process based on the NFCC guidance	Assistant Chief Fire Officer	Group Commander Prevention & Resilience	Nov-23	Apr-24	• PRS guidance note written and published • PRS is live across all channels • All staff understand the PRS methodology	Cause of Concern closed. Confirmed in the HMICFRS letter sent on 25 October 2024. This is now BAU and continuing to monitor.	**Complete**
	1.1.2	Key Performance Indicators (KPIs) developed and reported to support Risk Stratification guidance	Assistant Chief Fire Officer	Group Commander Prevention & Resilience	Jan-24	Mar-24	• KPI's in place • Management control processes in place. • All referrals are dealt with in line with PRS guidance thresholds	Cause of Concern closed. Confirmed in the HMICFRS letter sent on 25 October 2024. This is now BAU and continuing to monitor.	**Complete**
		It's systems and processes for dealing with referrals from individuals and partner agencies effectively manage and prioritise those referrals with the highest identified risk							
	1.2.1	Ensure all current referrals are processed and up to date	Assistant Chief Fire Officer	Group Commander Prevention & Resilience	Jun-23	Nov-23	• Referrals from partner agencies are being processed in line with Service expectations. • No referral backlog.	Cause of Concern closed. Confirmed in the HMICFRS letter sent on 25 October 2024. This is now BAU and continuing to monitor.	**Complete**
	1.2.2	Launch Online Home Fire Safety Check form (OHFSC) developed to complement the Person-Centred Framework	Assistant Chief Fire Officer	Group Commander Prevention & Resilience	Nov-23	Feb-24	• New route available for the public to complete a person-centred self-assessment of fire risk. • All OHFSC are handled with the relevant treatment and timescales.	Cause of Concern closed. Confirmed in the HMICFRS letter sent on 25 October 2024. This is now BAU and continuing to monitor.	**Complete**
	1.2.3	Introduce a recognised way of recording and processing all prevention referrals directly into the Premises Risk Management System (PRMS) to ensure there is one database recording all prevention engagements as well as activity	Assistant Chief Fire Officer	Administrative Support Manager	Nov-23	Feb-24	• Referral processing guidance note written and published • Guidance note utilised to support training	Cause of Concern closed. Confirmed in the HMICFRS letter sent on 25 October 2024. This is now BAU and continuing to monitor.	**Complete**
	1.2.4	Update PRMS to reflect Risk Stratification guidance	Assistant Chief Fire Officer	Group Commander Prevention & Resilience	Nov-23	Apr-24	• All agreed requirements have been developed, testing by all relevant users and live. • All referrals are in line with delivery expectations associated with the descriptors for levels of risk as per the Risk Stratification Guidance	Cause of Concern closed. Confirmed in the HMICFRS letter sent on 25 October 2024. This is now BAU and continuing to monitor.	**Complete**
	1.2.5	Ensure all appropriate staff are adequately trained on the referral process and understand the methodology.	Assistant Chief Fire Officer	Group Commander Prevention & Resilience	Jan-24	Mar-24	•All staff have received appropriate training.	Cause of Concern closed. Confirmed in the HMICFRS letter sent on 25 October 2024. This is now BAU and continuing to monitor.	**Complete**
		Clearly define its risk-based inspection programme, within a revised protection strategy, which is aligned to its next public safety plan							7
	2.1.1	Review and update current Protection strategy intended to provide clarity on how the Service will conduct its Protection business in line with legislative requirements and focusing resource on highest risk premises types.	Assistant Chief Fire Officer	Head of Protection, Assurance & Development	Nov-23	Dec-23	• Peer review from NFCC sector advisors • Appropriate level of stakeholder engagement in developing revised strategy • Scrutiny and acceptance of revised strategy by Fire Authority Members 6th December • Internal Publication	Protection strategy has been reviewed and updated with input from NFCC. The strategy was presented to the Fire Authority on 16 December 2023 (https://bucksfire.gov.uk/documents/2023/11/fire-authority-meeting-6-december-2023-item-12-protection-strategy-2023-2025.pdf/)	**Complete**
	2.1.2	Introduce risk-based interventions programme to underpin revised strategy	Assistant Chief Fire Officer	Group Commander Protection	Nov-23	Dec-23	• Risk-based inspection methodology identified and clearly articulated • Based on methodology, identify planned audit schedule for very high / high risk premise types • Internal Publication	The Protection team have worked with the Data Team to create a comprehensive database of the Services Protection Risk. it uses this database to create a Risk Based Inspection Programme which is regularly reviewed. Datasets are added to the database to improve upon the understanding of risk as and when this information is suitable and available using both internal review and external information. This live database is maintained, understood and used to progress the RBIP undertaken by the Protection Officers.	**Complete**

Protection	2.1.3	Ensure the Protection strategy 2025-30 is embedded and fully aligned with the Community Risk Management Plan (CRMP) 2025-30	Assistant Chief Fire Officer	Head of Protection, Assurance & Development	Feb-24	Oct-24	• Evidence-led approach to management of protection resources • Extensive internal / external consultation • Due consideration to integration / alignment with Prevention and Response strategies	Strategy under consultation and feedback will be considered in respect of final version. The current strategy will be amended as appropriate and sit as a more detailed plan behind the CRMP protection strategy.	**Complete**
	**Make sure its increased number of staff complete a proportionate amount of activity to reduce risk and work to effective targets**							
	2.2.1	Embed the revised Protection strategy and Risk-Based Interventions Programme (RBIP) guidance As directed within the revised strategy, teams will now be focussing on planned and demand-led activity on high risk / low compliance property types	Assistant Chief Fire Officer	Group Commander Protection	Nov-23	Apr-24	• Good stakeholder engagement when developing the strategy and RBIP guidance and during transition • Direction and performance management to ensure a smooth transition in terms of ways of working • KPI's monitored to assure embeddedness • Very high/High risk premises schedule delivered	The RBIP database has been developed to ensure that there is a full understanding of the highest risk premises and that the programme takes this into account when undertaking audits. The Protection are fully conversant with the database and select premises according to risk when undertaking pre-planned audits. The database is also regularly reviewed by the team to ensure that it is both current and relevant.	**Complete**
	2.2.2	Introduce new Protection KPI's captured at team and person level - Planned audit numbers against RBIP. - Monitor audit outcomes (compliance) against audit numbers to assure that the RBIP is targeting the right premises.	Assistant Chief Fire Officer	Group Commander Protection	Nov-23	Apr-24	• KPI's presented to Performance Monitoring Board quarterly • 1000 audits annually • Proportionate number of audits resulting in non-satisfactory outcomes	The KPIs have been created to capture and monitor the work undertaken by the Protection team whilst ensuring that the work undertaken is appropriate and suitable within the understanding of both the pre-planned and reactive risks.	**Complete**
	2.2.3	Introduce three apprentice Business Safety Advisor roles utilising Protection grant funding to support - Enable more qualified Protection staff to focus on high risk / low compliance	Assistant Chief Fire Officer	Group Commander Protection	Nov-23	Apr-24	• New roles resulting in greater levels of co-ordinated and targeted support to local businesses • Less time spent by qualified officers doing low risk activity.	BFRS have three apprentices to target local businesses to contribute to the service's business engagement. This ensures that Inspecting Officers focus upon the RBIP whilst the service still provides both support and guidance to businesses where requested or required.	**Complete**
	**Assures the system to record fire safety activity is robust and well supported to enable prioritisation of highest risk**							
	2.3.1	Ensure schedule for planned audits is easily accessible to staff who require it	Assistant Chief Fire Officer	Group Commander Protection	Nov-23	Dec-23	• Identified very-high risk and high risk audits are provided to teams	Protection Officer have contributed to and continue to review the existing RBIP database selecting the highest risk premises off this to audit.	**Complete**
	2.3.2	Premises Risk Management System (PRMS) – training input to ensure standardisation / consistency in data input and extraction	Assistant Chief Fire Officer	Group Commander Protection	Dec-23	Apr-24	• Training input received by relevant Protection staff • Consistency monitored by Station Commanders	The Protection team as a whole continue to work with PRMS to improve upon our understanding of the system and is being monitored by the SCs and the GC in the way that it is being used. There is a PRMS group who from all the offices that meets to ensure that there continues to be consistency in the way that the system is being used. Moved to BAU and assured through Quality Assurance process.	**Complete**
	2.3.3	PRMS system – make provision for standard Protection outcome letters to improve efficiency and consistency	Assistant Chief Fire Officer	Group Commander Protection	Jan-24	Apr-24	• Standard letters available for use • Training provided as appropriate to support implementation	The Protection department has undertaken revision of standards letters and will continue to review progress to improve efficiency and consistency based upon changes in guidance and legislation.	**Complete**
	2.3.4	Review provision of admin support to Protection teams to ensure efficiency	Assistant Chief Fire Officer	Head of Protection, Assurance & Development	Dec-23	Apr-24	• Administrative requirements identified • Qualified Protection staff enabled to focus more time on planned activity	Protection managers and admin team leader have identified a number of areas / tasks requiring additional support. Additional provision has been allocated for a 12 month period, with anticipated system improvements to take place during that time. Admin review to consider protection requirements.	**Complete**
	**Makes sure it has an effective quality assurance process so that staff carry out audits to an appropriate standard**							
	2.4.1	Introduce a Protection Quality Assurance (QA) process	Assistant Chief Fire Officer	Group Commander Protection	Oct-23	Apr-24	• (QA) process documented, consulted and agreed through governance • Relevant staff are trained on the QA process • QA activity recorded and reported	QA is embedded as per policy and is determined to be BAU.	**Complete**
	2.4.2	Review suite of Protection procedures and guidance to ensure it is aligned with best practice and supports staff in relation to consistent application	Assistant Chief Fire Officer	Group Commander Protection	Dec-23	Apr-24	• Published revised procedures and guidance • Training / input (as required) delivered to Protection staff	Suite of policy / guidance documents now live. There is not anticipated to be any specific training requirements, albeit through QA and CPD standardisation will be tracked. Moved to BAU and under the responsibility of Training and policy Manager to review as appropriate.	**Complete**
	**Give greater priority to how it increases awareness of equality, diversity and inclusion across the organisation**							
8	3.1.1	Develop a role to include dedicated EDI support to ensure the delivery of EDI objectives	Director of HR & OD	Head of Human Resources	Jan-23	Apr-24	•Dedicated staff member in place/ recruited	People and Culture Officer in place	**Complete**

3.1.2	Review current EDI training across all levels including management and look at options to implement additional regular, measurable, bitesize session(s) on EDI	Director of HR & OD	Station Commander HR Projects	Nov-23	Apr-24	• Review undertaken of EDI training to assess effectiveness, reach and options • EDI online training has a completion rate of 90%+ supported by regular reporting, to ensure managers can follow up on non-completion • Staff at all levels can demonstrate a good understanding of EDI and how this needs to be reflected in the way we work and deliver services.	Completion on EDI packages being monitored and reminders due to go out to employees in due course 79.2% of Employees felt that People of all backgrounds and services are respected by the service, 76.6% felt the service values and promotes employee diversity and 76.1% felt that the service is inclusive and welcoming to people of all backgrounds.	**Complete**
3.1.3	Rollout 360 feedback process to all middle managers, which includes a section on how they promote EDI	Director of HR & OD	Organisational Development Manager	Dec-23	Dec-24	• All relevant staff have completed 360 feedback including the manager appraisal session and workbook and the outcomes feed into development plans and appraisal process.	360 feedback has been embedded as business as usual via the Talent Management discussion of the appraisal and when 'Potential to move to next level' is selected and signed off by your line manager, those are then invited to complete a 360. It isn't mandatory but is encouraged as part of the development journey and wider staff development pathway. E,D&I and "my role" specific section added to appraisal process 2024/25. Review to be undertaken to align questions/framework to new Promise, Values and Behaviours.	**Complete**
3.1.4	Utilise EDI data to better inform station plans to facilitate targeted community engagement activity adding specific action(s) related to EDI	Director of HR & OD	Station Commander HR Projects	Jan-24	Mar-24	• Service delivery area plans include EDI related data and actions	This is now Business As Usual for the service, with it factoring into both station plans and community engagement. This engagement is reviewed by both Station Commanders and Group Commanders with assistance from the People and Culture Officer and MarComms if required E.G. Milton Keynes Pride.	**Complete**
3.1.5	Review and relaunch of our values/code of ethics to support a positive workplace culture	Director of HR & OD	Station Commander HR Projects	Jan-24	Oct-24	• All staff understand what each value means for/to them and can share how it supports the communities we serve	Promise, Values and Behaviours updated in our Code of Conduct, Probation, Discipline, Whistleblowing procedures, alongside this Organisational Development have created the leadership and behaviour framework that aligns with our PVB. HR and Marcomms plan to do 4 virtual Q&A sessions to further support the embedment of our PVB. Following these sessions a pulse survey will be conducted to ascertain reach and understanding, Visualisation work throughout the estates will require a growth bid, this will be progressed through governance for approval.	**Complete**
3.1.6	Work with our staff networks to gain their input, to develop policies, projects and initiatives.	Director of HR & OD	Head of Human Resources	Jul-24	Dec-24	• A representative from these groups is included in the development of procedures before consultation. • Increased staff engagement and inclusion	The Terms of Reference for the Staff Networks makes it clear they have the ability to take part in the development of policies, procedures, etc, if they wish to take part. Networks have been formulated now and teams channels set up with people joining to discuss. Request has came in for the first piece of assistance for one of the networks in relation to this.	**On track**
Make sure that it has appropriate ways to engage with and seek feedback from all staff, including those from under-represented groups								
3.2.1	Launch and review "Speak Up" campaign	Director of HR & OD	HR Advisory & Development Manager	Oct-23	Feb-24	• All staff aware of Speak Up facility • Ongoing process in place to review take up/usage	Confidential reporting line in place and all employees have been made aware of the services available. One call has been made to the service in October. Take up and usage monitored on a regular basis	**Complete**
3.2.2	Develop mechanisms to reduce the mystery of the Service's governance processes	Director of Finance & Assets	Head of Technology, Transformation & PMO	Nov-23	Jan-24	• "Extra Chair" take up is 50% • A summary of internal governance meetings is published on the intranet within 2 weeks of the meeting taking place	Extra Chair take up to be monitored on a quarterly basis. Template agreed and to be used across BTB and PMB. Will be reviewed as part of Governance review	**Complete**
3.2.3	Explore further options to establish staff networks for underrepresent groups, including exploring options to join with external networks (other FRS's and national networks)	Director of HR & OD	Head of Human Resources	Nov-23	Jun-24	• Established networks which feed into the Culture Board • Increase in the number of staff networks from underrepresented groups. (internal or external).	There are now Teams Channels set up for each of the Staff Networks, meetings are taking place during November. Members have begin to join the teams channels, these will also be used to promote the wider external networks. Training will be given to members who express interest in chairing/leading on the networks for them to eventually take ownership during 2025.	**Complete**
3.2.4	Move to an annual staff survey supported by embedding the feedback loop. Utilise pulse surveys to support assessment of progress against specific actions.	Director of HR & OD	Head of Technology, Transformation & PMO	Nov-23	Aug-24	•Maintain completion rate at 70+ percent •Increase "the Service will take action from the survey" score •Instigate action where the outcomes/scores are low	The overall completion rate was 72.5%. The question: 'The information from this survey will be used constructively by the Service increased by 13.24%. Team sessions with support from the supplier continue. We continue to review how we use could use a pulse survey to see how the changes from this action plan have been embedded with staff.	**Complete**

3.2.5	Investigate and implement reporting at senior level on whistleblowing/ Speak Up/ grievance/ disciplines/investigations to monitor, identify and take action on potential themes	Director of HR & OD	HR Advisory & Development Manager	Jan-24	Mar-24	• Increased visibility of issues being raised and the Service's lessons learnt through regular reporting internally and externally on activity • Additional activity to reduce reoccurrence of themes as and when identified	Case management monitored. Next SMB report due December 2024. Professional Standards Investigator role job evaluated and out to advert	**Complete**
3.2.6	Ensure all line managers have regular structured contact with all their staff	Director of HR & OD	Organisational Development Manager	Apr-24	Mar-25	• The leadership and management programme includes training/ education on being a people manager. • Increased percentage of staff who have a 121 every month	Staff Development Pathway launching 3rd October. Leadership and Management Development Programme launch 23rd September 2024. Leadership and Management Development Programme includes People Manager training. Supervisory and Middle Manager Acquisition Programmes also includes People Manager Input, including performance management. April 2024 Staff survey results indicates positive and regular interaction between staff and line management: * 92% of staff said they understand what their manager expects from them. * 90% of staff said their immediate manager is accessible to them when needed. * 81% of staff said their manager keeps the team focused on service priorities * 85% (increase from last year) of staff said they have trust and confidence in their immediate line manager. * 85% of staff said their manager regularly communicates with them. *83% of staff said their manager provides them with adequate support in their role. * 73% (increase from last year) of staff said their immediate manager coaches them to improve their performance.	**Complete**
Make improvements to the way it collects equality data to better understand its workforce demographics and needs								
3.3.1	Relaunch the Equality Monitoring campaign encouraging individuals to input their own equality data on the HR system in a safe and secure environment, supported by ongoing communications.	Director of HR & OD	Head of Human Resources	Jan-24	Jul-24	• A continuous increase of equality data being inputted. • Increased messaging about the benefits of a diverse workforce and the reasons for declaration.	People and Culture Officer discusses this during station visits, this is now business as usual and monitored by the Culture Board each quarter.	**Complete**
3.3.2	To review recruitment and promotion processes to ensure they include and promote the importance of staff providing their equality data.	Director of HR & OD	Head of Human Resources	Feb-24	Apr-24	• Increase of equality data. • Staff know how to enter their equality data.	People and Culture Officer continues to discuss and explain how to add data during station visits. There is a positive trend of data being completed.	**Complete**
3.3.3	To embed a process to monitor EDI data completions with a quarterly update to the Leadership team to identify if particular teams require additional support to understand why completion is of benefit.	Director of HR & OD	Head of Human Resources	Apr-24	Jun-24	• Ability to identify areas of the service that require additional support/training. • Better understanding of the diversity of the workforce through ongoing data tracking.	This is now BAU, with the data report taken to the Culture Board to monitor.	**Complete**
3.3.4	A quarterly review of equality data by the Culture Board to ensure we have an understanding of the workforce demographics and needs. Appropriate action taken where necessary.	Director of HR & OD	Head of Human Resources	Apr-24	Jun-24	• Increase in the availability of data which will allow the organisation to make more informed decisions that will have a positive impact.	This is now BAU.	**Complete**
Be more ambitious in its efforts to attract a more diverse workforce that better reflects the community it serves								
3.4.1	Develop a programme of works to ensure all workplace facilities (both on premises and at incidents) meet the needs of current and future staffing demographics.	Director of Finance & Assets	Director of Finance & Assets	Nov-23	Mar-25	• Review of premises facilities • Programme in place to improve identified gaps • Welfare facilities in place at incidents • Adequate facilities in place for all protected characteristics	Following engagement with staff, two high priority areas for facilities work have been identified. Both are in relation to rest areas for standby staff on day-crewed stations. Individual rest areas are to be introduced at Gerrards Cross and Buckingham. The work at Gerrards Cross is scheduled to run between November 2024 to February 2025, with Buckingham works running between January 2025 to March 2025.	**On track**
3.4.2	Introduce a sustained "Have a Go" operational programme for identified underrepresented groups, including a plan for positive action, offering a range of targeted activities across the county.	Director of HR & OD	Station Commander HR Projects	Dec-23	Nov-24	•Annual programme in place including at least six "Have a Go" events held for underrepresented groups per year. •A clear plan in place to deliver and maintain positive action. • Increased uptake from underrepresented applicants.	Paper has now gone to the Culture Board, feedback has been received and actioned and now been sent onto the Head of HR to review prior to taking to SMB.	**On track**

	3.4.3	Map out and review recruitment process end to end to understand impact on different underrepresented groups, including the applicants' feedback at various stages of the application.	Director of HR & OD	Station Commander HR Projects	Jan-24	Jun-24	• Recruitment processes are adapted. • Increased uptake from underrepresented applicants. • Data collected from applicants will be used to inform process changes.	Report presented to SMB October 22, this detailed the recommendations listed, additional work is required to explore how other Fire and Rescue Services and the NFCC are working towards reducing the barriers identified within recommendation: 1.Merge the requirement for candidates to hold a full UK or EU manual driving licence, with the requirement for them to be willing to get a LGV driving license within 18 months of joining. 2. Remove the wording 'candidates must be a confident swimmer' from the application and replace with the question "are they comfortable in water?"	**Complete**
	3.4.4	Identify and report on areas of underrepresentation within the Service, identifying groups we would benefit from attracting across all levels,	Director of HR & OD	HR Operations Manager	Jan-24	Oct-24	•Relevant and up-to-date data which can be used to inform recruitment actions	This now forms part of BAU	**Complete**
	3.4.5	Ensure recruitment resources are utilised to ensure more applications from diverse/underrepresented people from our local communities.	Director of HR & OD	HR Operations Manager	Jan-24	Oct-24	• Engagement/recruitment activities such as career fairs are prioritised to those that meet our target audiences • More applications from diverse/underrepresented applicants	This now forms part of BAU	**Complete**

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Buckinghamshire & Milton Keynes
Fire Authority

Meeting and date: Fire Authority, 11 December 2024

Report title: Member Update on the Fire Brigades Union Improvements Agenda 2024

Lead Member: Councillor Simon Rouse (Chairman)

Report sponsor: Chief Fire Officer Louise Harrison

Author and contact: Deputy Chief Fire Officer Simon Tuffley
stuffley@bucksfire.gov.uk

Action: Noting

Recommendations: That the Buckinghamshire FBU 2024 Improvement Agenda Service update report be noted.

Executive summary:

The report attached at Appendix 1 provides an update to Fire Authority Members on Service progress against the "2024 FBU Improvements Agenda" initially presented to the Fire Authority at its 06 December 2023 meeting, by the Buckinghamshire Fire Brigades Union (FBU) Brigade Secretary.

The 2024 FBU Improvements Agenda covers 10 areas, with further specific requirements within each of the 10 areas.

Throughout the last year, Officers have considered these requirements, and wherever possible incorporated them into current and future plans to help improve and enhance the Service.

Achievements to date include:

i.   Significant progress in implementing DECON policies and improving PPE management through a dedicated contaminants project. The project has 157 actions, 114 are complete, 38 are in progress, and 5 are yet to start.

ii. Recruitment and retention strategies have been reviewed to ensure the Service is able to attract, recruit and retain more on-call staff on a range of tailored employment contracts. There is now a dedicated On-call Marketing resource to assist with recruitment initiatives.

iii. Enhanced capabilities for dealing with rural firefighting and extreme weather events (wildfires) have been established and utilised throughout the summer of 2024.

iv. Improvements in crewing levels and skill set reviews are ongoing.

v. The appointment of an People and Culture Officer and the implementation of a Culture Board and Active Bystander training are fostering a more inclusive environment.

vi. Constructive dialogue with the FBU continues to strengthen industrial relations.

vii. Pay and conditions are reviewed in line with NJC negotiated settlements to ensure they offer the best possible pay for staff.

viii. Plans for a state-of-the-art training facility at Westcott Venture Park and increased training budgets are underway.

ix. Facility improvements are being prioritised and implemented to support ED&I goals.

x. Health and wellness initiatives are being reviewed and developed to support the overall well-being of firefighters

As we move forward, our focus will be on the continued implementation of these initiatives, working constructively alongside the FBU ensuring that more planned improvements are realised.

By focusing on these areas, we aim to create a safer, more supportive, and more effective working environment for all firefighters.

The constructive dialogue and challenge from the FBU will continue to play a vital role in shaping these improvements, ensuring that the voices of their members are heard and their needs are met wherever possible.

Together, we are committed to building a stronger, more resilient fire and rescue service for the future.

Financial implications:

A number of the recommendations set out in the FBU improvement agenda have a financial implication. Where those recommendations align to the Service objectives, the funding implications have been built into financial planning.

There are some examples of recommendations which have not been considered as viable e.g. "An increased wholetime duty system establishment of 20 for 2024/2025

financial year". That would have required a significant revenue commitment of circa £1,160,000, which the Service cannot currently assign.

Risk management:

Many of the improvement plan recommendations feature in the Corporate or Service level risk registers, accompanied by identified treatments. All risk registers are monitored through Service governance structures.

Legal implications:

Privacy and security implications:

There are no identified privacy issues or security implications arising from this report.

Duty to collaborate:

There are no specific collaboration requirements identified. However, a number of the areas identified by the FBU improvement agenda naturally align to existing collaborative arrangements.

Health and safety implications:

The FBU improvement agenda and the attached progress report seeks to enhance firefighter safety and wider health and safety matters.

Environmental implications:

The improvement agenda seeks to improve the way in which the service responds to environmental emergencies.

Equality, diversity, and inclusion implications:

The FBU improvement agenda and the attached progress report seeks to enhance equality, diversity and inclusion.

Consultation and communication:

Strategic Management Board and FBU Brigade Secretary.

Background papers:

Firefighters' Manifesto: our service, our future | Campaign The Fire Brigades Union (National) Firefighter Manifesto 2023

Appendix		Protective Marking
1	Report: Member Update on the Fire Brigades Union Improvement Agenda 2024	Not protectively marked
2	Fire Brigades Union 2024 Improvement Agenda	Not protectively marked

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Buckinghamshire Fire Brigades Union Improvement Agenda 2024

Service Progress Report - December 2024

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Contents:

1. Executive Summary:

This report provides an update to Fire Authority Members on Service progress against the Buckinghamshire 2024 Fire Brigades Union (FBU) Improvements Agenda (henceforth will be referred to as the "Agenda") initially presented by the Brigade Secretary of the Buckinghamshire FBU, at the 06 December 2023 Fire Authority meeting.

The Agenda covers 10 areas, with further specific requests within each of the 10 areas. Officers have used the Agenda to help plan implementation strategies wherever possible to help bring forward benefits to all staff and the communities we serve.

This report provides the key areas of focus defined by the Agenda, and a summary of Service activity and achievements, (many of which are mutually aligned) as well as providing some more detailed information regarding current and planned initiatives and the challenges and restrictions that are sometimes being faced.

The Agenda was developed and presented to the Fire Authority by the FBU Brigade Secretary as a more localised interpretation of the national FBU Firefighter Manifesto, Firefighters' Manifesto: our service, our future | Campaign which advocates for better funding, higher national response and crewing standards, and a fair say for its members through a new advisory body.

Constructive dialogue and challenge from the FBU at a local, regional and national level have long been valued, and are crucial in shaping Service improvement through a largely shared vision; ensuring that the voices of many firefighters are heard through their Representatives as well as their managers, to ensure their needs and ideas are fully considered.

This report demonstrates that Buckinghamshire Fire and Rescue Service continues to take the views of its Employee Representatives seriously and is fully prepared to work alongside the FBU and other Representative Bodies to ensure continual improvement across a range of areas.

2. Key Areas of Focus highlighted by the 2024 FBU Improvement Agenda:

The Agenda focusses on 10 key areas, which are summarised below:

i. **Decon**: Emphasises health monitoring, decontamination policies, and support for occupational injury legislation.

ii. **Retained Recruitment, Retention and Availability**: Calls for a comprehensive review of recruitment and retention strategies.

iii. **Extreme Weather Planning and Provision**: Requires the Service to include climate change in risk registers and enhance capabilities for dealing with extreme weather.

iv. **Crewing**: Sets targets for staffing levels and positive crewing of Turntable Ladders.

v. **Equality, Diversity and Inclusion (ED&I)**: Focuses on creating an inclusive environment with dedicated roles and training.

vi. **Commitment to Industrial Relations**: Supports National Joint Council (NJC) joint training and improved communication with Union representatives.

vii. **Pay and Conditions**: Advocates for increased pay and fair conditions for firefighters.

viii. **Infrastructure Planning – Stations and Training**: Promotes plans for state-of-the-art training facilities and increased training budgets.

ix. **Infrastructure - Facility Improvement Program**: Addresses facility shortcomings with a focus on ED&I.

x. **Firefighters Fit for the Future**: Proposes health and wellness initiatives, including cancer screening and fitness programs.

3. Summary of progress and achievements so far:

Throughout the last year, Officers have considered these key areas of focus, and wherever possible incorporated them into current and future plans to improve and enhance the Service.

i. **Decon**: Progress includes a contaminants project and enhancements to contracted PPE services. Implementation focuses on enhancing health monitoring and training, and pledging to the Dying to Work Charter, in memory of our colleague Firefighter Steve Bailey.

ii. **Retained Recruitment, Retention and Availability**: Progress involves aligning with future Service needs and innovative recruitment strategies, boosting training capacity, providing a dedicated marketing resource, and strategic (CRMP) planning of the future of the on-call, including more flexible working arrangements.

iii. **Extreme Weather Planning and Provision**: Progress includes adding climate change to the risk register and enhancing capabilities and plans for long term equipment, PPE and specific training.

iv. **Crewing**: Progress includes improved appliance availability and skill set reviews which reduce overtime and standby requirements. Implementation focuses on maintaining optimal crewing levels to manage daily demand and building resilience to manage risk.

v. **Equality, Diversity and Inclusion (ED&I)**: Progress includes appointing a People and Culture Officer and a new Director of Human Resources and Organisational Development. Implementation involves the roll out of Active Bystander training, and a commitment to review our maternity provision to provide up to 52 weeks' pay to protect breastfeeding mothers alongside setting the 25/26 budget.

vi. **Commitment to Industrial Relations**: Progress includes scheduling NJC joint industrial relations training and revising the Trade Union Facilities agreement. Implementation focuses on collaboration with Union representatives to uphold constructive dialogue and improved industrial relations.

vii. **Pay and Conditions**: Progress includes planning effectively for national pay increases and permanently adopting Grey Book overtime rates for daytime bank

rates. The temporary local increase for night rates has also been made permanent, and local agreement has been reached for Urban Search and Rescue resilience. Implementation involves a further review of employee reward and recognition scheduled for next year.

viii. **Infrastructure Planning – Stations and Training**: Progress includes committing to presenting a full business case for a potential new training facility at Westcott Venture Park by the end of the financial year and increasing training budgets for transformation initiatives. Implementation involves stakeholder engagement and regular Training Needs Analysis to align funding with training requirements.

ix. **Infrastructure - Facility Improvement Program**: Progress includes urgent works to improve facilities. Implementation focuses on developing a detailed program of works and regular staff feedback to improve facilities and ensure a supportive working environment.

x. **Firefighters Fit for the Future**: Progress includes auditing the provision and condition of gym equipment across the Service and planning a review of benefits, and reward and recognition. Implementation involves developing wellness programs and upgrading facilities to enhance health and well-being for firefighters.

4. Further Detail - Service Progress Updates and Implementation

These updates, implementation approaches, and perceived benefits highlight our commitment to enhancing the Service and supporting our firefighters in synergy with the 2024 FBU Improvements Agenda:

4.1 Decon:

Progress: Our priority for protecting firefighters' long-term health and safety align with the FBU's concerns and their Decon campaign. This is being addressed through a comprehensive contaminants project, which includes guidance on hazardous substances, decontamination, clean-cab procedures, and PPE management.

- Since 2018, the Service has a contracted PPE service for professionally laundered firefighting PPE to be available on a two-hour call-out, on the

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fireground if necessary, to ensure firefighters do not have to wear contaminated PPE for any longer than necessary.

- Fire Stations are now being zoned (red, amber and green) to minimise cross-contamination, though it is recognised that some sites require ongoing improvements to ensure this is possible.
- PPE collection points have also been introduced to eliminate any requirement for contaminated firefighting PPE to be brought onto fire stations.
- The Service has introduced new PPE helmet carry bags to further reduce the risk of contaminants
- personal issue 'gym' bags - hair and body wash and particulate flash hoods for training instructors have been issued.
- Three Breathing Apparatus set washing facilities are installed, and three further washers are planned for installation.
- Information regarding Systematised Nomenclature of Medicine Clinical Terms [SNOMED](#) codes to raise awareness about reporting occupational health risks are published on the Service intranet. External publication is also being considered for retired Firefighters.
- Recording of exposure to hazardous substances has always been in place and this has been expanded to include recording of exposure to fire effluents.
- Enhanced monitoring for specific roles is in place, such as operational training instructors is in place.
- Air sampling is being trialled, costed and implemented. Water testing kits are also being implemented to test river water prior to training events.

Implementation: The Service will continue to enhance health monitoring processes, ensuring comprehensive coverage and follow-up for all firefighters. This includes regular training on DECON procedures and the introduction of new technologies to monitor and record exposures effectively.

Benefits: These measures will significantly improve the health and safety of our firefighters, reducing long-term health risks and ensuring a safer working environment.

4.2 Retained Recruitment, Retention & Availability:

Progress: This priority aligns with the Service's future needs and is included in the draft Community Risk Management Plan (CRMP) as a key priority.

- FBU representatives will be integral to the on-call CRMP delivery programme and will form part of an on-call working group.
- The Service has provided a dedicated marketing resource to improve local advertising and targeted social media for on-call.
- Funding has been secured for an additional on-call Breathing Apparatus training course in 2024/25. A realignment of budgets during 2024/25 will ensure future courses are available according to need.
- The Bulk Water Carrier has been relocated to Princes Risborough on-call fire station to provide further opportunities for on-call availability and better coverage.
- One Rural firefighting vehicle has been moved to Chesham on-call fire station.
- Data analysis has been completed as part of the CRMP and does not indicate an urgent need for more wholetime or day-crewed fire stations, but future decisions on the on-call service may necessitate further review, depending upon the outcomes.

Implementation: The Service is considering innovative recruitment strategies to attract and retain talent, including flexible working arrangements. Recent social media campaigns are just one example of the innovative approach being taken to attract, recruit and retain more people. A comprehensive review of current practices will be conducted to identify areas for improvement, including improved management of tiered availability.

Benefits: A small number of on-call fire stations are starting to demonstrate improved performance in terms of tiered response availability, which is encouraging. Improved recruitment and retention will ensure the Service has a robust and reliable workforce, enhancing our ability to respond to emergencies effectively.

4.3 Extreme Weather Planning and Provision:

Progress: This priority aligns with the Authority's aims and objectives, and has been a key feature in developing the next Community Risk Management Plan

- Climate change risks are now included on the Corporate Risk Register, driving improvements to service delivery.
- Enhanced capabilities (three rural firefighting vehicles) are in place to address access to off-road, wildfire and extreme heat risks.
- Enhanced training and capability have been secured through introduction of Wildfire Subject Matter Advisors
- Proposals are being developed to procure the best capabilities in terms of appliances, equipment, and PPE for the long term.
- Two new Rescue Boats for Beaconsfield and Newport Pagnell are in the process of being procured.
- Wildfire Prevention materials have been developed and included in the annual Prevention calendar to help improve community resilience.

Implementation: We will continue to collaborate with other emergency services and local authorities through the Local Resilience Forum to ensure a coordinated response to extreme weather events. This includes regular training exercises and planning.

Benefits: These measures will enhance our preparedness and resilience, ensuring that we can effectively respond to extreme weather events and protect our communities.

4.4 Crewing:

Progress: Addressing every area of the improvement agenda within a year is challenging due to financial constraints. Previous decisions to use Council Tax precept flexibility have improved wholetime appliance availability and reduced overtime reliance. Further increases to the whole-time establishment are not currently planned as the data modelling shows these are not currently required. However, the Service does crew appliances with five firefighters where crewing allows, and a broad range of work is underway to enhance the performance of our response capability.

- Uplift of 12 firefighter positions to become Crew Commanders, with a further growth-bid to uplift 12 further posts, and introduce four additional Watch Commanders at Day- Crewed stations.

- Budget allocated for Firefighter Safe to Command, supported by FBU Collective Agreement.

- Alternative shift pattern are being trialled at Amersham fire station, supported by FBU Collective Agreement.

- USAR resilience contract proposal negotiated and agreed with FBU

- Positive crewing of Turntable Ladder is in place at West Ashland, with plans to improve availability at High Wycombe through skill set reviews and training (the current establishment level already allows sufficient capacity).

- Reviewed and optimised the approach to scheduling the Emergency Response Driver Training Programme to maximise effectiveness.

- Annual skill set reviews established to ensure firefighters with the right skills are in the right place.

Implementation: The Service will continue to lobby for Council Tax precept flexibility, however the requirement for additional wholetime staff will need to be balanced against future risk and demand, the on-call improvement programme and much needed improvements to estates. Regular reviews of staffing levels and skill sets will ensure that optimal crewing levels are maintained.

Benefits: Optimised crewing levels will enhance operational effectiveness, ensuring that the Service can respond to emergencies promptly and safely. Better facilities across our estate will improve the employee proposition to the wider community.

4.5 Equality, Diversity & Inclusion (ED&I):

Progress: Equity, Diversity, and Inclusion (E,D&I) are crucial to a fire and rescue service because they ensure that the workforce reflects the diverse communities they serve. This diversity brings a range of perspectives and experiences, which enhances problem-solving and decision-making. Inclusive practices foster a supportive environment where all team members feel valued and respected, leading to higher morale and better teamwork. Moreover, a commitment to E, D&I helps build trust and rapport with the

community, ensuring that services are accessible and responsive to everyone's needs, ultimately improving public safety and effectiveness.

- A People and Culture Officer is now in place, working to improve ED&I across the service.
- A Director of Human Resources and Organisational Development has been recruited to provide enhanced strategic oversight and direction.
- Active Bystander training is progressing, and mandatory training has been reviewed and is closely monitored.
- The FBU All Different All Equal policy is acknowledged and accepted as a process that FBU representatives will follow but is not included in Service procedures due to it being the FBU's policy.
- Staff networks are established.
- Culture Board is established.
- ED&I included as a key objective on all staff appraisals (95%+ completion)
- Positive action events completed and now integral to fire station planning processes.
- Leadership and Behavioural Framework and Development Pathways implemented.
- Refreshed Promises, Values and Behaviours.

Implementation: Reward and Recognition and Employee Benefits are scheduled for a full review during 2025/26. The Service will conduct regular reviews of ED&I policies and practices to ensure they remain effective and inclusive. Engaging with external experts will provide additional insights and recommendations.

Benefits: These measures will create a more inclusive and supportive working environment, enhancing the well-being and satisfaction of all staff.

4.6 Commitment to Industrial Relations:

Progress: The Service upholds good industrial relations as vital to a fire and rescue service because they ensure a harmonious and cooperative working environment. Effective communication and collaboration between management and staff lead to

better working conditions, higher job satisfaction, and increased morale. This, in turn, enhances the overall efficiency and effectiveness of the Service. When industrial relations are strong, it helps in resolving conflicts swiftly, maintaining operational continuity, and ensuring that the focus remains on delivering high-quality emergency services to the community. Ultimately, good industrial relations contribute to a safer and more resilient community.

- BFRS has a long-established Joint Consultation Forum where Representatives engage in constructive dialogue in relation to policy, procedure and change
- The Grey Book Joint Protocol has been included as an appendix to the Trade Union Facilities agreement to ensure a joint commitment to healthy industrial relations.
- An "Extra Chair" has been introduced to all governance meetings, allowing the FBU the opportunity to attend these meetings.
- Collective Agreement has been reached to introduce a new Firefighter Safe to Command role, and to trial a new shift pattern at Amersham Fire Station.
- Full time release (facilities) agreed for the current FBU Brigade Secretary/Regional Chair.
- FBU Brigade Secretary agreed to become part of the on-call working group.

Implementation: Attempts have previously been made to arrange joint industrial relations training with the NJC Joint Secretaries. Officers remain committed to scheduling this training as soon as possible. The Service will continue to improve communication and collaboration with Union Representatives, ensuring that their input is considered in all relevant decision-making processes.

Benefits: Constructive dialogue and challenge from the FBU will help shape improvements, ensuring that the voices of their members are heard, and their needs are met wherever possible.

4.7 Pay & Conditions:

Progress: Good pay and conditions are crucial for a fire and rescue service to attract and retain skilled personnel, especially given the high house prices and cost of living in Buckinghamshire and Milton Keynes. While firefighter pay is negotiated nationally and

individual services have limited influence, ensuring firefighters feel valued and supported is essential.

- The finance team continues to plan prudently for anticipated nationally agreed increases to firefighter pay.
- Where appropriately funded, the basis of improving pay for all staff is supported.
- The Service and the Authority have limited influence over the NJC framework for pay progression and negotiations.
- The Senior Management Team has agreed to permanently adopt the Grey Book overtime rate for day shift Bank shifts and has made permanent the temporary increase to the night shift rate.
- The NJC negotiated increase for On-call retaining fees is being uplifted and introduced from January 2025, and this is being applied to Day-Crewing retaining fees.
- Buckinghamshire weighting allowances have been explored informally and would require funding from existing budget. Each 1% increase to salaries would amount to approximately to £300,000 from existing budget.

Implementation: The Service will explore additional benefits and incentives to enhance overall compensation packages for our staff. Regular reviews of pay and conditions will ensure they remain competitive and fair.

Benefits: Improved pay and conditions will enhance staff morale and retention, ensuring a motivated and committed workforce.

4.8 Infrastructure Planning – Stations and Training:

Progress: The need for quality in-house training facilities is recognised, as this has been a regular theme from staff engagement as well as our workforce planning requirements. The recent Community Risk Management Plan development has also driven analysis of station/asset locations and their effectiveness against current risk and demand.

- A full business case for a potential new state-of-the-art training facility at Westcott Venture Park is being progressed.

- New roles in Operational Training and Organisational Development are implemented, supported by a refreshed Training Strategy.

- Procurement of Incident Command training and assessment software, and development of assessor/trainer skills in a newly created Incident Command Team.

- Staff development pathway launched.

- Currently, there is no requirement for additional wholetime or day-crewed stations or pumps, but this will be monitored through community risk management planning.

- Training budgets were significantly increased in 2024/25 to cover rising costs and additional training needs. Further increases will be considered as part of the Service's zero-based budgeting process.

Implementation: The Service will continue to develop the business case for the new training facility, ensuring it meets the highest standards for safety-critical functions. This includes engaging with stakeholders to gather input and ensure the facility addresses all training needs. Additionally, we will monitor the effectiveness of our Community Risk Management Plan to identify any future requirements for wholetime or day-crewed stations.

Benefits: The potential new training facility would provide firefighters with improved access to innovative training resources at a much more practical location, enhancing their skills and preparedness. Increased training budgets will ensure that all staff receive the necessary training to perform their duties safely and effectively. This will lead to improved operational performance and safety outcomes.

4.9 Infrastructure - Facility Improvement Program:

Progress: Good facilities are essential as they ensure that firefighters have the necessary resources and environment to perform their duties effectively and safely. Quality facilities support E,D&I, training, equipment maintenance, and overall operational readiness. However, with restricted finances making it difficult to fund large capital projects, it's important to find cost-effective solutions and make the most of available resources. Ensuring that even basic facilities are well-maintained can

significantly impact the efficiency and morale of the service, ultimately benefiting public safety.

- People and Culture Officer has worked with Human Resources and Facilities team to conduct an estate review and develop a Property Standard.
- A program of works will be developed following the estate review conducted in 2024/25
- Urgent works have been completed at Newport Pagnell to address female changing facilities - issues previously highlighted to the Authority.
- Further urgent works are ongoing at Gerrards Cross and Buckingham, with staff feedback and input from the People and Culture Officer.
- Remedial works completed at Brill On-call fire station
- The Service is also implementing a comprehensive audit schedule to regularly assess the condition and suitability of facilities, ensuring they meet the needs of all staff and support our ED&I goals.
- Full Westcott Business case proposal to be presented to Fire Authority before the end of the current financial year.
- Commitment to scope the requirements during 2025/26 for rebuilding/significantly refurbishing High Wycombe fire station

Implementation: The Service will develop a detailed program of works based on the estates review findings, prioritising projects that address critical needs and support ED&I objectives. Regular audits will be conducted to ensure facilities are maintained to a high standard and meet the diverse needs of our workforce. Staff feedback will be continuously sought to guide improvements.

Benefits: Improved facilities will create a more inclusive and supportive working environment, enhancing the well-being and satisfaction of all staff. Addressing infrastructure shortcomings will ensure that all firefighters have access to safe, functional, and equitable facilities, supporting their ability to perform their duties effectively.

4.10   Firefighters Fit for the Future:

Progress: Providing welfare and wellbeing support to firefighters is crucial due to the physically demanding and emotionally taxing nature of their work. Firefighters often face life-threatening situations, witness traumatic events, and endure high levels of stress. Comprehensive support arrangements not only enhance their ability to perform their duties effectively but also promotes long-term career satisfaction and reduces the risk of burnout and mental health issues. Ultimately, supporting firefighters' welfare and wellbeing is essential for maintaining a strong, capable, and motivated workforce.

- All staff have access to an Employee Assistance Programme.
- Three-yearly medicals for all operational staff, and six-monthly fitness testing are in place.
- Access to a range of gym equipment for all staff across many sites. A recent audit of gym equipment has been completed, and potential funding options will be explored to improve facilities.
- Enhanced medical monitoring for operational staff in specific roles such as Operational Training.
- Established Welfare Officer, and growth bid to consider increasing this capacity.
- Cadre of mental health support officers/first aiders.
- Long-established trauma support and incident debriefing.
- A review of reward and recognition and employee benefits is planned for 2025-26, following the recruitment of a new Director of Human Resources and Organisational Development in September.
- Yearly cancer screening has been explored, but more research is needed to implement effective screening.
- The Service has a team of physical training supervisors and instructors overseeing fitness testing and planning. Nutritional advice is not currently provided but can be considered.
- Recently introduced Professional Supervision to key roles where exposure to trauma can be high.
- The second phase of the EAP has not yet been explored, but business cases for expedited assistance are being considered as part of standard practice.

Implementation: We will conduct a comprehensive review of reward and recognition programs to identify opportunities for enhancing employee benefits during 2025/26. This includes exploring options for subsidised private medical insurance, yearly cancer screening, and targeted wellness programs. Potential funding options will be reviewed to upgrade gym facilities and provide nutritional advice as part of the reward and recognition review. The second phase of the EAP will also be explored regarding the request for specialist, targeted assistance to employees.

Benefits: Enhanced reward and recognition programs will improve staff morale and retention, ensuring a motivated and committed workforce. Access to comprehensive health and wellness resources will support the overall well-being of firefighters, reducing health risks and promoting a healthy lifestyle. Improved gym facilities and targeted wellness programs would enhance physical fitness and readiness, contributing to better performance and safety outcomes.

5 Conclusion and Look Forward

In conclusion, the "2024 Improvements Agenda" presented by the Fire Brigades Union and supported by Buckinghamshire Fire and Rescue Service compliments the Service's comprehensive plans to help enhance the safety, well-being, and operational efficiency of our firefighters.

The FBU Agenda helps the Service to address critical areas such as health monitoring, recruitment and retention, extreme weather preparedness, crewing, equality and diversity, industrial relations, pay and conditions, infrastructure planning, and overall firefighter fitness and wellbeing.

Both the Service and the FBU recognise that it would be impossible to implement all elements of the Agenda in the first year, alongside other competing priorities and restrictions and limitations to available funding.

As we move forward, focus will be on the continued implementation of these initiatives, working constructively alongside the FBU ensuring that more planned improvements are realised.

By focusing on these areas, we all aim to create a safer, more supportive, and more effective working environment for all firefighters.

The practical dialogue and challenge from the FBU will continue to play a vital role in shaping these improvements, ensuring that the voices of their members are heard, and their needs are met wherever possible.

Together, we are committed to building a stronger, more resilient fire and rescue service for the future.

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Executive Council member
Steve Wright

Regional Secretary
Mark Chapman

Improvements Agenda 2024

1. Decon

We note the importance to our members of the ongoing work at the University of Central Lancashire (UCLan), led by Professor Anna Stec. We seek the full adoption of recommendations made by these reports to include training, assurance, adjustments of working practices and provision of all required means of prevention and protection.

Ongoing scientific research findings continue to support last year's ruling from the World Health Organisation, which says that exposure through working as a firefighter is carcinogenic.

We are urgently calling on BFRS for:

· Annual health monitoring for all firefighters, to also continue after retirement.

· Adequate monitoring and recording of Firefighter exposures

· Adequate recording of occupation of firefighter (or former occupation) in health and similar records, including on death certificates

· The introduction of effective DECON policies and training across the FRS

· The introduction of facilities and contracts for appropriate and effective PPE and workwear cleaning across all services and duty systems
· Supporting presumptive legislation for occupational injuries
· Pledging to the Dying to Work Charter, in memory of our colleague Steve Bailey

DECON: Fire Contaminants | Campaign (fbu.org.uk)
The Dying to Work Campaign | TUC

2. Retained Recruitment. Retention & Availability

Currently we have 10 standalone retained stations and 17 retained appliances to supplement the 12 immediately available wholetime/day crewed. Our minimum provision to our communities is set at 3, leaving large areas of our county without sufficient fire cover. We recognise the difficulties faced in this area and call upon BFRS to:

- Conduct a route and branch review of Recruitment, Retention & Availability
- Evaluate differing ways of working and job specifications
- Support the NJC process in reviewing terms and conditions
- Set higher targets of availability
- Increase wholetime and/or day crewing stations

3. Extreme weather planning and provision

We recognise the ever-increasing threat of extreme weather events and the impacts that has on the fire and rescue sector. Urgent action is required from fire and rescue services to actively identify, plan and address those impacts. We call on BFRS to:

- Ensure that climate change is added to our risk register
- Procure the best appliances, equipment, PPE and training available to deal with wildfires
- Support the call for flooding to become a statutory duty of fire and rescue services with additional funding
- Ensure we have the resources in place and firefighter numbers to deal with these incidents safely

Scorched: Firefighters and resilience to wildfires | Fire Brigades Union (fbu.org.uk)

4. Crewing

Buckinghamshire Fire Brigades Union recognises the increase in our firefighter establishment over the last year. However, further increases are required now and into the future to better deliver for our communities in prevention and response. These are urgently required to enable improved firefighter safety, operational effectiveness and facilitate growth across our service. We urge:

- That 320+ is set as our establishment figure for the upcoming financial year.
- That successive increases are planned year on year.
- That positive crewing of the Turntable ladders is actioned immediately
- That we move progressively to crewing of 5 on fire appliances.

5. Equality, Diversity & Inclusion

Buckinghamshire Fire Brigades Union stated in 2022 & 2023 that enough work was not being done in this area. A number of our concerns remain moving into 2024. We assert that ED&I should be taken seriously with short, medium and long term planning in place to ensure our fire and rescue service is fit for the future. We urge:

- The creation of an Equalities Officer role (or equivalent) dedicated to ED&I, with a responsibility for planning, education and training of all staff.
- An uplift in quality training of all staff in relation to ED&I, with mandatory training and quality assurance.
- Inclusion of the Fire Brigades Unions All Different All Equal policy into discipline and grievance procedures.
- A focus on our partner organisations ensuring that their views and belief systems are compatible with the modern fire and rescue service.
- As assessment of infrastructure changes required (see below) with allocated funding for inclusivity.
- Support the Fight for 52: The case for 12 months full pay maternity leave in the fire and rescue service and amend policies and procedure as appropriate

Fight for 52 | Fire Brigades Union (fbu.org.uk)

All Different All Equal | Fire Brigades Union (fbu.org.uk)

6. Commitment to industrial relations

With significant changes in senior management and the need to navigate through difficult times, we affirm our commitment to maintaining good industrial relations, whilst seeking further improvements in working relationships. We urge that:

- NJC Joint training be booked at the earliest opportunity
- An ongoing commitment to support the Grey Book Joint protocol
- Formal access to additional meetings to include the Business Transformation board & workforce planning
- Revised Facilities arrangements and NJC Joint Protocol be adopted into our policies and procedures.

7. Pay & Conditions

Buckinghamshire Firefighters are alarmed that our pay has significantly declined in real terms since 2010. A competent firefighter is still 12-15%/£4000+ worse off and this needs to be rectified moving forward. We call on Buckinghamshire Fire & Rescue service to:

- Continue to support increased pay for firefighters and to make this position clear through all available means.
- Support the national NJC framework for pay progression and negotiations.
- Maintain assumed pay increase planning above inflationary levels
- Return all overtime rates of pay to grey book standards, to include the night bank rate
- Formally explore Buckinghamshire waiting allowance and make funds available to that end.

8. Infrastructure Planning – Stations and Training

Along with the need for improvements within our retained capability, action is needed in training infrastructure and our wholetime/day crewed capability to meet the needs of our communities. With a significant increase in new starters comes the need to ensure our capacity to access realistic and meaningful training is met. We suffer from a lack of good quality, fit for purpose training facilities to meet our ongoing needs. This area needs urgent attention and investment. Alongside this, with a significant reduction in retained appliance availability and housing and business expansion across our county, we require additional resources. We assert the need for:

- Quality, in house training facilities for our safety critical functions
- Wholetime or day crewed solutions in Princes Risborough and the West of Milton Keynes, as well as any others identified.
- Options considered for Amersham Fire stations future, to include a potential partial relocation and move to Wholetime over day crewed.
- An overall increase in training budgets to align with staff increases and inflation.

9. Infrastructure - Facility Improvement program

We note our members continued frustrations with what is a reactive approach to station facility changes, improvement and maintenance. We also note that some stations continue to be used in ways in which they were never originally designed. Going forward, we need to see:

- Proper planning and investment to address shortcomings
- ED&I at the forefront of property and infrastructure planning

- An open and consulted approach to station improvements
- An open channel for seeking improvements
- A review of Male, Female & Neutral provision of facilities and whether these are adequate and being used reasonably
- Regular station audits supported by our Brigade Health & Safety official
- Transparency and quality assurance

10. **Firefighters Fit for the Future**

We recognise the difficulty many of our members will see in reaching their full pensions, without reductions. To that end we call on Buckinghamshire Fire & Rescue service to invest in additional preventative and proactive means of firefighters maintaining a good level of mental & physical fitness now and into the future. We seek the following:

- Subsidised Private Medical Insurance
- Yearly cancer screening and health monitoring
- Investment and targeted funding for associated schemes
- Nutrition and fitness planning
- Regular refresh of gym equipment and provision
- Employee rewards programs which benefit these aims
- A second phase of EAP, offering specialist, targeted assistance

Brigade Committee
Buckinghamshire Fire Brigades Union

website | youtube | twitter | facebook

Buckinghamshire & Milton Keynes Fire Authority

Meeting and date: Fire Authority, 11 December 2024

Report title: Community Risk Management Plan 2025-2030

Lead Member: Councillor Simon Rouse: Service Delivery, Protection and Collaboration

Report sponsor: Simon Tuffley, Chief Operating Officer / Deputy Chief Fire Officer

Author and contact: Mark Hemming, Director of Finance and Assets, mhemming@bucksfire.gov.uk

Action: Decision.

Recommendations: That the Community Risk Management Plan 2025-2030 be approved.

Executive summary:

This paper presents the Community Risk Management Plan 2025-30 (henceforth the **CRMP**) to be approved. In June 2024 the Fire Authority approved the draft version of the CRMP for consultation with the public, staff and partner organisations, which ran for a 12-week period during July through to September.

Accompanying the final version of the CRMP for approval is a summary of the consultation responses (Appendix 2) and a summary of changes to the version presented to the Authority in June 2024 (Appendix 3).

The CRMP aims to explain how the Service plans to mitigate identified risks and improve community safety by aligning available resources with key objectives and utilising them in the most efficient way. It also reflects the Service's updated promise to the public, core values and core behaviours. As well as considering the full assessment of risks, it also addresses issues raised in the Service's most recent HMICFRS inspection report.

The document details three strategic objectives (first three bullet points below) supported by three strategic enablers (last three bullet points below). Each one of these is supported by an embedded strategy:
- Reducing risk and keeping our community safe (Prevention Strategy)
- Protecting people from risk in the built environment (Protection Strategy)
- Responding quickly and effectively to emergencies (Response and Resilience Strategy)
- An inclusive, healthy and engaged workforce (People Strategy)

- Making the most of our finances and assets (Finance and Assets Strategy)
- Optimising our technology and data (Digital, Data and Technology Strategy)

The CRMP also contains details of the measures relevant to each objective and enabler so that performance can be tracked throughout the lifetime of the plan.

The consultation feedback summary (Appendix 2) contains a detailed analysis of views on every area of the CRMP. For all questions the proportion of respondents that agreed with or provided a neutral response far outweighed the proportion that disagreed with each question. The questionnaire also provided the opportunity to provide free-text comments, with most of those who completed this section taking the opportunity to raise concerns, largely relating to resource issues and challenges around the on-call crewing model.

The feedback on the draft CRMP document itself overall showed that:
- Over three-in-five questionnaire respondents (63%) agreed that the draft CRMP 2025-2030 is clear and easy to understand. Around one-in-seven respondents (14%) disagreed that the draft CRMP is clear and easy to understand, while almost a quarter (23%) gave a neutral response.
- Three-in-five questionnaire respondents (60%) agreed that BFRS's proposed CRMP 2025-2030 has helped them to better understand how BFRS works. Around one-in-six respondents (16%) disagreed, while almost a quarter (24%) gave a neutral response.
- A few questionnaire respondents praised the service overall, and the draft CRMP's identification of risks and mitigations. Most other feedback was less positive, however. Respondents shared concerns around the draft CRMP's lack of detail and accountability measures; BFRS's recent inspection failures; and the wording of the consultation questions. A particular worry was that the draft CRMP's emphasis on efficiency is an attempt to disguise the potential for future service reductions.

Detailed plans for implementing the actions within each strategy will form the basis of our Annual Delivery Plan (previously known as the Corporate Plan) that will be presented to the Fire Authority for approval at its meeting in February 2025.

Financial implications:

The cost of the consultation exercise was £30k. This was covered within the existing revenue budget.

Risk management:

The leading case which considered the substantive and procedural requirements of a CRMP is R. (on the application of Islington LBC) v Mayor of London [2013] EWHC 4142 in which the High Court determined an application for judicial review brought

against LFEPA (the, then, fire and rescue authority for Greater London) concerning the adoption of its IRMP 2013-16. (The new Service Plan has been designated a 'Community Risk Management Plan' (CRMP), rather than 'IRMP', to align with the 2021 Fire Standards Board Fire Standard).

The London Boroughs argued that (1) the formulation of the IRMP should have commenced with a comprehensive risk assessment of "all foreseeable risks" before considering how those risks were to be addressed. If that had been done, certain vulnerable sections of the community would have been identified as being at higher risk than others elsewhere in London. Instead, it was said that LFEPA had adopted an approach to the IRMP predicated on seeking to achieve uniform attendance time targets, contrary to the Fire and Rescue National Framework, and had failed to take into account local risk factors; and (2) the consultation process leading to the adoption of the IRMP was flawed, in that misleading information had been conveyed in relation to a predicted increased in fatality rates under the proposals. Further, it was alleged that insufficient information had been made available about the impact of the proposals on attendance times at ward level.

The High Court refused the application, finding in favour of LFEPA for, i.a., the following grounds:
(1) The National Framework was not prescriptive as to the means by which all foreseeable risks were to be identified; those risks merely had to be addressed at a level of detail that enabled proper planning of a response to the needs identified. On the evidence, that had been done. Accordingly, the need to consider all foreseeable local risks in the formulation of the IRMP had been met [see paras 195-196, 207, 227-229 of judgment].
(2) The consultation had fulfilled its purpose of enabling consultees to draw to the attention of the decision-makers any reasoned objection to the proposals advanced [paras 292-293, 307,310 – 311], the High Court noting that care is required should proposals be changed after consultation [340].
(3) Certain sections of the population were more likely to suffer a fire and it was appropriate to consider the effect on them as future users of the fire service when assessing whether there would be indirect discrimination against them under the Equality Act 2010 s.149. LFEPA had complied with the obligation to have due regard to the Act by focusing at borough level on those most likely to experience fire as a legitimate means of considering those with protected characteristics [paras 365-366, 370-372].

Legal implications:

The requirement to produce an IRMP has a statutory basis as it is specified in the National Framework. Section 21 of Fire and Rescue Services Act 2004 (FRSA 2004) requires that:
"(1) The Secretary of State must prepare a Fire and Rescue National Framework.
(2) The Framework—

(a) must set out priorities and objectives for fire and rescue authorities in connection with the discharge of their functions;
(b) may contain guidance to fire and rescue authorities in connection with the discharge of any of their functions;
(c) may contain any other matter relating to fire and rescue authorities or their functions that the Secretary of State considers appropriate."

Moreover section 21 (7) of the FRSA 2004 requires that: *"(7) Fire and rescue authorities must have regard to the Framework in carrying out their functions."*

A key concept within the National Framework is the IRMP. For example, at paragraph *"3.6 Fire and rescue authorities are required to assess the risk of emergencies occurring and use this to inform contingency planning. To do this effectively, fire and rescue authorities are expected to assess their existing capability and identify any gaps as part of the integrated risk management planning process. This gap analysis needs to be conducted by fire and rescue authorities individually and collectively to obtain an overall picture of their ability to meet the full range of risks in their areas."*

Privacy and security implications:

No direct impact.

Duty to collaborate:

The National Framework requires every fire and rescue authority to produce its own IRMP / CRMP. However, officers share thinking on approaches to plan development and consultation practices with other fire and rescue services, including neighbouring services.

All neighbouring fire and rescue authorities and Thames Valley blue light partners were included as part of the public consultation process associated with the production of the new CRMP.

Health and safety implications:

No direct implications arising from the production of the CRMP and Corporate Plan. Any proposals for change arising from the Plans will include evaluation of any health and safety implications.

Environmental implications:

None arising from the planning process itself. However, any changes to service provision proposed in the CRMP will be subject to environmental impact assessments where appropriate.

Equality, diversity, and inclusion implications:

These will be identified and evaluated as the plans are developed, in line with the Fire Standards Board CRMP Fire Standard; relevant legislative requirements; best practice; and guidance , for example: Integrated risk management planning: equality and diversity guidance, Home Office 2008

Consultation and communication:

The consultation was undertaken in compliance with National Framework and Fire Standards Board CRMP Fire Standard requirements.

The proposed changes to the draft CRMP as a result of the consultation are not sufficient revisions so as to require re-consultation before adoption. R (Smith) v East Kent Hospital NHS Trust [2002] EWHC 2640 (Admin)

The period between the closure of the consultation and the date for approval by the Authority is to allow for the subsequent analysis of responses, in accordance with the Gunning Principles which set out the legal tests that define what constitutes a legitimate consultation. These include, amongst other things, that: "3 there is adequate time for consideration and response" and "4 'conscientious consideration' must be given to the consultation responses before a decision is made. Decision-makers should be able to provide evidence that they took consultation responses into account".

The outcomes of the consultation are not binding on the Authority. However, it is required to have regard to them in reaching decisions associated with the IRMP / CRMP planning process where relevant.

Background papers:

Community Risk Management Plan Assurance Review, 7 November 2024, Overview and Audit Committee, https://bucksfire.gov.uk/wp-content/uploads/2024/10/OVERVIEW-AND-AUDIT-COMMITTEE-AGENDA-AND-REPORTS-7-NOVEMBER-2024-min-1.pdf (pp.31-64)

Community Risk Management Plan 2025-2030, 12 June 2024, Fire Authority, https://bucksfire.gov.uk/wp-content/uploads/2024/05/FIRE-AUTHORITY-ANNUAL-MEETING-AGENDA-AND-REPORTS-120624-Compressed.pdf (pp.65-272)

2025 – 2030 Service Planning Update, 8 February 2024, Executive Committee, https://bucksfire.gov.uk/wp-content/uploads/2024/03/5executive-committee-meeting-8-february-2024-item-8-2025-2030-service-planning-update.pdf

2025-30 CRMP Listening and Engagement Consultation Outcomes, 11 October 2023, Fire Authority, https://bucksfire.gov.uk/documents/2023/09/fire-authority-meeting-11-october-2023-item-13b-2025-2030-crmp-listening-and-engagement-consultation-outcomes.pdf/

Community Risk Management Planning, Fire Standards Board, 19 April 2021, https://www.firestandards.org/standards/approved/community-risk-management-planning-fss-rmp01/

Fire and rescue national framework for England, Home Office, May 2018, https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/media/5aec5974ed915d42f7c6bf18/National_Framework_-_final_for_web.pdf

Appendix	Title	Protective Marking
1	Appendix 1 – Community Risk Management Plan 2025-2030 (Final Version)	
2	Appendix 2 – Community Risk Management Plan (CRMP) 2025-2030 Consultation: Report of findings	
3	Appendix 3 – Summary of Changes to the Draft CRMP	

Buckinghamshire Fire & Rescue Service

COMMUNITY RISK MANAGEMENT PLAN

2025–2030

Buckinghamshire
Fire & Rescue Service
Making a difference together

CONTENTS

INTRODUCTION

Welcome to our new Community Risk Management Plan (CRMP), jointly presented by the Chairman and Chief Fire Officer.

Previously known as the Public Safety Plan (PSP), this document reflects on the progress we have made over the past five years and looks ahead to the future. It not only identifies upcoming risks, opportunities and challenges, but also reflects what you, the community, have told us is important.

Since we published our PSP in 2020, there have been significant changes locally and globally. The increase in wildfires during the Summer of 2022 showed how important it is for us to be able to respond quickly when there's a high demand for our help.

We do more than just fight fires. For example, when the COVID-19 pandemic hit, we changed how we work and the services we offered. Our staff helped to help set up vaccination centres and supported our health partners as they delivered vaccines across Buckinghamshire and Milton Keynes.

A large part of our day-to-day job is also about working with the community and partners to help prevent fires from happening in the first place.

Although our financial situation remains challenging, it's better than it was at the start of the last PSP in 2020. By managing our money carefully and having some flexibility in how much we can ask for from Council Tax payers (for two of the last five years), we've been able to take on more staff to keep you safe. Right now, in Buckinghamshire Fire & Rescue Service (BFRS), we have more firefighters than we have had in the last ten years.

As a sector, the fire and rescue service (FRS) continues to focus on cultural transformation, reflecting on how we work and treat each other. At BFRS, we've set a clear expectation for ourselves: we won't get defensive or ignore problems with our culture. We want everyone in our team to feel safe, supported and valued and to create a welcoming, engaging and inclusive place to work.

We've recently made a promise to the public along with committing to new values and setting out core behaviours for our staff. We'll make sure that everything we do reflects these so we can give the best service possible to our community.

As a professional, modern and agile FRS, we're ready to face the challenges ahead and be ambitious in striving for excellence to serve you, our community.

WHAT IS A COMMUNITY RISK MANAGEMENT PLAN (CRMP)?

Our CRMP aims to explain how we plan to mitigate identified risks and improve community safety by aligning available resources with our key objectives and use them in the most efficient way.

The CRMP is a high-level strategic document used to inform more specific actions in supporting plans, which will include our Annual Delivery Plan, as well as dedicated station and team plans.

Each plan will outline the key interdependencies and how directorate leads, and their teams, plan to manage and monitor cross-departmental objectives.

In developing our CRMP, it was crucial for us to review the progress made since we published our PSP in 2020. Further details are available on pages 10 to 15.

Each FRS holds and has access to a wide range of data which it uses to help understand, plan for and respond to community risk.

A summary of the resources available to us can be seen in the CRMP Overview on page 6. The term 'resources' includes people, skills, money, buildings, infrastructure, equipment and data.

Change is constant and our CRMP must evolve and adapt throughout its lifetime.

The diagram below illustrates the process of building and reviewing our CRMP:

Continual review of emerging information from Prevention, Protection and Response activity used to test and update risk profile

Assessment of Risk

Promise, Values, Behaviours

HMICFRS Inspection Reports

Community Risk Management Plan

Supporting Plans

Monitoring of changes in fleet, estates and technology and impact on risk and mitigation
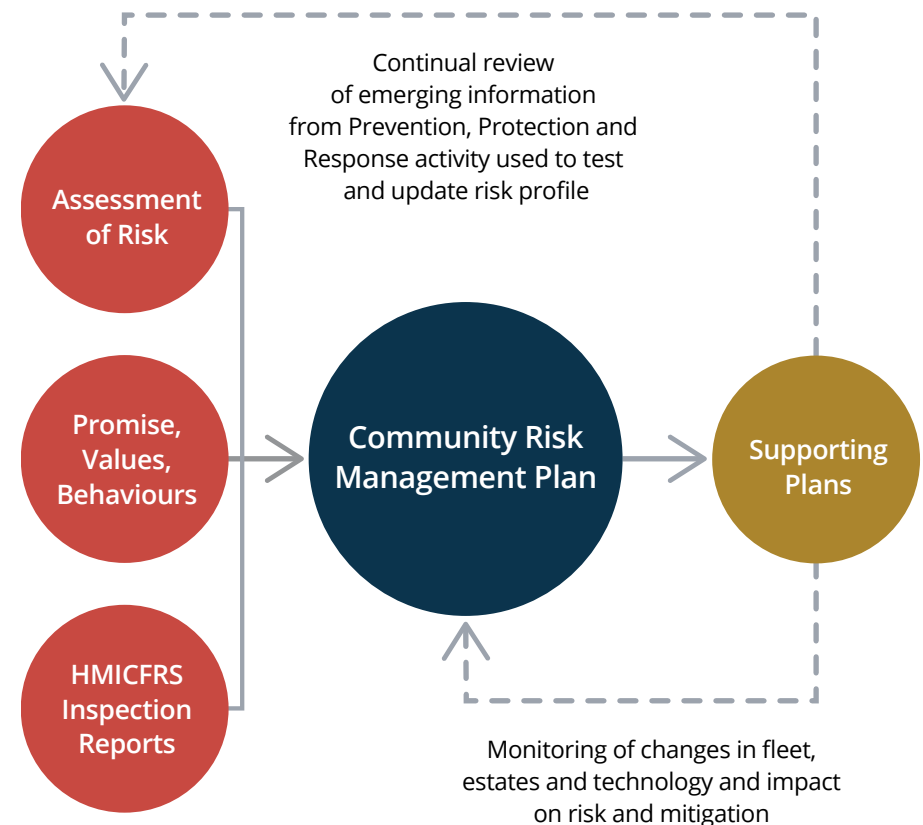
CRMP OVERVIEW

We deliver a crucial role in ensuring public safety within our community.

Our promise to the public, values and behaviours are fundamental to everything that we do. These are outlined on pages 16 to 17.

We serve over 800,000 people across diverse rural and city settings which includes the River Thames, the M1, M25 and M40 motorways, as well as rail infrastructure. This demands the expertise of nearly 500 highly skilled firefighters and support teams.

KEY FACTS

	Buckinghamshire (including Milton Keynes)	England
Area (square miles)	723	50,370
Population (thousands) 30 June 2021	843	56,536
Expenditure per population Year ending 31 March 2022	£35.51	£41.88
Incidents attended per 1,000 population Year ending 31 March 2022	9.7	11.0
Percentage of firefighters who are Wholetime Year ending 31 March 2022	70.9%	65.2%

Source: HMICFRS

We currently operate 19 fire stations across our community, housing 30 fire engines (known as pumps) along with a range of specialist and support vehicles. We also host 1 of the 19 Urban Search and Rescue (USAR) teams that are strategically located across England.

Our pumps are deployed to meet daily demands and provide resilience and capacity to handle occasional large-scale incidents or multiple, smaller incidents simultaneously. More insight into demand and use of our pumps can be found on pages 20 to 24.

We place our community and staff at the forefront of all our operations and so consultation with both these groups plays an integral role in shaping our CRMP.

Following consultation we will be implementing two new proposals: redefining our response standard and reviewing the number of pumps during the lifetime of the CRMP. Further details on these proposals can be found on pages 56 to 65.

Details of our initial consultations can be found on pages 29 to 31 and information on how to participate in planned consultations are provided on page 63.

Map A displays our fire station locations and pump types.

Map A, Location of Stations, Pumps and Specialist Vehicles and Boats

We respond to a diverse range of incidents, not just fires

Many of the incidents we attend are triggered by automatic fire alarms (AFAs). Research indicates that the vast majority of these (99%) turn out to be false alarms.

We committed to review our response to AFAs in our 2020–2025 PSP.

When not responding to incidents, station-based staff may be delivering home fire safety checks to those most at risk of fire and other emergencies, to proactively mitigate domestic dwelling fires.

At other times they may be conducting site-specific risk inspections. These enhance the protection we give to business premises by identifying and dealing with specific risks relating to each site.

To ensure that firefighter time is used effectively and productively across the three objectives data will be collected. This will help inform decision making linked to the mitigation of identified risks.

Incidents attended between April 2021 and March 2024

Category	Percentage
Fire – Outdoor	25%
Fire – Building	15%
Rescue/Release	15%
Road traffic collision	13%
Fire – Vehicle	7%
Flooding	6%
Assist other agency	6%
Lift release	3%
Other	3%
Hazardous material	2%
Animal rescue	2%
Making safe	2%
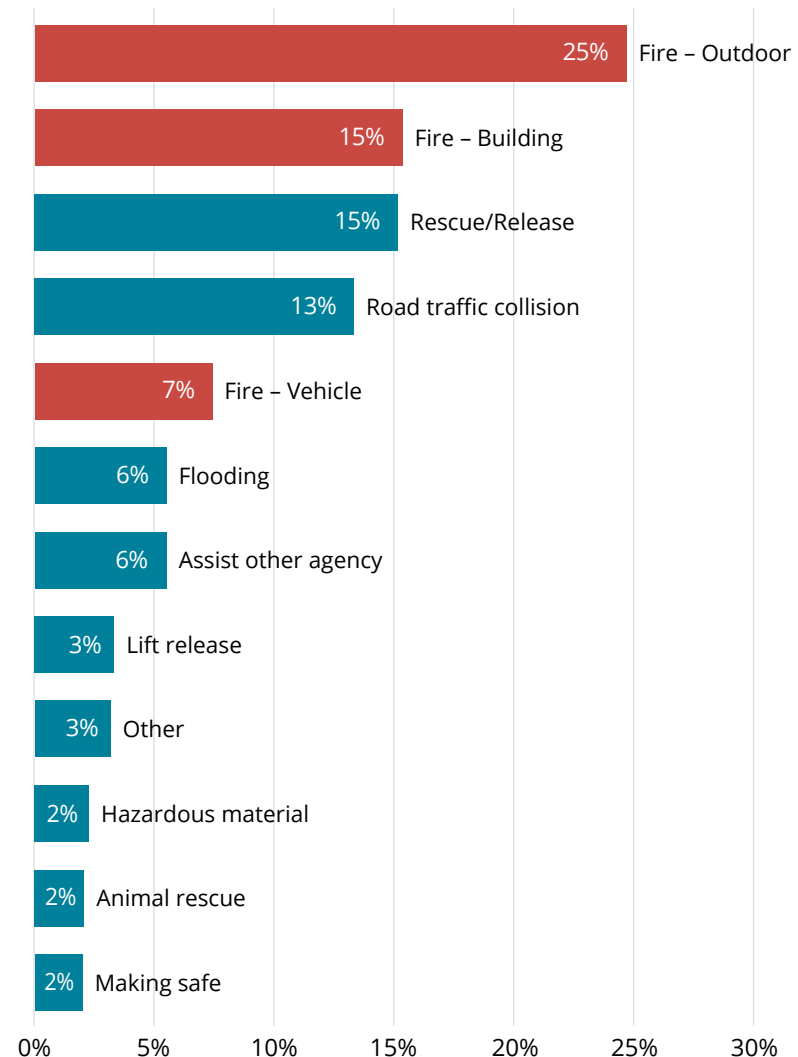
Our strategic objectives

The risks that we face are constantly evolving. Many factors contribute to this, including climate change, new construction, updated legislation and the emergence of new technologies, such as lithium-ion batteries (commonly used in electric vehicles, e-scooters and e-bikes). More information on these emerging risks can be found on pages 23 to 28.

After evaluating the available evidence, we developed an approach to these risks.

Our approach is divided into three objectives (what we want to do) and three enablers (the people, assets and IT/data) that support delivery of the objectives. Each objective and enabler has a corresponding strategy outlined in detail on pages 34 to 52.

To measure the success of these strategies, we will monitor key performance indicators throughout the lifespan of the CRMP. Detailed information on these performance indicators is available on pages 53 to 55.

It is essential that the three main functional areas of prevention, protection and response work together to ensure the achievement of all three of the objectives set out in our CRMP. Priorities across all three objectives will be detailed further in each station plan.

STRATEGIC OBJECTIVES

PREVENTION	PROTECTION	RESPONSE AND RESILIENCE
Reducing risk and keeping our community safe	Protecting people from risk in the built environment	Responding quickly and effectively to emergencies

STRATEGIC ENABLERS

WORKFORCE	FINANCE AND ASSETS	DIGITAL, DATA AND TECHNOLOGY
An inclusive, healthy and engaged workforce	Making the most of our finances and assets	Optimising our technology and data

PROGRESS AGAINST OUR PUBLIC SAFETY PLAN 2020–2025

This section of the CRMP provides an update on the progress made towards achieving the success criteria outlined in the 2020–2025 Public Safety Plan (PSP).

Progress on specific projects and initiatives outlined in the 2020–2025 PSP are reported to the Fire Authority during the annual review and refresh of the Service's five-year Corporate Plan.

A more detailed evaluation on progress will be carried out after the PSP timeframe ends in March 2025 and the CRMP (2025–2030) timeframe begins.

Infrastructure Projects

Risks identified

- Road closures during construction leading to slower emergency response times.
- On-site risks during construction, such as working at heights or depths.
- New technical risks following project completion, such as tunnel rescues.

Progress made

- Emerging Risk Group established and identifying potential impacts of all major infrastructure projects such as High Speed 2 (HS2) and East-West Rail.
- External HS2 traffic group is providing us with information on all road closures that may impact on our response times as well as access to a live road closure information system – one.network.
- Numerous multi-agency exercises undertaken at HS2 sites helping share knowledge and understanding to reduce risk and improve communication sharing.

Population

Risks identified

- Potential for increases in all types of emergency response.
- Potential increase in accidental dwelling fire (ADF) injuries and fatalities, particularly in vulnerable groups such as the 80+ age group.

Progress made

- In 2022/23, there was an 8% increase in overall incident numbers compared to the previous 5 year average.
  A notable portion of the increase stemmed from other agencies requiring our assistance. The 5 year average figure did cover the period of the COVID-19 pandemic, during which we saw a significant reduction in incident numbers and we should also factor in our growing population over this period.
- 2022/23 saw an 11% reduction in ADF incidents compared to the previous 5 year average, indicating a sustained downward trend. The rate of ADFs per 1,000 (0.79) was also notably below the average for England (0.98).
- In 2024/25 we reviewed and piloted our new approach to responding to AFAs.

Technology information and systems security

Risks identified

- Disruption to our ability to deliver emergency response and other services due to cyberattack.
- New risks arising from the introduction of emerging technologies, such as autonomous vehicles.

Progress made

- We did not experience any service-disabling cyberattacks during the PSP period (to date).
- We have invested in measures to enhance our cyber and information security, including:
  - Improving our email security ranking against the South-East Government Warning, Advisory and Reporting Point criteria.
  - Implementing an additional layer of protection to our existing firewall and reporting tools, enabling better monitoring of exposure and vulnerability to cyberattacks by email, and prioritisation of actions if threat is detected.
- Emerging Risk Group established and monitoring, evaluating and prioritising potential risks and opportunities, mitigating action from, or identifying potential for use of, new and emerging technologies.

Civil Emergencies

Risks identified

- Increase in frequency and/or severity of incidents.
- Two civil emergencies were experienced during the PSP period (to date):
  - The COVID-19 pandemic began in early 2020.
  - Wildfires, associated with record high temperatures and dry weather, during July and August of 2022.

Progress made

- In November 2020, His Majesty's Inspectorate of Constabulary and Fire & Rescue Services (HMICFRS) inspected our response to the pandemic. Its findings noted that being an active member of the Thames Valley Collaboration Group and Thames Valley Local Resilience Forum strengthens our relationships with partners, helping us to all provide better service to our community.

- 2022 saw the UK recording its highest ever temperature of 40.3°C (104.5°F) on 19 July 2022 which presented many challenges for all emergency services. Alongside 14 other UK fire and rescue services, including neighbouring London, Bedfordshire and Hertfordshire, we declared a major incident due to outbreaks of fire. We evaluated our response and have made recommendations for improvements which are currently being implemented.
- HMICFRS stated, following our 2023 inspection, that we have: "Good arrangements in place to respond to emergencies with partners that make up TVLRF".

Workforce pressures

Risks identified

- Maintaining range, or level, of service to the public due to staff retention and recruitment challenges.

Progress made

- In the 2022 Culture Survey, 71% of our staff responding indicated they were proud to work for the Service. This was also reflected in the HMICFRS' 2023 inspection which found that: "Staff are proud to work for the Service and demonstrate commitment to putting the community at the heart of all they do".

- Significant progress has been made in terms of increasing the number of staff, especially the number of Wholetime firefighters.

- Changes to apprenticeship firefighter contracts will help mitigate low numbers of emergency response drivers and incident commanders that we have experienced in the past.

"Staff are proud to work for the Service and demonstrate commitment to putting the community at the heart of all they do."

"Due to its improved financial position, the Service no longer faces the prospect of reduced reserves. It has a sensible and sustainable plan for using its reserves."

Funding pressures

Risk identified

- Insufficient funding to maintain current range or level of service to the public.

Progress made

- The Fire Authority is required, by law, to maintain a balanced budget. This requirement has been met without the need for service cuts during the current PSP period.

- The Fire Authority used the Council Tax Precept flexibility to increase its funding available for the financial years 2022/23 and 2023/24. This was used to improve front-line service resourcing which, over time, will improve the reliability and resilience of our Service.

- HMICFRS stated, following our 2023 inspection: "Due to its improved financial position, the Service no longer faces the prospect of reduced reserves. It has a sensible and sustainable plan for using its reserves".

OUR PROMISE AND OUR CULTURE

A review of our previous vision and values resulted in the development of a new promise to the public and a redefinition of our core values.

Underpinning our promise and our values are a set of core behaviours that clearly define what it means to work for us at BFRS. We believe these behaviours encourage a healthy workplace culture that values compassion, integrity and respect.

We create a welcoming, engaging and inclusive place to work, which inspires pride in our people. This is achieved through open and transparent communication, where everyone working within the Service feels safe and confident to offer ideas, feedback and speak up when things aren't right.

The combination of our promise, values and behaviours set the direction for how we deliver the culture we want to see within our Service, empowering our staff to make the right decisions over the lifetime of this CRMP, and into the future.

Our Promise

COMMITTED
to providing an excellent, modern and agile FRS for our community.

DEDICATED
to having the right people, at the right time, with the right skills, to keep you safe.

TOGETHER
we will work to protect and safeguard people and places.

Our Core Values

COMPASSION

INTEGRITY

RESPECT

Our Core Behaviours

PROFESSIONAL **CONNECTED** **EMPOWERING** **AMBITIOUS**

PREPARING OUR PLAN

Our CRMP is informed by a comprehensive understanding of current and future risk,

We have used a wide range of evidence to build a risk profile, which we have validated with our own operational data.

The following is a summary of our more detailed Evidence Base Document which analyses the full range of evidence available.

Our definition of risk in the community

- **Risk**: A combination of the likelihood and consequences of hazardous events.

- **Hazardous event**: This refers to a potential event that can cause harm.

- **Likelihood**: The chance of something happening. May be described by the probability, frequency or uncertainty of events.

- **Consequence**: The outcome of an event. Specifically, the severity or extent of harm caused by an event.

Resource allocation

We aim to match resources with the combination of likelihood and consequences of hazardous events.

The inputs into our CRMP risk assessment are:

National Security Risk Assessment (NSRA)

National Risk Register (NRR)

Thames Valley LRF (TVLRF) Risk Register

Horizon Scanning/ Research

Site Specific Risk Register

Incident Types and Trends

Socio-demographic Analysis

PESTELO Analysis

Listening and Engagement Consultation with Public, Staff and Partners

Chronic/ Local Risk and Demand

Community Risk Management Plan

Understanding demand

To understand the demand on our resources, we've looked at how often we need to use our pumps to respond to emergencies in Buckinghamshire and Milton Keynes (our response area).

This analysis involves counting how many pumps are being used for emergency response, at any point, anywhere in our response area and includes those from neighbouring Services.

Graph A shows that having 12 pumps available covers 99.7% of our demand. A simple way to look at this is 12 pumps would cover our demand for 364 days of an average year.

Graph A, Use of Pumps April 2019 to March 2023
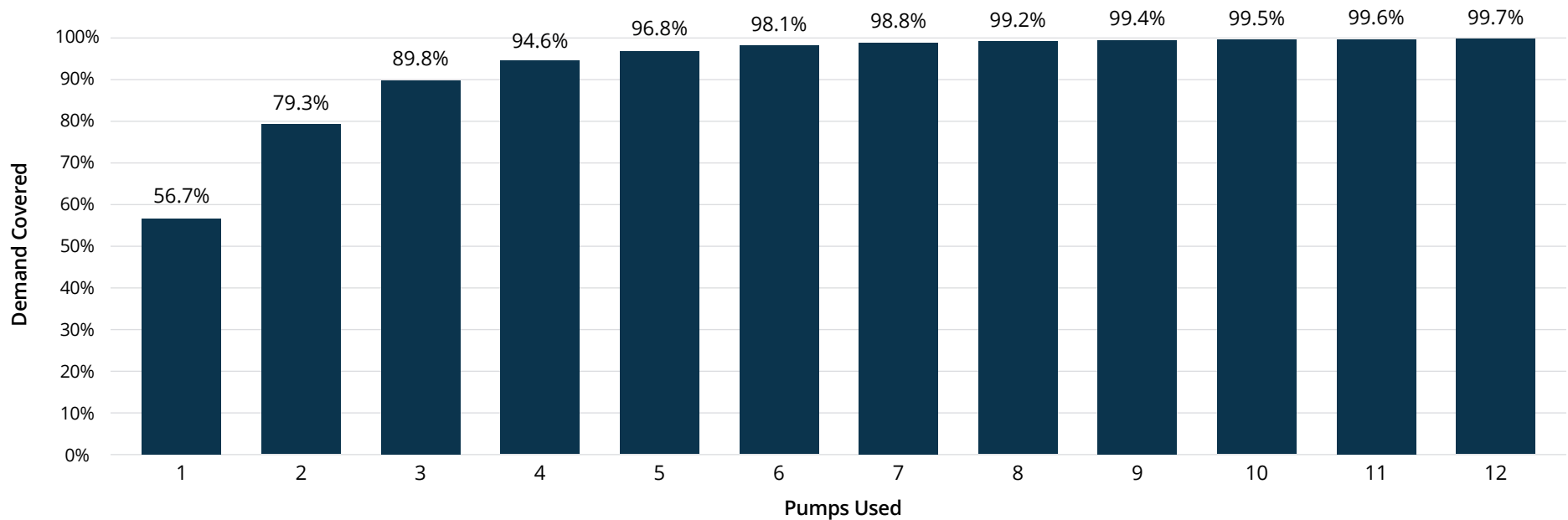
This is only part of the picture

We also consider when (what time) our pumps are needed.

Graph B shows how the number of pumps needed is not spread evenly across the day and night.

Our data tells us the majority of our simultaneous demand, over 99%, can be handled with 10 pumps or fewer. However, there are occasions where a larger number of pumps are needed.

The maximum number of pumps required at any given time was less than 20. Summer 2022 was an exception when the peak of wildfires required the response of nearly 40 pumps.

This underscores the importance of being able to rapidly increase our resources to meet demand, as well as the support provided by neighbouring services during periods of heightened demand.

Graph B, Use of Pumps by Hour of the Day

Legend:
- 2018–2023 >99% Coverage
- 2018–2023 Max Pumps Used
- 2018–2022 Max Pumps Used

Y-axis: Pumps

X-axis: Hour of the Day
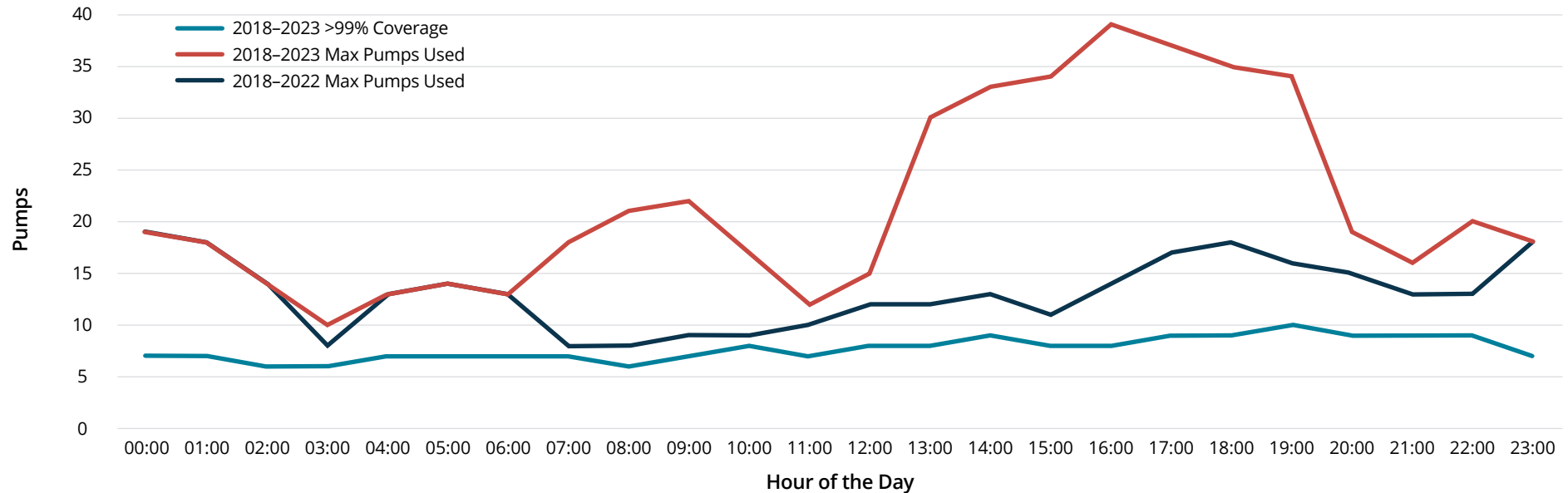
How we calculate support from neighbouring FRS

All our modelling considers the availability of resources from neighbouring FRS when we need them. Given the geography of our area, there are some locations where neighbouring Services can arrive quicker than us, even with all our pumps available.

We also have some areas where the pumps of neighbouring Services can reach more quickly, if our closest On-Call pump is not available.

Map B shows locations where neighbouring Service pumps could be called to attend an incident first.
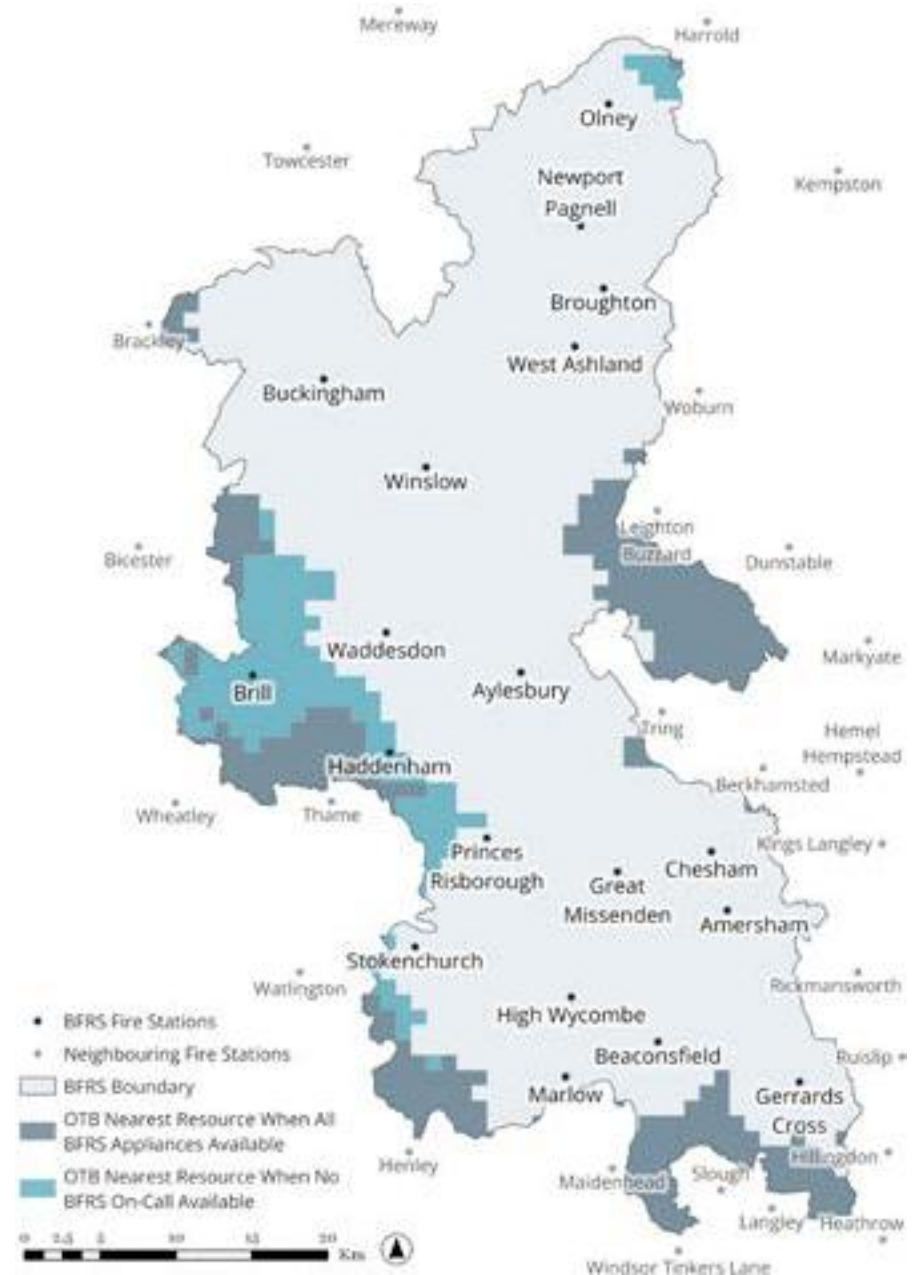
Map B, Over the Border (OTB) Resource Availability

Understanding risk

You can find all the risks we've identified, in detail, in the supporting Evidence Base Document. The following summary highlights some of the key evidence and explains how we use it.

Deprivation

The Index of Multiple Deprivation (IMD) calculates levels of deprivation across England. It's important to note that IMD isn't solely about financial deprivation; it considers various aspects, including education, health and crime.

The link between higher levels of deprivation and an increased risk of fire is evident in the data. Over the past 5 years, households in the most deprived areas experienced around 3 times more fires, proportionally, compared to those in the least deprived areas. This can be seen in Map C.

Maps D and E show our estimated response times and population density across our response area.

We also use this information to target our home fire safety initiatives and other prevention efforts towards those individuals and areas most at risk from fire.
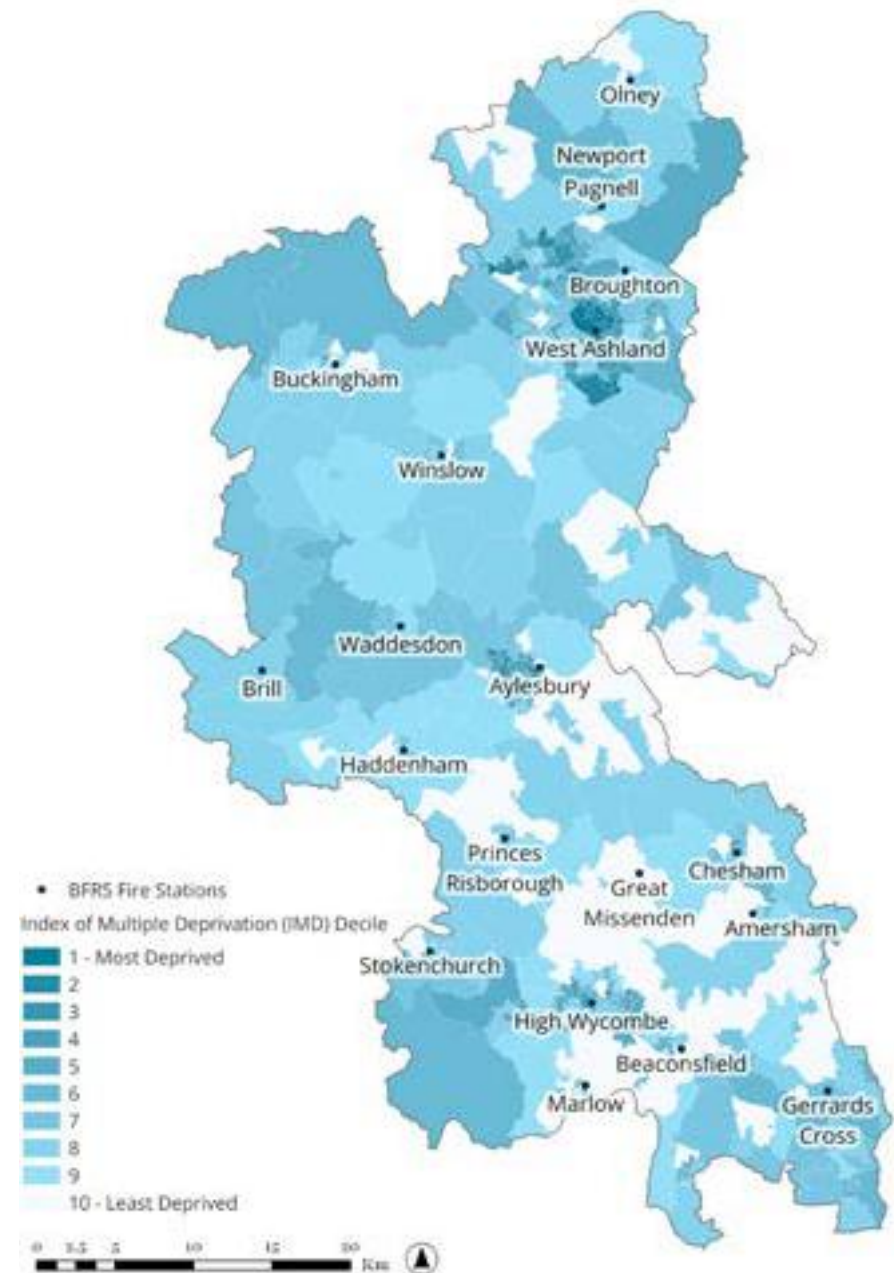
Map C, Index of Multiple Deprivation
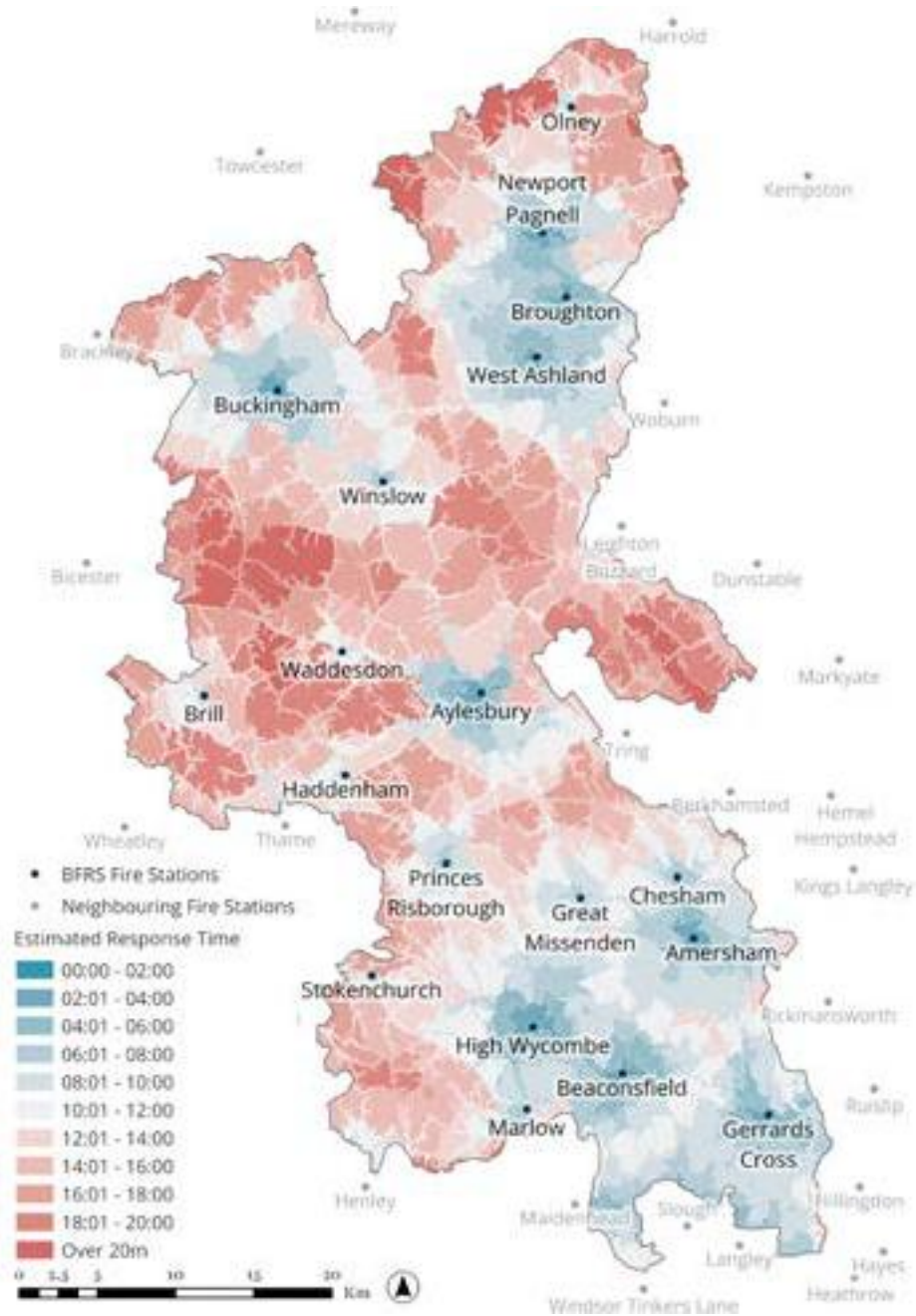
Map D, Estimated Response Times
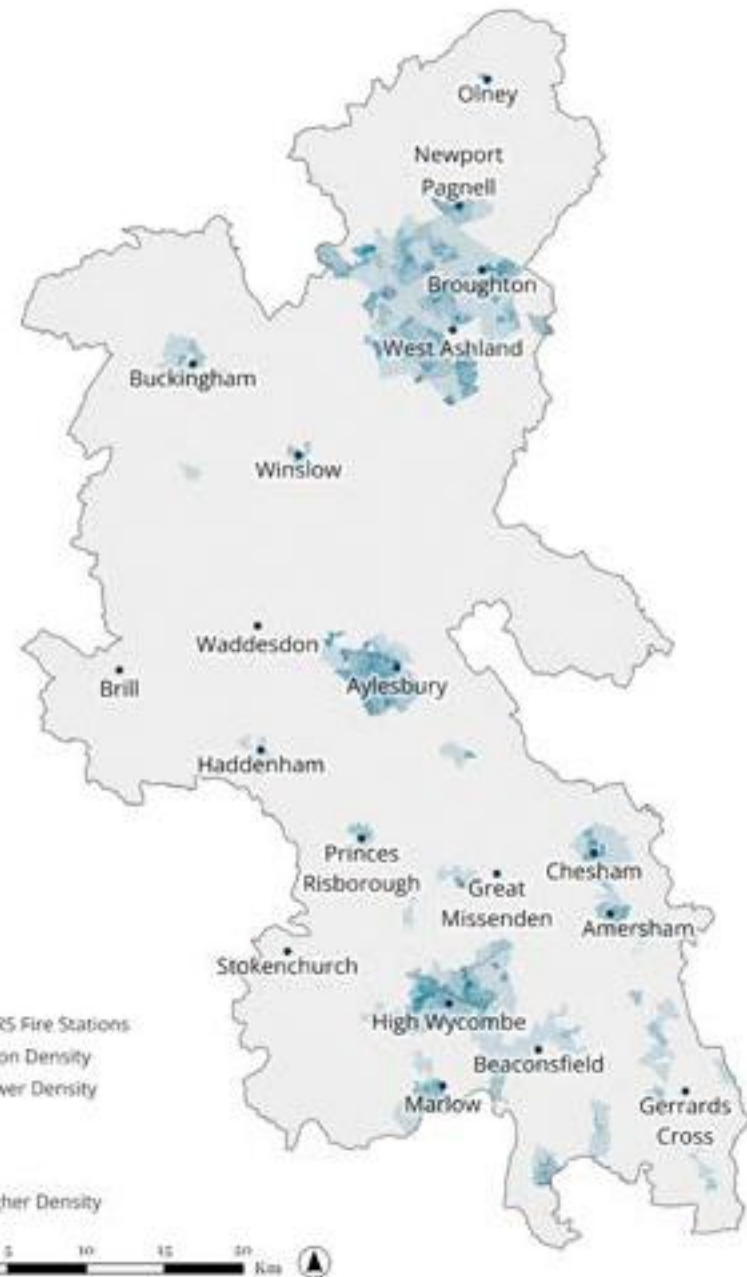
Map E, Population Density

Weather related events

We recognise the increasing impact of climate change which heightens the risk of weather related events, such as flooding and wildfires. We can accurately model areas most susceptible to flooding to help us ensure our specialist resources are best placed to respond effectively.

Map F shows flood zones 2 (1% annual probability of flooding from rivers) and flood zones 3 (higher than 1% chance from rivers) in our response area.

Given the unpredictable nature of wildfires which could occur almost anywhere within our response area, we maintain a wide range of capabilities. This may require the increased use of smaller, more specialised vehicles that can easily travel off-road and tackle the fires before they have spread too far.

Map F, Flood Zones 2 and 3.

Horizon scanning, risk analysis, national and local risks

We have used the PESTELO analysis framework to evaluate external factors impacting on our operations. The supporting Evidence Base Document details the full range of emerging risks that we have analysed as part of the CRMP preparation work.

Table B summarises our risks, issues and opportunities which are more likely or almost certain to happen and would result in severe, major or significant impacts to our Service.

How to read the table

The likelihood indicates to what extent an emerging risk, issue or opportunity is likely to affect our Service. This is sorted into:

- Almost certain – expected within 1 year.
- Likely – expected within 1–3 years.
- Moderate – possible within 3–10 years.

The consequence indicates to us how serious the impact would be if the event did happen.

While the exact impacts depend on the event, they could include:

Significant	Less serious injury, repairable damage to the environment, adverse impacts on multiple areas of the budget or unknown impact on strategic commitments.
Major	Serious injury, repairable damage to the environment following significant investment, compromised financial position or strategic commitments not being met.
Severe	Death, irreparable damage to the environment, unable to project the financial position of our fire service or failure to meet statutory duties.

The reference numbers relate to a more detailed table of risks in the Evidence Base Document.

Table B, Summary of Risks, Issues and Opportunities

Ref	Risk / Issue / Opportunity	Likelihood	Consequence
10	FBU Manifesto	Almost certain	Significant
28	Remote working technologies (for staff)	Almost certain	Significant
73	Natural and environment eg. wildfires	Likely	Severe
16	Ageing population	Likely	Major
17	Health and disability	Likely	Major
57	Ageing workforce – health and wellbeing	Likely	Major
69	Cyber – including cyber terrorism	Likely	Major
15	Rising population	Likely	Significant
23	Hoarding	Likely	Significant
37	Climate change	Likely	Significant
53	Firefighter pensions (remedial service)	Likely	Significant
48	Industrial Action	Moderate	Severe
55	Insufficient funding to achieve CRMP	Moderate	Severe
75	Societal – public disorder, industrial action	Moderate	Severe
8	Urban Search & Rescue (USAR) funding	Moderate	Major
11	Inflation/Cost of living	Moderate	Major
18	Population diversity	Moderate	Major
19	Overcrowded housing	Moderate	Major
56	Service resilience issues – retention of staff	Moderate	Major
58	Workplace culture	Moderate	Major

OUTCOMES OF INITIAL CONSULTATIONS

To help shape this CRMP we held initial listening and engagement consultations

These sessions were held with a diverse group of residents living in our response area and our staff.

These consultations aimed to explore:

- Public and staff perceptions of risk in the communities we serve.
- Awareness of current and future challenges facing the Service.
- Ideas on how we address key issues and challenges.

The risks identified by the public and our staff have been included in our risk analysis. More details can be found in our Evidence Base Document (PESTELO and Chronic/Local Risks analysis).

> "Feedback from the consultations has also influenced specific proposals for changes to our services or their delivery. This includes improving the resilience and capacity of the Service and adjusting our response to AFAs."

Feedback Summary

When asked about ideas for improving the resilience and capacity of the Service, participants were asked to rank a number of options in preference order.

The public ranked the options in the following order (most preferred as option 1 to least preferred as option 4):

1. Pooling On-Call resources to improve appliance availability across larger areas.
2. Smaller specialist appliances in remote rural locations.
3. Moving difficult-to-crew rural appliances to urban areas.
4. Re-balancing resources in favour of more Wholetime/ Day-Crewed provision.

Our staff ranked the options in the following order (most preferred as option 1 to least preferred as option 4):

1. Re-balancing resources in favour of more Wholetime/ Day-Crewed provision.
2. Smaller specialist appliances in remote rural locations.
3. Pooling On-Call resources to improve appliance availability across larger areas.
4. Moving difficult-to-crew rural appliances to urban areas.

When we asked about how we should respond to AFAs given the large number that turn out to be false alarm activations, the public opinion was divided between keeping the existing policy and changing.

In contrast, 83% of our staff who participated in the consultation favoured one of the reduced response options.

Again, participants were asked to rank a number of options in preference order. The public and staff participant responses were separated, however both gave the same order of preference.

The options were ranked in the following order (most preferred as option 1 to least preferred as option 4):

1. Attend all AFAs in high-risk premises and those in low-risk premises where there is an actual fire reported or the owner cannot be contacted.

2. Only attend if an actual fire is reported or the building occupants cannot be contacted.

3. Only attend high-risk premises and low-risk premises if an actual fire is reported.

4. Respond at normal road speed.

These consultation results were considered when preparing the policy trialled. Details can be found on pages 62 to 65.

EXPLAINING HOW WE SET OUT OUR OBJECTIVES, ENABLERS AND STRATEGIES

This part of the CRMP outlines our objectives and enablers. Each element has a high-level strategy shaped by relevant fire standards and insights from our most recent HMICFRS inspection. Both the objectives and enablers reflect our promise and values to ultimately reduce risk and enhance the wellbeing of our community.

Annual delivery plans will be created to support the CRMP objectives and enablers. Community feedback, quality assurance outcomes and evaluation of actions taken will all contribute to the evolution of these plans throughout the 5 year period of the CRMP.

Our commitment extends beyond paper; we actively engage with the local community, ensuring our strategies remain dynamic, responsive and in line with our shared vision for a safer, healthier future.

Updates on progress against our objectives and enablers will be presented at least annually.

For more details on how to keep up to date please refer to our Communication and Consultation section on page 63.

Key Terms

Objective – something we plan to do to reduce the risk to the community.

Enabler – what we use to help deliver our objectives, e.g. people, physical assets, money, data, technology.

Here's a brief overview of what you'll discover on pages 34 to 51:

Structure of objectives and enablers

- **Title:** The strategic principle guiding each objective or enabler.
- **Introductory paragraph:** A snapshot of how the objective or enabler supports our promise to the public.
- **Key aims:** Clear goals to be achieved during the CRMP's lifespan.
- **Key risks:** Identified risks from supporting Evidence Base and the summary on page 28 that the strategy addresses.
- **Key actions:** A list of steps to achieve the aims and mitigate identified risks.

Monitoring Progress

Pages 52 to 55 outlines how we plan to monitor and measure progress against each strategy.

OBJECTIVE 1

REDUCING RISK AND KEEPING OUR COMMUNITY SAFE
PREVENTION STRATEGY

Our goal is to enhance the health, safety and wellbeing of our community. Our focus is on preventing fires and other incidents in homes, neighbourhoods, on roads and in the environment.

To achieve this, we work closely with our partners to identify, safeguard and support those most at risk. Together, through community engagement and education, we aim to create a safer and more resilient environment for everyone.

Key Aims

- Prioritise community wellbeing by identifying and engaging with those most at risk of fire and other emergencies.
- Adopt a person-centred approach to deliver efficient risk-based prevention activities in collaboration with partners for more effective services.
- Support the holistic development of children and young people; actively leading safeguarding partnerships and maintaining effective information sharing in line with guidelines.

Key Risks

- Fire related incidents in the home resulting in injury or death.
- People killed and seriously injured on roads.
- Children and young people who are identified as being involved in fire setting behaviour.
- Emerging technological risks such as e-scooters, solar charging, and the increasing use of lithium-ion batteries in a wide range of domestic settings.
- Climate related emergencies, such as flooding and wildfire.

Key Actions

- Collaborate with partners to capture, share and analyse incident data enabling an intelligence-led, risk-based approach to prioritise and support those most at risk of emergencies.
- Engage regularly with the community to enhance our understanding of local risks and maintain a comprehensive risk profile for our area.
- Deliver high quality targeted, and quality assured, Home Fire Safety Visits (HFSV) to proactively mitigate domestic dwelling fires.
- Implement targeted initiatives which actively support national and local road safety campaigns within Buckinghamshire and Milton Keynes.
- Innovative and targeted, safety education delivered by skilled staff, in partnership with the Safety Centre MK.
- Prioritise safeguarding activities, working closely with partners to identify and support at-risk individuals.
- Maintain a continuous focus on monitoring and evaluating emerging risks and technological impacts.

OBJECTIVE 2
PROTECTING PEOPLE FROM RISK IN THE BUILT ENVIRONMENT
PROTECTION STRATEGY

Our goal is to enhance the safety and wellbeing of our community by reducing risks and incidents in the built environment.

Fire safety legislation applies to around 30,000 buildings within Buckinghamshire and Milton Keynes. We are committed to providing fire safety education to those responsible for keeping these buildings safe and, where required, taking proportionate and robust intervention.

To achieve this, we will deliver efficient and effective protection activity ensuring our services are accessible to all members of the community.

Key Aims

- Ensure compliance with fire safety legislation, statutory duties and regulatory standards to enhance overall regulatory compliance and fire safety measures.
- Support the decrease of fire-related incidents, injuries and fatalities in business premises through education and regulation.
- Continuously improve the competency and capacity of our Protection Team.

Key Risks

- The growth and diversity of buildings and land to which fire safety legislation applies in the fast-changing and increasingly complex urban environment we serve.
- Responsible persons failing to comply with fire safety legislation, either intentionally or due to a lack of understanding of their obligations.
- Changes in fire safety legislation needing to be effectively and consistently shared, and made accessible, for those affected or impacted.

Key Actions

- Regularly review and adapt policies, procedures and practices in response to new or revised fire safety legislation, working collaboratively with partners to share knowledge and learnings.
- Review and enhance our data-led methodology for defining protection risk and implement a risk-based intervention programme.
- Deliver a comprehensive business engagement plan; supporting responsible persons in fire safety regulation compliance while continuously evaluating protection activities for effectiveness, a targeted approach and accessibility.
- Respond proportionately to demand-led requirements, including consultations, fire safety concerns, complaints and post-fire inspections.
- Implement an effective quality assurance process to evaluate the standard of our fire safety activities.

OBJECTIVE 3
RESPONDING QUICKLY AND EFFECTIVELY TO EMERGENCIES
RESPONSE AND RESILIENCE STRATEGY

Our goal is to respond to emergencies in the most effective and safe way, prioritising the protection of, and limiting damage to, life, property and the environment.

To achieve this we are dedicated to ensuring operational preparedness as we respond safely and efficiently to all incidents. This includes acting independently as a single Service, collaborating seamlessly with local or regional Services and other partners, and actively engaging with the National Resilience Capabilities.

Key Aims

- Competent operational and fire control staff.
- Comprehensive operational policies, procedures, tailored guidance and training.
- Appropriate resources, vehicles, equipment and systems.

Key Risks

- Challenges of On-Call recruitment and retention impacting on-pump availability.
- High house prices, particularly near Day-Crewed and On-Call fire stations, pose challenges to our crew availability.
- Routine response to all AFAs puts additional demand on our available resources, diverting firefighters from key prevention and training activities.
- Emerging technologies and changes in the built environment present new operational risks requiring adaptive response capabilities.
- Enhancing resilience during periods of extreme pressure, such as severe weather, national industrial action or a pandemic.

Key Actions

- Ensure all operational and control room staff are trained in the hazard and control measure approach based on National Operational Guidance (risk assessment, decision-making and risk management skills).
- Conduct risk assessments for emergency operations and gather site-specific risk information to enhance response effectiveness.
- Integrate operational assurance and learning efforts to contribute to improvement at local, regional and national levels.
- Plan and prepare clear and scalable operational responsibilities for emergencies based on foreseeable events.
- Ensure that essential resources, equipment and adequately trained personnel are strategically available and align with planning assumptions.
- Optimise the structure and function of operational resources to meet preparedness requirements, managing asset types, numbers and locations to mitigate identified risks.
- Prioritise health, safety and wellbeing in operational planning and delivery through a clearly communicated health and safety policy.

ENABLER 1
AN INCLUSIVE, HEALTHY AND ENGAGED WORKFORCE
PEOPLE STRATEGY

Our goal is to optimise the contribution and wellbeing of everyone at BFRS.

To achieve this, we are committed to being connected with our staff, ensuring wellbeing is prioritised and empowering all to be professional and ambitious in serving the community. This commitment starts from the moment someone expresses an interest in joining our Service. It continues throughout their working life with us, and even after they have left.

Key Aims

- Strive for a more diverse and engaged workforce.
- Ensure all staff can access wellbeing support easily throughout their career and know how and where to obtain it.
- Ensure all staff are appropriately trained to fulfil their role and are committed to creating and maintaining a thriving culture.
- Senior leaders are role models for our core values and behaviours and possess the right skills and capacity to manage change.
- Clear communications and ease of access to a fair and transparent succession and promotional processes.

Key Risks

- Workplace culture at a national FRS level.
- Increases in normal pension age.
- Staff retention.

Key Actions

- Embed our promise, core values and behaviours and set the professional standards all staff are expected to meet.
- Continuously review and improve succession planning to retain, attract and nurture a workforce rich with diversity and the necessary skills, experience and leadership qualities.
- Develop pathways for high-potential staff and future leaders.
- Improve the collection of equality data to better understand workforce demographics and needs, supporting our ambition to achieve a more diverse workforce that better reflects the community we serve.
- Ensure effective engagement and feedback mechanisms for all staff, including those from under-represented groups, to enhance staff wellbeing.
- Proactively demonstrate our commitment to fostering a positive health and wellbeing culture, ensuring reasonable and appropriate working conditions for all staff.

ENABLER 2
MAKING THE MOST OF OUR FINANCES AND ASSETS
FINANCE AND ASSETS STRATEGY

Our goal is to make sure that we deliver the best possible service and value for money with the finances and assets that we have been trusted with.

To achieve this, we are committed to upholding the highest professional standards in financial management and ensuring the provision of top-tier facilities and equipment essential for our staff to deliver our duties to our community effectively and safely.

Key Aims

- Align finances with risk, ensuring proper financial management, and providing staff with safe and effective facilities and equipment.

- Efficiency improvements delivered year-on-year and reinvested into the Service.

- Wherever possible, and financially viable, take all appropriate steps to reduce negative impacts on the environment produced by our assets.

Key Risks

- A real-term reduction in funding due to limits on Council Tax increases and Government grant funding.
- Additional cost pressures from general inflation and unprecedented increases in supply costs, such as gas and electricity.
- Government policy changes resulting in additional, un-forecasted costs, such as employer pension contributions.
- Older property estate requiring increasing investment for refurbishment and maintenance, ensuring it remains safe and fit for purpose for our diversifying workforce.

Key Actions

- Implement a zero-based budget for the financial year 2025/26 to align resources for Prevention, Protection and Response activities, identifying any opportunities for efficiency and assessing these against risk.
- Develop and implement a property standard across our estate, ensuring all buildings are fit for purpose and meet health, safety and wellbeing requirements for a diversifying workforce.
- Review, procure and implement appropriate asset solutions to address needs and requirements of our diversifying workforce and/or emerging risks outlined within this CRMP.
- Investigate ways to enhance our facilities to expand the scope of locally-conducted training and validation and opportunities to collaborate with close partners.
- Explore options to invest in residential accommodation to support our crewing model and/or provide housing for key workers.
- Update policies and procedures to accommodate changes in procurement legislation.

ENABLER 3
OPTIMISING OUR TECHNOLOGY AND DATA
DIGITAL AND DATA STRATEGY

Our goal is to increase our use of data and business intelligence tools, through secure and resilient systems, to help us better understand and respond appropriately to the risks we, and our community, face.

To achieve this we will use technology to balance the need for security and resilience with the desire to innovate and introduce new, efficient ways of working.

Key Aims

- An empowered workforce with effective technology for communication, secure information management and remote efficiency.

- Easy access to current, role-relevant data and intelligence to enhance safety and reduce risk.

- A digitally engaged workforce that champions a digital first culture, embracing and promoting automation for enhanced efficiency and effectiveness.

- Enhanced community engagement through tailored, accessible and digitally-enabled solutions, helping to deliver reduction in paper and improved process efficiency.

Key Risks

- Cyber Security risks identified in the UK National Risk Register.
- UK Resilience Framework.
- Population changes.
- Emerging technology.

Key Actions

- Collect and analyse new data to enhance our understanding of risk in Buckinghamshire and Milton Keynes.
- Evaluate and optimise IT systems to ensure they continue to act as reliable key enablers for our Service.
- Assure the reliability, resilience, accuracy and accessibility of critical IT systems, such as mobile data terminals for accuracy and accessibility.
- Ensure all systems meet up-to-date security requirements, maintaining data and system security alongside accreditation to relevant codes of connections and security standards.
- Engage with the Home Office-led Emergency Service Mobile Communication Programme for implementing the Emergency Service Network within BFRS and the broader Thames Valley.
- Enhance systems to enable self-service for staff and the public, reducing paper and printing requirements and improving process efficiency through digitisation and automation.
- Implement data standards to enhance community analysis, evaluating and improving our risk methodology for prioritised home fire safety visits aligned with individual and household needs.

PERFORMANCE MONITORING GOVERNANCE AND KEY MEASURES

MONITORING THE DELIVERY OF OUR CRMP

It is important that management, strategic oversight and governance is in place to ensure that we deliver on our promises made within this plan.

We have realigned our internal governance structure to support delivery of the objectives and enablers contained with this CRMP.

The Service Delivery Group will ensure delivery against all our objectives, while the people, and finance and assets delivery groups will ensure the enabling functions are working effectively to support delivery of the objectives.

All groups will ensure that the risks identified in the CRMP, applicable to their respective areas are monitored, along with the actions in place to mitigate those risks.

The delivery groups will all report into the CRMP Performance Board to maintain strategic oversight of directorate plans and to ensure performance and risk is co-ordinated across all departments.

Strategic oversight will be provided by the Strategic Leadership Board and ultimately the Fire Authority (and its committees). The Fire Authority consists of elected Members and is responsible for making decisions on policy, finance, and resources.

The diagram below illustrates our new governance structure that will oversee the delivery of our CRMP:
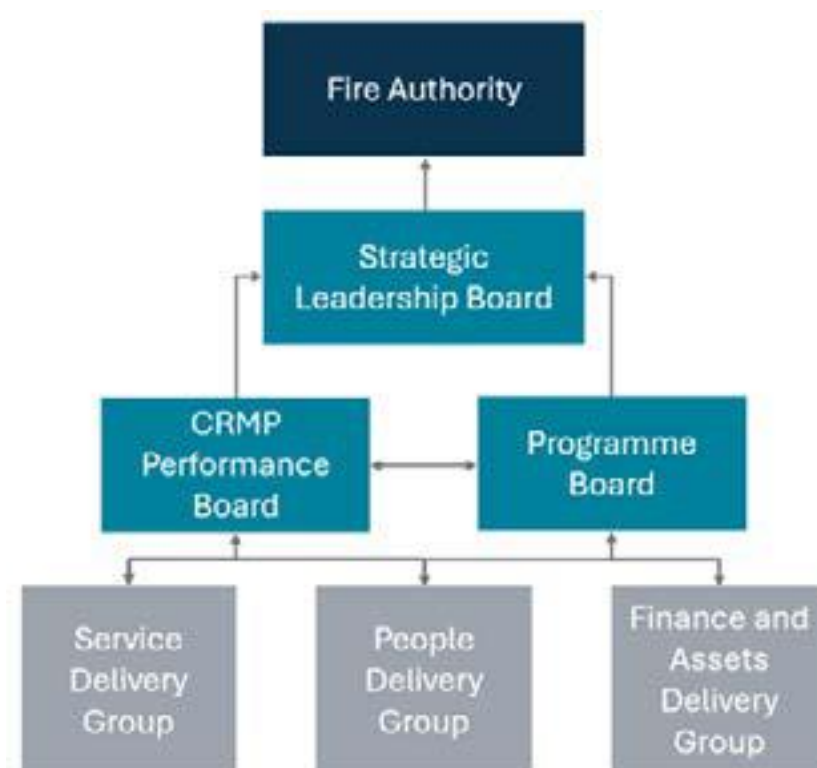
Below are some of the key performance metrics which we will use to monitor our progress against our objectives and enablers to help measure the success of our CRMP.

Some of these measures allow us to directly measure our performance (e.g. number of Home Fire Safety Visits completed) whereas others are indicative of the demand for our services over which we have limited influence (e.g. number of road traffic collisions attended).

OBJECTIVE 1

Reducing risk and keeping our community safe

- Number of Home Fire Safety Visits completed.
- Number of accidental dwelling fires.
- Number of serious accidental dwelling fires.
- Number of fire-related fatalities in accidental dwelling fires.
- Number of deliberate dwelling fires.
- Number of road traffic collisions attended

OBJECTIVE 2

Protecting people from risk in the built environment

- Number of Fire Safety Audits completed.
- Number of accidental fires in non-domestic buildings.
- Number of deliberate fires in non-domestic buildings.
- Number of serious fires in non-domestic buildings.
- Number of fires attended in prisons.

OBJECTIVE 3

Responding quickly and effectively to emergencies

- Average attendance time to all incidents (excluding co-responder).
- Average attendance time to accidental dwelling fires.
- Availability of pumps (Wholetime/Day-Crewed/On-Call).
- Number of pumps available – response model (Wholetime/Day-Crewed/On-Call).
- Use of pumps from other FRSs
- High-risk site information updates.
- Operational resilience (competencies, and hydrant availability).
- False alarms in non-domestic buildings.

ENABLER 1

An inclusive, healthy and engaged workforce

- Number of current vacancies.
- Staff turnover and absence rates.
- Welfare and support use.
- Health and safety – workplace injuries, incidents and near misses.
- Appraisal and objective completion.
- Mandatory e-learning completed.
- Grievance and discipline cases.
- Attacks on staff.
- Compliments and complaints.

ENABLER 2

Making the most of our finances and assets

- Project progress.
- Internal audit recommendations outstanding.
- Forecast – Outturn (forecasted spending vs budget).
- Cost of Bank Shifts.
- Carbon emissions and printing.
- Efficiency savings as a percentage of non-payroll expenditure.

ENABLER 3

Optimising our technology and data

- Data breaches and fraud.
- Engagement through social media.
- Engagement through BFRS website.
- Support desk response standards.
- Network uptime.
- Freedom of Information requests responded to within timeframe.

PROPOSALS FOR CONSULTATION
RESPONSE STANDARD AND RESOURCING

We have refined our emergency response standard to better serve you.

Our previous response standard

Our previous aim was to keep our average response time within 10 seconds of the previous 5 year period.

During the financial year 2023/24 our average attendance time to all incidents each month ranged from between 8 minutes 35 seconds to 9 minutes 31 seconds.

What is a response time?

When you call 999, our Fire Control Service (FCS) swiftly pinpoints your location and dispatches the quickest available pump, regardless of which fire service it comes from.

We measure the time it takes for the first pump to get to you. We call this the response time.

Why change our standard?

To ensure we are providing an excellent, agile and modern fire service for our community it is important our response standard is easy to understand, measurable, efficient and effective.

Our 2023 HMICFRS inspection findings suggested that our existing response standard could mean that even if our response times worsened, we would still be achieving our targets. As part of this CRMP we've redefined our response standard.

Our new response standard

Our new response standard has been designed with the five-year CRMP time period in mind, as growth in the built environment and infrastructure changes make achieving our standard increasingly challenging.

The new standard aims to uphold an average response time of 10 minutes. This means the **first pump arriving at a scene within an average of 10 minutes for all incidents.** This does not include call-handling times.

Areas nearer to our Wholetime and Day-Crewed fire stations can expect a much quicker response.

In areas further from our Wholetime and Day-Crewed stations our response time may extend to between 10 and 20 minutes.

Ensuring we can respond to incidents

Through analysing data, we've found that most routine daily incidents can be handled with less than 9 immediately available pumps.

However, due to Buckinghamshire and Milton Keynes' geography, we determine that 9 pumps is the minimum required for daily response to meet our new standard.

To ensure we can meet our new response standard during larger or simultaneous incidents, we know we need nearer to 12 immediately available pumps.

On some rare occasions (less than 1% of all demand) we may need to deal with protracted incidents or extreme demand (such as during storms or heatwaves).

To meet these extreme demands, we need to ensure we are ready and able to scale up quickly. We will look to do this through a blended approach; deploying traditional pumps and specialist vehicles crewed by immediately available, On-Call and resilience crews.

This ensures a robust response during routine and exceptional circumstances, providing the service you need when it matters most.

The data shows there is no need to change the number of Wholetime and Day-Crewed pumps or their location.

Our On-Call response

Currently we have 18 On-Call pumps which primarily provide us with resilience. The quantity and placement of these pumps impacts on our response time.

These vehicles significantly enhance our capacity to respond to exceptional circumstances like major incidents and adverse weather conditions, and our standalone On-Call stations help to reduce our response time in more rural areas.

We are committed to using data to understand the most effective use of On-Call resources to provide resilience, manage risks and uphold our new response standard. This includes evaluating the types of pumps and vehicles we have and exploring opportunities for greater efficiency and effectiveness.

Throughout the CRMP's duration, we will assess the required number of On-Call pumps to align with our new response standard and address identified risks within the CRMP.

How the number of available pumps impacts on response times

We use data modelling to help us understand how the number of available pumps might affect how long it would take for us to arrive at an incident.

Graph C shows us how first pump response times are affected if between 5 and 30 pumps were available.

Graph D looks at how second pump response times are affected if between 5 and 30 pumps were available.

Lastly, Graph E, tells us the variation in first pump response times, between different areas, if between 5 and 30 pumps are available (standard deviation). Standard deviation is important as it measures the degree of variation in average response times across different areas of our community.

It's important to consider all these factors when deciding where to place our resources. Having more pumps available doesn't always make a big difference to our average response time. However, it can in some, but not all, circumstances make a difference in reducing the variance between areas, for example improving response times to areas that are closer to our On-Call fire stations. This would help to make response times more consistent across the community.

Graph C, First Pump

Time in minutes / Number of Pumps

- First Pump Average
- First Pump Within 10 Minutes
- First Pump Within 20 Minutes

Graph D, Second Pump

Time in minutes / Number of Pumps

- Second Pump Average
- Second Pump Within 10 Minutes
- Second Pump Within 20 Minutes

Graph E, First Pump Standard Deviation

Standard deviation / Number of Pumps

- First Pump Average Standard Deviation

This information was used to generate the response model shown below:

Demand	Pumps	First Pump average response time (see table above)	Second Pump average response time (see table above)	Variation Between Areas	Crewing
Business as Usual (covers 99.7% of incidents)	Less than 9	Significant increase	Significant increase	Not modelled for 12 pumps or less	Wholetime/Day-Crewed
	9	Can meet first pump response average response standard of 10 minutes			
	10 – 12	Small decrease	Significant decrease	Not modelled for 12 pumps or less	
Infrequent (less than 1% of incidents)	13 – 16	Incremental decrease	Incremental decrease	Significant decrease	On-Call and Resilience
	17 – 22	Incremental decrease	Incremental decrease	Significant decrease	
	23 – 30	Incremental decrease	Incremental decrease	Negligible decrease	

In summary, during the period of this CRMP we will:

Aim to uphold an average response time of 10 minutes. This means the **first pump will reach the scene within an average of 10 minutes for all incidents.**

- Plan to maintain, at least, the same number of Wholetime and Day-Crewed pumps.

- Review and optimise our On-Call pumps and specialist vehicles to ensure we can meet our risks and response standard, while looking for opportunities to increase efficiency and effectiveness. While we will seek to optimise the use of all On-Call pumps and specialist vehicles, as shown in the table on the previous page, we anticipate that this will focus on pump levels 23 to 30.

COMMUNICATION AND CONSULTATION
HOW TO GET INVOLVED

We always value feedback from members of the public, business owners, members of our staff and all our valued partners.

Significant consultation was undertaken during the initial development of our CRMP, as well as on the draft CRMP prior to formal approval of the final document.

However, feedback is always welcome and there will also be opportunities to give your views on any changes we may introduce to our resourcing model as part of that planned review (see pages 57-61).

General comments and feedback

- You can contact us in a number of ways:
- Telephone: 01296 744400 (during office hours)
- Online: Complete our contact form
- Email: enquiries@bucksfire.gov.uk
- In writing: Buckinghamshire Fire & Rescue Service, Headquarters, Stocklake, Aylesbury, Bucks, HP20 1BD

Future consultations

We will always consult with the public if and when we propose to make significant changes to the way your service is delivered, for example, the number of pumps used within our resourcing model.

All consultation will follow the four best practice Gunning principles:

- Consultations must occur while proposals are still at a formative stage.
- Sufficient information needs to be supplied for the public to give the consultation 'intelligent consideration'.
- There needs to be an adequate time for the consultees to consider the proposal and respond.
- Conscientious consideration must be given to the consultation responses before decisions are made.

GLOSSARY

Accidental Dwelling Fire (ADF) – A fire in a domestic property started unintentionally.

Assets – Refers to everything we own or lease that is used to deliver the services we provide, which includes fire stations, vehicles (including pumps), firefighting equipment, workwear, technology and offices.

Automatic Fire Alarm (AFA) – A system that warns people of a possible fire by automatic or manual means. When activated, the occupants of a building should manage the response to the alarm. It may also, depending on the local arrangements, notify a remote alarm receiving centre which will contact the fire and rescue service.

Deprivation – Deprivation is the absence of essential resources or opportunities needed for a decent standard of living, including things like money, education, healthcare and housing (see also Index of Multiple Deprivation [IMD]).

Emergency Service Mobile Communication Programme (ESMCP) – Home Office-led, this aims to develop and deliver new communications services to replace the current emergency communications system, known as Airwave.

Emergency Service Network (ESN) – The communications systems used to share information between emergency services and their control rooms.

False Alarm – A call to an incident that does not require our attendance, for example where an alarm is being tested, a smoke alarm is sounding due to a failing battery or a fault in the detection system, or steam has been spotted escaping from an extraction unit and thought to be smoke.

Fire Control Service (FCS) – Often referred to as the control room, this is where emergency calls are received and call handlers allocate the appropriate response (i.e. the number of pumps) and/or provide appropriate advice.

Firewall – A technological barrier preventing unwanted or unauthorised access or emails entering the organisation computer network.

His Majesty's Inspectorate of Constabulary and Fire & Rescue Services (HMICFRS) – An independent body that assesses, in the public interest, the effectiveness, efficiency, and people aspects of police forces and fire and rescue services.

Home Fire Safety Visit – A free service we offer to people who may be at increased risk of, or from, fire.

Index of Multiple Deprivation (IMD) – The IMD is a government tool in England that measures relative deprivation across small areas. It assigns scores from 1 to 10 based on factors like income, education, health and crime. This helps identify deprived areas and guide resource allocation for community improvement.

Integrated Risk Management Plan – An alternative name for Community Risk Management Plan.

Lower Layer Super Output Areas (LSOAs) – An area on a map made up of between 400 and 1,200 households (usually with a resident population of between 1,000 and 3,000 people).

Modelling – The use of data, calculations and simulations to predict or estimate various factors related to fire and rescue services, such as demand, resource allocation, response times and effectiveness.

Mobile data terminal (MDT) – A tablet device used by firefighters on our pumps that provides crucial information, such as specific risks present at certain sites we may need to attend.

PESTELO – An analysis framework used by organisations to evaluate external factors impacting operations. It includes Political, Economic, Social, Technological, Environmental, Legal and Operational factors, helping anticipate changes and adapt strategies.

Primary Authority Scheme – Allows organisations served by multiple fire and rescue services to form a partnership to receive advice from a single service.

Pumps – The term we use to refer to our standard fire engines (short for pumping appliance).

Response model – A combination of data, statistics and analysis that collectively provides a visual representation (chart, table or graphic) of how we structure our response to incidents.

Standard deviation – A measure of how spread-out numbers are.

Thames Valley Collaboration Group – A forum for all emergency services in the Thames Valley region to work together to improve outcomes for the public.

Thames Valley Local Resilience Forum (TVLRF) – A multi-agency partnership made up of representatives from local public services, including the emergency services, from across Berkshire, Buckinghamshire and Oxfordshire. The group helps all partners come together to collaboratively prepare, plan and respond as well as warn, inform and advise the public on large-scale incidents.

UK Resilience Framework – An analysis that focuses on the UK's ability to anticipate, assess, prevent, mitigate and respond to, and recover from, known, unknown, direct, indirect and emerging civil contingency risks.

Wildfire – A term used to describe large uncontrolled fires occurring in open natural vegetation. A wildfire incident usually requires more than 4 pumps, covers an area of 1 hectare or more, takes more than 6 hours to extinguish and has flames longer than 1.5 metres.

Buckinghamshire
Fire & Rescue Service
Making a difference together

COMMUNITY RISK MANAGEMENT PLAN

2025–2030

Buckinghamshire
Fire & Rescue Service

Community Risk Management Plan (CRMP) 2025-2030 Consultation

Report of findings

Opinion Research Services

November 2024

Buckinghamshire Fire & Rescue Service: Community Risk Management Plan (CRMP) 2025-2030 Consultation

Report of findings

Opinion Research Services

November 2024

Opinion Research Services

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Contents

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1. Summary of findings

Background to the consultation

1.1   Buckinghamshire Fire & Rescue Service (BFRS) is required to produce a Community Risk Management Plan (CRMP) to identify risks within its areas of responsibility and set priorities for mitigating these risks and improving community safety. In July 2024, BFRS launched its CRMP for 2025-2030, which sets out how it will provide a fire and rescue service in Buckinghamshire and Milton Keynes for this five-year period. As part of this, BFRS is proposing to refine its emergency response standard and resourcing model.

The consultation process

1.2   To gather the views of local residents, staff, businesses and other stakeholders on BFRS's proposed new emergency response standard, resourcing plans, and its overall objectives for the period April 2025 - March 2030, a formal consultation was undertaken between 22 July and 13 October 2024.

1.3   Opinion Research Services (ORS) was commissioned by BFRS to offer independent advice on the design and conduct of the consultation programme, undertake a programme of key consultation activities, and report respondents' views, gathered through an open consultation questionnaire, and five in-person focus groups with residents. In total, 200 questionnaire responses were received; and 44 residents attended the in-person focus groups.

Summary of main findings

1.4   The following paragraphs summarise the main findings from 200 responses to BFRS' online consultation questionnaire and five focus groups with members of the public across Buckinghamshire and Milton Keynes. However, readers are referred to the detailed chapters that follow for the full report.

BFRS's emergency response standard

Current response standard

BFRS's current aim is to keep its average response time within 10 seconds of the previous five-year period. It aims to alert the quickest pump within 90 seconds of someone making an emergency call (known as the call handling time). During 2023/24, BFRS's average attendance time to all incidents each month ranged from between 8 minutes 35 seconds and 9 minutes 31 seconds (excluding call handling time).

BFRS's proposed new response standard

BFRS's proposed new response standard aims for an average response time of 10 minutes. This means the first pump arriving at a scene within an average of 10 minutes for all incidents. This does not include call-handling times. Areas nearer to BFRS's Wholetime and Day-Crewed fire stations can expect a much quicker response. In areas further from BFRS's Wholetime and Day-Crewed stations, the response time may extend to between 10 and 20 minutes.

1.5   More than half (55%) of questionnaire respondents agreed that there is a need to refine BFRS's emergency response standard. Around a fifth (21%) disagreed, and around a quarter (24%) gave a neutral response.

1.6   Focus group participants were mostly supportive of the proposed change to BFRS's emergency response standard in principle, considering it sensible to have something more definitive that reduces the risk of worsening performance over time and offers greater clarity.

1.7   When asked to what extent they agreed or disagreed with BFRS's proposed new emergency response standard, more than three-in-five questionnaire respondents (63%) agreed. Over a quarter of respondents (28%) disagreed, and around one-in-ten (9%) gave a neutral response.

1.8   Most respondents across the focus groups were supportive of an average response time across all incident types, acknowledging that BFRS will always strive to get to incidents as quickly as possible; and that it has internal mechanisms by which to measure whether the standard and its various components are being met. Indeed, the general feeling was that the proposed standard would be sufficient for and easily digested by members of the public.

1.9   A few participants felt less positive about the proposed new emergency response standard, however. Their main concern was around having an 'average' response standard for Buckinghamshire and Milton Keynes, which was considered somewhat uninformative and non-transparent. They suggested that any new response standard should be varied according to whether the responding fire engine is coming from an immediately available, day-crewed or on-call fire station, which was considered more representative and transparent, and important in managing expectations and raising awareness of potential wait times.

1.10   There was general agreement in all focus groups that 10 minutes is an appropriate and fair time to set as a response standard as it is easy to remember and would provide peace of mind to members of the public in an emergency. Moreover, several other participants recognised the need for BFRS to have an achievable response standard, as it would be held accountable by the relevant authorities and the public if it was not upheld. It was also considered important to avoid demotivating the operational workforce by implementing unachievable targets.

1.11   Less positive comments around the proposed 10-minute standard centred around the prospect of worsening performance, given the Service's current average response time is between eight minutes 35 seconds and nine minutes 31 seconds (a point echoed in the questionnaire responses). It was acknowledged that there are likely good reasons for this, but that these need explaining to ensure understanding and transparency. Other concerns were around resourcing, specifically that implementing an emergency response standard that is longer than what is being achieved currently could be a precursor to future reductions.

1.12   Finally, some participants noted that emergency response standards do not matter much to the public, who typically accept the BFRS will get to them as quickly as possible. Indeed, several stated that as they were not aware of the previous standard, any future changes would likely have gone unnoticed had they not attended the session. Nonetheless, participants encouraged better promotion of emergency response standards to offer reassurance to the wider public and ensure BFRS can be better held to account by the people it serves.

Resourcing (ensuring BFRS can respond to incidents)

Wholetime and day-crewed resourcing

Through analysing data, BFRS has found that most of its routine daily incidents can be handled with less than nine immediately available pumps. However, due to Buckinghamshire and Milton Keynes' geography, BFRS has determined that nine pumps is the minimum it needs to meet its proposed new response standard.

To ensure it can meet this standard during larger or simultaneous incidents, BFRS knows it needs nearer to 12 immediately available pumps. On rare occasions (less than one per cent of the time) the Service may need to deal with extended incidents or extreme demand, such as during storms or heatwaves. During these times, it needs to make sure it can scale up quickly using traditional pumps and specialist vehicles crewed by immediately available, on-call and resilience crews.

Considering this, BFRS plans to maintain at least the same number of immediately available and day-crewed appliances with no changes to their location. The current numbers are eight and four respectively (total 12 immediately available).

1.13 Over four-in-five questionnaire respondents (83%) agreed with BFRS's proposal to maintain at least the same number of wholetime and day-crewed appliances with no changes to their location. Just over one-in-ten (12%) disagreed, while 5% neither agreed nor disagreed.

1.14 Focus group participants were happy to trust the Service's judgement on the issue of resourcing; and most could see the value in having a 'safety net' to account for extended incidents or periods of extreme demand. Indeed, though it was acknowledged that these are rare occurrences currently, there was a strong view that they will become more frequent in future as a result of climate change impacts. This view was echoed by several questionnaire respondents in their comments, who supported more response resource to account for increased foreseeable risk.

1.15 In all groups, though, a minority of participants questioned the cost-benefit of maintaining the additional three appliances given the small percentage differences in the demand covered after a certain point (as shown in the graph on page 20 of the CRMP). At Buckingham it was suggested that the money saved from reducing the wholetime/day-crewed fleet could be invested in different, innovative fire and rescue resources to improve Service efficiency and effectiveness.

On-call resourcing

BFRS currently has 18 pumps crewed by On-Call firefighters, mainly for resilience. These vehicles significantly enhance the Service's capacity to respond to exceptional circumstances like major incidents and adverse weather conditions, and its standalone On-Call fire stations help it reduce its response time in more rural areas.

BFRS intends to use its data to understand how it can best use its On-Call resources. This includes examining the types of pumps and vehicles it has and exploring opportunities for greater effectiveness and efficiency. Throughout the CRMP's duration, BFRS proposes to assess the number of On-Call pumps it needs to align with its new response standard and address identified risks.

1.16 Almost four-in-five questionnaire respondents (78%) agreed with BFRS's proposal to assess its on-call resources to ensure they align with its new response standard and address identified risks within the CRMP. One-in-ten (10%) disagreed, while 13% neither agreed nor disagreed.

1.17 Several questionnaire respondents highlighted the issue of poor on-call firefighter availability in some areas. A robust on-call recruitment and retention strategy, together with a general *"overhaul"* of the system itself, was thought to be urgently needed to improve the situation. On a related note, there was worry about a potential over-reliance on neighbouring fire and rescue resources in border towns and villages, many of which are also on-call and subject to the same availability issues.

1.18 Participants at all focus groups also recognised the challenges facing the on-call system, not only in Buckinghamshire and Milton Keynes but nationwide. They thus unanimously supported a review into ways of improving the system's effectiveness and efficiency; and improving its robustness through enhancing the attractiveness of the role, thus ensuring better recruitment and retention.

CRMP strategic objective 1 - prevention (reducing risk and keeping communities safe)

BFRS's goal is to enhance the health, safety, and wellbeing of its communities. Its focus is on preventing fires and other incidents in homes, neighbourhoods, on roads, and in the environment. To achieve this, it works closely with partners to identify, safeguard, and support those most at risk; and through community engagement and education, it aims to create a safer environment for everyone.

1.19 Over four-in-five questionnaire respondents (83%) agreed with BFRS's approach to reducing risk and keeping communities safe. Less than one-in-ten (6%) disagreed, while 11% neither agreed nor disagreed.

1.20 In the focus groups, participants unanimously agreed with BFRS's approach to reducing risk and keeping communities safe. The general feeling was that prevention and education activity is essential in reducing incidents and minimising risk to the public and firefighters.

CRMP strategic objective 2 - protection (protecting people from risk in the built environment)

BFRS's goal is to enhance the safety and wellbeing of its community by reducing risks and incidents in the built environment. Fire safety legislation applies to around 30,000 buildings within Buckinghamshire and Milton Keynes. BFRS are committed to providing fire safety education to those responsible for keeping these buildings safe and, where required, taking proportionate and robust intervention.

To achieve this, it will deliver efficient and effective protection activity ensuring its services are accessible to all members of the community.

1.21 Nine-in-ten questionnaire respondents (90%) agreed with BFRS's approach to protecting people from risk in the built environment. Just 1% (two respondents) disagreed with BFRS's approach to protection, while 8% neither agreed nor disagreed.

1.22 In the focus groups, most participants agreed with BFRS's approach to protecting people from risk in the built environment. The general feeling was that engaging with and advising those responsible for implementing fire safety legislation is imperative to reduce risk in the built environment.

CRMP strategic objective 3 - response and resilience (responding quickly and effectively to emergencies)

> BFRS's goal is to respond to emergencies in the most effective and safe way, prioritising the protection of, and limiting damage to, life, property, and the environment.
>
> To achieve this, BFRS is dedicated to ensuring operational preparedness as it responds safely and efficiently to all incidents. This includes acting independently as a single Service, collaborating seamlessly with local or regional Services and other partners, and actively engaging with the National Resilience Capabilities.

1.23 More than nine-in-ten respondents (93%) agreed with BFRS's approach to responding quickly and effectively to emergencies. Just 1% (two respondents) disagreed with BFRS's approach to response and resilience, while 5% neither agreed nor disagreed.

1.24 Focus group participants unanimously agreed with BFRS's approach to responding quickly and effectively to emergencies. Resourcing should, it was said, be a strong focus for BFRS over the next five years to ensure the Service can protect and limit damage to life, property, and the environment, and make the best use of what it has.

CRMP strategic enabler 1 - workforce (an inclusive, healthy, and engaged workforce)

> BFRS's goal is to optimise the contribution and wellbeing of everyone at BFRS. To achieve this, it is committed to being connected with its staff, ensuring wellbeing is prioritised and empowering all to be professional and ambitious in serving the community. This commitment starts from the moment someone expresses an interest in joining the Service. It continues throughout their working life with the Service, and even after they have left.
>
> BFRS's key aims include striving for a more diverse and engaged workforce, ensuring all staff can access wellbeing support, and offering access to a fair and transparent succession and promotional processes.

1.25 Four-in-five questionnaire respondents (80%) agreed with BFRS's approach to an inclusive, healthy and engaged workforce. Around one-in-ten (9%) disagreed with BFRS's approach, while 11% neither agreed nor disagreed.

1.26 Most focus group participants agreed with BFRS's approach to ensuring an inclusive, healthy, and engaged workforce. Indeed, offering staff support and robust career pathways was thought to be essential for successful recruitment and retention.

1.27 In their comments, participants in Chesham, High Wycombe, and Milton Keynes, explicitly praised BFRS's emphasis on increasing the diversity of its workforce. Some questioned this focus, however, suggesting that hitting demographic workforce targets should not come at the expense of recruiting the best people for the job, and the Service's overall operational effectiveness. It was also said that the profile of the Service and the career opportunities it offers must be raised within certain communities and among certain demographics if it is to increase the diversity of its workforce.

CRMP strategic enabler 2 - finance and assets (making the most of finances and assets)

BFRS's goal is to make sure that it delivers the best possible service and value for money with its finances and assets that it has been trusted with. To achieve this, BFRS are committed to upholding the highest professional standards in financial management and ensuring the provision of top-tier facilities and equipment essential for its staff to deliver their duties to the community effectively and safely.

1.28 Over three quarters of questionnaire respondents (78%) agreed with BFRS's approach to making the most of finances and assets. One-in-twenty (5%) disagreed with BFRS's approach, while 16% neither agreed nor disagreed.

1.29 Most focus group participants agreed with BFRS's approach to making the most of its finances and assets. People were especially positive about the exploration of accommodation options to support the Service's crewing model, particularly in rural areas and where house prices are high.

CRMP strategic enabler 3 - digital and data (optimising technology and data)

BFRS's goal is to increase its use of data and business intelligence tools, through secure and resilient systems, to help it better understand and respond appropriately to the risks the Service, and the community, face. To achieve this, BFRS will use technology to balance the need for security and resilience with the desire to innovate and introduce new, efficient ways of working.

1.30 Over four-in-five questionnaire respondents (82%) agreed with BFRS's approach to optimising technology and data. Less than one-in-ten (7%) disagreed with BFRS's approach, while 11% neither agreed nor disagreed. Most focus group participants also agreed.

The CRMP overall

1.31 Over three-in-five questionnaire respondents (63%) agreed that BFRS's draft CRMP 2025-2030 is clear and easy to understand. Around one-in-seven respondents (14%) disagreed that the draft CRMP is clear and easy to understand, while almost a quarter (23%) gave a neutral response.

1.32 Three-in-five questionnaire respondents (60%) agreed that BFRS's proposed CRMP 2025-2030 has helped them to better understand how BFRS works. Around one-in-six respondents (16%) disagreed, while almost a quarter (24%) gave a neutral response.

1.33 A few questionnaire respondents praised the service overall, and the CRMP's identification of risks and mitigations. Most other feedback was less positive, however. Respondents shared concerns around the CRMP's lack of detail and accountability measures; BFRS's recent inspection failures; and the wording of the consultation questions. A particular worry was that the Plan's emphasis on efficiency is an attempt to disguise the potential for future service reductions.

2. Project Overview

The commission

2.1 Buckinghamshire Fire & Rescue Service (BFRS) is required to produce a Community Risk Management Plan (CRMP) to identify risks within its areas of responsibility and set priorities for mitigating these risks and improving community safety.

2.2 In July 2024, BFRS launched its CRMP for 2025-2030, which sets out how it will provide a fire and rescue service in Buckinghamshire and Milton Keynes for this five-year period. The plan builds on BFRS' Public Safety Plan 2020-25 and considers changes to risks and how it plans to change its services to keep residents, communities and businesses safe from fire and other emergencies. As part of this, BFRS is proposing to refine its emergency response standard.

2.3 In this context, on the basis of our experience of the fire and rescue service and many statutory consultations, Opinion Research Services (ORS) was commissioned by BFRS to offer independent advice on the design and conduct of the consultation programme, undertake a programme of key consultation activities, and provide an interpretative report of the findings.

Extensive consultation

2.4 BFRS' consultation period ran from 22 July to 13 October 2024, and included elements conducted by ORS as an independent organisation - for example, designing and analysing responses to an open consultation questionnaire; designing presentation material for, and recruiting, facilitating, and reporting five deliberative focus groups with residents; and writing interim and final reports.

Consultation proportionate and fair

2.5 The key legal and good practice requirements for proper consultation are based on the Gunning Principles, which state that consultation should be conducted at a formative stage, before decisions are taken; allow sufficient time for people to participate and respond; provide the public and stakeholders with sufficient background information to allow them to consider the issues and any proposals intelligently and critically; and be properly taken into consideration before decisions are finally taken.

2.6 In this case, the formal consultation on BFRS' CRMP followed an earlier engagement programme, which was undertaken in 2023. In addition to BFRS's internal staff engagement, ORS ran five focus groups with residents across its service area to understand public opinions and to 'test' some very general ideas and principles at a very early stage.

2.7 The 12-week formal consultation period gave the public, staff, and stakeholders sufficient time to participate, and through its consultation documents and website information the Service sought to provide sufficient information for consultees to understand the consultation issues and make informed judgements about them.

2.8   The final Gunning principle listed above is that consultation outcomes should be properly taken into consideration before authorities take their decisions. In this case, regular formal and informal briefings allowed the progressive reporting of people's opinions.

2.9   Properly understood, accountability means that public authorities should give an account of their plans and consider public and stakeholder views: they should conduct fair and accessible consultation while reporting the outcomes openly and considering them fully. Consultations are not referenda, and the popularity or unpopularity of draft proposals should not displace professional and political judgement about what are the right or best decisions in the circumstances. The levels of, and reasons for, public support or opposition are important, but as considerations to be taken into account, not as decisive factors that necessarily determine authorities' decisions.

2.10   Above all, public bodies have to consider the relevance and cogency of the arguments put forward during public engagement processes; and not only count the numbers of people. In this context, it was helpful that the consultation programme included both 'open' and deliberative elements, to allow many people to take part via the open questionnaire, and whilst promoting informed engagement through the deliberative focus groups.

Consultation methodology

Open questionnaire

2.11   The open consultation questionnaire was available online and in paper format between 22 July and 13 October 2024 to residents, representatives of business, public and voluntary organisations, and BFRS employees.

2.12   In total, 200 questionnaires were completed, all of which were submitted online. Most responses (195) were from individuals, but five valid responses were received from Burnham Parish Council, Denham Parish Council, Milton Keynes Business Council, the Royal British Legion, and Buckinghamshire Fire and Rescue Service – Health and Safety.

2.13   It should be noted that while open questionnaires are important consultation routes that are accessible to almost everyone, they are not 'surveys' of the public. Whereas surveys require proper sampling of a given population, open questionnaires are distributed unsystematically; and are more likely to be completed by motivated people. However, this does not mean that the open questionnaire findings should be discounted: they are analysed in detail in this report and must be considered as a demonstration of the strength of feeling of residents who were motivated to put forward their views.

Focus groups with residents

2.14   Five deliberative focus groups were undertaken with a broadly representative cross-section of residents from across Buckinghamshire and Milton Keynes. ORS worked in collaboration with BFRS to prepare informative stimulus material for the groups before facilitating the discussions and preparing an independent report of findings.

2.15   The focus groups were designed to inform and 'engage' participants with the issues set out in the CRMP. This was done by using a 'deliberative' approach to encourage people to question and reflect on the issues in detail. The meetings lasted for two hours and were attended as below in Table 2.

Table 2: Focus groups (area, time and date, and number of attendees)

Area	Time and Date	Number of Attendees
Aylesbury	Tuesday 24 September 2024 6:30pm - 8:15pm	9
Chesham	Wednesday 25 September 2024 6:30pm - 8:15pm	9
High Wycombe	Thursday 26 September 2024 6:30pm - 8:15pm	10
Milton Keynes	Tuesday 1 October 2024 6:30pm - 8:15pm	8
Buckingham	Wednesday 2 October 2024 6:30pm - 8:15pm	8
TOTAL		**44**

2.16 The attendance target for the focus groups was around eight people, which was achieved or exceeded at all sessions. Participants were recruited by Acumen Field, a specialist recruitment agency, who initially sent out a screening questionnaire as an online survey to a database of contacts and, more widely, on social media platforms. They then collated the responses to establish a pool of potential recruits, which was 'sifted' to establish a contact list. People were then contacted by telephone, asked to complete a more detailed screening questionnaire and either recruited or not to match the required quotas. Those recruited were sent all the necessary details in a confirmation email and telephoned a day or two before the events to confirm their attendance. Just under half of participants (20) had attended one of the engagement forums in 2023; the other 24 were fresh recruits.

2.17 In recruitment, care was taken to ensure that no potential participants were disqualified or disadvantaged by disabilities or any other factors. The recruitment process was monitored to ensure social diversity in terms of a wide range of criteria including, for example: gender; age; working status; and disability/limiting illness. Overall, as demonstrated in the table below, participants represented a broad cross-section of residents – and as standard good practice, people were recompensed for their time and efforts in and taking part.

Table 3: Participant characteristics

Gender	Age	Working status	Ethnicity	Disability or limiting illness
Female: 26 Male: 18	18 - 34: 14 35 - 54: 17 55+: 13	Working full-time (including self-employed): 25 Working part-time (including self-employed): 14 Not working (including unemployed, retired, homemaker, full-time student): 5	12 residents from an ethnic minority background	5 residents with a disability or limiting illness

2.18 Although, like all other forms of qualitative consultation, focus groups cannot be certified as statistically representative samples of public opinion, the meetings reported here gave diverse groups of people from the potentially affected areas the opportunity to participate. Because the recruitment was inclusive and participants were diverse, we are satisfied that the outcomes of the meeting (as reported below) are broadly indicative of how informed opinion would incline based on similar discussions.

The report

2.19 This report summarises the feedback on BFRS's CRMP for 2025-2030. In order to differentiate verbatim quotations from other information, they are in indented italics within text boxes. ORS does not endorse any opinions but seeks only to portray them accurately and clearly.

2.20 ORS is clear that its role is to analyse and explain the opinions and arguments of the many different interests participating in the consultation, but not to 'make a case' for any point of view. In this report, we seek to profile the opinions, views and arguments of those who have responded, but not to make any recommendations as to how the reported results should be used. Whilst this report brings together a wide range of evidence for BFRS to consider, decisions must be taken based on all the evidence available.

3. Open consultation questionnaire

Introduction and methodology

3.1 This chapter reports the findings from the open questionnaire which was available on the CRMP consultation page of BFRS's website from 22 July until 13 October 2024. Paper copies were also available on request; however, no paper responses were received.

3.2 Information summarising the main issues in the consultation plan, including the proposed new Emergency Response Standard and BFRS' overall objectives for the period 2025-2030, was included within the questionnaire. Respondents were invited to read the accompanying draft CRMP for further details, before answering the questions.

3.3 The questionnaire included questions on:

» BFRS's emergency response standard

» Resourcing (ensuring BFRS can respond to incidents)

» CRMP strategic objective 1 - prevention (reducing risk and keeping communities safe)

» CRMP strategic objective 2 - protection (protecting people from risk in the built environment)

» CRMP strategic objective 3 - response and resilience (responding quickly and effectively to emergencies)

» CRMP strategic enabler 1 - workforce (an inclusive, healthy, and engaged workforce)

» CRMP strategic enabler 2 - finance and assets (making the most of finances and assets)

» CRMP strategic enabler 3 - digital and data (optimising technology and data)

» The CRMP overall

3.4 In addition, all questionnaire respondents were invited to provide any other comments about BFRS's proposed changes and to identify any positive or negative impacts relating to equality they believed should be considered.

3.5 In total, 200 responses were received, of which 125 were complete responses, and 75 were partial responses where the respondent had answered at least one question. The number of valid responses recorded for each question (base size) are reported throughout in parentheses.

Interpretation of the data

3.6 As the questionnaire was available for anybody with an interest in the subject to complete, the achieved sample is not considered to be representative of any set population. As such, the text refers to 'respondents' throughout the report, as opposed to 'residents' or 'organisations'.

3.7 Graphics are used in this report to make it as user-friendly as possible. The pie charts show the proportions (percentages) of respondents making relevant responses. Where possible the colours used in the charts have been standardised with a 'traffic light' system in which:

» Green shades represent positive responses – for example, 'agree'

» Beige shades represent neither positive nor negative responses

» Red shades represent negative responses – for example, 'disagree'

» The darker shades are used to highlight responses at the extremes – for example, 'strongly agree' or 'strongly disagree.'

3.8   'Don't know' responses have been treated as invalid when calculating percentages.

3.9   Please note that where percentages do not sum to 100 and proportions of charts may not look equal, this is due to rounding. Moreover, in some cases, due to rounding, the grouped result shown on charts, or noted in the text, is not equal to that of the individual results which make up the grouped figure.

3.10 Findings highlighted in this report focus on the overall results; however, where possible, analysis by sub-groups (e.g. age, gender, ethnicity, location, and whether they work for BFRS/another FRS or not) has been included. To test whether apparent differences between sub-groups are statistically significant, statistical tests are applied. These consider the sizes of the samples that are being compared and the level of confidence we need to have in our testing. In line with standard social research practice, we have used a 95% confidence level. In other words, we can be 95% certain that the difference has not occurred by chance. Only differences that are statistically significant at a 95% confidence level are highlighted in the text commentary.

3.11 Not all respondents reached the profiling information section of the questionnaire, however of the 121 who did, most responses (116) were from individuals, and the tables that appear without commentary below and on the following page show the unweighted profiles of the responses to the survey provided by personal respondents (please note that the figures may not always sum to 100% due to rounding).

Table 1: Age – All respondents who gave a personal response

Age	Number of respondents (Unweighted)	% of respondents (Unweighted)
18 to 24	1	1
25 to 34	9	8
35 to 44	19	18
45 to 54	21	19
55 to 64	28	26
65 to 74	19	18
75 to 84	11	10
Not Known	8	-
Total	**116**	**100**

Table 2: Gender – All respondents who gave a personal response

Gender	Number of respondents (Unweighted)	% of respondents (Unweighted)
Female	38	37
Male	66	63
Not Known	12	-
Total	**116**	**100**

Table 3: Disability – All respondents who gave a personal response

Disability	Number of respondents (Unweighted)	% of respondents (Unweighted)
Yes	14	13
No	92	87
Not Known	10	-
Total	**116**	**100**

Table 4: Ethnic Group – All respondents who gave a personal response

Ethnic group	Number of respondents (Unweighted)	% of respondents (Unweighted)
White British	91	89
White Other	5	5
Other	6	6
Not Known	14	-
Total	**116**	**100**

Table 5: Respondent Type – All respondents who gave a personal response

Which of the following best describes you?	Number of respondents (Unweighted)	% of respondents (Unweighted)
Member of the public	77	76
Staff member at BFRS	23	23
Staff member at another Fire and Rescue Service	1	1
Not Known	15	-
Total	**116**	**100**

Table 6: Area – All respondents who gave a personal response

Area	Number of respondents (Unweighted)	% of respondents (Unweighted)
Buckinghamshire	67	71
Other	28	29
Not Known	21	-
Total	**116**	**100**

Table 7: Urban/Rural – All respondents who gave a personal response

Area	Number of respondents (Unweighted)	% of respondents (Unweighted)
Urban	66	69
Rural	29	31
Not Known	21	-
Total	**116**	**100**

3.12 In addition, five valid responses were received from the following organisations:

» Burnham Parish Council

» Denham Parish Council

» Milton Keynes Business Council

» Royal British Legion

» Buckinghamshire Fire and Rescue Service – Health and Safety.

3.13 Responses submitted on behalf of organisations can differ in nature to those submitted by personal responses from members of the public if, for example, they represent the collective views of a number of different people or raise very specific issues. However, given the low number of responses provided by organisations (five), we have on this occasion reported the consultation responses from organisations together with those of individuals.

3.14 It should be noted that while open questionnaires are important consultation routes that are accessible to almost everyone, they are not 'surveys' of the public. Whereas surveys require proper sampling of a given population, open questionnaires are distributed unsystematically and are more likely to be completed by motivated people. As such, because the respondent profile is an imperfect reflection of the local populations, its results must be interpreted carefully. This does not mean that the open questionnaire findings should be discounted: they are analysed in detail in this report and must be taken into account as a demonstration of the views of residents who were motivated to put forward their views.

Duplicate and co-ordinated responses

3.15 It is important that engagement questionnaires are open and accessible to all, whilst being alert to the possibility of multiple completions (by the same people) distorting the analysis. Therefore, while making it easy to complete the questionnaire online, ORS monitors the IP addresses through which questionnaires are completed. A similar analysis of 'cookies' was also undertaken – where responses originated from users on the same computer using the same browser and the same credentials (e.g., user account). Following this analysis, no evidence of possible multiple completions was found.

Main findings

Emergency Response Standard

3.16 Respondents were given the following information on BFRS's proposed new emergency response standard.

> **What is a response time?**
>
> When someone calls 999, Thames Valley Fire Control Service (TVFCS) quickly pinpoints their location and sends the quickest available pump, regardless of which fire station/service it comes from. BFRS measures the time it takes for the first pump (also known as fire engine) to arrive; this is what is known as the response time.
>
> **Current response standard**
>
> BFRS's current aim is to keep its average response time within 10 seconds of the previous five-year period. It aims to alert the quickest pump within 90 seconds of someone making an emergency call (known as the call handling time).
>
> During the financial year 2023/24, BFRS's average attendance time to all incidents each month ranged from between 8 minutes 35 seconds and 9 minutes 31 seconds (excluding call handling time).
>
> **BFRS's proposed new response standard**
>
> BFRS's proposed new response standard aims for an average response time of 10 minutes. This means the first pump arriving at a scene within an average of 10 minutes for all incidents. This does not include call-handling times.

Areas nearer to BFRS's Wholetime and Day-Crewed fire stations can expect a much quicker response. In areas further from BFRS's Wholetime and Day-Crewed stations, the response time may extend to between 10 and 20 minutes.

Why change the response standard?

BFRS considers it important that its response standard is easy to understand, measurable, efficient, and effective. Also, BFRS's recent inspection findings suggested that its current response standard could mean that even if its response times worsened, it would still be hitting its targets.

3.17 More than half (55%) of respondents agreed that there is a need to refine BFRS's emergency response standard, with around a quarter (24%) strongly agreeing. Around a fifth (21%) disagreed, with around one-in-ten (11%) strongly disagreeing. Around a quarter (24%) gave a neutral response to this question (Figure 1).

3.18 Respondents who are male (68%) and respondents who are White (63%) or White British (63%) were significantly more likely to agree that there is a need to refine BFRS's emergency response standard when compared with all respondents (55%).

Figure 1: To what extent do you agree or disagree that there is a need to refine BFRS's emergency response standard?
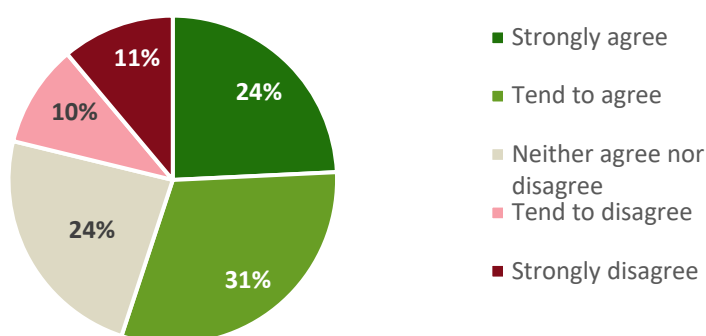
Base: All respondents who gave a valid response (198)

3.19 When asked to what extent they agreed or disagreed with BFRS's proposed new emergency response standard (to uphold an average response time of 10 minutes for all incidents), more than three-in-five respondents (63%) agreed, with around three-in-ten (31%) strongly agreeing. Over a quarter of respondents (28%) disagreed, with around one-in-six (17%) strongly disagreeing. Around one-in-ten (9%) gave a neutral response to this question (Figure 2).

3.20 Respondents who are female (76% versus 63% overall) were significantly more likely to agree with the proposed new emergency response standard, while those living in Milton Keynes were significantly more likely to disagree (48% versus 28% overall).

Figure 2: To what extent do you agree or disagree with BFRS's proposed new response standard (to uphold an average response time of 10 minutes for all incidents)?

- Strongly agree
- Tend to agree
- Neither agree nor disagree
- Tend to disagree
- Strongly disagree
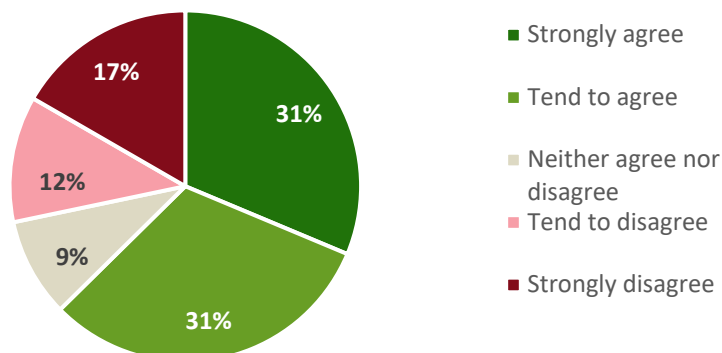
Base: All respondents who gave a valid response (198)

Resourcing (ensuring BFRS can respond to incidents)

3.21 Respondents were given the following information on BFRS's proposals around the number and location of immediately available and day-crewed appliances.

> Through analysing data, BFRS has found that most of its routine daily incidents can be handled with less than nine immediately available pumps. However, due to Buckinghamshire and Milton Keynes' unique geography, BFRS has determined that nine pumps is the minimum it needs to meet its proposed new response standard.
>
> To ensure it can meet this standard during larger or simultaneous incidents, BFRS knows it needs nearer to 12 immediately available pumps.
>
> On rare occasions (less than one per cent of the time) the Service may need to deal with extended incidents or extreme demand, such as during storms or heatwaves. During these times, it needs to make sure it can scale up quickly using traditional pumps and specialist vehicles crewed by immediately available, on-call and resilience crews.
>
> Considering this, BFRS plans to maintain at least the same number of immediately available and day-crewed appliances with no changes to their location. The current numbers are eight and four respectively (total 12 immediately available).

3.22 Over four-in-five respondents (83%) agreed with BFRS's proposal to maintain at least the same number of wholetime and day-crewed appliances with no changes to their location, with more than half (54%) strongly agreeing with this. Just over one-in-ten (12%) disagreed, while 5% neither agreed nor disagreed (Figure 3).

3.23 There were no significant differences by sub-groups of the population.

Figure 3: To what extent do you agree or disagree with BFRS's proposal to maintain at least the same number of Wholetime and Day-Crewed appliances with no changes to their location?
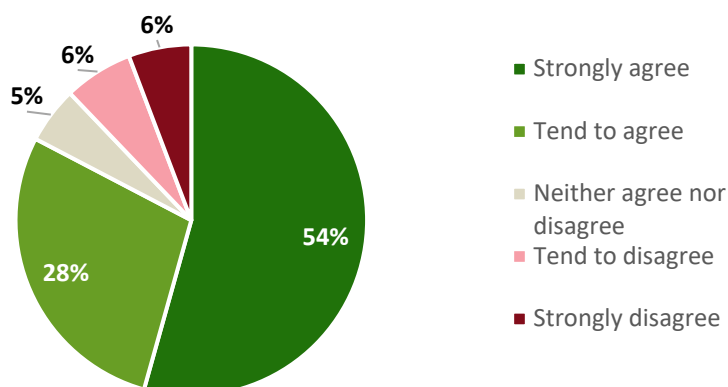
Base: All respondents who gave a valid response (173)

3.24 Respondents were given the following information on BFRS's plans for on-call resourcing.

> BFRS currently has 18 pumps crewed by On-Call firefighters, mainly for resilience. These vehicles significantly enhance the Service's capacity to respond to exceptional circumstances like major incidents and adverse weather conditions, and its standalone On-Call fire stations help it reduce its response time in more rural areas.
>
> BFRS intends to use its data to understand how it can best use its On-Call resources. This includes examining the types of pumps and vehicles it has and exploring opportunities for greater effectiveness and efficiency.
>
> Throughout the CRMP's duration, BFRS proposes to assess the number of On-Call pumps it needs to align with its new response standard and address identified risks.

3.25 Almost four-in-five respondents (78%) agreed with BFRS's proposal to assess its on-call resources to ensure they align with its new response standard and address identified risks within the CRMP. More than two fifths (44%) strongly agreed with this. One-in-ten (10%) disagreed, while 13% neither agreed nor disagreed (Figure 4).

3.26 Respondents who live in Buckinghamshire (85%), those who provided a personal response (83%), those who are female (100%), those who do not have any disabilities (87%), those who are White (86%) or White British (88%), and those who do not work for BFRS (85%) or another FRS (85%) were significantly more likely to agree with BFRS's proposal in relation to assessing On-call resources when compared with all respondents (78%).

Figure 4: To what extent do you agree or disagree with BFRS's proposal to assess its On-Call resources to ensure they align with its new response standard and address identified risks within the CRMP?

Pie chart:
- Strongly agree: 44%
- Tend to agree: 34%
- Neither agree nor disagree: 13%
- Tend to disagree: 5%
- Strongly disagree: 5%
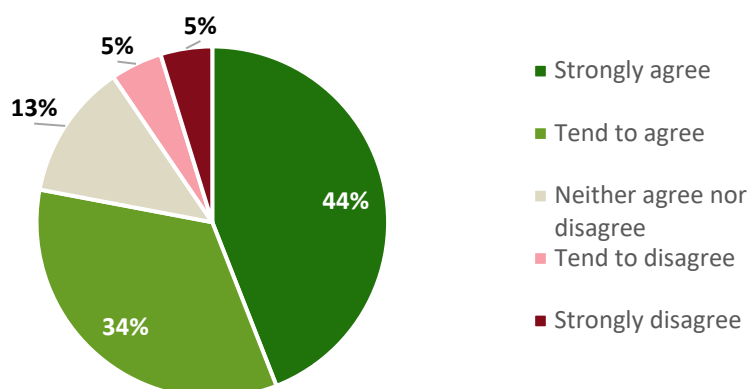
Base: All respondents who gave a valid response (168)

CRMP strategic objective 1 - prevention (reducing risk and keeping communities safe)

3.27 Respondents were given the following information about objective 1 (prevention) within the proposed new CRMP.

> BFRS's goal is to enhance the health, safety, and wellbeing of its communities. Its focus is on preventing fires and other incidents in homes, neighbourhoods, on roads, and in the environment. To achieve this, it works closely with partners to identify, safeguard, and support those most at risk; and through community engagement and education, it aims to create a safer environment for everyone.
>
> **Key Aims**
>
> - Prioritise community wellbeing by identifying and engaging with those most at risk of fire and other emergencies.
>
> - Adopt a person-centred approach to deliver efficient risk-based prevention activities in collaboration with partners for more effective services.
>
> - Support the holistic development of children and young people; actively leading safeguarding partnerships and maintaining effective information sharing in line with guidelines.
>
> **Key Actions**
>
> - Collaborate with partners to capture, share and analyse incident data enabling an intelligence-led, risk-based approach to prioritise and support those most at risk of emergencies.
>
> - Engage regularly with the community to enhance the Service's understanding of local risks and maintain a comprehensive risk profile for the area.
>
> - Deliver high quality targeted, and quality assured, Home Fire Safety Visits (HFSV) to proactively mitigate domestic dwelling fires.

- Implement targeted initiatives which actively support national and local road safety campaigns within Buckinghamshire and Milton Keynes.

- Innovative and targeted, safety education delivered by skilled staff, in partnership with the Safety Centre MK.

- Prioritise safeguarding activities, working closely with partners to identify and support at-risk individuals.

- Maintain a continuous focus on monitoring and evaluating emerging risks and technological impacts.

3.28 Over four-in-five respondents (83%) agreed with BFRS's approach to reducing risk and keeping communities safe, with around half (49%) strongly agreeing. Less than one-in-ten (6%) disagreed, while 11% neither agreed nor disagreed (Figure 5).

3.29 Respondents living in Buckinghamshire (93%), those living in an urban area (90%), those aged 55 to 64 years (93%), those who are female (97%), those who do not have a disability (90%), those who are White (92%) or White British (92%), and those who do not work for BFRS (91%) or another FRS (91%) were significantly more likely to agree with BFRS's approach to reducing risk and keeping communities safe when compared with all respondents (83%).

Figure 5: To what extent do you agree or disagree with BFRS's approach to reducing risk and keeping communities safe?
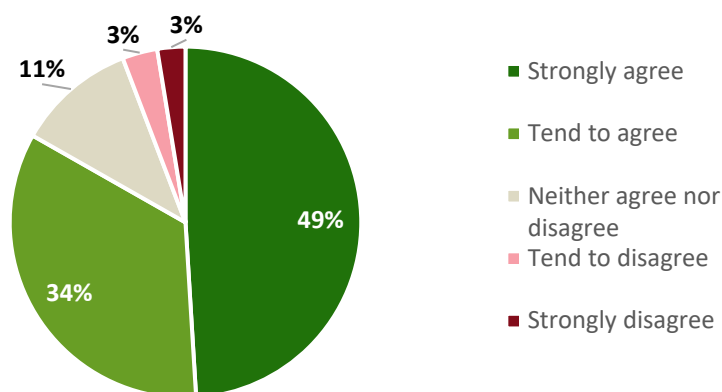
Base: All respondents who gave a valid response (155)

CRMP strategic objective 2 - protection (protecting people from risk in the built environment)

3.30 Respondents were given the following information about objective 2 (protection) within the proposed new CRMP.

BFRS's goal is to enhance the safety and wellbeing of its community by reducing risks and incidents in the built environment. Fire safety legislation applies to around 30,000 buildings within Buckinghamshire and Milton Keynes. BFRS are committed to providing fire safety education to those responsible for keeping these buildings safe and, where required, taking proportionate and robust intervention.

> To achieve this, it will deliver efficient and effective protection activity ensuring its services are accessible to all members of the community.
>
> **Key Aims**
>
> - Ensure compliance with fire safety legislation, statutory duties and regulatory standards to enhance overall regulatory compliance and fire safety measures.
>
> - Support the decrease of fire-related incidents, injuries and fatalities in business premises through education and regulation.
>
> - Continuously improve the competency and capacity of the BFRS Protection Team.
>
> **Key Actions**
>
> - Regularly review and adapt policies, procedures and practices in response to new or revised fire safety legislation, working collaboratively with partners to share knowledge and learnings.
>
> - Review and enhance its data-led methodology for defining protection risk and implement a risk-based intervention programme.
>
> - Deliver a comprehensive business engagement plan; supporting responsible persons in fire safety regulation compliance while continuously evaluating protection activities for effectiveness, a targeted approach and accessibility.
>
> - Respond proportionately to demand-led requirements, including consultations, fire safety concerns, complaints and post-fire inspections.
>
> - Implement an effective quality assurance process to evaluate the standard of BFRS's fire safety activities.

3.31 Nine-in-ten respondents (90%) agreed with BFRS's approach to protecting people from risk in the built environment, with over half (52%) strongly agreeing with this. Just 1% (two respondents) disagreed with BFRS's approach to protection, while 8% neither agreed nor disagreed (Figure 6).

3.32 Respondents aged 45-54 years (100%), those who are male (95%), and those who are White (95%) or White British (95%) were significantly more likely to agree with BFRS's approach to protecting people from risk in the built environment when compared with all respondents (90%).

Figure 6: To what extent do you agree or disagree with BFRS's approach to protecting people from risk in the built environment?

Legend:
- Strongly agree
- Tend to agree
- Neither agree nor disagree
- Tend to disagree
- Strongly disagree

Pie chart values: 52%, 38%, 8%, 1%
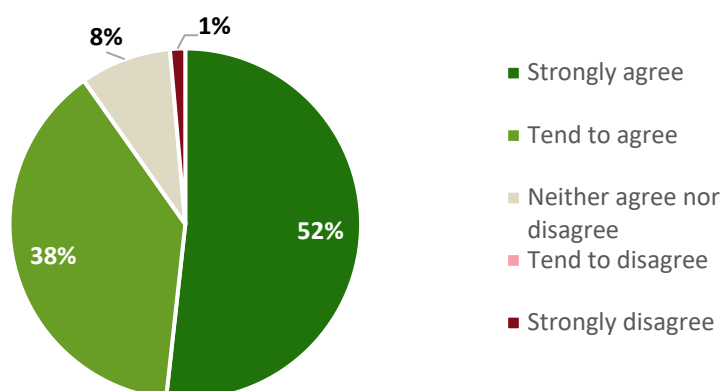
Base: All respondents who gave a valid response (143)

CRMP strategic objective 3 - response and resilience (responding quickly and effectively to emergencies)

3.33 Respondents were given the following information about objective 3 (response and resilience) within the proposed new CRMP.

> BFRS's goal is to respond to emergencies in the most effective and safe way, prioritising the protection of, and limiting damage to, life, property, and the environment.
>
> To achieve this, BFRS is dedicated to ensuring operational preparedness as it responds safely and efficiently to all incidents. This includes acting independently as a single Service, collaborating seamlessly with local or regional Services and other partners, and actively engaging with the National Resilience Capabilities.
>
> **Key Aims**
> - Competent operational and fire control staff.
> - Comprehensive operational policies, procedures, tailored guidance, and training.
> - Appropriate resources, vehicles, equipment, and systems.
>
> **Key Actions**
> - Ensure all operational and control room staff are trained in the hazard and control measure approach based on National Operational Guidance (risk assessment, decision making and risk management skills).
> - Conduct risk assessments for emergency operations and gather site-specific risk information to enhance response effectiveness.
> - Integrate operational assurance and learning efforts to contribute to improvement at local, regional and national levels.
> - Plan and prepare clear and scalable operational responsibilities for emergencies based on foreseeable events.
> - Ensure that essential resources, equipment and adequately trained personnel are strategically available and align with planning assumptions.

- Optimise the structure and function of operational resources to meet preparedness requirements, managing asset types, numbers and locations to mitigate identified risks.
- Prioritise health, safety and wellbeing in operational planning and delivery through a clearly communicated health and safety policy.

3.34 More than nine-in-ten respondents (93%) agreed with BFRS's approach to responding quickly and effectively to emergencies, with more than three-in-five (63%) strongly agreeing. Just 1% (two respondents) disagreed with BFRS's approach to response and resilience, while 5% neither agreed nor disagreed (Figure 7).

3.35 Respondents who live in Buckinghamshire (99%), those who live in an urban area (100%), and those who are aged 45 – 54 years (100%) were significantly more likely to agree with BFRS's approach to responding quickly and effectively to emergencies when compared with all respondents (93%).

Figure 7: To what extent do you agree or disagree with BFRS's approach to responding quickly and effectively to emergencies?
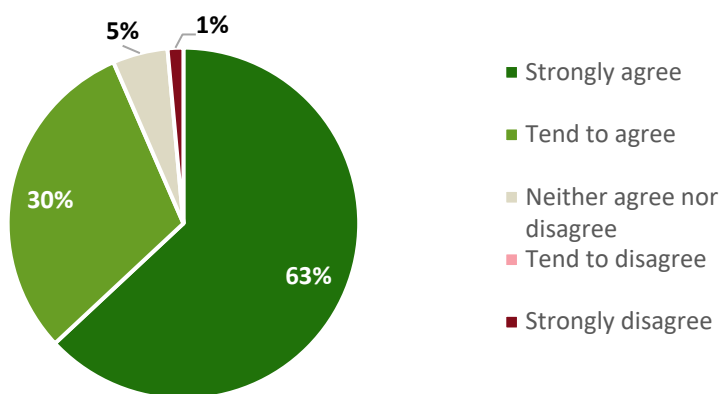
Base: All respondents who gave a valid response (138)

CRMP strategic enabler 1 - workforce (an inclusive, healthy, and engaged workforce)

3.36 Respondents were given the following information about enabler 1 (people) within the proposed new CRMP.

BFRS's goal is to optimise the contribution and wellbeing of everyone at BFRS. To achieve this, it is committed to being connected with its staff, ensuring wellbeing is prioritised and empowering all to be professional and ambitious in serving the community. This commitment starts from the moment someone expresses an interest in joining the Service. It continues throughout their working life with the Service, and even after they have left.

Key Aims

- Strive for a more diverse and engaged workforce.
- Ensure all staff can access wellbeing support easily throughout their career and know how and where to obtain it.

- Ensure all staff are appropriately trained to fulfil their role and are committed to creating and maintaining a thriving culture.
- Senior leaders are role models for BFRS's core values and behaviours and possess the right skills and capacity to manage change.
- Clear communications and ease of access to a fair and transparent succession and promotional processes.
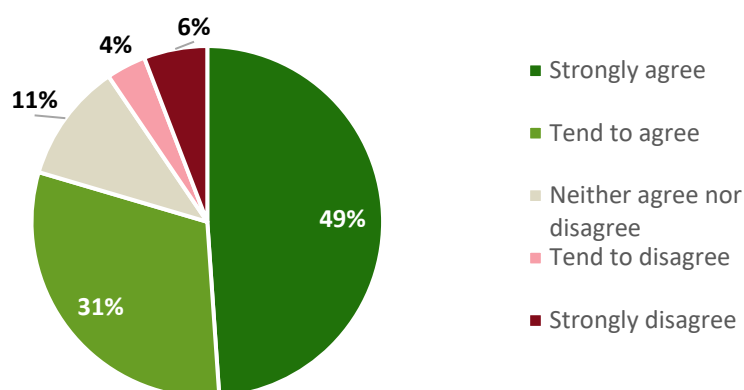
Key Actions

- Embed BFRS's promise, core values and behaviours and set the professional standards all staff are expected to meet.
- Continuously review and improve succession planning to retain, attract and nurture a workforce rich with diversity and the necessary skills, experience and leadership qualities.
- Develop pathways for high-potential staff and future leaders.
- Improve the collection of equality data to better understand workforce demographics and needs, supporting BFRS's ambition to achieve a more diverse workforce that better reflects the community it serves.
- Ensure effective engagement and feedback mechanisms for all staff, including those from under-represented groups, to enhance staff wellbeing.
- Proactively demonstrate BFRS's commitment to fostering a positive health and wellbeing culture, ensuring reasonable and appropriate working conditions for all staff.

3.37 Four-in-five respondents (80%) agreed with BFRS's approach to an inclusive, healthy and engaged workforce, with around half (49%) strongly agreeing. Around one-in-ten (9%) disagreed with BFRS's approach, while 11% neither agreed nor disagreed (

Figure **8**).

3.38 Respondents living in an urban area (87%), those who are female (89%) and those who are White (86%) or White British (87%) were significantly more likely to agree with BFRS's approach to an inclusive, healthy and engaged workforce when compared with all respondents (80%).

Figure 8: To what extent do you agree or disagree with BFRS's approach to an inclusive, healthy and engaged workforce?

Legend:
- Strongly agree
- Tend to agree
- Neither agree nor disagree
- Tend to disagree
- Strongly disagree

Pie chart values: 49%, 31%, 11%, 4%, 6%

Base: All respondents who gave a valid response (137)

CRMP strategic enabler 2 - finance and assets (making the most of finances and assets)

3.39   Respondents were given the following information about enabler 2 (finance and assets) within the proposed new CRMP.

BFRS's goal is to make sure that it delivers the best possible service and value for money with its finances and assets that it has been trusted with. To achieve this, BFRS are committed to upholding the highest professional standards in financial management and ensuring the provision of top-tier facilities and equipment essential for its staff to deliver their duties to the community effectively and safely.

Key Aims

-   Align finances with risk, ensuring proper financial management, and providing staff with safe and effective facilities and equipment.

-   Efficiency improvements delivered year-on-year and reinvested into the Service.

-   Wherever possible, and financially viable, take all appropriate steps to reduce negative impacts on the environment produced by the Service's assets.

Key Actions

-   Implement a zero-based budget for 2025–26 to align resources for Prevention, Protection and Response activities, identifying opportunities for efficiency and assessing these against risk.

-   Develop and implement a 'property standard' across the BFRS estate, ensuring all buildings are fit for purpose and meet health, safety and wellbeing requirements for a diversifying workforce.

-   Review, procure and implement appropriate asset solutions to address needs and requirements of BFRS's diversifying workforce and/or emerging risks outlined within this CRMP.

-   Investigate ways to enhance BFRS's facilities to expand the scope of locally conducted training and validation and opportunities to collaborate with close partners.

-   Explore options to invest in residential accommodation to support BFRS's crewing model and/or provide housing for key workers.

-   Update policies and procedures to accommodate changes in procurement legislation.

3.40   Over three quarters of respondents (78%) agreed with BFRS's approach to making the most of finances and assets, with two fifths (40%) strongly agreeing. One-in-twenty (5%) disagreed with BFRS's approach, while 16% neither agreed nor disagreed (Figure 9).

3.41   Respondents who are White (83%) or White British (85%) were significantly more likely to agree with BFRS's approach to making the most of finances and assets when compared with all respondents (78%).

Figure 9: To what extent do you agree or disagree with BFRS's approach to making the most of finances and assets?
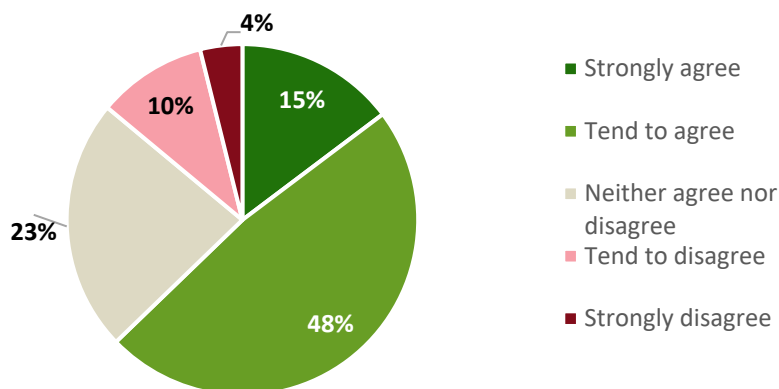

- Strongly agree
- Tend to agree
- Neither agree nor disagree
- Tend to disagree
- Strongly disagree
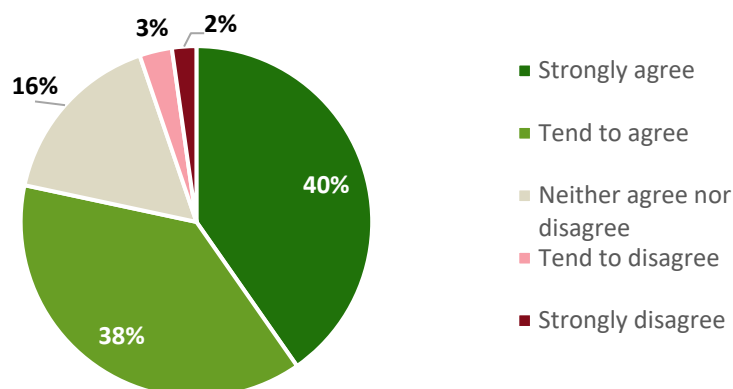
Base: All respondents who gave a valid response (134)

CRMP strategic enabler 3 - digital and data (optimising technology and data)

3.42 Respondents were given the following information about enabler 3 (digital and data) within the proposed new CRMP.

> BFRS's goal is to increase its use of data and business intelligence tools, through secure and resilient systems, to help it better understand and respond appropriately to the risks the Service, and the community, face. To achieve this, BFRS will use technology to balance the need for security and resilience with the desire to innovate and introduce new, efficient ways of working.
>
> **Key Aims**
>
> - An empowered workforce with effective technology for communication, secure information management, and efficient remote working.
> - Easy access to current, role-relevant data and intelligence to improve safety and reduce risk.
> - A digitally engaged workforce that champions a digital first culture, embracing and promoting automation for enhanced efficiency and effectiveness.
> - Enhanced community engagement through tailored, accessible and digitally enabled solutions, helping to deliver reduction in paper and improved process efficiency.
>
> **Key Actions**
>
> - Collect and analyse new data to enhance BFRS's understanding of risk in Buckinghamshire and Milton Keynes.
> - Evaluate and optimise IT systems to ensure they continue to act as reliable key enablers for the Service.
> - Assure the reliability, resilience, accuracy and accessibility of critical IT systems, such as mobile data terminals for accuracy and accessibility.
> - Ensure all systems meet up-to-date security requirements, maintaining data and system security alongside accreditation to relevant codes of connections and security standards.
> - Engage with the Home Office-led Emergency Service Mobile Communication Programme for implementing the Emergency Service Network within BFRS and the broader Thames Valley.

> - Enhance systems to enable self-service for staff and the public, reducing paper and printing requirements and improving process efficiency through digitisation and automation.
> - Implement data standards to enhance community analysis, evaluating and improving BFRS's risk methodology for prioritised home fire safety visits aligned with individual and household needs.

3.43 Over four-in-five respondents (82%) agreed with BFRS's approach to optimising technology and data, with more than two-in-five (44%) strongly agreeing. Less than one-in-ten (7%) disagreed with BFRS's approach, while 11% neither agreed nor disagreed (Figure 10).

3.44 Respondents who are male (89%), and those who are White (88%) or White British (90%) were significantly more likely to agree with BFRS's approach to optimising technology and data when compared with all respondents (82%).

Figure 10: To what extent do you agree or disagree with BFRS's approach to optimising technology and data?
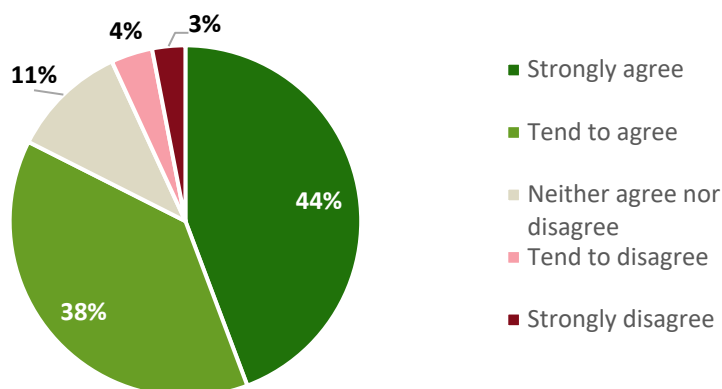
Base: All respondents who gave a valid response (131)

The CRMP overall

3.45 Over three-in-five respondents (63%) agreed that BFRS's draft CRMP 2025-2030 is clear and easy to understand, with 15% strongly agreeing. Around one-in-seven respondents (14%) disagreed that the draft CRMP is clear and easy to understand, while almost a quarter (23%) gave a neutral response (Figure 11).

3.46 Respondents living in Buckinghamshire (74%), those who are female (78%), and those who are White (71%) or White British (71%) were significantly more likely to agree that BFRS's draft CRMP is clear and easy to understand when compared with all respondents (63%).

Figure 11: To what extent do you agree or disagree that BFRS's draft CRMP 2025-2030 is clear and easy to understand?

Base: All respondents who gave a valid response (129)

3.47 Three-in-five respondents (60%) agreed that BFRS's proposed CRMP 2025-2030 has helped them to better understand how BFRS works, with over a quarter of respondents (27%) strongly agreeing. Around one-in-six respondents (16%) disagreed that the proposed CRMP has helped them to better understand how BFRS works, while almost a quarter (24%) gave a neutral response (Figure 12).

3.48 Respondents living in Buckinghamshire (74%), those living in rural areas (74%), those who are female (81%), those who are White (69%) or White British (70%), and those who do not work for BFRS (71%) or another FRS (72%) were significantly more likely to agree that BFRS's Proposed CRMP 2025-2030 has helped them better understand how BFRS works when compared with all respondents (60%).

Figure 12: To what extent do you agree or disagree that BFRS's proposed CRMP 2025-2030 has helped you to better understand how BFRS works?
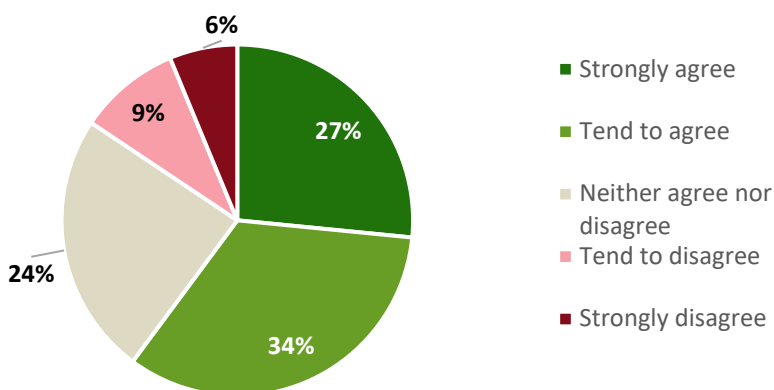
Base: All respondents who gave a valid response (128)

Other comments (general)

3.49 At the end of the questionnaire, respondents were to provide comments in relation to the draft CRMP 2025-2030. 38 respondents did so, with most of these taking the opportunity to raise concerns, largely relating to resource issues and challenges around the on-call crewing model.

3.50   A couple of respondents shared the view that funding for frequently unused or unavailable resources (including fire stations) should be redistributed to other areas of the Service, or even other emergency services, to optimise the use of public money.

> *"The Service should close fire stations where the pump is never available to use (e.g. due to lack of staff) where this has been the case in excess of a year and there is no likelihood of the situation changing…"*

3.51   Many others, though, were concerned about the potential for resource reductions in the context of, for example, local development and the impacts of climate change. Considering this, there was support for more response resource to account for increased foreseeable risk.

> *"I… do not agree with keeping the current provision as a minimum, it is already clear that this isn't enough. With the need for further housing and development… Also with the potential for solar farms and increased risk of battery fires from electric vehicles, the future needs to be looking at greater provision, not keeping what is already too little as the minimum…"*

3.52   Several respondents highlighted the issue of poor on-call firefighter availability in some areas. A robust on-call recruitment and retention strategy, together with a general *"overhaul"* of the system itself, was thought to be urgently needed to improve the situation.

> *"… Recruitment and retention of on-call staff will always be an issue unless there is a radical overhaul of the system and a more coherent and a strategic approach is implemented."*

3.53   On-call fire cover in the west of the county was a particular issue (Stokenchurch was mentioned by a few respondents). On a related note, there was also worry about a potential over-reliance on neighbouring fire and rescue resources in border towns and villages, many of which are also on-call and subject to the same availability issues.

> *"It appears the western side of the county from Buckingham down to Stokenchurch is potentially devoid of guaranteed fire cover which could quickly respond to meet your proposals and is solely based upon on-call? You make reference to support from neighbours, yet these are all also on call, so what guarantee is there that these would also be available? It appears to me that a more guaranteed level of fire cover must be provided to these areas rather than just the south & east?"*

3.54   Several respondents were of the view that the proposed change to the emergency response standard represents an unacceptable increase, which could have a negative impact on attitudes, productivity, and response times. It was said that standards should instead be set to improve outcomes and reduce response times.

> *"Unsure why a fire service would make slower response times an objective? Response times have got worse over the last 20 years so effort should be made to reduce response times."*

3.55 Furthermore, one respondent shared their concerns around using average response times, particularly for more rural areas in the uniquely shaped county of Buckinghamshire. They suggested that a more differentiated approach may best reflect the reality in different areas of the county.

3.56 A few respondents took the opportunity to provide general feedback on BFRS, the CRMP, and the consultation. A few positive comments praised the service overall, and the CRMP's identification of risks and mitigations.

> *"Very clear report and shows that it is imperative going forward that [the] community needs to understand what the Fire Service need from them too. Education and engagement is key to pushing that message of safety…"*

3.57 Most other feedback was less positive, however. Respondents shared concerns around the CRMP's lack of detail and accountability measures; BFRS's recent inspection failures; and the wording of the consultation questions.

> *"The CRMP is worded in a generic statement like manner, it just says 'we will try hard and be good.' The detail behind the headline statements are missing. This appears to be a document that would be hard to hold anyone to account against as it's wishy washy, probably the intent given the outcomes from the recent inspections of the service…"*

> *"This consultation doesn't really ask people what they want! 'Do you want staff to be well trained and respond effectively?' Of course everyone is going to agree with this! 'Should we use our financial assets efficiently?' Yes! No questions about what is important to us, what people are worried about etc."*

3.58 A particular worry was that the Plan's emphasis on efficiency is an attempt to disguise the potential for future service reductions.

> *"Whilst no-one can object to the principle of efficiency, we are concerned that this may be a euphemism for cuts, which would be undesirable and dangerous…"*

3.59 Furthermore, one respondent (while complementing the clarity and comprehensiveness of the CRMP) said they would like to have seen more of an emphasis on a long-term investment strategy to enable necessary and desired improvements to the Service.

> *"… Taking a longer-term approach to investment is crucial… A long-term investment strategy enables more significant, sustainable change by allowing resources to be allocated gradually over time, supporting larger-scale transformations that might be unattainable with annual budgets alone. By extending the financial planning horizon, the organisation can focus on the modernisation of infrastructure, integration of new technologies, and enhancement of services in a way that ensures fire stations remain future-proof. This approach not only provides the financial breathing room needed for unforeseen challenges but also encourages strategic planning that is proactive, rather than reactive…"*

3.60   Other comments made by fewer respondents related to the importance of having a skilled workforce over a diverse workforce; continuing to develop prevention work, especially around fires and road traffic collisions; the availability of funding for digital technology and the need to ensure the systems used by different FRSs *"work together";* ensuring digital technology is complemented by firefighter knowledge and experience; and the need for roper consideration of the dangers caused by battery energy storage systems (BESS).

> *"There is much talk of being technology led; please don't lose that knowledge, wisdom, experience and gut feel that a fire officer has in any situation. We know that technology will always have some limitations in the field and in the moment when making decisions and this shouldn't be ignored/discounted."*
>
> *"I would ask that with all the possible danger incurred with the battery energy storage systems (BESS) that no systems are installed until proper safety legislation has been put into place regarding both the effects of fumes, toxins and fire from these very dangerous systems are fully recognised and made safe"*

3.61   Finally, a few specific suggestions for alternative ways of working were made, as below.

> *"Are there plans to review the emergency service model to a collective emergency response unit? It seems at odds with paramedics and police officers to have fire fighters on station/on-call when that resource could be otherwise deployed under a single combined response force…"*
>
> *"Maybe consider a more personnel-based approach to resourcing larger incidents. At many incidents the necessary equipment is in place but more personnel are needed to enable the plans made to resolve the situation. There is no need for personnel to arrive with equipment that isn't needed."*
>
> *"… a stand-alone Milton Keynes fire & rescue service as Milton Keynes has nothing in common and no community connections with the rest of Buckinghamshire."*

Other comments (equalities)

3.62   Respondents were also asked whether there would be any positive or negative impacts from the CRMP that they felt should be considered.

3.63   Most of the comments made by respondents related to the commitment to diversifying the BFRS workforce, largely reflecting the view that skill and ability should take priority over demographics within the recruitment process.

> *"The Service should ensure the focus on having a diverse workforce does not detract from employing the most suitable and adept person for the job i.e. they do not positively discriminate."*

3.64   Nevertheless, one respondent noted the negative impacts of racism, homophobia, and transphobia on staff within the Service, highlighting the lack of prevention and support around these issues in the CRMP.

> *"No mention on supporting and preventing any staff member experiencing racism, homophobia and transphobia, or any measures to encourage recruitment of the gay and trans community into the service."*

3.65 A few other respondents again noted potential negative impacts around resourcing and the on-call staffing model. A lack of support for the on-call system and potential future resource reductions were noted as the main concerns, with joined-up working across counties and more funding for engines suggested as ways to resolve these concerns.

3.66 In terms of positive impacts, one respondent said that the current automatic fire alarm pilot will improve public awareness, as it places more responsibility on businesses and the community.

> *"… It should make business understand their role in ensuring safety for the community as well. It is a good bold move... It's important to show the community how much it takes to maintain the fire service. It should show positive change in mentality of negligence to safety."*

4. Resident focus groups

Introduction

4.1 This chapter reports the views from five deliberative focus groups with members of the public across Buckinghamshire and Milton Keynes, which were independently facilitated by ORS.

4.2 The meeting format followed a pre-determined topic guide which allowed space for a general discussion of the key questions under consideration. A series of information slides were shared at set points during the sessions, which ensured that participants had sufficient background information to actively deliberate on the issues. 'Workbooks' were used to determine participants' views on BFRS's strategic objectives and enablers, whereby they were asked to indicate whether they agreed or disagreed with the Service's approach and to make comments.

4.3 This is not a verbatim transcript of the five sessions, but an interpretative summary of the issues raised by participants in free-ranging discussions - and as the focus groups did not differ materially in their views, this report combines the findings from all the meetings in a single account. Any significant differences in views have been drawn out where appropriate.

4.4 All participants were encouraged to express their opinions freely and to ask questions throughout, and all the meetings were successful in stimulating wide-ranging and informed debate on the issues under consideration.
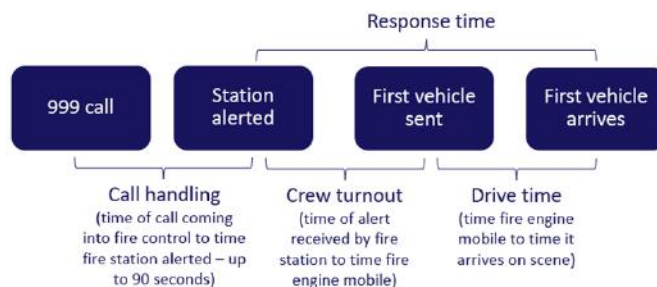
Main findings

BFRS's emergency response standard

4.5 Prior to discussion, participants were shown the following information and asked whether they agreed or disagreed with BFRS's proposed new emergency response standard.
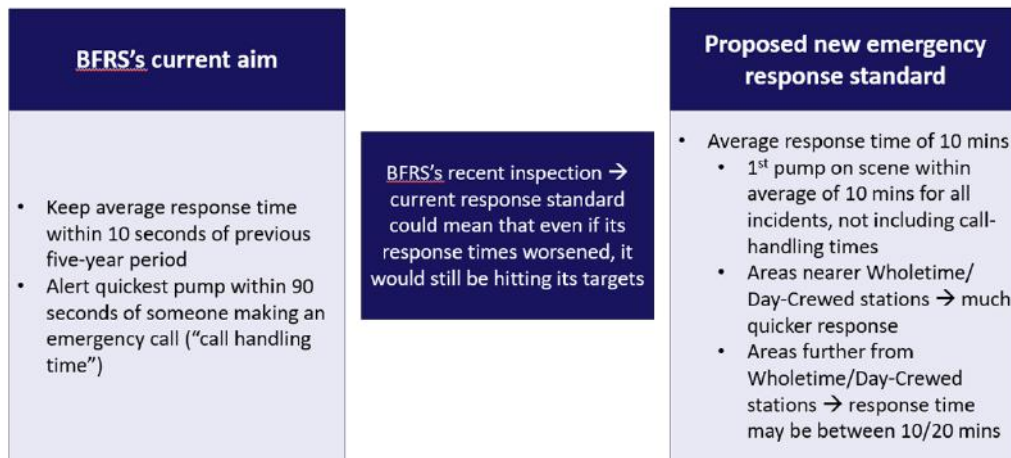

Emergency Response Standard

When someone calls 999, Thames Valley Fire Control Service (TVFCS) sends the quickest available pump, regardless of which fire station/service it comes from

BFRS measures the time it takes for the first pump (fire engine) to arrive → "response time"

Response time

| 999 call | Station alerted | First vehicle sent | First vehicle arrives |

Call handling (time of call coming into fire control to time fire station alerted – up to 90 seconds)

Crew turnout (time of alert received by fire station to time fire engine mobile)

Drive time (time fire engine mobile to time it arrives on scene)

2023/24 → BFRS's average response time to all incidents each month ranged from 8 minutes 35 seconds to 9 minutes 31 seconds (excluding call handling time)

Emergency Response Standard

BFRS's current aim

- Keep average response time within 10 seconds of previous five-year period
- Alert quickest pump within 90 seconds of someone making an emergency call ("call handling time")

BFRS's recent inspection → current response standard could mean that even if its response times worsened, it would still be hitting its targets

Proposed new emergency response standard

- Average response time of 10 mins
  - 1st pump on scene within average of 10 mins for all incidents, not including call-handling times
  - Areas nearer Wholetime/ Day-Crewed stations → much quicker response
  - Areas further from Wholetime/Day-Crewed stations → response time may be between 10/20 mins

Views on BFRS's current emergency response standard

4.6   Participants were largely positive about BFRS's current average response time, particularly considering the geographical and infrastructure challenges faced by the Service and the fact over half of its fire stations are on-call. Indeed, while it was acknowledged that no response time will be considered fast enough by those in an emergency situation, being able to respond in an average of less than 10 minutes across the whole of Buckinghamshire and Milton Keynes was considered impressive.

> *"… It kind of feels like any number you put on that screen is going to be long time to be waiting in the fire. But that eight or nine minutes is quite impressive for their territory that you're covering." (Milton Keynes)*
>
> *"It's pretty amazing… because some of the pumps aren't manned. And to get anywhere in 10 minutes, especially when you often can't even get out of Aylesbury in 10 minutes, is pretty impressive." (Aylesbury)*

4.7   For a minority of participants (predominantly those in the more urban areas typically served by wholetime fire stations), current response times were longer than expected.

> *"I think that that is quite a long time. I think a lot can happen in eight nine minutes and if everyone is suited and booted and ready to go…" (Aylesbury)*

4.8   Most, though, acknowledged that they represent an average across the whole Service area, and that actual response times will depend on where an incident takes place, the proximity of a fire station, and the way it is crewed.

Views on BFRS's proposed new emergency response standard

4.9   Participants were first asked to share their views on the need to refine BFRS's emergency response time standard. They were mostly supportive of the proposed change in principle, considering it sensible to have a more definitive standard, reducing the risk of worsening performance over time (a risk highlighted by

His Majesty's Inspectorate of Constabulary and Fire and Rescue Services [HMICFRS] in relation to the current aim) and offering greater clarity.

> *"I think it's better purely because if you keep it within 10 seconds of the previous five-year period, if it kept getting worse, it will keep getting longer. So, it's almost like a moving goal post, whereas if you had it with the 10 minutes then that's kind of finalised... Keeps you on track…" (Aylesbury)"*
>
> *"I get what they mean… It could be 10 seconds later, but still be in target, and then in 20 years you could be at like... 12 minutes or something." (Chesham)*
>
> *"... From a customer point of view, it's much clearer and much easier to understand." (Aylesbury)*

4.10 A few participants felt less positive about the proposed new emergency response standard, however. Their main concern was around having an 'average' response standard for Buckinghamshire and Milton Keynes, which was considered somewhat uninformative and non-transparent.

> *"It's saying average response time is 10 minutes, but that's because we can get to these people in under a minute, so it doesn't matter that you guys over there are taking half an hour…" (Milton Keynes)*

4.11 As such they suggested that any new response standard should be varied according to whether the responding fire engine is coming from an immediately available, day-crewed or on-call fire station, which was not only considered more representative and transparent, but also important in managing expectations and raising awareness of potential wait times in rural areas..

> *"… Maybe it should be done so the busiest stations that are manned 24 hours could be 10 minutes. But then the more rural ones maybe, say, 15 to 20. It's a bit more realistic for people." (High Wycombe)*
>
> *"… If I did live further out in a rural place, I would feel a lot safer and understand my situation better if I knew what the maximum response time was. The average is of little concern at that point, it doesn't give me any information." (Milton Keynes)*

4.12 There was also some discussion around differentiating between life-risk and non-life risk incidents by having a faster standard for the former than the latter. There was some (minority) support for this in the Milton Keynes and Chesham groups, on the grounds of reducing confusion and proving reassurance to those experiencing life-threatening emergencies.

> *"Would it just be easier if it's an average response time of five or eight or whatever minutes for all life-risk incidents? So then there's no confusion… Just to have that life-risk as a differentiation... I think I would personally prefer that because I'm not really bothered about the non-life risk ones. I know they need attendance, of course they do, but... what's important to me is somebody's life being saved... (Chesham)*

4.13 It should be noted, though, that most respondents across the five groups were supportive of an average response time across all incident types, acknowledging that BFRS will always strive to get to incidents as

quickly as possible; and that it has internal mechanisms by which to measure whether the standard and its various components are being met. Indeed, the general feeling was that the proposed standard would be sufficient for and easily digested by members of the public.

> *"I know you can't drive to my house quicker than 12 minutes so I understand why some people might like the differentiation, but at the same time it's not quite as punchy as a one line 10-minute response time. It doesn't have that kind of hit to the public…" (Aylesbury)*
>
> *"If you start trying to shape situations to areas, then you don't have an easily measurable target… If you go across the board, you have that, and you're still measuring if there are situations that impact that measurement… I think you need to start off with something simple and have your internal measurements… Then you can develop it from there." (High Wycombe)*
>
> *"The figures are enough as a broad statement as the public won't want to consider all the details. It's fine for the public eye." (Buckingham)*

4.14 Moreover, using an average was thought to guard against those seeking to blame BFRS for not meeting a more specific target.

> *"… Again, it's more society in how quick they are to blame and utilise whatever you've documented when it's not going their way... They're going to turn around and say, 'Well, you're outside 10 minutes.' That's why you'll find a lot of organisations will go with an average, because then they're not promising and under delivering, they're just looking to meet an average." (Milton Keynes)*

4.15 Most of the discussion around emergency response standards focused on the proposed 10-minute figure. There was general agreement in all focus groups that 10 minutes is an appropriate and fair time to set as it is easy to remember and would provide peace of mind to members of the public in an emergency. Moreover, several other participants recognised the need for BFRS to have an achievable response standard, as it would be held accountable by the relevant authorities and the public if it was not upheld. It was also considered important to avoid demotivating the operational workforce by implementing unachievable targets.

> *"… I understand it for the sake of having a simple, round number that is published in your document, otherwise you'd have to say that it has to be nine minutes. Well, they're not meeting that target… It has to be achievable, not just an empty promise. You don't want to over-promise and under deliver." (Milton Keynes)*
>
> *"It's got to be something that they can achieve, and it's not to be seen to be failing. They're doing the job the best they can, so if you have to put a label on it you have to say, 'Actually, we can do ten minutes,' and you've got motivated people then." (Chesham)*

4.16 Less positive comments around the proposed 10-minute standard centred around the prospect of worsening performance, given the Service's current average response time is between eight minutes 35 seconds and nine minutes 31 seconds. It was acknowledged that there are likely good reasons for this, but that these need explaining to ensure understanding and transparency.

> *"I don't like it… You're just making the service worse, not better. The average response time is between eight and nine minutes, and now you're saying its 10… Somebody could die in that time. I don't understand why they didn't just round it up to average response time of nine minutes, and not 10." (Chesham)*
>
> *"As the response time is currently up to nine and a half minutes, a 10-minute target could result In degradation of performance instead of improvement." (High Wycombe)*
>
> *"Why did you choose 10 minutes? Just because the average is actually better than that…. Why wouldn't you set it at nine minutes which is in the middle of where things are? I think they should be like 'Okay, it's 10 minutes because of this.' It's important to explain why." (Aylesbury)*

4.17 Other concerns were around resourcing, specifically that implementing an emergency response standard that is longer than what is being achieved currently could be a precursor to future reductions.

> *"I feel like if you were to do this, it could be a precursor to allow cost-cutting measures to follow. So, you say, 'We don't need that extra guy or engine, we'll be a minute slower but we'll still be on target. It allows cost-cutting measures to take place, or at least it's implied." (Chesham)*

4.18 Finally, and despite much discussion around them in the focus groups, some participants noted that emergency response standards do not matter much to the public, who typically accept the BFRS will get to them as quickly as possible. Indeed, several stated that as they were not aware of the previous standard, any future changes would likely have gone unnoticed had they not attended the session. Nonetheless, participants encouraged better promotion of emergency response standards to offer reassurance to the wider public and ensure BFRS can be better held to account by the people it serves.

> *"I feel a lot of reassurance from that, it's something that we should know. Will people get by day-to-day without knowing it? Yeah. But it's something that we should know. And I think it's something to be proud of, to get that reassurance from…" (Chesham)*

Resourcing (ensuring BFRS can respond to incidents)

Wholetime and day-crewed resourcing

4.19 Prior to discussion, participants were shown the following information and asked whether they agreed or disagreed with BFRS's proposal to maintain at least the same number of wholetime and day-crewed appliances as it has currently, with no changes to their location.

Resourcing (ensuring BFRS can respond to incidents)

Data → most routine daily incidents can be handled with less than 9 wholetime pumps but…

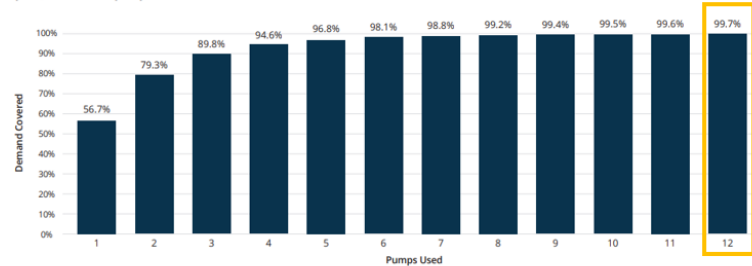…Bucks and Milton Keynes' unique geography → 9 pumps is minimum needed to meet proposed new response standard

…to ensure it can meet this standard during larger/simultaneous incidents → nearer to 12 needed

Graph A, Use of Pumps April 2019 to March 2023

12 pumps covers 99.7% of demand (i.e. for 364 days of an average year)

Rare occasions (less than 1% of time) → Service may need to deal with extended incidents or extreme demand, e.g., during storms or heatwaves

During these times, needs to make sure it can scale up quickly (using wholetime, day crewed, on-call pumps – and neighbouring resources)

Considering this, BFRS plans to **maintain at least the same number of wholetime (8) and Day-Crewed (4) appliances with no changes to their location**

4.20 Participants were happy to trust the Service's judgement on the issue of resourcing; and most could see the value in having a 'safety net' to account for extended incidents or periods of extreme demand. Indeed, thought it was acknowledged that these are rare occurrences currently, there was a strong view that they will become more frequent in future as a result of climate change impacts.

> *"There is nothing that can perform at full capacity consistently without breaking." (Buckingham)*
>
> *"… These floods are going to be happening more often. And [the wildfires] in 2022… are going to happen again. The way things are going now they are going to be a yearly thing…" (Milton Keynes)*

4.21 The other key reason for agreeing with BFRS at least maintaining its current resource levels was the amount and potential impact of local development and population growth on service demand.

> *"You only have to look at the road map for property over the next few years. In Aylesbury there's new estates popping up over the place and all those new people means that's more cars on the road…." (Aylesbury)*

4.22 In all groups, though, a minority of participants questioned the cost-benefit of maintaining the additional three appliances given the small percentage differences in the demand covered after a certain point (as shown in the graph on the slide above). At Buckingham it was suggested that the money saved from reducing the wholetime/day-crewed fleet could be invested in different, innovative fire and rescue resources to improve Service efficiency and effectiveness.

> *"What would be the cost difference in damages? I guess you can't put a cost on human life… but if the cost of a wholetime pump is more than £1 million a year… It actually seems like there's a very small percentage of benefit to each pump after six… and we're talking £6.6 million then." (Milton Keynes)*

> *"At nine pumps you have 99.4% and at 12 it's 99.7%, so it's such a small difference between nine and 12. You could use the money for those three appliances to invest in different resources to cover even more ground" (Buckingham)*

4.23   At Aylesbury, participants sought more information around any savings made from reducing wholetime and day-crewed resources would be spent on to enable them to make an informed judgement on whether BFRS should maintain its current level of service.

> *"It would be easier for me if they told us where they'd spend it otherwise. Because to me, it makes total tense; of course you should keep 12. But if they said, 'If we reduce to 10 this is what we'd actually spend the money on and this is why it'd be better.' You could potentially invest it more in your prevention work for example. There should be the reasons and alternatives as to what we do without it were to be reduced by, say, two and this is the advantage of that..."*
> *(Aylesbury)*

On-call resourcing

4.24   Again, participants were shown the following information and asked whether they agreed or disagreed with BFRS's proposal to understand how it can best use its on-call resources by looking at the types of pumps and other vehicles it has and exploring opportunities for better effectiveness and efficiency; and assessing the number of on-call pumps it needs to make sure it can meet its risks and response standard.

Resourcing (ensuring BFRS can respond to incidents)

- BFRS currently has 18 on-call pumps
  - Mainly for resilience → capacity to respond to 'exceptional circumstances' like major incidents and adverse weather conditions i.e. floods, wildfires
  - But standalone on-call fire stations also help reduce response times in more rural areas
- BFRS wants to **understand how it can best use its On-Call resources,** including…
  - … Looking at the types of pumps and other vehicles it has and exploring opportunities for better effectiveness/efficiency
  - … Assessing the number of on-call pumps it needs to make sure it can meet its risks and response standard

4.25   Participants at all groups recognised the challenges facing the on-call system, not only in Buckinghamshire but nationwide. They thus unanimously supported a review into ways of improving the system's effectiveness and efficiency; and improving its robustness through enhancing the attractiveness of the role, thus ensuring better recruitment and retention. There was, though, some concern at Chesham about the feasibility of the latter given:

> *"The world has moved on… Your Gen Z are very different and are not attracted to these sorts of things." (Chesham)*

Strategic objectives 1 – 3[1]

Prevention: reducing risk and keeping communities safe

Prevention Strategy (reducing risk and keeping communities safe)

BFRS's goal is to enhance the health, safety, and wellbeing of its communities. Its focus is on preventing fires and other incidents in homes, neighbourhoods, on roads, and in the environment

To achieve this, it works closely with partners to identify, safeguard, and support those most at risk; and through community engagement and education, it aims to create a safer environment for everyone

Key Aims	Key Actions
Identify and engage with those most at risk of fire and other emergencies to increase community wellbeing	Work with partners to capture, share, and analyse incident data → use this to reach people most at risk of emergencies
Deliver risk-based prevention activities with partners for more effective services	Engage regularly with communities to improve understanding of local risks and maintain a comprehensive risk profile for the area
Support the development of children and young people; actively leading safeguarding partnerships and sharing information effectively (in line with guidelines)	Deliver targeted Home Fire Safety Visits; initiatives that support national/local road safety campaigns; and targeted safety education in partnership with Safety Centre MK
	Prioritise safeguarding activities, working closely with partners to identify and support at-risk people
	Continually monitor and evaluate emerging risks and technological impacts

4.26 Participants unanimously agreed with BFRS's approach to reducing risk and keeping communities safe (36 strongly agreed and seven tended to agree). Indeed, one person described the Service's prevention strategy as:

> *"Refreshingly sensible, responsible, informed, and realistic." (Buckingham)*

4.27 In their comments, people said that prevention and education activity is essential in reducing incidents and minimising risk to the public and firefighters.

> *"Although potentially difficult to monitor and analyse, prevention and education in my view is one of the best ways to try and reduce the number of incidents." (Buckingham)*

4.28 One Aylesbury participant considered it *"important to engage with communities as their areas change… and to engage young people, as they don't always understand (or care!) about risks."* In considering the latter point, the Hazard Alley facility in Milton Keynes was praised.

4.29 While agreeing with the prevention strategy overall, a High Wycombe participant said they would like to have seen something more specific within the CRMP about how exactly the Service intends to engage with communities, especially those most at risk of fire and other emergencies.

> *"You have to see how that engagement happens. What is the action of the engagement, how do you do it? Then we can measure what works… whereas 'engage' to me is a bit fluffy." (High Wycombe)*

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[1] Please note that the figures quoted below do not sum to 44 as one participant had to leave before the end of the Milton Keynes session.

4.30 One Milton Keynes participant asked why fire and rescue services must "*supply staff/teams to educate, that comes out of their operational budget. Why not create a funded national team to do this, allowing more money to be used for [fire and rescue services'] original purpose?*"

Protection: protecting people from risk in the built environment

Protection Strategy (protecting people from risk in the built environment)

BFRS's goal is to enhance the safety and wellbeing of its community by reducing risks/incidents in the built environment

Fire safety legislation applies to c.30k buildings in Bucks and Milton Keynes. BFRS provides education to those responsible for keeping them safe and, if needed, takes proportionate, robust intervention

Key Aims	Key Actions
Ensure compliance with fire safety legislation, statutory duties, and regulatory standards to enhance overall compliance and fire safety measures	Regularly review and adapt policies, procedures, and practices in response to new or revised fire safety legislation
Support the decrease of fire-related incidents, injuries and fatalities in business premises through education and regulation	Work with partners to share knowledge and learnings
	Deliver a business engagement plan
	Support responsible persons in fire safety compliance
Continuously improve the competency and capacity of the BFRS Protection Team	Risk-based intervention programme
	Respond proportionately to e.g., consultations, fire safety concerns, complaints, and post-fire inspections
	Continuously evaluate fire safety activities for effectiveness, quality, a targeted approach, and accessibility

4.31 All participants but one agreed with BFRS's approach to protecting people from risk in the built environment (36 strongly agreed, seven tended to agree, and the remaining participant neither agreed nor disagreed). The general feeling was that engaging with and advising those responsible for safety in the built environment is imperative and that the approach represents:

> *"A sensible, holistic and robust approach." (Buckingham)*

4.32 The participant who neither agreed nor disagreed did so due to concern about the potential impacts of the Service's current Automatic Fire Alarm (AFA) mobilising pilot[2]. Moreover, another participant (who generally agreed with the Service's approach) suggested a need for:

> *"More emphasis/assistance managing or monitoring non-compliant organisations…" (High Wycombe)*

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[2] https://bucksfire.gov.uk/safety-hub/automatic-fire-alarm-mobilising-pilot/

Response and resilience: responding quickly and effectively to emergencies

Response and Resilience Strategy (responding quickly and effectively to emergencies)

BFRS's goal is to respond to emergencies in the most effective and safe way, prioritising the protection of, and limiting damage to, life, property, and the environment

To achieve this, BFRS is dedicated to ensuring 'operational preparedness' by acting independently as a single FRS, collaborating with local/regional FRSs and other partners, and engaging with National Resilience Capabilities

Key Aims

Competent operational and fire control staff

Comprehensive operational policies, procedures, guidance, and training

Appropriate resources, vehicles, equipment, and systems

Key Actions

Ensure all operational and control room staff are trained in National Operational Guidance (risk assessment and management, decision-making)

Conduct risk assessments for emergency operations – and gather site-specific risk information to enhance the effectiveness of response

Plan and prepare for emergencies based on foreseeable events – ensuring essential resources, equipment, and trained staff are strategically available

Ensure operational resources meet 'preparedness requirements' by ensuring asset types, numbers, and locations can mitigate identified risks

Prioritise health, safety, and wellbeing in operational planning and delivery through a clearly communicated health and safety policy

4.33 Participants unanimously agreed with BFRS's approach to responding quickly and effectively to emergencies (38 strongly agreed and five tended to agree). Resourcing should, it was said, be a strong focus for BFRS over the next five years to ensure the Service can protect and limit damage to life, property, and the environment, and:

> *"Make the best use of resources and cover all areas with what it has." (High Wycombe)*

Strategic enablers 1 – 3

Workforce: an inclusive, healthy, and engaged workforce

People Strategy (An inclusive, healthy, and engaged workforce)

BFRS's goal is to optimise the contribution and wellbeing of everyone at BFRS.

To achieve this, it is committed to being connected with its staff, ensuring wellbeing is prioritised, and empowering all to be professional and ambitious in serving the community

Key Aims

A more diverse and engaged workforce

Ensure all staff can access wellbeing support easily and know how and where to get it

Ensure all staff are appropriately trained for their role and are committed to creating and maintaining a thriving culture

Senior leaders are role models for BFRS's core values and behaviours and have the right skills and capacity to manage change

Clear communications and easy access to fair and transparent succession/promotional processes

Key Actions

Embed BFRS's promise, core values, and behaviours and set the professional standards all staff are expected to meet

Develop pathways for high-potential staff and future leaders – and continuously review and improve succession planning to retain, attract, and nurture a diverse workforce with the necessary skills, experience and leadership qualities

Better understand workforce demographics/needs, supporting the aim for a more diverse workforce that better reflects communities

Ensure effective engagement and feedback mechanisms for staff, including those from under-represented groups

Proactively demonstrate BFRS's commitment to a positive health and wellbeing culture, ensuring reasonable and appropriate working conditions for all staff

4.34 All participants but two agreed with BFRS's approach to ensuring an inclusive, healthy, and engaged workforce (33 strongly agreed, eight tended to agree, and the remaining participants neither agreed nor disagreed). Indeed, offering staff support and robust career pathways was thought to be essential for successful recruitment and retention.

> *"Having support seems vital to encouraging recruitment." (High Wycombe)*

4.35   In their comments, participants in Chesham, High Wycombe, and Milton Keynes, explicitly praised BFRS's emphasis on increasing the diversity of its workforce, arguing that:

> *"Diversity in recruitment and retention is essential as the Service <u>must</u> reflect the local community." (Chesham)*

4.36   Some Buckingham participants (and one in High Wycombe) questioned this focus, however, suggesting that hitting demographic workforce targets should not come at the expense of recruiting the best people for the job, and the Service's overall operational effectiveness.

> *"Whilst I understand recruiting under-represented groups is very admirable, I believe the person's skills and abilities are the number one priority. The ability to do the job is paramount." (Buckingham)*
>
> *"Aiming for more diversity in the workforce is a great and modern approach to a recruitment strategy and educating others to what a career is like in the fire service, but is there a risk to almost 'un-equal, equal opportunities' i.e., too much focus on recruiting a specific minority for equality and not best for the job?" (High Wycombe)*

4.37   It was also said that the profile of the Service and the career opportunities it offers must be raised within certain communities and among certain demographics if it is to increase the diversity of its workforce.

> *"Nowadays, I don't think kids even think of the fire service as an option for employment. Back in the day you had action figures that were firefighters, paramedics, and all that. Not any more… You should go in earlier. Emphasise that this it's a worthwhile profession[so] kids are aware of that... Wanting to grow up to be a firefighter." (Milton Keynes)*

4.38   Moreover, a couple of wording suggestions were made by a participant at High Wycombe, as follows.

> *"I would put the word inclusive with diverse as well, so just to represent groups with, say, disabilities. And then for wellbeing support, I'd say health and wellbeing support..." (High Wycombe)*

Finance and assets: making the most of finances and assets

Finance and Assets Strategy (making the most of finances and assets)

BFRS's goal is to make sure it delivers the best possible service and value for money with its finances and assets

To achieve this, BFRS is committed to upholding the highest standards in financial management and ensuring the provision of top-tier facilities and equipment for its staff to deliver their duties effectively and safely

Key Aims	Key Actions
Align finances with risk, ensure proper financial management, and provide staff with safe/effective facilities and equipment	Implement a 2025-26 budget that aligns Prevention, Protection and Response resources
	Identify opportunities for efficiency and assess these against risk
Efficiency improvements delivered year-on-year and reinvested into the Service	Develop and implement a 'property standard,' ensuring all BFRS buildings are fit for purpose and meet health, safety and wellbeing requirements for a diversifying workforce
Where possible, and financially viable, take all appropriate steps to reduce negative impacts on the environment produced by the Service's assets	Review, procure, and provide resources that address needs/requirements of BFRS's diversifying workforce and/or emerging risks
	Investigate ways to enhance BFRS's facilities to expand training and opportunities to collaborate with partners
	Explore options to invest in housing to support BFRS's crewing model and/or provide accommodation for key workers
	Update policies/procedures to reflect changes in procurement legislation

4.39 All participants but one agreed with BFRS's approach to making the most of its finances and assets (35 strongly agreed, seven tended to agree, and the remaining participant neither agreed nor disagreed).

> *"Always good to review effectiveness and identify opportunities to be more efficient…" (Aylesbury)*

4.40 People were especially positive about the exploration of accommodation options to support the Service's crewing model, particularly in rural areas and where house prices are high.

> *"Subsidised housing for on-call fire fighters seems like a really good plan for rural/high-cost areas." (Milton Keynes)*
>
> *"Investment or financial support for accommodation is a great idea to help fix crew/personnel issues." (Buckingham)*

4.41 Other comments were that meeting environmental targets should not come at a cost to the Service or affect its operations, and that:

> *"Staff should always have the appropriate equipment to do the job safely. If someone is putting their life at risk, money should not be a barrier to getting correct equipment." (Buckingham)*

Digital and data: optimising technology and data

Digital and Data Strategy (Optimising technology and data)

BFRS's goal is to increase its use of data and technology, through secure and resilient systems, to help it better understand and respond appropriately to the risks the Service, and the community, face

To achieve this, BFRS will use technology to balance the need for security and resilience with the desire to innovate and introduce new, efficient ways of working

Key Aims	Key Actions
A workforce with effective/secure technology for communication, information management, and remote working	Collect/analyse new data to enhance BFRS's understanding of risk
Easy access to role-relevant data and intelligence to improve safety/reduce risk	Evaluate and improve BFRS's risk methodology for prioritised home fire safety visits, to meet individual and household needs
A digitally engaged workforce that champions a 'digital first' culture, embracing and promoting automation for efficiency and effectiveness	Ensure IT systems continue to act as reliable key enablers for BFRS
	Assure the reliability, resilience, accuracy, and accessibility of critical IT systems (i.e., mobile data terminals)
Improved community engagement through tailored, accessible, and digitally-enabled solutions	Ensure all systems meet up-to-date security requirements
	Implement Emergency Service Network within BFRS and broader Thames Valley (led by Home Office)
	Enable self-service for staff/public, reducing paper and printing and improving efficiency through digitisation and automation

4.42   All participants but two agreed with BFRS's approach to optimising technology and data (34 strongly agreed, five tended to agree, and the remaining participants neither agreed nor disagreed)[3].

> *"It's working smarter through technology. They can collect data faster and use technology to make the right decisions." (Chesham)*
>
> *"Data analysis is vital/normal to improve service. I would expect this to be year on year improved." (High Wycombe)*

4.43   However, one High Wycombe participant cautioned that:

> *"Continuity and contingency in the shift to digital would be essential." (High Wycombe)*

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[3] Two people did not answer this question.

Appendix 1: List of Figures

Appendix 3 – Summary of Changes to the Draft CRMP

Page(s)	Text (additions | ~~deletions~~)	Rationale (Driver)
3	Performance Monitoring | <u>Governance and</u> Key Measures ~~Proposals for Consultation~~ <u>Response Standard and Resourcing</u> ~~Further~~ <u>Communication and</u> Consultation | How to Get Involved	• Updated table of contents to reflect changes made to the relevant pages.
5	<u>The CRMP is a high-level strategic document used to inform more specific actions in the supporting plans, which will include our Annual Delivery Plan, as well as dedicated station and team plans.</u> <u>Each plan will outline the key interdependencies and how directorate leads, and their teams, plan to manage and monitor cross-departmental objectives.</u>	• Based on **consultation feedback**, clarify purpose of CRMP and how it links to other documents, as well as addressing recommendations around interdependency from the Community Risk Management Plan **Assurance Review**.
6	~~Serving~~ <u>We serve</u>	• Correction of minor typographical error
7	~~We are seeking input on two proposals~~ <u>Following consultation we will be implementing two new proposals</u>: information on how to participate in ~~further~~ <u>planned</u> consultations are provided on pages ~~66~~ <u>63 to 67</u>.	• Amended text to reflect consultation has now concluded.
8	We committed to review our response to AFAs in our 2020–2025 PSP. ~~Historically, our policy was to treat AFAs the same as any other call for emergency assistance.~~ ~~However, most FRSs have moved away from this approach and we are also exploring this option, trialling a new policy which brings us into alignment. Details can be found on pages 62 to 65.~~ <u>When not responding to incidents, station-based staff may be delivering home fire safety checks to those most at risk of fire and other emergencies to proactively mitigate domestic dwelling fires.</u>	• Removed text relating to AFA consultation as that is being progressed as part of the previous PSP. • Added text to highlight how Protection, Prevention and Response work together based on gap analysis within the Community Risk Management Plan **Assurance Review**.

Appendix 3 – Summary of Changes to the Draft CRMP

Page(s)	Text (additions | ~~deletions~~)	Rationale (Driver)
	At other times they may be conducting site-specific risk inspections. These enhance the protection we give to business premises by identifying and dealing with specific risks relating to each site. To ensure that firefighter time is used effectively and productively across the three objectives as possible, data on utilisation will be collected. This will help inform decision making linked to the mitigation of identified risks.	
9	It is essential that the three main functional areas of prevention, protection and response work together to ensure the achievement of all three of the objectives set out in our CRMP. Priorities across all three objectives will be detailed further in each station plan.	• Added text to highlight how Protection, Prevention and Response work together based on gap analysis within the Community Risk Management Plan **Assurance Review**.
12	[New bullet point under Population > Progress Made] In 2024-25 we reviewed and piloted our new approach to responding to AFAs.	• Further progress against PSP since initial publication of draft CRMP.
28	[Table Header] Risk / Issue / Opportunity ~~Minimum Service Act (Legislation)~~ Industrial Action, ~~Almost certain~~ Moderate, ~~Major~~ Severe	• Update to be consistent with page header. • Update narrative and risk scoring following government announcement that it plans to repeal the Strikes Act 2023 through the Employment Rights Bill.
33	~~Join us on this journey as we collaboratively shape and refine our approach to community risk management. Details of how to get involved can be found in Further Consultation | How to Get Involved on page 66.~~	• Updated text to reflect consultation has now concluded and to reference ongoing engagement.

Appendix 3 – Summary of Changes to the Draft CRMP

Page(s)	Text (additions | ~~deletions~~)	Rationale (Driver)
	Updates on progress against our objectives and enablers will be presented at least annually.	
	For more details on how to keep up to date please refer to our Communication and Consultation section on page 53.	
52	[Photo removed] Performance Monitoring | Governance and Key Measures	• Removed photo and moved text that was previously on p.53 to here to allow space for new content on p.53.
53	[New page content]	• Added in oversight of how governance will work to support CRMP delivery based on gap analysis within the Community Risk Management Plan **Assurance Review**.
54	Operational resilience (competencies, hydrant availability ~~and high-risk site information~~). Some of these measures allow us to directly measure our performance (e.g. number of Home Fire Safety Visits completed) whereas others are indicative of the demand for our services over which we have limited influence (e.g. number of road traffic collisions attended).	• Removed erroneous duplicated information. • Based on feedback from internal **"Town Hall"** event.
57	~~We're proposing to~~ We have refined… Our ~~current~~ previous response standard Our ~~current~~ previous aim ~~is~~ was to… As part of this CRMP ~~we're looking to~~ we've redefined our response standard. Our new ~~proposed~~ response standard Our ~~proposed~~ new response standard…	• Amended text to reflect consultation has now concluded.

Appendix 3 – Summary of Changes to the Draft CRMP

Page(s)	Text (additions | ~~deletions~~)	Rationale (Driver)
	<u>Our new response standard has been designed with the five-year CRMP time period in mind, as growth in the built environment and infrastructure changes make achieving our standard increasingly challenging.</u>	• Clarify purpose of new response standard based on **consultation feedback**.
58	due to Buckinghamshire and Milton Keynes' ~~unique~~ geography… To ensure we can meet our ~~proposed~~ <u>new</u> response standard… …and uphold our ~~proposed~~ <u>new</u> response standard…	• Feedback from **public focus groups** was that all areas have a unique geography • Amended text to reflect consultation has now concluded.
62-65	[Pages removed as AFA pilot being progressed under the previous PSP, was included in the draft CRMP due to the CRMP consultation overlapping with the AFA pilot period]	• As noted to the left.
66 (now page 62)	~~Further~~ <u>Communication and </u>Consultation	• Section title updated to reflect the changes noted in the row below.
67 (now page 63)	[Replaced whole page detailing the consultation period with information on our approach to ongoing communication and consultation]	• Address recommendation regarding ongoing consultation in the gap analysis within the Community Risk Management Plan **Assurance Review**. • Amended text to reflect consultation has now concluded.