



Local Government Act 1972

A Meeting of the Combined Fire Authority for County Durham and Darlington will be held in the Morton Room, Fire and Rescue Headquarters on Friday 17 September 2021 at 10.00 am to consider the following business:-

PART A

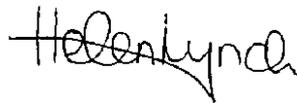
1. Chief Fire Officer Commendation
2. Declarations of interest, if any
If Members are aware of a private or personal conflict of interest in relation to any items on the Agenda, this should be disclosed at this stage or when the conflict of interest arises during consideration of an item in accordance with the Code of Conduct for Members
3. Minutes of the meeting held on 20 July 2021 (Pages 3 - 8)
4. Current Correspondence - Report of Assistant Chief Fire Officer (Pages 9 - 14)
5. Notes of the Performance Committee - Report of Chair (Pages 15 - 32)
6. Statement of Assurance 2020/21 - Report of Deputy Chief Executive (Pages 33 - 50)
7. Her Majesty's Inspectorate of Constabulary and Fire and Rescue Services Update - Report of Area Manager Assets and Assurance (Pages 51 - 62)
8. Update on the Service's Response to Covid-19 - Report of Chief Fire Officer (Pages 63 - 68)
9. Apprenticeship, Predicted Costings and Income Generation - Report of Group Manager Training (Pages 69 - 72)
10. Core Code of Ethics - Report of Assistant Chief Fire Officer (Pages 73 - 92)
11. Our People Project - Creating a Corporate Narrative - Report of Communications Manager (Pages 93 - 94)
12. Such other business as, in the opinion of the Chairman of the meeting, is of sufficient urgent to warrant consideration
13. Any resolution relating to the exclusion of the public during the discussion of items containing exempt information

Part B

Items during which it is considered the meeting will not be open to the public (consideration of exempt or confidential information)

14. Update on Business Continuity and Resilience - Report of Deputy Chief Fire Officer (Pages 95 - 142)
15. Such other business as, in the opinion of the Chairman of the meeting, is of sufficient urgency to warrant consideration

PURSUANT to the provisions of the above named Act, **I HEREBY SUMMON YOU** to attend the said meeting



H LYNCH

Clerk to the Combined Fire Authority
for County Durham and Darlington

County Hall
Durham
DH1 5UL

TO: The Members of the Combined Fire Authority for County Durham and Darlington

Durham County Councillors:

Councillors J Atkinson, B Avery, A Batey, R Bell, J Cairns, T Duffy, C Hampson, N Jones, B Kellett, L Kennedy, R Manchester, C Marshall, L Mavin, I McLean, M McGaun, J Quinn, S Quinn, G Richardson, K Rooney, J Shuttleworth, S Zair

Darlington Borough Councillors:

Councillors H Crumbie, B Jones, G Lee and A J Scott.

At a **meeting** of the **Combined Fire Authority for County Durham and Darlington** held at **Council Hall, Durham** on **Thursday 20 July 2021** at 10.00 am.

Present:

Durham County Councillors:

Councillors J Atkinson, B Avery, A Batey, J Cairns, T Duffy, C Hampson, N Jones, L Kennedy, R Manchester, C Marshall, L Mavin, I McLean, M McGaun, J Quinn, S Quinn, G Richardson, J Shuttleworth, S Zair

Darlington Borough Councillors:

Councillor H Crumbie, G Lee and A Scott

Apologies for absence were received from Councillors R Bell, B Kellett, C Marshall, K Rooney, B Jones

There were no substitutions.

A1 Declarations of Interest

There were no declarations of interest.

A2 Minutes of previous meeting

The Minutes of the meeting held on 10 June 2021 were confirmed as a correct record and signed by the Chair (for copy see file of minutes).

A3 Current Correspondence

The Authority received an update from the Assistant Chief Fire Officer in relation to current correspondence received from government and other bodies relevant to the Authority and the status of each (for copy see file of minutes).

A4 Committee Membership

The Authority considered a report of the Clerk to approve the Committee Membership for the Authority for 2021/22.

The political balance of the Pensions Board was highlighted and discussed. Cllr Atkinson proposed as Labour representative, seconded by Cllr Batey.

Resolved:

- i. **Approved** the Committee membership for 2021/22 for:
 - a. Appointments Panel
 - b. Appeals Committee
 - c. Audit and Finance Committee
 - d. Human Resources Committee
 - e. Performance Committee
 - f. Joint Consultative Committee

- g. Pension Board
 - h. Salary Review Group
- ii. **Agreed** that the Clerk in consultation with the Chair and Vice Chair of the Authority and the appropriate Group Leader be authorised to make any changes to the Committees that may arise during 2021/22.

A5 Member Champions

The Authority considered a report of the Assistant Chief Fire Officer informing Members of the appointment of Member Champions and to provide details of Officer contacts for each Member Champion role for the forthcoming two-year period.

Resolved:

- i. the list of Member Champions were approved

A6 Member Buddy System and Affiliation with Fire Stations

The Authority considered a report of Assistant Chief Fire Officer confirming the Service Leadership Team (SLT) contacts for the Member 'Buddy' arrangements and the fire station affiliation list.

Resolved:

- i. The Member Buddy and Station Affiliation list as set out in Appendices A and B was noted.

A7 Member Code of Conduct

The Authority received a report from the Clerk inviting members to approve a revised Code of Conduct for Members of the Authority.

Resolved:

- i. The revised Code of Conduct for Members was adopted.

A8 Member Induction

The Authority received a report from the Policy Support Officer setting out the proposed arrangements for the Combined Fire Authority (CFA) Member inductions

Resolved:

- i. Arrangements for Member Induction noted and agreed.

A9 Independent Persons Report

The Authority was presented with a report from the Clerk informing the Authority of the resignation of Mr Andrew Simpson as the Independent Person and to determine whether a recruitment exercise should be undertaken to fill the vacancy.

Debate took place regarding options outlined in paragraph 8 of the report. As there was no consensus for option 1, 2 or 3, a vote was conducted.

Resolved:

- i. The resignation of Andrew Simpson as the Independent Person was noted and he was thanked for his support to the Authority
- ii. Options set out in paragraph 8 of the report considered and option 3 to be taken forward following a majority vote
- iii. A recruitment exercise to be undertaken that this be in accordance with paragraph 9 of the report.

Action: Further report to be presented at a future CFA meeting providing an update.

A10 Performance Report Quarter Four 2020/21

The Authority received a report from the Area Manager, Community Risk Management presenting a summary of organisational performance at the end of the fourth quarter of the 2020/21 financial year.

It was highlighted that there is a downward trend on the number of dwelling fires and the Service is focusing on reducing the number of deliberate fires.

Cllr Atkinson asked about the difference between arson and vandalism and how this can be addressed through the criminal justice system. Clarification was provided, highlighting that multi-agency work is taking place to tackle the issue.

Cllr Lee raised concerns around the number of false alarms which are outside the AFA system. Members were assured that measures are in place to try to reduce the number of false alarms received.

He also raised shifts lost at corporate level. ACFO Nattrass explained it was due to Covid and people on long term sick or shielding.

Action: A report is to be presented to the Performance Committee on corporate staff sickness.

Resolved:

- i. content of the report noted

A11 Update on the Position Around Staff Pay 2021

The Authority considered a report from the Chief Fire Officer outlining the latest position in relation to pay claims in the Fire and Rescue Service (FRS) sector and the potential impact on the Authority.

Cllr Atkinson enquired if all models are comparative and relative in terms of diversity and equality. CFO Errington explained that the Grey and Gold books are comparable but Green book has different terms and conditions and pension scheme. There is an issue around diversity in the sector in terms of the make up of operational staff but we have a number of initiatives in place to help address this.

Resolved:

- i. Position in relation to pay awards for the various staff groups for 2021 noted
- ii. Financial impact and further measures to balance the budget for 2021/22 noted

A12 Any Other Business

No items of any other business.

A13 Exclusion of the public

That under Section 100A(4) of the Local Government Act 1972, the public be excluded from the meeting for the following items of business on the grounds that they involve the likely disclosure of exempt information as defined in paragraphs 3 and 4 of Part 1 of Schedule 12A to the said Act.

Part B

B 14 Estates Update

The Head of Corporate Resources presented a report to the Authority updating members on the latest position in relation to the Estates Improvement Programme (EIP).

Resolved:

The report was noted.

B15 Firefighters Pension Scheme

The Treasurer presented a report to the Authority in respect of the Firefighters Pension Scheme (for copy see file of minutes).

Resolved:

The recommendations in the report were approved.

B16 Any Other Business

Such other business as, in the opinion of the Chairman of the meeting, is of sufficient urgency to warrant consideration.

The Authority received an update on the emergency response following an incident on the A1(M) on 15 July 2021.

Cllr Shuttleworth expressed his condolences to families on behalf of the Authority.

CLOSE OF MEETING

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Current Correspondence: July 2021 – September 2021

No	Release Date	Subject	Summary	Action CFA Report	Action CFA Response	Action Info
1	17/08/2021	Letter from Sir Thomas Winsor ws, Her Majesty's Chief Inspector of Fire and Rescue Services – Annual Assessment of Fire and Rescue Authorities in England	The letter requests advice and assistance in connection with the annual assessment of the efficiency and effectiveness of fire and rescue authorities in England. (Appendix A)		√	
2	26/08/2021	National Fire Chiefs Council (NFCC) Position Statement	Position statement produced by the NFCC following a media release regarding the UCLAN Research report. This research highlights risks associated with contaminated PPE and Cancer rates in Firefighters. This position statement has been developed to support fire and rescue services to consider the response and to support communication teams with any local messaging. (Appendix B)			√

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Promoting improvements
in policing and fire & rescue
services to make everyone safer

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Email: tom.winsor@hmicfrs.gov.uk

Sir Thomas Winsor ws
Her Majesty's Chief Inspector of Fire and
Rescue Services

Chief Fire Officers, England
Commissioner, London Fire Brigade
Chair, Fire Services Management Committee
Police, fire and crime commissioners
Mayor, Greater Manchester
Deputy Mayor for Fire, London
Chairs, Fire and Rescue Authorities
Chair, National Fire Chiefs Council
General Secretary, Fire Brigades Union
Chair, Fire Standards Board
Chief Executive, Fire & Rescue Services Association
Chief Executive, Fire Officers' Association

17 August 2021

Dear Colleagues,

ANNUAL ASSESSMENT OF FIRE AND RESCUE AUTHORITIES IN ENGLAND

This letter asks for your advice and assistance in connection with my preparation of the annual assessment of the efficiency and effectiveness of fire and rescue authorities in England. This is the report which I am required by section 28 of the Fire and Rescue Services Act 2004 to submit to the Home Secretary and lay before Parliament. I shall greatly value your views.

2. The 2021 annual report will provide my final annual assessment before my term ends as Her Majesty's Chief Inspector of Fire and Rescue Services. I intend to take this opportunity to reflect on the overall progress made since July 2017, when HMICFRS had its remit extended to include inspections of England's fire and rescue services.

3. Part 1 of the annual report provides my assessment of the state of fire and rescue authorities in England. Whilst the experiences and events of the last eighteen months in particular have stimulated many thoughts on what I ought to include, I should appreciate your input, to ensure the report concentrates on the things which matter most.

4. To this end, I should be grateful for your views on the following questions in particular:

- (a) what do you think are the most pressing areas for reform in the fire sector;
- (b) where do you think the fire sector ought to be in 2026;
- (c) what changes have occurred – both locally and nationally – in response to the first round of our inspections; what effect have they had, or do you expect them to have;

(d) COVID-19 continues to test the resilience of every service; what went well and what could be improved;

(e) what short-term changes do you think COVID-19 has had on individual services and the sector;

(f) what medium- and long-term changes do you think COVID-19 is having and will have on individual services and the sector;

(g) what has your organisation done to implement the learning and recommendations made in the Grenfell Tower Inquiry's Phase 1 report (published on 30 October 2019); and

(h) what are your current people priorities, and what challenges are you facing to implement your people strategy?

5. The plan is to publish the annual assessment in late 2021. It would be greatly appreciated if I could have your views no later than 15 September 2021.

6. If you have any queries about this request, and indeed wider views on what I should include in my assessment, please let me know.

Yours sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Sir Thomas Winsor', written in a cursive style.

Sir Thomas Winsor ws

Her Majesty's Chief Inspector of Fire and Rescue Services



Position Statement

Purpose

This position statement/press line has been produced following a media release regarding the UCLAN Research report which was released on the 23rd November 2020. This research highlights risks associated with contaminated PPE and Cancer rates in Firefighters. This has been developed to support FRS to consider the response and provides an NFCC position to support communication teams with any local messaging.

Key Messages

- **NFCC takes the safety of Firefighters extremely seriously.**
- **NFCC are committed to understanding, through evidenced based research, any risks to Firefighters and supports a proportionate response to seek improvements and reduce risk where necessary.**
- **A project board (chaired by CFO Chris Davies MAWW) was established by NFCC in late 2016 to:**
 - **Understand any potential risk to firefighters as a consequence of any retained contaminants within their PPE**
 - **Provide guidance & recommendations to the UK Fire and Emergency Services to mitigate any such risks**
- **There is a vast amount of information/data available on this subject, often confusing and contradictory and therefore NFCC support further detailed longitudinal studies to inform future practises.**

Position Statement

NFCC takes the safety and welfare of firefighters extremely seriously and are committed to supporting evidence-based research, to understand potential risks as well as inform future guidance and recommendations.

As such, a PPE Contaminants project board was established in November 2016 in response to the commissioning of the project which is being delivered formerly by Centre of Applied Science and Technology (CAST) now Defence science and technology laboratory (DSTL) under the auspices of NFCC R&D programme.

The project was commissioned to better understand any potential risks to firefighters as a consequence of any retained contaminants within their PPE and to provide guidance and recommendations to the UK Fire and Emergency Services to mitigate any such risk.

The project board consists of representatives from NFCC, Home Office DSTL, Health and Safety Laboratories (HSL), the Fire Brigades Union (FBU), the Fire Officers Association (FOA), the Retained Firefighters Union (RFU).

The first objective of the project was to produce a full literature review which has now been completed. Unfortunately, due to the current restrictions imposed by the Global pandemic, the project has been unable to continue, all stakeholders are fully committed to this program, aiming to complete the research as soon as possible.

Significant improvements have already been realised across the sector, particularly around the cultural interpretations associated with contaminated PPE. The NFCC, Fire and rescue services, firefighters, Representative bodies and scientific advisors have and will continue to work in partnership, reducing risks to an acceptable level.

The NFCC will identify further opportunities to improve fire fighter safety as new evidence emerges. NFCC believe further detailed longitudinal research should be completed to fully understand any potential risks. Of course, if this identifies a problem with our PPE or current decontamination procedures, we would want to provide our Firefighters with the best protection available.

To ensure that FRS's reduce the risk so far as reasonably practicable:

- Every Fire and Rescue Service (FRS) must have fully risk-assessed decontamination procedures (en-route to, during and after fire incidents), and ensure all relevant staff are trained in implementing these procedures.
- All FRS personnel should receive regular and up-to-date training on the harmful health effects of exposure to toxic fire effluents, and how these exposures can be reduced, minimised or eliminated.
- All FRSs should have policies in place for the routine care, maintenance, inspection and professional cleaning of PPE.
- Establishing and strictly maintaining "designated zones" within the fire station must be a priority for preventing cross-contamination. PPE should never be worn in areas of the station designated a clean zone (e.g. kitchens, living quarters etc.) and should be stored away from personal items.
- To reduce secondary exposures, appliance cabs and equipment from emergency response vehicles should be cleaned and decontaminated on a regular basis, especially after incidents where exposure to any combustion products occurred.

County Durham and Darlington
Fire and Rescue Authority



Safest People, Safest Places

Combined Fire Authority

17 September 2021

Notes of the Performance Committee 31 August 2021

Report of the Chair of the Performance Committee

Members Present: Cllr B Avery in the Chair
R Manchester, S Quinn, and G Lee

Apologies: Cllr C Marshall, DCFO Steve Helps

Purpose of the report

1. The purpose of this report is to provide members with an update on the discussions and recommendations of the Performance Committee held on 31 August 2021.

Retained Duty System Project Update

2. The Committee were presented with an update on the Retained Duty System which covered:
 - Service Strategic Priorities – Phase One
 - Recruitment Volumes
 - Retainment
 - Availability of crew and appliances
 - Phase Two Priorities

The Committee **noted** the content of the presentation.

Performance Report Quarter One 2021/22

3. The organisational performance indicators for quarter one of the 2021/2022 financial year were presented to the committee by K Wanley (Appendix A).

The Committee discussed the indicators in turn noting where performance was strong or where additional work was required to secure improvement. Overall 67% of the strategic PIs met or exceeded their target level, while 53% of the strategic PIs either maintained or improved when compared to performance last year.

K Wanley highlighted the following key points from the report:

- When comparing performance to the previous year, many indicators were affected by the Covid-19 pandemic and the restrictions that were in place to manage the spread of the virus. In many cases this resulted in lower than average figures during 2020-21 which makes comparison to current performance unhelpful, therefore some additional narrative has been added to some indicators to provide context over the previous five years.
- PI 03 & 04: Both accidental dwelling fires and associated injuries show good reductions and are performing better than the predicted targets.
- PI 05: There was an increase in secondary fires in April result in Q1 performance being 49.5% above the target. A range of interventions have been taken to tackle the increase in secondary fires including the distribution of Fire Stopper leaflets following deliberate fires, multi-agency walkabouts to identify rubbish for removal and securing empty properties. During Q1, there were 20 online presentations/talks to over 4800 school children across County Durham and Darlington covering topics including arson reduction interventions, consequences of fires, fire investigation and the effects of fire.
- PI 17: Emergency Response crews recommenced delivery of fire safety audits in mid-April, and this has resulted in performance being 16.6% behind target at the end of Q1, work is underway to make up the gap. However, the five year analysis shows an improvement in the identification of premises which present a risk, this has resulted in an increase in both the percentage of unsatisfactory audits and increased enforcement action taken.
- PI 40: Overall there has been a 41.1% increase on shifts lost in comparison with Q1 of last year, the key difference being the change in covid-19 reporting status whereby in 2020 the majority of absence was classed as nonreportable (self-isolation due to others or shielding). A more detail report on sickness absence will be provided to the HR Committee on 16 September 2021 with further detail provided to Members at a future Authority meeting.

The committee **noted** the report.

Letters of Appreciation

4. There had been 14 letters received. The Committee considered the various letters or appreciation that had been submitted to the service

The Committee **noted** the report.

Part B

Formal Complaints

5. The committee **noted** the report.

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Safest People, Safest Places

Performance Committee

31 August 2021

Performance Report – Quarter One 2021/22

Report of Area Manager, Community Risk Management

Purpose of report

1. This report presents a summary of organisational performance at the end of the first quarter of the 2021/22 financial year.

Background

2. Both operational and corporate performance is monitored and managed internally via the monthly Performance and Programme Board (PPB) and Service Leadership Team (SLT) forums. Members of the Combined Fire Authority (CFA) consider performance on a quarterly basis at meetings of the Performance Committee and the full CFA.
3. A comprehensive suite of performance indicators (PIs) are employed to measure both operational and corporate performance. Targets are set on an annual basis against SMART criteria and take account of longer-term trends and the potential for spikes in performance.
4. This robust approach to performance management enables action to be taken at an early stage if performance is not meeting expectations and provides assurance that resources are being directed towards the areas of greatest risk.
5. In addition to setting a target level for relevant PIs, the Service also employs a system of tolerance limit triggers that allow under or over performance to be highlighted to the PPB when the PI goes beyond set tolerances, which vary depending on the indicator. Each PI has a total of four tolerance limit triggers, two each for both under and over performance.
6. Performance is presented from two perspectives, by comparison against the annual target levels, and by comparison with performance at the same point last year.

Overview of performance across all indicator categories

7. An overview across both operational and corporate key PIs at the end of quarter one for 2021/22 shows 67% of the strategic PIs met or exceeded their target level, while 53% of the strategic PIs either maintained or improved when compared to performance last year.

Performance reporting by exception

8. The following sections of the report present details of specific operational and corporate indicators where performance was notably strong or where additional work is required to secure improvement. An explanatory narrative is provided for each PI group along with information about how performance compares to the annual target and the previous year.
9. It is worth noting that when comparing performance to the previous year, many indicators were affected by the Covid-19 pandemic and the restrictions that were in place to manage the spread of the virus. In many cases this resulted in lower than average figures during 2020-21 which can make comparison against current performance unhelpful, for example PI17 (number of fire safety audits) and figures within the Response and Special Service/Road Traffic Collisions section were significantly impacted by the Covid-19 pandemic therefore additional narrative added to provide context over the previous five years.

Prevention

Performance Indicator	Objective	Q1 2021/22 Actual	Q1 Target	Actual vs Target	Q1 2020/21 Actual	Actual vs Previous Year
PI 01 - Deaths Arising from Accidental Fires in Dwellings	Down	0	0	0%	0	0%
PI 02 – Primary Fires	Down	238	239	0.4%	249	1.2%
PI 03 – Number of Accidental Dwelling Fires	Down	47	55	14.5%	58	19%
PI 04 - Injuries Arising from Accidental Dwelling Fires	Down	3	10	70%	8	62.5%
PI 05 - Total Secondary Fires	Down	1162	777	-49.5%	859	-35.3%
PI 07 – Number of Safe & Wellbeing Visits	Up	4325	4330	-0.1%	603	617%
PI 42 - Proportion of Safe & Wellbeing Visits to High-Risk People/Properties	Up	59.8%	80%	-25.2%	76.3%	-21.6%

PI01 – Nil

PI02 - The actual number of primary fires is slightly below target and the performance for the same reporting period for the last year. Locations of primary fires are monitored by divisional teams and interventions applied. 38% (90 primary fires) were vehicle fires in this reporting period, with crews liaising with Police partners to share intelligence on the cause and findings from any associated investigations. 23% of the primary fires occurred in the Peterlee station area and 12% in Darlington area, with crews working closely with police with the service social media channels highlighting the cause and locations of deliberate primary fires.

See Appendix A, chart 1 for primary fires by motive and chart 2 for primary fires by type.

PI03 – There has been a significant reduction in the number of accidental dwelling fires against the target performance and the performance from the previous year, with the most fires, 7 (15%) occurring in the Bishop Auckland and High Handenhold station areas. Current statistics show that

53% of accidental dwelling fires (ADFs) start in the kitchen, there is high ratio involving people who live alone or are lone parents. Crews continue to focus on kitchen safety advice during safe and wellbeing visits (SWV) and are fitting additional smoke alarms outside the kitchen where required.

See Appendix A, chart 3 for number of accidental dwelling fires by room of origin and chart 4 for number of accidental dwelling fires by occupier type.

PI04 – The low number of injuries and low number of ADFs is a positive indication that our long term strategy to reduce risk in the home is being effective.

PI05 – Each year the Service plans and prepares interventions to limit secondary fires over the Easter period which is known to have higher rates of fires, however the table below shows that secondary fires in Q1 have been steadily increasing since 2018, and in April 2021 it was exceptionally dry resulting in a greater increase than anticipated. A breakdown for this reporting period shows there were 260 (22%) in Peterlee, 198 (17%) in Darlington and 138 (12%) in High Handenhold. 89% of the total secondary fires occurred at nonaddressable locations. Examples of interventions taken to limit secondary fires include conducting hot strikes distributing Fire Stopper leaflets following deliberate fires, multi-agency walkabouts to identify rubbish for removal and securing empty properties, there has also been a new initiative introduced using bicycles to engage with youths in remote locations which commenced during July 2021. Also during Q1, there were 20 online presentations/talks to over 4800 school children across County Durham and Darlington between year 5 and year 10, these presentation covered topics including arson reduction interventions, consequences of fires, fire investigation and the effects of fire.

(Q1 only)	2016/17	2017/18	2018/19	2019/20	2020/21	2021/22
Secondary Fires	584	1102	780	861	859	1162

See Appendix A, chart 5 for secondary fires by motive and chart 6 for secondary fires by property type.

PI07 and PI42

There has been a progressive increase in the delivery of safe and wellbeing visits as our communities emerge from some of the restrictive behaviours from the pandemic, with only a divergence of 0.1% between actual and target performance. Homeowners have engaged more with operational crews who continue to use profiling and risk modelling tools to target both the higher risk individuals and locations to deliver safe and wellbeing visits.

The target of delivering 80% of safe and wellbeing visits to the higher risk individuals and locations was influenced by the reduced engagement of some communities, but communications to reinforce trust in the safety of staff, and the assurance provided by crews by the compliance with covid safety measures, has seen a recent increase in this indicator.

Operational crews continue to focus on safety advice related to kitchen and cooking related fires, and advice on the risks of smoking where this applies to homeowners. Further iPads are being sourced to improve the capacity for crews to deliver more safe and wellbeing visits.

Protection

Performance Indicator	Objective	Q1 2021/22 Actual	Q1 Target	Actual vs Target	Q1 2020/21 Actual	Actual vs Previous Year
PI 10a - Primary Fires in Non-Domestic Premises	Down	18	24	25%	16	-12.5%
PI10b – Primary Fire in Non-Domestic Premises (enforced under the FSO by CDDFRS)	Down	10	15	33.3%	14	28.5%
PI 14 - False Alarms Caused by Automatic Fire Detection Equipment	Down	167	131	-27.5%	129	-29.5%
PI 17 – Number of Fire Safety Audits	Up	443	531	-16.6%	358	23.7%

PI10b – PI 10b shows the fires that occurred in premises where the Fire Safety Order applies and therefore premises where we can use our enforcement powers to improve safety. Examples of significant fires which were followed up by Business Fire Safety (BFS) officers included a fire in a scrap yard in the Darlington area which was caused by a battery in processed material which spread to scrap material, these are now kept 6m away from the processed material due to our intervention. An incident at a major recycling plant in the Seaham area involved a jammed recycling machine, additional maintenance has now been put in place to prevent further issues. BFS follow up on all fires in non-domestic premises where the Fire Safety Order applies to ensure appropriate action is taken to prevent reoccurrence.

PI14 – There has been an increase on the number of automatic fire alarm (AFA) call outs from the same period last year. These appear to be attributed to other residential, offices, public admin and retail premises. BFS will look at some additional communications work to target and educate owners of these premises. 67 of the calls met the criteria for an unwanted fire signal (UwFS), 18 of these were a third or subsequent UwFS and resulted in a cost recovery charge being sent, none of these charges have been appealed.

See Appendix A, chart 7 for false alarms caused by automatic fire detection equipment

PI17 – Emergency Response crews did not recommence audits until mid-April and then appointments needed to be arranged with premises for their visits, this resulted in a slower start than predicted in the target. However, work is underway to make up the gap and ensure the target is reached. Also, when reflecting back over the previous 5 years, we have seen an improvement in the identification of premises which present a risk, this has resulted in an increased percentage of audits with an unsatisfactory outcome and increased enforcement action taken to address the risk. Recognising that 2020-21 had lower than normal output due to C-19 restrictions, the table below show these figures for the previous 5 years and for Q1 of 2021-22:

	Total Enforcement Action Taken	% Of Unsatisfactory Audits
2021-2022 (Q1 only)	5	30.6%
2020-2021	7	11.5%
2019-2020	14	20.7%
2018-2019	4	13.6%
2017-2018	4	15.1%
2016-2017	6	20.7%

Response

Performance Indicator	Objective	Q1 2021/22 Actual	Q1 Target	Actual vs Target	Q1 2020/21 Actual	Actual vs Previous Year
Total Emergency Calls Received (including EMR)	Down	5226	N/A	N/A	4337	-20.5%
Total Incidents (excluding EMR)	Down	2341	N/A	N/A	1933	-21.1%
Total Fires	Down	1411	N/A	N/A	1110	-27.1%
Total False Alarms	Down	625	N/A	N/A	633	1.3%
Total Special Services (excluding EMR)	Down	303	N/A	N/A	190	-59.5%
Total Road Traffic Collisions	Down	66	N/A	N/A	31	-112.9%
Total Emergency Medical Response (EMR)	Up	4	N/A	N/A	0	400%
PI 06 – Number of Response Standards Met	Up	6	6	0%	5	20%

See Appendix A, chart 8 for total incidents (excluding EMR)

Special Services and Road Traffic Collisions (RTCs) - As noted at the start of this report, many indicators were affected by the Covid-19 pandemic and the restrictions that were in place to manage the spread of the virus. In many cases this resulted in lower than average figures during 2020-21 which can make comparison against current performance unhelpful. To help put the figures above into context, when comparing against the previous year, total special services and total RTCs have increased by 59.5% and 112.9% respectively. The table below shows the Q1 performance for the previous five years. Due to the large reduction in traffic during the first period of Covid-19 lockdown, RTCs significantly reduced during 2020, however the table below also shows that Q1 of 2021-22 is more comparable with previous years.

(Q1 only)	2016/17	2017/18	2018/19	2019/20	2020/21	2021/22
Special Service	262	316	332	275	190	303
RTC's	87	84	79	68	31	66

PI06 – All 6 response standards met. Emergency Response continue to monitor and discuss all response time failures at monthly watch performance meetings which highlight to crews their key areas of activity and how they influence wider service performance. A recent focus on response times emphasised the need to 'book in' on arrival at locations as early as possible which has assisted in achieving all response standards for this reporting period.

Workforce

Performance Indicator	Objective	Q1 2021/22 Actual	Q1 Target	Actual vs Target	Q1 2020/21 Actual	Actual vs Previous Year
PI 40 - All Staff Sickness	Down	2.04	1.5	-36%	0.71	-187.3
PI 69 – Number of Accidents to Personnel	Down	3	3	0%	2	-50%

PI40 – Overall, there has been a 41.1% increase on shift lost in comparison with quarter 1 last year. The key difference being the change in Covid-19 reporting status whereby in 2020 the majority of absence was classed as nonreportable (Self Isolation due to others or shielding). We have seen a rise in cases over quarter 1 across the Service, perhaps due to increased testing capabilities, where employees have tested positive and so these absences have counted towards our targets.

Absences within the WT and RDS categories has increased and primarily linked to longer term absence. Absence levels within control are improving with relatively few shifts lost over May and June coupled with absences relating to covid-19 decreasing from the start of the quarter. Generally, sickness is low amongst corporate staff and has reduced over the reporting period.

HR are regularly reviewing all long-term absences and are in frequent discussions with relevant managers what support mechanisms are available including occupational health referrals, Employee Assistance Programme (EAP) support etc. The closer, weekly, sickness monitoring which is now in place is assisting with the monitoring and recording helping to predict long term absences and identify trends which can be acted on quicker. People Business Partners are in post to assist managers with issues around sickness and support staff in their return to work. We will continue to record and monitor Covid-19 related absence to ensure we are keeping our workforce safe. A more detail report on sickness absence will be provided to the HR Committee on 16 September 2021 with further detail provided to Members at a future Authority meeting.

See Appendix A, chart 9 for all staff sickness.

PI69 – There has been three accidents to personnel this quarter with one occurring in every month. The indicator remains on target, although performance is one more than the same quarter last year which was the lowest on record. One of the incidents was an injury to a firefighter at a fire incident which was RIDDOR reportable. The other two were minor incidents with no associated absence.

Finance & Governance

Performance Indicator	Objective	Q1 2021/22 Actual	Q1 Target	Actual vs Target	Q1 2020/21 Actual	Actual vs Previous Year
PI 34 - % of Invoices paid within 30 days	Up	95.3%	95%	0.3%	99.7%	-4.4%

Recommendations

10. Members are requested to:
 - a. **note** the content of the report;
 - b. **comment** on the reported performance.

AM Keith Wanley, Ext. 5630

Appendix A

Chart 1 - Primary Fires by Motive

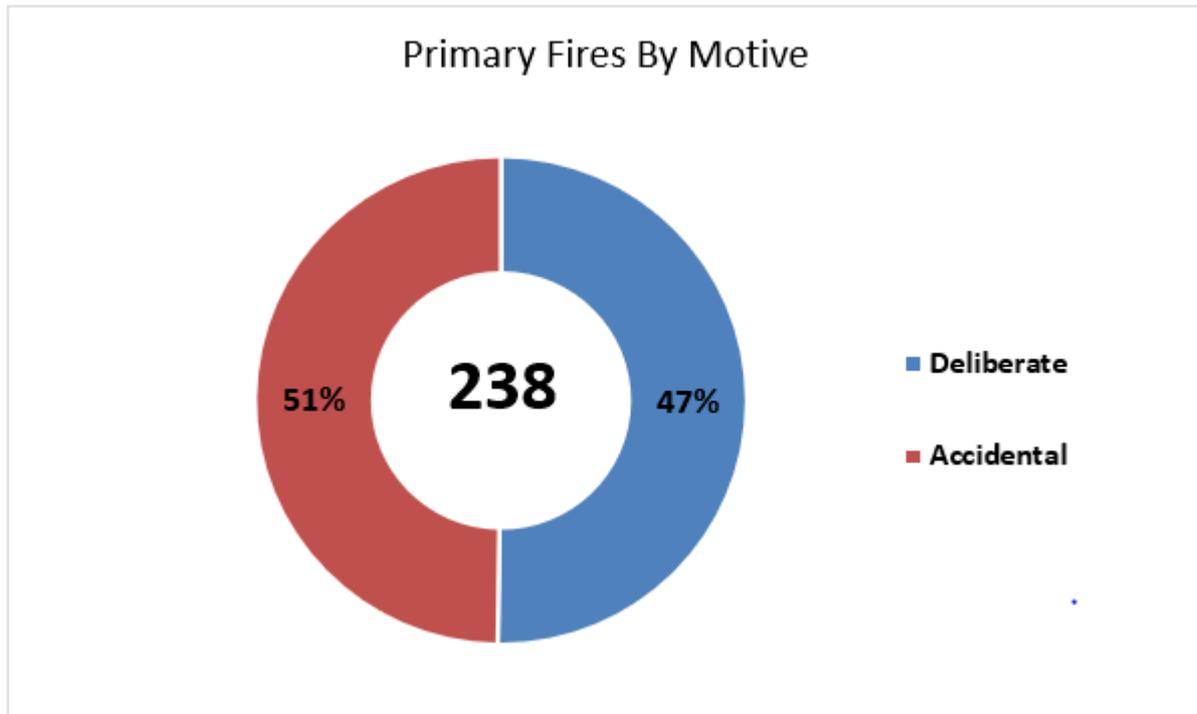


Chart 2 – Primary Fires by Type

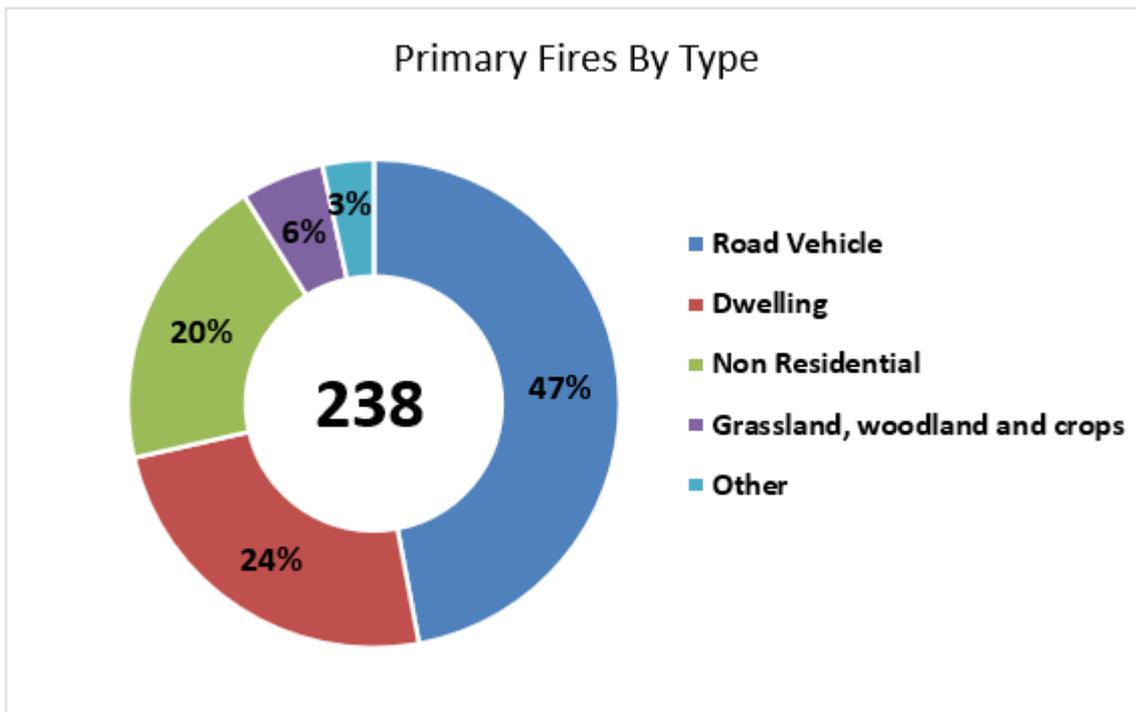


Chart 3 - Number of Accidental Dwelling Fires by Room of Origin

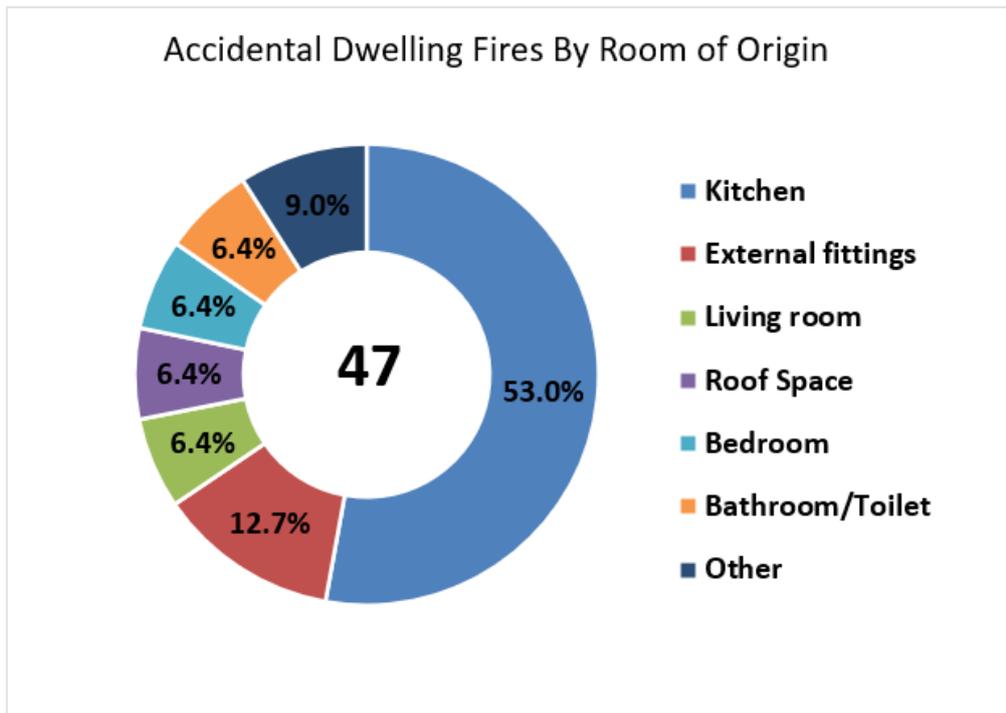


Chart 4 - Number of Accidental Dwelling Fires by Occupier Type

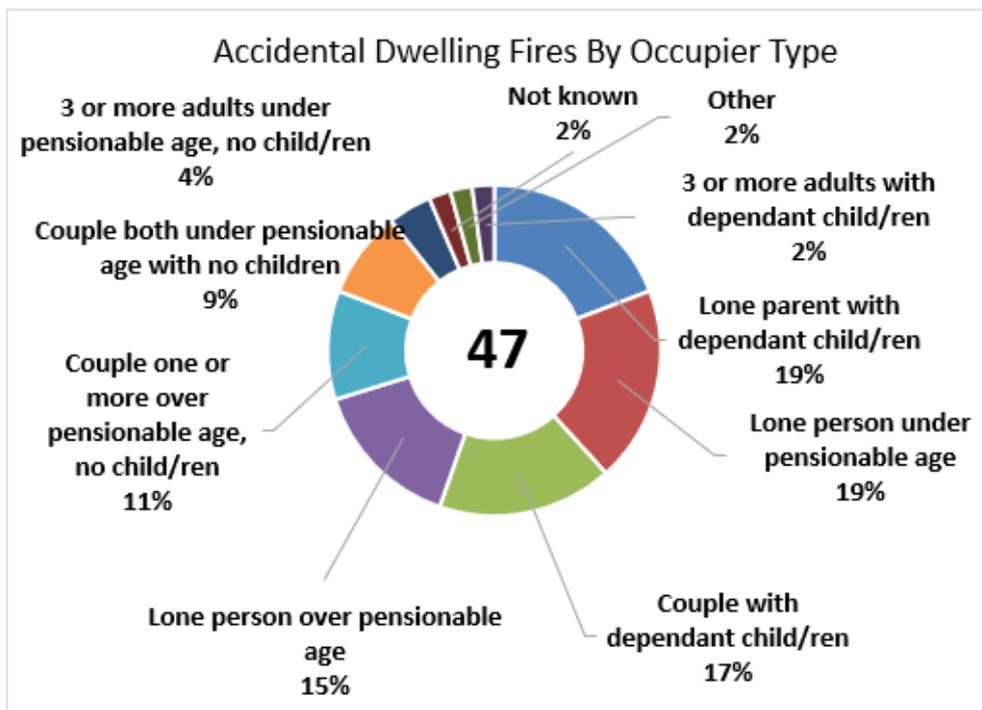


Chart 5 – Secondary Fires by Motive

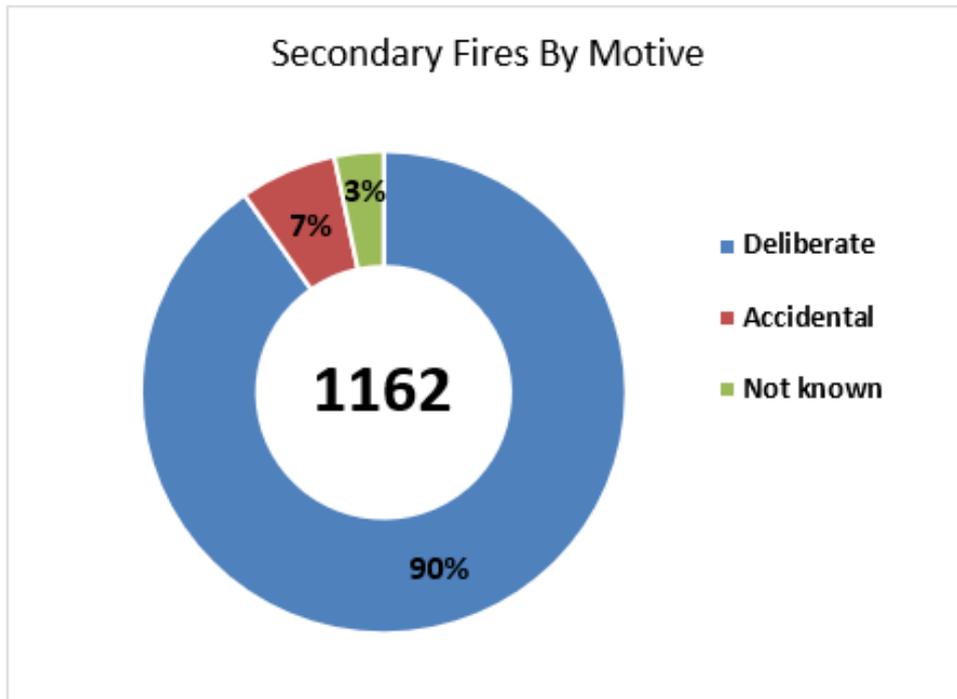


Chart 6 – Secondary Fires by Property Type

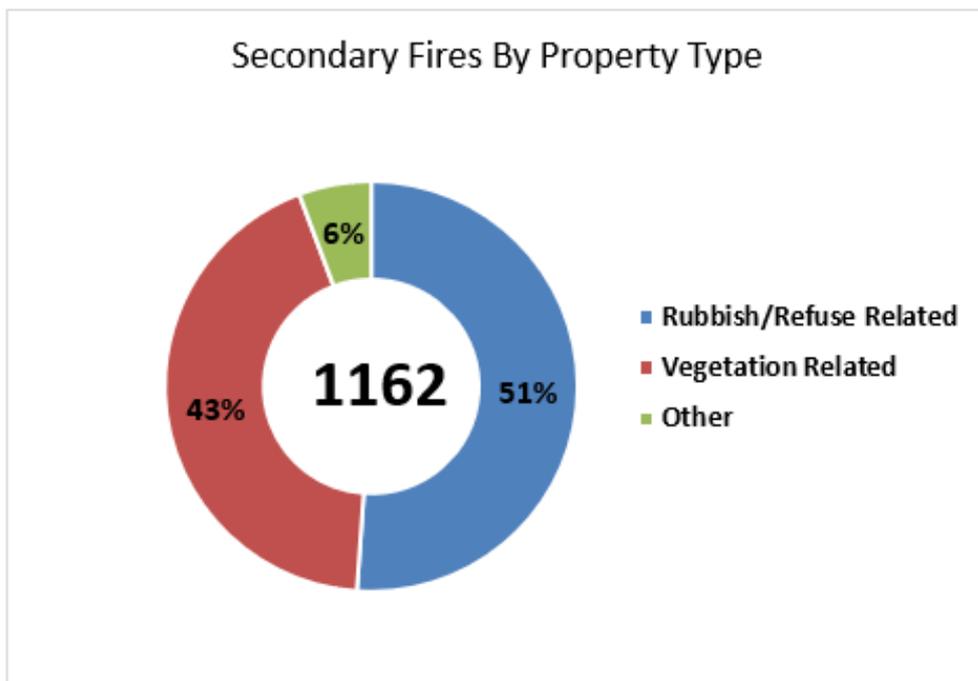


Chart 7 - False Alarms Caused by Automatic Fire Detection Equipment

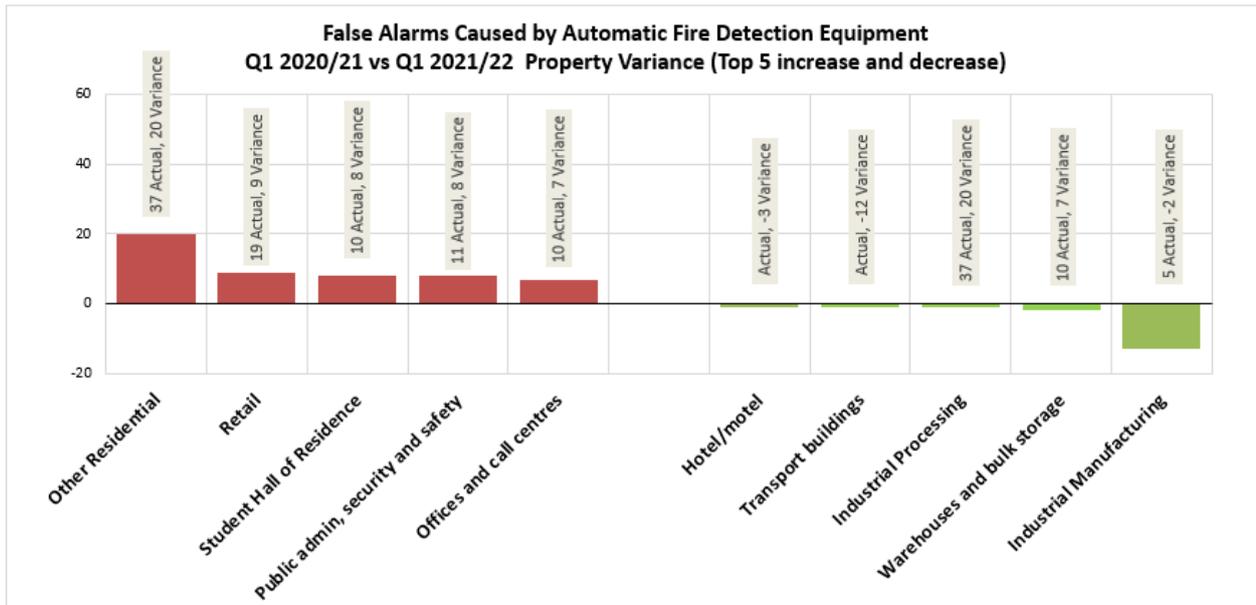


Chart 8 - Total Incidents (excluding EMR)

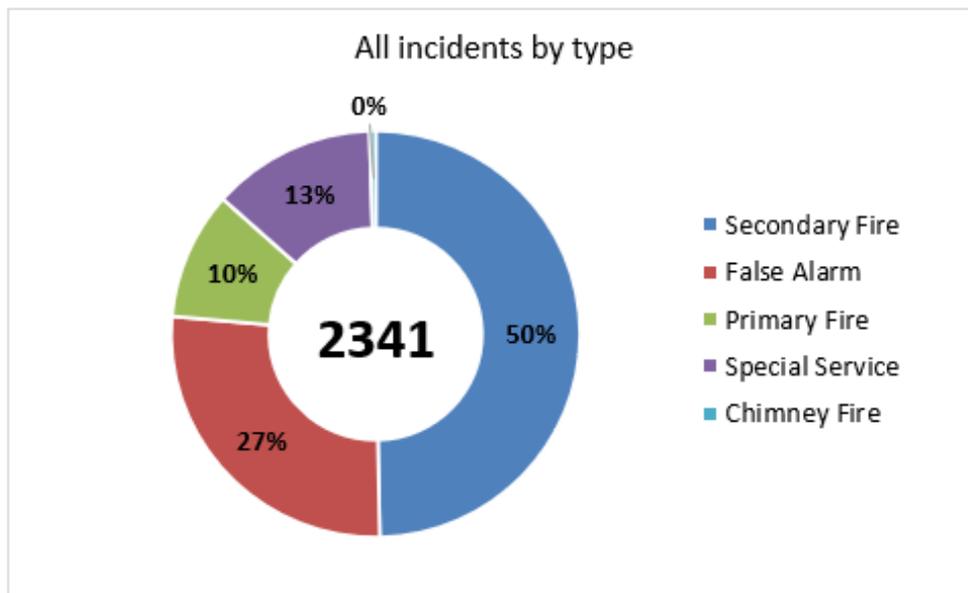
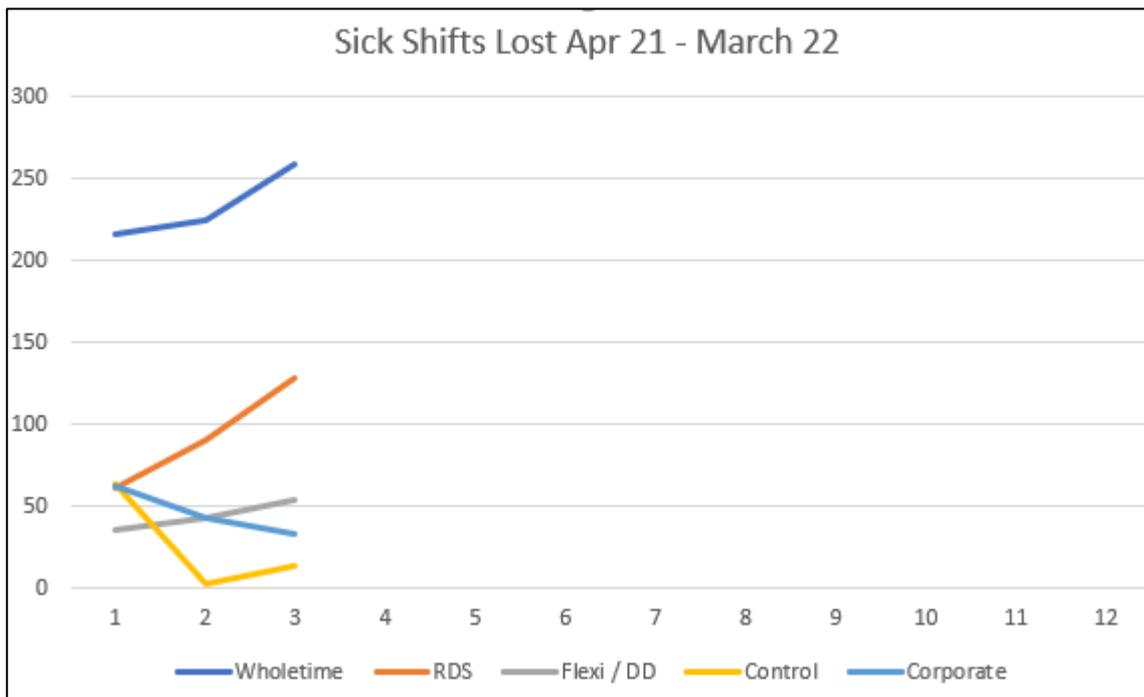


Chart 9 - All Staff Sickiness



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County Durham and Darlington
Fire and Rescue Authority



Safest People, Safest Places

Combined Fire Authority

17 September 2021

Statement of Assurance 2020/21

Report of Deputy Chief Executive

Purpose of Report

1. The purpose of this report is to provide members with the 2020/21 Statement of Assurance (SoA) for approval prior to publication.

Background

2. Guidance has been issued via the Fire and Rescue National Framework for England (2012) on the content of the SoA.
3. The approval and publication of a SoA is a National Framework requirement.

The Statement of Assurance (SoA)

4. The SoA forms part of the Authority's Assurance Framework and complements the Annual Governance Statement (AGS) which will be approved by the Audit and Finance Committee at the meeting held on 30 September 2021.
5. To avoid duplication, where assurances are provided by the AGS or other published governance documentation, a hyperlink reference has been made within the SoA as opposed to repeating information.
6. The 2020/21 SoA is attached at Appendix A.

Recommendation

7. Members are recommended to **approve** the 2020/21 Statement of Assurance.

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County Durham and Darlington Fire and Rescue Service

Statement of Assurance 2020-2021



Safest People, Safest Places

County Durham and Darlington
Fire and Rescue Authority



Foreword

Welcome to our annual Statement of Assurance. This document provides you, our communities, with the reassurance that in 2020/21 we met all our commitments to you as we strive to have the 'safest people and safest places' in every part of our Service area.

During 2020/21 the fire and rescue sector continued to face significant challenges and risks, including an increase in deliberate fires and the ongoing impact of the Covid-19 pandemic. As a result, we have implemented innovative ways to deliver our core functions, as well as continuing to develop our people and improve our leadership and culture.

We continue to support strong partnership working and to collaborate with our colleagues in the Police, Ambulance Service and neighbouring Fire and Rescue Services, as well as taking a leading role in the Local Resilience Forum (LRF). Our work with the LRF this year has led to stronger relationships with other organisations in fields such as health, transport and the voluntary sector.

During 2020/21 we have continued to invest in our community safety activity through our emergency response crews and Community Risk Officers who carry out home visits to give safety advice and install smoke alarms, adapting our delivery model due to Covid restrictions. We also operate an innovative and productive business model where crews carry out fire safety audits of businesses which complements the activity of our dedicated Business Fire Safety Team.

We consulted with our communities on future ways of working from February 2021 to March 2021 as part of the review of our three-year Integrated Risk Management Plan (IRMP), now renamed the Community Risk Management Plan (CRMP) and listened to their views to help us decide how best to use our resources to meet the risks faced.

As Chair of County Durham and Darlington Fire and Rescue Authority and Chief Fire Officer of County Durham and Darlington Fire and Rescue Service, we are satisfied that, during 2020/21 our business has been conducted in accordance with proper standards and law and that public money was properly accounted for and used economically, efficiently and effectively. Additionally, we are satisfied that the Authority has done everything within its power to comply with the requirements of the 2018 Fire and Rescue National Framework for England.



Stuart Errington
Chief Fire Officer, QFSM



Cllr John Shuttleworth
Chair, Combined Fire Authority

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Purpose

The Statement of Assurance confirms the adequacy of the arrangements of County Durham and Darlington Fire and Rescue Service (CDDFRS) in managing its financial, governance and operational obligations for the year 2020/2021. It also evaluates the adherence of the Service to the Fire and Rescue National Framework 2018.

How do we make our judgements?

In looking at our obligations we have made a judgement on each based on the following:

Fully	The requirements of applicable legislation and guidance are being consistently met.
Substantially	Where legislation and guidance are not being met there is minimal risk to the Fire Authority discharging associated duties and powers for the provision of a fire and rescue service.
Partially	The requirements of applicable legislation and guidelines are being inconsistently applied exposing the Fire Authority to considerable risk in discharging the necessary duties and powers associated with the provision of a fire and rescue service.

Financial Assurance

It is the view of CDDFRS that, at the end of the 2020/21 financial year, requirements associated with the appropriate management of financial matters were **fully met**.

How did we show this?

The Fire Authority places significant importance in ensuring that its financial management arrangements are in line with the expectations of a public body.

An annual, independent audit is undertaken to review the Fire Authority's Statement of Accounts, which summarise the financial position of the Fire Authority at the end of the financial year and performance throughout the year.

During 2020/21, the Service undertook a range of "reasonable worst case" planning assumptions exercises based on differing levels of government funding, aligning them to fluctuations in the Medium-Term Financial Plan and highlighting possible options to the Fire Authority for their scrutiny.

The primary function of the external auditor is to express an opinion as to whether the Fire Authority's financial statements are free from material misstatement. However, the auditor also has responsibility for assessing whether the Fire Authority has reliable systems of control in place and the arrangements for securing economy, efficiency and effectiveness in the use of its resources.

The 2020/21 Statement of Accounts is published on the Service website. [You can read the Statement of Accounts here.](#)

The accounts are audited by independent external auditors who provide a view on the information contained in the accounts being 'true and fair'. The auditor considers whether the Authority has demonstrated it has delivered value for money prior to signing the audit statement. You can read the [Annual Audit Letter – audit of accounts here.](#)

Further information about how the Service implements financial controls can be found in our [Constitution](#).

Governance Assurance

It is the view of CDDFRS that, at the end of the 2020/21 financial year, requirements associated with appropriate business practice, high standards of conduct and sound governance were **fully met**.

How did we show this?

Our governance arrangements

County Durham and Darlington Fire and Rescue Authority is a combined authority created by the Durham Fire Services (Combination Scheme) Order 1996.

Membership comprises of twenty-one elected councillors from Durham County Council and four from Darlington Borough Council. The Fire Authority is a legal body with statutory duties and responsibilities, including the scrutiny of the Service as a whole. The Fire Authority is responsible for setting the strategic direction, policies and priorities of the Service.

You can [find out more about the Fire Authority on our website](#).

Our legal responsibilities

The primary legislation governing the Fire and Rescue Service is covered by the following:

- [Fire and Rescue Services Act 2004](#)
- [Civil Contingencies Act 2004](#)
- [Regulatory Reform \(Fire Safety\) Order 2005](#)
- [Fire and Rescue Service \(Emergencies\)\(England\) Order 2007](#)
- [Localism Act 2011](#)
- [Police and Crime Act 2017](#)

The main legislative provisions which determine the functions of the Fire Authority include the following:

- Promoting fire safety
- Extinguishing fires and protecting life and property
- Rescuing people from road traffic collisions (and a large range of other risks determined through the Emergencies Order)
- Responding to other types of emergencies
- Entering into 'reinforcement' schemes with other fire authorities for mutual assistance

- Assess the risk of emergencies occurring and use this to inform contingency planning; and in this regard to:
 - Put in place emergency plans
 - Put in place business continuity management arrangements
 - Put in place arrangements to make information available to the public about civil protection matters and maintain arrangements to warn, inform and advise the public in the event of an emergency
 - Share information with other local responders to enhance coordination
 - Co-operate with other local responders to enhance coordination and efficiency.

The Fire and Rescue Service National Framework

The Fire and Rescue National Framework for England sets out the Government's priorities and objectives for Fire and Rescue Authorities in England. The National Framework outlines the high-level expectations although it does not require a detailed account of operational matters which are best determined locally.

The key priorities established by the Framework are:

- The identification and assessment of a range of foreseeable fire and rescue related risks including those of a cross border, multi authority and/or a national nature;
- The provision for prevention and protection activities and the appropriate response to incidents within County Durham and Darlington;
- Collaboration with the communities of County Durham and Darlington and a wide range of partners both locally and nationally to deliver a fire and rescue service;
- Ensuring effective business continuity arrangements are in place which include the provision of national resilience assets;
- Being accountable to the communities of County Durham and Darlington for the service we provide through an annual Statement of Assurance.

[The full 2018 document can be found at the following link: **Fire and Rescue National Framework for England**](#)

The Fire Authority is responsible for ensuring that its business is conducted in accordance with the law and proper standards, that public money is safeguarded, properly accounted for and used economically, efficiently and effectively. The Fire Authority also has a duty under the Local Government Act 1999 to make arrangements to secure continuous improvements in the way in which its functions are exercised.

Management of Risk

The National Framework requires the formulation of an Integrated Risk Management Plan (IRMP) which captures and publishes the Fire Authority's plans to meet current and future risks to our communities. To align the plan with the National Fire Chiefs' Council (NFCC) Framework the Service now describes the IRMP as a Community Risk Management Plan (CRMP).

The framework provides that the Fire Authority must hold their Chief Fire Officer to account for delivery of the Fire and Rescue Service, and that the Fire Authority must have in place arrangements to ensure that their decisions are open to scrutiny.

When preparing the IRMP/CRMP we follow a process introduced by the Government to provide a modern, flexible approach to the provision of Fire and Rescue Services based upon locally identified need, aligned to risk and demand. The assessment of risk is the initial stage of the IRMP/CRMP process and requires quantitative and qualitative analysis of hazards and threats. The processes we have adopted use a combination of risk modelling software, historical data and professional judgement to make an assessment of impact and consequence with likelihood that an event will occur, ensuring that a thorough analysis has been completed. We take into account local community and risk information by creating Station Plans which feed into our risk management process. We outline our approach, the risks and the associated analysis in our Community Risk Profile (CRP).

The IRMP/CRMP delivers on our analysis of the CRP, that is aligned to our Service Strategies to effectively manage the risks identified over the period.

[You can read our current Community Risk Profile here.](#)

[You can read our current CRMP here.](#)

When setting the Service's strategic priorities, the Fire Authority refer to the IRMP/CRMP to ensure that our resources are directed to where the risk analysis tell us they are needed.

Organisational governance

The Fire Authority, as a public body, places significant emphasis on ensuring that effective governance arrangements are in place.

Governance is concerned with how the Fire Authority manages its affairs on a day to day basis including business practices, standards of conduct and overall management procedures.

The Fire Authority operates in accordance with a Code of Corporate Governance that sets out the approach it takes to ensuring it operates in accordance with appropriate standards and frameworks. [The Fire Authority's Code of Corporate Governance is available to read here.](#)

To demonstrate how we have met our governance obligations the Fire Authority publishes an Annual Governance Statement that sets out the key governance issues that have been identified during the financial year. The Fire Authority works towards mitigating these risks as part of its approach to ensuring an effective governance framework is in place. [You can read our Annual Governance Statement here.](#)

The Fire Authority is committed to being fully transparent in accordance with the principles of good governance and legal requirements. [You can see our full transparency information on our website by clicking here.](#)

Our Covid-19 Response to governance

As part of the Service's preparations for the first wave of Covid-19, the Combined Fire Authority (CFA) delegated powers, in line with our Constitution, to the Chief Fire Officer, Treasurer and Clerk to ensure that all key decisions could still be taken. Remote meetings were then introduced to allow the CFA to resume their usual duties, which were also made available to the public to watch.

Operational Assurance

It is the view of CDDFRS that, at the end of the 2020/21 financial year, the requirements associated with our operational functions were **fully met**.

How did we show this?

Our services to the community

The primary legislation associated with fire and rescue services in England and Wales is the Fire and Rescue Services Act 2004 which sets out the statutory responsibilities of the Authority for providing a FRS that has the people, equipment and training needed to carry out the following core functions:

Promoting fire safety (community safety) – the provision of information, advice and encouragement on the prevention of fires, restricting the spread of fires in buildings and the means of escape from fires. We use our data and information from partner agencies to identify members of the public who are at the greatest risk from fire and we deliver Safe and Wellbeing Visits to support them. We also carry out fire safety, road safety and water safety talks in schools and work with partner agencies to keep our communities safe, as well as social media campaigns.

Fire safety regulatory enforcement (business fire safety) – Our firefighters and fire safety officers undertake inspections of workplaces providing advice and guidance to owners and occupiers to enable them to be compliant with the Regulatory Reform (Fire Safety) Order 2005, ensuring our communities are safe, using enforcement action where necessary.

Emergency response – We respond to emergencies including fires, road traffic collisions, air and rail crashes, water rescues and flooding, hazardous chemical incidents and many other types of emergencies. Our firefighters regularly train, maintain and test equipment to ensure they remain ready to respond to emergencies at all times.

We have also continued to meet our statutory responsibilities throughout the period of Covid-19 pandemic, as highlighted by HMICFRS in their Covid-19 thematic inspection letter:

“The service has continued to provide its core statutory functions throughout the pandemic in line with advice from the National Fire Chiefs Council (NFCC). This means the service has continued to respond to calls from the public and attend emergencies. The service adapted its prevention work by introducing safe and well visits by telephone. It adapted its protection work by introducing desktop audits.”

We also work closely with our partners such as Durham Constabulary, the North East Ambulance Service (NEAS), Teesdale and Weardale Search and Mountain Rescue (TWSMRT), local councils and our neighbouring Fire and Rescue Services as part of the Joint Emergency Service Interoperability Principles (JESIP) to ensure we can respond effectively and competently to any emergency.

Our Organisational Performance Framework is underpinned by our Operational Assurance Framework that sets out our approach to quality assuring that we can respond effectively and competently to the range of incidents we may be called to attend. A number of key performance indicators (KPIs) are used to monitor performance of our emergency response arrangements. Managers at all levels are accountable for managing the day to day performance of their fire stations overseen by their District Teams and the Emergency Response Manager.

The Operational Assurance Group (OAG) scrutinise performance and report, by exception, to the Performance and Programme Board (PPB) and the Service Leadership Team. Members play a key role in scrutinising performance through regular reports and presentations to the Performance Committee and the full Fire Authority.

In 2020/21 we have undertaken Operational Readiness Audits (OpeRA), where we assess the operational readiness of our stations across five areas (Prevention, Protection, Response, Efficiency and People).

The Operational Assurance Group (OAG) exists to monitor, report and act on the outcomes from active monitoring and incident debriefs and this feeds into both national operational learning and joint organisational learning. Membership of the group is drawn from a cross-section of key departments with the chair of the OAG reporting quarterly to the PPB. Outcomes from multi-agency debriefs are routinely shared.

Community & Business Safety (Prevention & Protection) Assurance

All protection activities carried out by the central Business Fire Safety team are subject to both internal and external annual quality assurance, as well as performance being reviewed at all Section meetings with an overview provided at PPB. In 2019/20 we have maintained our ISO 9001 accreditation.

A comprehensive Risk Based Inspection Programme (RBIP) exists to support our protection activities, underpinned by an ISO9001 accredited Quality Management System. The RBIP is underpinned by a full suite of procedures and practice notes which give guidance to staff enforcing statutory fire safety legislation. We have taken account of our legal duties and guidance from the Fire and Rescue Services Act and the Fire Safety Order, National Framework, National Fire Chiefs Council (NFCC) and Local Government Association (LGA) Circulars and any other relevant guidance. External ISO audits provide assurance that we are doing what we say we will do.

The RBIP & Annual Audit Workload Programme are refreshed annually using intelligence gained from a range of sources including national guidance and statistical data, as well as local and national trends. As well as local intelligence gained from engagement with partners and post incident audits, we also utilise the specialist CFRMIS (Community Fire Risk Management Information System) software to inform the RBIP.

A well-established Operational Risk Information (ORI) inspection process and programme exists to capture important information on risks that firefighters may face when responding to emergencies. This information is made available via appliance mobile data terminals (MDT). Processes exist to ensure premises risks identified by fire safety inspectors are shared with emergency response managers for onward dissemination to our firefighters.

Health & Safety Assurance

We have an established suite of key health and safety (H&S) performance indicators that enable us to closely monitor performance at all levels. The indicators cover areas such as personal and vehicle accidents, near misses and cause for concerns. Staff across the Service can access the information via SharePoint and the performance management software. The Assurance Manager produces a quarterly H&S report which is reported to the SLT and is also discussed at the Joint H&S Committee which is attended by the Representative Bodies.

In 2020/21 we experienced a decrease in the number of accidents to personnel when compared to the previous year. In Addition, we are able to report that the majority of these accidents were of a very minor nature and did not require additional medical treatment or absence from work. We also experienced a slight decrease in the number of vehicle accidents being attributable to our driver's fault, with most of those occurring being of a minor nature, occurring during slow speed manoeuvres.

Our Operational Assurance Framework illustrates how the learning outcomes from internal and external events identified through accident investigations, debriefs, active monitoring reports and stakeholder engagement are implemented via forums such as the OAG, PPB, the Corporate Wellbeing Group and the quarterly Joint H&S Committee. Information is shared with staff via Organisation Learning Posts and H&S Newsflashes.

We have an established programme of proactive quarterly station inspections, undertaken jointly with the Representative Bodies, and internal audits led by the Assurance Section to provide assurance on the effectiveness of our H&S management arrangements. Our OpeRA also provide a further level of quality assurance.

Training Assurance

A suite of key training performance indicators enables us to closely monitor staff competence in the risk critical skills required for a firefighter's role. Our Divisional Management teams are responsible for quality assuring the competency levels of their staff and ensuring that the competency recording system is kept up to date. Outcomes of the quarterly audits are reported to the Emergency Response Managers for the North and South Divisions.

The OpeRA framework is used to provide assurance of the operational readiness of all our fire stations and includes dip-sampling of training records and also themed practical exercises undertaken at the Training Centre to further quality assure the competency of firefighters.

All internal and external delegates attending our training courses and development days are invited to complete evaluation forms. These are analysed by the Training Manager and used to inform improvements in delivery. In 2020/21 our Training Section maintained the ISO 9001 accreditation for its quality management systems.

Equality, Diversity & Inclusion

Under the Equality Act 2010, public authorities have a legal obligation to comply with the general equality duty. This incorporates nine protected characteristics age, disability, gender reassignment, marriage and civil partnership, pregnancy and maternity, race, religion and belief, sex and sexual orientation.

To meet our statutory obligations, when exercising our functions, we must aim to:

- Eliminate unlawful discrimination, harassment and victimisation and other conduct prohibited by the Act;
- Advance equality of opportunity between people who share a protected characteristic and those who do not;
- Foster good relations between people who share a protected characteristic and those who do not.

In addition to the general duty, all public sector bodies are required to meet specific duties which are incorporated into the Public Sector Equality Duty (PSED) which requires us to:

- Publish diversity information annually to demonstrate our compliance with the general duty;
- Prepare and publish specific and measurable equality objectives.

We are committed to promoting equality, diversity and inclusion (EDI) in both the service we deliver to the community and the employment of our staff. EDI is about understanding and respecting differences and ensuring the right people receive the right services. We also understand that a diverse workforce with individuals who can offer different skills, experience and knowledge will benefit us as an organisation and ensure we are able to meet the needs of the diverse community we serve.

We have published our strategic commitment to EDI and our equality objectives in our Equality, Diversity and Inclusion Strategy. This is a public declaration and commitment of how we plan to meet the duties placed upon us by equality and diversity legislation and best practice, in managing our staff and meeting the needs and wishes of our local population.

Our EDI action plan runs alongside the Equality, Diversity and Inclusion Strategy and members of our EDI group are responsible for developing and implementing the action plan. [Further information about Equality, Diversity and Inclusion can be found here.](#)

Collecting and analysing equality data is an important way of developing our understanding about our employees and communities. [We produce an annual equality report](#) that shows how we comply with the general equality duty as well as publishing our gender pay gap, both of which are available on our website.

Our performance during 2020/21

The following tables provide an overview of our performance during 2019/20. [The latest statistics on fires, casualties, false alarms and non-fire incidents attended by all fire and rescue services in England are available online.](#)

Service Performance Indicators*	2020/21	2019/20	Direction of travel from previous year
PI 01 - Deaths Arising from Accidental Fires in Dwellings**	1	1	-
PI 02 – Primary Fires	974	1001	Improved
PI 03 – Number of Accidental Dwelling Fires	219	229	Improved
PI 04 - Injuries Arising from Accidental Dwelling Fires	15	20	Improved
PI 05 - Total Secondary Fires	2335	2387	Improved
PI 06 – Number of Response Standards Met	5	4	Improved
A. Dwelling Fires Attended Within 8 Minutes (Target 70%)	72.40%	71.70%	Improved
B. Dwelling Fires Attended Within 11 Minutes (Target 90%)	93.50%	92.20%	Improved
C. Non-Domestic Property Fires Attended Within 8 Minutes (Target 70%)	67.30%	61.30%	Improved
D. Non-Domestic Property Fires Attended Within 11 Minutes (Target 90%)	90.40%	84.20%	Improved
E. Road Traffic Collisions Attended Within 11 Minutes (Target 75%)	80.50%	84.40%	Regressed (target still achieved)
F. Road Traffic Collisions Attended Within 15 Minutes (Target 90%)	94.00%	95.50%	Regressed (target still achieved)
PI 07 – Number of Safe & Wellbeing Visits	4839	19310	Regressed
PI 09a Deliberate Primary Fires	512	505	Regressed
PI 09b Deliberate Secondary Fires	2093	2129	Improved
PI 10a Primary Fires in Non-Domestic Premises (excluding RRO question - HO method)	73	118	Improved
PI 10b Primary Fires in Non-Domestic Premises (Enforced under the FSO by CDDFRS)	66	86	Improved
PI 11a Fire Control Calls Received and Mobilised within 90 seconds	85.60%	87.20%	Regressed
PI 14 False Alarms Caused by Automatic Fire Detection	677	692	Improved

PI 17 Number of Fire Safety Audits	984	2003	Regressed
PI 42 - Proportion of Safe & Wellbeing Visits to High Risk People/Properties	62.60%	81.30%	Regressed
PI 69 – Number of Accidents to Personnel	12	15	Improved
PI 70 The Number of Hydrant Inspections	4872	4946	Regressed
PI 72 Number of Vehicle Accidents (CDDFRS Fault)	18	21	Improved

*Note: some performance trends have been affected by the Covid-19 pandemic

**Figures are accurate at time of publication but are subject to change if a fatality is confirmed at inquest at a later date.

Our future plans

The last ten years has seen significant cuts to public spending and to continue offering a first-class FRS to people living, working and visiting County Durham and Darlington we must be innovative and do things differently. This means collaborating with partners more, looking at ways we can enhance and widen the traditional firefighter role, changing the way we recruit our people and developing our culture.

[Details on our future plans which includes our consultation on the next 3-year CRMP can be viewed here](#)

The impact of Covid – 19

As with all public sector organisations, the Covid -19 global pandemic has had a unique impact on our Service. Throughout this period, we have approached the challenges with professionalism, compassion and a great deal of resilience. We have led in the work of the County Durham and Darlington Local Resilience Forum (LRF), as well as the Regional LRFs, to bring organisations together to provide a collective response.

Financial

The Service incurred increased costs due to Covid-19 on additional personal protective equipment (PPE), staff resilience measures, additional cleaning and ICT support which were mitigated to an extent by government funding. The position going forward will not be clear until we are informed of future government funding and we understand the effect of the pandemic on council tax and business rates receipts.

Governance

As part of the Service's preparations for the first wave of Covid-19, the Combined Fire Authority (CFA) delegated powers, in line with our Constitution, to the Chief Fire Officer, Treasurer and Clerk to ensure that all key decisions could still be taken. Remote meetings were then introduced to allow the CFA to resume their usual duties, which were also made available to the public to watch.

Operational

Due to our previous flu pandemic testing and business continuity planning the Service was highly prepared and coped well in terms of staffing throughout the period of lockdown. Absence levels remained manageable and therefore there was a minimal impact on our emergency response. The Service implemented measures to ensure that operational staff could distance from each other wherever possible, watches were kept separate and non-operational staff were able to work from home. The Service participated in local schemes including food delivery to vulnerable people, supervising at testing centres, and vaccinating people at mass vaccination sites.

How we engage with our communities

You can get involved with the work of the Fire Authority by attending the public meetings that are held regularly by the Authority at our Headquarters. [You can find out more about the Fire Authority, its work and access documents from previous and future meetings on our website by clicking here.](#)

We value the views of our communities to ensure we are providing the service you need. We consult formally on the ways in which we propose to deliver services through the CRMP consultation document and this and more information about our plans and priorities can be found on our website: www.ddfire.gov.uk You can also find us on social media by searching for @CDDFRS

Access to information

CDDFRS is committed to being open, accountable and transparent and we constantly strive to develop a culture of greater openness and awareness.

More information on our arrangements in respect of access to data and information can be found on our website via the following link: [Access to Information](#)

How to pay a compliment or make a complaint

We aim to make it as easy as possible for people to let us know their views. Through listening and learning we improve the quality of the services we provide and encourage and recognise good practice by our staff.

We want to hear from people if they:

- Would like to compliment us on a job well done;
- Have a suggestion on how we might improve services;
- Feel we have fallen short of their expectations;
- Feel we have fallen short of the standards we set ourselves in dealing with complaints.

There are several ways in which you can compliment, comment or complain about our services either:

Online via our website: www.ddfire.gov.uk

By phone: 0845 305 8383

By email: ServiceHQ@ddfire.gov.uk

By post: County Durham and Darlington Fire and Rescue Service
HQ,
Belmont Business Park,
Durham.
DH1 1TW

County Durham and Darlington
Fire and Rescue Authority



Safest People, Safest Places

Combined Fire Authority

17 September 2021

Her Majesty's Inspectorate of Constabulary and Fire and Rescue Services Update

Report of the Area Manager Assets and Assurance

Purpose of the report

1. The purpose of this report is to provide Members with an update on Her Majesty's Inspectorate of Constabulary and Fire and Rescue Services (HMICFRS) including the fire and rescue services (FRS) inspection programme.

Background

2. In July 2017, HMICFRS extended its remit to include inspections of England's 45 FRS as well as the 43 territorial police forces in England and Wales.
3. The standard FRS inspection programme assesses how effectively and efficiently FRS prevents, protects the public against and responds to fires and other emergencies. It also assesses how well services look after their people who work for the Service.
4. The first HMICFRS inspection of County Durham and Darlington Fire and Rescue Service (CDDFRS) was completed on 19 July 2019 with the final report published on 17 December 2019.
5. Additionally, under section 28A(3) of the Fire and Rescue Services Act 2004, the Secretary of State can commission HMICFRS to conduct thematic inspections of FRS.
6. In August 2020, HMICFRS were commissioned to inspect the response to the COVID-19 pandemic of the fire and rescue sector in England. CDDFRS was

inspected the week beginning 2 November 2020 with the inspection conducted entirely virtually, with interviews using Microsoft Teams.

Round Two Fire and Rescue Service Inspections

7. All 45 FRS will be inspected in three tranches during 2021 and 2022. CDDFRS will be inspected in tranche three which is likely to take place between March and September 2022 with the report published in Winter 2022.
8. Fifteen FRS have been inspected during tranche one. Although reports will not be published until November / December 2021, HMICFRS have provided feedback of their findings so far.
9. Generally, those services with Cause for Concerns had made real progress but those with Areas for Improvement was a less positive story and there is expected to be eight new Cause for Concerns. Many of these new Cause for Concerns were related to Areas for Improvement which hadn't made sufficient progress.
10. During tranche one, HMICFRS have identified improvements in the following diagnostics:
 - How effective is the FRS at protecting the public through the regulation of fire safety?
 - How well does the FRS promote its values and culture?
11. However, HMICFRS has expressed disappointment with progress by some FRS in the following diagnostics:
 - How well does the FRS understand the risk of fire and other emergencies?
 - How effective is the FRS at preventing fires and other risks?
 - How well trained and skilled are FRS staff?
12. Following CDDFRS's last inspection, an action plan was produced to ensure improvements against the 21 Areas for Improvement were made. These have been tracked by the Service Leadership Team (SLT) and are undergoing further scrutiny following the feedback from tranche one. The updated action plan will then be brought to a future Authority meeting. Additionally, further analysis is being undertaken of the areas identified in section 11 to ensure the Service have made sufficient progress in these areas.

Her Majesty's Inspector Responsible for Oversight of CDDFRS

13. Andy Cooke is Her Majesty's Inspector of the Fire and Rescue Services for the Northern Region which includes CDDFRS. He was appointed as Her Majesty's Inspector of Constabulary and Her Majesty's Inspector of Fire and Rescue in April 2021.

Service Liaison Lead Responsible for Oversight of CDDFRS

14. Gareth Bradbury was appointed as the new HMICFRS Service Liaison Lead for CDDFRS on 7 July 2021. He is also responsible for Humberside and Merseyside FRS.
15. His role will be to lead inspections of CDDFRS and to develop and maintain an effective working relationship between HMICFRS and CDDFRS. The Service have had an initial introductory meeting with Gareth and will use future engagement visits to inform him of our direction of travel since the last inspection.

HMICFRS Short Term Secondees

16. HMICFRS run a short term secondee scheme whereby staff from FRS help support the inspections of other FRS. Seconded staff bring valuable insight and experience of current fire service practices into the inspections. They will have the opportunity to learn about good practice in other services and develop their own assessment, analysis and decision-making skills and they will also become experts in the inspection methodology and process.
17. The Service supported staff to apply for selection for the scheme with one Group Manager being successful and selected. Each inspection they take part in will require a commitment of four weeks and the expectation is they will participate in two inspections.

State of Fire and Rescue 2021

18. Under section 28B of the Fire and Rescue Services Act 2004, Her Majesty's Chief Inspector of Fire and Rescue Services, Sir Thomas Winsor is required to publish an annual assessment of the effectiveness and efficiency of FRS in England. The 2021 report will be his third report to the Secretary of State.
19. As part of his preparation of the annual assessment, Sir Thomas Winsor has asked Chief Fire Officers and Chairs of Fire Authorities (Appendix A) for their views on the following questions, the deadline for the response is 15 September 2021:
 - (a) What do you think are the most pressing areas for reform in the fire sector?
 - (b) Where do you think the fire sector ought to be in 2026?
 - (c) What changes have occurred, both locally and nationally in response to the first round of our inspections; what effect have they had, or do you expect them to have?
 - (d) COVID-19 continues to test the resilience of every service; what went well and what could be improved?
 - (e) What short-term changes do you think COVID-19 has had on individual services and the sector?
 - (f) What medium and long-term changes do you think COVID-19 is having and will have on individual services and the sector?

- (g) What has your organisation done to implement the learning and recommendations made in the Grenfell Tower Inquiry's Phase 1 report (published on 30 October 2019)? and
 - (h) What are your current people priorities, and what challenges are you facing to implement in your people strategy?
20. Due to the deadline for submission, the Chief Fire Officer and Chair have provided a response to the questions posed in Section 19. A copy of the response is attached at Appendix B.

Recommendations

21. CFA Members are requested to:
- a. **note** the contents of this report;
 - b. **receive** further reports as appropriate.

Keith Carruthers, Area Manager Assets and Assurance, ext: 5564



Promoting improvements
in policing and fire & rescue
services to make everyone safer

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89 Eccleston Square, London SW1V 1PN
Email: tom.winsor@hmicfrs.gov.uk

Sir Thomas Winsor ws
Her Majesty's Chief Inspector of Fire and
Rescue Services

Chief Fire Officers, England
Commissioner, London Fire Brigade
Chair, Fire Services Management Committee
Police, fire and crime commissioners
Mayor, Greater Manchester
Deputy Mayor for Fire, London
Chairs, Fire and Rescue Authorities
Chair, National Fire Chiefs Council
General Secretary, Fire Brigades Union
Chair, Fire Standards Board
Chief Executive, Fire & Rescue Services Association
Chief Executive, Fire Officers' Association

17 August 2021

Dear Colleagues,

ANNUAL ASSESSMENT OF FIRE AND RESCUE AUTHORITIES IN ENGLAND

This letter asks for your advice and assistance in connection with my preparation of the annual assessment of the efficiency and effectiveness of fire and rescue authorities in England. This is the report which I am required by section 28 of the Fire and Rescue Services Act 2004 to submit to the Home Secretary and lay before Parliament. I shall greatly value your views.

2. The 2021 annual report will provide my final annual assessment before my term ends as Her Majesty's Chief Inspector of Fire and Rescue Services. I intend to take this opportunity to reflect on the overall progress made since July 2017, when HMICFRS had its remit extended to include inspections of England's fire and rescue services.

3. Part 1 of the annual report provides my assessment of the state of fire and rescue authorities in England. Whilst the experiences and events of the last eighteen months in particular have stimulated many thoughts on what I ought to include, I should appreciate your input, to ensure the report concentrates on the things which matter most.

4. To this end, I should be grateful for your views on the following questions in particular:

- (a) what do you think are the most pressing areas for reform in the fire sector;
- (b) where do you think the fire sector ought to be in 2026;
- (c) what changes have occurred – both locally and nationally – in response to the first round of our inspections; what effect have they had, or do you expect them to have;

(d) COVID-19 continues to test the resilience of every service; what went well and what could be improved;

(e) what short-term changes do you think COVID-19 has had on individual services and the sector;

(f) what medium- and long-term changes do you think COVID-19 is having and will have on individual services and the sector;

(g) what has your organisation done to implement the learning and recommendations made in the Grenfell Tower Inquiry's Phase 1 report (published on 30 October 2019); and

(h) what are your current people priorities, and what challenges are you facing to implement your people strategy?

5. The plan is to publish the annual assessment in late 2021. It would be greatly appreciated if I could have your views no later than 15 September 2021.

6. If you have any queries about this request, and indeed wider views on what I should include in my assessment, please let me know.

Yours sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Sir Thomas Winsor', written in a cursive style.

Sir Thomas Winsor ws

Her Majesty's Chief Inspector of Fire and Rescue Services

Answers from County Durham and Darlington Fire and Rescue Service to the specific questions posed

(a) what do you think are the most pressing areas for reform in the fire sector?

There are a number of key areas that are pressing in terms of reform in the sector. It is concerning that little progress has been made on the recommendations made in State of Fire 2019 and then re-stated in State of Fire 2020:

- the Home Office should precisely determine the role of fire and rescue services, to remove any ambiguity;
- the sector should remove unjustifiable variation, including how they define risk;
- the sector should review and reform how effectively pay and conditions are determined;
- the Home Office should invest chief fire officers with operational independence, whether through primary legislation or in some other manner;
- the Home Office should ensure that the sector has sufficient capacity and capability to bring about change

The sector needs a clear steer from the Home Office about what the Government's expectations are going forward. A strong vision underpinned with clear statutory responsibilities to play a wider role and add more value to society is important.

HMICFRS have also recognised that the on-call model needs significant reform in order to become sustainable. Although County Durham and Darlington Fire and Rescue Service would have welcomed a specific recommendation covering this issue, it is still a vital area for reform. Government support for the sector in this area is important and there are opportunities to introduce tax incentives for both individuals and primary employers of on-call staff that would make the system more sustainable without driving costs at a local level. Without a strategic view being taken from Government the system is likely to continue to struggle.

The lack of a longer-term sustainable funding settlement for the sector hinders future planning. Fire and Rescue Services (FRSs) are facing a range of significant cost pressures from issues such as: employer pension contribution increases; unfunded pay increases; uncertainty in inflation rates; and the future economic impact of both Brexit and Covid-19. Operating with this level of uncertainty is challenging especially as, if some of these risks were to materialise, they would require fundamental changes to the operating model of some FRSs. The Government should provide longer term certainty in relation to grant levels, flexibility in relation to precept increases and capital funding for those FRSs that have not accumulated high levels of reserves.

The system for national negotiations and the intransigence of the Fire Brigades Union (FBU), stifles reform in the sector. Whilst there is an important role for trade unions, and employers should not simply be free to amend contracts of employment without negotiation and consultation the current balance of power makes reform exceptionally difficult and at times impossible. Constructive and mutually respectful industrial relations at national and local levels is important but the current mechanisms simply encourage the FBU to adopt a no change position unless their demands are met. The current system severely limits the options for the employers to bring about sensible change.

(b) where do you think the fire sector ought to be in 2026;

In 2026 the FRS should be a modern, highly professional and flexible emergency service that has a much wider role in keeping the public safe from a range of hazards and threats. Chief Fire Officers would have the ability to deploy all their resources flexibly to undertake any activities linked to saving lives, protecting the public, or protecting the environment. The FRS would play a wider role in responding to civil emergencies and would be a key player in delivering the government's vision of the UK being the most resilient nation.

The sector would work in partnership to ensure that the knowledge and expertise in prevention work plays a vital role in improving the lives of the local population.

In 2026 the sector should be auditing a larger range of business premises and higher risk buildings to ensure the safety of residents and workers.

The sector should have a greater diversity of operational staff and highly effective talent management schemes to develop people as future leaders.

The FRS would be highly efficient and effective but with a sustainable funding model that encouraged innovation and delivered a world class fire and rescue service.

(c) what changes have occurred – both locally and nationally – in response to the first round of our inspections; what effect have they had, or do you expect them to have;

The first round of inspections has focussed the minds of key stakeholders on the areas that need to improve across the sector. This has improved the self-awareness of many FRSs and also ensured resources were committed to help address areas for improvement and cause for concerns. Nationally there has been investment in the NFCC and the Fire Standards Board which will help deliver significant sector-wide benefits. NFCC workstreams should also improve standards across all FRSs in the UK. It is however disappointing that the Home Office has not made more progress with some of the recommendations that were made nearly two years ago. Whilst a delay was inevitable due to the pandemic there has still be surprisingly little progress in some areas.

There has been a significant resource requirement for FRSs to service the needs of the inspection programme and this has for some FRSs been challenging to find following significant funding reductions over many years.

There has also been tension in industrial relations as a result of the inspection programme and the challenges posed towards the FBU. Given the strength of FBU membership and at times blind following of members there appears to be a strong distrust of HMICFRS in FRSs.

(d) COVID-19 continues to test the resilience of every service; what went well and what could be improved;

Overall CDDFRS coped well with the pandemic. The Service implemented a range of measures to increase staffing and mitigate the impacts that were being experienced. The investment made in a strong ICT infrastructure in previous years meant corporate staff could work effectively from home immediately without a reduction in performance. We worked well with partners and provided a range of additional support when required. Staff responded well to the challenges they faced and adopted flexible working arrangements to continue to focus on the services provided to the public. We had strong supportive welfare arrangements in place for staff and the improved communication methods we used were effective and appreciated by staff. A range of debriefs have been undertaken and important lessons learnt to further improve our business continuity plans.

CDDFRS played a leading role in the LRF and provided leadership at all levels to ensure successful multi-agency working. The NFCC delivered a significant amount during the pandemic and provided excellent leadership for FRSs.

The issues associated with the collapse of the tri-partite arrangements further underpinned the need for change in the national negotiating machinery. On a positive note, many staff locally chose to ignore the advice of the FBU and continued to undertake additional roles to support our communities. These decisions are culturally very important and will hopefully help with future change that is likely to be required over the next few years.

(e) what short-term changes do you think COVID-19 has had on individual services and the sector;

The use of technology and flexible approaches to working have improved the Service. The Service is more resilient than it was prior to the pandemic and staff appreciate a more agile approach to working where appropriate. Importantly staff showed a strong desire to take on additional roles and responsibilities despite the advice being received from the FBU. The use of innovative approaches in prevention and protection have increased the offer in these areas to the public. The service is more aware and thinking differently in terms of business continuity management. Introducing different crewing models and extending the use of smaller response vehicles has provided useful intelligence and data to drive decision making. The methods adopted to improve communication have been well received by staff and are becoming the norm for many people. The increased cleaning regimes and improved hygiene facilities across the entire estate have been adopted as good practice going forward.

The LRF is functioning well as a result of stronger relationships being formed over a protracted response period. A greater number of organisations and individuals have a more in-depth knowledge of the LRF and the value it brings to an area. The sector is working smarter and utilising technology to reduce travel and extraction costs for meetings etc.

(f) what medium- and long-term changes do you think COVID-19 is having and will have on individual services and the sector;

Technology will play a greater role in the sector over the longer term and FRSs will become more innovative. Staff are constantly thinking about improvements and realise that their ideas are listened to and can make lasting changes. Efficiencies are likely to be achieved on the use of estates following a general move to hybrid working, this could also provide opportunities for further collaboration with other partners as rationalisation of buildings occurs across the public sector.

The flexibility of the sector during the pandemic should lead to a wider role for the FRS in civil emergencies. The ability to adapt to a range of different scenarios and commit highly skilled staff in reasonable numbers immediately to an incident is a unique selling point of the FRS.

There is a different culture emerging in the sector which is more supportive of national decision making and following good practice guidance from the NFCC. This will reap long term benefits for the sector and should lead to longer-term efficiencies. In the longer-term the improved welfare arrangements that have been introduced in response to Covid-19 will hopefully improve the wellbeing of staff and help reduce absence rates going forward. This needs to be balanced off with the potentially longer-term negative impact covid-19 might have on the mental health of staff in the public sector in general. If the pandemic continues over the longer-term this will potentially be a growing issue.

There are, however, so longer-term concerns about the impact of Covid-19 on the sector. There is a lack of clarity around Government or sector rules around self-isolation. Covid-19 has led to staffing pressures for the sector and without any guidance it is more difficult to predict the impact over the longer-term.

There is also a lack of guidance in relation to staff that have long covid and how this will potentially impact their ability to do their roles going forward. FRSs are unsure how to treat people who may not be able to regain sufficient fitness to continue in operational roles and this is likely to increase costs.

Maintaining the additional ICT infrastructure, improved cleaning regimes and increased need for additional PPE will also increase cost pressures over the longer-term. It appears unlikely that any further additional funding will be provided to FRSs and therefore these increased costs will need to be met from existing budgets which are already under significant pressure, and this may increase as the economic impact of covid-19 impacts on future funding settlements.

(g) what has your organisation done to implement the learning and recommendations made in the Grenfell Tower Inquiry's Phase 1 report (published on 30 October 2019); and

The Service carried out a full internal gap analysis on the recommendations made from the Grenfell Tower Inquiry's Phase 1 report. A detailed action plan has been developed which is being tracked through our normal governance arrangements. The action plan includes:

- Increasing the establishment of the central business fire safety team;
- Increasing the qualifications of operational staff who are required to undertake fire safety audits;
- Updated operational procedures for firefighters and control room operators;
- Training for control room staff;
- Introducing smoke hoods to all frontline fire appliances;
- Carrying out training and exercising with neighbouring FRSs;
- Implementing a specific project to audit the operational and risk information for all tall buildings/higher risk buildings in the service area.
- Improved incident ground communications.

Currently there are no high-rise residential buildings in our service area, however, many of the items in the action plan improve our approach to firefighting and risk management of all buildings.

(h) what are your current people priorities, and what challenges are you facing to implement your people strategy?

CDDFRS' People Strategy 2021-24 outlines our priorities in relation to people. These include:

- Developing the leadership potential and ability in the organisation to ensure we have the correct talent currently and into the future.
- Ensuring our workforce composition meets our current and future needs and we have the right people, with the right talent in the right roles.
- Increasing the diversity of the workforce.
- Identifying and nurturing talent in the organisation.
- Ensuring we engage effectively with all staff groups.
- Developing operational excellence across the service.

We face a number of challenges in achieving these priorities. The current industrial relations climate at a national level leads to uncertainty from some staff about the benefits of adopting more flexible working patterns and expanding the roles we undertake outside of any national negotiations. At times the message from the FBU is at odds with our core values and this leads to uncertainty with staff. The content of the forthcoming White Paper has the potential to worsen industrial relations and lead to increased support for the FBU which could undermine the progress we have made locally in relation to culture. Any difficulties in relationships at a national level between key stakeholders (Home Office, NFCC, HMICFRS) and the FBU tend to lead to difficulties at a local level. Whilst tensions are a natural part of any change programme and inevitable with the Home Office's Fire Reform Programme it is also important that key stakeholders are fully aware of this and take it into account when thinking about the language they use and the messages they put out.

The structure of the national negotiation system, power of the FBU to block changes to working conditions and current restrictive national terms and conditions make progressing innovative practice in relation to people challenging. The FBU effectively hold a veto to even relatively minor changes that are either covered in the Grey Book or perceived to be outside of the rolemaps.

Workforce planning is particularly challenging at present as we have no certainty in relation to future funding. We are potentially facing a high turn-over of staff due to the recent changes in the firefighter pension schemes but without certainty around funding decisions on recruitment are difficult.

The on-call system still remains challenging to sustain. The system requires significant investment, and this is particularly difficult to find without support from the centre. The Government should consider supporting both individuals and organisations that release their employees to support the on-call system.

Whilst the Service support the work being delivered by the NFCC in relation to the People Programme it is at times, difficult to align progress at a national level with progress and innovation at a local level. National guidance is helpful, but it should not hinder innovation and there is a role for HMICFRS in ensuring it doesn't narrowly focus on NFCC products which may not always align with local needs. Maintaining a healthy balance between standardisation and innovation is important. It is also difficult for some FRSs to wait for particular national packages which don't align with the priorities and needs at a local level.

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County Durham and Darlington
Fire and Rescue Authority



Safest People, Safest Places

Combined Fire Authority

17 September 2021

UPDATE ON THE SERVICE'S RESPONSE TO COVID-19

Report of the Chief Fire Officer

Purpose of Report

1. To inform members of the activity the Service have been undertaking over the last 12 months of the Covid-19 Pandemic.

Background

2. On 11 March 2020 the World Health Organisation declared the Covid-19 Outbreak to be a pandemic and on 23 March 2020 the UK entered a period of lockdown. Since then, restrictions have been developed by Government including two further lockdowns beginning on 5 November 2020 and 6 January 2021. As with all organisations, Covid-19 has had a significant impact on County Durham and Darlington Fire and Rescue Service (CDDFRS). The Service's initial response to the pandemic was presented to the Combined Fire Authority on 24 July 2020.
3. As previously detailed the Strategic Pandemic Team (SPT), formed from members of the Service Leadership Team, was set up to oversee the strategic activity during the pandemic. The SPT appointed the Pandemic Influenza Management Group (PIMG), formed from members of the Service Management Team, to oversee the tactical delivery during the pandemic.

Business Continuity Planning

4. As part of business continuity planning CDDFRS had an existing Pandemic Influenza Business Continuity Plan and through the Local Resilience Forum (LRF) formed part of the North East Pandemic Influenza Framework. These plans formed the basis of the specific plans and actions implemented during Covid-19.

5. To ensure the Service are better prepared for any future events the Service's actions to date have been debriefed and the business continuity plan has been reviewed in July 2020 and July 2021 to capture learning from the ebb and flow of the pandemic and restrictions.

Recovery Planning

6. The Service produced a comprehensive Recovery Strategy, with the aim to transition CDDFRS in to its 'new normal' following the COVID-19 pandemic. This focused on the following key areas:
 - **Welfare:** Provide appropriate welfare support to those staff and their families affected by the incident. Understand what medium and long term impacts the outbreak has had on health, safety and welfare provisions.
 - **The 'new normal':** Coordinate recovery of all sections as the COVID-19 response phase enters a steady state. Consider aspects of the organisation which have changed during the response period.
 - **Opportunities for Improvement:** Consider the opportunities available to CDDFRS to determine what 'the new normal' may look like, and to identify opportunities to influence change and improvement in the organisations culture.
 - **Finance:** Identify any financial impacts which may result in changing ways of working. Consider national and local economic predictions of the financial impacts of the outbreak.
 - **Communication:** Provide coordinated and consistent reassurance and information via our internal communications strategy and the Local Resilience Forum multiagency recovery communication strategy. Ensure that affected staff, communities, and businesses are fully informed in regard of the recovery process.
 - **Information:** Collate information on the response, impact of and recovery from the incident across CDDFRS to inform future planning, policies, and procedures.
 - **Debrief:** Implement a comprehensive coordinated post-incident debriefing and reporting process.
7. A Recovery Group was set up, working closely with SPT and PIMG to coordinate recovery activities. This Recovery Group adopted the best practice guidance from the National Fire Chiefs Council (NFCC) Business Continuity Group, which included the 5S's model of recovery:
 - **Scan** Assess the current situation
 - **Stop** Consider what we used to do and have stopped doing. Do we need to reintroduce these? What else can we stop doing?
 - **Slow** What activities can we reduce or find alternative solutions to?
 - **Start** Consider the work we are carrying out which is not part of our statutory responsibilities. What new activities can we introduce?
 - **Speed up** What activities can we continue or increase?

8. Each section of the Service applied this 5S model to their activities. Some examples of the improvements identified are:
- Improvements to technology at all locations including fire stations to allow the improved use of virtual meetings. This was recently used for the cultural survey whereby Durham University Business School presented the results simultaneously to all locations and staff at home.
 - Development of a new Hybrid working policy to allow staff to continue to combine working from home and in the office.
 - As a result of the Covid-19 pandemic we introduced a flexible telephone triage system to identify the people most at risk of accidental dwelling fires and having reviewed the benefits, this learning will be applied moving forward and has been included in our Community Risk management Plan.

Protecting Staff from the Virus

9. A key goal during the pandemic has been to ensure appropriate policy, procedure and guidance to protect our staff from the pandemic. This has been regularly reviewed and updated as the pandemic situation and national and local guidance has changed.
10. During the pandemic the Service have conducted individual risk assessments for all staff. Any staff who were identified as being of higher risk from the virus were referred to our Occupational Health provider and received individual control measures.
11. The Service continued with its robust approach to testing staff utilising a service level agreement signed with the NHS Foundation Trust for PCR tests. Additionally, Lateral Flow Testing was introduced into the Service as soon as these were released to the Fire sector. This enabled staff to be regularly tested and provided extra protection against transmission of the virus in the workplace.
12. The Service have engaged with the local Vaccination Centres to allow staff early access to end of day vaccinations which may go to waste. We have also encouraged staff to access vaccinations through normal channels. Additionally, when the Government have introduced schemes for critical workers, such as Daily Contact Testing the Service have fully engaged with these schemes and provided detailed updates to staff.
13. The Service's has continued to invest in ICT to improve the virtual experience and ability of staff to work effectively from home. In addition, the Assets and Assurance Team have continued to work tirelessly with Finance to ensure cost effective purchase of certificated Personal Protective Equipment (PPE) for all our staff.

Ensuring the Authority Continued to Meet its Statutory Responsibilities

14. A continued focus of SPT and PIMG was to ensure the Authority continued to meet its statutory responsibilities during the pandemic. Service plans were prepared to

meet the government's Reasonable Worst-Case Scenario (RWCS) planning assumptions of up to 20% staff absence.

15. Total staff absences never peaked as high as the RWCS, although sharp spikes have occurred when infection rates have been high in the region resulting in large numbers of notifications from Test and Trace. Service plans have remained robust and included a successful call-off, of our Business Continuity and Resilience arrangements in March 2021.
16. Her Majesty's Inspector of Constabulary and Fire & Rescue Services conducted a Covid-19 thematic inspection of the Service during the pandemic and reported in January 2021:

"the service adapted and responded to the pandemic effectively. It continued to maintain its statutory functions, including responding to emergencies. It adapted its approach to prevention and protection activities to enhance social distancing and keep communities safe."

"The service has continued to provide its core statutory functions throughout the pandemic in line with advice from the National Fire Chiefs Council (NFCC). This means the service has continued to respond to calls from the public and attend emergencies. The service adapted its prevention work by introducing safe and well visits by telephone. It adapted its protection work by introducing desktop audits."

17. This independent report provides assurance of the successful approach to pre-planning by the Service and the actions of SPT and PIMG to ensure the Authority has met its statutory responsibilities during the pandemic.

Additional Activities

18. During the pandemic, CDDFRS was prepared to assist partner organisations in the fight against COVID-19. As previously highlighted during the first wave there was limited need from partners, with support only needed to support logistic arrangements for some of the Local Resilience Forum (LRF) cells.
19. From February 2021, there was an increased ask from partners for support. To support this work, staff were asked to volunteer to provide assistance. 174 staff have volunteered to assist with additional activities to support partners and communities in the fight against COVID-19.
20. As of 31 August 2021, CDDFRS staff have supported partners in the following areas:
 - Supported NHS Vaccination Centres with logistical support and Vaccinators to administer vaccinations;
 - CDDFRS staff have provided over 7,500 hours of support to the Vaccination Centres;
 - 25 staff have been trained as Vaccinators and have administered over 25,000 vaccinations;

- Supported Durham County Council to run six Community Testing Sites with our staff providing over 3,500 hours of leadership and support to the testing sites;
- Support Durham County Council with their local test and trace service visiting almost 300 households;
- 255 deliveries have been made to deliver essential items to vulnerable persons and the Personal Protective Equipment (PPE) to NHS and care facilities;
- Six staff have been trained to drive ambulances and support NEAS as a resilience arrangement, although fortunately this support was never needed.

ADDITIONAL RESOURCES

21. The Home Office have provided FRSs with additional funding to ease the financial impact of Covid-19. In March 2020 the Service were notified that we would receive an additional grant of £125,448 and this was followed up with £473,336 at the end of April 2020. The Service also were successful in a bid to the Contingency Fund and received £476,854 and were then given a further £98,995 from the Contingency Fund Balance Share. In total therefore we have received an additional £1,174,633 to help support our response to Covid-19.
22. The additional funding has enabled the Service to increase frontline staffing and mitigate any potential threat of significant staffing shortages. The Service fast-tracked a number of the apprentice cohorts onto stations, introduced an additional on-call to wholtime transfer process and funded additional operational cover contracts (OCCs). The measures provided additional staff on a temporary basis and the staffing numbers have now returned to normal as people have retired or left the Service.
23. The additional funding has also facilitated the Service undertaking the significant additional activities listed above. The additional funding received from the Home Office will however be exhausted in October 2021 and therefore some of these activities will cease unless arrangements are agreed locally with partners for funding.

Engagement with Staff

24. An important element of the Service's approach during the pandemic has been continued staff engagement. A significant effort has been dedicated to ensure staff have the information they require and welfare support is in place.
25. Regular Fireflash communications have remained in place. These are short video messages that are distributed by email to all staff. This has continued to allow a timely and consistent message to be distributed along with any new key messages. The Service's dedicated SharePoint site is regularly updated and provides a one stop shop for staff to obtain detailed internal or external guidance documents.

26. Engagement with the Trade Unions has continued to be extremely important during this crisis and the Service and the recognised unions have met regularly and worked closely throughout this period.

27. Staff from all areas of the Service deserve great praise for their attitude and approach throughout the pandemic. Staff have been flexible, supportive and positive and have actively sought to continue to support a first-class emergency service to the people of County Durham and Darlington.

Recommendations

28. Members are requested to:

- a) **Note** the contents of the report and the Service's continued response to the Covid-19 crisis.

Stuart Errington, Chief Fire Officer, 0191 3755553

County Durham and Darlington
Fire and Rescue Authority



Safest People, Safest Places

Combined Fire Authority

17 September 2021

Apprenticeships, Predicted Costings and Income Generation

Report of Group Manager, Training

Purpose of report

1. To provide information to Members on the various types of apprenticeship schemes currently operating within the Service, the cost associated with them and potential income generation opportunities.

Background

2. An apprenticeship levy (tax), set at 0.5% of an employer's wage bill, was introduced by the government on 6 April 2017 for all organisations with a pay bill in excess of £3 million. Public sector bodies, such as County Durham and Darlington Fire and Rescue Service (CDDFRS), with 250 or more staff in England also have an annual target of at least 2.3% or more of their employees starting a new apprenticeship.
3. The amount of levy CDDFRS pay is based on the Service's monthly pay bill and therefore continually changes. If the Service don't have enough funds in their levy account to pay for apprenticeship training in a particular month, they are responsible for the remaining cost of the apprenticeship for that month. This is called '*co-investment*'.

4. With co-investment, the Service pay 5% of the outstanding balance and the government pay the remaining 95%. This is an incentive for employers to access training, via an apprenticeship programme, in a wide range of areas for a significantly lesser cost.
5. Firefighter apprenticeships were introduced into the Service in 2017 which also led to a significant amount of work being carried out to look at other apprenticeship opportunities across the organisation to further develop staff whilst maximising use of the levy. It was identified that the use of the levy could also be beneficial to support internal Continuous Professional Development (CPD) in areas such as leadership and management, which historically have been expensive to deliver.
6. At present there are 78 employees (12.4% of the total workforce) enrolled onto one of the 10 apprenticeship standards currently in operation within the Service. These include technical and specialist skills and leadership and management at various levels.

Annual predicted costs and savings to the Service

7. All apprenticeship schemes currently running within the Service draw down from the levy.
8. The total forecasted levy that the Service is obligated to pay over the next 5 years is approximately **£349,008**.
9. Over the next 5 years the overall predicted apprenticeship training costs for the Service equate to **£1,037,024**.
10. By utilising the co-investment initiative and our apprenticeship levy to its full potential, the Service can benefit from an approximate saving of **£1,004,609** on overall training costs over the next 5 years. Maximising the use of co-investment has also supported development opportunities for staff which may have otherwise been unaffordable.

Potential income generation

11. The government offer several incentive schemes for organisations employing / enrolling individuals as apprentices based on age. As a result of these initiatives the Service will receive an additional **£33,000** income between April 2021 – September 2022. The incentive payments are paid directly into the levy account and can be used to reinvest in further apprenticeship training.
12. New College Durham (NCD) are the current training provider for the Level 3 Operational Firefighter Apprenticeship scheme running within the Service. Due to NCD not having the operational skill set or dedicated resources to deliver the operational elements of the scheme, the Service have an arrangement whereby this element of the programme is outsourced back to us for an agreed fee.

13. The projected overall income generation from this arrangement over the next 5 years is approx. **£416,348**. This money is used to further support development of staff and facilities within the Training function.

Summary

14. The Service intend to continue to utilise the levy to its full extent and it is anticipated more apprenticeship schemes will be used for internal staff development where they have been identified through the annual Training Needs Analysis (TNA) process.
15. The total income / savings generated using apprenticeship schemes within the Service, (considering incentive payments, sub-contracting work and maximum funding bands) is projected to be **£1,094,535** over the next 5 years. These savings will be used to support staff development and continuous improvement to our training activities.

Recommendations

16. Members are requested to:
 - a. **Note** the contents of this report.

GM Rob Cherrie, Training Manager, Ext. 5596

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County Durham and Darlington
Fire and Rescue Authority



Safest People, Safest Places

Combined Fire Authority

17 September 2021

Core Code of Ethics

Report of Assistant Chief Fire Officer

Purpose of Report

1. The purpose of this report is to inform Members of the launch and process of implementation of the Core Code of Ethics which have been produced specifically for Fire and Rescue Services by the National Fire Chiefs Council (NFCC), the Local Government Association (LGA) and the Association of Police and Crime Commissioners (APCC).

Background

2. The Core Code of Ethics is directly aligned to the National Code of Ethics Fire Standard and should be adopted by and embedded within every fire and rescue service (FRS) in England. It sets out the principles and standards of behaviour that will promote, reinforce and support the highest standards from the Members of County Durham and Darlington Fire and Rescue Authority (CDDFRA) and from everyone who works within or on behalf of County Durham and Darlington Fire and Rescue Service (CDDFRS).
3. The Core Code of Ethics contains 5 core principles and describes what the public should expect from the staff of CDDFRS as they deliver day-to-day business and how Members can hold the Service to account. The public expect the FRS to do the right thing in the right way. The principles must be more than words on a page and must become embedded in the way everyone thinks and behaves.
4. The Core Code requires everyone in the sector to prevent unprofessional conduct by questioning behaviour and is something that can be drawn upon to empower us to act when others are failing to meet the standards it articulates.

It gives confidence to challenge or report those who do not meet the required behaviours.

The Core Ethical Principles

5. The 5 ethical principles outlined in the Core Code of Ethics are:
 - a) **Putting our communities first** - this principle outlines how the interests of the public, the community, and service users are put first.
 - b) **Integrity** - this principle relates to acting with integrity including being open, honest, and consistent in everything that we do.
 - c) **Dignity and Respect** - this principle is about treating people with dignity and respect, making decisions objectively based on evidence without discrimination or bias.
 - d) **Leadership** - this principle is about being positive role models, always demonstrating flexible and resilient leadership. Everyone is accountable for their behaviour, decisions, and actions, and challenge all behaviour that falls short of the highest standards.
 - e) **Equality, Diversity and Inclusion** - this principle outlines the need to continually recognise and promote the value of equality, diversity and inclusion, both within the Service and the wider communities it serves. It is about standing against all forms of discrimination, creating equal opportunities, promoting equality, fostering good relations and celebrating difference.
6. In accepting to abide by the Core Code of Ethics, it demonstrates commitment to principles and standards of behaviour that are designed to provide support and guidance. A copy of the Core Code of Ethics is attached as Appendix A and includes a range of examples which are expected to be demonstrated within each of the five principles.

Personal Responsibility

7. Personal behaviour is central to providing the best service to our communities. Ethical values provide the moral compass by which people live their lives and make decisions, 'doing the right thing' because it's the right thing to do. When decisions are based on good principles and people live by good values, the lives of others and the experiences they have in their roles in society and at work can be improved.
8. Everyone is responsible for their own professional behaviour and to ensure the highest standards possible can be delivered, a good understanding of the contents of the Core Code is necessary.

9. Members and employees are expected to use the Core Code of Ethics to always guide behaviour. This can be done by considering the 5 ethical principles in decision-making, challenging others on their decisions, being transparent and role-modelling the Service's values and behaviours.

Your role as Members of CDDFRA

10. As Members of CDDFRA it is necessary to have an in depth understanding of the Core Code in order to hold senior leaders to account in the running of CDDFRS, and as such have additional corporate responsibilities which are outlined below:
 - a) Members have an individual and collective responsibility for the organisation. Each Member should act in a way which allows decision-making meetings to fulfil their purpose in meeting our communities' needs and improving the success of the organisation.
 - b) Members should ensure the organisation is financially responsible and properly managed to protect and enhance the interests of the organisation, be conscious of seeking value for money and be accountable to the public on how money is spent.
 - c) Members should be assured that the organisation complies within the law governing its operations. This includes our actions in a broader social context and the impact of the organisation on society.
 - d) Members must be prepared, if necessary, to express disagreement with senior leaders of CDDFRS where they consider the proposed course of action is not the right thing to do.
 - e) Members must not take improper advantage of their position on CDDFRA to gain, directly or indirectly, a personal advantage or an advantage for any associated person which might cause detriment to the organisation.
 - f) Personal interests and those of associated persons, must not take precedence over those of the organisation's partners generally. Members should seek to avoid conflicts of interest wherever possible. Full and prior disclosure of any conflict, or potential conflict, must be made and recorded where required.
 - g) Members must not make improper use of information acquired as part of CDDFRA or disclose, or allow to be disclosed, information confidential to the organisation. This prohibition applies irrespective of whether Members or any associated person would gain directly or indirectly a personal advantage or whether the organisation would be harmed. Members must not disclose, or allow to be disclosed, confidential information received in the course of the exercise of their duties unless that disclosure has been authorised by the organisation or is required by law. This is balanced by seeking to ensure our commitment to transparency is honoured and the Freedom of Information to our customers is fully supported.

11. To further support the above, Section 13 of the CDDFRA Constitution requires all Members at the Annual General Meeting (AGM) of the Authority to sign a form entitled "Notification by a Member of a Local Authority of Pecuniary and Other Interests, Localism Act 2011, s 29 (1)" which seeks to identify and confirm any conflicts of interest and further supports the ethical principles. Members are also requested to complete a Related Party Transaction Form as part of the external audit of the Service on an annual basis, aligned to the reporting of our Statement of Accounts.
12. The Authority's Constitution was amended to include the Core Code of Ethics, and which was agreed by Members at the AGM in June 2021.

Breaches of the Core Code

13. Members and all employees of CDDFRS have an obligation to question the conduct of colleagues that they believe falls below the expected standards and, if necessary, challenge, report or take action against such conduct.
14. Members should raise any concerns they have with the Monitoring Officer to the Fire Authority who will ensure appropriate action is taken. Further information is included in the Code of Conduct.

Implementation Plan

15. Following publication, a plan was developed to implement and embed the Core Code of Ethics into the Authority and everything that the FRS and its employees do. The plan will ensure effective communication with Members and staff to develop an understanding of and outline the expectations of the Core Code.
16. Progress of the implementation plan will be monitored by the Service's Performance and Programme Board (PPB) and is expected to be complete in March 2022. By this point it is expected the following will be achieved:
 - a) Members and all staff to demonstrate awareness of and record compliance with the Core Code of Ethics.
 - b) Members and line managers are able to hold employees to account over ethical behaviour.
 - c) Compliance achieved against the National Code of Ethics Fire Standard.

Compliance for Members

17. Members of CDDFRA are required to commit to respect and follow the five principles as set out in the Core Code in their service to the public. Members are also required to challenge inappropriate behaviour that does not meet the five ethical principles.
18. Each Member will be asked to sign a record to state they understand the Core Code of Ethics and will abide by these in their day-to-day activities. The documentation requiring signature will be sent to each Member individually and

on return will be held by our Governance Team, this will be renewed on an annual basis at the AGM.

19. Any deputies at Authority meetings will be asked to read the Core Code before attending and sign a record to demonstrate they are aware of the behaviour expected at our meetings.

Recommendations

20. Members are asked to:
 - a) **Note** and **comment** on the contents of this report.
 - b) **Agree** to the adoption and implementation of the Core Code of Ethics.

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NFCC
National Fire
Chiefs Council



Core Code of Ethics for Fire and Rescue Services

England

Foreword

You and the Code

This Core Code of Ethics will help you and every other member of the Fire and Rescue Service (FRS) to act in the right way in your service to the public.

We all make difficult decisions every day. This may be while helping a distressed member of the public or managing a complex financial scenario. The Core Code of Ethics is a clear set of principles for you to base your behaviours on.

We believe the Core Code will help us serve our communities and make FRSs even better places to work. It will help everyone to display and promote good behaviours and to challenge conduct that is inconsistent with the Core Code.

Everyone in every FRS is expected to follow the Core Code. This includes those working with, or on behalf of, the FRS.

The principles

The Core Code sets out five ethical principles, which provide a basis for promoting good behaviour and challenging inappropriate behaviour.

The ethical principles have been produced specifically for Fire and Rescue Services by the National Fire Chiefs Council, the Local Government Association and the Association of Police and Crime Commissioners.

The Seven Principles of Public Life¹ are the foundation of these principles.

We, and the organisations we represent, are all fully supportive of the five ethical principles as set out in this Core Code.

1. www.gov.uk/government/publications/the-7-principles-of-public-life/the-7-principles-of-public-life--2

Your FRS and the Code

The principles should be embedded within everything that FRSs and their employees do. FRSs will ensure that the principles of this Core Code are represented within policies and processes and are at the heart of day-to-day activity.

The Core Code is written as a 'Core' Code to recognise differing governance arrangements and is flexible enough for every service to adopt. Fire and Rescue Authorities and Services can add to the Code to reflect their local values, behaviours, and governance arrangements, including where they:

- are part of a county council and obliged to comply with the council's code
- have existing well-developed ethical codes that can be reviewed against the Core Code.

Accompanying guidance will support your FRS to implement the Core Code locally.

We encourage you all to read, understand, and commit to the ethical principles set out in the Core Code.



Councillor Nick Chard

LGA Lead
Core Code of Ethics



CFO Rebecca Bryant

NFCC Lead
Core Code of Ethics



PFCC Roger Hirst

APCC Lead
Core Code of Ethics

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1. Purpose of our Core Code

Public trust and confidence in our FRS rely on us all demonstrating ethical behaviours.

The Core Code sets out these ethical principles and helps us continuously improve our organisational culture and workforce diversity and assists us in supporting our community in the best way. It is effective only when we all consistently demonstrate the ethical behaviours. Everyone in every FRS is expected to follow the Core Code. This includes those working with, or on behalf of, the FRS.

The principles should be embedded within everything that FRSs and their employees do. FRSs will ensure that the principles of this Core Code are represented within policies and processes to ensure they are embedded and at the heart of day-to-day activity.

2. Our Five Fire and Rescue Service ethical principles

Each of our ethical principles is described by a statement and examples to set out what we must each do to ensure we are acting in line with our Core Code.



Putting our communities first

We put the interests of the public, the community, and service users first.



Integrity

We act with integrity including being open, honest, and consistent in everything that we do.



Dignity and respect

We treat people with dignity and respect, making decisions objectively based on evidence, without discrimination or bias.



Leadership

We are all positive role models, always demonstrating flexible and resilient leadership.

We are all accountable for everything we do and challenge all behaviour that falls short of the highest standards.



Equality, diversity, and inclusion (EDI)

We continually recognise and promote the value of EDI, both within the FRS and the wider communities in which we serve.

We stand against all forms of discrimination, create equal opportunities, promote equality, foster good relations, and celebrate difference.

3. Our ethical principles in practice

Putting our communities first

We put the interests of the public, the community, and service users first.

To demonstrate this, I:

- act with empathy, compassion, and respect, caring equally for everyone I deal with
- consider the diverse needs of my communities and tailor my work to best meet their specific needs
- understand and evaluate the impact I have on the public's safety and wellbeing
- continuously improve my performance to better serve the public and my communities
- am an ambassador for my Fire and Rescue Service and a role model in my communities
- identify and remove barriers to people joining or accessing our service.

Some examples of putting our communities first:



- I find out about my local community and risks, to ensure I can offer the best service.
- I seek the views of others about service quality and effectiveness to identify ideas for improvement.
- I work collaboratively with colleagues and partners to improve the service to the public.
- I look to solve problems in different ways, to improve the service I provide.

Integrity

We act with integrity including being open, honest, and consistent in everything that we do.

To demonstrate this, I:

- am honest, open, and fair when dealing with everyone
- can evidence my decisions and am able to explain my behaviour
- build trusting relationships and demonstrate an understanding of everyone's roles and responsibilities
- welcome challenge and adapt the way I work **and my behaviour as a result of what I learn**
- challenge behaviour that does not comply with our Core Code or my service's values
- never behave in a way that may cause others to act outside our ethical principles
- remain impartial and objective
- never act in an improper way, or in a manner that could create a perception of improper behaviour for personal gain. I declare relevant interests and relationships and maintain personal and professional boundaries.

Some examples of acting with integrity:



- I acknowledge and learn from my mistakes and celebrate my successes with the team.
- I recognise and challenge inappropriate behaviour.
- I always strive to deliver against my commitments.
- I persist in the face of obstacles and demonstrate a sense of personal responsibility for delivery.

Dignity and respect

We treat people with dignity and respect, making decisions objectively based on evidence, without discrimination or bias.

To demonstrate this, I:

- use unbiased judgement and behaviour and act respectfully
- act with decency and impartiality, recognising that my unconscious bias can prevent me considering all perspectives and needs when I am making decisions
- do the right thing when delivering services, using the ethical principles set out in this Core Code and my service's values
- support the development and opportunity of myself and my colleagues
- create an environment of openness and trust
- treat people with respect and without discrimination, harassment, or bullying; I actively reject these inappropriate behaviours
- challenge all inappropriate behaviour when I am at work.

Some examples of having dignity and respect:



- My manner is always composed and respectful.
- I create an environment where people can be themselves at work and the best they can be.
- I communicate responsibly and with sensitivity and respect for others.
- I strive not to create conflict. When conflict happens, I handle it in a professional manner.
- I build trust with others, creating constructive working relationships to achieve goals.

Leadership

We are all positive role models, always demonstrating flexible and resilient leadership.

We are all accountable for our behaviour, decisions, and actions, and challenge all behaviour that falls short of the highest standards.

To demonstrate this, I:

- take responsibility for continuously improving my own performance and the performance of my service
- am accountable to the public, my employer and my colleagues for my decisions and actions
- take responsibility for my actions and their consequences
- address inappropriate behaviour in ways appropriate to my role
- recognise leaders exist at all levels in my organisation and communities
- always demonstrate the principles of a positive culture of equality, diversity, and inclusion
- am committed to implementing and working by this Core Code

Some examples of leadership:



- I am an ambassador for the Service, taking pride and responsibility for the work we do and encouraging others to do the same.
- I value inclusion and set a positive example of appropriate behaviour for everyone, consistent with our Core Code.
- I look after the people around me and look for signs that someone may need support, ensuring its' availability.
- I create conditions where team members feel confident to suggest and implement creative ideas.
- I make decisions based on evidence and consider all risks.

Equality, diversity, and inclusion

We continually recognise and promote the value of EDI, both within FRSs and the wider communities in which we serve. We stand against all forms of discrimination, create equal opportunities, promote equality, foster good relations, and celebrate difference.

To demonstrate this, I:

- acknowledge and care about people's diverse needs so they can access the services they need from me and my service
- provide an environment where everyone has an equal voice
- acknowledge my own unconscious bias and consider everyone's perspective
- behave in a way that celebrates diversity in all its forms, everywhere
- tackle discriminatory behaviour, policy, and procedure
- do all I can to encourage people from underrepresented groups to join our Service and feel welcome
- help everyone to be their best and to always learn from one another.

Some examples of equality, diversity, and inclusion:



- I deliberately create an environment where people can be the best they can.
- I value my colleagues and my team and know how to make best use of our diverse skills and strengths.
- I value and appreciate differences in people and treat everyone with kindness and respect.
- I recognise and challenge inappropriate behaviour.
- I avoid making and expressing preconceptions and stereotyping when interacting with others.

4. Commitment to our Core Code

We operate in rapidly changing environments, often with new ethical challenges. Our decisions are sometimes made in difficult, changing, and unclear situations.

The principles in this Core Code guide our individual behaviours and form the basis of ethical decision making as we go about our work. We will also need to consider:

- the needs of communities, partners, our service, and our employees
- our service's values and its guidance, policy, and procedure.

It is vital that we are fully committed to the principles in the Core Code as set out in the commitments.

Commitment from Fire and Rescue Authority and Service

Our behaviour is central to effectively serving our community. We will ensure the resources, policies and procedures are in place, so our organisation acts in accordance with the Core Code.

Through adhering to the Core Code, we will strive to create a positive, responsible, innovative, open, and challenging working environment in which ability and delivery is valued, encouraged, developed, recognised, and rewarded.

We are committed to continually improving the behaviours within the sector at all levels and ensuring that employees treat each other with humanity, dignity, and respect.

We will always act appropriately to address behaviour which falls below the standards set in the Core Code.

My commitment

As a member of the FRS, I will respect and follow the five principles in the Core Code in my service to the public.

I will promote the principles to my colleagues and challenge inappropriate behaviour that does not meet the five principles.

5. Our Five Ethical Principles on a page



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County Durham and Darlington
Fire and Rescue Authority



Safest People, Safest Places

Combined Fire Authority

17 September 2021

Our People Project - Creating a Corporate Narrative

Report of Communications Manager

Purpose of Report

1. The purpose of this report is to provide members with the rationale behind creating the “Our People” video.

Background

What is a corporate narrative?

- 2 It's simply a great story, told well and truthfully, about an organisation and the place it serves. An effective corporate narrative helps people understand what we stand for, why it's important. It should capture what we do, who we are, what's important to us and why? using simple, clear everyday language.
- 3 It's difficult to remember facts – however impressive they are – it's easy to remember good stories. The brief was to create a video and handbook which reflects our greatest asset – Our People, capturing what it is like to work for County Durham and Darlington Fire and Rescue Service (CDDFRS).

Study and Align

- 4 Earlier this year the communications team completed a series of staff focus groups to assist with writing a script, creating a corporate narrative and more importantly so staff could hear their own voices in the video. Questions asked in the focus groups included why did you want to work for CDDFRS? What's

your favourite part of your day? If you could tell a member of the public something that would surprise them about the fire service, what would it be?

- 5 For the most part, the focus groups were very positive with some genuinely heart felt responses about how proud staff are to work for CDDFRS, comments included “best job in the world” “my chest swells with pride when I tell people where I work” “I never wanted to do anything else” “people call us when they don’t know who else to call” amongst many others.
- 6 The focus groups also acted as an informal ‘temperature check’ of when would be the best time to launch the video and how the organisation was ‘feeling’ in the midst of a pandemic.

Create

- 7 The team created a story which centres around Our People, employed a local filmmaker to heighten the production value of the video and the filming began as the Covid-19 restrictions lifted in April 2021. Filming every aspect of the service and aligning it to the script was not easy, however the team and the wider organisation pulled together to ensure we had the best footage, showcasing all aspects of the service we provide to the communities of County Durham and Darlington.

Launch and Embed

- 7 The video was launched at this year’s Being the Best Awards and sent out to the wider organisation a few days later. The handbook will embed the values and behaviours of the organisation further when it is launched in September and will include the recently launched Code of Ethics.
- 8 Once embedded the video will be launched to the public and will be used at service wide events, engagement activities and recruitment campaigns. The way in which the video was produced will allow the communications team to adjust and refresh the video accordingly.

Recommendation

- 9 Members are recommended to **note** the report and video content.

By virtue of paragraph(s) 3 of Part 1 of Schedule 12A
of the Local Government Act 1972.

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