Devon & Somerset
Fire & Rescue Authority

2023-24

DRAFT Annual Statement of Assurance

Contents

1   Introduction

1.1. The Devon and Somerset Fire and Rescue Authority (the Authority) functions within a clearly defined statutory and policy framework. The key documents setting this out are:

- Fire and Rescue Services Act 2004
- Civil Contingencies Act 2004
- Regulatory Reform (Fire Safety) Order 2005
- Fire Safety Act 2021
- Fire and Rescue Services (Emergencies) (England) Order 2007
- Localism Act 2011
- Accounts and Audit Regulations 2015
- Fire and Rescue National Framework for England 2018
- Health and Safety at Work etc Act 1974, and associated regulations

1.2 In addition, other key statutes include:
- Local Government Act 1972
- Local Government Finance Act 1988
- Local Government and Housing Act 1989
- Local Government Finance Act 1992
- Local Government Act 2003

1.3 Within this statutory framework, the Authority has three main responsibilities: to determine a strategic policy agenda for its area; set a budget to fund delivery of the policy agenda: and to undertake scrutiny to ensure that intended outcomes are being achieved efficiently, effectively and in accordance with statutory requirements. The Authority creates the organisational capacity to 'operationalise' these responsibilities through the Devon and Somerset Fire and Rescue Service (the Service), which is led by the Chief Fire Officer.

1.4 The Authority is required to:

- Ensure that there is a sound system of governance in place.
- Ensure that its business is conducted in accordance with the law and proper standards, and that public money is safeguarded and properly accounted for.
- Meet its duty under the Local Government Act 1999 to make arrangements to secure continuous improvement in the way in which its functions are exercised, having regard to a combination of economy, efficiency and effectiveness.
- Prepare an annual governance statement in support of its Statement of Accounts in line with the Accounts and Audit (England) Regulations 2015. This sets out the measures taken to ensure appropriate business practice, high standards of conduct and sound governance.

- Publish an annual Statement of Assurance as required by The Fire and Rescue National Framework for England (May 2018). The statement should outline the way in which the Authority and its Fire and Rescue Service has had regard to the Framework for that period. Each Authority must also provide assurance to their community and to government on financial, governance and operational matters.

1.5 The Authority has agreed that the most appropriate way to meet both the National Framework and the Accounts and Audit (England) Regulations 2015 requirements is through the creation of one assurance report entitled 'Annual Statement of Assurance'. The Annual Statement of Assurance details the approach for how the Authority has developed and applied its governance framework in accordance with statutory responsibilities.

2 Identification and assessment of risk

2.1 The Authority has a statutory duty to produce a [Community Risk Management Plan](#) (CRMP). The CRMP covers the period 2022-2027 and sets out the key challenges and risks facing local communities and how the Authority intends to meet and reduce them. It demonstrates how protection, prevention and response activities have and will be used collectively to prevent and/or mitigate fires and other incidents. A full consultation process took place prior to development and publication of the CRMP.

2.2 Since the launch of the CRMP in April 2022, the Service has developed Local Community Plans (LCPs) for each of the Service's fire stations. Each plan is unique to that station and incorporates information on community profiles which provides a comprehensive picture of a station's geographical area, risk, station availability and incident information.

2.3 The premise of the LCPs is to help stations to understand their local risk profile and to support planning and performance within the Service's key business areas, which will underpin the mitigation of risk and improve community safety.

2.4 A process to undertake annual reviews of the CRMP and LCPs is being developed for implementation in 2024-25.

2.5 Understanding the risk of fire and other emergencies was rated as good by His Majesty's Inspectorate of Constabulary and Fire & Rescue Services (HMICFRS) in their 2022 inspection report.

3 Prevention

3.1 The CRMP provides a high-level overview of the Service's prevention activities with the detail provided in the Prevention Plan 2023-2026.

3.2 Prevention activities include delivery of education programmes in schools, and interaction with children and young people through cadet schemes and through the Fire Intervention team who work with young people who have a fascination with fire or have set fires.

3.3 The Road Safety team have delivered 126 events including Learn to Live presentations in schools and colleges throughout Devon and Somerset, Biker Down presentations and Streetwise, and have engaged with c25,000 participants. The team has secured £30,000 funding from Vision Zero South West towards a new engagement vehicle and £20,000 to undertake some parental evaluation of our interventions. In addition, the team is the thematic lead for Young Drivers across all fire and rescue services in the UK.

3.4 In addition to supporting the National Fire Chiefs Council's national prevention campaigns, the Service delivered campaigns focused on the cost of living, outdoor safety including wildfires and most recently our 'treasured people' campaign which focussed on reducing false alarms. Our 'How to use a throwline' YouTube video is now used by Devon and Cornwall Police for their in-house staff training. The Service also shares partnership newsletters with messages subsequently appearing on social media channels which helped to get our safety messages to the most vulnerable audiences.

3.5 Home fire safety checks are provided for those identified to be in our higher risk groups providing advice and ensuring that smoke alarms and other equipment are available. The home safety team works with over 350 partners to obtain referrals for home safety visits targeting those with risk factors such as mobility, disability and mental health issues. During 2023-2024 over 18,000 home fire safety checks were completed.

3.6 The Service is committed to its legal duties and responsibilities with regard to ensuring that safeguarding is in place. The Safeguarding Strategic Board aims to ensure that the Service proactively meets the needs of its communities and to drive timely and specific action to provide a sustained improvement in all aspects of safeguarding within the organisation. Mandatory Service-wide 'Tier One Universal' Safeguarding Training has been implemented to provide a basic understanding of safeguarding and associated employee responsibilities. A Safeguarding Competency Training Framework has also been created to identify the correct level of training for each position within the Service; enhanced Tiered training will be implemented during 2024-2025. The Safeguarding Manager and the Head of People Services are working to comply with the recent legalisation change to ensure that all employees within the Service have the correct level of DBS checks.

3.7 The Service was rated as good at preventing fires and other risks in the 2022 HMICFRS inspection report.

4 Protection

4.1 The CRMP provides a strategic high-level overview of the Service's approach to protecting people within the built environment through regulation and protection activities. The Service is the Enforcing Authority for the Regulatory Reform (Fire Safety) Order 2005 and a statutory consultee as part of the Building Regulations process. The Service has signed up to a Building Safety Regulator Southwest Regional Memorandum of Understanding which was signed in February 2024 to confirm the regional arrangements for our future Protection work assisting the Building Safety Regulator in higher risk buildings.

4.2   The Risk Based Inspection Programme 2021-2024 supports the identification and targeting of the highest risk buildings most likely to have vulnerable occupants through unfamiliarity and / or their mobility. Operational Crews and Specialist Fire Safety Inspectors have successfully completed 2,622 fire safety checks and 856 fire safety audits in 2023 - 2024. A proportional approach is taken utilising fire safety checks at normal risk buildings and fire safety audits at higher risk buildings that have the potential to cause significant harm and / or loss of life in the event of a fire. This proportional but targeted approach is demonstrated through a high level of unsatisfactory / non-compliance outcomes which allows the Service to improve the safety of occupants. The Service uses its full powers as an Enforcing Authority issuing formal notices as appropriate, including prosecuting those that knowingly allow dangerous fire safety standards, including putting profit before safety. On average, the Service brings four cases per year for prosecution with a 100% success rate of holding individuals and companies to account. Formal Notices such as enforcements, alterations and prohibitions are available to view on a public register on the Service's [website](#).

4.3   A dedicated Fire Safety Helpdesk supports all members of the local community, providing compliance support for new and small businesses, providing technical advice and giving residents a voice to report fire safety concerns directly to a regulator. Any concerns or intelligence received are formally logged, assessed by a Fire Safety Inspector for appropriate action and when required, anonymity maintained. All fire safety concerns are assessed in conjunction with the Duty Fire Safety Manager and actioned as appropriate based on life risk.

4.4   The Protection teams work closely with partners such as the local authority housing team, NHS and the Care Quality Commission to ensure that residents are kept safe in residential flats, hospitals and care homes. They also work closely with the Prevention Team undertaking joint work as appropriate, the most recent example being during the Building Risk Review, inspecting all High-rise residential blocks with Home Fire Safety Technicians also attending and offering Home Fire Safety Visits.

4.5   The Protection Team is trained and developed in line with the National Fire Chiefs Council Competence Framework for Fire Safety Regulators including additional qualifications for specialist roles such as fire engineering. In addition, and in line with the wider sector recommendations, senior inspecting officers and managers are also undertaking third party accreditation with the Institution of Fire Engineers and the Contextualized Auditors Register.

4.6   An effective fire and rescue service will identify and assess the full range of foreseeable fire and rescue risks its community faces. It should target its fire prevention and protection activities to those who are at greatest risk from fire and make sure fire safety legislation is being enforced. When the public calls for help, it should respond promptly with the right skills and equipment to deal with the incident effectively. The Service's overall effectiveness was assessed as good in the 2022 HMICFRS inspection report with a rating of good for protecting the public through fire regulation. However, the report identified that the Service needs to be better at undertaking quality assurance and evaluation of Prevention and Protection activities. Quality Assurance and Evaluation Officers have now been appointed to identify and support future improvements. Protection has a Quality Assurance Policy and Guidance in place with the Fire Safety Manager in each area overseeing this. The Quality Assurance Manager is also auditing each area by 1 July 2024 to ensure that teams are working in line with the Quality Assurance Policy.

5   Response and Resilience

5.1   The CRMP provides a high-level overview of the Service's response arrangements.

5.2   The Service was rated as good at responding to fires and other emergencies and responding to major and multi-agency incidents in the 2022 HMICFRS inspection report.

5.3   Response plans are in place for different incident types to ensure that the most effective response is provided to an emergency call. Fire Control can also apply 'Dynamic Mobilising' to revise the response plan by adding or removing resources depending upon the information that they receive. If the response is changed, this is recorded on the incident along with the rationale for that decision. A review of response plans is underway to ensure that they are still current and aligned to task analysis and equipment, ensuring effective and efficient responses.

5.4   A Dynamic Coverage Tool has been purchased and is expected to go live in June 2024. This will look at risks, including cross border risks, identify available appliances and suggest which to move to enhance availability to keep our communities safer.

5.5   The Service has signed the Southwest Regional Cross Border Exercising Memorandum of Understanding, training with five other fire and rescue services. The aim is to clearly identify the roles and responsibilities of all named fire and rescue services as they relate to the delivery of cross border operational exercising and risk information sharing within the geographical areas covered by those services. The intent is for services to exercise on risk jointly, debrief jointly and feed into Operational Assurance processes.

5.6   Processes are in place to ensure that crews have access to the most up to date operational risk information on their mobile data terminals. An improved exercising strategy is now in place and crews will exercise against operational risk from 2024-25.

5.7   Through its Training Academy, the Service has enabled the delivery of quality assured training to its staff to improve safety and overall effectiveness. The quality of operational training is assured via a combination of Operational Assurance feedback from incidents and attended assurance visits from Flexi Duty Officers to on-call and wholetime station training sessions. From 1 April 2024, assurance will also be provided via annual audits conducted through the Skills for Justice Quality Assurance Framework.

5.8   Development Firefighters on the apprenticeship scheme have training assured via the Service's main provider, Bridgwater and Taunton College, and the associated OFSTED assessment. Non apprentice development firefighters are aligned to the same programme. A training quality assurance framework has been created which includes a sampling strategy focused around the 'Operational licence' skills which include Breathing Apparatus, Driving, Incident Command System, Maritime, Casualty Care, Safety at Height and Confined Spaces, Water Rescue and Fitness.

5.9 Training delivery continues to be aligned to National Operational Guidance via eLearning training packages, practical training sessions and Academy facilitated assessments. The Firefighter development and maintenance of skills programme is fully aligned to National Operational Guidance. Confirmation of learning is achieved via knowledge checks after each eLearning package. The maintenance of skills recording system (due to launch in June 2024) will provide assurance that skills are demonstrated to the correct standard and frequency through programmed training, incidents and exercises.

5.10 The Service continues to explore new ways of delivering training. The successful roll out of locally delivered Incident Command Training is an example of improved efficiency in training delivery with less time spent travelling to location and training hours being utilised in more succinct delivery. This model of delivery reduces the impact on the environment by reducing the number of vehicles travelling to training events and also shortening these journeys.

5.11 The Service currently has 522 operational personnel qualified to command incidents at varying levels.

5.12 The Academy currently delivers localised Incident Command System (ICS) assessments to maintain skills and competence for Level 1 Commanders in addition to the ICS related content on the eLearning portal available to stations. The Service's Joint Emergency Services Interoperability Programme (JESIP) 3rd Edition Awareness online learning package was launched in September 2022 as an annual requirement.

5.13 Level 2 and 3 Commanders are revalidated every 2 years with 95% of the scenarios used based on an area or risk in Devon or Somerset. All Level 2 and 3 Incident Command Acquisition courses are Skills for Justice Accredited and aligned to National Operational Guidance. Level 2 and 3 Commanders also attend a multi-agency JESIP course every 3 years.

5.14 As the Service continues to work to align to National Operational Guidance, the new Level 4 ICS Acquisition course was implemented in June 2023 with four individuals having completed the course and four more starting the course in April 2024.

5.15 The Service has a physical fitness policy and four dedicated fitness advisors in post to support firefighters to attain and maintain the fitness standards that are required. Firefighters are also supported by three fitness advocates who provide an additional fitness role and are qualified to a minimum of a Level 2 gym instructor. A data management system is used to provide assurance that fitness requirements are being met, reviewed, and evaluated. Compliance data is reported to Strategic Safety Committee.

Over the Border Mutual Aid Arrangements

5.16 Sections 13 and 16 of the Fire and Rescue Services Act 2004 allow mutual assistance arrangements to be agreed with neighbouring services to improve resilience and capacity in border areas. The Authority has in place contractual agreements with neighbouring fire and rescue authorities for response to incidents requiring their support.

5.17 In addition to sections 13 and 16, there is a partnership agreement between the Service and Dorset and Wiltshire and Hampshire and Isle of Wight Fire and Rescue Services to provide a common, networked mobilising system with the principle of ensuring that the response mobilised to an incident is always the nearest and most appropriate resource(s) based upon travel time and attributes (i.e. having the necessary skills or equipment) to deal with the incident. This Networked Fire Services Partnership (the Partnership) also has the benefit of providing business continuity so that in the event of one control room experiencing a high volume of calls or being unable to function, either of the other two control rooms can conduct all of their emergency business, including call handling, mobilising resources, and supporting incidents. The Service is currently working with the Partnership to tender for its new mobilising system requirements.

5.18 An Information Governance Partnership Group meets regularly to review the governance procedures and monitor current and emerging risks to the information that the Partnership system holds. A risk remediation plan is in place to ensure that security risks are managed effectively and there is an annual IT health check for assurance. The external system supplier is responsible for remediating any high-risk vulnerabilities. This supports the Authority's compliance with the Airwave Code of Connection, and the upcoming Emergency Services Network which is due to replace the Airwave service.

5.19 The Partnership has committed to scoping further collaboration opportunities that will support all three services in achieving increased effectiveness and efficiency as well as sharing and developing good practice. The Partnership is currently expanding the mobilising solution to include Kent Fire and Rescue Service formally including them as a fully functioning fourth partner fire and rescue service. The inclusion of Kent Fire and Rescue Service will expand the resilience of the current mobilising system and backups, as well as offer financial efficiencies.

Civil Contingencies

5.20 The Emergency Planning Team is the primary means through which the Service meets the Authority's obligations in the Civil Contingencies Act 2004 and elements of the Fire Services Act 2004.

5.21 Effective arrangements are in place to collaborate with partners through Local Resilience Forums and other national, regional and local networks dealing with resilience and emergency and contingency planning arrangements. This includes collaboration with the South-West Malicious Risk Working Group, Counter-Terrorism Police South-West, and other local and national constabularies (Devon & Cornwall Police, Avon and Somerset Police, British Transport Police and the Civil Nuclear Constabulary).

5.22 The Emergency Planning Team also works in close collaboration with the Service's National Interagency Liaison Officers (NILO) Team in respect of risk, response and contingency arrangements for key events or sites of sensitivity (local and critical national infrastructure, hazardous materials etc).

National Resilience

5.23 National Resilience comprises of several specialist capabilities, funded and assured by the Government via the Home Office. The Service hosts the following capabilities from a wide range of stations.

- Urban Search and Rescue (USAR).
- High Volume Pumping.
- Enhanced Logistics Support.
- Mass Decontamination.
- Marauding Terrorist Attack Specialist Response (MTA).
- Flood Rescue.

5.24 In line with the Joint Emergency Services Interoperability Principles, the NILO cadre supports collaborative working with key partner organisations. NILOs provide specialist advice about the Service's operational capability and capacity to partners and supports both the planning for intelligence led operations and the response to dynamic incidents.

5.25 Whilst the national planning assumption is for a 'lite' Marauding Terrorist Attack team to be in place in Devon and Somerset, the Service leadership supported by the Fire Authority have increased capability above this minimum provision and has trained additional responders in both Plymouth and Exeter to help improve attendance times and casualty outcomes.

5.26 This Marauding Terrorist Attack capability has been established to support specialist emergency service response alongside Police and Ambulance responders in response to a marauding terrorist attack incident within the Authority area or, under National Mutual Aid, to any other location within the UK as requested. The overall aim is to save life, and the two main strands of fire and rescue support during this type of incident are for casualty care and fire hazards management.

5.27 The Marauding Terrorist Attack capability is made up of two key groups, NILO qualified officers who would adopt the command role and Specialist Response Team Operatives. Both groups undergo specialist training for responding to the Marauding Terrorist Attack threat.

5.28 The Hazardous Materials capability has been enhanced by a set of Raman (laser) and Infrared spectroscopy chemical identification equipment enabling swifter resolution of incidents involving unknown chemical substances and reduced disruption to the community.

Collaborative and Partnership Working

5.29 The Service continues to strengthen its partnership working with other fire and rescue services, blue light services, local authorities, community groups and other organisations by working to common objectives at the local, regional and national level. The improvement of prevention and protection work is a major priority, and the Service also contributes to wider community objectives identified in Local Area Agreements where appropriate.

5.30 The Tri-Service Safety Officer (TSSO) role is a collaborative asset within the community. The TSSO being introduced into Holsworthy is a pioneering role from the present method of working. delivering positive interventions to improve the safety, health, and the wellbeing of vulnerable people. This role works with partners including the NHS (local GP surgeries) and Police identifying those with the highest risk, at the same time as being able to respond to category one medical emergencies and complementing fire service crewing. Funded and managed between Cornwall Fire and Rescue Service, Devon and Somerset Fire and Rescue Service, Devon and Cornwall Police and South-Western Ambulance Service NHS Foundation Trust, this is an example of adapting to changing demands. Future funding is being sought from the NHS Integrated Clinical Board.

5.31 Collaborative working continues to grow through the South-West Emergency Services Collaboration (SWESC). The SWESC Tactical Group meets quarterly. The SWESC Strategic Group will be re-introduced in the latter half of 2024.

5.32 At a tactical level the Collaboration and On Call Support Team are key stakeholders at both the SWESC partnership and South-West Fire Sector working group. A dedicated police collaboration Sergeant is available to liaise with on joint initiatives with Devon & Cornwall Police.

5.33 The Service continues to share good practice and to scope areas of joint improvement. Community Responders (the dual role of a firefighter and special constable) are now permanent shared roles and are an example of innovative working where shared learning and comparison of benefits with other shared roles is undertaken.

5.34 The Authority has a formal partnership agreement in place with South Western Ambulance Service to provide a co-responder medical response (an initial medical provision to stabilise casualties in life-threatening emergencies prior to the arrival of the ambulance service). Work is continuing to review training, procedures, and equipment, with the goal of improving clinical governance as well as improving efficiency and effectiveness. This work is being done collaboratively with South Western Ambulance Service and other fire and rescue service colleagues across the South-West Fire Sector, for both clinical governance and the co responding memorandum of understanding.

Fleet, Equipment and Water Supplies

5.35 The Fleet and Equipment Strategy and plans are agreed for 2023-2028 with vehicle replacements and relocation of vehicles ongoing. The management and maintenance of vehicles and equipment is in accordance with relevant legislation and the National Fire Chiefs Council (NFCC) Best Practice Manual. Vehicle telematics have been installed on all light support vehicles with consideration for introduction on operational vehicles underway. We are collaborating with NFCC on Personal Protective Equipment (PPE) replacement in readiness for changes to PPE within the Service. The Service adopts the National Guidance Document for Water for Fire-fighting purposes and has installed a new hydrant management system.

Estates

5.36 The Service has an Estates strategy for 2024-27.

5.37 The Service's Estate totals 107 buildings / sites (including Fire Stations, training, fleet maintenance, office accommodation, residential properties and storage facilities) of which a number of buildings were constructed within the period where Reinforced Autoclaved Aerated Concrete (RAAC) was frequently used (from the mid-1960's to at least the mid-1980's, as referenced in the "Safety Issues Regarding Reinforced Autoclaved Aerated Concrete (RAAC) - FRS Estates and Assets"). 25 buildings were identified as falling within this time frame. Site inspections confirmed that there was no RAAC present within the main structure of these buildings. As such, we are generally satisfied that there is no risk posed to the Service from RAAC within our existing property portfolio.

Service Improvement and Assurance

5.38 The Fire Standards Board has been set up to oversee the identification, organisation, development, and maintenance of professional standards for fire and rescue services in England. There are currently 16 'live' fire standards. The board has developed an Implementation Tool for each standard to assist fire and rescue services in planning, delivering, and reporting on their implementation. The tools also help services record actions needed to be taken to move towards achieving the desired outcome of each standard and provide a benchmark from which progress can be measured. Each standard has several criteria for department leads to assess against to define what needs to be done to achieve compliance.

5.39 The Service has a Fire Standards SharePoint page where the implementation tool for each standard is hosted. Each of the 16 implementation tools are currently being completed by department leads. The Policy, Procedure and Guidance Team are working with the service HMI team in compiling a master list of requirements from Fire Standards and National Operational Guidance Strategic Actions. This will support a consistent approach to support the Service in achieving compliance against each identified area of partial or non-compliance.

5.40 The Service actively contributes to development of Fire Standards. National changes are communicated via the Fire Standards webpage which is monitored internally by the Fire Standards Point of Contact, to ensure that the Service provides a response to consultations on draft Standards.

5.41 In accordance with the Authority's commitment to public and staff safety, the Operational Assurance team ensures that all learning submitted nationally is positively utilised to review current Service ways of working, implement Service improvements where necessary and to raise awareness across the Service. National and regional learning is fed in and out of the Service via several different pathways which include:

- National Operational Learning.

- Joint Organisational Learning.

- Coroner's Regulation 28 - Prevention of Future Death reports.

- Health and Safety Executive recommendations.

- Local Resilience Forum debriefing focus group.

- South-West Regional Operational Assurance Group.

5.42 The Operational Assurance team is a key stakeholder in a number of these groups which enables the Service to play a vital role in ensuring that all learning received drives positive organisational change in a timely manner. The team also strives to promote a culture where all internal learning and best practice, identified from a variety of activities linked to operational response, is shared, and communicated in a way that supports self-development and organisational improvement. This includes the provision of a dedicated Operational Assurance SharePoint page, publications, posters, and regular updates communicated via our Service forums.

5.43 A process has been developed to enable the effective management of identified learning and outcomes identified through:

- Operational monitoring and feedback.

- Debriefing incidents and training exercises.

- National and regional learning.

- Audit and engagement with all key stakeholders within the Service.

5.44 The Operational Assurance team have also, throughout 2023-24, showcased their system and processes (aligned to the National Operational Learning Good Practice Guide and Fire Standard – Operational Learning), following requests from a wide number of fire and rescue services and partner agencies, which has been extremely well received and appreciated. This engagement is ongoing and has included supporting a number of partner agencies to introduce and implement the Operational Assurance function within their own organisations.

6. People and Culture

6.1 The Service's People Strategy was due for review and refresh in 2022. The process to develop a revised Strategy is now in progress.

6.2 Corporate commitments to equality, diversity and inclusion are set out in the Community Risk Management Plan. The Service has a process in place to ensure that potential equality impacts are identified and mitigated when preparing or reviewing policies and procedures. The process is called Equality Risks and Benefits Analysis and it helps the Service to deliver better services and working practices as well as ensuring compliance with the Public Sector Equality Duty. It sits within a broader assessment, the People Impact Assessment. Besides equality impacts, this assessment also includes impacts on people in relation to wellbeing, data protection, health and safety and safeguarding.

6.3 The Employers Network for Equality & Inclusion benchmarked the Service against Talent, Inclusion, Diversity & Equality and awarded the Service a Silver Award in September 2022.

6.4 In September - October 2021 HMICFRS conducted its second-round full inspection of the Service, with the final report published in July 2022. HMICFRS's assessment of the people pillar was Requires Improvement with a Cause of Concern raised related to culture and behaviour. Whilst the report recognised the commitment of the Executive Board and senior leaders to address this concern, more work needed to be done. Delivery of the action plan to address this concern was monitored by the Service's HMICFRS Governance Board, Executive Board and by the Fire Authority with updates published as part of the Fire Authority papers.

6.5 All actions under the Cause of Concern action plan have now been completed. A recommendation for closure report was approved by the Service's HMICFRS Governance Board and by the Executive Board in March 2024. An update on the actions taken against the cause of concern have been included under the 'Progress on Improving Culture 2022/23' section of our website. The Cause of Concern will now be transitioned into Service business as usual and work to improve organisational culture will continue to be an area of focus.

6.6 On Friday 31 March 2023, HMICFRS published a report into the values and culture in fire and rescue services. The report contains 35 recommendations, 1 specific for the Police, 14 which required action at a national level and 20 which were specific for fire and rescue services. HMICFRS requested a final update from services on the status and progress against each of the recommendations in March 2024. By 19 March 2024 the Service had completed and closed 16 out of the 20 recommendations, with 4 reported as 'In Progress'. These are listed below with a full update published on our website:

- Recommendation 09 Background Checks;
- Recommendation 12 Staff disclosure, complaint and grievance handling standard;
- Recommendation 14 Misconduct allegations standard; and
- Recommendation 32 Diversity in succession planning.

6.7 Speak Up Guardians have been introduced into the Service as an additional route to support all staff to raise concerns safely and confidentially. The Freedom to Speak Up Program was officially launched on 1 June 2023, following extensive research into how the Service could adopt best practice from other organisations including the NHS, Greater Manchester Fire and Rescue Service and resources and training from the National Guardians Office. The team consists of a lead guardian and four additional guardians working within current job roles on a part time basis.

6.8 Quarterly reports are produced which detail the number of concerns raised, themes of concerns, whether from operational or support staff, learning themes and recommendations and next quarter actions. This is shared with the Executive Board and Service Leadership Team, the Speak Up Steering Group, Diversity & Inclusion Committee and to all staff via a Shout Out update.

6.9 The Service is collaborating with peers to develop a national speak up network.

Commitment to Health and Safety

6.10 The Authority recognises and accepts its responsibility for the health, safety and welfare of its employees and others who may be affected by its activities.

6.11 Detailed health, safety and welfare arrangements are set out in Service policies developed to take account of relevant legislation and guidance, including the Health and Safety Executive's HSG65 methodology. The policies provide staff with relevant and comprehensive information on the risks they face, and the preventative, and protective measures required to control them. They also identify the roles and responsibilities of duty holders who have a responsibility to ensure that measures are implemented.

6.12 Procedures are in place to report all safety events, allocate an investigator and where required make recommendations for corrective action to be completed. In order to improve the timely management of safety event investigations, a further 20 accident investigators have been trained during this reporting period and approval given to recruit two casual contract accident investigators. The Health and Safety team operate a business partnering model with the Service Delivery Response Groups, liaising with Health and Safety Points of Contact. This approach supports proactive management of ongoing safety event investigations and wider safety management systems. In addition, raising awareness of positive safety culture is delivered during Watch Manager, Station Manager and Group Manager development sessions.

6.13 Further improvements to the critical messaging process have been made. This includes the development of a dashboard report which supports managers in monitoring that their teams have taken the necessary action. The Service has assurance that staff read and understand risk critical messages and apply the required changes, and managers have the means to closely monitor completion.

6.14 Systems for monitoring the effectiveness of the Service's Health and Safety Management procedures are in place; this includes the following proactive and reactive monitoring:
- air sampling on station of diesel engine exhaust emissions;
- legionella testing;
- provision of accident and near miss incident data to the Strategic Safety Committee;
- annual completion of premises Health, Safety and Welfare Assessment Report Forms;
- annual review of fire risk assessments for Service premises; and
- a means to conduct targeted or full audits of the Service's Health and Safety management systems.

6.15 The Service has a Strategic Safety Committee which meets quarterly to monitor the health, safety and welfare of employees as per section 2(7) of the Health and Safety at Work Act 1974. All representative bodies (trades unions) recognised by the Authority, i.e. the Fire Brigades Union, the Fire and Rescue Services Association, the Fire Officers Association and UNISON, are invited to sit on this committee.

6.16 The Authority's People Committee receives regular reports on the Health, Safety and Wellbeing of the Service. These reports help the committee to monitor and scrutinise performance in these areas on behalf of the Authority.

6.17 The Health and Safety Manager attends the National Fire Chiefs Council Health & Safety meetings and chairs the regional National Fire Chiefs Council Health & Safety meetings.

6.18 An independent review of the Service's safety management system, compliance, safety culture, and health and safety resource and structure was completed in 2022. Following this, approval was given in August 2023 to a revised structure for the Health and Safety Team. Recommendations from the independent review are in the process of being implemented with 20 of the 41 recommendations fully completed. The remaining recommendations will be progressed through 2024-25.

6.19 Regular monitoring of risk assessments by the Service Leadership Team has been established to ensure that the Service has relevant risk assessments that are suitable, sufficient and within review. Work to align the operational risk assessments with National Operational Guidance has been completed. This work and a review of the Estates risk assessments has significantly reduced the number of overall risk assessments being managed.

6.20 In June 2022, occupational exposure as a firefighter was classified as "carcinogenic to humans" (Lancet, 2022). This classification followed a 2020 report by the University of Central Lancashire (UCLan) which aimed to investigate rates of cancer and other diseases in UK firefighters; understand the long-term health effects of fire contaminants; and find ways to reduce exposure to contaminants in fire and rescue service work. The Service's Contaminants working group has actively progressed Phase 1 of the contaminants project. This included hygiene packs provided on appliances and Flexi Duty Officer vehicles, and the provision of procedures, information and instruction that reduce / mitigate the risk from contaminants. The project is moving to scope the requirements for Phase 2. Progress is monitored by Portfolio Board and Strategic Safety Committee.

7 Governance

7.1 The Authority has approved and adopted a Code of Corporate Governance, consistent with the principles of the Chartered Institute of Public Finance and Accountancy (CIPFA) / Society of Local Authority Chief Executives framework "Delivering Good Governance in Local Government". A copy of the Code is on the Authority's website or can be obtained from the Clerk to the Authority. This Annual Statement of Assurance explains how the Authority has complied with the Code.

7.2 The Authority's governance arrangements have the following key elements:

(1) The Authority was constituted under the Devon and Somerset Fire and Rescue Authority (Combination Scheme) Order 2006. The Authority has strategic responsibility for discharging fire and rescue authority functions for the combined area with the day-to-day responsibility resting with the Chief Fire Officer and other Officers within the Executive Board.

(2)   During the 2023-24 financial year, the Authority comprised 25 Members appointed by the constituent authorities (Devon County Council, Somerset Council, Plymouth City Council and Torbay Council). In addition, the Authority has appointed two "independent persons" as part of its arrangements for dealing with standards issues in accordance with the requirements of the Localism Act 2011 and recommendations made by the Committee on Standards in Public Life following its review of local government ethical standards.

(3)   The following governance structure operated during this reporting period:

- Resources Committee (7 Members)

- People Committee (7 Members)

- Audit & Governance Committee (9 Members)

- Community Safety Committee (7 Members)

- Shareholders Committee (7 Members – established 16 February 2024 but did not meet in this financial year)

- Appointments and Disciplinary Committee (4 Members)

- Appeals Committee (4 Members)

(4)   The Authority approves its Strategic Policy Objectives. The focus of the committees is to scrutinise and monitor Service performance in achieving the Strategic Policy Objectives in the areas for which the committees are responsible. The full terms of reference for all Authority committees can be found here. The committee structure (including terms of reference) is subject to annual review but may also be amended in-year as required.

(5)   The Authority, committees, and the Executive Board are provided with high-level indicators and analytical reporting by exception, to ensure governance and oversight of service provision and performance.

(6)   The Audit & Governance Committee broadly operates in accordance with CIPFA's Position Statement: Audit Committees in Local Authorities and Police 2022. At its meeting on 26 September 2022, the Authority approved the appointment of two independent co-opted members to the Committee in accordance with the revised position statement on audit committees published by CIPFA in July 2022. The two independent co-opted members joined the Committee in April 2023.

(7)   The Audit & Governance Committee provides an additional level of review and scrutiny of the Authority's internal and external audit arrangements, corporate governance and risk arrangements and financial statements. The Committee also has responsibility for discharging the Authority's member conduct arrangements as required by the Localism Act 2011 and monitors the operation of the Authority's strategy for the prevention and detection of fraud and corruption and policy and usage in relation to the Regulation of Investigatory Powers (RIPA) Act 2000.

(8) The Authority has [a constitutional governance framework](#) which includes the following documents:

- Members and Officers Accountabilities, Roles and Responsibilities
- Standing orders
- Financial Regulations
- Treasury Management Policy
- Contract Standing Orders
- Scheme of Delegations
- Members Code of Conduct
- Protocol for Member / Officer Relations
- Policy on Gifts and Hospitality
- Scheme of Members Allowances
- Corporate Governance Code
- Confidential Reporting Policy (Whistleblowing" Code)
- Strategy on the prevention and Detection of Fraud and Corruption
- Code of Recommended Practice on Local Authority Publicity

(9) These documents, except for the Code of Recommended Practice on Local Authority Publicity (which is a national document issued by the Government under Section 4 of the Local Government Act 1986), are subject to review at least annually and are updated as and when necessary to reflect legislative change, organisational change or best practice to ensure they remain up-to-date and fit for purpose.

(10) Compliance with the seven principles of public life (the Nolan principles) form part of and underpin the Member Code of Conduct which the Authority is required to have by virtue of the Localism Act 2011. Service Officers are guided by the Service values and the National Fire Chief Council's Code of Ethics

(11) The Treasurer is responsible for ensuring that effective financial stewardship is in place across the Service in conducting the business of the Authority. The Authority's financial management arrangements conform to the governance requirements of the "CIPFA Statement on the Role of the Chief Financial Officer in Local Government".

(12) The statutory functions of the Proper Financial Officer (as per Section 112 of the Local Government Finance Act 1988) and Monitoring Officer (as per Section 5 of the Local Government and Housing Act 1989) provide a source of assurance that the Authority's systems of governance and internal control are effective and being complied with.

(13) The Fire Authority governance specifically includes procurement and commercial activities through the Contract Standing Orders as the policy framework and the procurement team reviews all third-party expenditure and manages contracts above £20,000 in value. The Service has a procurement and commercial strategy outlining its category management approach, aims and priorities. The Service utilises national systems for spend analysis, tendering and contract management and undertakes lead roles on the National Fire Chiefs Council strategic commercial board working collaboratively across the blue light services in support of the duty to collaborate. The Service has agreed procurement and contractual documentation based on national model terms and conditions and contract management arrangements in place. The service adheres to all requirements to provide transparency data regarding contracts and expenditure, modern slavery, and social value governance in the management of procurement, contract, and commercial activities. The Procurement Team have been undertaking training for the implementation of the Procurement Act 2023.

(14) To ensure that the Authority understands the potential risks regarding funding, a number of scenarios are published within the Medium Term Financial Plan demonstrating the possible funding position for the next 5 years. This is published alongside the underpinning: Reserves Strategy; Capital Strategy; and the Community Risk Management Plan.

(15) The Devon Audit Partnership audit of the Medium Term Financial Plan 2023-24 highlighted the following for inclusion in the Annual Governance Statement: "In terms of this audit, we highlight the need to ensure the continued alignment of the Community Risk Management Plan and the Medium Term Financial Plan, given the longer lifecycle of the Community Risk Management Plan, and the financial fragility of the capital programme over the longer term." The Medium Term Financial Plan is an important strategic tool in identifying potential budget shortfalls in the medium-term. Progress against the Medium Term Financial Plan is reported, quarterly, to the Resources Committee to ensure the importance is maintained and progress understood.

(16) It is a statutory requirement under the Accounts and Audit (England) Regulations 2015 for authorities to publish the financial results of their activities for the year. The 'Statement of Accounts', shows the annual costs of providing the Service and is determined by a Code of Practice published by CIPFA, which aims to give a "true and fair" view of the financial position and transactions of the Authority. The Treasurer is responsible for the approval of the Statement of Accounts prior to publication.

(17) To meet the requirements of the regulations, the draft Statement of Accounts is published by the end of September with the final audited Statement of Accounts published once the audit process has been completed.

(18) The 2023-24 External Audit provision was provided by Bishop Fleming. The scope of the External Audit work includes the Accounting Statements, Whole of Government Accounts and a commentary on Value for Money arrangements. No significant issues have arisen to date from the External Audit work completed for the 2023-24 financial year.

(19) The Service's overall efficiency rating was Good in the 2022 HMICFRS inspection report. The Service was assessed as Good at making best use of its resources and Requires Improvement at making the service affordable now and in the future.

(20) Project and programme arrangements are in place to ensure robust decision making for change activity. These arrangements include use of the HM Treasury Five Case model and monthly programme and portfolio boards with associated highlight reports to commission, initiate and manage projects. The Service is also in the process of determining a high-level target state that it will actively work towards over the next five years. This will allow any changes to be viewed in line with the longer term vision and aspirations of the Service. The Service also recognises that some change activity remains outside of this process and is reviewing lessons learned to improve the alignment of the management within the programme and project governance and that within business as usual activity.

(21) On 23 October 2020 the Authority supported the declaration of a Climate Emergency and agreed the Environmental Strategy with commitment to the Emergency Services Environmental and Sustainability Charter. The Service has a green goal to be carbon net zero by 2030 and carbon positive by 2050. The Service's carbon footprint (scope 1 and 2 and an expanded scope 3) have been published and are reported in the statement of accounts.

(22) The Service's environmental action plan is aligned to ISO14001 with a Strategic Environmental Board, policy, and procedures in place. The environmental legislation, and aspects register has been reviewed to reflect changes within the Environmental Act 2021. The Service has introduced electric vehicles and charging points, developed a heating decarbonisation plan and been successful in securing grant funding to deliver environmental plans. The Service behaviour change initiatives focus on carbon reductions, environmental protection, and climate change impacts.

(23) The effective management of risk is critical for the Service to ensure that it maintains services and continues to progress effectively towards achieving its strategic objectives. The risk management framework provides a structured way to deal with uncertainty which can help everyone in the Service to manage their area effectively.

(24) The Service risk registers are populated and reviewed periodically. This process in turn informs the corporate risk register. Risks are only escalated to the corporate risk register if they cannot be managed or mitigated at department level. The Service risk management framework includes the risk escalation and de-escalation process that ensures that risks are considered at appropriate levels within the Service.

(25) The corporate risk register is reviewed by the Extended Leadership Team monthly (dependent on the level of risk) to ensure that risks to the Authority's strategic objectives and corporate plans are appropriately identified and managed, with cross reference to the national risk register where relevant. Horizon scanning supports deep dive risk identification and assessment. The corporate risk register is presented to the Audit & Governance committee every six months.

(26) The introduction of the SharpCloud software solution has facilitated greatly enhanced risk visualisation which has led to greater engagement across the Service in the effective management of risk.

(27) The Authority maintains comprehensive insurance cover to support its management of organisational risk. The Authority is a member of the Fire and Rescue Indemnity Company (FRIC), the mutual protection provider that has 14 fire and rescue authority members and has achieved a surplus every year since it was formed. This is a significant result for FRIC and shows what can be achieved when fire authorities collaborate in an innovative and mutually beneficial manner. The surplus generated can be retained to support further improvements, drive better risk management and deliver lower costs for FRIC's members, or as is the case in 2022-23 and 2023-24, returned to members.

(28) The Authority has a statutory responsibility to conduct business continuity as mandated in The Civil Contingencies Act 2004. The strategic business continuity policy sets out the corporate business continuity management structure and goals for business continuity assessment, training and exercising. The business continuity framework details how the Service will respond to specific disruptions. 30 tactical business continuity plans ensure that the Service is prepared for a range of threats and challenges. The Service embraces the principles of 'Plan, Do, Check, and Act' and aligns with aspects of the ISO: 22301 (Societal Security – business continuity management systems and requirements). The Business Continuity Manager is responsible for providing specialist advice and guidance on business continuity management issues, including the co-ordination, development, implementation and review of business continuity plans, processes and procedures.

(29) The Fire & Rescue Authority resolved on 31 October 2023 to support internal reform of the Data, Digital and Technology department as opposed to outsourcing the function to DELT Shared Services Ltd. Since that time, the department has been focusing on reviewing its structure and functions alongside the revised strategic vision. The department has made great strides in making changes that allow them to support the Service more effectively. Full restructure has seen five key functions evolve; Business Relationship Management, Service Delivery, Information Governance, Development and Data, Insights and Analytics. These functions have had all roles reviewed and new roles created to allow them to fully support Service needs.

(30) Clear focus for the department has been given on four main areas;
- Improvement of customer service;
- Cyber resilience and awareness;
- Data driven insights with clear standards and data sets; and

- Improvements on processes and automation.

(31) The Information Governance function oversees three specialist disciplines: Information Security, Information Compliance and Records Management.

(32) Processes are in place to respond to Subject Access Requests and Freedom of Information requests. 94% of Subject Access Requests received were processed within the legislative timescale. Excluding the Freedom of Information requests that were withdrawn or declined, 96% were processed within the legislative timescale.

(33) The Authority complies with the Government's 'Local Government Transparency Code 2015' for releasing public data. The following arrangements are in place:
- A Freedom of Information Publication Scheme
- Publication of the annual statement of accounts
- Publication of all expenditure over £500
- Publication of all Government Procurement Card transactions
- Publication of Procurement Information
- Publication of spend on Agency Staff and Consultants
- Publication of land ownership
- Publication of Trade Union facility time
- Publication of a Pay Policy Statement including all senior employee salaries and pay multiple comparators
- Publication of fraud investigations
- Publication of Members' allowances and expenses
- Publication of External Audit reports
- Publication of all committee reports and minutes (other than those where a statutory exemption for publication applies).

The Service demonstrates compliance with this and other information legislation on the Service's website.

(34) The department has applied renewed focus on the importance of cyber security and resilience. There is now a clear plan in place for 2024-25 to allow focus in this area.

(35) The Service completed its annual IT Health Check and also completed the Cyber Assurance Framework in October 2023. The outcomes and actions from these exercises are being aligned to the ISO50001 standards to ensure that robust standards and systems are being put in place.

(36) The Protective Security Group provides strategic oversight of the Service's approach to security of information, people and physical assets, aligned to the HMG Security Policy Framework.

(37) A robust governance framework has been implemented to manage oversight of delivery of the action plan to address the findings of the HMICFRS inspection report and Cause of Concern. This includes an HMICFRS Governance Board which reports to Executive Board.

(38) Complaints or concerns about the Service received from a member of the public are managed in accordance with the Complaints policy. Where appropriate, complaints will be resolved informally as a concern. If the complainant is either not happy with the local resolution or if the complaint needs further investigation, it will be processed as a formal complaint. During 2023-24 the Service received 64 complaints and concerns, compared with 49 last year. For one complaint, there were two independent complainants, and this has been counted as one complaint. Of these, 31 were successfully resolved as concerns, 13 were out of scope (such as civil, insurance, or a police matter) and 20 were (or are being) handled under the complaint process. Of the 20 complaints, four were upheld with a further four partially upheld. Six were dismissed and six were unable to progress. One was unable to progress due to lack of information and contact from the complainant, the other five were transitioned to HR processes because of evidence uncovered in the complaint investigation. Numbers, themes and outcomes of complaints are monitored in performance reports for the Communications and Engagement department which are regularly shared with the senior management team. In August, the unreasonable behaviour policy and procedure were published.

(39) The Service has not received any Whistleblowing alerts during 2023-24.

(40) There have been no Code of Conduct breaches in 2023-24.

(41) The Authority participates in the biennial National Fraud Initiative (NFI). 26 errors were identified in the 2022-23 report. 11 of these were due to duplicate payments, with 10 rectified prior to identification through NFI matching. The other payment of £1,854 was recovered as a result of identification through the NFI process. The remaining 15 errors were duplicate creditors which were subsequently removed from Integra, the Service's payment system. Management actions were agreed to prevent a recurrence of this issue.

(42) The Authority has a process for internal auditing and is a partner of Devon Audit Partnership who provide the internal audit service. Devon Audit Partnership conforms to the governance requirements of the CIPFA Statement on the Role of the Head of Internal Audit in public service organisations.

(43) The 2023-24 Internal Audit Plan sets out the planned audit coverage for the year. In accordance with the Public Sector Internal Audit Standards, the plan was flexible to be able to reflect and respond to the changing risks and priorities of the Authority. Delivery of the plan, and implementation of the management action taken to address the recommendations made, is reported to the Executive Board and to the Audit & Governance Committee at scheduled meetings throughout the year.

(44) Based on the completed audit work, the [Head of Internal Audit's opinion](#) on the adequacy and effectiveness of the Authority's internal control framework in 2023-24 is one of 'Reasonable Assurance'. This means that "There are generally sound systems of governance, risk management and control in place across the organisation. Some issues, non-compliance or scope for improvement were identified which may put at risk the achievement of some of the strategic and operational objectives."

(45) Red One Ltd. was established in 2012 to allow the Authority to deliver commercial activities within the legislative framework that applies. This is a standalone company that manages its own affairs whilst reporting to the single shareholder, the Fire Authority. It is not managed by the Service.

(46) During the reporting year, the Authority's Audit & Governance Committee considered risks and, where necessary, audit concerns raised in relation to Red One Ltd., whilst the Resources Committee monitored financial performance on a quarterly basis.

(47) The Authority has taken legal advice to ensure compliance with legislative requirements and to ensure effective governance arrangements for Red One Ltd., which were enhanced in January 2018 by the appointment of independent non-executive directors. Governance arrangements were further enhanced in July 2018 by the adoption of revised Articles of Association, which strengthened the composition of the Board to include a mix of: Authority Member non-executive directors; independent non-executive directors; Service officer non-executive directors and company appointed executive directors. In June 2022 the Authority commissioned a governance review from Devon Audit Partnership which assessed the degree of conformity to CIPFA's best practice guide on Local Authority owned companies and made recommendations on areas for improvement.

(48) The Authority established a Shareholder Committee in February 2024 in accordance with the recommendation made by this independent review. Going forwards, this Shareholder Committee will provide the necessary oversight from a shareholder perspective and will afford a formal route for the Authority and, where appropriate, Statutory Officers, to have an active, strategic role in the direction of the company and provide proportionate oversight and scrutiny of its affairs. The aim is to ensure that the objectives and policies that the Authority, as the sole shareholder, has established for the company are being adhered to. This is in addition to the Annual General Meeting which Red One Ltd. holds with the Authority as its sole shareholder.

8   Future Improvements

8.1   The following areas for improvement remain the Service's key areas of focus throughout 2024-25:

- Implementation of an Information Governance Framework.

- Implementation of a more effective approach to information governance.

- Implementation of effective policy management.

- Ensuring that the Service's planning processes integrate performance, projects and risk so that all activity is aligned to the corporate priorities to reduce duplication of effort and to performance manage the Service.

- Improving the integrity of data to support the effective implementation of the performance framework and the systems supporting this.

- Aligning resources to risk and prioritising prevention and protection activity.

- Improving the Service's processes and systems for the management of assets.

- Responding to the requirements of the Environmental Act 2021 and other environmental legislation and working to achieve plans to be carbon neutral by 2030 and carbon positive by 2050.

- Ensuring that the Service has the appropriate resource, capacity, structure, health and safety management framework and assurance systems to ensure compliance with its statutory health and safety duties and to ensure that all staff, both uniformed and non-uniformed, are able to be healthy and safe at work when undertaking their duties.

- Ensuring the financial sustainability of the Service.

- Development of a refreshed People Strategy.

- Ensuring that the Service has robust cyber security arrangements in place.

9   Conclusion

9.1   The Authority is satisfied that the systems and processes that are in place across the organisation fulfil the requirements of the Fire and Rescue National Framework for England.

9.2   The Authority's assurance arrangements have identified some areas for improvement in its governance, finance, and operational arrangements. The Authority is satisfied that the issues identified are appropriate and that steps are already in place to address them. The Audit & Governance Committee will receive updates on the implementation of the improvement areas set out in this document annually, through the updated action plan attached in Appendix A to this report.

CHIEF FIRE OFFICER   **CHAIR, AUDIT AND GOVERNANCE COMMITTEE**

Identified Issue	Action Needed	Lead Officer	Update	Status
Information Governance Framework An Information Governance (IG) Framework that incorporates records management principles needs to be implemented across the Service.	Develop and implement the IG Framework.	Head of Data, Digital & Technology	The Information Governance Strategy and Framework remains to be developed.	2024-25 Q4
Information governance The approach to information governance is driven at department level rather than taking an enterprise approach to how information is managed across the Service. This leads to difficulty for employees easily finding accurate and up to date information when required. This also impedes the ability to lead to smarter working practices.	As part of the Microsoft 365 (MS365) project, an enterprise wide approach to information management will be developed which will form the basis of the new Intranet.	Head of Data, Digital & Technology	Data classification pilot test completed, currently being reviewed and will be rolled out across the Service. A structural and strategic review of how the Service has implemented MS365 to date has been completed. A work plan has been created to focus on the structural architecture of M365 and Intranet; this will go out to third party suppliers to bid on. The work plan will focus on agreeing the new structure and implementation of recommendations, whilst also reviewing all permissions and groups in M365. Once completed we will review and add retention policies.	2024-25 Q3

Identified Issue	Action Needed	Lead Officer	Update	Status
Service Policy Management Improvements are required to ensure that the Service has an effective policy framework, effective document lifecycle management and compliance with the latest accessibility standards.	As part of the Microsoft 365 rollout: • Deliver new policy template repository with automated document management information reporting on the policy lifecycle. • Enable automatic publication of policies to the website to decrease the Freedom of Information (FOI) response burden. • Implement an improved mechanism to store documents to enable easier location by employees.	Head of Data, Digital & Technology	The Policy Management System was accepted into Service in April 2022. Work continues to transition policies onto the new templates and update the metadata to reflect changes at Information Asset Owner level. A performance dashboard of policies and procedures has been developed and can be accessed using Power BI. It will also be hosted on the Service Strategic Portal. A review of which policies are open under FOI is outstanding as part of the ongoing metadata updates referenced in point one.	2024-25 Q3 Complete 2024-25 Q1
Planning, Performance and Continuous Improvement In order to ensure that all activity is aligned to the strategic objectives, vision and purpose, the Service's planning processes need to integrate with performance, projects and risk.	Improve the planning and performance management framework to ensure that all activities are aligned to corporate priorities to reduce duplication of effort and to performance manage the Service.	Area Manager Corporate Planning, Analysis and Strategic Business Change	A revised planning and performance framework is in the process of being developed with work now focussed on developing the underlying processes.	2024-25 Q1

Identified Issue	Action Needed	Lead Officer	Update	Status
Data integrity Work is required to improve the integrity of data and to ensure proportionate and robust controls on data to: promote valid data at the point of capture; maintain up to date, accurate records; enable the exploitation of external data sources, particularly in relation to location and premises data; and ensure consistency in reporting information.	• Map the data requirements for the Service and where these are held. • Agree data owners. • Develop automated reporting.	Head of Data, Digital & Technology (DDaT)	Data mapping has started and is ongoing. In addition to this piece of work we are also mapping all systems alongside data to ensure we understand the full picture. Clarity being sought in terms of data owners. The work to review data is in terms of what is captured and how, and cleansed, as it is migrated from old to new systems is ongoing. The next step will be for us to complete a data and information strategy to ensure that we have a clear direction for the Service in this area. The Executive Board has approved a recommendation on reporting, focused on a 24 month plan to fully move to Power BI. This project will focus on move of KPIs to Power BI within a 12 month period. This will also enable automated reporting functionality. Closer working relationships between the Strategic Analysis Team and Information and Data Exploitation Team have been started with a view to securing greater collaboration and clarity across the Service.	2024-25 Q2

Identified Issue	Action Needed	Lead Officer	Update	Status
Aligning resources to risk and prioritising prevention and protection activity. We need to ensure that we allocate our resources for response, prevention and protection in a way that best reflects the risks to our communities, prioritising our prevention and protection work to prevent fires and other emergencies from occurring, but being able to respond when emergencies do happen.	• Review the Community Safety Plan to ensure that the most vulnerable communities are being prioritised through our prevention work. • Review the Service Delivery strategic plan to ensure that resources are deployed to support efficiency and effectiveness of all response, prevention and protection activity.	Area Manager Service Delivery - Community Safety / Ops Risk	The Community Safety Plan has been reviewed to ensure that we continue to target the most vulnerable members of society by using a triaged approach. We are in the process of procuring a new IT system which will be rolled out later this year. It is hoped that this will enable efficiencies in work output and better access to data to prioritise cases accordingly. We have temporarily 'paused' incoming referrals for Home Fire Safety Visits until Summer 2024 to allow us to focus on reducing our oldest and most vulnerable cases (this excludes any 'blue light' or Safeguarding referrals). The Service Delivery Strategic Plan is currently being reviewed.	Complete 2024-25 Q3 2024-25 Q2 2024-25 Q2
Integrated Service Asset Register (Fleet and Operational Equipment) An integrated fleet and operational service asset register needs to be developed and embedded to ensure that all assets are effectively recorded and managed to provide	• Implement Phase 2 of the asset management implementation project. • Implement Phase 3 of the asset management project.	Head of Fleet, Equipment and Procurement	Phase 1 and Phase 2 is complete and the final stage 3 which is introduction of hardware device for barcode reading, data migration, integration with internal systems and application for equipment maintenance and station-based testing is in progress for delivery in 2024. Intention is to transfer	2024-25 Q1 (Phase 3)

Identified Issue	Action Needed	Lead Officer	Update	Status
consistent data to inform replacement plans and ensure operational assets are fit for purpose.			all individual log-books to an electronic system.	
Environmental Strategy The UK has a legislative commitment to be net zero (carbon neutral) by 2050. The Service will need to respond to the requirements of the Environmental Act 2021 and environmental legislation. The Service response will need to mitigate against changing environmental threats.	The three main projects for carbon reductions are: • Reducing electricity and gas consumption. • Introduction of vehicle telematics. • Alternatively fuelled vehicles and electric charging points. The next phase of actions include: • Implementation of electric vehicles and charging infrastructure for phase 2. • Procurement and planning for heating decarbonisation for Middlemoor and Greenbank. • Developing further opportunities for grant funding. • Planning for the waste digital tracking legislative changes.	Head of Fleet, Equipment and Procurement.	Work continues to deliver the environmental action plan. Achievements to date include: • Environmental strategy, Board, policy and procedures and action plan. • eLearning, behaviour change initiatives on climate change, carbon reductions and environmental protection. • Reduction of light support vehicles following introduction of telematics • Reduction in scope 1 and 2 of the carbon footprint and inclusion of new areas for scope 3. • Successful application for Low Carbon Skills Fund of £95,000 to develop a heating decarbonisation plan for 13 sites. • Successful application for Public Sector Decarbonisation Scheme for £325,090 for Middlemoor and Greenbank stations.	2024-25 Q4

Identified Issue	Action Needed	Lead Officer	Update	Status
Health and Safety The Service needs to ensure that it has the appropriate resource, capacity, structure, health and safety management framework and assurance systems to ensure compliance with its statutory Health and Safety duties and to ensure that all staff, both uniformed and non-uniformed, are able to be healthy and safe at work when undertaking their duties.	Strategic health and safety improvement plan to be developed and implemented.	Head of Organisational Assurance	An independent (external) review of the Service's safety management system, compliance, safety culture, and health and safety resource and structure has been completed. Recommendations from the independent review are in the process of being implemented with 20 of the 41 recommendations fully completed. The remaining recommendations will be progressed through 2024-25. Approval was given in August 2023 to a revised structure for the Health and Safety Team. Approval was also given to recruit two casual contract accident investigators with the aim to improve the timely completion of our more significant safety event investigations and increase the quality of resulting recommendations.	2024-25 Q4
Ensuring the financial sustainability of the Service. There is a need to ensure that the Service designs and implements a service delivery model and supporting infrastructure that is affordable and meets the needs of the communities that it serves.	Implement the Target Operating Model and ensure that the underpinning plans meet the medium-term financial plan.	Chief Fire Officer	The Service has identified four key areas of change to underpin the requirements of the medium-term financial plan ensuring a balanced budget for 2024-25 by reducing operating costs. They are: • Review of whole-time shift patterns. • Review of the operating model for specialist rescue.	2024-25 Q4

Identified Issue	Action Needed	Lead Officer	Update	Status
			• Review of the on call pay system (P4A). • Reduction of Automatic Fire Alarms. Further detailed planning work is taking place to ensure the direction of travel to achieve the target operating model is delivered whilst also ensuring future financial sustainability.	
People Strategy There is a need to develop a refreshed People Strategy that is designed in collaboration with the workforce in line with the requirements of the Fire and Rescue National Framework for England 2018.	People Strategy to be developed.	Head of People Services	The process to develop a revised Strategy is now in progress.	2024-25 Q3
Data, Digital & Technology The Service needs to determine the future direction for digital services in consultation with the Fire Authority.	Determine permanent leadership structure for the department. Develop the business case which will explore the possible delivery models for digital services for presentation to the Fire Authority.	Director of Finance & Corporate Services	Fire Authority agreement to reform internally. New department structure has been completed and new functions created. Update to Fire Authority published on the website.	Complete
Cyber The Service needs to ensure that it has robust cyber security arrangements in place.	Implement the cyber security and resilience improvement plan.	Head of Data, Digital & Technology (DDaT)	New action for 2024-25.	2024-25 Q4