

**BUCKINGHAMSHIRE AND MILTON KEYNES FIRE AUTHORITY**  
**BUCKINGHAMSHIRE FIRE AND RESCUE SERVICE**

Director of Legal & Governance, Graham Britten  
Buckinghamshire Fire & Rescue Service  
Brigade HQ, Stocklake, Aylesbury, Bucks HP20 1BD  
Tel: 01296 744441



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Louise Harrison  
Chief Fire Officer and Chief Executive

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To: Members of Buckinghamshire and Milton Keynes Fire Authority

1 June 2026

Dear Councillor

**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](mailto:cteam@bucksfire.gov.uk)

Your attendance is requested at the **ANNUAL MEETING** of the **BUCKINGHAMSHIRE AND MILTON KEYNES FIRE AUTHORITY** to be held in the **PARALYMPIC ROOM, BUCKINGHAMSHIRE COUNCIL, THE GATEWAY OFFICES, GATEHOUSE ROAD, AYLESBURY, BUCKS, HP19 8FF** on **WEDNESDAY 10 JUNE 2026 at 11AM** 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.

Councillors: Adoh, Banks, Carroll, Exon, Geary, Gomm, Hall, Hughes, A Hussain, M Hussain OBE, N Hussain, Khan, Monger, Rouse, Sherwell, Stuchbury and Wilson.



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### **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/UCWmIXPWAscxl3vIiv7bh1Q>

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](mailto: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](mailto: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. Election of Chairman**

To elect a Chairman for 2026/27

#### **2. Appointment of Vice-Chairman**

To appoint a Vice-Chairman for 2026/27

The Vice Chairman's responsibilities include supporting the Chairman of the Authority in the discharge of their responsibilities; to deputise for the Chairman of the Authority where necessary, including leading on the Authority's response to any Government proposals relevant to the responsibilities of the Authority, and any transitions or changes arising from such proposals; to lead on Climate Change and to lead on the Authority's response to any matters relating to HMICFRS.

#### **3. Apologies**

#### **4. Minutes**

To approve, and sign as a correct record the Minutes of the Extraordinary Meeting of the Fire Authority held on 18 March 2026 (item 4) **(Pages 13 - 48)**

#### **5. Matters Arising from the Previous Meeting**

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

#### **6. 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.

#### **7. Chairman's Announcements**

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

#### **8. Petitions**

To receive petitions under Standing Order SOA6.

## 9. Questions

To receive questions in accordance with Standing Order SOA7.

## 10. Membership of the Authority

Under the Buckinghamshire Fire Services (Combination Scheme) Order 1996 Part III paragraph 12 – Each constituent authority shall, so far as is practicable, appoint such number of representatives to be members of the Authority as is proportionate to the number of local government electors in its area in relation to the number of such electors in the other constituent authority's area.

The electorate for Buckinghamshire Council is 419,836 as at 1 December 2025 (An email received from the Buckinghamshire Council Electoral Services Manager, 3 December 2025, confirmed 'The Local Government electorate for Buckinghamshire Council at 1 December 2025 is 419,836.') 66.96%.

The electorate for Milton Keynes City Council is 207,167 as at 1 December 2025 (An email received from the Milton Keynes City Council Head of Democratic Services, 17 December 2025, confirmed 'The Local Government Electorate for Milton Keynes City Council as at 1 December 2025 is 207,167') 33.04%.

|                           |         |          |      |
|---------------------------|---------|----------|------|
| Total Number of Members : |         |          | 17   |
| Buckinghamshire           | 419,836 | (66.96%) | 11.4 |
| Milton Keynes             | 207,167 | (33.04%) | 5.6  |

This equates to Authority Membership for Buckinghamshire Council 11 Members and Milton Keynes City Council 6 Members.

To note that the Constituent Authorities have appointed the following Members to serve on the Fire Authority for 2026/27:

### Buckinghamshire Council (11)

Councillors Adoh, Carroll, Gomm, Hall, M Hussain OBE, N Hussain, Monger, Rouse, Sherwell, Stuchbury and Wilson

### Milton Keynes City Council (6)

Councillors Banks, Exon, Geary, Hughes, Hussain and Khan

## 11. Committee Matters

- (a) Local Government and Housing Act 1989 and Local Government (Committees and Political Groups) Regulations 1990.

The Authority is required by the above Regulations to review the basis of allocation of seats amongst the Political Groups either at its Annual Meeting, or as soon as practicable thereafter, or following a change in its Membership. In making its review, the Authority is required, so far as reasonably practicable, to comply with the following principles:

- (i) The majority of seats is to be allocated to a particular Group if the number of persons belonging to that Group is a majority on the Authority.
- (ii) Subject to the above paragraphs, the number of seats on the Committees allocated to each Group should bear the same proportion to the total of all the seats on the Committees as that borne by the number of Members of that Group to the Membership of the Authority.
- (iii) Subject to paragraphs (i) to (iii) above, that the number of the seats on the body which are allocated to different political groups bears the same proportion to the number of all the seats on that body as is borne by the number of members of that group to the membership of the authority.

Subject to formal notification of the Membership of each Political Group, the allocation of seats on the Authority is as follows:

|                              |         |          |
|------------------------------|---------|----------|
| Conservative Group:          | 7 seats | (41.18%) |
| Liberal Democrat Group:      | 5 seats | (29.41%) |
| Labour Group:                | 2 seats | (11.76%) |
| Buckinghamshire Independent: | 1 seat  | [5.88%]  |
| IMPACT Alliance              | 1 seat  | [5.88%]  |
| Reform UK                    | 1 seat  | [5.88%]  |

The above Regulations, with the Authority's Scheme of Delegation, require a notice in writing to be delivered to the Authority's Monitoring Officer signed by two or more Members of the Authority to establish a Political Group.

The Regulations are modified where any Members of the Authority are 'ungrouped'. The effect of the modification is that the political groups represented on the Authority's committees should be proportional to the Groups' membership of the Authority with the remainder of seats on committees to be filled by any ungrouped member(s).

The Authority is asked to note the report.

Contact Officer: Katie Nellist (Democratic Services Officer) – 01296 744633

Background papers: None.

(b) Committee Appointments

To consider making appointments to the Authority's committees. The membership of the Executive and the Overview and Audit committees is required to be mutually exclusive.

**Executive Committee**

The Authority is asked to make appointments to the Executive Committee in accordance with the wishes of the respective Political Groups (8 Members) with the remainder going to ungrouped Members.

(b)(i) It is recommended that the seats should be allocated as follows:

Conservative – 3

Liberal Democrat – 2

Labour – 1

Ungrouped – 2

**Overview and Audit Committee**

The Authority is asked to make appointments to the Overview and Audit Committee in accordance with the wishes of the respective Political Groups (9 Members) with the remainder going to ungrouped Members.

(b)(ii) It is recommended that the seats should be allocated as follows:

Conservative – 4

Liberal Democrat – 3

Labour – 1

Ungrouped – 1

(c) It is recommended that authority be delegated to the Monitoring Officer, upon the written confirmation of a Group Leader, to vary the nomination on a given Committee and to make the appropriate amendments to membership (and notify all Members and the Chairman of the appropriate Committee of the change) including variations to nominations by a Group Leader as a result of any in year changes to the membership of the Authority .

Background papers: None.

## **12. Calendar of Meetings**

### Fire Authority

|                             |            |
|-----------------------------|------------|
| Wednesday 16 September 2026 | at 11.00am |
| Wednesday 2 December 2026   | at 11.00am |
| Wednesday 24 February 2027  | at 11.00am |
| Wednesday 9 June 2027 (AM)  | at 11.00am |

### Executive Committee

|                            |            |
|----------------------------|------------|
| Wednesday 15 July 2026     | at 10.00am |
| Wednesday 9 September 2026 | at 10.00am |
| Wednesday 18 November 2026 | at 10.00am |
| Wednesday 17 February 2027 | at 10.00am |
| Wednesday 14 April 2027    | at 10.00am |

### Overview & Audit Committee

|                           |            |
|---------------------------|------------|
| Wednesday 22 July 2026    | at 10.00am |
| Wednesday 14 October 2026 | at 10.00am |
| Wednesday 27 January 2027 | at 10.00am |
| Wednesday 24 March 2027   | at 10.00am |

## **13. Appointment of Representatives to Outside Bodies**

### **(a) Local Government Association Annual Conference**

To appoint 2 Members to attend as the Authority's representatives at the Local Government Association's Annual Conference.

### **(b) Local Government Association Fire Commission**

To appoint 1 Member and Standing Deputy to represent the Authority at the Local Government Association's Fire Commission.

### **(c) Local Government Association Annual Fire Conference**

To appoint 2 Members to attend as the Authority's representatives at the Local Government Association's Annual Fire Conference.

(d) Thames Valley Fire Control Service – Joint Committee

- (i) To appoint 2 Representatives to the Thames Valley Fire Control Service – Joint Committee.
- (ii) To nominate 2 substitute members to the Thames Valley Fire Control Service – Joint Committee (in the event the 2 representatives are unable to attend).

Appointments to the Thames Valley Fire Control Service Joint Committee are exempt from the political balance rules under section 15 of the Local Government and Housing Act 1989. It is a joint committee constituted by two or more authorities under section 102 of the Local Government Act 1972 but to which the Authority appoints fewer than three members.

#### 14. Lead Member Responsibilities

To consider the allocation of Lead Member Responsibilities; and to appoint Members to those roles.

| <b>Responsibility</b>                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                 |
|-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| <b>Service Delivery, Protection and Collaboration</b>                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                 |
| To lead on issues relating to the protection of our communities, the enforcement of fire safety legislation, and collaboration across the blue light services.                                                                                                                                                        |
| <b>People, Equality and Diversity and Assurance</b>                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                   |
| To ensure that the right staffing solutions are in place to provide the best possible service to our communities; and to ensure that our operations are fully assured and we continue to improve the quality of our service to our communities and the safety of our staff.                                           |
| <b>Finance and Assets, Information Security and IT</b>                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                |
| To lead on treasury management, MTFP and the longer term aspects of our finances including the capital programme; optimising the use of assets (including fleet and property); and on information and data security and IT to ensure that we can develop and protect our infrastructure and service to our community. |
| <b>Health and Safety and Corporate Risk</b>                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                           |
| To ensure that measures and policies are in place to mitigate risks to the organisation and our staff.                                                                                                                                                                                                                |

It is recommended that:

1. Appointments to each of the Lead Member roles be made.

Contact Officer: Katie Nellist (Democratic Services Officer) – 01296 744633.

Background Papers: None

**15. Annual Review 2025-2026**

To consider item 15 (Pages 49 - 96)

**16. Member Update on the Fire Brigades Union (FBU) Improvement Agenda 2025**

To consider item 16 (Pages 97 - 146)

**17. 2026-2027 Annual Delivery Plan Update**

To consider item 17 (Pages 147 - 164)

**18. Operational Activity and Communications Update**

To receive a presentation (Pages 165 - 176)

**19. Exclusion of Public and Press**

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 report contains information relating to any individual; and Paragraph 3 of Part 1 of Schedule 12A of the Local Government Act 1972, as the report 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.

**20. People Directorate Restructure**

To consider item 20

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

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# Buckinghamshire & Milton Keynes Fire Authority

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MINUTES OF THE EXTRAORDINARY MEETING OF THE BUCKINGHAMSHIRE AND MILTON KEYNES FIRE AUTHORITY HELD ON WEDNESDAY 18 MARCH 2026 AT 11.00AM.

**Present:** Councillors Bailey (Vice Chairman), Banks, Carroll, Exon, Gomm (part), Hall, M Hussain (OBE), N Hussain, Lancaster, McLean, Monger (Chairman), Rouse, Sherwell, Stuchbury and Wilson

**Officers:** L Harrison (Chief Fire Officer), S Tuffley (Deputy Chief Fire Officer), D Buchanan (Assistant Chief Fire Officer), G Britten (Director of Legal and Governance), M Hemming (Director of Finance and Assets) R Davidson (Director of People), A Burch (Head of Prevention and Protection), A Carter (Head of Service Improvement), A Collett (Head of People Services ) P Scanes (Head of Response and Resilience), M Burn (Group Commander On-Call Development Programme), J Flower (Project Manager) E Hilling (Head of Communication and Marketing), C Wycherley (Fire Brigades Union) and K Nellist (Democratic Services Officer)

**Apologies:** Councillors Adoh and Priestley

(Meeting having been adjourned until 11.20AM)

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/UCWmIXPWAscxpL3vIiv7bh1Q>

Councillor Rouse proposed that the meeting be adjourned to a future date on the basis that there had been insufficient time for the Equality Impact Assessments included in the agenda pack to be properly considered. This was seconded by Councillor Carroll.

On being put to the vote, the motion failed.

## **FA61 DISCLOSURES OF INTERESTS**

None.

## **FA62 CHAIRMAN'S ANNOUNCEMENTS**

The Chairman announced that he and the Chief Fire Officer had recently attended the Local Government Association Annual Fire Conference. He had come away from the conference feeling there were a huge number of issues affecting fire and rescue services across the UK, which would need to be addressed, but would take a considerable time.

The Chairman advised the following additional documents were in front of Members:

Addendum to Item 6f, Phase 1: On-call Improvement Programme Assurance Review (January 2026) and Item 6g, Phase 2 Addendum: On-call Improvement Programme Assurance Review (March 2026).

Infographic which explains the current configuration of the operational fleet, alongside the proposed configuration of the operational fleet.

A document which explains the differences between our standard, all terrain, lightweight, and dedicated wildfire firefighting vehicles within the fleet.

## **FA63 PETITIONS**

None.

## **FA64 QUESTIONS**

None.

The Chairman felt it was an appropriate time to receive the statements from Councillors Adoh and Priestley.

Councillor Rouse read Councillor Adoh's statement:

"Dear Chair, I have a family event I cannot miss, and to stress to Members of the Authority it is a significant family event, otherwise I would have been at this meeting to speak again for the residents of Stokenchurch in Ridgeway West, the ward I represent. I'd like you to read my message or to allow Councillor Rouse to read it or speak around it.

Stokenchurch is now a definite closure, albeit at all meetings prior to consultation and during, we were told nothing is planned or confirmed. The Authority has now got its feedback but will be going ahead with planned closures which I want noted would appear to be more in Buckinghamshire and the people of Bucks have said no.

Stokenchurch Station is needed. I have given reasons in the past for this and the residents have spoken. If this is not political, which will be baffling because Bucks residents have rejected it, then let's do the right thing. Pull back from closures, review previous recruitment plans to proactively address the challenges within the on-call system. A reduction in operational capability is not the answer for all the reasons that colleagues have given at previous meetings. Thank you."

Councillor Bailey read Councillor Priestley's statement:

"Chair, colleagues, this is not just a technical paper—we are making a public leadership decision today about the future of fire cover in our communities.

Let's be clear, our responsibility is not to preserve systems because they are familiar. Our responsibility is to ensure that our residents receive a reliable, effective emergency response when they need it most and the reality set out in this report is stark.

The current On-Call model, while valued, is no longer delivering consistent availability. In some areas, engines are simply not crewed, and in others, they are not able to respond quickly enough. That is not a sustainable position, and it is not one we can defend to the public.

So the question before us is not whether change is comfortable, it is whether change is necessary and the evidence tells us that it is.

What is being proposed is not a reduction in safety it is a rebalancing of resources towards reliability. Twelve engines continue to meet day-to-day demand in over 99% of incidents, and even in more complex scenarios, demand rarely exceeds 22. What matters is not how many engines we have on paper, but how many are actually available when the call comes in. That is the test of public safety. And that is what this proposal seeks to strengthen.

Now, I fully recognise the strength of feeling from our communities. People understandably value local fire engines, they are visible, reassuring, and part of the fabric of local life. But we must be honest, an engine that cannot be crewed is not protection it is a promise we cannot keep.

What reassures me is that this has not been a closed process. Consultation has shaped the outcome. The

decision to retain capability at Buckingham shows that the Service has listened and adapted. That matters.

However, approving this today cannot be the end of our role it must be the beginning of stronger oversight and accountability.

If we are serious about making this work, we must insist on a comprehensive smart framework and a robust project plan. That means clear targets on recruitment and retention, defined timelines, measurable outcomes, and transparent reporting back to this Authority.

Because ultimately, this is about delivery. If we are asking communities to accept change, then we must be able to demonstrate clearly and consistently that this change is improving resilience, strengthening response, and delivering better outcomes.

So yes, this is a difficult decision. But it is also a responsible and necessary one. We cannot stand still while the system weakens around us. We must act thoughtfully, transparently, and with a clear plan to deliver, and with that in mind, I support the direction of travel set out in this paper, alongside a clear expectation of rigorous implementation and ongoing scrutiny. Thank you.”

**FA65 PUBLIC CONSULTATION – SHAPING OUR FUTURE ON-CALL SERVICE AND OPERATIONAL INDEPENDENCE FOR THE CHIEF FIRE OFFICER**

The Chairman asked that before the Chief Fire Officer presented this report, he would like to adjourn the meeting and under Standing Order SOA7 allow Mr Christopher Wycherley local representative of the Fire Brigades Union (FBU) to speak:

“My name is Chris Wycherley and I am speaking on behalf of the Fire Brigades Union (FBU). Our position is simple, this report is weak on evidence, weak on process and wrong on substance. Let me begin with the evidence, because Members are being asked today to make an irreversible decision at exactly the moment the national sector evidence is pointing in another direction.

The National Fire Chief’s Council’s (NFCC) national retained study says the retained duty system is not broken, but it is fragile. It says doing nothing is not an option. However, incrementalism alone will not stop long term decline. Its answer is not retreat. Its answer is reform, transformative

investment, better recruitment and retention, stronger leadership, proportionate training, employee engagement and measures that reflect real community risk. That study was completed before this formal consultation ended, yet there is no clear sign in this process that the most important national study covering retained duty system has meaningfully shaped the recommendations before you.

Instead, Buckinghamshire is bringing forward a package built around removals, closures, and in its own words, streamlining the on-call fleet. This is not improvement. It is simply asset stripping the Service. This is how Buckinghamshire Fire and Rescue Service (BFRS) is in danger of becoming an outlier from the sector-wide direction of travel. Across the sector, the message is the retained duty system is fragile and must be strengthened.

Here the message is the retained duty system is broken, therefore remove appliances and close stations. That is not alignment with national reform, that is local retreat, and the weakness in the evidence does not stop there. This report asks Members to sign off real closures and real removals on the basis of a model that openly assumes conditions that do not exist.

The evidence pack says they did not use actual response times because real world data already reflects low on call availability. Instead, they ran historical instances through a model in which to keep consistency across the model, all fire engines were set to 100% availability. So let us be honest about what that means.

This Authority has been asked to approve permanent reductions in real fire cover using a model built around unrealistic assumptions. That is not a minor technical detail it goes to the heart of the reliability of the case being made, and there is a deeper contradiction in the Service's own documents. We are told this is not about cuts, but the consultation evidence pack says these proposals are about streamlining the on-call fleet and using the change as an opportunity to reinvest savings back into the operational on-call response. The same papers then point to avoid capital costs, maintenance savings and a reduced fleet burden. Members need to ask themselves, if this is not a cut, why are appliances being removed, stations being closed and savings being identified?

Let me now turn to process. This consultation ran for 10 weeks. ORS said that was sufficient time, but it was still a 10-week exercise on a decision of long-term consequence. Even the consultation evidence showed the public were often forming views after BFRS explained the problem to them, with many residents previously unaware of the Service's claimed on-call challenges. The headline being relied on is that 56% agreed changes were needed, but even taken at face value, that is not a mandate for these specific closures and removals. It is not a clear endorsement of losing local fire engines and local stations and the same consultation report records something much more politically damaging for this Authority.

Staff are strongly of the view that BFRS has been the architect of its own challenges through its neglect of the on-call service. That is a devastating finding because it means the consultation itself contains the argument against these proposals. If the Service has helped create the problem through neglect, weak recruitment processes and a focus on whole time recruitment at the expense of on-call, then the answer is not to institutionalise that failure by closing stations and deleting appliances. The answer is to repair what has been allowed to become fragile.

That takes me to substance. The FBU's objection from the outset has been that this programme is built around historic demands, not foreseeable risk. The final report says routine demand can be met by around 12 engines and that periods needing more than 22 are rare. It says some of the appliances in scope attended a combined total of 23 instance in 2024-25, but risk is not measured only by yesterday's call count. Risk is measured by geography, concurrency, resilience, climate pressure, future growth and the bad day when things go wrong at once.

The national study supports that warning. It points to challenging incident types, climate pressures and the need to measure on-call contribution against community risk, not just narrow availability metrics, and if Members want proof that fragility can be addressed, not just managed the way the national material provides it. The NFCC study includes examples of Services using flexible contracts, targeted recruitment, cross-station aggregation, specialist

opportunities and investment to improve availability and sustain retain capability.

The LGA conference where the Chair and the Chief Fire Officer represented the Service points the same way. Investment in recruitment teams, faster onboarding, professionalising on call, digital training and resilience planning. That is the sector wide direction. Not surrender, not shrinkage, not managed withdrawal, and then we come to Great Missenden and Stokenchurch.

The Authority states they are dormant; therefore, closure is sensible, but the FBU says exactly the opposite. Dormancy is not proof that these communities no longer need protection. Dormancy is proof that the Service failed to sustain that protection. The evidence pack even says Great Missenden should close before because it avoids investment costs and allows resources to be directed elsewhere. That is not an operational argument. That is a managed decline argument. You would see an improvement of between 3 and 3 1/2 minutes in terms of response times if those stations were recovered.

The inconsistency becomes even more obvious when you look elsewhere in the same papers. Haddenham is retained despite extremely low availability because engagement and community feedback showed strong concerns about resilience, over-reliance on neighbouring services and the need for target recruitment investment to rebuild staffing levels. That is the point.

If these proposals are voted through today. I will be frank, the Service has spent the best part of the year working towards this, which offers no tangible solutions to the problem, nor improves the offering to the public. Precious time wasted. If these proposals are voted through today, the consequence will likely be that the FBU will enter into industrial dispute with the Service to maintain these resources, and we will continue to assess whether the NFCC's framework and paper has been factored into the consultation and both the recommendations to the Authority to date and whether it was legally compliant and competent.

I would encourage all Members here to reject these proposals, reject the closures, reject the pump reductions and start to rebuild the retain duty system instead of dismantling it. Thank you."

Councillor Rouse proposed that under Standing Order SOA9 (n) 'Amending the time limit for speeches', amended the speech limit to 10 minutes. This was seconded by Councillor Hall.

Councillor Rouse requested a recorded vote which was supported by Councillors Gomm and Hall, details of the recorded vote are set out below:

Members moved to a recorded vote:

|           | For | Against |
|-----------|-----|---------|
| Bailey    |     | ✓       |
| Banks     |     | ✓       |
| Carroll   | ✓   |         |
| Exon      |     | ✓       |
| Gomm      | ✓   |         |
| Hall      | ✓   |         |
| Hussain M | ✓   |         |
| Hussain N |     | ✓       |
| Lancaster |     | ✓       |
| McLean    | ✓   |         |
| Monger    |     | ✓       |
| Rouse     | ✓   |         |
| Sherwell  |     | ✓       |
| Stuchbury |     | ✓       |
| Wilson    |     | ✓       |

On being put to the vote, the motion was NOT CARRIED.

The Chief Fire Officer advised that the meeting today saw a culmination of over 15 months' worth of significant work, careful consideration, collaboration and consultation using dedicated resources to enable officers to bring to Members the final recommendations on proposals they believe mark

a significant milestone in bringing about bold and brave and sustainable change to the Service.

Officers were asked by the Authority's Group Leaders last week to provide some supplementary infographics and detail to the main report to give a clear overview of where the current assets were and locations and what the recommendations would mean in practice.

The Deputy Chief Fire Officer advised Members they had a hard copy of a map or infographic of the Service's area within the current and proposed configuration of its assets and stations. This was a request from Group Leaders to provide something pictorial on the proposed amendments to the fleet.

The first map showed the current configuration of whole time and on-call fire stations supported by the current provision of frontline fire engines and specialist capabilities. For example, urban search and rescue, water rescue, operational support, incident command support, turntable ladders and water carriers distributed geographically to meet risk and demand locally, regionally and nationally.

The second map showed the proposed changes introduced through the on-call improvement programme, where some of the on-call fire engines transition to a more flexible or specialist roles, including rural firefighting units and welfare units. The two on-call stations that were not in use were removed, and the overall number of frontline fire engines was 24, 12 wholetime and 12 on-call. Six on-call fire engines were recommended to be removed. Four of these were from wholetime stations where there was already at least one frontline fire engine available 24/7, 365 days a year. The other two fire engines were from Great Missenden and Stokenchurch, which were both sites that were not used.

The Deputy Chief Fire Officer advised that Members also had a hard copy of a document which explained the differences and similarities between the standard and all-terrain off-road fire engines and the new dedicated rural firefighting vehicles. This was also a request from Group Leaders to provide further information to help Members in their decision making. The Service operated a modern and capable mix of standard rural and wildfire all-terrain

vehicles, ensuring that it could respond effectively within a range of risks.

The standard fire engines remain fully equipped for structural fires, rescues, RTCs (road traffic collisions), flooding and hazardous materials with a minimum crew of four and the full complement of firefighting and rescue equipment. To enhance resilience in difficult terrain and severe weather, the Service also deploy its long-established Rosenbauer all-terrain 4x4 fire engines which provided full capability with enhanced traction and mobility, allowing safer access during snow, ice, flooding and off-road conditions. These appliances operate exactly like any other frontline engine, but with greater capability.

The lightweight 7 1/2 tonne Iveco 4x4 fire engine adds flexible dual-purpose capability. It can operate as a normal fire engine with a four-person crew or as an off-road and wildfire unit with a minimum crew of two, giving the Service a rapid attack capability in rural and agricultural areas.

Finally, the dedicated rural firefighting vehicles, the Mercedes Sprinter 4x4s, provided specialist wildfire suppression, off-road access, water mist technology, dedicated wildfire intervention equipment and vital crew welfare in extreme heat, operating with crews of two to five. These units go where larger appliances simply cannot. So together officers recommend that this was a more balanced and diversified and modernised fleet. It significantly strengthens the Service's ability to protect both urban, rural and harder to reach communities, particularly protecting communities and businesses, farms and agriculture during hot and dry periods and in the face of a changing risk profile, whilst also effectively servicing business as usual routine demand.

These hard copies would be added to the website after the meeting so that they could be seen by the public too.

The Chief Fire Officer advised that in commending this report, she would like to thank members of the public, all stakeholders and staff who took the time to engage with this independently commissioned consultation, who read the proposals and shared their views. The Service received what was described by ORS as an exceptional level of feedback returns and this demonstrated the Service's

Deputy  
Chief Fire  
Officer

success in honouring its commitment to ensure that it had meaningful engagement and constructive dialogue.

Officers complied with the Gunning Principles and importantly ensured that the final proposals presented today had been thoroughly considered, professionally assessed and remained entirely free from political influence. The outcomes clearly evidence the need for change. The priority had always been and will remain to deliver a modern, agile and effective active fire service for the public. Where concerns were raised, officers listened, and met with MPs, Authority Members, FBU colleagues here today, and members of the public, including face-to-face discussions with residents in areas potentially affected by station decommissioning. Officers considered activity on the borders, as well as local growth projections.

These proposals do not restrict the ability to flex and grow, adapt and change in the future. Removing a small number of engines, does not prevent the Service from upgrading on-call appliances to wholetime, transitioning from on-call stations to day crew stations, or wholetime should the need arise in the future.

The Chief Fire Officer was particularly encouraged by the strong response from staff, those people that were actually delivering the service day-to-day, and would urge Members to lend some weight to their views. Their support for the proposals was significant. Nationally, many fire and rescue services were facing job losses and widespread station closures, even in areas where availability far exceeds this Service.

Locally, the intention was straightforward, to provide the service that the public pay for and expect. The CRMP identified that the Service do not need 18 on-call pumps. The recommendation was that the Service retain 12, not including the 12 wholetime engines that it still had. There were no staff reductions. This was a proposal to remove unused and unnecessary assets and introduce a more diverse and capable work fleet. There was no material impact to response standards. Recruitment remained consistently strong and the Service had just recently welcomed four new on-call recruits to Princes Risborough, Olney and Waddesdon and it would continue to place recruitment and retention as a priority focus going forward

and working collaboratively with both the FBU and the Authority.

The Service would continue to maintain all its protection, prevention, fire safety and inspection capabilities across the whole of the county and continue to prioritise investing in viable stations and in its crews.

A new training centre would provide much greater accessibility for on-call crews and enable officers to train more staff more quickly. Members would also be aware that the Service was also investing in a significant overhaul of one of the busiest stations High Wycombe.

Whilst not the driving force behind these proposals, the Service cannot ignore the annual cost avoidance of £133k a year or the significant one-off cost of more than £300k to maintain two fire stations that had not been unused for over five years, and that does not include the potential capital receipts of any future sales.

What the recommendations propose were a clear separation between what was essential and what represents inefficient use of public funds. Funds currently tied up in resources that were not used.

In conclusion as a Service, officers were proud to be taking a bold step forward. As outlined in the NFCC report, it recognised that it needed to be made incrementally and would suggest that a lot of the work suggested in the NFCC report, officers were already undertaking. The programme of work had always been about ensuring the Service could effectively match required resource against risk and demand, thus creating a better overall fire service. A significant amount of work had gone into developing both the proposals, the early engagement and the formal consultation. Officers were incredibly grateful for all the feedback that had been received.

The Chief Fire Officer advised that supported by strong professional advice from herself and the senior team, these recommendations do support the change required to enhance overall service provision and improve operational resilience.

The Group Commander advised Members that just to assure them as there was some confusion earlier on around what Equality Impact Assessments were in the

pack. The one that was sent out was the same as the second version that was in the pack.

The Group Commander spoke briefly about that process that was conducted for the Equality Impact Assessments. An Equality Impact Assessment was completed at the beginning of the process, as was done for all processes, and was used to help inform the consultation. Officers asked a specific question during that consultation process around equality impacts that the public thought they could identify. Following that, officers reviewed all of those three checked responses and updated the Equality Impact Assessment, which was the one that Members would find was the second version in the pack today.

Councillor Rouse advised that nowhere in the CRMP does it say the Service does not need those on-call fire engines. Could the Chief Fire Officer clarify. It was right they should be reviewed, but that does not lead to a conclusion to get rid of them. Secondly, the Chief Fire Officer talked about the strong response from staff who were clearly an important part of the input. The response from staff in the consultation document was from 109 members of BFRS staff. The total headcount of BFRS was 520. That was barely one fifth of the staff engaging in the survey. Could the Chief Fire Officer again clarify why her view was that was a strong response from the public. Also, on the Equality Impact Assessment, do officers believe the Equality Impact Assessment was full and complete in its assessment of the protected groups from a member of public perspective.

The Chief Fire Officer advised she did say that the CRMP identified that the Service did not require 18 on-call fire engines, but certainly within the CRMP and the HMICFRS reports, there was a clear indication that the Service had fire engines that were not used.

In terms of staff engagement, other than the current staff surveys, engagement of this kind of consultation was relatively low and it was the ORS commissioning body who said that and actually when they briefed officers, were overwhelmingly surprised at the level of engagement officers had with staff. It was important that staff were heard and had a voice. The statistics were there and their views can be seen in the proposals. In terms of the Equality Impact Assessment, it was complete, but should the

recommendations be moved forward today, officers would continue to review and monitor it.

Councillor Sherwell would like the Chief Fire Officer's confirmation, that whatever happens with this consultation, whether it was passed or not, it was officer's intention to review the on-call service, to strengthen recruitment, to look at the offer, and the way that people work on-call, the contract, and regardless of what happens to the vote today, that there was a commitment to try and make on-call work.

The Chief Fire Officer advised that the NFCC report had not yet been officially published, but it talked about a number of things that services should consider and a lot of what it talked about in terms of flexible tiered contracts, modular proportionate training, this Service was already doing. There was absolutely a need for improvement and officers recognise that sustained improvement for on-call needed to continue.

Looking back at the Service's figures, there was a consistent level of on-call recruitment for the past five years. The Service had just welcomed four new on-call recruits, but that does not take away that it was difficult and as quickly as on-call firefighters were recruited, the Service was losing them as well, certainly some of the dual contract firefighters. It was an ongoing challenge, but officers were committed with FBU colleagues to move the on-call provision forward and improve.

Councillor Hall had an operational question regarding the reserved fleet. The Service was going to take a fire engine from the on-call fleet and put it in the reserve fleet to make six. Councillor Hall was shocked that while attending a fire station recently, the fire engine was going away for a service, and a spare pump had been delivered. The spare pump was empty apart from the ladders on the roof. It took hours for the crew to remove all the kit from the current engine to put in the spare fire engine. If the Service was going to have five or six reserve pumps, they were going to be no good if they were empty. What was the situation with the readiness of these pumps that was being proposed.

The Deputy Chief Fire Officer advised it was a very operational question and over the years the Service had moved from having fully kitted reserves to un-kitted

reserves back to fully kitted reserves to try and make things work best. Within the proposal officers want to make the strategic reserve fleet in a better place of readiness and much of that had come from this consultation, but also major learns from the major incidents that the Service dealt with in 2022.

The Service would need to move back to something that was more like a fully kitted reserve because the appliances would be in a state of readiness, so that if there was a major incident, it could be scaled up at the time it was required.

Councillor Bailey thanked officers for their work on this difficult and challenging project and thanked the Chief Fire Officer for reiterating her commitment to reviewing resources and potentially upgrading them again, should the situation allow. Councillor Bailey proposed that the implementation and review of this project was considered at future Executive Committee meetings. Also, the first six months of the project included what to do with Great Missenden and Stokenchurch, as they had been sitting doing nothing for five years, they were not priorities, should the work not be focussed on strengthening on-call as much as possible where it was being continued, and potentially bring recruitment issues and contractual issues a bit further forward?

The Chief Fire Officer advised that the review of recruitment, staffing and contracts were already going on through the on-call working group chaired by the Assistant Chief Fire Officer. Should these recommendations be approved, the community would want to know what was happening with their stations and the Chief Fire Officer wanted to be in a position to go out and talk to the communities again. The priority was increasing availability of on-call, but running in parallel with that, officers wanted to ensure whatever happened today, they could go back out to the community and continue that dialogue.

Councillor N Hussain asked that as stated in the report, the whole review was founded on recommendations from the CRMP under the previous Authority, was that correct and when was it done. On-call was a long-term issue, it was not something that had appeared in the last six months. Please can Members be aware of what was done by previous Authorities to allay and respond to the on-call issues. The

two stations that were proposed to be closed, how long have they been open or were they closed at the moment. Was there a cost to bring them back to operational readiness. Do the recommendations restrict in any way future adaption or flexibility or growth of the Service in response to circumstances.

The Chief Fire Officer advised that the CRMP was approved in December 2024, but the on-call discussions had been going on for a long time. Now that the on-call numbers were up and were sustainable and healthy, it was time to focus on on-call availability. The two stations that Councillor Hussain referred to were Great Missenden and Stokenchurch and it was the Chief Fire Officer's understanding that they had not had engines there in over five years and Stokenchurch seven years. The cost just to maintain them i.e. keep them as a viable station was over £150k for each and that was just to maintain the bays and the areas outside. There was nothing to restrict the Service from growing, flexing, adapting in the future alongside potential growth within the area.

Councillor Stuchbury asked for assurance for the public that the Service could be proactive and reactive to any challenges that were put before them.

The Chief Fire Officer advised that it had been challenging for officers, who accepted and understood that the proposals that were being put forward, would not necessarily be popular, certainly with FBU colleagues, but also there would be concerns in the community as well. There was no way that officers would be putting proposals in front of this Authority if they genuinely believed there was any risk or danger to the public.

The Assistant Chief Fire Officer advised Members that the proposals were designed to enable the Service to strengthen its operational position and deliver the CRMP objectives and enhance on-call availability and overall resilience.

Councillor M Hussain OBE asked if shutting stations and removing fire engines was the best value for the taxpayers and how do Members justify this report to their residents.

The Chief Fire Officer advised that the Service had invested a lot of money in having an independent consultation run so the views of the public could be taken into consideration and it was really important to get the comms message right

and clear. The public would not see a difference with the changes being proposed because the services were not being used now. Officers were proposing to decommission two station that had not been used, one of them for over seven years and remove a small number of pumps that were not being crewed. There would be no material change to the response availability.

Councillor Gomm asked how much the public consultation cost and how many staff hours were spent on that consultation and also felt that some of the public comments had been ignored.

The Chief Fire Officer assured Members that people's comments had not been ignored. Officers had spent hours looking at the comments and looking at the quantitative as well as the qualitative data. Initially Haddenham was one of the stations that was being considered for closure. But, listening to the public, it was decided that Haddenham was still a viable station in terms of its usage. Officers were still committed to trying to actively recruit in that area.

If these proposals were accepted, Buckingham was going to get a rural firefighting unit, which was good evidence that officers had listened to feedback and taken it on board, accepted it and adapted the recommendations accordingly.

Councillor Hall asked a question on behalf of a retired firefighter, how come a small village with a low population like Brill can maintain crewing, but High Wycombe with a population of 77-80k people cannot recruit, what was behind the lack of recruitment. Also, what was going to happen to the second pump in High Wycombe the Rosenbauer.

The Deputy Chief Fire Officer advised Members there were a lot of different reasons why some stations seem to struggle worse than others with recruitment, and there was a lot of work that had gone on over the years to try and recruit to that station. In terms of the Rosenbauer, it would be moved into somewhere like Marlow or Princes Risborough to maintain capability in that part of the county.

Councillor Wilson felt that one of the critical statements in the report was under Phase Two work stabilisation improvements. Could the Chief Fire Officer categorically support the statement that says recruitment and retention ambition to return on-call staffing levels to current

establishment, which was way below at present and that there was absolutely no intention to reduce the establishment going forward, and also provide some additional information as to when would Members get a report back on all the activities included in that, particularly in relation to the NFCC report as and when it was formally published and what was the process for moving that forward.

The Chief Fire Officer advised that she had set out when first looking at these recommendations that there would be no cuts in the workforce. Officers were committed to getting numbers back up to where they should be and were looking to have a continual open running recruitment for on-call, as opposed to having targeted campaigns. In terms of next steps, and with the on-call working group, there was a plan of progress set out, and additional resource had been secured to ensure the work continued. If the proposals were supported today, a clearer plan of approach would be set out as it would be run as a project of next steps, milestones and what the Authority could expect, and there would be regular updates to the committees.

Councillor Wilson asked what was the process for Member oversight of the project.

The Chief Fire Officer would be very keen to have an open working group cross-party, with FBU colleagues and officers and Members to present what the next steps were moving forward.

Councillor McLean advised that it referenced in the report Milton Keynes South and Milton Keynes North and he would be grateful to understand what areas they cover and the populations in each. Also, it stated that Milton Keynes City Council had adopted a long-term city plan to 2050, but it had not yet been adopted.

The Chief Fire Officer advised that officers would need to get clarity from ORS to see where the delineation had come from, but it did not materially change the results.

Councillor Hall advised that this consultation went out to members of the public to ask their opinion, the uptake had been quite low, but in the report there was a big spike in Milton Keynes and Aylesbury, which he suggested was political activists getting involved rather than members of

the public, did the Chairman agree that it had devalued the consultation.

The Chairman advised he could not get into all the minds of the people who responded to the consultation. He was aware of political activity across the whole county supporting various viewpoints which was entirely reasonable.

Councillor Rouse asked for confirmation that at the Executive Committee, it was noted an underspend in the budget of over £1m and it was the fourth year to his knowledge that there had been a significant underspend. Also, could the Chief Fire Officer confirm to simplify the extract from the consultation, that 52% of overall respondents strongly disagreed or disagreed with the proposal versus 42% who strongly agreed or agreed. That 57% of the public strongly disagreed or disagreed with the proposal to reduce on-call fire engines, 38% strongly agreed or agreed. 50% strongly disagreed or disagreed with permanently closing Great Missenden versus 41% strongly agreed or agreed and 50% strongly disagreed or disagreed with permanently closing Stokenchurch versus 41% strongly agreed or agreed.

Councillor Rouse had written to the Director of Legal and Governance during this meeting asking that given the paper does not include a legal or risk assessment of industrial action and Members today had received notice of a potential industrial dispute being lodged, before Members take this decision what were the legal risks that Members would be taking.

The Chief Fire Officer confirmed that the Authority did have an underspend, but Members had been fully briefed as to why that was and they were one off payments. The fact that the Authority had an incredible finance team who were prudent in trying to plan for the future, was not something to be criticised, although having an underspend was not where the Authority would prefer to be.

The Chief Fire Officer accepted what Councillor Rouse said the percentages were in the report.

The Assistant Chief Fire Officer appreciated that Councillor Rouse wanted a legal position, but the FBU's Representative's words were in relation to a dispute, not industrial action. Also, there was nothing from staff that

suggested that there would be a mandate for the FBU to take industrial action in this service over this issue.

Councillor Rouse asked for an explanation as to why the ORS data referred to these new areas of Milton Keynes South etc., the ORS data only captured the responses from areas that were supporting the proposals, even where those responses were responses where the majority were opposed but was not sharing data from those areas that were opposed.

The Deputy Chief Fire Officer advised that the Service had used ORS for a number of consultations, the CRMP and the AFA consultation. When looking into Councillor Rouse's request for an additional level of data, ORS advised that it would not meet the level of confidence that they require for best practice in terms of social research. It would not meet their threshold, which was why they advised that it was not put into the report. The Service use them as an independent specialist professional company, and that was the advice they gave the Service. That said, Members were provided with that level of data because they asked for it. It was around 95% confidence threshold that ORS use to meet best practise in terms of social research. The data asked for had not met that standard, which was the reason why they recommended that it was not put into the report. That was the advice that was given.

Councillor Gomm asked what would happen to the ariels (EE network) if Stokenchurch was closed down. Was the station self-sufficient with the income it raised.

The Chief Fire Officer advised that the Service received a very small income from that mast, but the contract was due to expire shortly, and it had been factored into the MTFP, taken to the Authority meeting in February.

The Director of Legal and Governance advised that further to Councillor Rouse's earlier question, he was confident that the legal implications and legal considerations were adequately covered in the report under legal implications. Also, they had expanded slightly in terms of the public sector equality duty and the fact that it mentioned that there was an updated equality impact assessment with the papers that does look at those individuals with protected characteristics that might be vulnerable to fire within the community. The Director of Legal and Governance was satisfied that all relevant legal considerations and legal

implications were covered for Members to make a decision today should they decide to do so.

Councillor Hall asked if the Chief Fire Officer could give the residents of Stokenchurch some further reassurance and a presence, perhaps by sending a fire engine up there for a couple of hours and letting them sit waiting for an incident, rather than sitting in High Wycombe Fire Station and respond from there, just to give residents the assurance that this Service was actually there for them.

The Chief Fire Officer advised that depending on what the proposals were today, officers recognise that comms would be extremely important, and having further drop-in surgeries, particularly around those stations that were likely to be affected if the proposals were agreed today. Officers understand the concerns and the fear and reassurance was really important but remained confident that the Service could respond to those station grounds with wholetime crews adequately and safely.

The Chairman advised a comfort break had been requested and asked for a short adjournment of five minutes.

(The meeting adjourned).

Following the adjournment, Councillor M Hussain OBE asked if he could propose an amendment to 1d of the recommendations, that 'the On-Call fire engine at High Wycombe' be deleted so the Service keeps the On-Call fire engine at High Wycombe.

Councillor Hall advised that High Wycombe was such a key station for the south and the southeast of the county. When the retained pumps were not available, the community relied on High Wycombe to turn out. Frequently the two wholetime fire engines were on the motorway or at other incidents and it left High Wycombe very vulnerable. The line at 1d should be removed.

Councillor Carroll advised that he talked to the communities of High Wycombe every day. This point was very important to the public.

Councillor Wilson recognised it was the second attempt by Members to try and trap him on this High Wycombe question and he went back to the points he made last time this was attempted, which was that the Service had an extraordinarily low availability for on-call at High Wycombe, which meant the pump was not actually

available in any meaningful way. As it says in the recommendation, existing on-call staff would be redeployed to support their nearest on-call station to improve availability in South Buckinghamshire, which in this case would be Marlow which did have good availability, but the average FTE was still 3.6, so if there needs to be a minimum 4 crew on the appliance, redeploying the crew from High Wycombe, would be a service improvement and give a much better chance of getting an appliance on the run from Marlow. There were only 25 responses from High Wycombe to the consultation and that in itself raised a lot of questions. Councillor Wilson had attended the High Wycombe drop in and it was not very well attended.

Councillor Bailey stated that Members were being presented with evidence within the pack and the proposal as a whole and would expect senior officers to keep looking at High Wycombe. The proposal going forward was that on-call be strengthened where it was most able to do so and therefore did not support the amendment.

Councillor Rouse advised it was not entrapment; it was holding people to account for decisions that would have long-term consequences for communities they represent. It was of course the role of officers to bring proposals to this Authority, but it was Members responsibility to look at it in the broadest possible context. The idea that this report provided clear evidence, not to mention a clear mandate to drive through these proposals was frankly risible and in terms of High Wycombe, this was the busiest station in Buckinghamshire. It was a station which had the capacity in terms of people in the vicinity to create an on-call that was not to the detriment of Marlow which was an on-call station that was thriving and operating. Members heard very clearly from the Fire Brigades Union directly the consequences of this change. Councillor M Hussain OBE was standing up for his community in High Wycombe and he had Councillor Rouse's support in doing so.

The Director of Legal and Governance confirmed it was an amendment to delete 1d from the recommendations.

Councillor Rouse requested a recorded vote, supported by two Members, details of the recorded vote are set out below:

|           | For | Against |
|-----------|-----|---------|
| Bailey    |     | ✓       |
| Banks     |     | ✓       |
| Carroll   | ✓   |         |
| Exon      |     | ✓       |
| Gomm      | ✓   |         |
| Hall      | ✓   |         |
| Hussain M | ✓   |         |
| Hussain N |     | ✓       |
| Lancaster |     | ✓       |
| McLean    | ✓   |         |
| Monger    |     | ✓       |
| Rouse     | ✓   |         |
| Sherwell  |     | ✓       |
| Stuchbury |     | ✓       |
| Wilson    |     | ✓       |

The Chairman advised that the amendment failed.

Councillor N Hussain stated that the on-call service had been a long-term issue and had been brought to Members attention a number of times by HMICFRS Inspections and previous reports. The CRMP instigated a review in December 2024 and the Chairman asked for 'flexibility and innovation' and now Members had the report in front of them and for it to be risible without evidence was a strange state of affairs. The two stations that were being asked to be closed, one had not operated for seven years and the other not operated for five years. The cost was £150k per station to keep them empty and closed.

The recommendations do not restrict the Service in any way for adapting to any growth or any future plans. On-call had been a problem both nationally and locally, how could

it be fixed, and how could it be fixed so it was flexible, innovative and a cost effective service. This report tries to answer some of those questions. It does its best to bring flexibility and innovation to the Service and safety to the communities.

Councillor Lancaster felt this was an important and constructive step. The Service needed to continue to evolve and obviously that comes with the risk and demands that the communities were facing today. From the operational data, Members know that Stokenchurch had not had an appliance leave the station for seven years. At the same time, the incident patterns had shifted and pressures on crews had changed significantly. But this was to ensure that people and equipment were placed where they gave the greatest impact. It was modernisation. It was not about removing something from one area to give to another. It was about ensuring the response model reflected that current reality and what could be done to protect the public effectively.

A key element of the programme was reliability, on-call availability had been ineffective for many years on a national level and there was also a change in working patterns. People were doing it in their spare time and would have lifestyle pressures on top of that and there was also recruitment challenges which was a nationwide issue. This report directly addresses those concerns and reshapes the structure, supporting the staff more effectively and investing where it strengthens the frontline.

The programme ensured that public money was being used responsibly. Continuing to direct funding towards stations and fire engines with very low or zero availability does not give communities the protection they deserve. Reinvesting those resources into areas where safety and performance could be enhanced allows officers to build a service that was both sustainable for the future and better equipped.

Another important benefit was that the focus on strengthening community safety through targeted investment in people which meant better training, updated equipment and more robust on-call support models.

The programme supports quick and more consistent responses times, and it meant that on-call availability needed to better impact on how quickly it can respond in certain places. By making these decisions, officers had to

look at the performance data and make sure the resources worked in a way that improved this likelihood and improved response times. It was also important to highlight that it gave the Service the ability to make decisions with operational evidence and risk, rather than what had happened historically or by organisational habits.

The improvement plan was not simply reorganisation, it was a long-term commitment to improve how the Service protects the public now and to strengthen reliability, safety and efficiency and looking at further development down the line as it comes.

Councillor Stuchbury firstly wanted to stress the thoroughness and detailed professionalism, the openness and clarity and the wish to engage that had been conveyed within the consultation. That had best been expressed in the contributions to the debate today and the discussion which showed that the consultation worked. One of the things that this would do was strengthen the Service's ability to improve and this report gave the opportunity to try and improve the ability to change.

There would be opportunities to strengthen large rural agricultural areas, by putting in the four-wheel drive units. One of the things that had been found out with climate change was the large number of fires in rural areas and the different challenges it brings.

This Service has been around longer than any of us and it would be around longer than that and Members had the ability to address the changes. Councillor Stuchbury was reassured through his discussions with colleagues and officers that this truly tries to address the concerns made. There had been immense challenge to carrying out their professional positions and he supported the officers in doing that and by supporting them, he supported the opportunity to improve the Service and would be supporting the recommendations.

Councillor Wilson advised that Industrial action was covered on the Corporate Risk Register and it was covered at the Overview and Audit Committee meeting last week in terms of mitigating response. With regard to the financial performance and the comment made on how fortunate the Authority was with the finance team, last week Members talked about the excellent Treasury Management performance that had contributed to the overall financial

performance, particularly giving additional returns, which took pressure off elsewhere and much of that is non-revenue, deferral of capital, and pension cost contribution. All of those things go to contribute to the overall financial performance.

It was very clear this was a consultation. It was not a piece of market research, and Councillor Wilson totally understand ORS's point around how the data should be treated. Based on ORS's professional experience of doing this across a number of social projects, 956 questionnaire responses plus all the focus groups, and that qualitative and quantitative piece was really, really important. That level of response still reflected 0.1% of the overall population of Buckinghamshire and Milton Keynes.

Therefore, one had to take the importance of public consultation in accordance with also trying to ascribe to it, it was not a referendum, and was not a weighted, quoted piece of market research to be fully representative. Councillor Wilson felt that Members had to take that into account.

Councillor Wilson advised Members that he was actually not correct about the Marlow FTE. It was 3.5, not 3.6, and the total employees for on-call was 10. Councillor Wilson fully agree with Councillor Rouse that it was a very, very successful example of how an on-call station could work, but 3.5 was not sufficient to crew an appliance.

At High Wycombe there were three on-call employees and a full-time equivalent of 1.5 and Beaconsfield had three on-call employees and full-time equivalent of 1.42. There was a much better chance using all of those on-call employees for the betterment of getting on-call appliances on the run, and for that reason Councillor Wilson supported the recommendations.

Councillor Gomm asked the Chief Fire Officer if he could have a meeting with her regarding concerns of farmers in rural communities. All farmers in rural communities were very knowledgeable about vehicles, and many had commented that it would not be sufficient, so Councillor Gomm would really appreciate some of the Chief Fire Officers time as this moved forward.

Councillor Rouse advised it was the Member's job to apply scrutiny and the broader perspective of the community representative role that they had to these proposals. It was

perfectly possible to disagree with the approach; to disagree with the proposals and not have any doubt about the professional competence or indeed motive of officers, and Councillor Rouse wanted that to be on the record.

Councillor Rouse advised that when this first started he knew it would be controversial back in February 2025 and that was why he sought to create consensus by getting every political group in a room because he knew there was no way this would ever get the command of communities unless they saw it was an endeavour. Members left the February meeting with a clear consensus across political groups, and he failed because he trusted from that meeting where Members gave a very different direction, officers would be working up those proposals. Instead, the largest group on the Authority had been excluded, and that had failed to create consensus.

The public had overwhelmingly in this consultation said no, the Fire Brigades Union had overwhelmingly said no, the Fire and Rescue Services Association had overwhelmingly said no and Buckinghamshire Council, the largest constituent body, had overwhelmingly said no. The only two Members of Parliament that responded to the consultation, mid Buckinghamshire and Beaconsfield, had said no. 57% of the public said do not cut fire engines. 50% said do not close fire stations. If Members live in Milton Keynes, Stokenchurch and Great Missenden do not matter to you, but they absolutely matter in those parts of the world.

The idea that this should be done on the basis of historic data, that it should be done on the basis of about a fifth of staff engaging, was simply not a credible mandate for these changes.

Members had heard quite clearly from the Fire Brigades Union that this was going to potentially lead to an industrial dispute, and Members had to take that into consideration. This should have been done on the basis of consensus. Changes need to be made to the on-call service, but that should be on investment, radical overhaul of the on-call recruitment processes, which Members heard today, was not done on a rolling basis. It should have been on the basis of radical overhaul of what it took to be an on-call firefighter, proper employer engagement. Instead, it

had ended up with the path of least resistance cutting fire engines and cutting stations.

Councillor Rouse hoped that when the new Fire Authority came into power in June, it looked at this proposal and would seek to reverse it because the legacy that people are choosing to deliver here was the hollowing out of the fire service in Buckinghamshire and he would not be supporting the recommendations.

Councillor Hall advised Members that this was the consultation that should never have been. Why cross party had they not sat down and looked at this consultation and taken forward something that all Members agreed. There were aspects in the consultation that Councillor Hall could support, but there were things, like High Wycombe, he was against. This could have done in such a different way if it was done on a cross-party basis. Instead, the consultation had been rushed forward. In Councillor Hall's opinion, it had brought the Fire Authority into disrepute, and brought the fire service into disrepute, and placed officers in an impossible situation. The best thing now was to throw this in the bin and let the new Fire Authority come up with a consultation that all Members agree on.

(Councillor Gomm left the meeting)

Councillor McLean advised that only two MPs responded to the consultation. All the others did not respond. All MPs should have had some input into this consultation and responded so Members could take their views into account.

One of the things that worried Councillor McLean was the lack of opportunity for on-call firefighters. There was a specific section in the report where it stated that someone who lived 10 minutes away from an on-call fire station, does not want to do it anymore because someone who lived five minutes away, turned up on a shout, and could not get a ride. That was going to reduce the number of people who were going to be committed to becoming on-call or remaining on-call firefighters.

Councillor McLean had read the executive summary of the NFCC report and there were some very good things in there proposing how to reinvigorate the recruitment and retention of on-call firefighters.

Looking at the consultation, as the Chief Fire Officer had said, there were a smaller number of on-call firefighters this year, what had gone wrong. Was it culture, was it changing people's view, was the Service getting it right. There were some good points and there were some bad points. This does impact the whole of the Buckinghamshire and Milton Keynes areas because there would be less on-call firefighters available at any time.

Councillor McLean would like to reject this in its current form and reconvene and try and have a more comprehensive meaningful workshop. Councillor McLean asked Members to support the rejection of it in its current form.

Councillor Carroll advised Members that there would be 95,000 houses being built on green belt over the next few years. Residents were astonished that services were being cut. Councillor Carroll could not vote for this, it was not forward planning, it was going to damage trust in the communities.

Councillor Sherwell believed that all Members want the best results for the Service and the best service for local people, there may be significant differences about how that could be achieved, but he believed everyone held that objective.

Councillor Sherwell felt it was really noticeable on the consultation that on virtually every question, staff were more in favour of what was being proposed than the public and it should be taken into account when people start talking about industrial action.

Councillor Sherwell found it strange to say that a station had not operated for five years or seven years, continuing to not operate, was a cut. Materially, it was absolutely no difference whatsoever. The Service would need extra engines, and it would need them in certain places, and Councillor Sherwell hoped Members would get into much more detailed discussions next year about how that would actually be done.

What the consultation was seeking to do was to say that there were things that do not work, and how do they get them to work? Members had already had the commitment from the Chief Fire Officer to expand the working group that already exists within the Service about development of the on-call service. Councillor Sherwell was more than

happy that it should go forward, but it had to continue to evolve as it goes along.

Councillor Bailey advised that in terms of the three Milton Keynes MPs, they may not have put their names to the consultation, but they did have a meeting with the Chief Fire Officer.

Members should not make decisions on the basis of a consultation alone because it was to inform the decision, not to dictate it. This had been an extremely useful exercise. Modifications had been made as a result and there had been some other very useful feedback which she hoped the Senior Leadership Team would be taking account of around flexible contracts etc.

Members seem to be putting an awful lot of weight on the 1% of the Buckinghamshire population that answered the survey and discounting the 20% of staff who responded, 76% of whom agreed with the proposal to reduce the number of on-call engines. The majority of whom agreed with the proposal to permanently close Great Missenden and Stokenchurch fire stations. Generally, if people answer a survey, it was because they had a vested interest and the motivation to do so.

Councillor Bailey found it strange that Members expressed their respect for the Chief Fire Officer and her team and then completely slate the report. It was an important change and a difficult decision to take. There were a lot of historic things that had gone on which had made this situation very difficult, and a lot of the people who were responsible for the situation now were not present.

Councillor Rouse wished to move the following amendment:

Insert under “Recommendations”

That the Fire Authority notes:

1. The completion of the consultation into the On-Call Improvement Programme
2. Notes that the Equality Impact Assessment.
3. Notes the low level of staff engagement in the consultation with only 109 staff participating out of a total headcount of 520.
4. That 52% of overall respondents strongly disagreed (42%) or disagreed (10%) with the

proposal to reduce the number of on-call fire engines. 42% strongly agreed (23%) or agreed (19%).

5. That the public response showed:
  - a. 57% strongly disagreed (47%) or disagreed (10%) with the proposal to reduce on-call fire engines. 38% strongly agreed (20%) or agreed (18%).
  - b. 50% strongly disagreed (42%) or disagreed (8%) with permanently closing Great Missenden Station. 41% strongly agreed (26%) or agreed (15%).
  - c. 50% strongly disagreed (43%) or disagreed (7%) with permanently closing Stokenchurch station. 41% strongly agreed (26%) or agreed (15%).
6. That the results from the consultation show clear majority public opposition to reducing on-call fire engines and closing Great Missenden and Stokenchurch stations.
7. The objections of the Fire Brigades Union and the Fire & Rescue Services Association to the proposals.
8. The objection of Buckinghamshire Council, the largest constituent Authority, to the proposals.
9. The objections of 2 Members of Parliament, for Mid-Buckinghamshire and Beaconsfield, to the proposals.
10. The National Fire Chiefs Council (NFCC) On-Call Study.
11. That the NFCC study includes a number of steps and recommendations to improve on-call services that have not been considered by the Fire Authority.

Deletes after "It is recommended that":

- a. The On-Call fire engine at Amersham
- b. The On-Call fire engine at Beaconsfield

- c. The On-Call fire engine at Great Missenden
- d. The On-Call fire engine at High Wycombe
- e. The On-Call fire engine at Stokenchurch

2 The closure and decommissioning of:

- a. Great Missenden Fire Station; and
- b. Stokenchurch Fire Station

Insert:

2. That a review of the industrial dispute/action risk from these proposals be undertaken and presented to the Executive Committee.

Delete Under section 5 of the recommendations:

- "Chief Fire Officer"

And replace/insert:

- "Executive Committee"

Insert:

8. That Officers be asked to fully evaluate the NFCC On-Call study recommendations and to invite the Fire Brigades Union and the Fire & Rescue Services Association to support that evaluation.

The amendment was seconded by Councillor McLean.

Councillor Rouse would provide a hard copy of the amendment.

Councillor Rouse requested a recorded vote, supported by two Members, details of the recorded vote are set out below:

|         | For | Against |
|---------|-----|---------|
| Bailey  |     | ✓       |
| Banks   |     | ✓       |
| Carroll | ✓   |         |
| Exon    |     | ✓       |
| Hall    | ✓   |         |

|           |   |   |
|-----------|---|---|
| Hussain M | ✓ |   |
| Hussain N |   | ✓ |
| Lancaster |   | ✓ |
| McLean    | ✓ |   |
| Monger    |   | ✓ |
| Rouse     | ✓ |   |
| Sherwell  |   | ✓ |
| Stuchbury |   | ✓ |
| Wilson    |   | ✓ |

The Chairman advised the amendment failed.

The Chairman advised there had been some very impassioned contributions today and given the length of time spent on questions, many of the issues were responded to by the Chief Fire Officer and other members of the team. It was important that Members had the opportunity, but for the benefit of members of the public who might be watching, this was not about the fire service as a whole, it was in relation to the on-call element.

The Service responded to 99.7% of incidents using just 12 full time fire engines. Equally, in 2019 and again in 2023, His Majesty's Inspector of Constabulary and Fire and Rescue Services pointed out in much the same way each time that they were surprised the Service continued to maintain 30 fire engines when 99.7% of incidents were responded to by just 12.

Comparing this with other authorities, even the reduced level, if Members approved this report, would still be significantly more than neighbouring authorities, who had larger populations to respond to.

These proposals to Members were not an end in themselves but were actually the point at which the Service could move forward with a revised structure that was fit for purpose and flexible enough to accommodate future developments.

With regard to the 95,000 houses, they were not going to fall out of the sky tomorrow. Members were well aware of

the increasing housing need, and it was obvious the public were too.

Turning to the National Fire Chiefs Council report, very early in the report it states very clearly that the on-call problem had been around for decades. This was not something that had come about in the last year, two years, or three years. It had been evident to Members locally in that period of time, but nationally, this was an issue that had always been there. It was fraught with complications because of different structures for fire authorities around the country.

Members needed to respond today to what they believe the situation to be now, and the report achieved that particularly well. Members would have to pay close attention to local government reform coming down the line, and that was going to be an issue which would further complicate things. It cannot be answered today. All Members can do today was address the issues as the professionals see them. Changes needed to be made, and His Majesty's Inspectorate had said the Service needed to make changes.

The Chairman urged Members to see this as a step along the way toward positive change for the Authority and asked them to support the recommendations in full that were before them today.

Councillor Rouse requested a recorded vote, supported by two Members, details of the recorded vote are set out below:

|           | For | Against |
|-----------|-----|---------|
| Bailey    | ✓   |         |
| Banks     | ✓   |         |
| Carroll   |     | ✓       |
| Exon      | ✓   |         |
| Hall      |     | ✓       |
| Hussain M |     | ✓       |
| Hussain N | ✓   |         |

|           |   |   |
|-----------|---|---|
| Lancaster | ✓ |   |
| McLean    |   | ✓ |
| Monger    | ✓ |   |
| Rouse     |   | ✓ |
| Sherwell  | ✓ |   |
| Stuchbury | ✓ |   |
| Wilson    | ✓ |   |

On being put to the vote, the motion was CARRIED.

RESOLVED –

1. The removal of the following On-Call crewed fire engines at the below locations:
  - a. The On-Call fire engine at Amersham;
  - b. The On-Call fire engine at Beaconsfield;
  - c. The On-Call fire engine at Great Missenden;
  - d. The On-Call fire engine at High Wycombe;
  - e. The On-Call fire engine at Stokenchurch; and
  - f. The second On-Call fire engine at West Ashland

be authorised.
2. The closure and decommissioning of:
  - a. Great Missenden Fire Station; and
  - b. Stokenchurch Fire Station

be authorised.
3. It be noted that the On-call capability at Buckingham will be retained and enhanced by the provision of a dual purpose 4x4 lightweight fire engine (with rural firefighting capability) as a replacement for the current on-call fire engine.
4. The following special appliances locations as below be noted
  - a) Rural Firefighting Vehicle at Amersham;
  - b) Crew Welfare unit at Beaconsfield; and
  - c) Rural Firefighting Vehicle at West Ashland.

5. The timing and phased implementation of the approved changes be delegated to the Chief Fire Officer.
6. It be noted that recommendations for the future of Great Missenden and Stokenchurch sites will be brought to the Executive Committee at a later date.
7. The consultation feedback in relation to operational independence of the Chief Fire Officer, and that no changes to existing governance or delegation arrangements are recommended as part of this report, be noted.

**FA40      DATE OF NEXT MEETING**

To note that the Annual meeting of the Fire Authority will be held on Wednesday 10 June 2026 at 11 am

THE CHAIRMAN CLOSED THE MEETING AT 2.15 PM



# Buckinghamshire & Milton Keynes Fire Authority

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**Meeting and date:** Fire Authority, 10 June 2026

**Report title:** Annual Review 2025-2026

**Lead Member:** Chairman of the Fire Authority

**Report sponsor:** Simon Tuffley, Deputy Chief Fire Officer

**Author and contact:** Craig Newman, Data Intelligence Team Manager

**Action:** Noting

**Recommendations:**

It is recommended that the Annual Review 2025-2026 report be noted.

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## Executive summary:

This report presents Buckinghamshire Fire & Rescue Service's 2025/26 Annual Review, summarising performance and progress against the priorities and measures set out in the Annual Delivery Plan and the Community Risk Management Plan (CRMP) 2025–2030 for the period 1 April 2025 to 31 March 2026. It provides a consolidated view of delivery across our strategic objectives and enablers, supported by key performance indicators and narrative on what has gone well, where performance has not met expectations, and the improvement activity underway.

Overall, the year demonstrates strong delivery in several core areas of prevention, protection, response.

- Home Fire Safety Visits exceeded target (5,272 vs 4,800), and online Home Fire Safety Checks tripled with over 700 residents using the portal.
- Safeguarding has been strengthened through a multi-agency review with 23 of 25 actions implemented and improved timeliness for initial referral activity.
- Business engagement activity is now embedded (1,199 interactions) and fire safety audit output increased year-on-year (746), alongside continued impact from call-challenging, which has reduced attendance at non-domestic false alarms by almost 50%.
- Average attendance to accidental dwelling fires remained stable (08:07) and wholetime pump availability improved to 97.8%, while on-call engine availability rose to 18.0% against a 15.0% target.

A strong focus this year has been on strengthening our people offer, recognising that our workforce is central to delivering an effective, modern fire and rescue service. The introduction of a new workwear offering, shaped through extensive staff

consultation, has improved both practicality and staff experience, reinforcing our commitment to listening and responding to frontline needs. Alongside this, we have invested in leadership development through the rollout of the Thrive programme, which is building confidence and capability in performance management, coaching and self-awareness across our leaders.

This is complemented by the establishment of a formal mentoring scheme, creating structured opportunities for knowledge sharing, professional growth and support across the organisation. Together, these initiatives are contributing to a more engaged, supported and high-performing workforce, aligned with our ambition to be an inclusive employer.

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**Financial implications:** A detailed understanding of the Service's performance allows informed decision making in relation to future resource allocation. The balance of measures also allows an understanding of the Service's financial performance and enables a view to be formed of its overall value for money compared with others.

**Risk management:** Performance and risk information is designed and presented to assist the Authority in the strategic decision-making through understanding the communities we serve and associated risk profiles. Performance management information is a major contributor to service improvement and to the effective prioritisation of resources.

**Legal implications:** There are no legal implications arising directly from this report.

**Privacy and security implications:** There are no Privacy and Security implications arising from this paper.

**Duty to collaborate:** There are no opportunities to collaborate directly from this report.

**Health and safety implications:** There are no specific Health, Safety and Wellbeing implications arising from this paper. Performance reports on Health, Safety and Wellbeing is subject to separate scrutiny and performance reporting.

**Environmental implications:** There are no environmental implications arising directly from this report. Performance measures will be developed during the year to provide reassurance that the Service is making progress against its recently approved

**Equality, diversity, and inclusion implications:** There are no specific Equality, diversity and inclusion implications arising from this paper. Performance reports on Equality, diversity and inclusion are subject to separate performance reporting.

**Consultation and communication:** We aim to provide performance information incorporating stakeholder contributions. The report will be circulated throughout the organisation for information and awareness.

**Background papers:**

Community Risk Management Plan 2025-2030: [Community Risk Management Plan 2025-2030 - Buckinghamshire Fire & Rescue Service](#)

Fire Authority Meeting, 12 February 2025: 2025-26 Annual Delivery Plan: [FIRE AUTHORITY MEETING - 12 FEBRUARY 2025 - Buckinghamshire Fire & Rescue Service](#)

Fire Authority Meeting, 12 February 2025: Performance Management Q3 2025/26: [FIRE AUTHORITY MEETING - 11 FEBRUARY 2026 - Buckinghamshire Fire & Rescue Service](#)

Fire Authority Meeting, 12 February 2026: 2026-27 Annual Delivery Plan: [FIRE AUTHORITY MEETING - 11 FEBRUARY 2026 - Buckinghamshire Fire & Rescue Service](#)

| Appendix | Title                   | Protective Marking |
|----------|-------------------------|--------------------|
| 1        | Annual Review 2025-2026 |                    |

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## Summary

Welcome to our 2025/2026 Annual Review.

As Chief Fire Officer, I am pleased to present an overview of Buckinghamshire Fire & Rescue Service's performance against the priorities, actions, and measures set out in our Annual Delivery Plan and Community Risk Management Plan (CRMP).

This review highlights the progress we have made over the past year, while also reflecting the dedication, professionalism, and commitment shown by our people, who work tirelessly to keep communities across Buckinghamshire and Milton Keynes safe.

At the heart of our Service is a strong commitment to delivering an excellent, modern, and agile Fire & Rescue Service. We continue to focus on ensuring we have the right people, with the right skills, in the right place at the right time, so we can effectively protect both people and places.

This report also provides an opportunity to recognise and celebrate the outstanding contribution of our staff. Their expertise, care, and determination make a meaningful difference every single day, and their efforts are central to everything we achieve.

While we are proud of the progress we have made so far, we recognise there is always more to do. We remain committed to building on this momentum and to driving continuous improvement in a thoughtful and consistent way as we move forward.

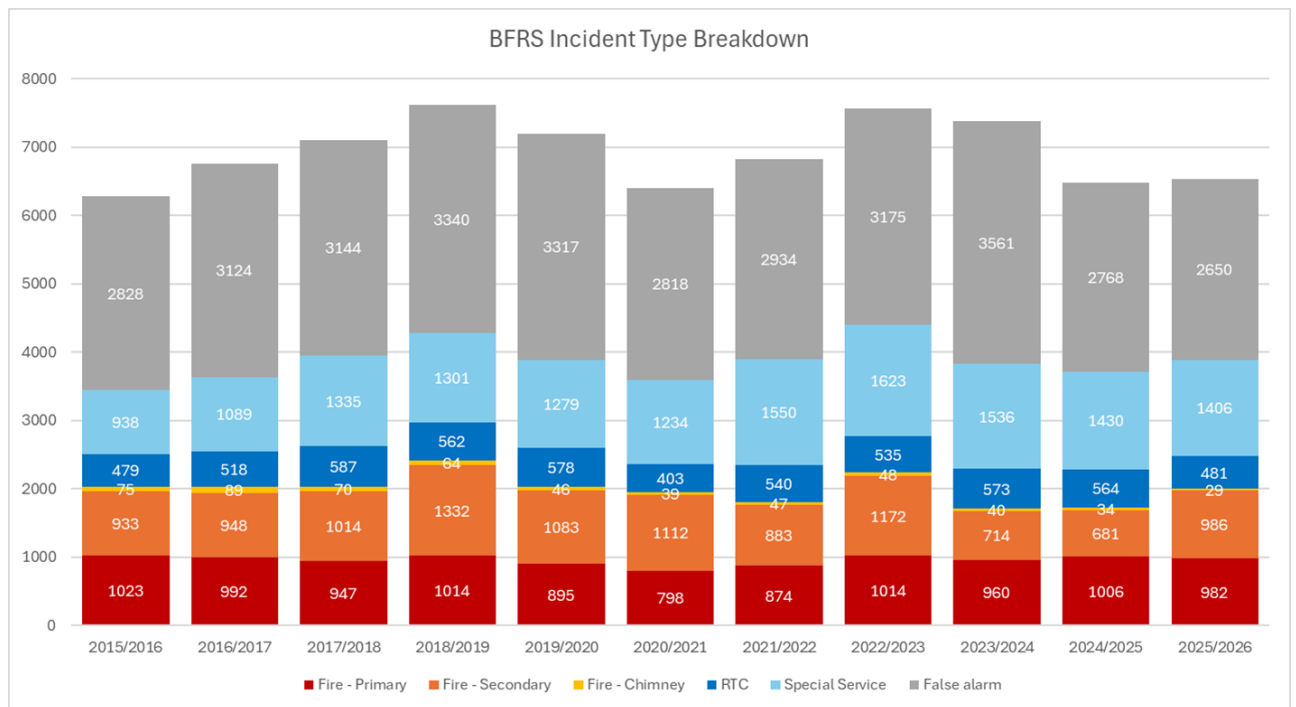
Louise Harrison  
Chief Fire Officer



## About us

We serve nearly 900,000 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.

We respond to a diverse range of incidents, not just fires:



When not responding to incidents, our station-based staff spend considerable time 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 conduct site-specific risk inspections. These enhance the protection we give to business premises by identifying and dealing with specific risks relating to each site.

## Our strategic objectives

The risks we face continue to change over time, shaped by factors such as climate change, new developments, evolving legislation, and emerging technologies like lithium-ion batteries (commonly used in electric vehicles, e-scooters, and e-bikes).

To respond to these changes effectively, our approach is guided by three key objectives, outlining what we aim to achieve, and are supported by three enablers: our people, our assets, and our use of data and technology.

We track our progress through a range of key performance indicators, which are referenced throughout this report and help us understand how well we are delivering on our goals.

A collaborative approach across prevention, protection, and response is vital to achieving the objectives set out in our Community Risk Management Plan (CRMP). By working together, these areas help ensure a coordinated and effective response to the risks facing our community.

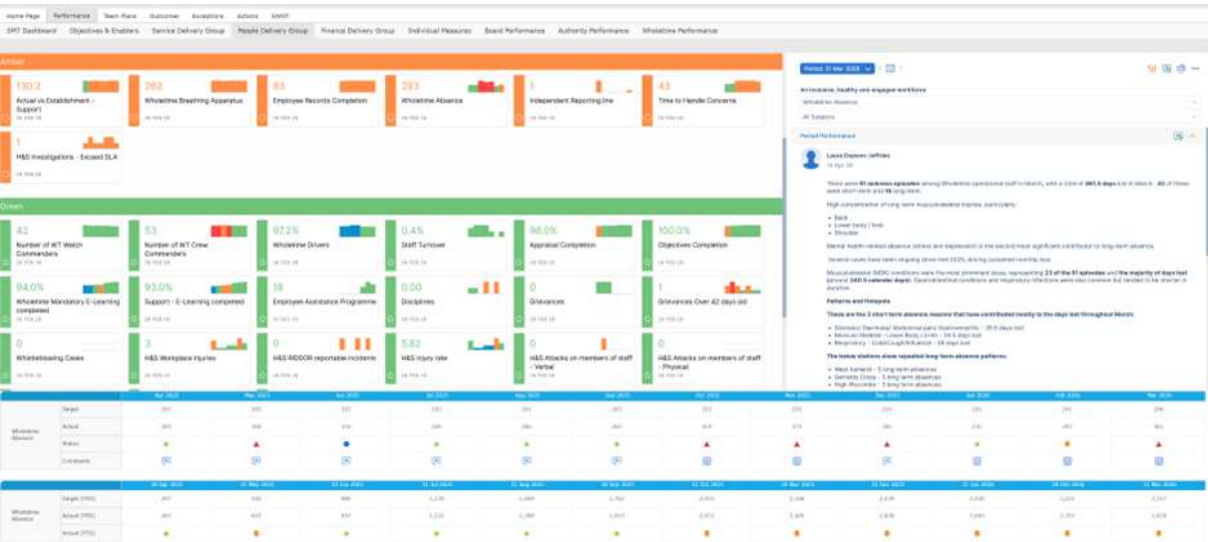
Each area is underpinned by a high-level strategy informed by national fire standards and insights from our most recent HMICFRS inspection. Together, our objectives and enablers reflect our commitment to reducing risk and supporting the wellbeing of the communities we serve.

To bring this strategy to life, we develop annual delivery plans that support our CRMP objectives and enablers. These plans are continually reviewed and refined over the five-year CRMP period, drawing on community feedback, quality assurance outcomes, and ongoing evaluation of our work.

Our commitment goes beyond written plans. We actively work with our local communities to ensure our approach remains responsive, relevant, and aligned with our shared ambition for a safer and healthier future.

# How we measure our performance.

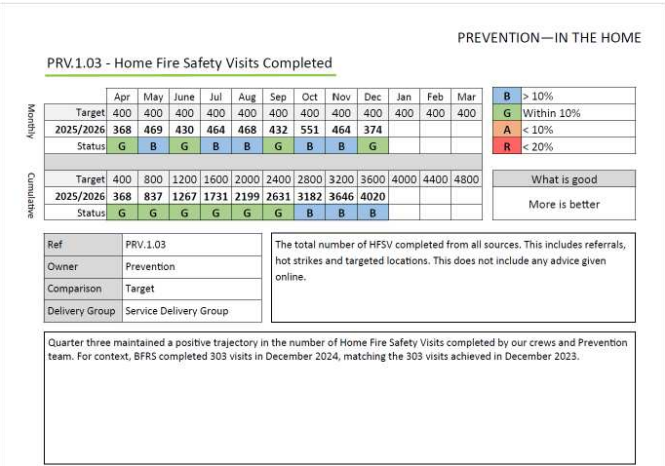
We measure our performance through a range of local and national indicators. Our primary forum for monitoring is the CRMP Performance Board, where approximately 150 key performance indicators (KPIs) are reviewed alongside ad hoc reports on specific service areas previously considered by delivery groups. Both the Performance Board and delivery groups use our Performance Management System (PMS), which provides a clear view of KPIs, supported by data and informed commentary.



Delivery groups and the Performance Board meet monthly, with outputs reported quarterly to the Fire Authority. Our performance measures are designed to provide a balanced and comprehensive view of service delivery at a local level.

Due to the frequency of reporting, many indicators reflect changes in performance rather than definitive outcomes. For example, an increase in accidental dwelling fires locally may still represent comparatively low levels at a national scale. Greater context is provided through annual and ad hoc reports, particularly where national data—typically published annually—is used for benchmarking.

We apply a range of target types and comparison methods. Some are aspirational, others ensure minimum standards, and some are designed to highlight exceptions in trends, enabling timely identification of areas requiring attention or improvement.



## REDUCING RISK AND KEEPING OUR COMMUNITY SAFE

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.



## Prevention – 2025-26 Annual Delivery plan

### **Item 1) Define our 5-year Safety Centre Partnership Plan**

A four-year Safety Centre Partnership Plan has been defined positioning the Safety Centre as a key delivery mechanism within our Prevention Framework and Serious Violence Duty commitments.

This strengthened agreement, aligned to our Community Risk Management Plan 2025–2030, secures a long-term prevention pathway and reinforces BFRS’s leadership role across Buckinghamshire and Milton Keynes. It also provides a clear blueprint for wider partnership working with neighbouring agencies to maximise societal impact.

Through this partnership, approximately 4000 children from Buckinghamshire and Milton Keynes annually benefit from learning about risks in a safe, controlled environment.

### **Item 2) Deliver a safeguarding review and implement agreed findings**

The safeguarding review was completed in collaboration with nine external partners, ensuring a robust and independent assessment of current practice. This resulted in six thematic recommendation areas, broken down into 25 actions, of which 23 have been fully implemented.

Significant progress has been made to strengthen safeguarding processes, capacity, and oversight. Our Prevention Team has been expanded with the introduction of a Safeguarding Support Officer, enhancing resilience and professional capability. All initial safeguarding referral actions are now completed within 24 hours, improving response to risk and enabling greater focus on prevention and partnership work.

Improved feedback mechanisms have increased staff confidence and the quality of referrals. Collectively, these improvements ensure safeguarding is embedded across the organisation and fully integrated into prevention activity.

### **Item 3) Develop our youth inclusion capability**

Good progress has been made in delivering this action, with all foundational elements now in place ahead of the finalisation of a business case to present a range of options and recommendations for enhancing youth inclusion provision, including fire cadets and other initiatives, in Q1 2026/27. Guidance, procedures and risk assessments have been developed to support the safe and consistent delivery of youth inclusion activity, including Fire Wise provision. Youth inclusion has also been fully embedded within the Community Engagement Framework, and the Prevention team structure has been reviewed to confirm it is aligned to effectively support delivery across children and young people’s programmes.

#### **Item 4) Optimise Online Home Fire Safety Checks with our partners and the public**

This has been a highly successful area of delivery over the past year. The team has developed a range of new partnerships with supporting agencies and delivered targeted social media campaigns to promote the online Home Fire Safety Check portal. As a result, over 700 residents accessed the service during the year, representing a significant increase compared to previous years.

#### **Item 5) Embed the NFCC FireSense and Staywise education platforms**

Good progress has been made in embedding NFCC FireSense and education platforms across Prevention delivery. FireSense is now established as a structured training offer for professionals and volunteers, strengthening early identification of vulnerability, safeguarding practice and multi-agency collaboration. Delivered both virtually and face-to-face, it has achieved consistently positive outcomes, with evaluation from 197 participants showing 85% reported improved fire safety knowledge, 84% improved understanding of the Service offer, and 100% confidence in making referrals.

Alongside this, the refreshed KS2 education programme is delivering a modern and engaging safety offer for primary schools. Operational crews deliver structured sessions supported by workbooks and interactive experiences, including fire appliance engagement. This academic year, 148 visits have been booked, with over 6,200 children expected to benefit, demonstrating strong reach and impact.

#### **Item 6) Embed the new NFCC Prevention Quality Assurance process**

Prevention Quality Assurance process has now been successfully embedded, establishing a consistent and structured approach to monitoring and improving delivery across the Prevention function. Clear QA guidance has been developed and implemented, with observed visits and benchmarking activity underway across multiple stations to ensure consistency and identify areas for improvement.

This work has already driven tangible benefits, including the shift to a more person-centred approach within Home Fire Safety Visits, enhancing the quality and impact of interactions with residents.

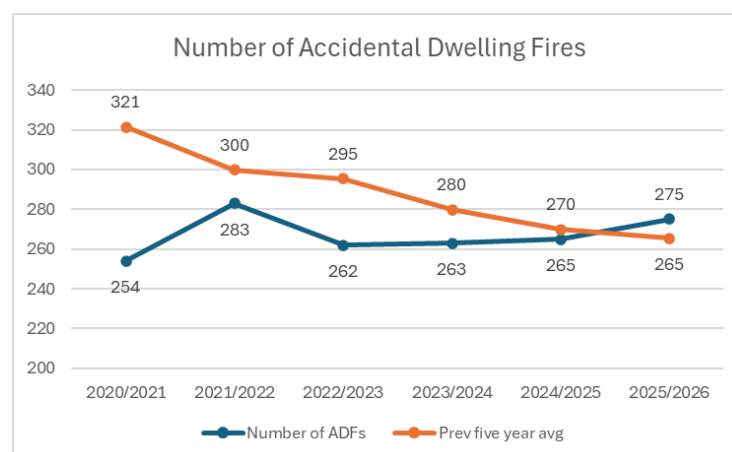
## The figures

Below are some of the key performance metrics we use to monitor progress against this objective and assess the success of our CRMP.

| Measure                                               | Actual<br>2024/2025 | Actual<br>2025/2026 | Target<br>2025/2026 | Against Target |
|-------------------------------------------------------|---------------------|---------------------|---------------------|----------------|
| Home Fire Safety Visits (HFSV) completed              | 5,054               | 5,272               | 4,800               | 9.8% More      |
| Percentage of HFSV that supported a vulnerable person | 87.8%*              | 79.4%               | 70%                 | 9.4% Higher    |
| Accidental Dwelling Fires (ADFs)                      | 265                 | 275                 | 265                 | 3.8% More      |
| Serious accidental dwelling fires                     | 84                  | 93                  | 84                  | 10.7 More      |
| Fire-related fatalities from ADFs                     | 2                   | 3                   | 0                   | 3 More         |
| Fire-related serious injuries from ADFs               | 4                   | 1                   | 2                   | 1 Fewer        |
| Deliberate dwelling fires                             | 15                  | 13                  | 24                  | 45.8% Fewer    |
| Deliberate Primary Fires                              | 164                 | 149                 | 153                 | 2.6% Fewer     |
| Deliberate Secondary Fires                            | 227                 | 342                 | 315                 | 8.6% More      |
| Road Traffic Collisions attended                      | 573                 | 499                 | 535                 | 6.7% Fewer     |

\*A different methodology is now used to calculate vulnerable persons for the purpose of home fire safety visits.

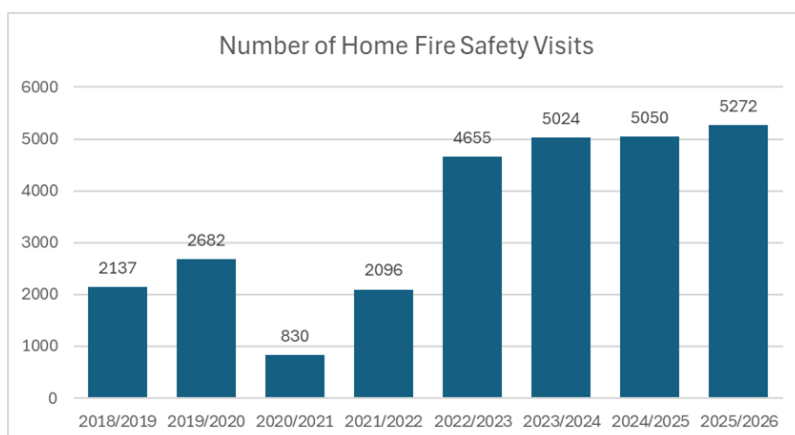
### Accidental Dwelling Fires



Accidental Dwelling Fires (ADFs) increased slightly during the year, creeping above the average of the previous five year average. However, it should be noted, that five year average includes the lower than average number recorded in 2020/2021. It is also worth noting that while Buckinghamshire and Milton

Keynes sees a similar number of ADFs when compared with England, the number of serious ADFs is usually lower than the national average (35.3% across England in 2024/2025, compared to 32.8% during the same period and 33.8% during 2025/2026).

## Home Fire Safety Visits

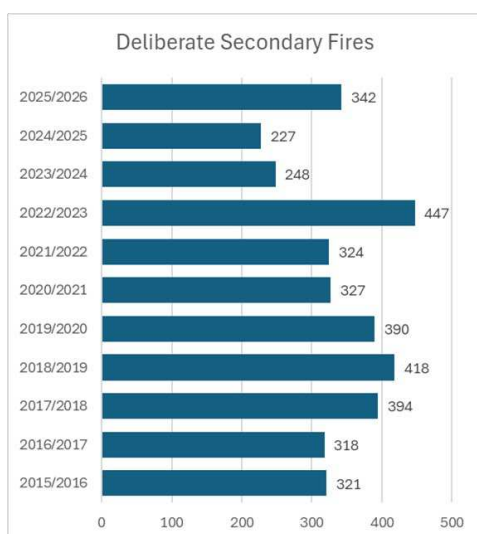


2025/2026 saw the number of Home Fire Safety Visits increase for the fourth year since 2021/2022 (post pandemic).

A Home Fire Safety Visit offers tailored fire safety advice for those at greater risk. During the visit, a

member of our team will assess the risks within the home and provide guidance on areas such as: Smoke detection and escape planning, candle and cooking fire safety, electrical safety, fireplace and heater safety, clutter and hoarding, smoking-related fire safety. The team can also provide signposting or referrals for additional support.

## Deliberate Secondary Fires



| Property Type                                             | Incidents  |
|-----------------------------------------------------------|------------|
| Loose refuse (incl in garden)                             | 76         |
| Grassland, pasture, grazing etc                           | 33         |
| Small refuse/rubbish/recycle container (excl wheelie bin) | 32         |
| Tree scrub (includes single trees not in garden)          | 31         |
| Refuse/rubbish tip                                        | 20         |
| Hedge                                                     | 17         |
| Park                                                      | 12         |
| Scrub land                                                | 12         |
| Cycle path/public footpath/bridleway                      | 11         |
| Other outdoor location                                    | 11         |
| Wasteland                                                 | 11         |
| Roadside vegetation                                       | 10         |
| other items (all below 8 incidents)                       | 66         |
| <b>Total</b>                                              | <b>342</b> |

Secondary fires are minor, generally outdoor fire that does not involve casualties, rescues, or significant property damage. In this case, deliberate refers to the cause of the fire being started by deliberately by somebody that was not the owner of the property.

Longer periods of hot or dry spells do typically influence the number of secondary fires we attend however, this is usually linked to changes in behaviours during these periods. Our data tells us where and when are most likely to see these types of incidents, allowing our crews and prevention teams to mitigate risk where possible.

## PROTECTING PEOPLE FROM RISK IN THE BUILT ENVIRONMENT

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 36,000 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.



## Protection – 2025-26 Annual Delivery plan

### **Item 1) Embed and evaluate our business engagement programme**

Business engagement is now embedded across the Service, with 1,199 interactions delivered in 2025/26, including advisory visits, Primary Authority work, fire safety support and operational crew engagement. Activity is targeted, recorded through Business Engagement (BE) trackers and station plans, and provides clear, auditable evidence across engagement types. A structured Business Engagement Framework has been established, aligned to the 2025–2030 CRMP, ensuring a consistent and coordinated approach to Protection activity.

Monitoring is supported through business engagement measures within the Performance Management System, with defined KPIs and consistent data capture across Protection and operational teams.

### **Item 2) Continue to support the Thames Valley Forensic Fire Investigation Project**

Strong progress has been made in delivering the Thames Valley Forensic Fire Investigation Project. Funding is secured for 2026–27, with a clear project structure and milestones in place. Delivery remains on track, with 39 forensic and 34 Tier 2 investigations completed in 2025/26, alongside continued collaboration across Thames Valley partners.

A consistent cross-partnership approach has been implemented, including standardised procedures, equipment, training and CPD for Tier 2 investigators, improving both competence and consistency.

### **Item 3) Strengthen partnership arrangements to effectively manage, resolve and enforce within multi-occupied residential buildings**

Partnership arrangements for multi-occupied residential buildings have strengthened, improving coordination, information sharing and regulatory oversight across Buckinghamshire and Milton Keynes. Established strategic and tactical structures support a more joined-up approach to risk management, remediation and enforcement.

Formal arrangements with Buckinghamshire Council and Milton Keynes City Council continue through the Partnership Working Agreement, supported by regular meetings, joint casework and shared oversight. These have improved risk understanding, escalation and coordinated regulation.

Protection teams also work closely with partners including the Building Safety Regulator, building control, planning, licensing, and housing and environmental health teams, ensuring emerging risks and compliance issues are managed consistently.

Collaboration extends beyond fire safety regulation, with continued support to Thames Valley Police during operations involving fire safety concerns or vulnerable sleeping risks. Intelligence from inspections, incidents and partner engagement informs risk-based planning.

These arrangements align with the Protection Framework 2025–2030 and support proportionate regulation, collaboration and shared learning. Further governance, intelligence sharing and joint activity will continue through the 2026–27 Plan.

#### **Item 4) Develop Protection team resilience through succession planning**

Progress has been made in strengthening team resilience through succession planning. Role profiles and allowance reviews are complete, and staff now have access to defined development pathways supported by a competency framework. A review of out-of-hours arrangements and benchmarking against neighbouring services has also been undertaken.

Recruitment has continued to address vacancies and increase capacity. While long competency lead-times remain a challenge, the key structures for succession planning are now in place, supported by ongoing recruitment and targeted development. Further capacity-building work will continue in 2026–27.

#### **Item 5) Trial the use of operational station-based staff resolving fire safety complaints**

Good progress has been made in trialling the use of operational crews to support Protection. Joint XVR training with the ICS Team has improved understanding of premises fire safety and referral quality.

Supporting processes are in place, including recording mechanisms and structured triage of low-risk issues. Operational crews increasingly contribute through station plans, aligned to the Business Engagement Framework and local delivery priorities.

This reflects a more integrated approach between Protection and Response, linked to targeted, risk-based activity. While development will continue, including further collaboration and ‘During Performance’ activity, the core elements are now embedded.

#### **Item 6) Review of the PRMS system and associated processes to identify opportunities to enhance productivity and efficiencies**

Progress has been made in reviewing PRMS and related processes. Funding has been secured, a prioritised development plan established, and governance strengthened through clearer ownership. Work is underway to improve administration and reduce duplication.

However, delivery remains dependent on supplier capacity. While requirements are defined, full implementation and measurable productivity gains have yet to be achieved.

Further work is needed to complete system development, standardise processes and demonstrate efficiency improvements, which will be progressed through the 2026–27 Plan in Q1.

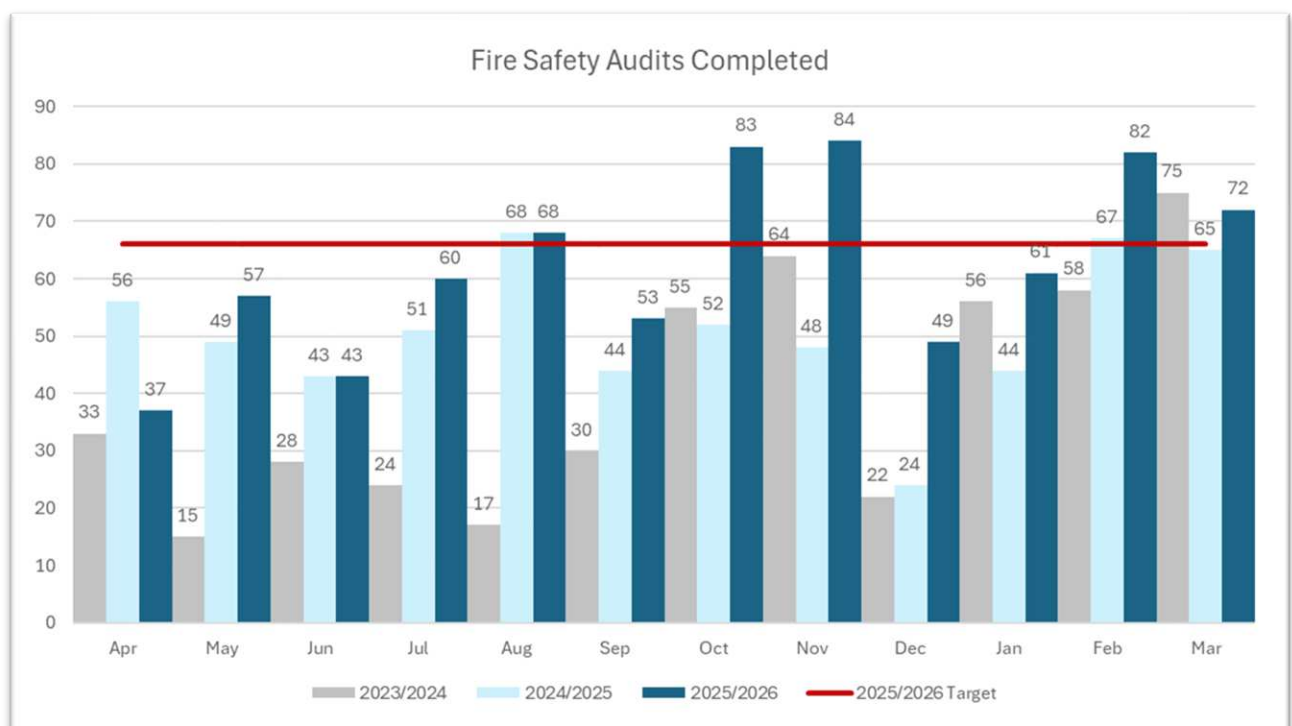
## The figures

Below are some of the key performance metrics we use to monitor progress against this objective and assess the success of our CRMP.

| Measure                                    | Actual<br>2024/2025 | Actual<br>2025/2026 | Target<br>2025/2026 | % Against Target |
|--------------------------------------------|---------------------|---------------------|---------------------|------------------|
| Fire safety audits completed               | 611                 | 746                 | 792                 | 5.8% Fewer       |
| Accidental fires in non-domestic buildings | 136                 | 126                 | 120                 | 5.0% More        |
| Deliberate fires in non-domestic buildings | 22                  | 17                  | 24                  | 29.2% Fewer      |
| Serious fires in non-domestic buildings    | 79                  | 80                  | 96                  | 16.7% Fewer      |
| False alarms in non-domestic buildings     | 1,044               | 746                 | 1,475               | 49.4% Fewer      |

### Fire Safety Audits Completed

2025/2026 saw all but one month beat or equal the previous two years number of fire safety audits completed. Despite this increase in audits, the Service did fall short of its target of completing 792 audits by 46. The graph below shows the breakdown of audits by month, compared with the previous two years and the 2025/2026 target.



### Accidental Fires in Non-Domestic Buildings

Despite having 10 fewer accidental fires in non-domestic building when compared to 2024/2025, the Service still attended six more (5%) than the target of 120 (the average of the previous five years).

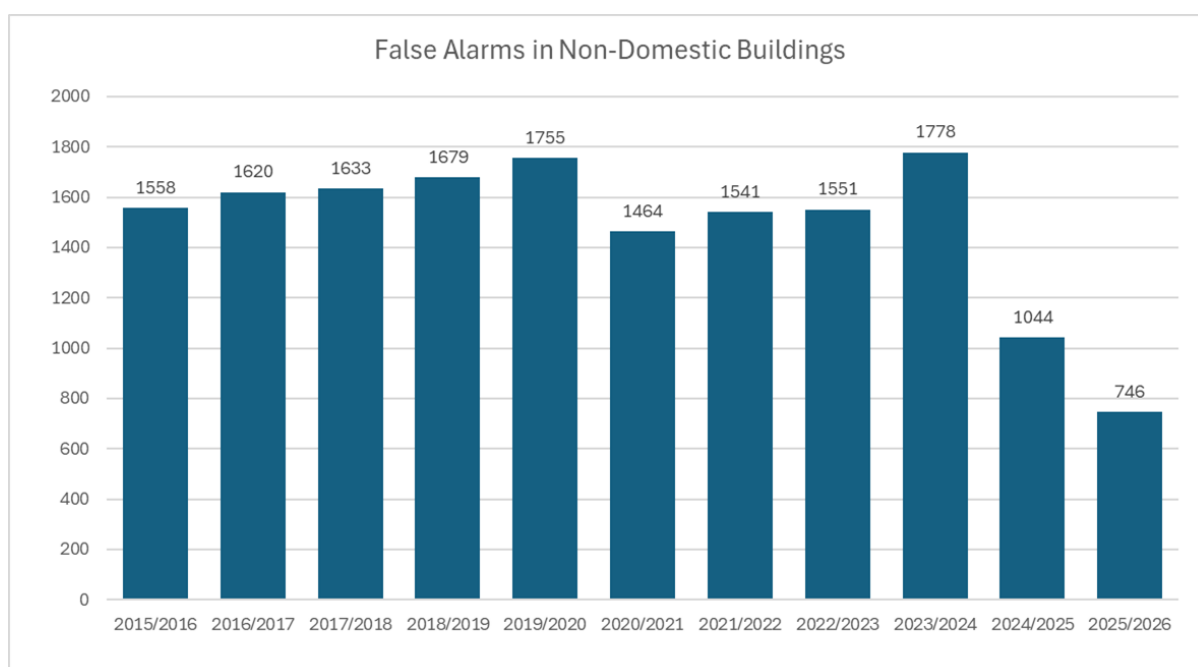
The two biggest increases came from retail and private garden sheds.

Despite an increase in this incident type when compared to the target, it was pleasing to see the number of serious fires fell by 16.7%, despite the increase in Private Garden Sheds – which usually sees the entire property damaged by fire.

| Property Type                          | Incidents |
|----------------------------------------|-----------|
| Private Garden Shed                    | 17        |
| Retail                                 | 13        |
| Food and Drink                         | 11        |
| Private garage                         | 11        |
| Industrial Manufacturing               | 10        |
| Education                              | 9         |
| Residential Home                       | 9         |
| Hospitals and medical care             | 5         |
| Hotel/motel                            | 4         |
| Public Utilities                       | 4         |
| Vehicle Repair                         | 4         |
| Other private non-residential building | 3         |
| Permanent Agricultural                 | 3         |
| Sheltered Housing – not self contained | 3         |
| Warehouses and bulk storage            | 3         |
| Other (inc Offices and Bakery)         | 17        |
| Total                                  | 126       |

### False Alarms in Non-Domestic Buildings

In 2024 Buckinghamshire Fire & Rescue Service introduced a call challenging system that challenged 999 calls to alarms activating in buildings that were deemed not to be high risk. This has resulted in the number of false alarms attended in non-domestic buildings by nearly 50%.



We continue to monitor the incidents we attend and work with repeat offenders to reduce the number of calls we receive to non-domestic buildings that result in a false alarm.

## RESPONDING QUICKLY AND EFFECTIVELY TO EMERGENCIES

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.



## Response – 2025-26 Annual Delivery plan

### **Item 1) Define and deliver year one of our On-Call Improvement Programme**

This has been a significant multi-departmental achievement that forms part of a multi-year programme of work across our Service as it relates to On-Call provision.

Year one has involved developing our requirements for our On-Call service provision now and for the future, that addresses the needs of our communities and of our staff.

A full public consultation was conducted which involved; a comprehensive consultation and supporting evidence pack; focus groups across stakeholder, staff and public groups; public meetings and councillor and MP engagement.

This culminated in an agreement at Fire Authority to rationalise our On-Call fleet and stations laying the foundations to continue On-Call improvement across the life of the CRMP.

### **Item 2) Ensure operational preparedness for infrastructure developments including High Speed 2**

Regular meetings are held, and continue to be held, with the Thames Valley Local Resilience Forum (LRF) regarding infrastructure developments.

The Organisational Risk Group has been established to highlight emerging risks and discuss current risks to the service. One area of focus is High Speed 2 (HS2), plans and exercises have been completed for HS2 sites and have been incorporated into the Site Specific Risk Inspections System.

Virtual Reality exercises have been delivered during training sessions, incorporating emerging risks. The Service has participated in multi-agency exercises both within the county and alongside neighbouring Fire and Rescue Services. Further participation in relevant exercises is planned at appropriate intervals going forward.

### **Item 3) Launch, embed and evaluate new SSRI process and system**

This has been an ongoing complex project, which relies on third party technical support and expertise. Work has been continual to ensure the SSRI process and system is developed, tested and bespoke training provided to all operational and appropriate staff in preparation for a 'go live' date.

With a number of technical hurdles now being addressed, there is high confidence that the system will go live in the late end of Q2 or early Q3.

**Item 4) Develop a collaborative plan to implement new Firefighting national guidance**

The full Gap analysis of all National Operational Guidance (NOG) has been underway and now being transferred onto the National Fire Chiefs Council (NFCC) toolkit. Due to the complexity and size of this workstream this is being carried over as a BAU workstream on Response & Resilience departmental plan 2026-2027

**Item 5) Complete a specialist vehicle capability review**

This review was completed and a report produced. The information from this report formed part of the evidence pack for the recent On-Call Improvement public consultation outcomes.

**Item 6) Optimise the productivity and capacity of operational core working hours**

Evaluation report delivered to the Service Delivery Group (SDG) and the CRMP Performance Board in September. Further evaluation of the process has been agreed to be paused due to effort to extract data. However, it was agreed to continue to utilise the Outlook calendar system to capture and record workload activities for Wholetime and Day-Crewing Stations. A longer term solution being explored. This should include the NFCC app and apps being developed by partner agencies. Performance is robustly being measured and scrutinised on activity and outputs through our monthly Performance Board meetings

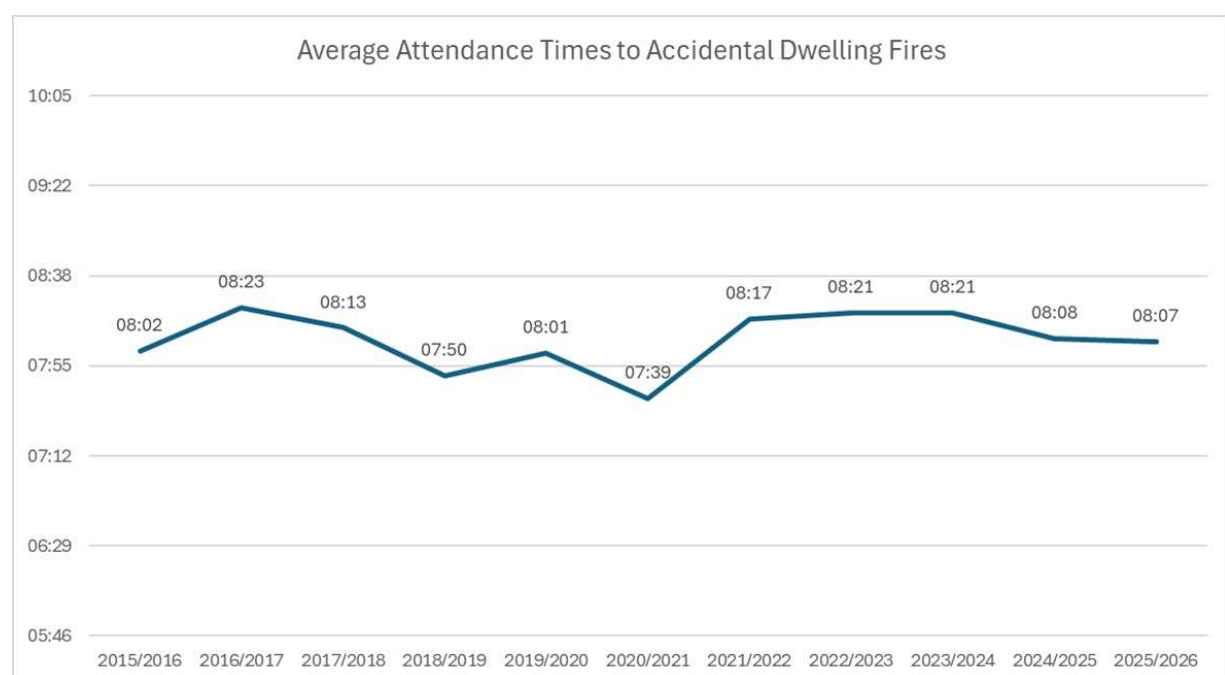
## The figures

Below are some of the key performance metrics we use to monitor progress against this objective and assess the success of our CRMP.

| Measure                                              | Actual<br>2024/2025 | Actual<br>2025/2026 | Target<br>2025/2026 | % Against Target |
|------------------------------------------------------|---------------------|---------------------|---------------------|------------------|
| Total incidents attended                             | 6,475               | 6,534               | 6,932               | 5.7% Fewer       |
| Average attendance time to all incidents             | 08:53               | 09:01               | 09:59               | -                |
| Average attendance time to accidental dwelling fires | 08:08               | 08:07               | 09:59               | -                |
| Availability of wholetime fire engines               | 97.6%               | 97.8%               | 98.0%               | 0.2% Less        |
| Availability of on-call fire engines                 | 12.8%               | 18.0%               | 15.0%               | 20.0% Higher     |
| Very high risk sites visits up to date               | 84.6%               | 94.7%               | 90%                 | 5.2% Higher      |
| Bank Shifts                                          | 2,193               | 2,378               | 2,193               | 8.4% More        |
| Over the border mobilisations into BFRS grounds      | 1,716               | 1,828               | 1,724               | 6.0% More        |

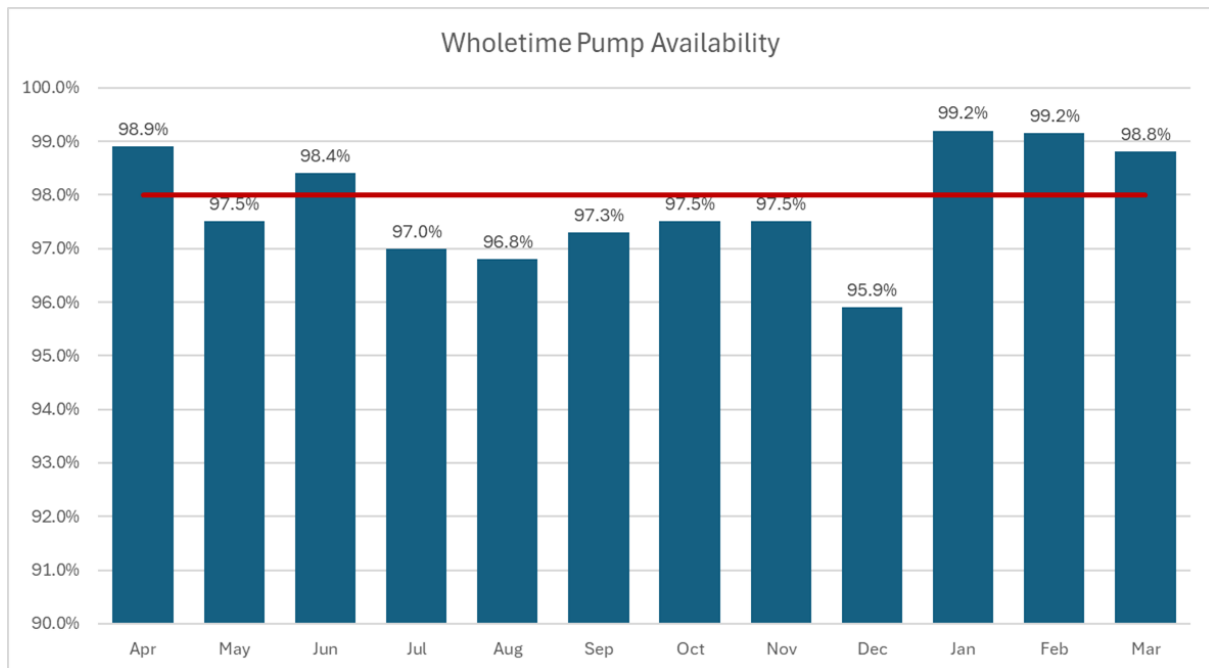
### Average Attendance Time To Accidental Dwelling Fires

The average time it takes the first appliance to arrive at an incident (08:07) remained consistent with the previous five year average (08:08), which coincidentally is the same time as the 10 year average, prior to 2025/2026 (08:08).



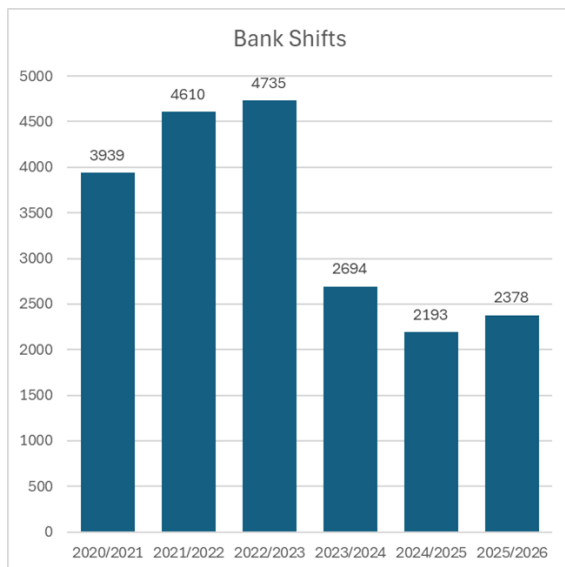
### Wholetime Pump Availability

Wholetime Fire engine (pump) availability saw an increase from 97.6% in 2024/2025 to 97.8% in 2025/2026. This was also against 92.9% availability in 2023/2024.



### Bank Shifts

Bank shifts are used to cover shortfall (planned and unplanned) in wholetime firefighter numbers. These shortfalls can be attributed to reasons such as absence and training.



While bank shifts are essential to maintaining appliance availability, the Service is actively working on reducing the number of bank shifts it utilises.

While the Service did not hit its 2025/2026 target or having fewer banks shifts than 2024/2025, we have introduced to new leave procedures, which we believe will reduce the number of bank shifts in 2026/2027.

## AN INCLUSIVE, HEALTHY AND ENGAGED WORKFORCE

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 prioritized 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.



## People – 2025-26 Annual Delivery plan

### **Item 1) Enhance our reward and recognition framework**

The Service has made strong progress in enhancing its reward and recognition framework through the approval of a revised Support Services pay structure, improved annual leave entitlements, and strengthened internal job evaluation capability. The new pay scale model, due to be implemented from 1 July 2026, simplifies the existing pay structure, improves transparency and flexibility, and aligns more closely with public sector benchmarks, supporting fairness, attraction, and retention. In parallel, the approval of a minimum 25 day annual leave entitlement, effective from April 2027, provides a competitive, non pay benefit that enhances the overall employment offer while remaining financially sustainable. In addition, Korn Ferry job evaluation capability has been expanded from two trained individuals to thirteen, providing a wider pool of trained assessors who will form a rotating job evaluation panel, strengthening governance, resilience, and consistency in reward decision making.

### **Item 2) Review our health and wellbeing proposition**

We are reviewing and strengthening our health and wellbeing proposition, with a Private Medical Insurance (PMI) options paper approved in March 2026 and due for imminent roll-out. We have also refreshed our Mental Health First Aid capability, completing refresher training in January 2026 to ensure continued confidence and consistency of support across the Service. This workstream links closely with the reward and recognition project (due for completion in July 2026) to ensure our overall employment offer is joined-up, and it will also align with the planned People Directorate restructure in 2026, with welfare and wellbeing remaining within scope as part of those changes.

### **Item 3) Empower our leaders, with training and support, to performance manage**

We piloted our bespoke Thrive Programme following detailed analysis and feedback which identified gaps in leadership development. The programme is designed to build leaders' confidence and capability to get the best from their teams. It links to our four core behaviours and embeds a self-reflective, curious and coaching mindset to strengthen performance management in ourselves and others. The programme comprises four modules delivered over four days, with a 1:1 coaching session to support learning transfer and real-life application.

Our approach is iterative and flexible, adapting to the needs and make-up of each cohort. The pilot was successful: 50% of attendees reported increased confidence and 68% reported a positive improvement in self-awareness. Across all elements of the programme, 81.65% of attendees rated it 7–10 out of 10.

Rolling out Thrive Service wide to our remaining line managers as a mandatory requirement (and others as optional) provides a consistent, evidence based approach to leadership development that directly addresses HMICFRS feedback, People Survey priorities, and cultural risks. It represents a credible, scalable intervention to strengthen leadership capability, improve performance management confidence, and embed a coaching led leadership culture across the Service.

#### **Item 4) Embed our talent management programme**

Our staff development pathway, together with the leadership and behavioural framework, is now fully embedded across the service. This has been achieved through a comprehensive programme of initiatives, including:

- A dedicated intranet hub designed for clear and intuitive navigation
- A consistent cascade of key messages and expectations through leadership events at all levels
- A programme of staff development workshops, including the inaugural Women's Network Development Day
- Targeted support sessions and coaching to reinforce learning and embed best practice

Our most recent Assessment Development Centre, attended by both support and operational colleagues, achieved a 100% success rate. Notably, three delegates scored above 90%, securing access to the High Potential Development Programme. This demonstrates the strength of our development pathway and the extent to which it is now understood and embedded across the organisation.

We have also shared our processes with the NFCC and other services, both in response to direct requests and through NFCC recommendation, contributing to wider sector learning and improvement.

#### **Item 5) Develop our coaching and mentoring programme**

To support a more people-centred culture of communication and development, we launched an official mentoring programme in November 2025 and introduced coaching interventions through the Thrive Programme (outlined above).

*Mentoring:* This programme supports confidential, longer-term mentoring relationships in an official capacity. Since work commenced in November 2025, individuals have been identified and a mentoring pool established. Training ran from January to March 2026, resulting in a bank of 26 trained mentors. Eight mentoring relationships were established within the first eight weeks of the programme being available, and early feedback from both mentors and mentees has been positive.

*Coaching:* Our approach to coaching has been foundational and deliberately inclusive. Coaching is embedded as a core skill within our Thrive Programme, which will be rolled out Service-wide to all leaders, covering key skills such as presence, active listening and curiosity to support behaviour change. As part of Module 2, the coaching skills session has consistently been one of the highest-rated elements of the pilot programme, alongside Insights Discovery.

The inclusion of coaching skills was welcomed, with 84% of participants indicating it should 'definitely' or 'probably' be an important part of the programme. Provision of coaching within the Service was also viewed as important by 89% of those attending the pilot Thrive Programme.

*Female coaching:* Since July 2025, we have offered ad hoc specialist confidence and impact coaching for women within the Service, and 60% of those coached have achieved promotion in that period. This success highlights the value of specialist, meaningful support for women in the fire and rescue service, and the offer will continue through 2026 and 2027 where required.

#### **Item 6) Provide training and toolkits on our people management processes to give staff the confidence to challenge unacceptable behaviour**

The Service's Professional Standards Investigator (PSI) role was introduced to provide independent oversight of investigations into grievances, disciplinary matters and other professional standards issues. The role operates independently of HR and line management and provides assurance that matters are handled fairly, consistently and in line with ACAS guidance.

Over the past year, the PSI has commenced a number of investigations and reviews across the Service. This work has led to recommendations for improvements to policies and processes, which are being progressed through the appropriate governance routes.

We commissioned Capsticks to undertake a full review of our key ER policies, procedures and templates. Working with their HR Advisory Consultancy team, we are implementing a toolkit based approach to provide clear, practical guidance that enables confident, consistent decision making and early intervention. This work complements the leadership development delivered through Thrive.

Thrive continues to support managers in managing behaviours, early intervention and leading with confidence. This programme will be rolled out to all managers in 2026.

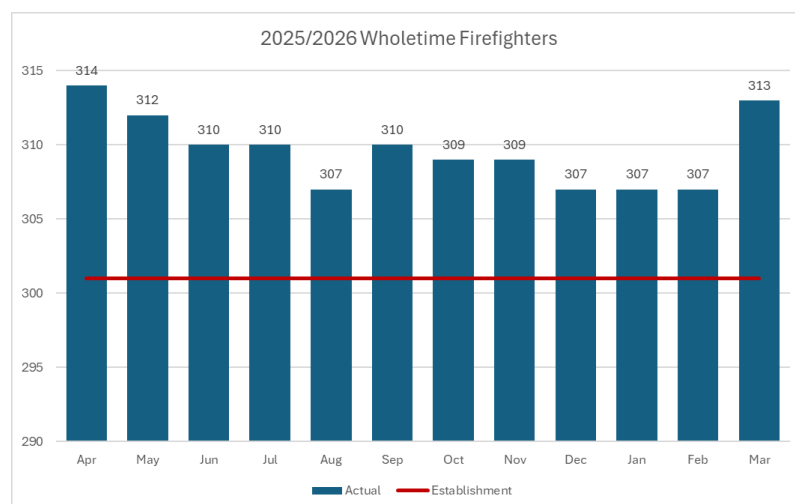
Case reviews are being undertaken, with lessons learned captured and actions developed.

## The figures

Below are some of the key performance metrics we use to monitor progress against this objective and assess the success of our CRMP.

| Measure                                           | Actual<br>2024/2025 | Actual<br>2025/2026 | Target<br>2025/2026 | % Against Target |
|---------------------------------------------------|---------------------|---------------------|---------------------|------------------|
| Actual vs Establishment FTE – wholetime (average) | 308.7               | 309.5               | 301                 | 2.8% More        |
| Actual vs Establishment FTE – on-call (average)   | 57.2                | 60.2                | 96                  | 37.3% Fewer      |
| Actual vs Establishment FTE – support (average)   | 125.4               | 129.5               | 136.4               | 5.1% Fewer       |
| Staff turnover                                    | 5.8%                | 8.0%                | 12.0%               | 33.33% Less      |
| Maintenance of operational skills – wholetime     | 95.0%               | 92.2%               | 96.0%               | 4.0% Less        |
| Mandatory E-Learning – wholetime                  | 86.0%               | 95.0%               | 95.0%               | 0.0% Higher      |
| Mandatory E-Learning – support                    | 92.0%               | 97.0%               | 95.0%               | 2.1% Higher      |
| Appraisals completed                              | 95.0%               | 98.0%               | 95.0%               | 3.2% Higher      |
| Objectives set                                    | 95.0%               | 100%                | 95.0%               | 5.3% Higher      |
| Half year reviews completed                       | -                   | 91.0%               | 75.0%               | 21.3% Higher     |
| Absence – wholetime staff (shifts lost)           | 3,234               | 3,818               | 3,517               | 8.6% More        |
| Absence – on-call staff                           | -                   | 2,195               | 2,052               | 7.0% More        |
| Absence Support staff                             | 1,186               | 1,264               | 1,255               | 0.7% More        |
| Grievances                                        | 28                  | 12                  | -                   | -                |
| Disciplinaries                                    | 23                  | 6                   | -                   | -                |
| Complaints                                        | 19                  | 18                  | -                   | -                |
| Compliments                                       | 62                  | 85                  | -                   | -                |
| Workplace injuries                                | 39                  | 29                  | 24                  | 20.8 More        |

### Actual vs Establishment FTE - Wholetime Firefighters



2025/2026 saw an average number of 309 Wholetime firefighters against an establishment of 301. Based on workforce planning, a decision was made to proceed with a new Wholetime Firefighter intake of six candidates during quarter four.

Within the previous recruitment campaign for Cohort 13, we had a pool of fifteen candidates who successfully completed all stages but did not score among the highest-scoring applicants. Each of these individuals was contacted to confirm their continued interest in the role. Thirteen candidates responded positively, and six were offered roles as firefighters.

### *Absence - Wholetime Firefighters (shifts lost)*

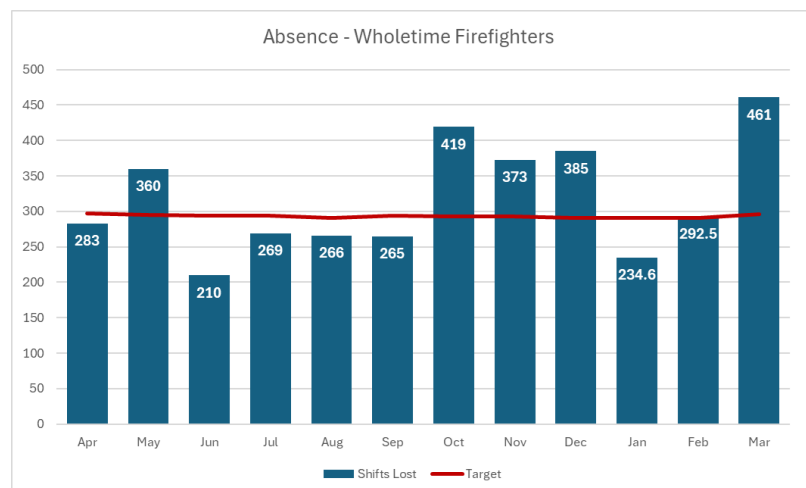
Absence in 2025/2026 was measured against the national average from 2024/2025.

Last year we saw 8.6% more shifts lost than the above mentioned target. However, based on early indications, this looks to be a national trend.

More important than the comparison with national figures, is our ability to manage absence within the service. To this end, our absence records are analysed every month to best understand both the reasons for the recorded absences, and the impact they have on the Service.

We then break down the absence by short and long-term, by the reason for absence and then by location. During 2025/2026 we tended to see long-term absence being impacted by musculoskeletal injuries. Short-term absence was more impacted by seasonal trends with cold and flu featuring heavily during the winter months.

We have also given a renewed focus to our absence management, with regular reviews and meetings now taking place across the Service.



## MAKING THE MOST OF OUR FINANCE AND ASSETS

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.



## Finance & Assets – 2025-26 Annual Delivery plan

### **Item 1) Launch new workwear offering**

The new workwear offering was successfully launched during Q4 of 2025-26 following extensive staff consultation. Initial reception from staff was positive. As part of the evaluation, the scale of issue to staff on dual wholetime and on-call contracts was increased following feedback.

### **Item 2) Deliver year 1 of the property standards programme by investing £500k in station facilities**

Work was completed across a number of stations including drill tower refurbishments, resurfacing of drill yards, new roofs, guttering and downpipes and improvements to washrooms.

### **Item 3) Start the build on local training facility (subject to agreement)**

The site, building and training facility design have all been finalised and contracts awarded subject to receiving planning consent. As at the end of 2025-26 the Service was still awaiting planning approval to proceed with the build, which is now expected Q1 of 2026-27. Westcott Venture Park has completed detailed groundwork designs so work can start rapidly once consent is granted.

### **Item 4) Evaluate options for fleet and specialist vehicle investment**

Two specialist rural firefighting vehicles were added to our fleet during 2025-26 and two new dedicated water carriers have now been delivered to the Service. Work commenced on scoping the requirement for replacing the two aerial appliances currently in our fleet. A crew welfare van was ordered and is due for delivery early 2026-2027.

### **Item 5) Scope options for improving High Wycombe fire station**

Extensive consultation has been undertaken with staff, and initial designs and an options appraisal have been completed in conjunction with a third-party specialist. Decant options are being drawn up with a view to bringing a full business case to Members in July 2026.

### **Item 6) Investigate housing options across the service**

After reviewing our workload and resource commitments, we have moved this project to 2027. This allows us to focus on priority activity and will ensure the project receives the attention and capability it needs.

## The figures

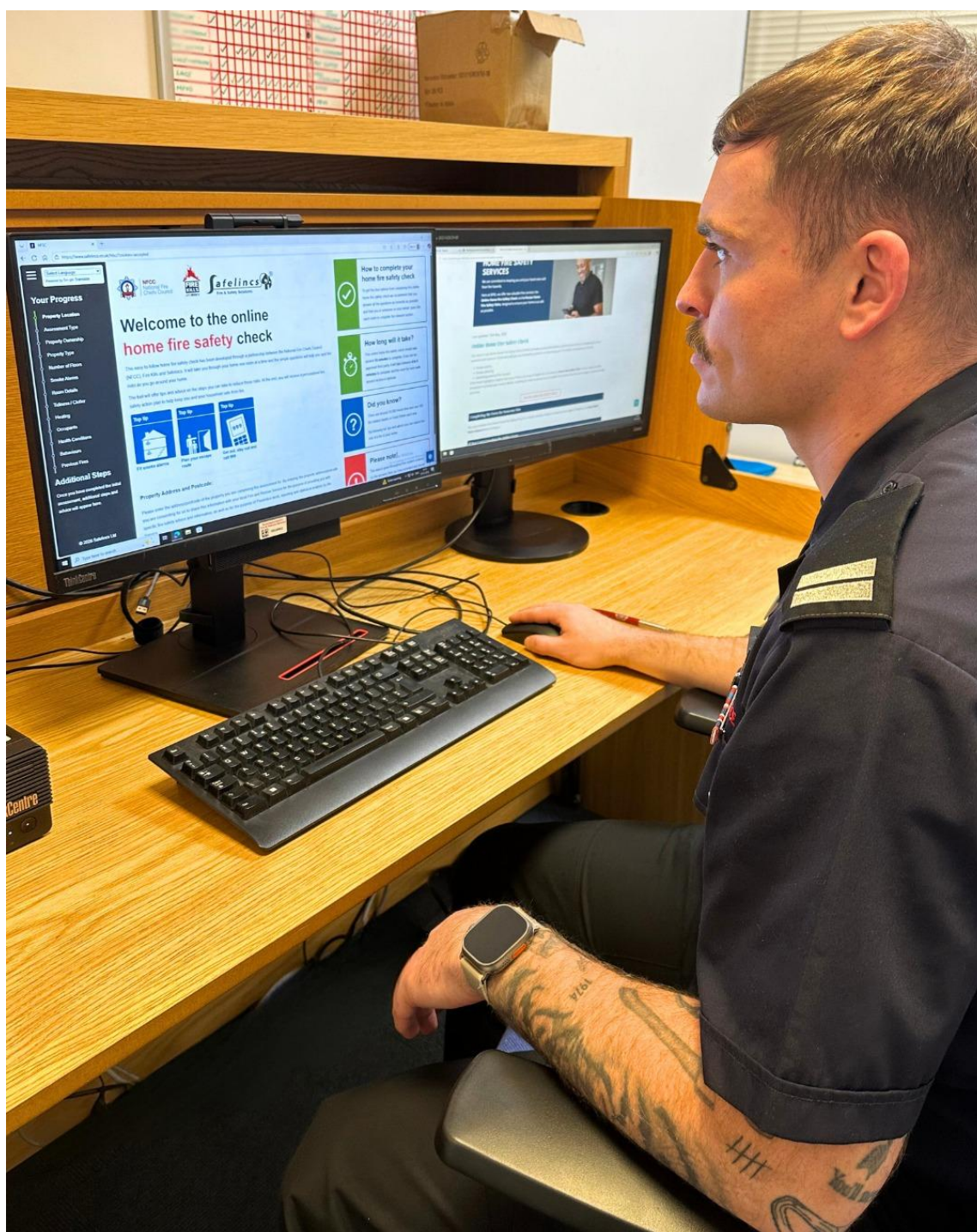
Below are some of the key performance metrics we use to monitor progress against this objective and assess the success of our CRMP.

| Measure                          | Actual<br>2024/2025 | Actual<br>2025/2026 | Target<br>2025/2026 | % Against Target |
|----------------------------------|---------------------|---------------------|---------------------|------------------|
| Forecast – Outturn (£000's)      | £38,586             |                     | £42,989             |                  |
| Wholetime cost (£000's)          | *                   |                     | £22,757             |                  |
| On-Call cost (£000's)            | *                   |                     | £1,504              |                  |
| Capital spend (£000's)           | *                   |                     | £1,974              |                  |
| Projects (off track)             | 4                   | 0                   | -                   |                  |
| Overdue internal audits – high   | *                   | 0                   | -                   |                  |
| Overdue internal audits - medium | *                   | 0                   | -                   |                  |
| Critical procurement contracts   | 100%                | 100%                | 100%                |                  |
| Procurement contracts off track  | *                   | 2                   | -                   |                  |

\*It is worth noting that many of the measures captured above were introduced in 2025/2026 in relation to the launch of our new CRMP.

## OPTIMISING OUR TECHNOLOGY AND DATA

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.



## Digital & Data – 2025-26 Annual Delivery plan

### **Item 1) Introduce a new maintenance of competency system**

This year has seen the successful introduction of a new Maintenance of Competency system, representing a significant step forward in how we assure operational capability across the Service. The system provides a more robust, consistent and transparent approach to ensuring our staff have the right skills, knowledge and confidence to carry out their roles safely and effectively. By strengthening how we record, monitor and support competency, we are better able to maintain high standards, identify development needs and ensure our workforce remains ready to respond to the evolving risks within our communities

### **Item 2) Implement the updated Home Office Incident Recording System**

The Home Office had set out plans to replace the long-standing Incident Recording System (IRS) during 2025/2026, introducing a new platform designed to support the collection of a wider range of fire and rescue data, including prevention, protection, and incident activity. The overall ambition is to develop a more complete and consistent national picture of Fire and Rescue Service activity.

Delivery of the new system has since been approached in two phases by the Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government (MHCLG). The first phase was successfully introduced during 2025/2026 and was implemented within BFRS with minimal disruption to staff. The second phase is currently planned for implementation in Q2 2026/2027 and is expected to enhance the level of detail available, enabling staff to capture and access more comprehensive information about the incidents attended.

### **Item 3) Enhance technology on our fire engines**

Working with staff we have add to the technology on appliances, alongside the mobile data terminal and a tablet, all appliances now have a smartphone with a range of applications including a dedicated satellite navigation bespoke to emergency blue light response for large vehicles.

### **Item 4) Develop and implement comprehensive branding standards, including digital and physical assets and integration into cross-departmental operating practices**

This programme is proposed to move to the next planning year, as delivery has not yet commenced. Current focus is prioritised on embedding the Events and Engagement Framework that was launched Q4 2025-26

**Item 5) Develop and embed a corporate communications framework, including a social media policy and events/engagement strategy**

This item will be carried forward and completed Q1 2026-27.

**Item 6) Deliver comprehensive system security and cyber awareness training programmes for all staff**

Working in partnership with Buckinghamshire Council, the Service has strengthened its approach to cyber security through the introduction of monthly bite-sized e-learning packages. This programme ensures that staff remain vigilant, informed and equipped to manage evolving cyber risks. Completion rates are actively monitored through our performance framework, alongside staff responses to simulated phishing activity, providing clear insight into organisational resilience and enabling targeted improvement where required.

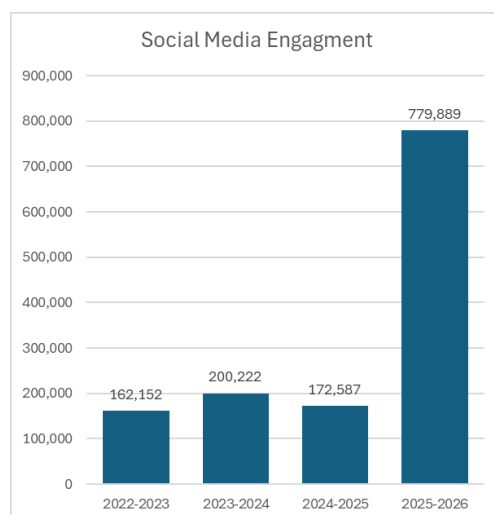
## The figures

Below are some of the key performance metrics we use to monitor progress against this objective and assess the success of our CRMP.

| Measure                                   | Actual<br>2024/2025 | Actual<br>2025/2026 | Target<br>2025/2026 | % Against Target |
|-------------------------------------------|---------------------|---------------------|---------------------|------------------|
| Website users (average per month)         | 12,481              | 11,746              | 10,000              | 17.5% More       |
| Social media engagements                  | 172,587             | 779,889             | 120,000             | 550% More        |
| Intranet active users (average per month) | 94.1%               | 95.1%               | 90.0%               | 5.7% Higher      |
| Reportable data breaches                  | 0                   | 0                   | 0                   | -                |
| Network uptime (average per month)        | -                   | 99.9%               | 99.9%               | 0% Higher        |
| Service desk response within SLA          | 97.8%               | 96.5%               | 95.0%               | 1.6% Higher      |

### Social media engagement

Social media engagement is critically important for a fire and rescue service because it



enables rapid communication, public education, and community engagement at scale, and the figures clearly demonstrate its growing influence. This sharp increase supports safety messages, incident updates, and prevention campaigns are reaching and resonating with far larger audiences. High engagement levels are essential because they increase the likelihood that critical fire safety advice is seen, understood, and acted upon, ultimately helping to reduce risk and save lives.

Additionally, strong social media performance supports transparency and builds trust within the

community, demonstrating that the service is accessible, responsive, and proactive in keeping the public informed. Overall, these figures confirm that social media is a powerful and increasingly vital tool in delivering modern fire and rescue services.

## Collaboration

Collaboration is especially important in the public sector because it enables us to combine expertise, resources, and perspectives to deliver better outcomes for our communities. As well as emergencies, we often deal with complex, interconnected issues such as health, safety, education and social care. These cannot be effectively addressed in isolation. By working together across departments, agencies, and partner organisations, we can improve efficiency, reduce duplication, and ensure a more coordinated and responsive service. Ultimately, strong collaboration helps us build trust, drive innovation, and ensure that limited public resources are used in the most effective way to meet the needs of the people they serve. Some examples of collaborative projects can be found below:

The **Prevention** Team works closely with other teams across the Service. In addition, it demonstrates good partnership working with external bodies/agencies. An example of this is our current collaboration with Screwfix. Following recognition of fire related injuries due to DIY products being mishandled, we developed a safety leaflet highlighting the risks of DIY products, which Screwfix kindly agreed to locally distribute to its customers where appropriate.

Our **People** Team work closely with colleagues across the Service and maintains strong partnerships with external organisations. A recent example is our collaboration with Milton Keynes Council, through which we have secured an apprenticeship levy transfer of £168k to fund two cohorts of firefighter apprentices starting in 2026. This delivers a direct saving of approximately £10k (the 5% co-investment we would otherwise have paid) and strengthens our levy position, enabling us to fund additional apprenticeships without further top-up costs. We have also begun discussions to extend this arrangement to support future firefighter recruitment.

We continue strong partnership working through our commitment to the **Armed Forces Covenant**, for which we hold the Gold Award under the Defence Employer Recognition Scheme. This reflects sustained support for serving personnel, veterans and their families, alongside active advocacy within the wider employer community. The Service participates in national transition events, regional partnership boards and sector-wide networks, helping to connect service leavers with opportunities and share best practice across fire and rescue services. Locally, BFRS provides practical support through regular veteran engagement sessions, delivered in partnership with organisations such as the Royal British Legion, creating trusted spaces for advice, support and clinical engagement. This activity is underpinned by internal policies, staff champions and ongoing engagement that ensure the Armed Forces community is supported both within the organisation and across the communities we serve.

# His Majesty's Inspectorate of Constabulary and Fire and Rescue Services

His Majesty's Inspectorate of Constabulary and Fire and Rescue Services (HMICFRS) inspect each fire and rescue service (FRS) approximately every two years, assessing 10 key areas that can be categorised into Effectiveness, Efficiency and People. We were first inspected in 2021 again in 2023 and in Q4 of 2025/26.

The 2025–27 inspection programme includes several updates. HMICFRS has streamlined its approach by reducing the diagnostic areas from 11 to 10 combining the efficiency questions. This round also places a stronger emphasis on leadership at all levels, introduces greater scrutiny of values, culture and misconduct, and adds a new focus on how a Fire and Rescue Authority's governance, oversight and scrutiny affects the service. HMICFRS will also look more closely at how services support community resilience, including working effectively with local communities to prevent fires.

During 2025/26 we have worked on delivering the areas for improvement the HMICFRS identified alongside our annual plan. Progress has been reviewed through our internal governance with final sign off at the HMICFRS improvement board chaired by the Chief Fire Officer.

The outcome report from this inspection, due mid quarter 2 2026/27, will highlight any areas for improvement and potentially causes for concern. Action plans to work on these will need to be scheduled into our planning and may affect our priorities and delivery of our Annual Plan.

For more information on the inspection of fire and rescue services, please visit the HMICFRS website.

## Celebrating Our People

Throughout 2025/2026, our staff have achieved so much to be proud of. It's been a year filled with success, and below are just some examples of the fantastic work and behaviours that have been recognised and celebrated.



**The People Awards**, a night dedicated to recognising the outstanding contributions and achievements of staff across the whole organisation. Awards included:

- Culture and Inclusion Award
- Innovation Award
- Rising Talent Award
- Impact Award
- Community Action Award

**NFCC Apprenticeship Awards:** the NFCC (National Fire Chiefs Council) hosted its annual Apprenticeship Awards Ceremony, recognising outstanding apprentices from Fire and Rescue Services across the country. *"Shelby and Sasha's success at this year's NFCC National Apprenticeship Awards is a proud moment for BFRS. Their professionalism, drive and commitment reflect the values we stand for and the culture we continue to build together."*



**10 Years of Apprenticeships:** National Apprenticeship Week marked an important milestone to us: ten years since our very first cohort of firefighter apprentices walked through our doors.

Whether it's operational response, Information Technology, Fire Safety, or Leadership development, apprenticeships

remain a powerful route into careers that truly changes lives. And for our first cohort who "footed the ladder so future apprentices could safely climb it" we couldn't be prouder of everything they've achieved.

**Pass Out Parade - Cohort 13:** In January, we followed Fire Service tradition and held our Pass Out Parade Ceremony at the Blue Light Hub, Milton Keynes.

We opened our doors to friends and family, giving them a chance to witness their loved ones in action. The day was filled with excitement as our team demonstrated their expertise in a 'persons reported' fire drill.

It was a day of celebration and recognition, highlighting the dedication our firefighters pour into their roles. We couldn't be prouder of their achievements and the unwavering commitment they show every day.



**Long Service Awards:** On the 2<sup>nd</sup> October 2025 our Long Service Awards Ceremony took place. This is a formal event held to recognise and celebrate the dedication, commitment, and exemplary conduct of firefighters and staff over many years of service. The ceremony honours individuals who have consistently demonstrated professionalism, bravery, and integrity in serving their

communities. It is our opportunity for colleagues, friends, and family to acknowledge the significant contributions made by those being recognised.

**Kings Garden Party:** The King and Queen hosted a Garden Party at Buckingham Palace to celebrate the dedication and contribution of those who serve their communities through volunteering, supporting charitable causes and working for emergency services.

Paul, William, Matt and Ania were invited in recognition of their contributions to the community.



## Messages of Appreciation

Below are some of the messages we have received from members of the public and local businesses over the last year:

*“We had two Fire Officers attend our home in Butlers Cross on Saturday, to test the fire alarms. They were both very helpful and offered really good advice and fitted a carbon monoxide detector next to our Boiler. Both my husband and I were very impressed with their knowledges, experience and helpfulness. It is a great preventative initiative which weren't aware of but are really grateful for. A huge thank you from us for this service!!!”*

*“I would like to formally recognise the exceptional professionalism and support we received from our West Ashland Fire Service colleagues during the emergency call out.”*

*“Hayley was very patient and very caring towards her mother, and she was very impressed with the service we deliver.”*

*“On the 5th July the bucks fire team attended to help me after a fall whilst visiting my house renovation. I would like to thank the team for their very hard work on this day and all their efforts to make sure I get out of the house safely. I firmly believe I was treated incredibly well and my family have complimented the way your team treated me and helped support my family at the scene during such a difficult time.”*

*“Please can you pass on my thank to Red Watch who came to our Fairford Leys Womens Institute on Thursday 9th October. The group found the talk very interesting with some of them giving details to Red Watch for a Home Fire Safety visit.”*

*“I just wanted to send a huge thank-you and a very sincere apology for the false-alarm call out to my property on Saturday 8 November 2025. It seems a neighbour mistook our family's traditional bonfire for something more serious.*

*I felt awful for causing any concern, but I was so grateful for how calm, kind, and reassuring your crew were when they arrived. They checked everything carefully and handled it with such professionalism. You truly turned what could have been an awkward moment into something heart-warming.*

*Warmest thanks again for everything you do for the community you're all an absolute credit to the service.”*

*"I just wanted to leave a compliment to lovely friendly woman called Leigh from your station who came out to do a fire safety check and to make sure everything was needed to be done in order to be safe and gave me advice on what to do if there's a fire which I really appreciated, she would really friendly and helpful towards me as I am a disabled resident living a Milton Keynes council flat, she's a great asset to your station I'd like to thoroughly think her for being so kind and helpful."*

*"Just wanted to pass on my thanks for the delivery of the fire safety workshop for our Year 5 cohort last week. The children and teachers all commented on how engaging the provision was and all have a great time.  
Thank you again, things like this really do make a difference!"*

*"I really wanted to reach out and provide my thanks and appreciation for allowing the Kent USAR team access to your training facility at Westcott Park.  
The feedback that I have received is that your venue offered an excellent opportunity for the skills and procedures to be tested to the full. The team found the venue suitably challenging and an ideal environment to develop their skills. An extra thank you to Ian Nisbet and Alan Still who gave up their time to facilitate the two days, and this is really appreciated and can you pass on my thanks to them too please?"*

*"We had a visit from one of your wonderful fire service teams yesterday and I just wanted to write to thank you. The visit was a huge hit and our children came away filled with knowledge and excitement. They learnt so much and we simply can't thank you enough for making time to come round to our school.  
Your team were fantastic! Kind, friendly, engaging and full of facts! If they weren't already serving our community I would suggest they looked at teaching careers....  
We already look forward to (hopefully) another visit from your station crew next year.  
From all the year 2 teachers at Farnham Common Infant school, a heartfelt thank you!"*

# Glossary

*Accidental Fire* - A fire that 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 non-domestic 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.

*The Building Safety Act (BSA) 2022* - is a law that regulates the design, construction, and management of higher-risk residential buildings in England. The BSA was introduced in response to the Grenfell Tower disaster in 2017.

*Chimney fires* - Reportable fires at occupied buildings where the fire was confined within the chimney structure and did not involve casualties or rescues and was not attended by 5 or more appliances.

*Community Risk Management Plan (CRMP)* - A strategic document used to assess and manage the risks faced by a community, focusing on reducing incidents and improving safety.

*Co responders* – Firefighters who also respond to ambulance calls. The aim of a co-responder is to preserve life until the arrival of either an ambulance or a response vehicle from the NHS ambulance service.

*Dwellings* - Buildings occupied by households, excluding hotels, hostels and residential institutions.

*Emergency Services Mobile Communications Programme (ESMCP)* - a cross-government, multi-agency programme that will deliver a new communication system to the emergency services and other public safety users throughout Great Britain.

*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.

*Fire Sense* - A free training session delivered by our Community Safety Coordinators for anyone who works with vulnerable people in their homes.

*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.

*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.

*The National Fire Chiefs Council (NFCC)* - is the professional voice of the UK fire and rescue service. NFCC drives improvement and development throughout the UK FRS, while supporting strong leadership.

*Premises Risk Management System (PRMS)* - A system we use to identify, assess, and mitigate risks associated with various properties and locations within a community.

*Primary fires* - Reportable fires at non-derelict buildings, vehicles and outdoor structures or any fire involving casualties, rescues, or fires attended by five or more appliances.

*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.

*Risk Based Inspection Programme (RBIP)* = A process developed by the National Fire Chiefs Council (NFCC) that prioritises fire safety inspections of premises based on risk. It is part of the NFCC's Community Risk Programme (CRP), which aims to reduce community risk and vulnerability.

*Secondary fires* - The majority of outdoor fires including grassland and refuse fires unless they involve casualties or rescues, property loss or five or more appliances attend. They include fires at single derelict buildings. They are reported in less detail than other fires and consequently less information concerning them is available.

*Site-Specific Risk Information (SSRI)* = A system for providing firefighters with specific information about the risks associated with a particular site or building.

*Special Service Incidents* - Non-fire incidents which require the attendance of an appliance or officer and include:

- (a) Local emergencies e.g. road traffic incidents, rescue of persons, 'making safe' etc;
- (b) Major disasters;
- (c) Domestic incidents e.g. water leaks, persons locked in or out etc;

(d) Prior arrangements to attend incidents, which may include some provision of advice and inspections.

*Staywise* – A website that gives teachers, home educators and emergency services workers free access to curriculum-aligned safety resources developed by UK fire and rescue services, police, paramedics, RNLI and the Coastguard, alongside other safety-focused organisations.

*Thames Valley Forensic Fire Investigation Unit* = A collaborative unit between fire services and Police in the Thames Valley region dedicated to investigating fire incidents and their causes.

*Thames Valley Fire Control Mobilising* = A system for managing emergency response operations within the Thames Valley area, specifically the mobilising of resources during incidents.

*Youth Inclusion Coordination* - A program or function designed to engage and support young people within the community, particularly in relation to fire safety and prevention initiatives.



# Buckinghamshire & Milton Keynes Fire Authority

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**Meeting and date:** Fire Authority, 10 June 2026

**Report title:** Member Update on the Fire Brigades Union (FBU) Improvement Agenda 2025

**Lead Member:** Chairman of the Fire Authority

**Report sponsor:** Chief Fire Officer Louise Harrison

**Author and contact:**

Simon Tuffley - Deputy Chief Fire Officer [stuffley@bucksfire.gov.uk](mailto:stuffley@bucksfire.gov.uk)

Mitchell Wallace - Fire Brigades Union (Buckinghamshire) Brigade Secretary

**Action:** Noting

**Recommendations:** That the Member Update on the Fire Brigades Union Improvement Agenda 2025/26 be noted.

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## Executive summary:

The report attached at Appendix 1 provides an update to Fire Authority Members on Service progress against the 2025 Fire Brigades Union (FBU) Improvement Agenda.

This second update report has been co-authored by Officers and the FBU Brigade Secretary, building upon progress from the 2024 Improvement Agenda, and proving to be an invaluable framework for shaping priorities and constructive dialogue between Officers and FBU representatives.

Now in its second iteration, the Agenda has provided a clear prioritisation for the FBU to bring forward critical issues that impact both operational effectiveness and workforce wellbeing. 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.

One of the most significant achievements this year has been the introduction of enhanced maternity and parental entitlements, delivering up to 52 weeks of provision, which is a milestone that reflects a joint commitment to creating a better working environment for all staff.

This change is just one example that demonstrates how constructive dialogue between Officers and Representatives can lead to meaningful improvements that support both our people and the communities we serve.

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**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.

**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:**

None arising directly from this report.

**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:**

This report is co-authored by Officers and the FBU Brigade Secretary. Therefore, requiring principal consultation and sign-off at both a senior leadership and FBU Brigade Committee level.

The Update report was approved for submission to the 10 June 2026 Fire Authority by the FBU (Buckinghamshire Branch) Brigade Committee at its meetings of January and April 2026, and the BFRS Strategic Leadership Board on 18 May 2026.

**Background papers:**

<https://bucksfire.gov.uk/wp-content/uploads/2024/11/FIRE-AUTHORITY-SUMMONS-AND-AGENDA-11-DECEMBER-2024-min.pdf>

<https://bucksfire.gov.uk/wp-content/uploads/2026/01/FIRE-AUTHORITY-AGENDA-AND-REPORTS-11-FEBRUARY-2026.pdf>

<https://www.fbu.org.uk/campaigns/firefighters-manifesto-our-service-our-future>

The Fire Brigades Union (National) Firefighter Manifesto 2023

| Appendix | Title                                                               | Protective Marking      |
|----------|---------------------------------------------------------------------|-------------------------|
| 1        | Member Update on the Fire Brigades Union Improvement Agenda 2025/26 | Not Protectively Marked |
| 2        | Buckinghamshire FBU Improvement Agenda 2025                         | Not Protectively Marked |
| 3        | Buckinghamshire FBU Improvement Framework 2025 – 2030               | Not Protectively Marked |

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# **Member Update on the Fire Brigades Union Improvement Agenda 2025/26**



## **Report co-authored by:**

**Mitch Wallace - FBU Brigade Secretary**

**Simon Tuffley - Deputy Chief Fire Officer**

**May 2026**



## Contents

### Executive Summary

1. Fight for 52
  2. Training
  3. UCLAN Mental Health Research Project
  4. Skills Payments
  5. Day Crewing
  6. Standard Crewing
  7. CRMP – Growth, No Cuts
  8. High Wycombe
  9. Employee Benefits Package
  10. Incident Welfare
- ### Conclusion

## **Executive Summary**

This report provides an update on the Fire Brigades Union (FBU) Improvement Agenda 2025/26 (Agenda) which continues to serve as a cornerstone for collaboration between Buckinghamshire Fire & Rescue Service (BFRS) Officers and FBU representatives.

The Agenda sets out FBU priorities aimed at improving operational effectiveness and workforce wellbeing, with many of these aligned to Community Risk Management Plan (CRMP) objectives.

One of the most significant achievements this year has been the introduction of enhanced maternity and parental entitlements, delivering up to 52 weeks of provision, which is a milestone that reflects a joint commitment to creating a better working environment for all staff. This change demonstrates how constructive dialogue can lead to meaningful improvements that support both our people and the communities we serve.

Training has also been a major focus, with particular emphasis on water rescue capability. Funding has been approved for Module 2 training to be delivered in a controlled, purpose-built environment from 2026/27, reducing exposure risks from increasing river pollution and ensuring skills are maintained to the highest standard. Alongside this, the Westcott Training Facility project continues to progress, representing a significant investment in modern, safe, and accessible training infrastructure.

Work is scheduled throughout the CRMP lifecycle to further strengthen the Day Crewing model, following establishment levels at all Day Crewing Stations being increased during 2025/26. Planned further improvements include potential housing investment, policy reviews, and closer integration with on-call arrangements to ensure sustainability and operational flexibility of the Day Crewing system.

Mental health and inclusion have also been prioritised, with full support for the FBU's research programme with the University of Central Lancashire (UCLAN), the creation of a Wellness, Accessibility, Neurodiversity, and Disability (WAND) network, and the further development of professional supervision across key roles.

Estate and fleet improvements are advancing, including a full appraisal of High Wycombe Fire Station and measures to improve incident welfare, supported by

plans for a dedicated welfare appliance. At the same time, the Service has modernised its employee benefits offer to strengthen staff support, ensuring the Service becomes more competitive and supportive of staff needs.

Next year, the FBU has agreed to align future iterations of its Agenda with the timescales of the CRMP, ensuring that priorities remain strategically focused and deliverable over the next four years. While challenges remain, the constructive relationships built through this process give confidence that we are moving forward together, with a shared commitment to continuous improvement.

## **1. Fight for 52**

Call for improvement

*Buckinghamshire Fire Brigades Union has been calling for increased maternity provision since March 2018, in recognition of the support our female members need, and the added risks of our occupation, when it comes to fertility & breastfeeding. We have been frustrated by the lack of progress in this area and assert our call for 52 weeks maternity provision to be implemented without delay.*

*To supplement this, we would like to see a review of our return-to-work program and documentation, as well as pathways supported for alternate duties, to supplement recognised breastfeeding guidance. [Fight for 52 | Fire Brigades Union](#)*

### **Agreed Update**

Both the FBU and BFRS officers recognise the importance of creating a better working environment that supports employees during key life stages. Historically, provisions for maternity, adoption, and parental leave were limited, and feedback highlighted the need for a more inclusive and supportive approach to improve wellbeing and retention.

Actions Completed

In September 2025, the Maternity, Adoption and Parental Entitlements Procedure was approved, marking a significant step toward creating a supportive and inclusive workplace. Key enhancements include:

- Enhanced Maternity/Adoption Pay: Eligible employees now receive full pay for 45 weeks, with the potential to extend to 52 weeks when annual leave and public holidays are factored in.
- Immediate Access from Day One of Employment to:
  - Maternity/adoption support leave (paternity leave)
  - Parental bereavement leave
  - Unpaid parental leave
- New Guidance and Support covering:
  - Neonatal care
  - Pregnancy loss (before and after 24 weeks)
  - Breastfeeding, with the parent retaining the choice to undertake operational duties
  - Reasonable paid leave for foster carers
- Stronger Employment Protections: Clearer safeguards against redundancy for pregnant employees and new parents.

#### Planned Actions / Next Steps

- A full review of the procedure will be conducted following the first live case to ensure the policy is practical, effective, and aligned with employee needs.
- A further review of the return to work process to be undertaken
- Additional awareness sessions will be delivered to managers and staff to embed understanding of the new entitlements.
- Monitoring and reporting mechanisms will be introduced to track uptake and identify any gaps in implementation.

#### Impact / Benefits

These changes demonstrate BFRS's commitment to being a family-friendly employer, improving staff wellbeing, retention, and morale. They also support

equality objectives, ensuring employees feel valued and supported during critical life stages.

Agreed Status: Complete (and subject to further review)

## **2. Training**

Call for improvement

*We welcome the positive steps taking place around Westcott and in seeking a dedicated training venue for our staff, but far more is to be done in this area. We continue to be at the hands of third-party providers, with costs increasing, quality reducing and competing pressures rendering our access more and more difficult.*

*With the roll out of a new training strategy, we need the correct infrastructure in place to ensure effectiveness of this approach, as well as ensuring a manageable distribution of work within our teams. We call on BFRS to:*

- Increase the training team establishment and introduce at least another 2 additional area trainers.*
- To secure access to additional hot fire training venues*
- Ensure our water training venues are fit for purpose, with safety being paramount. If this cannot be done, all training must be moved to a controlled environment.*
- An increase in paid hours for training for on call members of staff and a review of skillset requirements*

### **Agreed Update**

Training provision has historically relied on third-party providers, creating challenges around cost, quality, and availability. The FBU and BFRS have recognised the need for a robust internal training infrastructure to ensure operational competence, safety, and professional development.

Actions Completed

- Training Team Establishment: The team was reviewed and strengthened in 2024/25 with the reintroduction of an Incident Command Training and Assessment team, improving command capability and resilience. However a

wider capacity review is required to ensure long term adequate provision of training resources.

- Hot Fire Training Access: The current contract with the Fire Service College continues to provide realistic fire scenarios, ensuring compliance with national standards while plans for a local facility progress, acknowledging that current arrangements pose difficulties regarding access in relation to re-assessment timescales.
- Water Training Venues: New contaminants management guidance has been implemented for water rescue training. All risk assessments have been collaboratively reviewed by Health & Safety, Service Delivery, and the FBU, significantly reducing exposure risks while maintaining realism.
- Module 2 Water Rescue Training has transitioned to a controlled, purpose-built environment, limiting exposure to polluted watercourses and safeguarding firefighter health. Staff trained to Module 3 (Newport Pagnell and Beaconsfield) still maintain skills every month in local water courses, and this is closely monitored.

#### Planned Actions / Next Steps

- Westcott Training Facility: The next review of training team establishment will align with the Westcott project, currently subject to planning approval. This facility aims to provide dedicated hot fire and specialist training within the county, reducing reliance on external providers.
- Infrastructure Development: Investment will focus on creating safe, modern training environments for all disciplines, including water rescue, technical rescue, and command training.
- On-Call Training Improvements: Explore increased paid hours and skillset reviews for on-call staff to ensure parity and competence.

#### Impact / Benefits

These measures will deliver a more professional and adaptive training framework that prioritises firefighter health without compromising operational readiness. The collaborative approach between officers and the FBU ensures training provision

meets both operational and welfare needs, supporting long-term workforce resilience.

Status: Progressing

### **3. UCLAN Mental Health Research Project**

Call for improvement

*The FBU is conducting a scientific study into mental health within the fire & rescue sector, similar to our pioneering work with DECON, assisted by the University of Central Lancashire (UCLAN). In support of this, we urge BFRS to:*

- *Offer full support to facilitate the research program, including time for staff to participate.*
- *Review and improve our current offering for those suffering from mental health conditions*
- *Improve understanding and facilitation of reasonable adjustments*
- *Ensure adequate recognition of mental health conditions being occupational injuries*
- *Professionally qualified welfare support*

#### **Agreed Update**

Mental health remains a critical area of focus within the fire and rescue sector, with increasing recognition of the unique pressures faced by operational staff. The FBU, in partnership with the University of Central Lancashire (UCLAN), initiated a scientific study to better understand mental health challenges and inform sector-wide improvements.

Actions Completed

- Research Programme Support: BFRS fully supported the UCLAN study, promoting participation through an article on the Service intranet and allowing staff time to complete the survey.
- Wellness, Accessibility, Neurodiversity, and Disability (WAND) network: Introduced, and championed by a Director, this network reports into the

Culture and Ethics Steering Group and serves as a platform for improving mental health and inclusion.

- Neurodiversity Training: Delivered across the Service to raise awareness and improve understanding of diverse needs.
- Professional Supervision: is being further developed across a range of roles to provide structured support and guidance for staff wellbeing.
- Guidance and Policy Updates: New guidance on reasonable adjustments and neurodiversity introduced, ensuring managers and staff have clear frameworks for support.
- Wellbeing Offer Review: A full review of the Service's wellbeing provision is underway to identify gaps and strengthen support mechanisms.

#### Planned Actions / Next Steps

- Complete the wellbeing review and implement recommendations for enhanced mental health support.
- Further develop the WAND Network's remit
- Continue collaboration with UCLAN to share findings and integrate evidence-based practices into policy and training.

#### Impact / Benefits

These actions demonstrate a proactive approach to mental health and inclusion, improving staff resilience, reducing stigma, and adopting a culture of openness and support. The introduction of professional supervision and neurodiversity training ensures that wellbeing is embedded into everyday practice.

Agreed Status: Progressing

## **4. Skills Payments**

Call for improvement

*Buckinghamshire Fire Brigades union applauds the approach some services have taken, in recognising and rewarding staff who take on additional responsibilities,*

*ensuring specialist skills and crewing of specialist vehicles are available to our communities. To that end we call on BFRS to enter negotiations to:*

- Set a timeframe and anticipated completion period for implementation*
- Agree upon an appropriate rate and associated terms and conditions*
- Make provision within future budgets*

#### Agreed Update

The FBU has highlighted the importance of recognising and rewarding staff who take on additional responsibilities, particularly those maintaining specialist skills and crewing specialist vehicles. While some services have implemented structured skills payment schemes, BFRS has yet to enter negotiations in this area.

#### Actions Completed

- An allowances review is currently underway to assess existing provisions and identify gaps.
- As the sector explores nationally revised pay structures for firefighters, Officers are mindful that this may influence local implementation.

#### Planned Actions / Next Steps

- Await outcomes of the national pay structure review to ensure alignment with sector-wide standards.
- Once national guidance is clear, initiate local negotiations to:
  - Set a timeframe and anticipated completion period for implementation.
  - Agree upon appropriate rates and associated terms and conditions.
  - Make provision within future budgets to support sustainability.

#### Impact / Benefits

Introducing skills payments where appropriate will incentivise staff to maintain specialist competencies, improve appliance availability, and enhance operational resilience. It will also support retention by recognising the additional responsibilities undertaken by firefighters, beyond the current and future role of a firefighter.

Agreed Status: On Hold (pending national pay structure outcomes)

## 5. Day Crewing

Call for improvement

*Understanding the importance of our day crewing stations in terms of community value and cost effectiveness cannot be understated. However, a number of ongoing issues need to be addressed, to ensure its longevity and future success. The following measures should be undertaken and reviewed, before the end of 2025:*

- *A full review of policies and procedures specific to the day crewing system.*
- *Investment in housing stock*
- *A return to a minimum of 12 substantive positions at each station, with equalization of rank structures and development pathways*
- *Resolving the compensatory grant issue*
- *Resolve the leave gap anomaly as well as clear guidance for booking off during on-call hours*

Agreed Update

Day crewing remains a critical component of BFRS's response and resilience model, providing effective coverage and maintaining operational capability in key areas. However, several issues require attention to ensure the long-term sustainability and effectiveness of this model, including housing provision, staffing levels, and clarity of policies and working arrangements.

Actions Completed

- A light review of day crewing policy has been undertaken through staff consultation, with a full review scheduled for future years.
- Investment in housing stock has been approved by the Fire Authority as part of the CRMP. This will be explored in year's two and three of the plan to explore improving accommodation for day-crewed staff.
- Officers have reviewed and restructured the flexi-firefighter establishment, ensuring day-crewed stations now operate with a minimum of 12 substantive

positions per station, supported by equal skills and qualifications across each watch.

- The compensatory grant issue under the Grey Book has been explored. While a disagreement remains on interpretation, this will be incorporated into the full day crewing review planned for year three of the CRMP.

#### Planned Actions / Next Steps

- Complete the full review of day crewing policies and procedures, including clarity on booking off during on-call hours and addressing the leave gap anomaly.
- Continue housing investment as scheduled in the CRMP annual plan process.
- Explore opportunities for closer integration between on-call and day-crewed personnel, improving flexibility and operational resilience.
- Factor compensatory grant considerations into the broader review to ensure fairness and compliance.

#### Impact / Benefits

These actions will strengthen the sustainability of the day crewing model, improve staff welfare through better housing and clearer policies, and enhance operational capability by ensuring consistent staffing and skills across stations.

Agreed Status: Progressing

## 6. Standard Crewing

Call for improvement

*Riding appliances with 4 (minimum crewing) has become a norm in Buckinghamshire, reducing our operational effectiveness in resolving incidents. This practice can pose a significant risk to the public and firefighters, in being able to implement safety critical roles and operating safe systems of work.*

*Standard crewing should be the gold standard we strive to achieve, and we would like to see plans in place to address this over the coming years, with:*

- *A prioritisation toward maintaining 5, especially in more remote locations of Buckinghamshire*
- *An evaluation of our establishment number, forecasting any increases required to realise this aim.*
- *Stopping the practice of dropping appliances crewed at 5 to 4, to back fill on call appliances.*

## **Agreed Update**

Maintaining five firefighters on an appliance is recognised as the gold standard for operational effectiveness and resilience. However, historical financial constraints and establishment levels have led to a long-held practice of riding with four, which can impact capability, flexibility and resilience.

### **Actions Completed**

- Officers and FBU representatives agree on the benefits of riding five and endorsed this as the aspirational standard for the Service where crewing allows.
- Measures have been implemented to reduce the frequency of wholetime standbys being deployed to on-call stations, although this option remains available when operational necessity dictates.
- The Service has prioritised the availability of specialist vehicles, actively exploring strategies to maintain these resources without compromising frontline appliance crewing.

### **Planned Actions / Next Steps**

- Conduct a comprehensive evaluation of establishment numbers, by developing a data-driven approach to determine actual operational requirements. This review will address the historical reliance on a 300-person establishment, which was primarily finance-driven rather than needs-based.
- Explore options to crew above four riders more frequently, while recognising that progress will be dependent on budget availability.

- Review operational leave guidance to ensure fair and practical leave allocation, reducing reliance on overtime and flattening peak leave periods to maintain adequate crewing levels

#### Impact / Benefits

Improving crewing levels will enhance operational resilience, improve response capability, and ensure resources are more aligned with risk. A scientific approach to establishment planning will support long-term sustainability and service delivery.

Status: Progressing

## 7. CRMP – Growth, No Cuts

Call for improvement

*Moving forward, the CRMP should be used as a platform to grow our service, with the aim of better providing for our communities and supporting firefighters within Buckinghamshire. We expect Buckinghamshire Fire & Rescue service to be forthcoming with any proposed changes, with due regard for any proposal which could affect the terms and conditions of our members.*

*We would expect that the focus should remain on recruitment and retention. That our on call stations will be prioritised as an area of growth, with investment and all practicable measures taken to increase appliance availability.*

*As a union, we hope to work collaboratively to improve standards, yet will stand in opposition towards any cuts in our service or the fire and rescue sector.*

*To realise our collective ambitions, investment is sorely needed, and we urge BFRS to seek:*

- *A 3-year settlement*
- *Precept flexibility*
- *Increased Central government funding*

#### Agreed Update

BFRS and the FBU agree that the CRMP should be used as a constructive platform to support improvement. The focus should now be on positive delivery, with a clear

emphasis on recruitment and retention, prioritising on-call stations for future investment and taking all practicable steps to improve appliance availability. Both parties are committed to working collaboratively to raise standards, support firefighters, and deliver better outcomes for our communities. Achieving these shared aims will require sustained investment, including pursuit of greater effectiveness, greater precept flexibility, and increased central government funding.

### **Actions Completed**

The Chief Fire Officer (CFO) has fully aligned with the FBU's position, taking proactive steps to advocate for sustainable funding. This included writing to local MPs during the national fair funding consultation and ensuring that BFRS made formal representations on the investment issues raised by the FBU. These actions demonstrate a strong, united front in lobbying for investment that protects service standards and supports future growth.

At a national level, the NFCC adopted a coordinated approach to improving fire service funding, addressing critical issues such as decontamination facilities and accessibility improvements. This alignment reinforces the sector-wide commitment to modernisation and firefighter welfare.

### **Planned Actions / Next Steps**

Officers and employee representatives have developed a deeper understanding of the challenges surrounding the on-call system. A focus on continued good industrial relations through collaborative working in the on call working group is a priority going forward.

This commitment ensures that improvements to the on-call service remain a priority for all parties throughout the lifetime of the CRMP.

Agreed Status: Progressing

## **8. High Wycombe**

Call for improvement

*Whilst some minor remedial works have taken place over the last year at High Wycombe fire station, longer term planning is required to address some substantial issues at this station. Major works are required to ensure that this station is fit for*

*purpose and in keeping with a modern fire and rescue service. We assert our view that the station requires either extensive building work and development or, if this is not possible, a full rebuild. This should take account of the following:*

- Response times in the short term should not be delayed as far as is reasonably practicable. Longer term, we should see no reduction in response from High Wycombe.*
- Any plans should fully recognise and implement DECON recommendations*
- Station welfare provision should be a top priority*
- Expansion and future proofing should be considered*
- Employee engagement will be inclusive and factored into decision making*

### **Agreed Update**

During Year 1 of the CRMP, the Finance and Assets Directorate commissioned a full site appraisal of High Wycombe Fire Station to assess its suitability for long-term operational needs. This appraisal will bring forward detailed options for either major refurbishment or a complete rebuild, ensuring the station meets modern standards and supports long-term requirements.

The appraisal incorporates all considerations highlighted in the Improvement Agenda, including:

- Compliance with DECON recommendations to improve firefighter health and safety.
- Enhanced welfare facilities to support wellbeing and dignity at work.
- Future-proofing for expansion, ensuring the station can accommodate evolving operational requirements.
- Maintaining response times and operational capability throughout any redevelopment process.
- Inclusive employee engagement, ensuring staff input shapes the final design and functionality.

This work forms part of the Service's strategic commitment to modernising its estate and aligning infrastructure with the demands of a contemporary fire and rescue service fit for the future.

Status: Progressing

## **9. Employee Benefits Package**

Call for improvement

*A wider scheme of employee benefits is essential to us recruiting and retaining members of staff within Buckinghamshire. Whilst a number of academic studies highlight the importance of workplace culture, and this is steadily improving, they also note that core wage is no longer the primary area of focus. A wider scheme of benefits, inclusive of reward and recognition packages is essential to us keeping step with more progressive Fire & Rescue services, whilst competing with the private sector. The following should be formally costed over the next year, with plans for introduction considered:*

- *A waiting allowance, to address the cost of living*
- *Private Medical Insurance*
- *Milestone recognition and rewards schemes*
- *Costs covered for childcare to attend training*
- *The cap on loss of earnings for on call training removed*
- *Broader approach to pre-tax schemes/salary sacrifice*

### **Agreed Update**

Recruitment and retention are a key focus for the Service, and a competitive benefits package is essential to attract and retain talent. While core pay is important, modern workforce expectations increasingly focus on broader benefits, flexibility, and recognition.

Actions Completed

- An employee benefits review was initiated as part of the Year 1 CRMP annual plan, led by the People Directorate.

- Salary sacrifice schemes are being reviewed, with access to benefits such as private medical insurance and other pre-tax options approved on a two-year trial period.
- The loss of earnings cap for on-call firefighters has been factored into the scope of the On-Call Improvement Programme, ensuring consideration is given to fairer compensation for training and development.
- A Reward and Recognition project is underway to enhance milestone recognition and introduce structured reward schemes, supporting staff engagement and morale.

#### Planned Actions / Next Steps

- Complete the benefits review and develop a comprehensive benefits framework, including costing childcare support for training, milestone rewards, and broader salary sacrifice options.
- Evaluate uptake of additional benefits such as private healthcare enhancements, and ensure flexible working arrangements align with sector best practice.
- Officers and the FBU recognise the issues presented by high house prices and the cost of living, and also that a weighting allowance incurs a significant cost to the Authority that would require specific funding.

#### Impact / Benefits

A modernised benefits package will improve staff wellbeing, support retention, and position BFRS as an employer of choice within the sector. Enhanced recognition and flexible benefits will strengthen organisational culture and workforce resilience.

Status: Progressing

## 10. Incident Welfare

Call for improvement

*Currently, our incident welfare provision is lacking and in need of redress.*

*Firefighters can be in attendance at incidents for long durations, without access to*

*adequate changing, sanitation or food provision. To this end, the following should be considered for inclusion, moving forward:*

- *Our own dedicated special appliance for welfare*
- *A review of our major incident welfare provision*
- *Interim measures for changing/toilets/sanitation*
- *A proactive approach towards rotation/reliefs at incidents, to support current and developing policies and procedures*
- *Food and nutrition improvement*

### **Agreed Update:**

Incident welfare provision has historically been limited, leaving firefighters without adequate facilities during prolonged incidents. Feedback from operational staff and the FBU highlighted the need for improved arrangements to support dignity, wellbeing, and resilience on the incident ground.

### **Actions Completed**

- Essential measures have been implemented, ensuring basic welfare provision is now in place at incidents.
- The Thrive Leadership Programme is being piloted, incorporating a dedicated section on food and nutrition to promote wellbeing.
- Feedback from watches regarding incident ground feeding has been collected and is currently being explored to inform future improvements.

Officers have committed to purchasing a dedicated specialist appliance for incident welfare and dignity.

### **Planned Actions / Next Steps**

- Finalise the requirements of the first dedicated welfare vehicle, ensuring it meets operational and wellbeing requirements.
- Develop a comprehensive welfare strategy, including sanitation, changing facilities, hydration, and nutrition standards for major and protracted incidents.

- Continue engagement with staff to refine feeding arrangements and explore further solutions for welfare provision.
- Integrate welfare considerations into operational planning to ensure consistency across all incident types.

#### Impact / Benefits

These improvements will significantly enhance firefighter wellbeing, reduce fatigue, and maintain operational effectiveness during extended incidents. A dedicated welfare appliance and structured welfare strategy will demonstrate the Service's commitment to dignity and health on the incident ground.

Status: Progressing

### **Conclusion**

The FBU Improvement Agenda has proven to be an invaluable framework for shaping priorities and constructive dialogue between Officers and FBU representatives.

Now in its second iteration, the Agenda has provided a clear prioritisation for the FBU to bring forward critical issues that impact both operational effectiveness and workforce wellbeing.

By aligning on these priorities wherever possible, we have been able to move beyond transactional discussions and instead focus on collaborative problem-solving, ensuring that improvements are meaningful, sustainable, and reflective of the needs of our people and the communities we serve.

This second update report is co-authored by Officers and the FBU Brigade Secretary. It demonstrates the positive relationships and mutual respect that has developed through this process. The joint authorship signifies a transparent and honest approach, reinforcing that progress is not the responsibility of one party alone but a collective effort.

Much has been achieved over the course of this year, and where progress has been limited, this has primarily been due to constraints around capacity and resources, availability of funding, and the need to prioritise and align actions with other ongoing workstreams. Some items within the Agenda would require significant additional

financial investment, such as reintroducing standard crewing models or implementing regional weighting allowances. Officers and FBU representatives recognise that these ambitions cannot be achieved in the short term; however, they should remain on the table as part of the longer-term considerations for the Service.

Additionally, national negotiations relating to pay and reward are an influencing factor, and these external dependencies must be considered when assessing what can realistically be delivered locally.

Importantly, there are very few areas where Officers and Representatives disagree, which reinforces the strength of the collaborative relationship and shared commitment to achieving meaningful improvements.

While there is still work to do, and both parties do not always get it right, the constructive relationships built through this Agenda give confidence that we are moving in the right direction together.



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Executive Council member  
Steve Wright

Regional Secretary  
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## **Improvements Agenda 2025**

### **1. Fight for 52**

Buckinghamshire Fire Brigades Union has been calling for increased maternity provision since March 2018, in recognition of the support our female members need, and the added risks of our occupation, when it comes to fertility & breastfeeding. We have been frustrated by the lack of progress in this area and assert our call for 52 weeks maternity provision to be implemented without delay.

To supplement this, we would like to see a review of our return-to-work program and documentation, as well as pathways supported for alternate duties, to supplement recognised breastfeeding guidance.

[Fight for 52 | Fire Brigades Union](#)

### **2. Training**

We welcome the positive steps taking place around Westcott and in seeking a dedicated training venue for our staff, but far more is to be done in this area. We continue to be at the hands of third-party providers, with costs increasing, quality reducing and competing pressures rendering our access more and more difficult.

With the role out of a new training strategy, we need the correct infrastructure in place to ensure effectiveness of this approach, as well as ensuring a manageable distribution of work within our teams. We call on BFRS to:

- Increase the training team establishment and introduce at least another 2 additional area trainers.
- To secure access to additional hot fire training venues
- Ensure our water training venues are fit for purpose, with safety being paramount. If this cannot be done, all training must be moved to a controlled environment.
- An increase in paid hours for training for on call members of staff and a review of skillset requirements

### **3. UCLAN Mental Health Research Project**

The FBU is conducting a scientific study into mental health within the fire & rescue sector, similar to our pioneering work with DECON, assisted by the University of Central Lancashire (UCLAN). In support of this, we urge BFRS to:

- Offer full support to facilitate the research program, including time for staff to participate.
- Review and improve our current offering for those suffering from mental health conditions
- Improve understanding and facilitation of reasonable adjustments
- Ensure adequate recognition of mental health conditions being occupational injuries
- Professionally qualified welfare support

#### **4. Skills Payments**

Buckinghamshire Fire Brigades union applauds the approach some services have taken, in recognising and rewarding staff who take on additional responsibilities, ensuring specialist skills and crewing of specialist vehicles are available to our communities. To that end we call on BFRS to enter negotiations to:

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- A proactive approach towards rotation/reliefs at incidents, to support current and developing policies and procedures
- Food and nutrition improvement

**Brigade Committee**  
**Buckinghamshire Fire Brigades Union**



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# BUCKINGHAMSHIRE FBU IMPROVEMENT FRAMEWORK 2025-2030



## Version history

| <b>Version</b> | <b>Date</b> | <b>Author</b> | <b>Approved by</b> | <b>Summary of changes</b> |
|----------------|-------------|---------------|--------------------|---------------------------|
| <b>0.1</b>     | May 2026    | M. Wallace    | Brigade Committee  | Initial draft             |
| <b>0.2</b>     | May 2026    | M. Wallace    | Brigade Committee  | Language amendments       |
| <b>1.0</b>     | May 2026    | M. Wallace    | Brigade Committee  | FINAL version 2026/27     |

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# 1. Introduction

Buckinghamshire Fire Brigades Union (FBU) is committed to working constructively with the Buckinghamshire Fire and Rescue Service (BFRS) to support continuous improvement, firefighter safety, workforce wellbeing and effective service delivery to the public.

This Improvement Framework sets out the FBU's strategic priorities for the period 2025–2030 and aligns with the Community Risk Management Plan (CRMP) cycle.

The Framework builds upon previous annual Improvement Agendas submitted by the FBU and establishes a longer-term approach to workforce and service improvement, supported by annual priority plans.

The document is intended to:

- Support meaningful consultation and engagement.
- Identify key workforce and operational priorities.
- Promote firefighter and public safety.
- Contribute to service resilience and effectiveness.
- Support transparent and constructive industrial relations.

The Framework is not intended to replace existing consultation arrangements, policies or collective agreements, but to support and enhance strategic engagement over the life of the CRMP.

## 2. Relationship to Service Planning (including CRMP)

This framework operates alongside the Community Risk Management Plan (CRMP) and wider service planning processes.

- The CRMP defines statutory risk-based service delivery requirements.
- This framework defines workforce-led improvement priorities and organisational development needs.
- Alignment is achieved through shared planning timelines, not hierarchical dependency.
- Both frameworks are designed to operate in parallel to ensure operational coherence and delivery consistency.

## 3. Strategic Principles

The following principles underpin this Framework:

## Firefighter Safety

The health, safety and welfare of firefighters and control staff must remain a primary consideration in all areas of service delivery and organisational change.

## Public Safety

Improvement activity should contribute to effective emergency response, prevention, protection and community resilience.

## Meaningful Consultation

The FBU supports genuine engagement and consultation with representative bodies throughout the development and implementation of service change.

## Equality and Fairness

The Service should promote equality, inclusion, fairness and dignity across all areas of employment and progression.

## Evidence-Based Improvement

Improvement proposals should be informed by operational evidence, workforce experience, service performance, and identified risk.

# 4. Strategic Improvement Themes

## 4.1 Operational Response and Resilience

### Key Areas

- Appliance availability.
- Response standards.
- Crewing arrangements.
- Operational resilience.
- Cross-border attendance.
- Major incident preparedness.

### Strategic Aim

To maintain and improve safe, effective and resilient emergency response arrangements across the Service area.

## 4.2 Workforce Health, Safety and Wellbeing

### Key Areas

- Contaminant management.
- Occupational health.
- Mental health support.
- Welfare arrangements.
- Fatigue management.
- Safe systems of work.

### Strategic Aim

To strengthen firefighter and staff wellbeing through proactive health, safety and welfare measures.

## 4.3 Safe Staffing and Workforce Planning

### Key Areas

- Establishment levels.
- Recruitment.
- Retention.
- Succession planning.
- Abstraction levels.
- Overtime reliance.

### Strategic Aim

To support sustainable workforce planning and safe staffing arrangements across all functions of the Service.

## 4.4 Training, Competence and Professional Development

### Key Areas

- Protected training time.
- Instructor capacity.
- Competency assurance.
- Leadership development.
- Incident command.
- Risk-critical skills maintenance.

### Strategic Aim

To ensure all employees have access to effective training, development and competence maintenance.

## 4.5 Equality, Diversity and Inclusion

### Key Areas

- Workplace culture.
- Fair promotion processes.
- Inclusive recruitment.
- Reasonable adjustments.
- Facilities and welfare provision.
- Representation and engagement.

### Strategic Aim

To promote an inclusive workplace culture where all employees are treated fairly and with dignity and respect.

## 4.6 Prevention, Protection and Community Safety

### Key Areas

- Community safety capacity.
- Protection workload.
- Specialist skills.
- Integrated risk reduction activity.
- Resource pressures.

### Strategic Aim

To support effective prevention and protection activity while maintaining operational resilience.

## 4.7 Infrastructure, Fleet and Equipment

### Key Areas

- Station condition.
- Fleet replacement.
- PPE provision.
- Operational equipment.
- ICT and digital systems.
- Decontamination facilities.

### Strategic Aim

To ensure employees have safe, effective and appropriate equipment, facilities and infrastructure.

## 5. Strategic Objectives 2025–2030

- Improve appliance availability and operational resilience through sustainable crewing arrangements and effective workforce planning.
- Strengthen contaminant management arrangements and reduce exposure to operational contaminants.
- Improve recruitment, retention, and succession planning to maintain workforce stability and competence.
- Protect training time and improve access to risk-critical training and development.
- Support workforce wellbeing through enhanced occupational health, welfare and mental health arrangements.
- Promote equality, fairness and inclusion across all areas of employment and progression.
- Improve infrastructure, PPE, fleet and operational equipment provision across the Service.

## 6. Governance and Engagement

The Framework will be supported through regular engagement between the FBU and BFRS.

This may include:

- Formal consultation arrangements.
- Strategic workforce meetings.
- Health and safety structures.
- Policy consultation groups.
- Annual review meetings.

Both parties should seek to maintain constructive dialogue focused on workforce wellbeing, operational effectiveness and public safety.

## 7. Annual Priorities – Improvement Agenda

This Framework will be supported by annual Improvement Agenda documents covering each reporting year during the life of the CRMP.

The yearly Improvement Agenda documents contained within the appendices will:

- Identify specific areas for focus and engagement.
- Reflect emerging risks and workforce concerns.
- Support implementation of strategic objectives.
- Identify achievable short-term improvements.
- Provide a mechanism for review and accountability.

Annual priorities may be informed by:

- Operational learning.
- Workforce feedback.
- Service performance data.
- Inspection findings.
- Health and safety concerns.
- National developments.

## 8. Monitoring and Review

Progress will be monitored through:

- Regular performance and assurance reporting.
- Workforce and operational feedback mechanisms.
- Health, safety, and wellbeing data analysis.
- Training, competence, and operational assurance tracking.
- Internal audit and review processes.

The framework will be reviewed annually to ensure continued relevance, effectiveness, and alignment with organisational priorities and workforce needs.

## 9. Conclusion

This FBU Improvement Framework establishes a clear, structured, and workforce-informed approach to continuous improvement across Buckinghamshire Fire & Rescue Service for 2025–2030.

It ensures that improvement activity is grounded in firefighter safety, professional standards, workforce wellbeing, and operational effectiveness, while remaining aligned to the Service's planning cycle.

The framework supports a consistent and collaborative approach to delivering meaningful, measurable, and sustainable improvement across the organisation.

# Appendices

## Appendix A – 2025/26 Improvement Agenda

### 1. Fight for 52

Buckinghamshire Fire Brigades Union has been calling for increased maternity provision since March 2018, in recognition of the support our female members need, and the added risks of our occupation, when it comes to fertility & breastfeeding. We have been frustrated by the lack of progress in this area and assert our call for 52 weeks maternity provision to be implemented without delay.

To supplement this, we would like to see a review of our return-to-work program and documentation, as well as pathways supported for alternate duties, to supplement recognised breastfeeding guidance.

[Fight for 52 | Fire Brigades Union](#)

### 2. Training

We welcome the positive steps taking place around Westcott and in seeking a dedicated training venue for our staff, but far more is to be done in this area. We continue to be at the hands of third-party providers, with costs increasing, quality reducing and competing pressures rendering our access more and more difficult.

With the role out of a new training strategy, we need the correct infrastructure in place to ensure effectiveness of this approach, as well as ensuring a manageable distribution of work within our teams. We call on BFRS to:

- Increase the training team establishment and introduce at least another 2 additional area trainers.
- To secure access to additional hot fire training venues.
- Ensure our water training venues are fit for purpose, with safety being paramount. If this cannot be done, all training must be moved to a controlled environment.
- An increase in paid hours for training for on call members of staff and a review of skillset requirements.

### 3. UCLAN Mental Health Research Project

The FBU is conducting a scientific study into mental health within the fire & rescue sector, similar to our pioneering work with DECON, assisted by the University of Central Lancashire (UCLAN). In support of this, we urge BFRS to:

- Offer full support to facilitate the research program, including time for staff to participate.
- Review and improve our current offering for those suffering from mental health conditions.

- Improve understanding and facilitation of reasonable adjustments.
- Ensure adequate recognition of mental health conditions being occupational injuries.
- Professionally qualified welfare support.

#### **4. Skills Payments**

Buckinghamshire Fire Brigades union applauds the approach some services have taken, in recognising and rewarding staff who take on additional responsibilities, ensuring specialist skills and crewing of specialist vehicles are available to our communities. To that end we call on BFRS to enter negotiations to:

- Set a timeframe and anticipated completion period for implementation.
- Agree upon an appropriate rate and associated terms and conditions.
- Make provision within future budgets.

#### **5. Day Crewing**

Understanding the importance of our day crewing stations in terms of community value and cost effectiveness cannot be understated. However, a number of ongoing issues need to be addressed, to ensure its longevity and future success. The following measures should be undertaken and reviewed, before the end of 2025:

- A full review of policies and procedures specific to the day crewing system.
- Investment in housing stock.
- A return to a minimum of 12 substantive positions at each station, with equalisation of rank structures and development pathways.
- Resolving the compensatory grant issue.
- Resolve the leave gap anomaly as well as clear guidance for booking off during on-call hours.

#### **6. Standard Crewing**

Riding appliances with 4 (minimum crewing) has become a norm in Buckinghamshire, reducing our operational effectiveness in resolving incidents. This practice can pose a significant risk to the public and firefighters, in being able to implement safety critical roles and operating safe systems of work.

Standard crewing should be the gold standard we strive to achieve, and we would like to see plans in place to address this over the coming years, with:

- A prioritisation toward maintaining 5, especially in more remote locations of Buckinghamshire.
- An evaluation of our establishment number, forecasting any increases required to realise this aim.
- Stopping the practice of dropping appliances crewed at 5 to 4, to back fill on call appliances.

#### **7. CRMP – Growth, No Cuts**

Moving forward, the CRMP should be used as a platform to grow our service, with the aim of better providing for our communities and supporting firefighters within

Buckinghamshire. We expect Buckinghamshire Fire & Rescue service to be forthcoming with any proposed changes, with due regard for any proposal which could affect the terms and conditions of our members.

We would expect that the focus should remain on recruitment and retention. That our on-call stations will be prioritised as an area of growth, with investment and all practicable measures taken to increase appliance availability.

As a union, we hope to work collaboratively to improve standards, yet will stand in opposition towards any cuts in our service or the fire and rescue sector.

To realise our collective ambitions, investment is sorely needed, and we urge BFRS to seek:

- A 3-year settlement.
- Precept flexibility.
- Increased Central government funding.

## **8. High Wycombe**

Whilst some minor remedial works have taken place over the last year at High Wycombe fire station, longer term planning is required to address some substantial issues at this station. Major works are required to ensure that this station is fit for purpose and in keeping with a modern fire and rescue service. We assert our view that the station requires either extensive building work and development or, if this is not possible, a full rebuild. This should take account of the following:

- Response times in the short term should not be delayed as far as is reasonably practicable. Longer term, we should see no reduction in response from High Wycombe.
- Any plans should fully recognise and implement DECON recommendations.
- Station welfare provision should be a top priority.
- Expansion and future proofing should be considered.
- Employee engagement will be inclusive and factored into decision making.

## **9. Employee Benefits Package**

A wider scheme of employee benefits is essential to us recruiting and retaining members of staff within Buckinghamshire. Whilst a number of academic studies highlight the importance of workplace culture, and this is steadily improving, they also note that core wage is no longer the primary area of focus. A wider scheme of benefits, inclusive of reward and recognition packages is essential to us keeping step with more progressive Fire & Rescue services, whilst competing with the private sector. The following should be formally costed over the next year, with plans for introduction considered:

- A waiting allowance, to address the cost of living.
- Private Medical Insurance.
- Milestone recognition and rewards schemes.
- Costs covered for childcare to attend training.
- The cap on loss of earnings for on call training removed.
- Broader approach to pre-tax schemes/salary sacrifice.

## **10. Incident Welfare**

Currently, our incident welfare provision is lacking and in need of redress. Firefighters can be in attendance at incidents for long durations, without access to adequate changing, sanitation or food provision. To this end, the following should be considered for inclusion, moving forward:

- Our own dedicated special appliance for welfare.
- A review of our major incident welfare provision.
- Interim measures for changing/toilets/sanitation.
- A proactive approach towards rotation/reliefs at incidents, to support current and developing policies and procedures.
- Food and nutrition improvement.

## Appendix B – 2026/27 Improvement Agenda

### 1. Parental Leave

Review and improve parental leave and carers leave provisions to better support employees with family and caring responsibilities by:

- Co-creating enhanced parental leave arrangements beyond the current two-week paternity provision.
- Recognising the additional pressures experienced following complicated births, emergency deliveries, or non-natural births.
- Introducing and implementing meaningful carers leave arrangements for employees with dependants.
- Reviewing existing unpaid leave provisions where they create financial hardship or act as a barrier to accessing support.

The inclusion of the above measures will generate a more supportive and equitable leave framework that improves employee wellbeing, retention, and workforce resilience.

### 2. Training

Strengthen operational training delivery, safety controls, and workforce competence arrangements by:

- Allowing meaningful FBU involvement in the implementation of the planned in-house training facility.
- Explore controlled-environment training delivery for MOD3 SWRT MOS training, aligned to the existing MOD2 approach.
- Further reducing employee exposure to contaminated water sources during training activity.
- Thoroughly reviewing the Training Department establishment, structure, and resource levels ahead of the transition to Westcott.
- Reviewing paid training hours and MOS arrangements for retained employees to ensure operational skills can be maintained effectively.

These measures will result in a safer, more sustainable, and operationally effective training model that supports workforce competence and reduces avoidable training-related risk.

### 3. Welfare support

Improve employee welfare provision through the establishment of dedicated and professionally qualified support arrangements by:

- Reviewing the current welfare support model and resource allocation.
- Implementing of a full-time welfare support function.
- Ensuring welfare provision is delivered by appropriately qualified personnel.
- Improving accessibility, consistency, and responsiveness of welfare support services.

- Continuing to commit to work with local FBU representatives to implement UCLan findings from the ongoing mental health research project.

The above measures will result in an outcome that provides a more robust and effective welfare provision that better supports employee wellbeing, early intervention, and long-term workforce resilience.

#### **4. Skills Payments**

Develop a clear and structured approach to skills payments following the outcome of national pay reform discussions and associated guidance by:

- Monitoring and reviewing the outcomes of ongoing national pay reform activity relating to skills payments.
- Establishing a local implementation framework once national guidance and parameters are confirmed.
- Entering into local negotiations regarding implementation arrangements.
- Agreeing realistic implementation timescales and anticipated completion periods.
- Developing agreed payment rates and associated terms and conditions where applicable.
- Ensuring any local arrangements are transparent, equitable, and operationally sustainable.
- Ensuring appropriate financial provision is considered within future budget planning processes.

Buckinghamshire FBU must make it clear that no local agreement or interim arrangement will undermine, prejudice, or conflict with the outcomes and intent of national pay reform negotiations.

#### **5. Day Crewing**

Recognising the significant operational and community value delivered by day crewing stations, further work must continue during 2026/27 to address outstanding issues identified within the previous improvement cycle.

Building on progress already achieved, including the completion of an interim policy review and the restoration of a minimum of 12 substantive positions at each station, the following areas will remain priorities for continued development and resolution:

- Completion of a full review of policies and procedures relating specifically to the day crewing system.
- Exploration of investment opportunities relating to day crewing housing stock and accommodation standards.
- Continued support for consistent crewing structures, rank alignment, and development pathways across day crewing stations.
- Further review and resolution of compensatory grant arrangements as part of the wider policy review process.
- Review of the leave gap anomaly and development of clear and consistent guidance relating to booking off during on-call hours.

## **6. Standard Crewing**

Support the development of sustainable crewing arrangements that improve operational effectiveness, firefighter safety, and resilience across the Service.

The FBU position remains firm in recognising the importance of progressing toward standard crewing arrangements wherever reasonably practicable. It is acknowledged that current establishment levels and financial constraints remain significant barriers to implementation; however, continued progress and planning remain essential.

During 2026/27, the following activity must be prioritised:

- Completion of a data-led evaluation of current establishment numbers and operational demand requirements.
- Exploration of options to increase the number of appliances crewed above the minimum level of four riders.
- Continued prioritisation of maintaining five-person crews where operationally achievable, particularly within more remote areas of Buckinghamshire.
- Consideration of future workforce and financial planning requirements necessary to support longer-term crewing improvements.
- Reducing the practice of dropping appliances crewed at 5 to 4, to back fill retained appliances.

Prioritising standard crewing, where possible, will result in a more resilient and operationally effective crewing model that improves firefighter safety, supports safe systems of work, and provides a clearer evidence base for future workforce and funding decisions.

## **7. CRMP – Growth, Investment, & No Cuts**

The CRMP must support a collaborative approach to service growth, resilience, and long-term sustainability, with particular focus on strengthening retained availability and workforce capacity across Buckinghamshire.

The FBU recognises the importance of developing and strengthening operational capacity through investment, workforce growth, and improved resilience arrangements. The CRMP should continue to support sustainable development of the Service, with a focus on improving outcomes for communities and firefighters alike.

During 2026/27, the following areas will remain priorities:

- Investment and development of the retained workforce model to improve appliance availability, self-sustainability, and operational resilience.
- Collaborative work through the retained working group to review and improve recruitment, training, and retention processes.
- Identification and implementation of practical measures to support long-term retained sustainability and workforce growth.
- Continued engagement and consultation regarding any proposed changes with potential impact on employees.

- Ongoing collaborative approaches to lobbying and engagement relating to fire sector funding and investment requirements.
- Support for measures aimed at securing greater financial stability and long-term planning capability, including:
  - Preparing for future multi-year funding settlements.
  - Appropriate precept flexibility.
  - Increased central government investment in the fire and rescue sector.

## **8. High Wycombe**

Following agreement to proceed with refurbishment/redevelopment works, the 2026/27 focus will be on ensuring effective delivery, compliance, and workforce-informed design, while maintaining operational resilience throughout the works period.

The FBU aims to support the delivery of the refurbishment/redevelopment and long-term future-proofing of High Wycombe Fire Station to ensure it remains fit for purpose, compliant with modern operational standards, and capable of meeting evolving community and workforce needs.

Key priorities include:

- Delivery of refurbishment works in line with agreed programme timelines, ensuring minimal disruption to operational response capability.
- Maintenance of response times throughout the redevelopment period, ensuring no avoidable deterioration in emergency cover.
- Full implementation of DECON recommendations within design, layout, and operational processes.
- Enhancement of welfare facilities to meet modern standards and improve firefighter wellbeing.
- Future-proofing of station design to support expansion, changing operational demands, and evolving service requirements.
- Active and inclusive employee engagement to ensure staff input meaningfully informs final design and operational arrangements.

Providing that the lessons learnt from the BLH are factored into decision making, the High Wycombe refurbishment should result in a modernised, safe, and operationally effective fire station that meets DECON standards, improves welfare provision, maintains emergency response performance during works, and provides a long-term asset capable of supporting future service needs.

## **9. Employee Benefits Package**

Building on previous work and the agreed commitment to undertake a structured review and development of the employee benefits and reward package to strengthen recruitment, retention, and long-term workforce sustainability across Buckinghamshire Fire & Rescue Service, the 2026/27 focus will be on assessment, costing, and development of a comprehensive and competitive benefits offer.

Key areas of work include:

- Completion of a full review of the current employee benefits package, including benchmarking against comparable Fire & Rescue Services and relevant sectors.
- Evaluation of uptake, accessibility, and effectiveness of additional benefits and reward schemes – including the private medical insurance review.
- Formal costing and feasibility assessment of potential enhancements to the benefits package.
- Consideration of measures to support cost-of-living pressures and workforce retention.
- Review of recognition and reward mechanisms, including milestone-based recognition approaches.
- Assessment of support mechanisms for employees attending training, including childcare-related costs.
- Review of current arrangements relating to retained training and loss of earnings, including consideration of appropriate caps and fairness across duty systems.
- Exploration of wider salary sacrifice and pre-tax benefit schemes to improve flexibility and value to employees.
- Development of a prioritised options paper for future implementation, subject to affordability and consultation.

## **10. Incident Welfare**

Building on progress made during 2025/26, including the commitment to procure a dedicated welfare vehicle, and the collation of employee feedback on incident ground feeding arrangements, further development is required to embed a consistent and effective welfare standard across all operational activity.

The FBU calls on BFRS to strengthen incident welfare provision to ensure all operational personnel have access to appropriate welfare, hydration, nutrition, and sanitation support during prolonged and complex incidents.

The FBU would like to see the following prioritised during 2026/27:

- Delivery of a dedicated welfare vehicle to support incident ground welfare provision.
- Development and implementation of a comprehensive Incident Welfare Strategy covering sanitation, changing facilities, hydration, and nutrition standards for major and protracted incidents.
- A review and refinement of incident ground feeding arrangements, informed by employee feedback and operational learning.
- Consideration of improved systems for rotation and relief of crews at incidents to reduce fatigue and support safe systems of work.
- Continued development of interim and scalable welfare provision solutions to ensure consistent standards across incident types and durations.
- Ongoing evaluation of training and awareness initiatives relating to firefighter nutrition, wellbeing, and operational endurance, recognising mixed feedback on existing approaches.

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# Buckinghamshire & Milton Keynes Fire Authority

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**Meeting and date:** Fire Authority, 10 June 2026

**Report title:** 2026-2027 Annual Delivery Plan Update

**Lead Member:** Chairman of the Fire Authority

**Report sponsor:** Simon Tuffley, Deputy Chief Fire Officer

**Author and contact:** Anne-Marie Carter, Head of Service Improvement

**Action:** Noting

**Recommendations:**

It is recommended that the 2026-2027 Annual Delivery Plan Update be noted.

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**Executive summary:** This report provides Members with an overview of progress against the Annual Delivery Plan for 2026/27, viewed from a PMO assurance perspective. It focuses on our major projects, setting out what has been delivered this period, what is planned next, and where there are any emerging risks.

As this is the first quarter of the year, delivery activity is at an early stage. The focus during this period has been on mobilising projects, confirming scope and governance, and ensuring that plans are in place to support delivery over the year ahead.

There are currently 24 projects within the Annual Delivery Plan. These have been prioritised into tiers based on scale, risk and complexity, to ensure that they receive the appropriate level of oversight and support. This report provides detailed updates on the major projects, alongside a summary of key collaborative programmes.

Overall, the projects are progressing as expected for this stage of the year. The On-Call Improvement Programme has moved into delivery and remains on track. The High Wycombe Station Renovation is progressing through early planning and due diligence activity. The Local Training Facility continues to face challenges in relation to planning and timelines, and this remains an area of focus.

The report also highlights a number of collaborative programmes, including Fire Control replacement, PPE renewal and the Emergency Services Network, where we are working with partners to deliver longer-term improvements in capability and value for money.

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**Financial implications:** The Medium term financial plan (MTFP) factored in the 26/27 Annual plan so there are no direct financial implications arising from this paper.

Financial positions for individual major projects are set out within the attached highlight reports, and any future requests for additional funding or approval will be progressed through the established governance.

**Risk management:** Risks, issues and dependencies are actively managed through the PMO's project controls and are summarised in each major project highlight report. The report provides Members with visibility of any material exceptions and the mitigating actions in place.

**Legal implications:** There are no legal implications arising directly from this report. Any project-specific legal considerations will be addressed as part of the relevant procurement, contracts and business case.

**Privacy and security implications:** There are no privacy and security implications arising directly from this report. Any project-specific privacy/security assessments (e.g., DPIAs) will be completed where required within the scope of individual projects.

**Duty to collaborate:** A number of Annual Plan initiatives are delivered collaboratively, including the Thames Valley Fire Control replacement and national programmes (PPE framework and ESN). This supports interoperability and value for money across partner services.

**Health and safety implications:** There are no health and safety implications arising directly from this report. Any project-level health and safety impacts will be assessed and managed within the scope of individual projects and enabling works.

**Environmental implications:** There are no new environmental implications arising directly from this report. Any project-level health environmental impacts will be assessed and managed within the scope of individual projects.

**Equality, diversity, and inclusion implications:** There are no direct equality, diversity and inclusion implications arising from this report, which is provided for assurance purposes.

However, a number of projects within the Annual Delivery Plan have specific EDI considerations embedded in their development, including the completion of Equality Impact Assessments (EqIAs) where appropriate and ongoing engagement with affected staff and communities. This ensures that equality considerations are reflected in decision-making and service delivery as projects progress.

**Consultation and communication:** Major project work with the Marketing and Communications team to build a communication plan that takes into account the appropriate level of stakeholder engagement needed.

#### **Background papers:**

Community Risk Management Plan 2025-2030: [Community Risk Management Plan 2025-2030 - Buckinghamshire Fire & Rescue Service](#)

Annual Delivery Plan 2026-2027: [Annual Delivery Plan 2026-2027 - Buckinghamshire Fire & Rescue Service](#)

Fire Authority Meeting, 12 February 2026: 2026-27 Annual Delivery Plan: [FIRE AUTHORITY MEETING - 11 FEBRUARY 2026 - Buckinghamshire Fire & Rescue Service](#)

| Appendix | Title                                             | Protective Marking |
|----------|---------------------------------------------------|--------------------|
| 1        | 2026-2027 Annual Delivery Plan Update – June 2026 | N/A                |

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**Buckinghamshire  
Fire & Rescue Service**

*Making a difference together*

# 2026-2027 Annual Delivery Plan Update

PMO Assurance

June 2026

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# INTRODUCTION

This quarterly review provides Members with a view of progress across the Annual Plan's strategic objectives, Prevention, Protection, Response & Resilience and the enabling work across People, Finance & Assets, and Digital, Data & Technology.

It is written from a Portfolio Management Office (PMO) perspective, using a consistent, exception-based reporting approach to provide assurance on delivery.

This quarter focuses on our major projects, summarising what we have delivered, and the key priorities for the next quarter. It also highlights any material risks, issues, or dependencies that could affect delivery, alongside the actions being taken to manage them through established governance arrangements and performance monitoring.

The PMO exists to strengthen delivery assurance and organisational grip. It does this by applying consistent standards for planning and reporting, tracking delivery against milestones and measurable indicators, maintaining a transparent record of risks, issues, and dependencies, and ensuring timely escalation where delivery confidence reduces.

The PMO allocates appropriately trained project management professionals to priority workstreams and projects, providing day-to-day delivery support and strengthening governance, pace and consistency across the portfolio.

## SUMMARY

As we are at the start of the 2026/27 year, there is limited progress to report at this stage, and the PMO focus this quarter is therefore on mobilisation, delivery readiness and early assurance, ensuring that major work is correctly scoped, governed, and supported before key commitments and spend accelerate.

Across the Annual Delivery Plan there are 24 projects. To strengthen oversight and ensure resources are aligned to risk and complexity, projects have been split into different tiers based on cost, impact, or risk to ensure they have the appropriate support and governance.

The current split of projects is:

| Tier 1 - Major | Tier 2 – Medium | Tier 3 – Small |
|----------------|-----------------|----------------|
| 5              | 7               | 12             |

### Major projects – position this quarter

This quarter's reporting focuses on the Service's major projects, with highlight reports outlining delivery confidence, progress to date, and planned next steps.

**On-Call Improvement Programme (Years 2–5)** is currently reported as **Green** overall, with PMO activity completed (mandate/objectives agreed, governance established, kick-off activity completed, and initial staff engagement underway). Delivery planning continues, including finalising workstream requirements and commencing Fleet and HR workstreams. Timescale is flagged **Amber** to reflect the programme's multi-year implementation profile and the need to maintain pace through year-two planning and consultation activity.

**Local Training Facility** remains **Red** overall, reflecting ongoing planning process delays and associated timeline pressure. The project continues to be monitored closely, with emerging cost risks noted (including wider market pressures affecting materials, logistics and fuel). Spend-to-date is reported as in line with the current phase, and the latest forecast position is described in the report, including the drivers behind variance and contingency use.

**High Wycombe refurbishment** is currently reported as **Amber** overall. Extensive consultation has been undertaken with staff, and initial designs and an options appraisal have been completed in conjunction with a third-party specialist. Decant options are being drawn up with a view to bringing a full business case to Members in July 2026.

# OUR ANNUAL DELIVERY PLAN 2026/2027

The Buckinghamshire Fire & Rescue Service Annual Plan 2026–2027 sets out how we will translate our strategic priorities into the everyday decisions and actions required to keep our communities safe, building on the progress already made and targeting resources where they add the most value. The actions below are supported by measures of success and detailed team plans.

|                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                              |
|----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| <b>Prevention</b>                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                            |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Plan, resource, and deliver local and national road and water safety initiatives and campaigns.</li> <li>Develop a Youth Inclusion Programme</li> <li>Deliver the Prevention Community Engagement Communications Plan, ensuring consistent messaging across all Service Delivery Areas (SDA's)</li> <li>Embed the Domestic Dwelling Fire Targeting Methodology across all nine SDAs, monitoring and reporting on its effectiveness</li> </ul>                                                                                                                                                                                                         |
| <b>Protection</b>                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                            |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Work with partners to ensure effective management, enforcement, and ongoing implementation of fire safety remediation plans for multi-occupied residential properties</li> <li>Utilise station-based crews for targeted fire safety and protection initiatives</li> <li>Upgrade PRMS workflows and processes to achieve measurable efficiency improvements</li> <li>Transition the FFSIU and Thames Valley Fire Investigation team into business-as-usual delivery</li> </ul>                                                                                                                                                                         |
| <b>Response &amp; Resilience</b>                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                             |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Define and deliver year two of our On-Call Improvement Programme</li> <li>Review our water rescue capacity &amp; capability to understand long term requirements</li> <li>Complete a review of Working at Height (W@H) provision defining service needs</li> </ul>                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                    |
| <b>People</b>                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Implement a refreshed People Directorate structure &amp; function that enhances service delivery and meets future needs</li> <li>Develop advanced people analytics capabilities to provide real-time workforce insights and support data-driven decision-making</li> <li>Evaluate how newly introduced people frameworks and processes have been adopted and the difference they have made for staff and the service</li> <li>Implement a communication skills development initiative to improve internal collaboration and external engagement</li> </ul>                                                                                            |
| <b>Finance &amp; Assets</b>                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                  |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Deliver Year 2 of the property standards programme by investing £360k in station facilities</li> <li>Complete build of local training facility (subject to agreement)</li> <li>Secure funding and finalise plans for the redevelopment or refurbishment of High Wycombe Fire Station</li> <li>Commence scoping of Firefighting PPE and develop an implementation plan, to support delivery</li> </ul>                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                 |
| <b>Digital &amp; Data</b>                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                    |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Collaborate with other Thames Valley fire &amp; rescue Services for the replacement of the Command &amp; Control system (Year 1)</li> <li>Review provision of risk data within the current Command &amp; Control system</li> <li>Embed branding standards across all departments and monitor compliance to ensure consistency in digital and physical assets</li> <li>Collaborate with national and regional partners to ensure operational and technical readiness for the Emergency Services Mobile Communications Programme</li> <li>Develop a roadmap for AI integration across key functions and define next steps for implementation</li> </ul> |

# MAJOR PROJECTS HIGHLIGHT REPORTS

## On Call Improvement Programme

**Sponsor:** Assistant Chief Fire Officer

|                                        |                          |                    |       |
|----------------------------------------|--------------------------|--------------------|-------|
| <b>STATUS – This period:</b>           | Green                    | <b>Last period</b> | Green |
| <b>Agreed Project completion date:</b> | Implementation 2026-2030 |                    |       |

|                  |       |             |       |              |       |             |       |                 |       |
|------------------|-------|-------------|-------|--------------|-------|-------------|-------|-----------------|-------|
| <b>Timescale</b> | Amber | <b>Cost</b> | Green | <b>Scope</b> | Green | <b>Risk</b> | Green | <b>Resource</b> | Green |
|------------------|-------|-------------|-------|--------------|-------|-------------|-------|-----------------|-------|

| Overall Project Objective                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                       |
|-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| The On-Call Improvement Programme (Years 2–5) aims to build on the foundations established during its first year to create a more resilient, reliable, and sustainable On-Call service model across Buckinghamshire Fire & Rescue Service. The programme will take forward the Fire Authority-approved changes to the number and location of On-Call appliances and develop a modernised approach to staffing, training, mobilisation, and operational support. |

| Key activities completed in this reporting period                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                   |
|-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Programme mandate and objectives agreed, with governance arrangements established (including Terms of Reference) to support effective oversight and decision-making</li> <li>Programme mobilisation completed, including Sponsor and On-Call Programme tactical kick-off meetings to align leadership, priorities and ways of working.</li> <li>Staff consultation commenced, with initial meetings held with affected staff to support communication, gather insight and inform implementation.</li> </ul>                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                  |
| Activities planned in next period                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                   |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Project Initiation Document (PID) to be submitted for approval, defining scope and delivery approach for year 2 (26/27).</li> <li>Consultation with impacted staff continues to ensure they are supported during this time.</li> <li>Finalise the programme plan and confirm detailed workstream requirements, ensuring alignment on scope, milestones and resource needs across all delivery areas.</li> <li>Initiate Fleet and HR workstreams moving from planning into delivery and progressing initial priority actions, including a full On-Call recruitment review and supporting action plan</li> <li>Work to start on future use of Great Missenden &amp; Stokenchurch proposal.</li> <li>Cross Party &amp; Union workshop to take place to support wider engagement and support planning</li> </ul> |

|                                                                                                         |     |                               |     |
|---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-----|-------------------------------|-----|
| <b>Approved Project Spend:</b>                                                                          | N/A | <b>Project Spend to date:</b> | N/A |
| <b>Finance Update:</b><br>Any business cases needed for the project will be brought through governance. |     |                               |     |

| R / I NO | DESCRIPTION                                                        | TREATMENT | OWNER | ORIGINAL SCORE | CURRENT SCORE |
|----------|--------------------------------------------------------------------|-----------|-------|----------------|---------------|
|          | No risk/issue identified that are required to highlight to members |           |       |                |               |

# Local Training Facility

**Sponsors:** Director of Finance & Assets & Director of People

|                                        |            |                    |            |
|----------------------------------------|------------|--------------------|------------|
| <b>STATUS – This period:</b>           | <b>Red</b> | <b>Last period</b> | <b>Red</b> |
| <b>Agreed Project completion date:</b> | March 2027 |                    |            |

|                  |            |             |              |              |              |             |              |                 |              |
|------------------|------------|-------------|--------------|--------------|--------------|-------------|--------------|-----------------|--------------|
| <b>Timescale</b> | <b>Red</b> | <b>Cost</b> | <b>Amber</b> | <b>Scope</b> | <b>Green</b> | <b>Risk</b> | <b>Amber</b> | <b>Resource</b> | <b>Green</b> |
|------------------|------------|-------------|--------------|--------------|--------------|-------------|--------------|-----------------|--------------|

| Overall Project Objective                                                                                                                                                                                        |
|------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| The development of a dedicated Technical and Training Centre at Westcott Venture Park. This bespoke solution will deliver the functions of a Training school. USAR Technical Training Centre, and Logistics Hub. |

| Key activities completed in this reporting period                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                            |
|------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>The current target date for the planning application to be determined is 23 June 2026, with an agreed expiry date of 30 June 2026.</li> <li>Wescott have completed the final ecology surveys and have informed the Planning Officer that they intend to submit all outstanding information by 29 May 2026.</li> <li>Due to <b>delays in the planning process</b>, we have reassessed the risk ratings for <b>timelines</b> and this remains Red.</li> <li>Resources – the project and ICT leads have been appointed into new roles from 1 April 2026.</li> <li>A review of the current Financial Budget Forecast has been completed, and several emerging risks have been identified. The most significant relates to the ongoing conflict in the Middle East and its continued impact on raw material availability, contractor overheads, logistics, and rising fuel costs.</li> <li>The Service has secured fixed pricing with both Premier and Crofton Engineering until <b>12 June 2026</b>. However, any delay to planning approval beyond this date will directly affect these costs and may result in unavoidable price increases. As an example, we are seeing steel tonnage prices fluctuate on a daily rate of 15 to 20%</li> <li>WVP are currently in the market, with contractors tendering for the groundworks package. This will support contractor selection and ensure sufficient lead-in time for mobilisation on site once planning approval is secured.</li> </ul> |
| Activities planned in next period                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                            |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Continue to Support Planning Officer</li> <li>WVP Final Agreement to Lease completion</li> <li>Site Construction Office Set Up</li> <li>Westcott to submit final planning information</li> </ul>                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                      |

|                                |       |                               |       |
|--------------------------------|-------|-------------------------------|-------|
| <b>Approved Project Spend:</b> | £5.5m | <b>Project Spend to date:</b> | £179k |
|--------------------------------|-------|-------------------------------|-------|

**Finance Update:**

The forecast cost is now £5.682m, which is 3% over budget (including the contingency amount). There is a risk of further increases due to the ongoing conflict in the Middle East.

**SUMMARY OF KEY RISKS AND ISSUES**

| R / I NO | DESCRIPTION                                                                                    | TREATMENT                                                                             | OWNER            | ORIGINAL SCORE | CURRENT SCORE |
|----------|------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|------------------|----------------|---------------|
| 3        | Planning approval not granted to Westcott Venture Park or process takes longer than envisioned | Extension of Time has been granted until early May with Review to take place in April | Property Manager | 15             | 20            |

# High Wycombe Station Redevelopment/Restoration

**Sponsor:** Head of Finance & Assets (Deputy Director)

|                                        |            |                    |     |
|----------------------------------------|------------|--------------------|-----|
| <b>STATUS – This period:</b>           | Amber      | <b>Last period</b> | N/A |
| <b>Agreed Project completion date:</b> | March 2027 |                    |     |

|                  |  |             |  |              |  |             |  |                 |  |
|------------------|--|-------------|--|--------------|--|-------------|--|-----------------|--|
| <b>Timescale</b> |  | <b>Cost</b> |  | <b>Scope</b> |  | <b>Risk</b> |  | <b>Resource</b> |  |
|------------------|--|-------------|--|--------------|--|-------------|--|-----------------|--|

| Overall Project Objective                                                                                                                                                                                         |
|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| The High Wycombe fire station redevelopment/restoration project aims to ensure the station remain fit for purpose, safe and capable of supporting modern emergency response requirements across the service area. |

| Key activities completed in this reporting period                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                             |
|---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Equality Impact Assessment completed, ensuring that equality considerations are embedded within the development of the new station requirements.</li> <li>Project mandate approved, providing formal authority to proceed; development of the PID is underway to establish detailed delivery and governance controls.</li> <li>Decant strategy initiated, with early assessment of location options and operational impacts (including response times) to support informed decision-making.</li> <li>Business Case planning advanced, with a structured timeline being developed to support timely submission to SLT and Fire Authority.</li> </ul>                                                                    |
| Activities planned in next period                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                             |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Commission and complete structural and asbestos survey to confirm baseline condition and inform design assumptions.</li> <li>Confirm the scope and implications of the existing tank at the current site, including survey findings, options, and impacts on programme approach.</li> <li>Update design documentation for compliance: adjust station plans to reflect EIA requirements so the project remains compliant and future stages are not delayed.</li> <li>Complete the PID for approval, confirming scope, roles, milestones, risks and controls.</li> <li>Prepare the Business Case for SLT/Fire Authority consideration, including options appraisal, affordability, benefits and deliver plan.</li> </ul> |

|                                                                                                                                                           |     |                               |     |
|-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-----|-------------------------------|-----|
| <b>Approved Project Spend:</b>                                                                                                                            | N/A | <b>Project Spend to date:</b> | N/A |
| <b>Finance Update:</b><br>Will be updated once business case approved.<br>Current Project costs are being funded/resourced from business as usual budgets |     |                               |     |

## SUMMARY OF KEY RISKS AND ISSUES

| R / I NO | DESCRIPTION                                                                                                                                                     | TREATMENT                                                                                                                                                                                   | OWNER                         | ORIGINAL SCORE | CURRENT SCORE |
|----------|-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-------------------------------|----------------|---------------|
| R1       | There is a risk that an adequate location for decant may be enough of a distance from the station that response times may change                                | Current options are being agreed by SLT to ensure the tolerances of a decant location are acceptable.                                                                                       | Head of Response & Resilience | 12             | 10            |
| R3       | There is a risk the business case will not capture the true condition of the site if it goes to the fire authority prior to a structural survey being completed | Team is discussing a delay to the business case, so the structural survey is complete and the business case is able to more fully consider the issues and most appropriate way to fix them. | Head of Response & Resilience | 12             | 12            |

## COLLABORATIVE PROJECTS

A number of key initiatives within the Annual Plan are being delivered collaboratively with partner organisations. These programmes are typically complex, high-value and high-impact, and collaboration enables the Service to share expertise, reduce duplication, improve interoperability and consistency across services, and strengthen value for money through collective procurement and common standards. Where programmes are national in nature, our local focus is on ensuring we remain prepared to adopt new capabilities safely and effectively, without disrupting operational delivery.

### **Thames Valley Fire Control replacement**

Current Status: **GREEN**

We are working with our Thames Valley partners on replacing the current Fire Control System. This is a significant and critical technology investment which will modernise the systems that provide for call handling and mobilisation. The programme is currently in the procurement phase, with implementation expected to begin in October 2026 and a planned go-live in April 2028. Our focus during this phase is to ensure the selected solution is operationally fit for purpose, resilient, and provides a robust platform for future improvements.

### **Personal Protective Equipment (PPE) renewal**

Current Status: **GREEN**

We are also progressing PPE renewal through a national programme which provides an approved procurement framework. This supports consistent standards, reduces procurement risk and enables the Service to access compliant PPE while achieving value for money. Locally, activity is focused on planning for implementation, ensuring operational requirements are met, and supporting adoption through appropriate engagement and readiness activity.

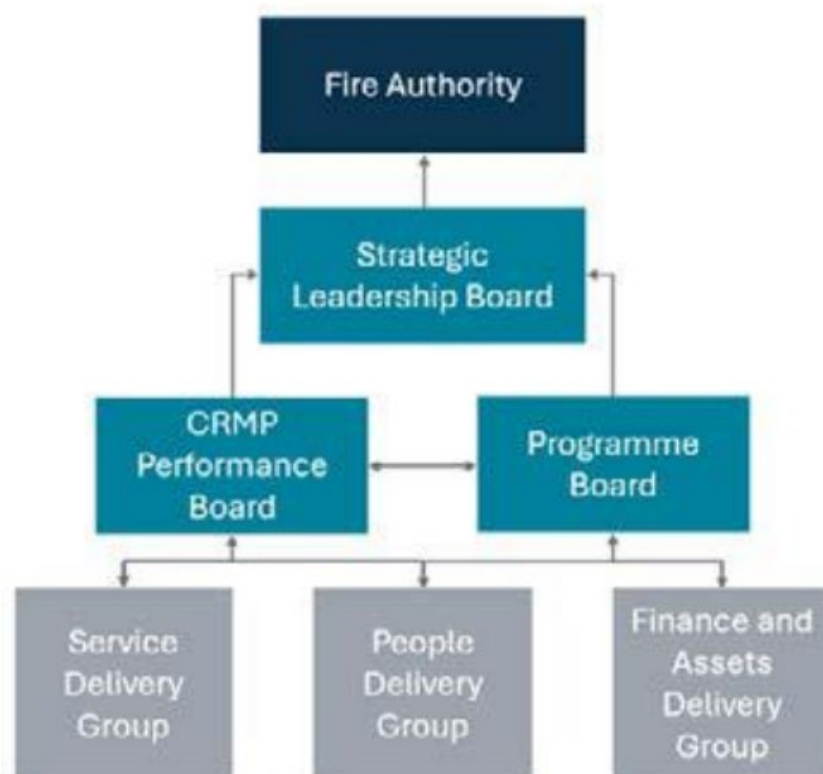
### **Emergency Services Network (ESN) transition**

Current Status: **GREEN**

The transition from Airwave to the Emergency Services Network is a long-term national programme affecting all emergency services. BFRS continues to play an active role, working with Thames Valley fire partners and wider emergency service stakeholders. Our focus is on maintaining operational continuity, understanding readiness requirements, and managing dependencies (technical, operational and training) as national timelines and delivery plans develop.

# GOVERNANCE

BFRS uses a structured governance framework to monitor progress and manage risk against the Annual Delivery Plan



## Delivery Groups

Delivery groups report monthly to the CRMP Performance and Programme Boards, ensuring that performance and risk are coordinated and that progress against objectives is reviewed routinely.

## CRMP Performance Board

The Community Risk Management Plan Performance Board (CRMP Performance Board) monitors performance across objectives and enablers monthly.

## Programme Board

Programme Board provides strategic direction and oversight of change delivery aligned to the CRMP and Annual Plan.

## Strategic Leadership Board

Provides strategic oversight and assurance prior to reporting to the Fire Authority and its committees.

# SUPPORTING INFORMATION

## RAG Status



- Major problems identified which mean the project is unlikely to be delivered on time, on budget or to the required standard.
- Remedial plans are not proving effective.
- Escalate to the next level with costed options.



- Significant problems identified or uncertainty which may put the project timetable, costs and/or benefits at risk.
- Remedial plan is in place and is being monitored closely to ensure that risk is mitigated.
- Escalate to the next level.



- Project is proceeding according to plan.
- Risks / issues are being managed within the project.

## Risk reporting approach (exception-based)

In line with established public-sector programme reporting practice, this quarterly update is an exception report, designed to give Members clear oversight without overloading the paper with operational detail.

Accordingly, the risk and issues sections highlight only:

- items above the agreed risk score threshold (or those judged “material” due to impact on time/cost/scope/benefits), and
- items that require Member visibility because they may affect delivery confidence, tolerances, or future decision points.

All other risks are tracked and treated within project and programme risk registers, reviewed routinely through governance arrangements, and escalated if they become significant.

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Buckinghamshire  
Fire & Rescue Service

*Making a difference together*

# Operational Activity & Communications Update

Adam Burch, Paul Scanes & Emily Hilling





# Introduction

This presentation provides an overview of several recent significant incidents and demonstrates how Buckinghamshire Fire & Rescue Service coordinates operational response, public communication and community reassurance during periods of heightened operational demand.

The presentation aims to provide:

- An overview of operational activity and response
- Insight into how communications support incident management and community reassurance
- Examples of public engagement and media reach during significant incidents
- Assurance around organisational learning and continuous improvement



Sunday, 26 April 2026

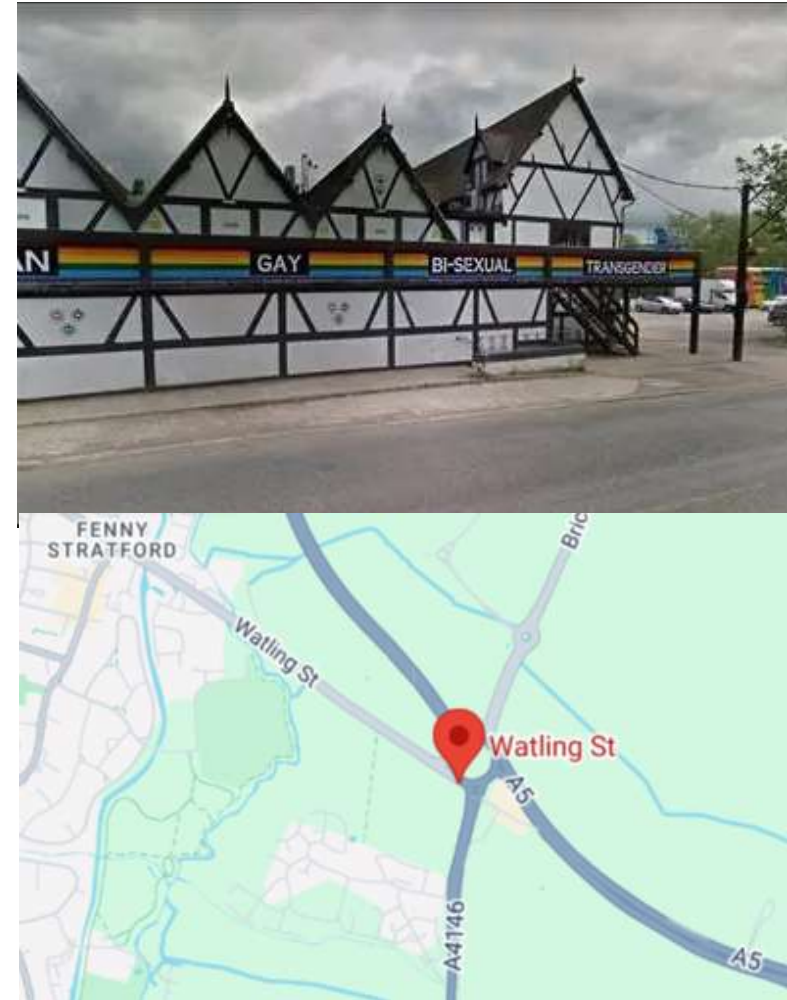
# Nightclub fire – Bletchley

## Incident overview

- Fire affecting Pink Punters Nightclub and domestic flat above
- Call received at 02:10

## Response

- Initial attendance of two fire appliances from West Ashland Fire Station
- First appliance on scene within six minutes
- Response escalated to:
  - Ten fire appliances, seven from BFRS, three from Bedfordshire FRS
  - Turntable Ladder (TTL), Incident Command Unit (ICU), Operational Support Unit (OSU) and Water Carrier (WC)
  - Six Flexi-Duty Officers (FDO) in various command roles
- Thames Valley Police (TVP) supported cordons and crowd management due to evacuation
- Approx. 800 occupants evacuated safely with no reported casualties
- Incident also Supported by South Central Ambulance Service (SCAS) and utilities providers
- Operational Support Room (OSR) stood-up to support relief appliance arrangements and wider officer cover



Wednesday, 29 April 2026

# George Farm Close, Little Brickhill

## Incident overview

- Fire involving a barn in a rural location
- Incident reported at 15:47

## Response

- Two fire appliances initially mobilised from West Ashland Fire Station
- First appliance on scene within nine minutes
- Response escalated to:
  - Eight fire appliances
  - Two Water Carriers (WC), Incident Command Unit (ICU), Turntable Ladder (TTL)
  - Four Flexi-Duty Officers in various command roles
- One male casualty treated at scene by SCAS for smoke inhalation
- Relief crews required due to incident duration, On-Call fire appliance utilised where possible to maintain operational resilience
- Liaison maintained with partner agencies, including water utility providers



Sunday, 3 May 2026

# Desborough Road – High Wycombe

## Incident overview

- Call received at 05:36
- Fire spread from the commercial premises to neighbouring properties
- 21 displaced persons requiring assistance

## Response

- Two fire appliances on scene from High Wycombe within five minutes
- Response escalated to:
  - Eight fire appliances, six from BFRS, two from Royal Berkshire FRS
  - Aerial appliance (RBFRS), Incident Command Unit (ICU)
  - Supported initially by four Flexi-Duty Officers in various command roles
- Multi-agency liaison with TVP, SCAS, Local Authority Emergency Planning Officer (EPO)
- Continued coordination with partners to manage recovery and communications



Thursday, 7 May 2026

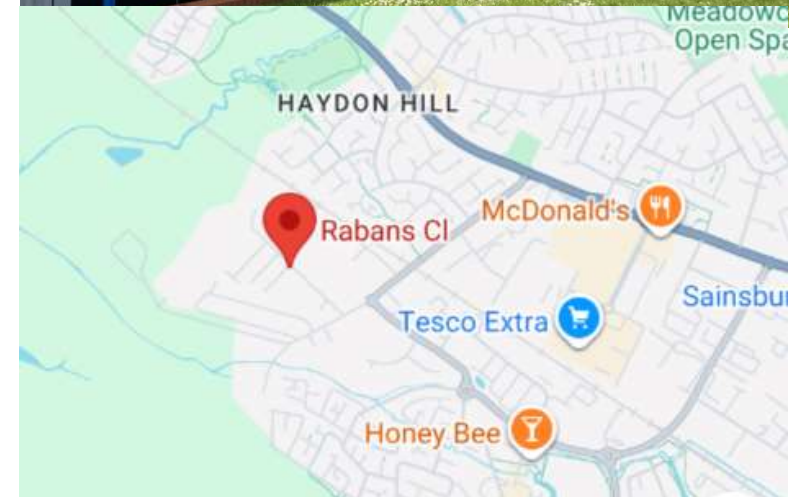
# Lynx Gymnastics - Aylesbury

## Incident overview

- Call received at 08:58
- Building was fully involved on arrival, with significant smoke in the area
- Multi-agency response required due to scale and location

## Response

- First fire appliance from Aylesbury arrived within seven minutes
- Response escalated to:
  - Eight fire appliances, five from BFRS, two from Oxfordshire FRS, one from Bedfordshire FRS
  - Turntable Ladder (TTL), Operational Support Unit (OSU), Incident Command Unit (ICU)
  - Supported initially by four Flexi-Duty Officers in various command roles
- TVP and SCAS in attendance
- Operational Support Room stood-up to support relief appliance arrangements and wider officer cover
- On-Call crews deployed to maintain operational response and resilience
- Road closures implemented, resulting in temporary disruption to access for nearby industrial units



# Wider Overview, Activity and Assurance

Operational demand was managed effectively while maintaining **resilience**, **community reassurance** and **organisational learning**.



## DEMAND & REPOSE

- Maintained response performance during periods of increased demand validating CRMP response standards and assumptions
- Value of continued investment in specialist capabilities
- Reinforces the priority of the On-Call improvement programme



## COMMUNITY & PREVENTION

- Targeted prevention and business engagement activity providing community reassurance and fire safety advice



Community Reassurance



Fire safety advice



Business engagement



## ASSURANCE & LEARNING

- Fire Investigation Officers established likely causes across multiple incidents – no evidence of linkage
- Debriefs, feedback and Significant Incident Reviews (SIRs) completed
- Actions and recommendations tracked through our assurance framework and governance



# Communications Support During Operational Incidents



## Weekend Support

Out-of-hours communications support introduced to provide timely operational messaging and media handling during significant incidents.



## Public Information

Real-time updates shared to provide safety advice, road closure information and public reassurance.



## Multi-Agency Coordination

Joint communications with Thames Valley Police, councils, ambulance service and partner agencies.



## Community Confidence

Communications support transparency, reassurance and trust during periods of heightened public interest.



# Communications and Media Interest

- Media and communications function deployed
- Incident updates issued via service website and social media platforms
- Timely safety messaging issued to local residents via social channels
- Incidents generated local, national and global interest

Night Club Fire – Bletchley

8k+

Social media engagements

2.7K

Website views

George Farm Close

9k+

Social media engagements

1K+

Website views

Desborough Rd – High Wycombe

19k+

Social media engagements

1.7K+

Website views

Lynx Gymnastics - Aylesbury

10.3k+

Social media engagements

1.6K+

Website views



Police issue major update as fire destroys LGBT+ nightclub in Milton Keynes

A fire broke out at the Pink Punters venue in Milton Keynes at 2am on Sunday morning with a large number of partygoers and residents in the Watling Street area evacuated

 BFRS West Ashland Fire Station

29 April at 17:25 · 🌐

🔴 Incident 🔴

Firefighters remain at the scene of a barn fire in the Little Brickhill area, which is generating smoke visible across a wide area.

Our advice to local residents is to keep doors and windows closed and be prepared for the potential of disruption and smoke affecting visibility on local roads, while the emergency services are working at the scene. You can find out more here 📄 <https://bit.ly/4uD6GGf>

#BFRS #Incident #KeepingYouSafe See less



# How We Engage Our Communities Digitally



**WEBSITE**

Official source of information, incident updates and safety advice

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**8.5k visits per month**  
(YTD average)

Website demographic data is not currently collected through Google Analytics. This may be explored in future, subject to lawful basis, privacy and governance requirements.

**FACEBOOK**

Incident updates, community reassurance and prevention advice

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**50,670 fans & followers (19 pages)**

Top locations: **Milton Keynes, Aylesbury and High Wycombe**, with strongest engagement from **adults aged 25–54** across both men and women.

**LINKEDIN**

Recruitment, partnership updates and professional engagement

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**2,486 followers**

Top locations: **London, Milton Keynes Aylesbury** within **Public safety, Hospital & Healthcare Government administration** Industries.

**INSTAGRAM**

Visual storytelling, prevention campaigns and engagement

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**3140 followers**

Other digital channels



↗ 56,296

Fans & followers across all our social channels

↗ 562,322

Engagements YTD (likes, shares & comments)



# Questions?