



Hereford & Worcester
Fire Authority

Fire Authority Statement of Assurance

2018-19

Foreword

The Statement of Assurance is a short report designed to give staff, partners and local communities an assurance that we are doing everything we can to keep them safe and well and are providing value for money.

It covers three main areas:

- making sure our governance arrangements are delivering our services effectively and efficiently,
- ensuring our financial arrangements are in order and providing good value for money, and
- organising our services to make sure risks are well understood and we have the right resources in place to tackle them effectively and safely.

The Statement includes a short directory of links to relevant documents published on the Service website and elsewhere, which will help you to assess our performance and value for money.

Following last year's publication of the Policing and Crime Act 2017 and the introduction of the Government's Fire Reform programme, a new independent inspectorate of fire and rescue services has been set up. It is called Her Majesty's Inspectorate of Constabulary and Fire & Rescue Services (HMICFRS), and in July 2018 it began a programme of inspections of all fire and rescue services across England and Wales. These inspections look at

how efficiently Services are run, how effective they are and how well they lead and support their employees.

The resulting assessments will include graded judgments of performance. They are designed to enable the public to see how each fire and rescue service's performance changes over time and compared with the performance of other services.

HWFRS was one of the first Services to be inspected during July 2018 and the results of the inspection are due to be published on the HMICFRS website at the end of 2018.

We should also note that the proposed change in governance from the current Fire Authority made up of local councillors from the two counties to the West Mercia Police and Crime Commissioner (PCC), originally due to take effect from June 2018, has not yet taken place pending the outcome of a judicial review. The review was requested because the Fire Authority believes it is in the public interest to challenge the Government's decision to approve the change in governance on the grounds that such a change would not significantly improve the economy, effectiveness or efficiency of the Service.

Shropshire & Wrekin Fire Authority has also requested a judicial review, which means both fire authorities in the West Mercia area have challenged the government's approach. The outcome of the review is expected to be known in the New Year.

More information about our plans can be found on the Service website and in our Fire Authority Annual Report 2018-19.

We trust the Statement of Assurance gives you confidence that the Fire Authority maintains the highest standards in all aspects of its work and that the Service continues to deliver its frontline and support services to the best of its abilities for the communities of Herefordshire and Worcestershire.



Councillor Roger Phillips,
Chairman of the Fire Authority



Nathan Travis, Chief Fire Officer/
Chief Executive

Governance

The counties of Herefordshire and Worcestershire cover a largely rural area of around 1,500 square miles (390,000 hectares) and are home to over three-quarters of a million people (772,362 people at mid-2016 resident in around 320,000 households). About three-quarters of the population live in Worcestershire, with around 100,000 people living in the city of Worcester. Herefordshire is a much more sparsely populated rural area with just under 190,000 residents at mid-2016. By 2030, the population of the two counties is projected to grow to over 800,000 people, with people aged 65 and over likely to represent close to one in three of the total.

To serve this very large area, we have 27 fire stations mostly located in the main towns, with 41 frontline fire engines supported by 28 specialist vehicles. In addition to Service Headquarters in Worcester there is also a training centre, stores/workshops and a number of locally based training facilities. At the end of March 2018, the Service employed 743 full-time and part-time staff, most of whom are full-time and part-time firefighters (approximately 82% of the workforce).

In 2017-18 we attended 6,931 incidents, about 130 each week. The majority of incidents were false alarms (3,289 incidents), though there was also a small increase in the number of road traffic collisions and floods we attended, largely because of poor weather conditions during the year.

More details on population, Service resources and incidents attended can be found in the [Fire Authority Annual Report 2018-](#)

[19](#) on our website. Further information on population demographics can also be found in the [CRMP Demographic Profile 2018](#), which can also be found on the website.

The Service's overall governing body is Hereford & Worcester Fire Authority, which is made up of 25 local councillors, six from Herefordshire Council and 19 from Worcestershire County Council. They make sure the Service carries out its duties in relation to fire prevention, fire safety, firefighting and rescues, including road traffic collisions and other emergencies such as flooding, as set out in the [Fire and Rescue Services Act 2004](#). Due regard is also given to the terms and requirements for Fire Authorities as set out in the [Fire and Rescue National Framework for England](#), which was revised in 2018.

The Authority sets the budget and approves the overall direction for the Service. It also appoints the Chief Fire Officer and makes sure the Service has the right people, equipment and training to deliver their services effectively and efficiently in the best interests of the communities of Herefordshire and Worcestershire. The Police and Crime Commissioner (PCC) for West Mercia also currently attends Fire Authority meetings and participates in discussions as a non-voting member.

The Authority meets four times a year and is supported by three committees. Full details of all meetings and decisions can be found on the [Service website](#).

The Fire Authority has a responsibility to ensure that its business is conducted in accordance with the law and proper standards, and that public money is safeguarded and properly accounted for. The Authority must have in place proper arrangements for the governance of its affairs and ensure it is doing the right things in the right ways for the right people in a timely, inclusive, open, honest and accountable manner.

Each year the Authority prepares an Annual Governance Statement setting out how it meets these responsibilities. It comprises the systems and processes, culture and values by which the Authority is directed and controlled and through which it accounts to and engages with its communities. This includes maintaining a sound system of internal control and ensuring robust arrangements for managing risk are in place. This is supported by a [Code of Corporate Governance](#) setting out how the Authority promotes good governance.

The main elements of the governance framework are as follows:

- Constitution – defines the roles and responsibility of the Authority, Committees, Members and Officers.
- Audit and Standards Committee – reviews arrangements for identifying and managing the Authority's business risks and the approval of policies in respect of the governance framework.
- Monitoring Officer – provides advice on the scope of powers and responsibilities of the Authority, and has a statutory duty to ensure lawfulness and fairness of decision making.

- Chief Financial Officer (Treasurer) – ensures the sound administration of the financial affairs of the Authority as required by the statutory duties under the Local Government Act 1972, the Local Government Finance Act 1988 and the Accounts and Audit (England) Regulations 2015.
- Ethical Framework and Code of Conduct – in place for all staff, and familiarisation is included in the induction process.

The Authority's Strategic Risk Register (SRR) is reviewed quarterly at the Service's Senior Management Board and is reported annually to the Audit and Standards Committee. The SRR identifies risks to the success of the organisation and puts effective control measures in place to mitigate their effect. Examples of risks include severe weather, pandemic influenza and fuel shortages. A [summary of the Strategic Risk Review](#) is also available.

During the year, the Worcestershire Internal Audit Shared Service (WIASS) carried out a number of audits in relation to Corporate Governance (including Health & Safety arrangements). The audits examined business continuity, resilience and emergency planning, ICT and risk management. Each audit received '*full assurance*' in complying with the Accounts and Audit (England) Regulations 2015 and the terms of the Internal Audit Charter between WIASS and the Authority.

In 2017-18, there was also an independent external assessment of the internal audit process delivered by WIASS. The assessment found that the WIASS service was '*solid and reliable*' with no areas of non-compliance.

During 2017, the West Mercia PCC submitted a business case to take over the governance of the Service alongside Shropshire Fire and Rescue Service. The business case was subsequently approved by the Government and the change of governance was due to take place in June 2018. However, both Hereford & Worcester and Shropshire & Wrekin Fire Authorities have requested a judicial review of the decision, because they challenge the proposed benefits of the business case over and above the current governance arrangements. The outcome of the judicial review will be reported in the New Year.

In July 2018, the HMICFRS conducted an inspection of the Service as part of the Government's overall Fire Reform programme. The HMICFRS will be inspecting all 45 Fire and Rescue Services in England in three stages over the next 18

months. The inspections look at each Service's effectiveness, efficiency and how well staff are led and supported.

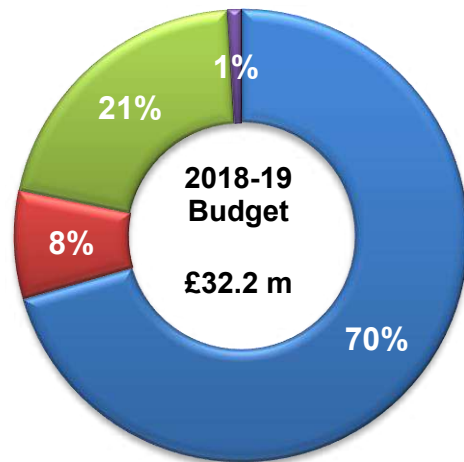
The results of the inspection will include a judgement on the Service's performance in relation to effectiveness, efficiency and people. Their report will be published online alongside similar reports for other Fire and Rescue Services across England so that the public will be able to see how performance changes over time and when compared with the performance of other Services.

Their report on HWFRS is expected to be published on the HMICFRS website at the end of 2018 once the first round of inspections is complete.

Finance

Funds available to the Fire and Rescue Service continue to reduce. The revenue budget for 2018-19 is £32.2 million, 18 per cent less in real terms than in 2010-11. Our funding comes from three main sources, the majority of which comes from Council Tax as shown in the following chart:

How the Service is paid for: 2018-19



- H&W Council Tax: £22.7 m
- H&W share of Business Rates: £2.5 m
- Government Grants: £6.7 m
- Fire Authority Reserves: £0.3 m

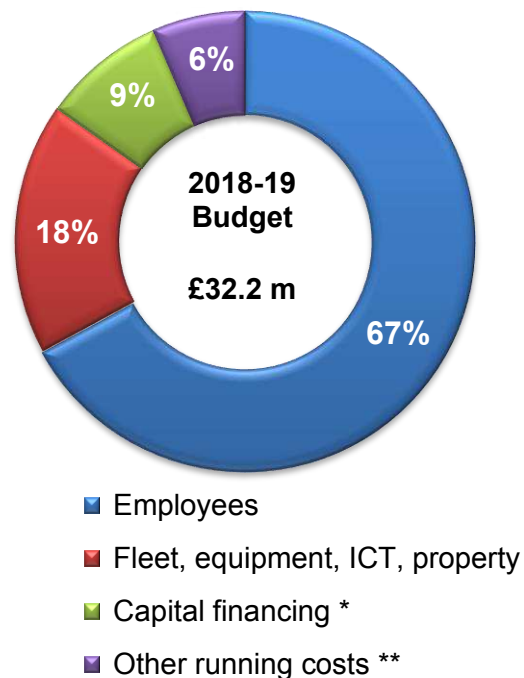
The cost to the average household in Herefordshire and Worcestershire in 2018-19 (Council Tax Band D) is £81.90, representing about 22p per day. This is above the £76.62 average for comparable Fire Authorities in 2018-19, but considerably less than the highest cost of £100.53. The Service also receives a low level of central government grant funding, compared to other Fire and Rescue Services.

To make sure we spend our budget properly, we have robust financial monitoring processes in place. The Fire Authority requires the Treasurer to prepare an annual Statement of Accounts, which is designed to provide a true and fair view of the financial position, including a statement on income and expenditure. In preparing the statement, the Treasurer follows the CIPFA Code of Practice on Local Authority Accounting in the United Kingdom.

The latest Statement of Accounts covers the Authority's financial year ending 31 March 2018 and is available on the Service website along with the External Auditor's audit opinion. The Statement of Accounts also includes the Annual Governance Statement.

The Authority approves a Medium Term Financial Plan each year, which sets out the resources needed to deliver our services, and agrees an annual budget as shown in the chart below.

How the budget is spent: 2018-19



* capital financing is interest and provision to repay loans

** other running costs include training costs, community safety materials, payroll services, legal costs, Fire Authority costs and insurances

To provide further assurance, every year a structured programme of internal audit reports is carried out, supported by an independent annual external audit. The internal audits are carried out by the Worcestershire Internal Audit Shared Service (WIASS) in line with the Public Sector Internal Audit Standards 2013. These audits examine key aspects of how the Service conducts its business including:

- the adequacy and effectiveness of internal controls and risk management,
- compliance with legislation and the Service's own objectives, policies and procedures,
- how well the Service's assets and interests are protected and managed,
- investigation of any allegations of fraud and irregularity, and
- advice on the control and risk implications of new systems or other organisational changes.

Twelve audits were carried out by WIASS during the year and they found '*full assurance*' for the three core financial areas and reported no '*limited*' or '*below assurance*' areas. The audits covered the following areas.

- Accountancy and Finance Systems – main ledger, creditors, debtors, payroll & pensions, capital programme (fleet)

- Corporate Governance (including Health & Safety) – corporate governance, ICT audit, risk management
- Systems/Management arrangements – partnership working, training, transformational planning, procurement/contracts

The annual external audit is currently undertaken by Grant Thornton UK LLP and provides an independent assessment of the Fire Authority's arrangements to secure economy, efficiency and effectiveness in its use of resources. It focuses on arrangements for securing financial resilience and prioritising resources within tighter budgets. This year's report found that the Authority continues to have proper arrangements in place to ensure it delivers value for money in its use of resources.

Frontline response (operational) services

Making sure our firefighters and communities are kept as safe as possible is at the heart of everything we do. We aim to provide the best training and equipment for our firefighters to do their jobs safely and ensure they have the best incident command and operational leadership available. We constantly assess the level of risk across the two counties and use this to help organise how we target our prevention and protection services.

The [Community Risk Management Plan 2014-2020](#) (CRMP) is our overall strategy for planning how to improve community safety, reduce the number of incidents we need to attend and, above all, save lives. It sets out what we do to tackle risks to our communities, to our firefighters, and to the effectiveness and efficiency of our services.

This year we carried out a Midpoint Review of the CRMP to assess progress and check if its aims and objectives are still valid or require updating in the light of changing circumstances. Three key areas were highlighted:

- the successful implementation of fire and emergency cover proposals to help improve efficiency without reducing the effectiveness of the cover arrangements; together with reductions in management and support staff levels, reductions in departmental budgets, and collaborative work with Shropshire FRS and West Mercia Police, an estimated £6.9 million per year will have been saved up to 2023-24,

- the successful implementation of the Service's 2020 Vision Programme, an extensive range of strategic modernisation and transformation projects, which will help to ensure services are delivered more effectively and efficiently, including through collaboration with other partners, and
- the introduction of our new strategic vision and direction called 'Saving More Lives' which signals our wider ambition to add even more value to local communities by working collaboratively with our partners to support and protect those most vulnerable.

The CRMP Midpoint Review will be available on the Service website once published. Alongside the Midpoint Review is the CRMP Demographic Profile 2018, which provides updated information on the local population and how it is changing over time, and especially highlighting the potential risks associated with an ageing population.

There is also the CRMP Risk Review 2018, which provides an analysis of trends to help us understand how risk is changing over time. In particular, it looks at the key life risks of fires and road traffic collisions and maps out areas that are at more risk than others. The Risk Review is complemented by separate risk profiles for each of our 27 fire stations, highlighting any particular local areas or groups potentially at more risk than others.

The latest Fire Authority Annual Report 2018-19 provides more detail on progress made in delivering our plans and services over

the previous year. It also includes our CRMP Action Plan for 2018-19, which sets out the services we will be delivering over the forthcoming year, including how we organise our fire and emergency cover arrangements in the light of changing risks and resources.

Among the operational highlights during 2017-18 was the opportunity to carry out our first recruitment campaign in ten years for wholtime firefighters, and our continued recruitment programme for on-call firefighters with special emphasis on attracting women into the role. We also developed new proposals to change crewing arrangements in order to provide extra capacity and resilience and discussions with staff are currently ongoing.

In conjunction with the Active Incident Monitoring process, the programmes of Operational Assurance audits continued

throughout the year to help ensure practical skills and fire station audits meet safety critical requirements. Findings continue to be positive and any actions needed are noted and followed up.

Over the last year the Service has also published a number of strategies aimed at supporting our Saving More Lives vision. These cover key aspects of service delivery including ICT, People, Community Risk, Equipment and Property.

The [Transparency](#) pages on the Service website help to make as much information about how our organisation delivers its responsibilities as freely available as possible. We also publish a quarterly [Performance Snapshot](#) giving information on operational assurance and performance covering firefighter safety, community safety and quality services.

Directory of assurance documents

The following directory provides links to documents available on the [Service website](#) and to others held on external websites.

A. Governance

The Fire Authority is fully committed to supporting the Government's transparency initiative, promoting openness and accountability through reporting on local decision making, public spending and democratic processes. The Service website lists all the relevant information through its [Transparency Code of Practice](#), including:

- [Annual Governance Statement 2017-18 \(included in the Statement of Accounts 2017-18\)](#)
- [Code of Corporate Governance](#)
- [Fire Authority Constitution](#)
- [Fire Authority and Committees](#)
- [Transparency](#)
- [Performance Snapshot](#)

- [Ethical Framework and Code of Conduct](#)
- [Strategic Risk Register \(summary\)](#)

Links to national legislation and other guidance:

- [Fire and Rescue National Framework for England 2018](#)
- [Fire and Rescue Services Act 2004](#)
- [Local Government Transparency Code 2015](#)
- [Her Majesty's Inspectorate of Constabulary and Fire & Rescue Services \(HMICFRS\)](#)
- [West Mercia Police and Crime Commissioner business case](#)
- [Announcement of judicial review challenge to Home Office decision to approve PCC business case](#)

B. Finance

Details of the Fire Authority's finances and budgeting arrangements can be found in the following documents:

- [Annual Statement of Accounts 2017-18](#)
- Link to previous [Statements of Accounts](#)
- [Budget and Precept 2018-19 and Medium Term Financial Plan](#), [Appendices 1-8](#) and [Appendix 9](#)

Reports of internal audits and external audit reviews can be found at the following links:

- [Internal Audit Annual Report 2017-18](#) (including Internal Audit Charter)
- [Internal Audit External Assessment 2017-18](#)
- [External Audit Findings Report 2017-18](#)

The Service website has further information on spending and links include:

- [Council Tax 2018-19](#)
- [Invoice payments over £250](#)

- [Pay Policy Statement 2018-19](#)

Links to national legislation and other guidance:

- [Local Government Act 1999](#)
- [Accounts and Audit Regulations 2015](#)
- [Local Government Finance Act 1988](#)
- [Local Government Act 1972](#)
- [Chartered Institute for Public Finance and Accountancy \(CIPFA\) Codes of Practice](#)
- [Public Sector Internal Audit Standards](#)

Previous Statements of Assurance can be found at the following link:

- [Statements of Assurance](#)

C. Operations

The Fire Authority publishes reports on all its services, including the overall strategy, operational performance, policies and financial plans. Key documents include:

- [Fire Authority Annual Report 2018-19](#)
- [Community Risk Management Plan 2014-2020](#)
- CRMP Midpoint Review 2018 (not yet published)
- [CRMP Demographic Profile 2018](#)
- [CRMP Risk Review 2018](#)
- [Annual Performance 2017-18](#)
- [Link to Strategies](#)

The Service website provides a wide range of information about the Fire Authority and the Fire and Rescue Service, with five main sections:

- [About Us](#)
- [Safety and Advice](#)
- [Your Right To Know](#)

- [Join Us](#)
- [News and Events](#)
- There is also a [Publication Scheme](#), which sets out what information we make publicly available.

Links to national legislation and other guidance:

- [Policing and Crime Act 2017](#)
- [Fire and Rescue Services Act 2004](#)
- [Civil Contingencies Act 2004](#)
- [Regulatory Reform \(Fire Safety\) Order 2005](#)
- [Fire and Rescue Services \(Emergencies\) \(England\) Order 2007](#)
- [Localism Act 2011](#)
- [Health and Safety at Work etc. Act 1974](#)
- [Fire and Rescue National Framework for England 2018](#)

Your right to know: access to information

Hereford & Worcester Fire and Rescue Service collects and maintains information and data to enable it to carry out our statutory duties. A great deal of information on the Service is already available in the public domain through our [Publication Scheme](#) and [Transparency](#) webpage. Service staff will help you obtain the information you want unless disclosure would be against the law.

You have a right to request information under the [Freedom of Information Act 2000](#), which gives you a general right of access to recorded information held by the Service. The Act is designed to ensure greater accountability, as well as to promote a more open culture. If you want to know what personal information is held about you, you can make a request under the [Data Protection Act 1998](#). To find out more, please follow the [Access to Information](#) link.

What do you think of our Statement of Assurance?

We welcome any views you may have on the content of this Statement of Assurance.

If you have any comments or would like to contact us about any issue, please visit our website at www.hwfire.org.uk where you will find full contact details along with links to further information about our services and activities.

If you have any general enquiries, please call 0345 122 4454 or email us at info@hwfire.org.uk.



You can also follow us on

Twitter www.twitter.com/hwfire



or find us on

Facebook www.facebook.com/hwfire

Alternatively you may write to:

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If you would like this information in an alternative language or format such as large print or audio, please contact us on 0345 122 4454.