



HEREFORD & WORCESTER Fire Authority

Full Authority

AGENDA

Tuesday, 13 February 2024

10:30

**Wyre Forest House Council Chamber
Wyre Forest District Council, Wyre Forest House,
Finepoint Way, Kidderminster, Worcestershire, DY11 7WF**

Wyre Forest House Location Map

SAT NAV: DY11 7FB

Wyre Forest House, Finepoint Way, Kidderminster, DY11 7WF
Reception at Wyre Forest House 01562 732101

From Stourport:

Head towards Kidderminster on the A451 Minster Road, passing Stourport High School and Stourport Sports Club on your left. When you reach the traffic lights at the crossroads, turn left into Walter Nash Road West (signposted Wyre Forest House). Then take your first left onto Finepoint Way. Follow the road around to your left and Wyre Forest House is at the end of the road on the left. Visitor parking is available and signposted from the mini roundabout.

From Kidderminster:

From Kidderminster, follow the signs for Stourport and head out of Kidderminster on the A451 Stourport Road, this road becomes a dual carriageway. You will pass 24/7 Fitness and Wyre Forest Community Housing on your left. At the crossroads with traffic lights turn right into Walter Nash Road West (there is a dedicated right hand-turn lane), signposted for Wyre Forest House. Then take your first left onto Finepoint Way. Follow the road around to your left and Wyre Forest House is at the end of the road on the left. Visitor parking is available and signposted from the mini roundabout.



ACCESS TO INFORMATION – YOUR RIGHTS. The press and public have the right to attend Local Authority meetings and to see certain documents. You have:

- the right to attend all Authority and Committee meetings unless the business to be transacted would disclose “confidential information” or “exempt information”;
- the right to film, record or report electronically on any meeting to which the public are admitted provided you do not do so in a manner that is disruptive to the meeting. **If you are present at a meeting of the Authority you will be deemed to have consented to being filmed or recorded by anyone exercising their rights under this paragraph;**
- the right to inspect agenda and public reports at least five days before the date of the meeting (available on our website: <http://www.hwfire.org.uk>);
- the right to inspect minutes of the Authority and Committees for up to six years following the meeting (available on our website: <http://www.hwfire.org.uk>); and
- the right to inspect background papers on which reports are based for a period of up to four years from the date of the meeting.

Please note that when taking part in public participation, your name and a summary of what you say at the meeting may be included in the minutes.

A reasonable number of copies of agenda and reports relating to items to be considered in public will be available at meetings of the Authority and Committees. If you have any queries regarding this agenda or any of the decisions taken or wish to exercise any of these rights of access to information please contact Committee & Members’ Services on 01905 368209 or by email at committeeservices@hwfire.org.uk.

WELCOME AND GUIDE TO TODAY’S MEETING. These notes are written to assist you to follow the meeting. Decisions at the meeting will be taken by the **Councillors** who are democratically elected representatives and they will be advised by **Officers** who are paid professionals. The Fire and Rescue Authority comprises 25 Councillors and appoints committees to undertake various functions on behalf of the Authority. There are 19 Worcestershire County Councillors on the Authority and 6 Herefordshire Council Councillors.

Agenda Papers - Attached is the Agenda which is a summary of the issues to be discussed and the related reports by Officers.

Chairman - The Chairman, who is responsible for the proper conduct of the meeting, sits at the head of the table.

Officers - Accompanying the Chairman is the Chief Fire Officer and other Officers of the Fire and Rescue Authority who will advise on legal and procedural matters and record the proceedings. These include the Clerk and the Treasurer to the Authority.

The Business - The Chairman will conduct the business of the meeting. The items listed on the agenda will be discussed.

Decisions - At the end of the discussion on each item the Chairman will put any amendments or motions to the meeting and then ask the Councillors to vote. The Officers do not have a vote.



Hereford & Worcester Fire Authority

Full Authority

Tuesday, 13 February 2024, 10:30

Agenda

Councillors

Mr C B Taylor (Chairman), Mr R J Phillips (Vice Chairman), Mr A Amos, Mr D Boatright-Greene, Mr D Boulter, Mr B Brookes, Mrs J Carwardine, Mr D Chambers, Mr B Clayton, Mr D Davies, Mr A Ditta, Mrs E Eyre BEM, Mr I D Hardiman, Mr Al Hardman, Mr M Hart, Mr J Kenyon, Mrs E Marshall, Ms N McVey, Ms J Monk, Mr D Morehead, Mr R J Morris, Ms L Robinson, Ms D Toynbee, Mr R M Udall, Mr T Wells

No.	Item	Pages
1	Apologies for Absence To receive any apologies for absence.	
2	Declarations of Interest (if any) This item allows the Chairman to invite any Councillor to declare an interest in any of the items on this Agenda.	
3	Chairman's Announcements To update Members on recent activities.	
4	Public Participation To allow a Member of the public to present a petition, ask a question or make a statement relating to any topic concerning the duties and powers of the Authority. Members of the public wishing to take part should notify the Head of Legal Services in writing or by email indicating both the nature and content of their proposed participation to be received no later than 2 clear working days before the meeting (in this case 8 February 2024). Further details about public participation are available on the website. Enquiries can also be made through the telephone numbers/email listed below.	

5	Confirmation of Minutes	1 - 8
	To confirm the minutes of the meeting held on 12 December 2023.	
6	Budget and Precept 2024/25 and Medium Term Financial Plan 2024/25	
	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Determine the Revenue and Capital Budgets and the Council Tax Requirement for 2024/25. 2. Approve the Prudential Indicators and Minimum Revenue Provision (MRP) Statement for 2024/25. 3. Approve the Capital, Investment and Reserves Strategies. 4. Approve the level of Fees and Charges for chargeable services for 2024/25. 5. Identify potential future resources, their consequential impact on future year budgets and the future Council Tax Requirement. (the Medium Term Financial Plan). 	
	Report to follow.	
7	Pay Policy Statement	9 - 20
	To present the Pay Policy Statement for 2024-2025 for approval and publication on the Authority's website.	
8	Fire Alliance Update: Fire Control Project	21 - 23
	To update the Fire Authority on progress of the Fire Alliance Fire Control Project.	
9	His Majesty's Inspectorate of Constabularies and Fire and Rescue Services (HMICFRS) Improvement Plan 2024-25	24 - 90
	To update Members on the proposed actions relating to each area for improvement following receipt of the 2023 Inspection Report.	
10	Members' Allowances Scheme 2024/25	91 - 96
	To propose an increase in the allowances paid to Members for 2024/25 in accordance with the previous decision that increases be linked to the National Joint Council annual pay award for 'Green Book' staff.	
11	Minutes of the Audit and Standards Committee	97 - 100
	To receive the minutes of the meeting held on 17 January 2024.	



Hereford & Worcester Fire Authority

Full Authority

Tuesday, 12 December 2023, 10:30

Chairman: Mr C B Taylor

Vice-Chairman: Mr R J Phillips

Minutes

Members Present: Mr D Boatright-Greene, Mr D Boulter, Mr B Brookes, Mrs J Carwardine, Mr D Chambers, Mr B Clayton, Mr D Davies, Mrs E Eyre BEM, Mr I D Hardiman, Mr Al Hardman, Mr M Hart, Mrs E Marshall, Ms N McVey, Ms J Monk, Mr R J Phillips, Ms L Robinson, Mr C B Taylor, Ms D Toynbee, Mr R M Udall, Mr T Wells

0454 Apologies for Absence

Apologies were received from Cllr A Amos, Cllr D Morehead and Cllr R Morris.

0455 Declarations of Interest (if any)

Cllr R Phillips declared that he was Vice Chair of the Firefighters Scheme Advisory Board (England and Wales), Chair of the Local Government Pension Scheme Advisory Board (England and Wales), and a member of the NJC for Fire Service (Grey Book and Green Book).

0456 Chairman's Announcements

The Chairman informed Members of the following:

- On 16 November 2023 the Chairman attended the Worcester Medals and Awards Ceremony at the Guildhall where the first new award for 50 years' service was presented.
- On 30 November 2023 the Vice-Chairman attended the Hereford Medal and Awards Ceremony at the Shire Hall.
- At the end of the meeting there would be a short Equality, Diversity and Inclusion briefing for Members.

0457 Public Participation

There was no public participation.

0458 Confirmation of Minutes

RESOLVED that the minutes of the Fire Authority meeting held on 18 October 2023 be confirmed as a correct record and signed by the Chairman.

0459 External Audit Findings Report and Letter of Representation 2021/22

On behalf of the External Auditor, the Treasurer presented the Audit Findings Report for consideration and the Letter of Representation 2021/22 for approval.

Members were reminded that the Audit had been very delayed and getting approval now, rather than wait for the January Audit and Standards Committee meeting, would help with the production of the 2022/23 Accounts. Members noted that the Accounts were the same as the ones presented at the January and April meetings except for the actuarial valuation of the LGPS and therefore approved the Letter of Representation.

RESOLVED:

- i) that the Audit Findings Report be considered before approving the Statement of Accounts; and***
- ii) the Letter of Representation be approved.***

0460 Statement of Accounts 2021/22

The Treasurer presented the 2021/22 Statement of Accounts for approval.

Due to the delay in completion of the 2021/22 audit of Accounts, year end balances could not be rolled forward which then caused delays to the production (and therefore the Audit) of the 2022/23 Accounts. Due to time constraints, the Authority therefore were asked to approve the 2021/22 Statement of Accounts rather than the Audit and Standards Committee, to allow the Auditor to close the 2021/22 audit and commence the 2022/23 audit.

The External Auditor will now be able to issue an Audit Opinion as soon as it is ready.

RESOLVED that the Statement of Accounts 2021/22 be approved.

0461 His Majesty's Inspectorate of Constabularies and Fire and Rescue Services (HMICFRS) Inspection Report and Improvement Plan 2023/2024

The Chief Fire Officer presented the HMICFRS Inspection Report 2023 and the subsequent Improvement Plan.

Members were gratified to note that the Inspectorate were pleased with the performance of Hereford & Worcester Fire and Rescue Service and the improvements made since the last inspection. The improvement was recognised from the previous inspection with all 11 assessment areas graded as 'adequate' or 'good'.

HMICFRS had identified 11 Areas for Improvement (AFIs) in this year's inspection which was half the number of AFIs compared to the previous report. At least four of the AFIs related to national or wider issues and would be reflected in most English Fire and Rescue Services' HMICFRS reports.

Members noted that 7 of the AFIs highlighted were continuations of previous AFIs which the Service was actively working towards through the existing Improvement Plan and would continue to do so as part of the next Improvement Plan, therefore the reporting on the previous 2021 HMICFRS report would now close.

The Strategic Leadership Board (SLB) would be required to recommend the strategic direction for each AFI and designate leads for the AFIs and the actions that will make up the next Improvement Plan. The draft Improvement Plan will be produced for Members' approval at the next Fire Authority meeting in February 2024.

RESOLVED that the Authority notes the outcomes and findings highlighted in the HMICFRS inspection report 2023. In particular that:

- i) Of the 11 assessment areas, the Service has achieved four ratings of 'good' and seven ratings of 'adequate'.***
- ii) There were no areas rated as 'requires improvement' or 'inadequate'.***
- iii) The report identifies 11 Areas for Improvement.***
- iv) Work is ongoing to produce the next HMICFRS Improvement Plan.***
- v) The findings of the previous report from 2021 are considered closed.***

0462 Resource Review

The Chief Fire Officer presented Members with a review on how the Authority can respond to the challenges around On-Call availability, improve the resilience of the Service overall and ensure the most efficient and effective use of resources.

Members were assured that this review did not propose to close any fire stations or remove or reduce the first available fire engine at any location. These proposals would mean that in some locations the first fire engine would have increased crewing, resilience, and faster response times. This review would ensure that resources were used in a more effective way.

The Chief Fire Officer thanked Members for taking the time to have discussions on this and Members agreed that the presentations were very useful and helped with the understanding of the proposal. Members were informed that there would be focus groups for the public and that parish and town councils would be sent details of the proposals. Should a stakeholder group like more information a presentation can be arranged.

[Cllr E Marshall left the meeting at 11.02am].

Members proposed a task and finish group be set up to look at the consultation responses in more detail and it was agreed that this would consist of Group Leaders.

[Cllr E Marshall returned to the meeting at 11.10am].

[Cllr Udall left the meeting at 11.11am].

It was suggested by a Member that there would be value in responses from staff members being categorised; for example On-Call, Wholetime, Officers. The Chief Fire Officer agreed to look into this and assured Members that all participants would be invited to leave their details.

[Cllr R Udall returned to the meeting at 11.13am].

RESOLVED that:

1. The following proposals be supported for public consultation:

- (i) removal of eight On-Call fire engines (from multi-pump fire stations);**
- (ii) increase Wholetime workforce numbers to provide more on duty firefighters;**
- (iii) develop a new blended staffing model at some locations to**

improve availability;

(iv) change the cover model of one other fire engine to widen the area of potential On-Call staff;

(v) provide alternative, more flexible modes of transport for available firefighters to attend incidents, at some locations; and

(vi) focus on additional prevention activity in some areas.

2. Officers be authorised to go out to public consultation on the proposals.

3. A Task and Finish Group to comprise of Group Leaders to be established to review the responses to the consultation and make any recommendations to the Authority.

[Cllrs T Wells and N McVey voted against the proposal and requested that their votes be noted].

0463 Fire Authority and Committee Dates 2024/25

The Head of Legal Services presented the proposed meeting dates for 2023/24 for approval.

The Chairman of the Audit and Standards Committee queried the meeting on 30 July as it was during the school holidays. It was agreed to take the discussion outside of the meeting. Members also noted that the Fire Authority and Policy and Resources Committee meetings scheduled for June 2025 may need to be moved due to the impact of County Council elections.

Members noted that Committee Services would send electronic meeting calendar invites in due course to assist with diary planning.

RESOLVED that the meeting dates for 2024/25 be agreed.

[Note - the dates as now amended are appended to these minutes].

0464 Minutes of the Policy and Resources Committee

The Chairman of the Committee presented the minutes of the Policy and Resources Committee meeting held on 14 November 2023.

RESOLVED that the minutes of the Policy and Resources Committee meeting held on 14 November 2023 be received and noted.

The Meeting ended at: 11:51

Signed:.....

Date:.....

Chairman

Hereford & Worcester Fire Authority 2024/25 Meeting Dates

Meeting	Date	Time	Location
Audit & Standards	Wed 17 Jan 2024	10.30	Wyre Forest Council Chamber
Special Policy & Resources (if required)	Tues 30 Jan 2024	10.30	Wyre Forest Council Chamber
FRA	Tues 13 Feb 2024	10.30	Wyre Forest Council Chamber
Policy & Resources	Wed 6 Mar 2024	10.30	Wyre Forest Council Chamber
Audit & Standards	Wed 17 April 2024	10.30	Wyre Forest Council Chamber
Policy & Resources	Wed 8 May 2024	10.30	Wyre Forest Council Chamber
FRA	Wed 26 June 2024	10.30	Wyre Forest Council Chamber
Audit & Standards – cancelled	Tues 30 July 2024	10.30	Wyre Forest Council Chamber
Policy & Resources	Wed 11 Sept 2024	10.30	Wyre Forest Council Chamber
Audit & Standards	Wed 25 Sept 2024	10.30	Wyre Forest Council Chamber
FRA	Wed 16 Oct 2024	14.00	Herefordshire Council Offices
Policy & Resources	Wed 20 Nov 2024	14.00	Wyre Forest Council Chamber
FRA	Wed 11 Dec 2024	10.30	Wyre Forest Council Chamber
Audit & Standards	Wed 15 Jan 2025	10.30	Wyre Forest Council Chamber

Special Policy & Resources (if required)	Wed 29 Jan 2025	10.30	Wyre Forest Council Chamber
FRA	Wed 19 Feb 2025	10.30	Wyre Forest Council Chamber
Policy & Resources	Wed 5 Mar 2025	10.30	Wyre Forest Council Chamber
Audit & Standards	Wed 16 April 2025	10.30	Wyre Forest Council Chamber
FRA	Wed 25 June 2025	10.30	Wyre Forest Council Chamber
Policy & Resources	Wed 9 July 2025	10.30	Wyre Forest Council Chamber

Amended 21/12/23

Report of the Assistant Chief Officer – Director of Prevention

Pay Policy Statement 2024-2025

Purpose of the report:

1. To present the Pay Policy Statement for 2024-2025 for approval and publication on the Authority's website.
-

Recommendation

It is recommended that the Pay Policy Statement for 2024-2025 be approved and published on the Authority's website.

Introduction and Background

2. The Localism Act 2011 places a requirement on the Authority to approve and publish an annual Pay Policy Statement prior to the commencement of each financial year.
3. Pay Policy Statements must articulate an Authority's policy towards a range of issues relating to the pay of its workforce, particularly its senior staff (or "Chief Officers") and its lowest paid employees. Pay Policy Statements must be prepared and approved by the Authority by 31 March in each year and be published as soon as reasonably practicable thereafter. Publication can be in such a manner as the Authority considers appropriate but must include publication on the Authority's website.

Pay Policy Statement 2024-2025

4. The Pay Policy Statement sets out the Authority's policies for the financial year 2024-2025 relating to:
 - The level and elements of remuneration of its Chief Officers.
 - The remuneration of its lowest paid employees, together with its definition of "lowest paid employees" and its reasons for adopting that definition.
 - The relationship between the remuneration of its Chief Officers and other employees.
 - Other aspects of Chief Officers' remuneration namely:
 - Remuneration range for Chief Officers on recruitment.
 - Methodology for increases and additions to remuneration for each Chief Officer.
 - The use of performance-related pay for Chief Officers.
 - The use of bonuses for Chief Officers.

- The approach to the payment of Chief Officers on their ceasing to hold office under, or be employed by, the Authority.
 - Transparency, that is, the publication of and access to information relating to the remuneration of Chief Officers.
5. It also includes the Authority’s policies for the financial year relating to other terms and conditions applying to its Chief Officers.
 6. The definition of Chief Officers (as set out in section 43(2)) is not limited to Heads of Paid Service or statutory Chief Officers. It also includes those who report directly to them (non-statutory Chief Officers) and the people who report directly to them.
 7. The draft Pay Policy Statement for 2024-2025 is attached as Appendix 1 of this report.

Conclusion

8. The Localism Act requires the Authority to adopt, prior to the commencement of each financial year, a Pay Policy Statement to operate for the forthcoming financial year. This Statement sets out, amongst other items, the Authority’s policy towards a range of issues relating to the pay of its workforce and in particular the senior staff and the lowest paid employees.

Corporate Considerations

Resource Implications (identify any financial, legal, property or human resources issues)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Financial implications as a result of national pay awards. • Producing and publishing an annual Pay Policy Statement is a requirement of the Localism Act 2011.
Strategic Policy Links & Core Code of Ethics (identify how proposals link with current priorities and policy framework and align to the Core Code of Ethics).	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • CRMP • Core organisational strategies • People Strategy • Core Code of Ethics
Risk Management / Health & Safety (identify any risks, the proposed control measures and risk evaluation scores).	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Failure to produce and publish an annual Pay Policy Statement by 31 March may attract public and political scrutiny and breach of section 38 of the Localism Act 2011.
Consultation (identify any public or other consultation that has been carried out on this matter)	N/A

<p>Equalities (has an Equalities Impact Assessment been completed? If not, why not?)</p>	<p>No – the general principle supports a common and transparent approach by linking Executive pay rises to that of the lowest paid employees.</p>
<p>Data Protection Impact Assessment (where personal data is processed a DPIA must be completed to ensure compliant handling)</p>	<p>N/A. Data is published in line with the Local Government Transparency Code.</p>

Supporting Information

Appendix 1 – Pay Policy Statement 2024-2025

Hereford and Worcester Fire Authority

Pay Policy Statement

Introduction

The Pay Policy Statement for Hereford and Worcester Fire Authority (the Authority) covers the period 1 April 2024 to 31 March 2025. The Statement sets out the Authority's approach to pay in accordance with the requirements of Section 38 of the Localism Act 2011. It will be subject to review annually and in accordance with new legislation.

Pay Framework

Terms and conditions of employment for staff within the Authority pay framework are set nationally with any variations negotiated and agreed locally. Pay for all Authority staff is determined by the:

- Local Government Employers with the Employers' Sides of the National Joint Council for Local Authority Fire and Rescue Services.
- Middle Managers' Negotiating Body.
- NJC for Brigade Managers of Local Authority Fire and Rescue Services.
- Authority locally and Representative Bodies nationally.

Pay awards are considered annually for all staff.

Operational (Uniformed) – Salary and Remuneration

The pay structure for employees conditioned to the Scheme of Conditions of Service for Local Authority Fire and Rescue Services (Grey Book) provides a three point pay structure at Firefighter level and a two point pay structure for all other roles. Rates of pay are based on defined stages of development such as training, development and competent pay levels. After all the applicable functions have been assessed as having been achieved, competence is deemed to have been demonstrated and competent salary rate applied.

The Authority pay framework for operational staff was reviewed in 2003 and implemented in December 2003 following a rank-to-role exercise in line with national guidance, with the grade for each role being determined by a consistent job evaluation process.

For operational staff, any outcome of national consultations by the Local Government Employers in negotiation with the Representative Bodies is applied in July each year.

Support Roles (Non-Uniformed) – Salary and remuneration

The salary and remuneration levels for support staff are determined in accordance with the National Joint Council for Local Government Services (NJC) National Agreement on Pay and Conditions of Service (Green Book).

The pay structure is aligned to the national spinal column point system. Spinal column points are configured into groups to provide incremental pay points. The incremental rises occur on 1 April, subject to national pay bargaining until the top of the spinal column is reached. Where an employee commences in post after 1 October and up to 31 March, they receive an increment six months later and then annually on 1 April.

The starting pay point for new employees (including internally appointed or promoted employees) should normally be the first point of the appropriate grade. There may be circumstances where it is necessary to make an offer that is at a higher point within the grade (e.g. level of relevant experience and knowledge, market forces).

The Authority pay framework for support staff was implemented in 2003 in line with national guidance, with the grade for each role being determined by the national Greater London Provincial Council (GLPC) Job Evaluation scheme. The Scheme was developed to support Local Authorities in carrying out their obligations under the national agreement on single status. The national agreement required all Local Authorities, and a number of other public sector employers, to review their pay and grading frameworks to ensure fair and consistent practice for different groups of workers with the same employer.

The grading structure was reviewed and implemented in 2012 for support Senior Management posts, PO3 and above.

For support staff, any outcome of national consultations by the Local Government Employers in negotiation with the Representative Bodies is applied in April each year.

Chief Fire Officer/Chief Executive and Principal Officers – Salary and Remuneration

The National Joint Council (NJC) for Brigade Managers of Local Authority Fire and Rescue Authorities will publish annually recommended minimum levels of salary applicable to Chief Fire Officers/Chief Executives employed by local authority fire and rescue authorities.

The Chief Fire Officer/Chief Executive's pay is considered by the Authority. Account is taken of relevant available information, including the salaries of Chief Officers in other comparable Fire and Rescue Services nationally. To support the pay review, information may be provided on inflation, earnings growth and any significant considerations from elsewhere in the public sector.

For Brigade Managers, any outcome of national consultations by the Local Government Employers in negotiation with the Trade Unions is applied in January each year.

The Authority has adopted the following pay levels for the Principal Officer team:

- Deputy Chief Fire Officer (DCFO) – 80.14% of Chief Fire Officer (CFO)
- Assistant Chief Fire Officer (ACFO) – 75.13% of CFO
- Assistant Chief Officer (ACO) – 80% of ACFO
- Director of Finance – 80% of ACFO

The Treasurer is part of the Director of Finance's role for which a specific honorarium is paid.

Market Forces

Where necessary the Authority may apply market supplements for specific roles in order to ensure that it can recruit the best staff. This approach will only be adopted where there is clear evidence of recruitment difficulty and any such payments will be time limited and reviewed. The Authority currently pays market supplements.

Pay Allowances, Expenses, Bonuses and Performance Related Pay

There are a number of allowances paid to employees where specific circumstances require this and where it can be justified, for example to cover additional responsibilities over and above pay grades. Allowances are negotiated nationally or locally through collective bargaining arrangements and/or as determined by Service policy.

When legitimately incurred in the performance of their duties, all employees are able to claim a restricted range of legitimate expenses. These are reimbursed in accordance with the relevant terms and conditions specified in the Gold, Grey or Green Book. All expenses have the usual audit requirements with the requirement to produce receipts, authorisation of all expenditure and the requirement to retain records.

The Authority does not award performance related pay nor bonuses in addition to base salary.

Honorariums

These are additional payments for work carried out over and above the job role. These payments are made at the Chief Fire Officer's discretion.

Latest National Pay Award

Annual pay awards normally take place as follows:

- Chief Officers – January.
- Non-uniformed Support staff – April.
- Uniformed staff – July.

The last annual pay award for these groups were as follows:

- Chief Officers – January 2024.
- Support staff (Non-uniformed) – April 2023.
- Uniformed staff – July 2023.

Tables 1 and 2 below detail the remuneration relating to the above groups.

Other Employment-Related Arrangements

Pension Schemes

The Service operates the following pension schemes:

- Local Government Pension Scheme (LGPS).
- 1992 Firefighter Pension Scheme (Closed to new members).
- 2006 Firefighter Pension Scheme (Closed to new members).
- Firefighters' Pension Scheme 2006 (Modified) (Closed to new members).
- The Firefighters' Pension Scheme 2015 (England).

In accordance with the Public Service Pensions Act 2013, the Authority has established a Pensions Board for the Firefighters' Pension Scheme.

New employees are automatically enrolled to the relevant occupational pension scheme as defined by their terms and conditions of employment on appointment and qualifying employees are automatically re-enrolled during their employment.

Employment Arrangements

Due to the nature and responsibilities of their role, Senior Managers are normally employed on full time, permanent employment contracts. The Service's policy and procedures with regards to recruitment of Chief Officers is set out within the Officer Employment Procedure Rules as set out in Part 4 of the Fire Authority Constitution.

When recruiting to all posts, the Authority will take full and proper account of its own Equal Opportunities, Recruitment and Redeployment Policies. The determination of the remuneration to be offered to any newly appointed Chief Officer will be in accordance with the pay structure and the relevant policies in place at the time of recruitment.

Payments on Termination of Employment

The Authority's approach to statutory and discretionary payments on termination of employment for all staff prior to reaching normal retirement age are in accordance with the Service's Redundancy Policy and relevant terms and conditions as follows:

- Arrangements for Support and Control staff are set out within the Service's LGPS Discretions Policy Statement in accordance with Regulations 5 and 6 of the Local Government (Early Termination of Employment), (Discretionary Compensation) Regulations 2006 [and if adopted] Regulations 12 and 13 of the Local Government Pension Scheme (Benefits, Membership and Contribution) Regulations 2007.
- Arrangements for uniformed staff are set out within the relevant conditions of service i.e. NJC for Brigade Managers of Local Authority Fire and Rescue Services and the NJC for Local Authority Fire and Rescue Services.

The Authority agreed on 18 February 2015 the discretion to pay voluntary redundancy to all employee groups based on the number of statutory weeks x actual weekly pay, enhanced by 75%. On the 8 October 2015, the Authority extended the Scheme of Delegation to permit the Chief Fire Officer to approve early retirements, in consultation with the Chair of the Authority and Treasurer, in the case of employees whose salary is less than £45,000 to include Officers at Station Commander role, subject to the pension costs still not exceeding £45,000. Where it is above £45,000 the decision will be taken by the Policy and Resources Committee.

Re-employment

The Authority operates a Flexible Retirement Policy for members of the Local Government Pension Scheme where the Authority has defined a specific need, and a business case shows there are clear benefits for the Authority to offer a re-employment opportunity. Part of the business case will include whether to offer the post out to open competition.

For members of the Firefighters' Pension Scheme 2015, the Authority allows re-employment subject to the normal recruitment process. In order to protect public funds, Government policy requires public sector pension schemes to be abated when a public servant is re-employed following retirement.

Under Rule 4K of the 1992 Firefighters' Pension Scheme, the Authority can elect not to exercise the discretion to abate and would be responsible for paying an amount

equivalent to the amount that would be abated into the pension fund. When considering abatement, the Authority will take into account the following:

- Clear financial benefit to the Authority.
- Staffing requirements of the Authority, in particular any shortage of specialisms.

Mandatory Gender Pay Gap Reporting

The Authority is required to publish information regarding the Gender Pay Gap, as required under The Equality Act 2010 (Gender Pay Gap Information) Regulations 2017.

The Equality and Gender Pay Gap Report has been considered by the Audit and Standards Committee in January 2024 and is published on the Service website.

Table1 Pay Grades 2024/25

Job	Remuneration	Pay Relationship to CFO (%)	Salary Range	
			Min	Max
1. Head of Paid Service				
Chief Fire Officer / Chief Executive	£157,189	Recommended by Appointments Committee		
2. Statutory Chief Officer				
Treasurer (Part of Director of Finance role) receives an additional £9,172 (10% of post holder's salary) honorarium for the extra responsibility of Monitoring Officer (Part of Head of Legal Services role)				
3. Non-Statutory Chief Officer				
Deputy Chief Fire Officer (DCFO)	£125,970	80.14		
Assistant Chief Fire Officer (ACFO)	£118,096	75.13		
Assistant Chief Officer (ACO)*	£97,311	61.90		
Director of Finance (excluding Treasurer role)	£94,477	60.10		
Head of Legal Services **	£72,479	46.11	£68,411	£72,479
4. Deputy Chief Officer				
Assistant Director - Protection	£89,791	***	£81,859	£89,791
Assistant Director - Response	£89,791	***	£81,859	£89,791
Assistant Director - Assets	£75,796	****	£75,796	£83,140
Assistant Director - Prevention	£89,791	***	£81,859	£89,791
Assistant Director - Finance	£71,094		£68,411	£72,479
5. Lowest Paid Employees****				
Uniformed				
Firefighter (Control)	£25,819	16.43	£25,819	£34,415
Support (Non-Uniformed)				
Administrator	£23,500	14.95	£23,500	£23,893

Notes:

* Includes an additional allowance of 3% of basic salary to provide flexibility to working hours when required.

** Full time equivalent salary is shown. Current post holder is part time and paid a prorated amount.

*** Includes an additional 8% enhancement to provide a higher level of fire cover responsibility and includes a 20% allowance to provide out of hours fire cover on a continuous rota system.

**** Includes a 20% allowance to provide out of hours fire cover on a continuous rota system.

***** The lowest paid employees (Administrators) are employed on full time (37 hours) equivalent salaries in accordance with the minimum scale point in use within the Service grading structure. As at 1 April 2023, this is Scale 3, spinal column point 5.

The Head of Paid Service, Director of Finance, Deputy Chief Fire Officer, Assistant Chief Fire Officer and uniformed Assistant Directors are provided with a motor vehicle for work purposes. Any private use is chargeable.

The Assistant Chief Officer, Head of Legal Services and the Property & Environmental Manager receive an essential mileage car user allowance in accordance with the NJC provisions.

A number of staff members including the Head of Paid Service, all statutory and non-statutory Chief Officers and all Deputy Officers are provided with a mobile phone and laptop or tablet for work purposes. Any private use is chargeable.

Table 2

	Pay Range Minimum	Pay Range Maximum	No of Staff In Post		
Non-Uniformed Pay Grades from 1st April 2023					
PO7	£68,411	£72,479	1		
PO6	£61,800	£65,362	0		
PO5	£55,604	£58,996	7		
PO4	£50,205	£53,987	1		
PO3	£44,428	£47,420	5		
PO2	£40,221	£43,421	6		
PO1	£37,336	£39,186	22		
SO2	£34,834	£36,648	5		
SO1	£32,076	£33,945	15		
Scale 6	£29,269	£31,364	15		
Scale 5	£26,421	£28,770	27		
Scale 4	£24,294	£25,979	16		
Scale 3	£23,500	£23,893	18		
Total*			138		
Uniformed Pay Grades **					
			WT	RDS	Total
Area Commander	£63,163	£69,283	4	0	4
Group Commander	£53,801	£59,642	8	0	8
Station Commander	£46,712	£51,525	17	0	17
Station Commander Control	£44,376	£48,949	2	0	2
Watch Commander	£41,031	£44,911	67	21	88
Watch Commander Control	£38,979	£42,665	3	0	3
Crew Commander ***	£38,501	£40,161	36	52	88
Crew Commander Control	£36,576	£38,153	8	0	8
Firefighter ****	£27,178	£36,226	100	288	388
Firefighter Control	£25,819	£34,415	10	0	10
Total			255	361	616

NOTES: Number of staff in post is as at 09 January 2024 and is based on people in their substantive roles.

These figures are headcount not full time equivalent.

*Includes Fixed Term Contracts, four at Scale 3, one at Scale 4, four at Scale 5, two at Scale 6, one at PO2

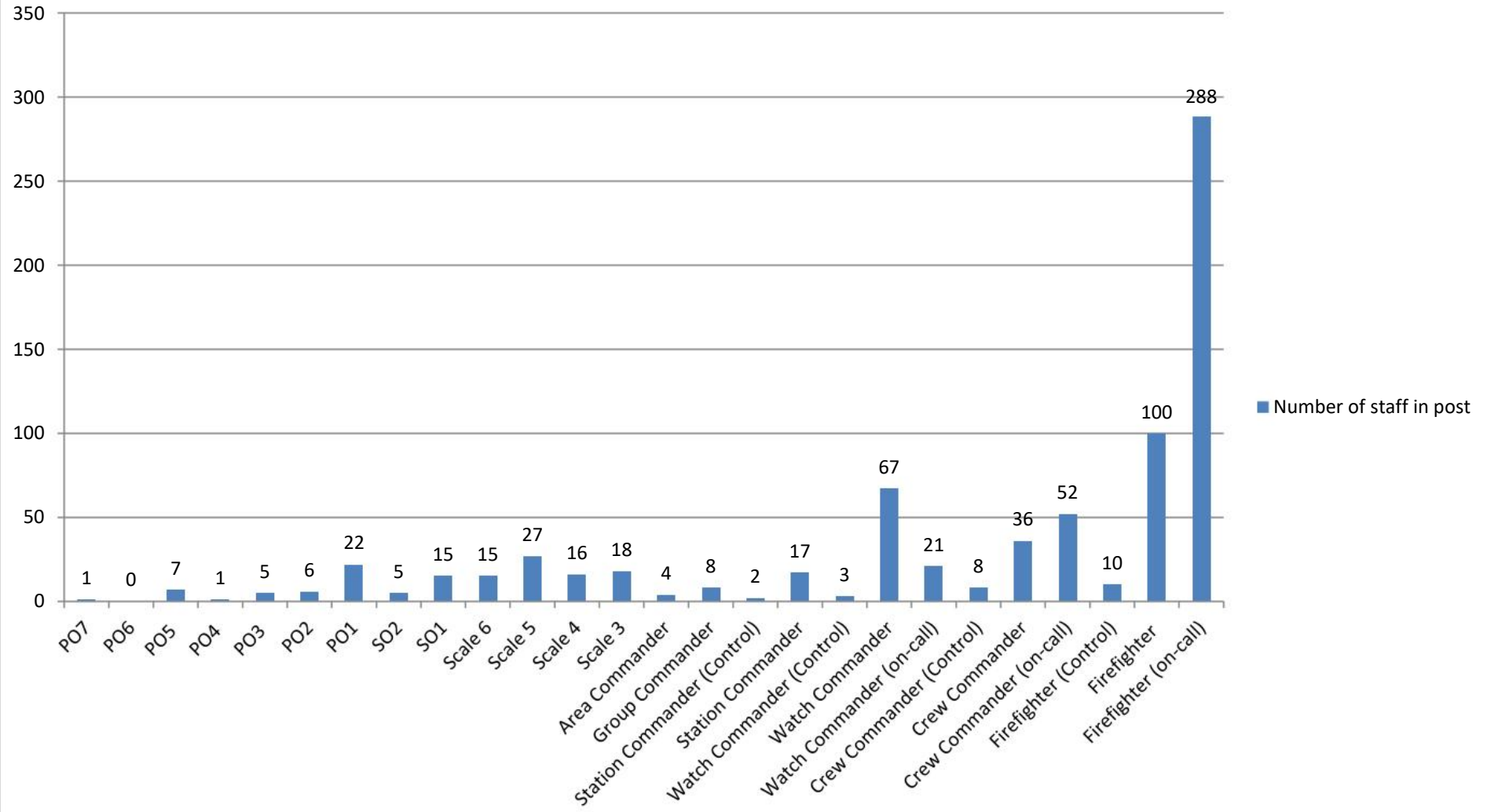
** On Call employees have a different pay structure to Wholetime –

a retaining fee of either 8%, 9.5%, 11%, 11.5% or 12% of the equivalent Wholetime rate, depending on cover, plus the same hourly rate as Wholetime.

*** Includes one fixed term Wholetime Crew Commander contract

**** Includes two fixed term On-Call Firefighter contracts

Grades and staff in post



Report of the Assistant Chief Fire Officer

Fire Alliance Update: Fire Control Project

Purpose of report

1. To update the Fire Authority on progress of the Fire Alliance Fire Control Project.
-

Recommendation

It is recommended that Members note the update, confirming the development of a new joint fire control system in partnership with Shropshire FRS, Cleveland FB and County Durham & Darlington FRS project has commenced.

Introduction and Background

2. At the Authority meeting on 15 February 2022 Members approved the utilisation of funding against the Fire Control reserve to secure an appropriate replacement command and control system.
3. Subsequently the Fire Alliance Board approved a project to procure a jointly funded single Command and Control system able to work across both Shropshire Fire and Rescue Service (SFRS) and Hereford & Worcester Fire and Rescue Service (HWRFS) areas from two sites (Telford and Hindlip).
4. In October 2022 the project was re-scoped following an approach from Cleveland Fire Brigade (CFB) and County Durham and Darlington Fire and Rescue Service (CDDFRS) who asked us to consider involving them in the procurement process. This will make this project one of the largest collaborative Fire Control projects in the UK and introduces several new ways of working.

Progress to date

5. In January 2023, HWFRS commenced a full procurement process, acting as the lead authority on behalf of all four Services.
6. Following rigorous evaluation of submissions by representatives from all four Fire and Rescue Services, the panel recommended to the Chief Fire Officers that the contract be awarded to Motorola Solutions.
7. In June 2023, HWFRS, acting as lead authority on behalf of all four Services announced the intent to award a contract to Motorola Solutions who provide a single system and will build a Mobilising Hub which will be accessed over a secure internet link from each of the four control rooms.

8. At the Authority meeting on 18 October 2023 Members were provided with an overview of features of the new system that will bring about improvements to service delivery and enhanced resilience. Members noted and approved the decision to award the contract for a new joint Fire Control system to Motorola Solutions.
9. Following a period of negotiations, led by HWFRS, all four Services signed a 7-year contract with Motorola Solutions on 14 December 2023.
10. All four Services have also signed a collaboration agreement which sets out how both the project and the system will be managed over the lifetime of the contract with HWFRS continuing to act as the lead authority. For ease of reference the collective name for the group is the Integrated Fire Control Collaboration (IFCC).
11. Preparatory work commenced immediately with Motorola Solutions, and a formal project start-up meeting took place on 25 January 2024 with representatives from all four Services and the project team from Motorola. The new Fire Control mobilising system will be delivered within the next 2 years.
12. The contract allows for additional parties to join the IFCC hub and we have been approached by other FRSs expressing an interest in doing so. There have also been other FRSs interested in learning from our experience and considering the IFCC model in the future. The Service will fully explore any benefits and disbenefits in considering any such expansion. However, there may be the potential to make further cost savings, as well as further enhance resilience with the addition of compatible FRS partners.

Summary

13. The replacement Fire Control system will provide a more reliable, flexible and resilient product with increased functionality to better support the work of Fire Control staff. Furthermore, it will streamline the flow of information between the control rooms and to operational fire crews, which will mitigate risk to firefighters and the public.
14. By working in partnership with Cleveland and County Durham and Darlington Fire Authorities, the Fire Alliance has provided the opportunity to make significant cost savings, in comparison to procuring this system alone, which would have most likely been unaffordable. A paper to the Authority will follow outlining the efficiency and estimates of how effective this approach has been, but the early estimates indicate savings of several millions of pounds over the seven-year term.
15. This project allows the Service to provide the benefits of the most up to date technology to better support our communities, and will also improve our ability to scale up operations to deal with multiple calls and major incidents when required. This aligns with the expected outcomes and recommendations from recent high-profile national incidents.

16. Following contract sign-off the project commenced in January 2024, which is a significant milestone for the Service after many years of work. It demonstrates our commitment to provide a high-quality new mobilising system, alongside three partner Fire Services and represents a new way of collaborating and delivering a resilient Fire Control system, whilst maintaining mobilising teams in each Service.

Corporate Considerations

Resource Implications (identify any financial, legal, property or human resources issues).	Budget provision already agreed and approved by the Fire Authority.
Strategic Policy Links & Core Code of Ethics (Identify how proposals link with current priorities & policy framework and align to the Core Code of Ethics).	Links to delivery of the CRMP and HWFRS Core Strategies of; Response, Prevention, and Protection.
Risk Management / Health & Safety (identify any risks, the proposed control measures and risk evaluation scores).	Not required at this stage of the project.
Consultation (identify any public or other consultation that has been carried out on this matter).	Wide consultation has been carried out with all stakeholders.
Equalities (has an Equalities Impact Assessment been completed? If not, why not?).	Not required at this stage of the project.
Data Protection Impact Assessment (where personal data is processed a DPIA must be completed to ensure compliant handling).	DPIAs are all aligned to current standards and Codes of Compliance for the current system and will be refreshed when the data transfer is completed against the project timeline.

Report of the Assistant Chief Officer/Director of Prevention

His Majesty's Inspectorate of Constabularies and Fire and Rescue Services (HMICFRS) Improvement Plan 2024-25

Purpose of report

1. To update Members on the proposed actions relating to each area for improvement following receipt of the 2023 Inspection Report.

Recommendation

It is recommended that the draft Improvement Plan in response to the areas for Improvement highlighted in the HMICFRS inspection report 2023 be approved.

Introduction and Background

2. Between May and August 2023, HMICFRS carried out their third inspection of Hereford & Worcester Fire and Rescue Service. The inspection report was published in November 2023 and can be seen at Appendix 1.
3. The report contains an assessment of the Service's effectiveness, efficiency and how well it looks after its people. HMICFRS measured the Service across 11 assessment areas which they hope will encourage Fire and Rescue Services to consider inspection findings as a whole.
4. Services are now measured against the 'characteristics of good performance' and are given graded judgements. HMICFRS have also expanded the previous four-tier graded system to include a fifth graded judgement of 'adequate'.
5. The report noted in particular that:
 - Of the eleven assessment areas, the Service has achieved four ratings of 'good' and seven ratings of 'adequate'.
 - There were no areas rated as 'requires improvement' or 'inadequate'.
 - The report identifies eleven Areas for Improvement.
 - The Improvement Plan sets out actions to address the Areas for Improvement.
6. The 11 Areas for Improvement (AFIs) recommended are:

Assessment Area	Area for Improvement
Understanding fires and other risks	The Service should make sure its firefighters have good access to relevant and up-to-date risk information
Preventing fires and other risks	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The Service should make sure staff carry out home fire safety visits competently • The Service should evaluate its prevention activity, so it understands what is most effective
Protecting the public through fire regulation	The Service should make sure it effectively addresses the burden of unwanted fire signals
Responding to fires and other emergencies	The Service should make sure it has an effective system to learn from operational incidents
Responding to major and multi-agency incidents	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The Service should make sure it has an effective method to share fire survival guidance information with multiple callers and that it has a dedicated communication link in place • The Service should make sure it has an overarching cross-border exercise strategy. The strategy should assure the service that exercise objectives are in line with community risk management plan risks and that learning is recorded, shared and actioned.
Making best use of resources	The Service should make sure it effectively monitors, reviews and evaluates the benefits and outcomes of any collaboration activity
Future affordability	The Service needs to make sure it has adequate plans in place to close its identified budget gaps
Promoting the right values and culture	The Service should monitor secondary contracts to make sure staff don't work excessive hours
Managing performance and developing leaders	The service should make sure it has processes in place to manage and develop talent within the organisation

HMICFRS Improvement Plan 2024-25

7. The Service has prepared an Improvement Plan containing actions which will address the Inspectorate's findings.
8. The draft Improvement Plan containing the proposed actions and expected timelines for their delivery is available for review at Appendix 2. Actions have been proposed following consultation with department heads and members of Strategic Leadership Board (SLB), with consideration given to the inspection report and HMICFRS's 'characteristics of good.'
9. The Strategic Leadership Board (SLB) have previously recommended the strategic direction for each AFI and designated tactical leads for the AFIs and the actions that will make up the next Improvement Plan.
10. The delivery of the Improvement Plan will be coordinated by members of the Performance and Information (P&I) team, who meet regularly with senior managers responsible for each Area for Improvement to prepare updates on actions proposed and completed. The P&I team also ensure that actions carried out are fully evidenced and available for evaluation and audit.

Conclusion/Summary

11. Members are recommended to approve the HMICFRS Improvement Plan and the actions proposed by the Service to address the Areas for Improvement.
12. Quarterly updates on the progress of the Improvement Plan will continue to be provided to the Fire Authority.

Corporate Considerations

Resource Implications (identify any financial, legal, property or human resources issues)	The HMICFRS Inspection Report highlights areas for improvement relating to effectiveness, efficiency and people. Resource implications will be considered as part of the Improvement Plan.
Strategic Policy Links & Core Code of Ethics (Identify how proposals link with current priorities & policy framework and align to the Core Code of Ethics)	The recommendations in the report directly link to delivery of the CRMP and the core strategies. Areas for Improvement with links to strategic policies will be considered as part of the Improvement Plan.
Risk Management / Health & Safety (identify any risks, the proposed control measures and risk evaluation scores).	Any risks associated with the proposed actions will be assessed through the development of the Improvement Plan.

<p>Consultation (identify any public or other consultation that has been carried out on this matter)</p>	<p>The publication of the inspection report involved the full participation of Senior Managers in relevant Service departments. The report is publicly available through HMICFRS and will be featured on the Service website.</p>
<p>Equalities (has an Equalities Impact Assessment been completed? If not, why not?)</p>	<p>An EIA is not required for this report. EIAs will be completed as appropriate when preparing proposals through the Improvement Plan.</p>
<p>Data Protection Impact Assessment (where personal data is processed a DPIA must be completed to ensure compliant handling)</p>	<p>Impact assessments will be completed as required for specific actions that are proposed in the Improvement Plan.</p>

Supporting Information

Appendix 1 – HMICFRS Inspection Report 2023

Appendix 2 – HMICFRS Improvement Plan 2024-25

Fire & Rescue Service 2023–25

Effectiveness, efficiency and people

An inspection of Hereford and Worcester Fire and Rescue Service

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Changes to this round of inspection

We last inspected Hereford and Worcester Fire and Rescue Service in April 2021. And in December 2021, we published our inspection report with our findings on the service's effectiveness and efficiency and how well it looks after its people.

This inspection contains our third assessment of the service's effectiveness and efficiency, and how well it looks after its people. We have measured the service against the same 11 areas and given a grade for each.

We haven't given separate grades for effectiveness, efficiency and people as we did previously. This is to encourage the service to consider our inspection findings as a whole and not focus on just one area.

We now assess services against the characteristics of good performance, and we more clearly link our judgments to [causes of concern](#) and [areas for improvement](#). We have also expanded our previous four-tier system of graded judgments to five. As a result, we can state more precisely where we consider improvement is needed and highlight good performance more effectively. However, these changes mean it isn't possible to make direct comparisons between grades awarded in this round of fire and rescue service inspections with those from previous years.

A reduction in grade, particularly from good to adequate, doesn't necessarily mean there has been a reduction in performance, unless we say so in the report.

This report sets out our inspection findings for Hereford and Worcester Fire and Rescue Service.

More information on [how we assess fire and rescue services](#) and [our graded judgments](#) is available on our website.

Overall summary

Our judgments

Our inspection assessed how well Hereford and Worcester Fire and Rescue Service has performed in 11 areas. We have made the following graded judgments:

Outstanding	Good	Adequate	Requires improvement	Inadequate
	Public safety through fire regulation	Understanding fire and risk		
	Right people, right skills	Preventing fire and risk		
	Promoting fairness and diversity	Responding to fires and emergencies		
	Managing performance and developing leaders	Responding to major incidents		
		Best use of resources		
		Future affordability		
		Promoting values and culture		

In the rest of the report, we set out our detailed findings about the areas in which the service has performed well and where it should improve.

HMI summary

It was a pleasure to revisit Hereford and Worcester Fire and Rescue Service, and I am grateful for the positive and constructive way in which the service worked with our inspection staff.

I am pleased with the performance of Hereford and Worcester Fire and Rescue Service in keeping people safe and secure from fire and other risks, but it needs to improve in some areas to provide a consistently good service. For example, the service could improve how it gathers up-to-date risk information to help protect

firefighters, the public and property during an emergency. It could also improve how it learns from incidents.

We were pleased to see that the service has made progress since our 2021 inspection. For example, it has improved its staff appraisal process and actively sought feedback from staff on how the organisation could be better.

My principal findings from our assessments of the service over the past year are as follows:

- The service has now produced clearly defined prevention, protection and response strategies that link to its [community risk management plan \(CRMP\)](#). We were encouraged to find that these strategies directed the service's core activity.
- The service has made some additional improvements in prevention since our [cause of concern](#) revisit in November 2022 ([we published this letter in January 2023](#)). These include an increased number of [home fire safety visits \(HFSVs\)](#) and a reduction in the backlog of referrals. But we identified that the service still has further progress to make in prevention.
- It was pleasing to see that the service has continued good performance in protecting the public through fire regulation. We identified [promising practice](#) in how the service works with other enforcing authorities. The service has made advances in fire safety prosecutions.
- The service has made improvements across all the four people-related areas we assessed: promoting the right values and culture; getting the right people with the right skills; ensuring fairness and promoting diversity; and managing performance and developing leaders. But the service shouldn't be complacent about these improvements as there is still more that can be done.

Overall, I am pleased with Hereford and Worcester Fire and Rescue Service's performance and the improvements it has made since our last inspection. I encourage it to continue to improve in the areas we have highlighted.



Wendy Williams

HM Inspector of Fire & Rescue Services

Service in numbers



Profile

	Hereford and Worcester	England
Area		
Square miles	1,514	50,370
Population (thousands)		
30 June 2021	793	56,536
Population density		
Thousands per square mile	0.5	1.1



Cost

Funding		
Year ending 31 March 2022	£33.3m	£2.5bn
Expenditure per population		
Year ending 31 March 2022	£41.80	£41.88

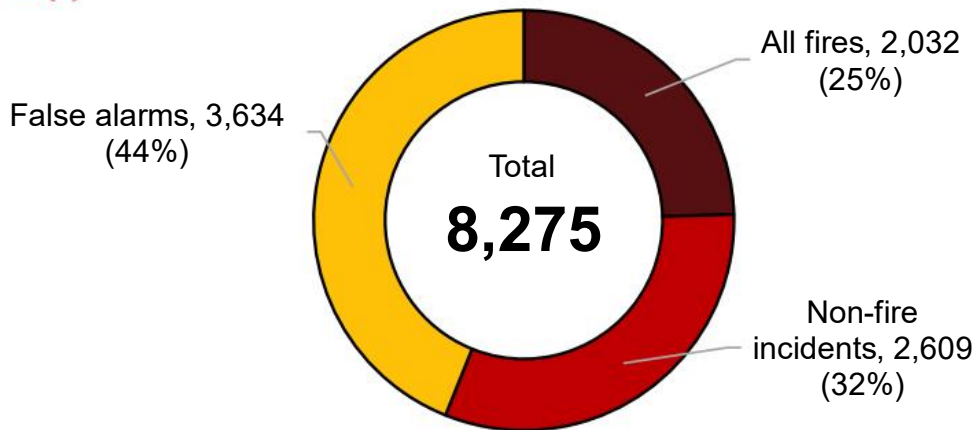


Response

Incidents attended per 1,000 population		
Year ending 31 December 2022	10.4	11.1
Home fire safety checks carried out by fire and rescue service per 1,000 population		
Year ending 31 March 2022	3.3	7.7
Fire safety audits per 100 known premises		
Year ending 31 March 2022	4.4	2.0
Availability of wholetime pumps		
Year ending 31 March 2022	100.0%	
Availability of on-call pumps		
Year ending 31 March 2022	74.1%	



Incidents attended in the year to 31 December 2022



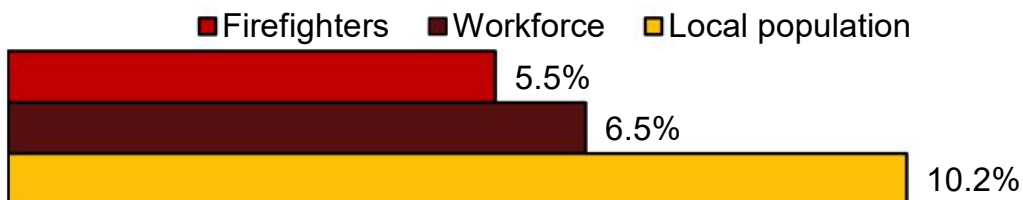
Workforce

	Hereford and Worcester	England
Five-year change in total workforce 2017 to 2022	1.1%	0.2%
Number of firefighters per 1,000 population Year ending 31 March 2022	0.77	0.62
Percentage of firefighters who are wholetime Year ending 31 March 2022	40.7%	65.2%

Percentage of firefighters, workforce and population who are female as at 31 March 2022



Percentage of firefighters, workforce and population who are from ethnic minority backgrounds as at 31 March 2022



References to ethnic minorities in this report include people from White minority backgrounds but exclude people from Irish minority backgrounds. This is due to current data collection practices for national data. For more information on data and analysis in this report, please view the [‘About the data’ section of our website](#).

Understanding the risk of fire and other emergencies

Adequate

Hereford and Worcester Fire and Rescue Service is adequate at understanding risk.

Each fire and rescue service should identify and assess all foreseeable fire and rescue-related risks that could affect its communities. It should use its protection and response capabilities to prevent or mitigate these risks for the public.

Area for improvement

The service should make sure its firefighters have good access to relevant and up-to-date risk information.

We set out our detailed findings below. These are the basis for our judgment of the service's performance in this area.

Main findings

The service is effective at identifying risk in the community

The service has assessed a suitable range of risks and threats using a thorough community risk management planning process. In its assessment of risk, it uses the information it has collected from a broad range of internal and external sources and datasets. This includes historical incident data, census information and societal data.

When appropriate, the service has consulted and held constructive dialogue with its communities and other relevant parties to understand risk and explain how it intends to mitigate it. For example, it has spoken with the public about the change to its attendance performance measures.

The service has effective prevention, protection and response strategies that underpin the CRMP

At the time of our last inspection in 2021, the service's CRMP 2021–25 had recently been published. In our report, we identified an area for improvement that the service should make sure the aims and objectives of prevention, protection and response activity are clearly defined in its CRMP. To address this, the service has produced prevention, protection and response strategies. These strategies describe how the service intends to use its prevention, protection and response activities to mitigate or reduce the risks and threats the community faces both now and in the future. For example, in protection, this includes carrying out [intelligence](#)-led fire safety inspections based upon local or national fire trends.

The service's current CRMP is now mid-way through its term. Ahead of its next CRMP, the service is reviewing its response arrangements.

The service needs to review its processes for updating risk information

The service collects some information about the highest-risk people, places and threats it has identified. But some of the information we reviewed was limited, inaccurate or out of date. We found that the service didn't always complete site-specific risk information within the time frame it has set itself.

We sampled a broad range of the risk information that the service collects, including information from HFSVs, site-specific risk information, temporary risk information and protection files.

The service doesn't make the information it collects on risk readily available throughout the service, and not all staff understand it. The service needs to do more so that staff in prevention, protection and response roles can access the information they need.

During our 2021 inspection, we highlighted an area for improvement that the service should make sure that firefighters have good access to relevant and up-to-date risk information. The service has made limited progress in addressing this by increasing the number of staff members who can enter temporary risk information onto the [mobilisation](#) system. But there is still a backlog. And there are delays before information is entered. Therefore, this area for improvement will remain.

However, firefighters at the locations we visited, were able to show us that they can access and use risk information quickly through [mobile data terminals](#) to assist them in resolving incidents safely.

Where appropriate, the service shares risk information with other organisations, such as local authority building control and the [police and crime commissioner's](#) office.

The service uses the outcomes of operational activity effectively to build an understanding of risk

The service records and communicates risk information effectively. It also routinely updates [risk assessments](#) and uses feedback from local and national operational activities to inform its planning assumptions.

The service has dedicated staff for the internal communication of [national operational guidance](#). These staff also communicate lessons learned from national operational work. The service's operational policy team reviews emerging information gathered from operational activity. The team then changes the service's approach to risks where needed.

Preventing fires and other risks

Adequate

Hereford and Worcester Fire and Rescue Service is adequate at preventing fires and other risks.

Fire and rescue services must promote fire safety, including giving fire safety advice. To identify people at greatest risk from fire, services should work closely with other organisations in the public and voluntary sectors, and with the police and ambulance services. They should share [intelligence](#) and risk information with these other organisations when they identify vulnerability or exploitation.

Areas for improvement

The service should make sure staff carry out [home fire safety visits](#) competently.

The service should evaluate its prevention activity so it understands what is most effective.

We set out our detailed findings below. These are the basis for our judgment of the service's performance in this area.

Main findings

The service's prevention strategy clearly links to the risks identified in its CRMP

During our 2021 inspection, we highlighted a cause of concern that prevention activity wasn't a high enough priority for the service and that it wasn't adequately identifying those most at risk from fire. We gave three recommendations for the service. We said it should have plans in place for:

- an effective system to define the levels of risk in the community;
- the development and delivery of a prevention strategy that prioritises the people most at risk of fire and ensures that work to reduce risk is proportionate; and

- the review of systems and processes for dealing with referrals from partner agencies.

We found in our revisit in November 2022, that the service had made sufficient progress in addressing these areas. Therefore, the cause of concern has now been discharged.

The service's prevention strategy is clearly linked to the risks it has identified in its CRMP. The core focus of activity is preventing death and serious injury from dwelling fires and road traffic collisions.

The service's teams work well together and with other relevant organisations on prevention, and they share relevant information when needed. The service uses information to adjust its planning assumptions and direct activity between its prevention, protection and response functions. It works closely with the NHS, local authorities and social care teams to identify individuals most at risk. Prevention staff prioritise HFSVs for at-risk people.

The service is improving how it targets prevention activity

The service uses a risk-based approach to clearly prioritise its prevention activity towards people most at risk from fire and other emergencies. It has developed a risk scoring matrix to effectively assess the risk level of each person. This determines the response. It also informs the decision to deploy a specialist prevention technician or operational crew. It uses a broad range of information and data to target its prevention activity at [vulnerable people](#) and groups.

The service used [National Fire Chiefs Council \(NFCC\)](#) guidance to profile risk in its communities. And it has created station risk profiles using socio-economic and health data. However, we found that several members of staff on fire stations were unfamiliar with station risk profiles and their use.

The service carries out a range of interventions, which it adapts to the level of risk in its communities. Prevention technicians visit people who are at most risk from fire. These technicians may carry out [safe and well visits](#). [Wholetime](#) firefighters make HFSVs for people that the service has assessed as medium risk. Some visits we reviewed weren't within the time frames the service has set itself. It should assure itself that it has the capacity to meet these standards.

We found that the service's post-incident prevention work was inconsistent. We couldn't get a clear picture of its post-incident prevention work processes from the files we sampled and the staff that we talked to.

The service should improve staff competence in carrying out HFSVs

Since our last inspection in 2021, wholetime crews have been making a good contribution to the overall number of HFSVs made. These visits cover an appropriate range of hazards that can put vulnerable people at greater risk from fire and other emergencies. Staff told us that they have the right skills and confidence to carry out HFSVs. And we were encouraged to see that quality assurance visits make sure service is consistent.

However, we did review some HFSVs that weren't appropriately risk assessed, completed within service time frames or suitably referred to the prevention team. This is an area for improvement.

Staff understand how to identify and safeguard vulnerable people

Staff we interviewed told us about occasions when they had identified [safeguarding](#) problems. They told us that they feel confident and trained to act appropriately and promptly. Staff are trained in dealing with safeguarding issues for both adults and children. A safeguarding flowchart helps staff in their decision-making. The service works well with other organisations to reduce risk and prevent fires and other emergencies. These include the NHS, local authority [child](#) and adult mental health services and West Midlands Ambulance Service.

We found evidence that the service routinely refers people at greatest risk to organisations that may better meet their needs. These organisations include Age UK and the Worcestershire Safeguarding Adults Board. Arrangements are also in place to receive referrals from other organisations. In 2021/22, it received 2,502 referrals from other agencies for prevention visits. This is an increase from 1,780 in 2018/19. The service acts appropriately on the referrals it receives.

The service also has dedicated prevention engagement officers. And it uses quality assurance processes to make sure partnerships effectively target risk.

The service routinely exchanges information with other public sector organisations about people and groups at greatest risk. It uses this information to challenge planning assumptions and target prevention activity. Examples of such organisations include Western Power, GP surgeries, dementia services and local audiology clinics. It also gets regular information about oxygen users from Baywater Healthcare, which triggers HFSVs.

The service has arrangements to tackle fire-setting behaviour

The service has a range of suitable and effective interventions to target and educate people with different needs who show signs of fire-setting behaviour. This includes trained 'fire-setter advisers' who work with young people who present a risk around fire.

When appropriate, it routinely shares information with relevant organisations to support the prosecution of arsonists. It uses its website to share arson prevention advice and offers an online virtual safety information and quiz challenge for year six students. The service also participates in the NFCC's annual fire safety campaigns.

Improvements are still required in the evaluation of prevention work

We found limited evidence that the service evaluates how effective its activity is or makes sure that all its communities get appropriate access to prevention activity that meets their needs.

This was an area for improvement when we inspected the service in 2018 and 2021, and it has made limited progress. It uses HFSV customer feedback forms to review quality assurance and has recently introduced a change-of-behaviour evaluation: three months after an HFSV, the service visits again to evaluate how the person's safety awareness has changed. This is a relatively new process and has yet to show its effectiveness.

Without routine systematic and effective evaluation of prevention initiatives and collaboration, the service can't be assured that its prevention work is of the standard it expects. And it can't be sure that it is achieving the expected outcomes.

Protecting the public through fire regulation

Good

Hereford and Worcester Fire and Rescue Service is good at protecting the public through fire regulation.

All fire and rescue services should assess fire risks in certain buildings and, when necessary, require building owners to comply with fire safety legislation. Each service decides how many assessments it does each year. But it must have a locally determined, risk-based inspection programme for enforcing the legislation.

Area for improvement

The service should make sure it effectively addresses the burden of unwanted fire signals.

Promising practice

The service works effectively with partner agencies to jointly target risk

The multi-agency targeted enforcement partnership is an effective collaboration between Hereford and Worcester Fire and Rescue Service and other enforcing authorities.

The partnership allows effective sharing of risk information and joint working between agencies including:

- West Mercia Police;
- local authority housing;
- Trading Standards and other regulatory services;
- His Majesty's Revenue and Customs;
- the Home Office; and
- Border Force.

The strategy provides an effective and efficient approach. It means that enforcing authorities can access premises in a single visit to ensure compliance with relevant legislation, including fire safety. This protects those who are at high risk and makes the communities of Herefordshire and Worcestershire safer.

We set out our detailed findings below. These are the basis for our judgment of the service's performance in this area.

Main findings

The service's protection strategy is clearly linked to its CRMP

The service's protection strategy is clearly linked to the risks it has identified in its CRMP.

Staff across the service are involved in this activity, effectively exchanging information as needed. For example, inspecting officers and firefighters inspect premises and work with local businesses to share information and advice on how they can comply with fire safety regulations. The service then uses information to adjust planning assumptions and direct activity between its protection, prevention and response functions. This means resources are properly aligned with risk.

The service directs its protection activity based on risk

The service's risk-based inspection programme is focused on its highest-risk buildings. The service has redeveloped its programme to take into account best practice from other fire and rescue services in the region. It has also used additional data sources to enhance its risk targeting.

The service carries out intelligence-led audits based on information such as national data sources, coroners' recommendations and outcomes of local and national fire investigations.

The audits we reviewed had been completed in the time frames the service has set itself within its policies and procedures.

The service carries out consistent, good-quality audits

We reviewed a range of audits that the service had carried out at different buildings across its area. These included audits carried out:

- as part of the service's interim risk-based inspection programme;
- after fires at premises where fire safety legislation applies;
- after enforcement action had been taken; and
- at high-rise, high-risk buildings.

The audits we reviewed were completed to a high standard in a consistent, systematic way and in line with the service's policies. The service makes relevant information from its audits available to operational teams and control room operators. [Fire control](#) learns about action taken on a premises via a temporary action notice of enforcement. It shares this with operational crews.

The service has an effective quality assurance process

During our 2021 inspection, we highlighted an area for improvement related to the quality assurance of fire safety audits. In this inspection, we were pleased to see that the service carries out proportionate quality assurance of its protection activity. Inspecting officers have line manager and peer assessments from other staff members each year. During our inspection, we also saw evidence that files had been quality assured by managers.

The service has good evaluation tools in place to measure how effective its activity is and to make sure that all sections of its communities get appropriate access to the protection services that meet their needs. Neighbouring Shropshire Fire and Rescue Service provides an external review of the effectiveness of the service's protection activities.

The service is good at taking enforcement action when appropriate

When we last inspected the service in 2021, we identified an area for improvement that the service should make sure that its use of enforcement powers prioritises the highest risks and includes proportionate activity to reduce the risk.

In this inspection, we found that the service consistently used its full range of enforcement powers. When appropriate, it prosecutes those who don't comply with fire safety regulations. At the time of our inspection (June 2023), the service had an ongoing fire safety prosecution that subsequently went to court in July 2023.

The responsible person pleaded guilty to fire safety breaches. This is the first prosecution that the service has completed in the five years from July 2018 to July 2023.

In the year ending 31 March 2022, the service issued 13 alteration notices, 451 informal notifications, 22 enforcement notices and 32 prohibition notices.

The protection function is well resourced

The service has enough qualified protection staff to meet the requirements of its risk-based inspection programme. Since 2017/18 the service consistently carries out more fire safety audits (per 100 known premises) when compared to the national rate for England. This helps it provide the range of audit and enforcement activity needed, both now and in the future.

Staff get the right training in protection services and work to appropriate accreditation.

The service is adapting to new legislation

Since our last inspection, the [Building Safety Act 2022](#) and the [Fire Safety Regulations 2022](#) have been introduced to bring about better regulation and management of tall buildings.

The service is supporting the introduction of the [Building Safety Regulator](#). It works closely with housing associations and landlord forums to outline their responsibilities. There aren't many tall residential buildings in Herefordshire and Worcestershire. Therefore, the service expects these arrangements to have a limited effect on its other protection activity.

The Fire Safety Regulations 2022 introduced a range of duties for the managers of tall buildings. These include a requirement to give the fire and rescue service floor plans and inform them of any substantial faults to essential firefighting equipment, such as firefighting lifts.

We found that the service had good arrangements in place to receive this information. When it doesn't receive the right information, it takes action and updates the risk information it gives its operational staff.

The service works well with other enforcement agencies

The service works closely with other enforcement agencies to regulate fire safety and it routinely exchanges risk information with them. The service has a well-established and effective partnership, MATE, which we identified as promising practice.

This partnership has been very successful for the service in carrying out [fire safety enforcement action](#) against non-compliant premises and making the community safer.

The service manages building consultations effectively

The service responds to building consultations on time. This means it consistently meets its statutory responsibility to comment on fire safety arrangements at new and altered buildings. In 2021/22, the service responded to 98.9 percent of building consultations and 100 percent of licensing consultations within the required time frames.

The service could do more to work with local businesses

The service could do more to work with local businesses and other organisations to promote compliance with fire safety legislation. The service carries out limited work directly with businesses on how they can comply with their legal fire safety duties. The service relies on its website and social media to inform businesses about fire safety regulations.

The service hasn't taken enough action to reduce unwanted signals

The service is taking only limited action to reduce the number of unwanted fire signals. In 2021/2022, according to Home Office data, 45 percent of incidents were false alarms. This has rarely changed since 2017/18. This means fire engines may not be available to respond to genuine incidents because they are attending false alarms. It also creates a risk to the public if more fire engines travel on the roads to respond to these incidents.

This was identified as an area for improvement at our last inspection in 2021, but the service hasn't taken sufficient action to manage the burden of false alarms. Therefore, this area for improvement will remain.

The service told us that a revised policy for unwanted fire signals would be considered in a [fire authority](#) meeting in October 2023. We look forward to seeing this work progress.

Responding to fires and other emergencies

Adequate

Hereford and Worcester Fire and Rescue Service is adequate at responding to fires and other emergencies.

Fire and rescue services must be able to respond to a range of incidents such as fires, road traffic collisions and other emergencies in their areas.

Area for improvement

The service should make sure it has an effective system to learn from operational incidents.

We set out our detailed findings below. These are the basis for our judgment of the service's performance in this area.

Main findings

The service aligns its resources with the risks identified in its CRMP

During our 2021 inspection, we highlighted an area for improvement that the service should make sure its response strategy provides the most appropriate response for the public in line with its CRMP.

In this inspection, we found that the service's response strategy was linked to the risks identified in its CRMP. Its fire engines and response staff, as well as its working patterns, are designed and located to help the service respond flexibly to fires and other emergencies with the appropriate resources. For example, the service effectively operates wholetime and [on-call](#) duty systems to maximise the efficiency and effectiveness of its workforce. And it aims to introduce a day-crewing model at three of its fire stations. This means that firefighters will be immediately available for turnout from stations during the day and will be on-call at night.

The service has introduced new attendance performance measures and has plans to improve response times where possible

There are no national response standards of performance for the public. But on 1 April 2023, the service amended its own attendance performance measure as part of a stated aim within its CRMP. These new measures of 10, 15 or 20 minutes are based on incident type, anticipated travel time and location. They replace the previous response standard for fires in buildings, which was for the first appliance to attend within 10 minutes of the receipt of the call on 75 percent of occasions.

It is too early to tell whether the service will consistently meet these new standards. Home Office data shows that in the year ending 31 March 2022, the service's response time to [primary fires](#) was 11 minutes and 32 seconds. This is slower than the average of 9 minutes and 58 seconds for significantly rural services.

The service has good wholetime availability, but it could improve on-call availability

To support its response strategy, the service aims to have 100 percent of wholetime and on-call fire engines available on 100 percent of occasions. The service doesn't always meet this challenging standard for on-call availability.

The service's overall availability for 2021/22 was 75 percent, with wholetime availability at 100 percent and on-call availability at 74 percent. This value is normal when compared to other fire and rescue services in England and considering that the service is predominantly on-call.

Staff have a good understanding of how to command incidents safely

The service has trained incident commanders and a system that makes sure they are assessed regularly and properly. The service assesses command competence every two years. It assesses command at operational incidents and on weekend station audits. On 31 March 2022, all 206 incident commanders who carry out command duties were appropriately accredited. This helps the service safely, assertively and effectively manage the whole range of incidents it could face, from small and routine ones to complex multi-agency incidents.

As part of our inspection, we interviewed incident commanders from across the service. They were familiar with risk assessing, decision-making and recording information at incidents in line with national best practice as well as the [Joint Emergency Services Interoperability Principles \(JESIP\)](#).

Fire control staff have good involvement in training, exercising and debriefs

We were pleased to see that the service's control staff are integrated into its command, training, exercise, debrief and assurance activity. We found that fire control staff had good involvement in large service training exercises and had been invited to high-rise training with West Midlands Fire and Rescue Service. They are routinely included in the service's debrief and structured debrief processes.

The service should make sure that risk information is accurate and up to date

We sampled a range of risk information at wholetime and on-call stations, including the information in place for firefighters responding to incidents at high-risk, high-rise buildings and the information held by fire control.

The information we reviewed wasn't always up to date or detailed. For example, we found that important risk information on a tall building wasn't promptly made available on the site-specific risk information record. Staff can't always easily access or understand risk information. And it hasn't always been completed with feedback from the service's prevention, protection and response functions when appropriate.

The evaluation of operational performance is still ineffective

As part of the inspection, we reviewed a range of emergency incidents and training events. These included domestic and commercial property fires and a gas explosion.

We were disappointed to find that the service didn't always act on learning it has or should have identified from incidents. This means it isn't routinely improving its service to the public. For example, there were significant incidents, such as fatal fires and motorway collisions involving heavy goods vehicles, which had limited debrief submissions and inadequate tracking of resulting actions.

We identified this as an area for improvement in our last inspection, and as there has been insufficient progress, it will remain.

The service has introduced an effective plan to implement national operational guidance

During our 2021 inspection, we highlighted an area for improvement that the service should make sure it understands what it needs to do to adopt national operational guidance, including joint and national learning, and put in place a plan to do so.

We were pleased to see that the service has introduced an extensive programme of work to make sure that staff command incidents in line with national operational guidance. All national operational guidance has been strategically adopted and the service is producing digital products to inform staff about it. The service is exchanging this information with other fire and rescue services to share best practice and increase efficiency.

The service acts on learning from other fire and rescue services and also contributes towards [national operational learning](#). The service has employed paramedics to improve trauma care training for firefighters. It has shared what it has learned on some aspects of trauma care, including paramedic cardiac arrest procedures.

The service is effective at keeping the public informed

The service has good systems in place to inform the public about ongoing incidents to help keep them safe during and after incidents. This includes sharing information on the internet, social media and local radio broadcasts as well as warning and informing through the [local resilience forum \(LRF\)](#). The service often puts messages out to the public in conjunction with the police. The joint headquarters used by police and fire control helps this process.

Responding to major and multi-agency incidents

Adequate

Hereford and Worcester Fire and Rescue Service is adequate at responding to major and multi-agency incidents.

All fire and rescue services must be able to respond effectively to multi-agency and cross-border incidents. This means working with other fire and rescue services (known as intraoperability) and emergency services (known as interoperability).

Areas for improvement

The service should make sure it has an effective method to share fire survival guidance information with multiple callers and that it has a dedicated communication link.

The service should make sure it has an overarching cross-border exercise strategy. The strategy should assure the service that exercise objectives are in line with [community risk management plan](#) risks and that learning is recorded, shared and actioned.

We set out our detailed findings below. These are the basis for our judgment of the service's performance in this area.

Main findings

The service is prepared for major and multi-agency incidents

The service has effectively anticipated and considered the reasonably foreseeable risks and threats it may face. These risks are listed in both local and national risk registers as part of its CRMP. The identified risks include a severe weather event, an epidemic and a large-scale waste fire. The strategic risk register is reviewed on a quarterly basis at the senior leadership board meeting to monitor the risks and control measures.

The service is also familiar with the significant risks neighbouring fire and rescue services may face, and which it might reasonably be asked to respond to in an emergency. But it has more to do. We sampled several over-the-border risk information files and found that many had key information missing, such as building plans and identified hazards. The service should consider how it assures the quality of this information.

The service's ability to respond to major and multi-agency incidents could be improved

In our last inspection, we focused on how the service had collected risk information and responded to the Government's building risk review programme for tall buildings.

In this inspection, we have focused on how well prepared the service is to actually respond to a major incident at a tall building, such as the tragedy at [Grenfell Tower](#).

At this type of incident, a fire and rescue service would receive a high volume of simultaneous fire calls. During this inspection, we tested the service's systems for sharing fire survival guidance information and reviewed how the fire control room directly communicates with the incident commander.

We were disappointed to find that the service had developed only a limited number of policies and procedures for safely managing this type of incident. It has limited procedures in place for fire survival procedural guidance for operational crews and fire control staff. And the role of the evacuation commander isn't in the service's procedure for fires in high-rise buildings. The service should address these policy gaps as a matter of urgency.

Not all staff at all levels properly understand the policies and procedures the service does have in place. We found a good level of understanding among operational firefighting staff of procedures for fighting a fire in a tall building. But the service's staff as a whole had limited knowledge of fire survival guidance and evacuation procedures when changing from 'stay put' (when residents not affected by the fire stay in their flats) to a simultaneous evacuation (when everyone leaves the building together).

The service has carried out several tall building exercises in collaboration with West Midlands Fire and Rescue Service at its training facility in Oldbury. And in December 2022, it held a large service exercise at a high-rise block in Kidderminster. One of the structured debrief recommendations from this exercise was that the service needs to review its fire safety guidance training and procedures.

We found that the service's systems for managing an incident in a high-rise building weren't robust enough. The service has an electronic method for sharing information. As part of our inspection, we reviewed a simulated fire guidance survival incident at a high-rise building in Worcester. We found that the electronic information-sharing method couldn't be used as the premises wasn't in the system. As a result, the service had to rely on a backup, paper-based system. Paper-based systems are too open to operator error. They also mean that staff in the emergency control room, at the incident and assisting control rooms can't share, view and update actions in real time. These systems could compromise the service's ability to safely resolve a major incident at a tall building. This is an area for improvement.

The service works well with other fire and rescue services

The service supports other fire and rescue services responding to emergency incidents. It has seven neighbouring services and is frequently mobilised to their areas. It is intraoperable with these services and can form part of a multi-agency response.

The service has successfully deployed to other services and has used [national resilience assets](#), such as a high-volume pump during flooding in Derbyshire.

Cross-border exercises lack corporate oversight

We found that the service lacked an overarching cross-border exercise plan that links with neighbouring fire and rescue services to make sure they all work together effectively to keep the public safe.

The service monitors the number of cross-border exercises it has done in its quarterly operational assurance report. And it was encouraging to see that in 2021/22, it completed 18 training exercises with neighbouring fire and rescue services. However, there was a lack of oversight as to exercise locations, aims and objectives. And debriefs weren't completed consistently.

The service should make sure it has an overarching cross-border exercise strategy. The strategy should assure the service that exercise objectives are in line with CRMP risks. And it should make sure it records, shares and acts on learning.

Incident commanders have a good understanding of JESIP

The incident commanders we interviewed had been trained in and were familiar with JESIP.

The service could give us strong evidence that it consistently follows these principles. This includes incident commanders routinely using the [joint decision model](#) when liaising with other agencies. This means that the service can be sure there is shared situational awareness and that everyone is aligning with JESIP effectively.

But the service isn't taking the opportunity to carry out robust debriefs after multi-agency incidents and exercises. This means it may not be identifying any problems it has with applying JESIP. This could compromise the service's ability to respond effectively with other emergency organisations when major incidents do occur.

The service is an active and valued member of the West Mercia LRF

The service has good arrangements in place to respond to emergencies with partners that make up the West Mercia LRF. These arrangements include planning for major incidents, such as an uncontrolled off-site chemical release from an industrial plant.

The service is a valued partner of the LRF. It takes part in regular training events with other members and uses the learning to develop planning assumptions about responding to major and multi-agency incidents. The service has a multi-agency exercise plan with the LRF. Each of the service's three districts is responsible for organising a large-scale, multi-agency exercise at least annually. The service recently participated in Exercise Lemur, which was an LRF-led power outage exercise.

The service shares and contributes to national learning

The service makes sure it knows about national operational updates from other fire and rescue services and [joint organisational learning](#) from other organisations, such as the police service and ambulance trusts. It uses this learning to inform planning assumptions that it makes with the organisations it works with.

The service passes identified learning to the operational policy department to act on. This may involve changes to training, procedures or guidance. A tracker monitors progress. It communicates learning to staff through urgent safety notices or via the weekly staff bulletin.

The service has improved staff training and exercising on marauding terrorist attacks

In our last inspection in 2021, we identified an area for improvement that the service should make sure it is well-prepared to form part of a multi-agency response to a terrorist incident and its procedures for responding are understood by all staff and are well tested.

We were encouraged to find that the service had used different training solutions to improve understanding of marauding terrorist attacks (MTAs) including:

- online training packages;
- in-person training for operational and fire control staff from service national inter-agency liaison officers;
- training for all level two and three commanders from an external specialist provider; and
- MTA training for strategic commanders through multi-agency gold incident command courses.

Incident commanders and fire control have done some MTA training exercises. There are further MTA events planned in 2023/24.

Making best use of resources

Adequate

Hereford and Worcester Fire and Rescue Service is adequate at making best use of its resources.

Fire and rescue services should manage their resources properly and appropriately, aligning them with their risks and statutory responsibilities. Services should make best possible use of resources to achieve the best results for the public.

The service's revenue budget for 2023/24 is £39.4m. This is a 7 percent increase from the previous financial year.

Area for improvement

The service should make sure it effectively monitors, reviews and evaluates the benefits and outcomes of any collaboration activity.

We set out our detailed findings below. These are the basis for our judgment of the service's performance in this area.

Main findings

The service has improved how it allocates resources to meet its objectives

In our last inspection, we identified an area for improvement about the need to show a clear rationale for the resources allocated between prevention, protection and response activities, which should reflect and be consistent with the risk and priorities set out in its CRMP. We were encouraged to see the improvements the service has made in this area. Therefore, the area for improvement has now been discharged.

Since our last visit, the service has produced prevention, protection and response strategies that are clearly linked to the CRMP. And it has reviewed the allocation of resources across these three functions. This has improved the service's understanding of its financial and workforce requirements. The service has increased resources in prevention and protection through specialist staff and the use of operational staff in these areas. The service told us that in 2017/18, it spent 4 percent

of its overall budget on prevention and protection but by 2022/23 this figure had increased to 10 percent. The service can now better meet its responsibilities in these areas.

The service has evaluated its mix of crewing and duty systems. It is looking to introduce a new day-crewing model at three of its fire stations to improve efficiency and operational effectiveness. The service is aware that second and third fire engines at some fire stations aren't often used to attend emergencies. They are often unavailable because there isn't enough staff to crew them. The service plans to carry out a resource review before its next CRMP to assure itself that it is deploying its fire engines and response staff to manage risk efficiently.

The service builds its plans on sound scenarios. But its budget is balanced using reserves and the service needs to find savings in the medium term. The fire authority provides overview and scrutiny of the service's budget. Therefore, it can assure itself that it uses public money appropriately.

The service has improved staff productivity with new ways of working

We were pleased to see that the service's arrangements for managing performance clearly link resource use to its CRMP and its strategic priorities. It monitors performance measures across the organisation. The senior leadership board sees the results in a quarterly performance report. Fire authority members get quarterly updates through the service's audit and standards committee. At the time of our inspection, the service was making significant changes to its operating model. It was introducing a new, four-board structure to provide governance for performance, service improvement, change and annual business planning. We look forward to seeing the outcome of these changes during our next inspection.

The service understands how it uses its wholetime firefighters. It collects data on how they spend their time across day and night shifts. It makes the most of its capacity. For example, the service completed a time and motion study of activity on fire stations to see if there was capacity to support prevention and protection activities. This has led to operational firefighters contributing to HFSVs and business fire safety visits.

The service is taking steps to make sure the workforce's time is as productive as possible. This includes putting in place new ways of working. For example, the service has invested in tablet computers for operational staff to increase their productivity both on and off station. Operational staff will be able to use the wi-fi on the fire engines so that they are productive when other crew members are doing community and business safety work. This will improve access to learning opportunities, national operational guidance and service communication.

The service explores collaboration opportunities but still needs to monitor, review and evaluate the benefits

We were pleased to see that the service meets its statutory duty to collaborate. It routinely considers opportunities to collaborate with other emergency responders. It continues to provide operational support to West Mercia Police and West Midlands Ambulance Service. This includes assisting at incidents such as searches for [missing persons](#), gaining entry to buildings and instances when a drone or search and rescue dog is needed.

Collaborative work is aligned with the priorities in the service's CRMP. For example, the service works closely with the West Mercia Police road safety team, National Highways, Herefordshire Council and Worcestershire County Council to reduce the number of deaths or serious injuries from road traffic collisions.

We are satisfied that the service monitors, reviews and evaluates the benefits and results of its collaborations. But its reviews and evaluations are limited in scope, and the service doesn't use them to learn from or to change decisions. As part of its business planning process, the service is developing an evaluation process tool for reviewing the effectiveness of collaboration. We will be interested to see the results during our next inspection.

However, there hasn't been enough progress in effectively monitoring, reviewing and evaluating the benefits and outcomes of any future collaboration. Therefore, the area for improvement identified in our last inspection will remain.

The service has effective continuity arrangements

We were encouraged to see the improvements the service has made in addressing the area for improvement for business continuity from our last inspection. The service has good continuity arrangements in place for areas in which it considers threats and risks to be high. It regularly reviews and tests these threats and risks so that staff understand the arrangements and their associated responsibilities.

We found robust business continuity plans and testing for events such as industrial action or loss of the mobilising system in fire control.

The service has appropriate business continuity plans for industrial action. It has assured itself and can demonstrate that it has adequate resources available for future periods of industrial action. The last test was carried out in November 2022.

Continuity plans for fire control include the relocation to a secondary control facility and fallback arrangements with Shropshire Fire and Rescue Service. In March 2023, staff in fire control completed an evacuation exercise to secondary control.

The service shows sound financial management

There are regular reviews to consider all the service's expenditure, including its non-pay costs. And this scrutiny makes sure the service gets value for money. For example, Hereford and Worcester Fire Authority reviews expenditure on a regular basis through its policy and resources committee meetings.

The service has made savings and efficiencies, which have caused minimal disruption to its operational performance and the service it gives the public. For example, the service's fire engines are staffed to a minimum of four firefighters as standard. And the service has purchased smaller fire engines that are more cost effective. However, it was evident that the service hasn't fully evaluated these fleet changes to understand and measure their effectiveness.

The service is taking steps to make sure it achieves efficiency gains through sound financial management and best working practices. It is doing this in important areas such as estates, fleet and procurement. The service uses procurement frameworks or collaborates directly with other organisations at a national, regional or local level to get the best possible purchasing power. Examples include:

- buying replacement breathing apparatus sets with three of the other four services in the West Midlands region;
- replacement fire control with three other fire and rescue services – one neighbouring (Shropshire) and two in the north-east region (Durham and Darlington and Cleveland);
- fire engines and other vehicles procured from national frameworks; and
- collaboration with Shropshire Fire and Rescue Service to procure three identical and interchangeable command support units.

Making the fire and rescue service affordable now and in the future

Adequate

Hereford and Worcester Fire and Rescue Service is adequate at making the service affordable now and in the future.

Fire and rescue services should continuously look for ways to improve their effectiveness and efficiency. This includes transforming how they work and improving their value for money. Services should have robust spending plans that reflect future financial challenges and efficiency opportunities, and they should invest in better services for the public.

Area for improvement

The service needs to make sure it has adequate plans to close any identified budget gaps.

We set out our detailed findings below. These are the basis for our judgment of the service's performance in this area.

Main findings

The service understands its future financial challenges but needs to develop its savings plan

The service has a sound understanding of future financial challenges. It has some plans to mitigate its main or significant financial risks, but it anticipates a future budget shortfall and is still developing its savings plan. In the short-term, it plans to use its budget reduction reserve to balance the budget.

The underpinning assumptions are relatively robust, realistic and prudent. They take account of the wider external environment and some scenario planning for future spending reductions. These include planning assumptions around pay, government grants, business rates and pensions.

A higher-than-anticipated firefighter pay award has resulted in a projected budget deficit in 2023/24 rather than a budget surplus as previously predicted. There is a projected shortfall in subsequent years and the service forecasts that it needs to find savings of around £750,000 by 2026/27.

The service told us that it would develop a savings plan alongside its next CRMP. However, at the time of inspection, savings options weren't established, evaluated or prioritised. Therefore, this is an area for improvement. The service should identify all the savings it needs to make and have plans to meet these savings requirements.

The service has plans for using reserves

The service has a sensible plan for using its reserves. It currently aims for the general reserve to be maintained at £1.5m, which is equivalent to around 4 percent of its annual revenue budget requirement. Earmarked reserves are reviewed annually, and the service has plans to reduce overall reserves from around £15.5m in 2023/24 to around £3m in 2026/27.

As part of developing its savings plan, the service should consider whether there are any opportunities to use reserves to allow innovation or new ways of working.

The new fleet and estates strategies are clearly linked to its CRMP

In our last inspection, an area for improvement was that the service should regularly review and evaluate its fleet and estates strategies to maximise potential efficiencies.

We were encouraged to see the improvements the service has made since our last inspection. The service has new fleet and estates strategies that have clear links to its CRMP. Therefore, the previous area for improvement has now been discharged.

While the service isn't regularly updating these strategies, we were pleased to see good progress with its plans and investment in these areas. The service is exploiting opportunities to improve efficiency and effectiveness in both fleet and estates.

The service works with the West Mercia police and crime commissioner for property management. This has resulted in the sharing of construction costs with West Mercia Police on the build of the new fire and police station at Redditch. The service has a governance board and key performance indicators and uses an external auditor from Worcester City Council to assure itself that it is getting best value for money and appropriate service levels from this service agreement.

The service regularly reviews its fleet plans with other fire and rescue services and suppliers. This assures it that the plan is appropriate and achieves value for money. For example, the service told us that it needs to replace its aerial ladder platforms and is exploring joint procurement opportunities with other fire and rescue services.

The service invests in technology to support change and improve efficiency

The service actively considers how changes in technology and future innovation may affect risk. It also seeks to exploit opportunities to improve efficiency and effectiveness presented by changes in technology. The service has invested in new display screens (known as Tripleplay) in prominent locations to improve communication with staff on a wide variety of content. Prevention, protection and response staff are now provided with tablet computers, which help them to work on the go. Wide area network improvements have increased internet speeds at the service's more rural fire stations. And the service is working with other fire and rescue services to procure a new mobilising system which, the service told us, will provide more resilience.

The service has put in place the capacity and capability it needs to achieve sustainable transformation, and it routinely seeks opportunities to work with others to improve efficiency and provide better services in the future. The service is jointly leading on an NFCC [benchmarking](#) project. The aim is to improve how fire and rescue services compare their costs and services with each other.

External funding and income generation is limited

The service considers and exploits opportunities for generating extra income, although the steps taken are limited and there is scope for considering wider options.

Where appropriate, it has secured external funding to invest in improvements to the service it gives the public. This includes £25,000 that was secured by the prevention team from the electrical safety and household support funds. This funding was used to provide equipment such as oil-filled radiators, flasks and blankets for households struggling in the winter months with the cost-of-living crisis.

Promoting the right values and culture

Adequate

Hereford and Worcester Fire and Rescue Service is adequate at promoting the right values and culture.

Fire and rescue services should have positive and inclusive cultures, modelled by the behaviours of their senior leaders. Services should promote health and safety effectively, and staff should have access to a range of well-being support that can be tailored to their individual needs.

Area for improvement

The service should monitor secondary contracts to make sure working hours are not exceeded.

We set out our detailed findings below. These are the basis for our judgment of the service's performance in this area.

Main findings

Values are accepted and maintained throughout the service

The service has well-defined values, which staff understand. Of those that completed our staff survey, 96 percent (296 out of 307) said that they are aware of the service's statement of values.

We found staff at all levels of the service showing behaviours that reflect service values. Our staff survey showed that 90 percent (267 out of 296) of staff felt that their managers consistently model and maintain the service's values. This increases to 95 percent (281 out of 296) when describing colleagues.

The service has implemented the [Core Code of Ethics](#) well and staff understand it.

Most staff felt that senior leaders act as role models. For example, the people we spoke to during our inspection felt that senior leaders model the values of the service and are approachable. Of those that completed our survey, 73 percent (215 out of 296) felt that senior leaders consistently model and maintain the service's values. But many members of staff told us that senior leaders aren't always visible on stations.

There is a positive working culture throughout the service, with staff empowered and willing to challenge poor behaviours when they come across them. They have confidence that their concerns will be taken seriously, and concerns can be raised anonymously through Say So, an independent reporting line.

Staff have access to appropriate services to support mental and physical health

The service has well-understood and effective well-being policies in place, which are available to staff. The service has signed up to the mental health at work commitment, which promotes health and well-being. A significant range of well-being support is available for physical and mental health. For example, the service offers confidential welfare support and guidance through a dedicated team of 16 trained members of staff from across the organisation. Staff also have access to mental health advisers, professional counsellors, support after involvement with traumatic incidents and a fitness adviser.

There are good provisions to promote staff well-being. This includes events such as:

- the men don't talk workshop;
- the thriving after the fire service for retirees;
- general men's well-being sessions that cover topics such as prostate cancer; and
- workshops to increase menopause awareness.

Of those that completed our survey, 96 percent (294 out of 307) said that they feel able to access services to support mental well-being.

The service has appropriate health and safety provision

The service has effective and well-understood health and safety policies and procedures in place. Of those that completed our staff survey, 95 percent (293 out of 307) felt that the service has a clear procedure to report all accidents, [near misses](#) and dangerous occurrences.

The service's health and safety committee monitors health and safety performance every three months. It reports the service's performance to fire authority members in the audit and standards committee.

Health and safety policies and procedures are readily available, and the service promotes them effectively to all staff. It monitors accident statistics and shares learning from accidents with staff through health and safety notices (known as flashes). Staff have confidence in the service's health and safety approach.

We were pleased to see the service's work on the area for improvement identified in our last inspection related to the management, monitoring and review of analytical risk assessments. This is the process used to manage and record health and safety while staff are dealing with fires and other incidents. The service has produced a new analytical risk assessments policy, refreshed its training and improved quality assurance via the operational policy team.

However, we found that there had been only limited progress in the monitoring of staff who have secondary employment or dual contracts. The service needs to assure itself that these staff members comply with the secondary employment policy and don't work excessive hours. Therefore, this area for improvement from our last inspection will remain.

The service has clear processes to manage staff absence

We found that there were clear processes in place to manage absences consistently for all staff. There is clear guidance for managers, who are confident in using the process. The service manages absences well and in accordance with policy. Sickness absence is monitored and reported at the service's health and safety committee and by fire authority members. Managers are appropriately trained to manage and record staff absences effectively.

Getting the right people with the right skills

Good

Hereford and Worcester Fire and Rescue Service is good at getting the right people with the right skills.

Fire and rescue services should have a workforce plan in place that is linked to their CRMPs. It should set out their current and future skills requirements and address capability gaps. This should be supplemented by a culture of continuous improvement, including appropriate learning and development throughout the service.

We set out our detailed findings below. These are the basis for our judgment of the service's performance in this area.

Main findings

The service has improved its workforce planning

The service has good workforce planning in place. This makes sure skills and capabilities align with what it needs to effectively carry out its CRMP. This was an area for improvement in our last inspection in 2021. Since then, the service has developed and published a workforce plan that monitors the skills and capabilities of the workforce. The workforce plan has an associated action plan to make sure that the service has the right number of people with the right skills to meet the demand. HR staff have had workforce planning training, which the service has used to better understand its resourcing challenges. There has been sufficient progress for this area for improvement to be discharged.

Workforce and succession planning is subject to consistent scrutiny in the form of quarterly workforce planning group meetings to discuss requirements. The service intends to incorporate the workforce plan into the annual business planning strategic board meeting.

Workforce skills and capabilities are managed well

Most staff told us that they can access the training they need to be effective in their roles. This wasn't just focused on operational skills but also included management skills. The service's training plans make sure that staff can maintain competence and capability effectively. For example, of those that completed our survey, 82 percent (252 out of 307) said that they can access the right learning and development opportunities when needed.

In our 2021 inspection, we identified an area for improvement that the service should assure itself that records for risk-critical competencies, such as using breathing apparatus, driving fire engines and incident command, are accurate and up to date.

During this inspection, we found that there had been sufficient progress for this area for improvement to be discharged. The service monitors staff competence using subject leads to monitor the competency recording system. Although it is temporary, pending a new course management system, this manual process is more robust than staff overseeing the whole system. In the wide sample of staff records we reviewed, we found that all staff were in date for their risk-critical competencies.

The service regularly updates its understanding of staff skills and risk-critical safety capabilities through monitoring of the competency database. The senior leadership board gets detailed, quarterly operational assurance reports so that it can review compliance. This approach means the service can identify gaps in workforce capabilities and resilience. It also means it can make sound and financially sustainable decisions about current and future needs.

The service supports staff with learning and development

The service promotes a culture of continuous improvement throughout the organisation, and it encourages staff to learn and develop. For example, the service offers staff the opportunity to apply for courses funded through an external development and sponsorship process. This scheme gives any member of staff the opportunity to receive funding for learning and development. This opportunity is based on a review of future benefits to the individual and the service.

We were pleased to see that the service has a range of resources in place. These include e-learning modules, formal development, training courses, [continuing professional development](#) (such as command seminars), coaching and mentoring.

Most staff from across the service, both operational and support members, told us that they can access a range of learning and development resources. These include leadership and management qualifications and courses from organisations such as the [Chartered Management Institute](#) and [T2](#). This allows them to do their jobs effectively.

Ensuring fairness and promoting diversity

Good

Hereford and Worcester Fire and Rescue Service is good at ensuring fairness and promoting diversity.

Creating a more representative workforce gives fire and rescue services huge benefits. These include greater access to talent and different ways of thinking. It also helps them better understand and engage with local communities. Each service should make sure staff throughout the organisation firmly understand and show a commitment to equality, diversity and inclusion (EDI). This includes successfully taking steps to remove inequality and making progress to improve fairness, diversity and inclusion at all levels of the service. It should proactively seek and respond to feedback from staff and make sure any action it takes is meaningful.

We set out our detailed findings below. These are the basis for our judgment of the service's performance in this area.

Main findings

The service and senior leaders seek feedback from staff

The service has made good progress in the area for improvement from the last inspection that it should make sure it engages appropriately with and seeks feedback from all staff, including those from underrepresented groups.

The service has developed several ways to work with staff on issues and decisions that affect them. This includes methods to build all-staff awareness of fairness and diversity as well as targeted initiatives to identify matters that affect different staff groups.

Some of the service's improvements on staff feedback and challenge include:

- the commissioning of an independent cultural audit;
- a full staff survey with a commitment to complete further surveys in the future to measure improvement;
- pro-active engagement with the two staff networks – one for female staff and the other for neurodivergent members of staff;

- an externally appointed service communications review; and
- introducing a confidential reporting line alongside the service whistleblowing procedure.

The service has taken action to address matters staff have raised such as a new EDI training programme based on the findings of the cultural audit. Staff have received these actions positively. However, some staff did state that two-way communication and the visibility of senior officers could be improved.

Most staff are confident with the service's approach to dealing with bullying, harassment and discrimination

Staff have a good understanding of what bullying, [harassment](#) and discrimination are and their negative effects on colleagues and the organisation.

In this inspection, 13 percent (41 out of 307) of staff responding to our survey told us that they have been subject to bullying or harassment and 10 percent (32 out of 307) to discrimination over the past 12 months. Of these staff, 41 percent (17 out of 41) didn't report the bullying or harassment. The main reason for this was that they felt it could make the situation worse. And 56 percent (18 out of 32) didn't report the discrimination, mainly because they felt that no action would be taken.

But most staff are confident in the service's approach to tackling bullying, harassment and discrimination, grievances and disciplinary matters. Representative bodies that responded to our survey agreed that the service has appropriate processes to eliminate, bullying, harassment and discrimination. The service has made sure that all staff are trained and clear about what to do if they encounter inappropriate behaviour.

The service plans in the future to communicate to staff the outcomes and circumstances of serious conduct (discipline) cases that have been heard and deemed fully closed. The purpose of this is to share the learning and to demonstrate that the service does take these matters extremely seriously and, when necessary, will act. The service won't identify individuals in this process and the specific details will be kept confidential. However, it plans to publish the outline circumstances and outcomes. We will be interested to review this during our next inspection.

The service acts positively to improve diversity in recruitment

There is an open, fair and honest recruitment process for staff or those wishing to work for the fire and rescue service. The service has an effective system to understand and remove the risk of disproportionality in recruitment processes. It has a good understanding of the diversity of its workforce. In 2021/22, unknown ethnicities within its staff profile were 2.5 percent compared to the England rate of 8.8 percent. Reports are provided quarterly to the senior leadership board so that it fully understands the demographic of its employees and where improvements are required to improve diversity.

The service has put considerable effort into developing its recruitment processes so that they are fair and potential applicants can understand them. It has provided taster sessions for candidates so that they know what to expect. The service has also put in reasonable adjustments for neurodiverse applicants to help them overcome potential barriers to entry. The recruitment policies are comprehensive and cover opportunities in all roles. The service advertises recruitment opportunities both internally and externally, including through [Women in the Fire Service UK](#), the NFCC, Total Jobs and social media platforms. This has encouraged applicants from diverse backgrounds, including into middle and senior management roles.

The service has made some improvements to increase staff diversity at all levels of the organisation. In 2021/22, 10 percent of new joiners self-declared as being from an ethnic minority background.

The proportion of firefighters that are from an ethnic minority background has stayed the same from 5.4 percent (32 people) in 2017/18 to 5.5 percent (33 people) in 2021/22. The proportion of female firefighters has increased from 6.7 percent (40 people) to 8.2 percent (50 people) over the same period.

For the whole workforce, in 2021/22, 6.5 percent are from an ethnic minority background compared to 10.2 percent in their local population and 8 percent throughout all fire and rescue services. And 17.4 percent are women, compared to a rate of 18.6 percent throughout all fire and rescue services. In 2021/22 the proportion of female staff in service roles was as follows:

- fire control – 67 percent
- support staff – 55 percent
- wholetime firefighters – 10 percent
- on-call firefighters – 7 percent.

The service has taken steps to improve diversity. For example, it used [positive action](#) in its latest wholetime social media recruitment campaign, and work continues with external partners, such as the [Asian Fire Service Association](#) and Women in the Fire Service UK, to try and improve disproportionality. The service has used videos to communicate internally with staff about why positive action is needed and what it does and doesn't include. The workforce supports this.

The service promotes EDI

The service has improved its approach to EDI. It makes sure it can offer the right services to its communities and can support staff with [protected characteristics](#). It has developed policies and procedures and has made several improvements to support EDI since our last inspection. These include:

- a new EDI policy and service code of conduct, which incorporate the [NFCC Core Code of Ethics](#) principles;

- a culture and ethics steering group with representatives from across the organisation;
- good relationships with external EDI networks, such as Women in the Fire Service UK and the Asian Fire Service Association;
- a response rate of around 65 percent to its staff survey; and
- service-specific EDI training for all staff based on the findings from the service's independent cultural audit.

The service has some measures to monitor staff awareness of EDI. It incorporates EDI into the operational assurance process when it reviews fire station [watches](#). This includes questions on understanding of service EDI principles, such as positive action. The feedback informs the service about what further training it should provide.

The service has a process to carry out people impact assessments (PIAs) on each protected characteristic. It provides staff with training, guidance and toolkits to make sure assessments are consistent. PIAs are quality assured by the service's EDI officer before being added to the service's PIA library. However, we found that many service policies and procedures hadn't yet had a PIA completed. The service should develop a process for responsible departments to complete PIAs on their policies and procedures on a prioritised basis.

Managing performance and developing leaders

Good

Hereford and Worcester Fire and Rescue Service is good at managing performance and developing leaders.

Fire and rescue services should have robust and meaningful performance management arrangements in place for their staff. All staff should be supported to meet their potential and there should be a focus on developing staff and improving diversity into leadership roles.

Area for improvement

The service should make sure it has mechanisms in place to manage and develop talent within the organisation.

We set out our detailed findings below. These are the basis for our judgment of the service's performance in this area.

Main findings

The service effectively manages individuals' performance

Our last inspection identified an area for improvement that the service should improve all-staff understanding and application of the appraisal review process. During this inspection, we found evidence to show that the service has made progress in addressing this. Therefore this area for improvement has now been discharged.

There is a good performance management system in place, which allows the service to effectively develop and assess the individual performance of all staff. For example, we were pleased to see that in 2022/23, the proportion of staff who completed an appraisal increased to between 90 and 100 percent in different workforce groups. This is an improvement from 2021/22 when completion rates ranged between 25 and 63 percent.

Through our staff survey, 93 percent of staff reported that they had an appraisal with their manager in the last 12 months. Most of these staff felt they were useful. Each staff member has individual goals and objectives and regular performance assessments. Staff feel confident in the performance and development arrangements.

The service needs to do more to assure the workforce that promotion and progression processes are fair

The service has put considerable effort into developing its promotion and progression processes so that they are fair and all staff can understand them. But, of those that completed our survey, only 60 percent (184 out of 307) felt that promotion processes are fair. The promotion and progression policies are comprehensive and cover opportunities in all operational roles, but they contain limited guidance for support staff.

The service has succession-planning processes in place, which allow it to effectively manage the career pathways of its staff, including roles needing specialist skills.

It manages selection processes consistently. And it uses temporary promotions appropriately to fill short-term resourcing gaps. The service has reduced the number of staff on temporary promotions from 54 as of 31 March 2021 to 44 as of 31 March 2022. However, the average length of temporary promotions has increased in the same period from 346 days to 415 days. This could indicate resourcing issues. The England average length of temporary promotion in 2021/22 was 300 days.

The service has diversified its leadership, but it could do more

The service has made some improvements to increase workforce diversity. The service told us that as of 31 August 2023, approximately 35 percent of the 57 people it defined as senior managers were female. This includes both operational and non-operational female senior managers, including at assistant chief officer and area commander levels.

But it knows it needs to go further to increase workforce diversity at all levels and has plans to address this. These include external recruitment advertising and professional development sponsorship opportunities for all staff.

The service should improve plans to develop leadership and high-potential staff at all levels

The service needs to improve the way it actively manages the career pathways of staff, including those with specialist skills and those with potential for leadership roles.

It has some schemes to develop future leaders. We were told about the aspiring executive leaders' and aspiring supervisory managers' programmes. In these, staff can experience the roles before committing fully to the development process. We also heard about the new appraisal process that will include a career conversation, which is yet to be fully rolled out.

The service should consider more formal arrangements to identify and support members of staff to become senior leaders. There has been limited progress with the area for improvement identified in our last inspection that the service should make sure it has processes to manage and develop talent within the organisation. Therefore, this area for improvement will remain.

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HMICFRS Improvement Plan

2023 Inspection





During May to July 2023, His Majesty's Inspectorate of Constabulary and Fire & Rescue Service (HMICFRS) inspected Hereford & Worcester Fire and Rescue Service (HWFRS). HWFRS was selected as the 11th Service to be inspected in the third round of inspections.

The inspection team from HMICFRS carried out their in-depth review, focusing on how effective and efficient we are and how well we look after our people. The report, titled "Fire and Rescue Service 2023-25, Effectiveness, Efficiency and People – An inspection of Hereford & Worcester Fire and Rescue Service" was published on 29th November 2023, and this is [the link to the report](#).

The inspection measured the Service across 11 assessment areas which they hope will encourage Fire and Rescue Services to consider inspection findings as a whole. HMICFRS have also expanded their previous four-tier system of graded judgements to five.

In the report, the Inspectorate state that they are pleased with the performance of HWFRS and the improvements made since the last inspection, and they would encourage the Service to continue to make improvement in the areas they have highlighted.

The inspection report highlighted 11 Areas for Improvement (AFI) and recommend that action be taken to address them. In response, the Service has prepared an Improvement Plan. This Improvement Plan is owned by senior managers and is updated on a quarterly basis and published as progress is made.

The Improvement Plan summarises the proposed actions against the AFIs noted in the inspection report.

Areas for Improvement: Summary

Assessment Area	Area for Improvement	Page
Understanding fires and other risks	AFI-1 - The service should make sure its firefighters have good access to relevant and up-to-date risk information.	4
Preventing fires and other risks	AFI-2 - The service should make sure staff carry out home fire safety visits competently.	5
	AFI-3 - The service should evaluate its prevention activity, so it understands what is most effective.	6
Protecting the public through fire regulation	AFI-4 - The service should make sure it effectively addresses the burden of unwanted fire signals.	7
Responding to fires and other emergencies	AFI-5 - The service should make sure it has an effective system to learn from operational incidents.	8
Responding to major and multi-agency incidents	AFI-6 - The service should make sure it has an effective method to share fire survival guidance information with multiple callers and that it has a dedicated communication link in place.	9
	AFI-7 - The service should make sure it has an overarching cross-border exercise strategy. The strategy should assure the service that exercise objectives are in line with community risk management plan risks and that learning is recorded, shared and actioned.	10
Making best use of resources	AFI-8 - The service should make sure it effectively monitors, reviews, and evaluates the benefits and outcomes of any collaboration activity.	11
Future affordability	AFI-9 - The service needs to make sure it has adequate plans in place to close its identified budget gaps.	12
Promoting the right values and culture	AFI-10 - The service should monitor secondary contracts to make sure staff don't work excessive hours.	13
Managing performance and developing leaders	AFI-11 - The service should make sure it has processes in place to manage and develop talent within the organisation.	14

Understanding fires and other emergencies – (AFI-1)

Area for Improvement

The service should make sure its firefighters have good access to relevant and up-to-date risk information

HWFRS Action Proposed

Target Date

Fire Control project team to address and reduce the existing backlog of temporary risk information as part of the data cleanse for the introduction of the new mobilisation system

Q2 2024/25

Implement the new reporting system, including ongoing monitoring of risk information processing time from submission to going live on the system

Q2 2024/25

Develop a process for review and the updating / removal of old information

Q2 2024/25

Establish KPI(s) for the ongoing reporting of actions 2 and 3 above for continued monitoring

Q2 2024/25

Strategic Lead

Assistant Director, Protection

Tactical Lead

Group Commander Ops Policy, Assurance and Fire Control

Preventing fires and other risks – (AFI-2)	
Area for Improvement	The service should make sure staff carry out home fire safety visits competently
HWFRS Action Proposed	
	Target Date
Undertake a review of the HFSV referral process to ensure HFSV's are being appropriately risk assessed, completed within time frames, suitably referred to the prevention team and ultimately that the referral process is being delivered effectively	Q2 2024/25
Establish a clear process to communicate with crews to ensure a robust referral pathway is in place	Q3 2024/25
Strategic Lead	<i>Assistant Director, Prevention</i>
Tactical Lead	<i>Head of Prevention</i>

Preventing fires and other risks – (AFI-3)

Area for Improvement

The service should evaluate its prevention activity, so it understands what is most effective

HWFRS Action Proposed

Target Date

Further embed the HFSV behaviour change evaluation process, and monitor and review to demonstrate continual improvement

Q3 2024/25

Establish a process to evaluate the effectiveness of Prevention campaigns e.g. implement a stakeholder feedback mechanism

Q3 2024/25

Develop an approach to evaluate changes in behaviour following the delivery of road safety education and intervention

Q4 2024/25

Strategic Lead

Assistant Director, Prevention

Tactical Lead

Head of Prevention

Protecting the public through fire regulation – (AFI-4)

Area for Improvement

The service should make sure it effectively addresses the burden of unwanted fire signals

HWFRS Action Proposed

Target Date

Establish terms of reference and commence a review on how we communicate with businesses etc.

Q2 2024/25

Updated policy to be created and published

Q3 2024/25

Produce guidance on mobilisation and provide Fire Control training

Q3 2024/25

Establish a consistent recording and review process for unwanted fire signals

Q4 2024/25

Strategic Lead

Assistant Director, Protection

Tactical Lead

Group Commander, Protection

Responding to fires and other emergencies – (AFI-5)

Area for Improvement	The service should make sure it has an effective system to learn from operational incidents	
HWFRS Action Proposed		Target Date
Incorporate a review of RTC fatalities into quarterly Fire, Death and Serious Injury (FDSI) Board meetings		Complete
Automate the process of requesting debriefs that hit the submission criteria, to improve the return rate of debriefs		Complete
Implement a new Organisational Learning and action tracking system		Q1 2024/25
Strategic Lead	<i>Assistant Director, Protection</i>	
Tactical Lead	<i>Group Commander Ops Policy, Assurance and Fire Control</i>	

Responding to fires and other emergencies – (AFI-6)

Area for Improvement	The service should make sure it has an effective method to share fire survival guidance information with multiple callers and that it has a dedicated communication link in place
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HWFRS Action Proposed	Target Date
Update and review Fire Survival Guidance / Evacuation documentation including Evacuation Commander role	Q1 2024/25
Review the existing procedures, carry out updates and test as required	Q2 2024/25
Implement training for staff based on the above	Q3 2024/25
Procure and implement an electronic information sharing system to share Fire Survival Guidance	Q4 2024/25

Strategic Lead	<i>Assistant Director, Protection</i>
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Tactical Lead	<i>Group Commander Ops Policy, Assurance and Fire Control</i>
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Responding to fires and other emergencies – (AFI-7)	
Area for Improvement	The service should make sure it has an overarching cross-border exercise strategy. The strategy should assure the service that exercise objectives are in line with community risk management plan risks and that learning is recorded, shared and actioned
HWFRS Action Proposed	
	Target Date
Carry out a review of the Station Exercises Policy and Exercise Planning Guidance	Q4 2023/24
Develop an overarching cross-border exercise plan to sit alongside the existing Exercise Policy and Guidance	Q4 2024/25
Strategic Lead	<i>Assistant Director, Response</i>
Tactical Lead	<i>Group Commander, North District</i>

Making the best use of resources – (AFI-8)

Area for Improvement	The service should make sure it effectively monitors, reviews, and evaluates the benefits and outcomes of any collaboration activity	
HWFRS Action Proposed		Target Date
Produce guidance for HWFRS staff to use when reviewing and evaluating collaboration. This will include a definition of collaboration and an evaluation process/tool		Q2 2024/25
Review the implementation of the guidance and the evaluation processes that have taken place		Q3 2024/25
Strategic Lead	<i>Assistant Director, Prevention</i>	
Tactical Lead	<i>Group Commander, Performance & Information</i>	

Making the fire and rescue service affordable now and in the future – (AFI-9)

Area for Improvement	The service needs to make sure it has adequate plans in place to close its identified budget gaps	
HWFRS Action Proposed		Target Date
Revise the Medium-Term Financial Plan (MTFP), providing an updated position on potential budget gaps		Q4 2023/24
Continue to monitor the budget gap and revise plans accordingly		Q2 2024/25
Strategic Lead	<i>Director of Finance</i>	
Tactical Lead	<i>Assistant Director, Finance</i>	

Promoting the right values and culture – (AFI-10)	
Area for Improvement	The service should monitor secondary contracts to make sure staff don't work excessive hours
HWFRS Action Proposed	
	Target Date
Establish a service-level assurance process for employees with secondary employment or dual contracts	Q3 2024/25
Implement a formal reporting mechanism on secondary employment and hours worked	Q4 2024/25
Strategic Lead	<i>Assistant Director, Prevention</i>
Tactical Lead	<i>Head of HR & Development</i>

Managing performance and developing leaders – (AFI-11)

Area for Improvement	The service should make sure it has processes in place to manage and develop talent within the organisation	
HWFRS Action Proposed		Target Date
Develop a Talent Management strategy for the service		Q4 2024/25
Establish a delivery plan that is fair and equitable to enable talented individuals to develop and progress		Q4 2024/25
Develop a framework for managers which they can use to identify and develop high-performing staff (appraisal) in line with the NFCC talent management toolkit		Q1 2025/26
Strategic Lead	<i>Assistant Director, Prevention</i>	
Tactical Lead	<i>Head of HR & Development</i>	

Report of the Head of Legal Services

Members' Allowances Scheme 2024/25

Purpose of report

1. To propose an increase in the allowances paid to Members for 2024/25 in accordance with the previous decision that increases be linked to the National Joint Council annual pay award for 'Green Book' staff.
-

Recommendation

It is RECOMMENDED that:

- (i) *the existing basic and special responsibility allowances paid to Members be increased by 3.88% for 2024/25, in line with the increase to additional allowances agreed as part of the NJC pay award for 'Green Book' Staff for 2023;*
- (ii) *the Dependent Carers' allowance be increased to £11.44 per hour in line with the national living wage; and*
- (ii) *the revised Members' Allowances Scheme for 2024/25 be approved.*

Introduction and Background

2. The Authority is required to make a scheme each year for its Members to be paid a basic annual allowance, under the Local Authorities (Members' Allowances) (England) Regulations 2003. Authorities may also make provision for other allowances, for example for those Members with special responsibilities or for travel and subsistence. The proposed 2024/25 budget for Members' allowances is £52,000.

Annual Increase

3. The Regulations allow for authorities to refer to an index for the purpose of any annual adjustments to the levels of allowances.
4. At the Authority's meeting in February 2022, it was resolved that allowances should be increased each year by the same percentage as the preceding year's pay award for National Joint Council 'Green Book' staff (if any). This ensures that allowances keep pace with, but do not exceed, the pay increases awarded to staff.

NCJ Annual Awards

5. The NCJ Green Book pay settlement for April 2023, agreed in November 2023, was for a flat rate increase of £1,925 at all pay grades. Thus the pay award ranged from 9.4% for the lowest paid to 3.88% for higher paid employees. Additional allowances were updated by 3.88%%
6. It is difficult to translate a flat rate increase of £1,925 for staff into a percentage increase to members' allowances. It is therefore proposed to use the 3.88% increase to staff allowances as the most appropriate measure, as we did last year.
7. The table below shows a comparison of the current allowances and the proposed 3.88% increase.

	Current	Proposed 2024/25	
	2023/24	Increase	Allowance
		3.88%	
Basic Allowance	£ 1,235.15	£ 47.92	£ 1,283.07
FRA Chairman	£ 9,487.68	£ 368.12	£ 9,855.80
FRA Vice--Chair	£ 5,692.56	£ 220.87	£ 5,913.43
Group Leaders	£ 1,423.14	£ 55.22	£ 1,478.36
Chair - A+S Cttee	£ 1,423.14	£ 55.22	£ 1,478.36
Chair - P+R Cttee	£ 1,423.14	£ 55.22	£ 1,478.36

8. Members may only receive one special responsibility allowance. Based on the current Member appointments, the total allowances payable are/will be as follows:

	Current	Proposed	
	2023/24	2024/25	Increase
Total allowances payable	£ 50,328	£ 52,281	£ 1,953

Dependent Carer's Allowance

9. The scheme of allowances also includes an additional allowance that can be claimed to cover expenditure incurred for the care of dependents whilst Members' are attending Authority meetings. This has previously been set in accordance with the national living wage (currently £10.42 per hour) and will increase to £11.44 per hour from April. In practice, no claims have been made under this heading.

Conclusion/Summary

10. The proposed increase of members' allowances by 3.88% gives effect to the decision taken in February 2022 linking future increases to the annual pay awards for the Authority's non-operational, NJC 'Green Book' staff.
11. It is proposed that the dependent carers' allowance would be increased in line with the national living wage to £11.44 per hour
12. The proposed increase would equate to an additional cost overall of £1,953 which has been allowed for within the current draft budget.
13. The revised amounts have been included in a draft Members' Allowances Scheme for 2024/25 at appendix 1. Any Member who does not wish to receive the allowance either in full or who chooses to decline the proposed increase may do so.

Corporate Considerations

Resource Implications (identify any financial, legal, property or human resources issues)	The proposed increase of 3.88% across all allowances would equate to an additional cost of £1,953, bringing the total budget for Members' allowances to £52,300 .
Strategic Policy Links & Core Code of Ethics (identify how proposals link in with current priorities and policy framework and if they do not, identify any potential implications).	None directly.
Risk Management / Health & Safety (identify any risks, the proposed control measures and risk evaluation scores).	None directly.
Consultation (identify any public or other consultation that has been carried out on this matter)	None.
Equalities (has an Equalities Impact Assessment been completed? If not, why not?)	The current Members' Allowances Scheme includes a Dependents' Carers' Allowance to assist those members with caring responsibilities in carrying out their approved duties.

Data Protection Impact Assessment (where personal data is processed a DPIA must be completed to ensure compliant handling)	
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Supporting Information

Appendix 1 – Draft Members’ Allowances Scheme 2024/25

Background papers:

Local Authorities (Members Allowances) (England) Regulations 2003
NJC pay agreement for 2023

Members' Allowances Scheme 2024/25

Fire Authority Members receive certain allowances in recognition of their various duties and to recognise the time they give to undertake Authority work. Allowances are also intended to cover incidental costs that may be incurred by Members.

Allowances will be adjusted annually in line with the preceding year's pay award to the Authority's non-operational NJC 'Green Book' staff.

Basic Allowance

The annual basic allowance of £1,283.07 is paid to all Members.

Special Responsibility Allowances

The following additional allowances are paid to Members with special responsibilities:

Chair of the Authority	£9,855.80
Vice Chair of the Authority	£5,913.43
Political Group Leaders	£1,478.36
Chairman of Audit & Standards Committee	£1,478.36
Chairman of Policy & Resources Committee	£1,478.36

Members with more than one special responsibility will only receive one special responsibility allowance at the higher appropriate level.

The Members' Allowances Scheme also includes the following travel and subsistence allowances:

Travel Allowance

Allowances for travel expenses incurred by Members undertaking their approved duties can be claimed.

Mileage can be claimed for travel by car motorbike or cycle in line with the rate used by HM Revenue & Customs. Car park costs incurred by a Member whilst undertaking an approved duty may also be claimed back although evidence of the payment will need to be submitted.

For those Members who car share, a passenger allowance can be claimed by the driver in respect of one or more passengers who are fellow Authority Members carried on Authority business.

Members may claim for use of public transport up to the amount of the ordinary standard class fare (or any available cheap fare as incurred). Evidence of the payment will need to be submitted. Taxi fares may be claimed where bus/train travel is not practical. Receipts will be required.

Approved Duties

Members may submit a claim for travel allowances for:

- a) meetings of the Authority, its committees, sub-committees, panels or working parties;
- b) meetings of outside bodies to which a Member is appointed by the Authority, if that organisation does not pay Members' expenses;
- c) Authority Member training seminars, events and workshops;
- d) Chairman's briefing meetings;
- e) meetings with Officers in connection with the functions of the Authority which have been convened by the Chief Fire Officer or a member of the Senior Management Board; or
- f) any meeting or event as approved by the Authority or its Committees.

Subsistence Allowances

Members can claim subsistence allowance payments as a reimbursement of actual expenditure, on the basis that reasonable expenses evidenced by receipts will be paid. Similarly, reasonable overnight accommodation expenses will be paid where this is necessary and is evidenced by receipts.

Dependent Carers' Allowance

Members may claim an additional allowance to cover expenditure incurred for the care of dependents as follows:

- i) £11.44 per hour (this amount will increase each year in line with the national living wage);
- ii) Payable in respect of attendance at meetings of the Authority, its committees and Member training events; and
- iii) Claims to be made only in respect of care provided by persons other than family members resident in the house and all claims to be evidenced by receipts.



Hereford & Worcester Fire Authority

Audit and Standards Committee

Wednesday, 17 January 2024, 10:30

Chairman: Mr M Hart

Vice-Chairman: Mr A Amos

Minutes

Members Present: Mr A Amos, Mr B Clayton, Mr I D Hardiman, Mr Al Hardman, Mr M Hart

0291 Apologies for Absence

Apologies were received from Cllr Boatright-Greene, Cllr B Brookes, Cllr E Marshall, Cllr N McVey, Cllr R Morris and Cllr D Toynbee.

0292 Named Substitutes

There were no named substitutes.

0293 Declarations of Interest (if any)

There were no interests declared.

0294 Confirmation of Minutes

RESOLVED that the minutes of the meeting held on 19 July 2023 be confirmed as a correct record and signed by the Chairman.

0295 Internal Audit Progress and Audit Plan Revision Report

The Treasurer, on behalf of the Interim Audit Team Leader of WIASS, presented an update regarding the delivery of the Internal Audit plan 2023/24 and the 2023/24 Audit Plan Revision.

The Treasurer explained to Members that normally the Head of WIASS, as Chief Internal Auditor, would attend this meeting to present the report. However unfortunately WIASS lost both the Head and deputy Head at around the same time and the service had been operating with an interim Audit Lead until the new Head started in late February. The interim Audit Lead was unable to attend in person.

Members were informed that the Internal Audit Plan for 2023/24

continued to see progress, however revisions had been made to the plan due to resourcing issues. There had been no significant reduction in risk assurance and coverage. For the 2023/24 finalised reports issued to date there were no high priority recommendations to report and robust management action plans had been agreed and are in place to address the findings from the review. All finalised reviews would be reported to the Committee on completion.

RESOLVED that the report and 2023/24 Internal Audit Plan Revision be noted.

0296 National Fraud Initiative 2022/23

The Treasurer updated Members on the National Fraud Initiative (NFI).

Members were pleased to note that the outstanding data matches all referred to one report which had now been fully investigated and no fraud had been detected.

RESOLVED that the Committee noted that the process of examining all National Fraud Initiative matches was now complete and no fraud had been detected.

0297 Safeguarding Assurance – Annual Report

The Assistant Chief Officer, Director of Prevention updated Members on the Service's commitment to safeguarding.

Members were pleased to note that it was mandatory that all staff completed the level of safeguarding training which was relevant to their role. Staff were also regularly informed of developments in safeguarding policies and procedures with a suite of promotional items such as posters and credit cards on the safeguarding reporting procedure. Triple play videos had also been produced to assist staff in embedding their understanding of their roles and responsibilities regarding safeguarding and the Service website and SharePoint sites had been reviewed and updated.

Members also noted that all activities related to safeguarding continued to be developed and evolved to align with the Safeguarding Fire Standard and Prevention Strategy. Activities would be quality assured, monitored and reviewed regularly.

RESOLVED that the progress of the Prevention department's activity against the Fire Standards Board's Safeguarding Fire Standard be noted.

0298 Equality & Gender Pay Gap Report 2022-2023 and Equality Objectives Progress Update

The Assistant Chief Officer, Director of Prevention presented the Equality and Gender Pay Gap Report 2022-2023 and a summary of work completed during Quarter 1 and Quarter 2 2023-2024 against the Service's Equality Objectives 2021-2025.

It was questioned why the data for gender reassignment was not published. The Assistant Chief Officer explained that due to low numbers it was omitted to avoid identifying employees. It was suggested that if it stated that there were less than 1%, this would not identify anyone. Officers agreed to look into this further.

Members thanked Officers for a very positive and understanding report and approved it's publication on the Service website.

RESOLVED that:

i) Members noted the content of the Equality & Gender Pay Gap Report 2022-2023 and approved its publication on the Service website.

i) Members noted the good progress made against the Service's Equality Objectives.

0299 Update on the Activities of the Women@HWFire Group

The Deputy Chief Fire Officer updated Members on the work of Women@HWFire group.

Members noted that the work delivered by Women@HWFire demonstrated the organisational commitment to supporting under-represented groups within HWFRS. It had added significant value to multiple areas of work and continued to influence the changing profile in operational and support staffing managerial roles across the Service. The group remained committed to driving diversity within HWFRS as an organisational priority.

RESOLVED that the activities of the Women@HWFire group be noted.

0300 Health and Safety Committee Update: April to Sept 2023 (Quarters 1 & 2)

The Deputy Chief Fire Officer presented a Health and Safety update on

activities and items of significance for quarters 1 and 2, April to September 2023.

Members noted the National, Regional and local activities that had taken place during the 2 quarters. Members also noted that although the total number of safety events reported had increased by 17 compared to the previous quarters, the 10 Near Hit reports (something with the potential to cause harm) indicated a positive step forward for safety reporting.

Members also noted that in comparison to Quarter 1, there had been a slight decrease in the total days/shifts lost to sickness absence for all staff (Q1 at 2.31 versus Q2 at 2.29), with 848 day/shifts lost overall. The 3 main causes of sickness absence were; Mental Health (44%) Muscular-Skeletal (MSK) (30%), and Respiratory (11%). Members had concern with the increase of Mental Health cases. The Chief Fire Officer assured Members that although there was an emerging trend, the Service provided support with specialised counsellors where appropriate.

RESOLVED that the following issues, in particular, be noted:

- i) The involvement of the Service in Health and Safety initiatives;***
- ii) Health and Safety performance information recorded during April to Sept 2023 (Quarters 1 & 2)***
- iii) Workforce Health & Wellbeing performance (Quarters 1 & 2)***

The Meeting ended at: 11:55

Signed:.....

Date:.....

Chairman