

Hereford & Worcester Fire and Rescue Service

Statement of Assurance

2021-22



HEREFORD & WORCESTER
HWFR
FIRE AND RESCUE SERVICE



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Foreword

The Statement of Assurance is the annual report designed to provide assurance that we are doing everything we can to respond to emergencies when our communities need us, and provide effective and efficient preventative and protection services.

It follows national guidance set out in the 2018 Fire and Rescue National Framework for England, which requires Fire and Rescue Authorities to provide assurance to our community and to government in three main areas:

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

The Statement also needs to have due regard to the expectations in the Community Risk Management Plan and the provisions of the National Framework.

The Statement is a signposting document that points the reader to documents and reports that will help them to form a judgement on how well the Service is delivering its services. As such, it has been designed to provide an overview of important activities in relation to governance, finance and operations along with links to relevant documents for further information.

The Statement covers the year up to 31 March 2022 and sits alongside our strategies, plans, policies and procedures – all of which can be viewed on the [Publications](#) page of the Service website.

In the report, we highlight some of the work we are doing through our Organisational and Operational Excellence programmes to drive learning and improvement throughout the Service.

We also highlight our commitment to long-term improvements in service delivery and infrastructure through our Invest to Improve programme, which is aligned to the Service's Core Strategies.

As Chairman of the Fire Authority and Chief Fire Officer, we are confident that our governance, financial and operational assurance arrangements continue to be effective and appropriate in supporting our aim to deliver our services to the best of our abilities for the communities of Herefordshire and Worcestershire.

Through this Statement, we want to give you an opportunity to review these arrangements and be assured that we have conducted our business in accordance with the law and proper standards and have used our public funding efficiently, effectively and economically.



Cllr. Kit Taylor
*Chairman of the
Fire Authority*



Jonathon Pryce
*Chief Fire Officer /
Chief Executive*

Our Area

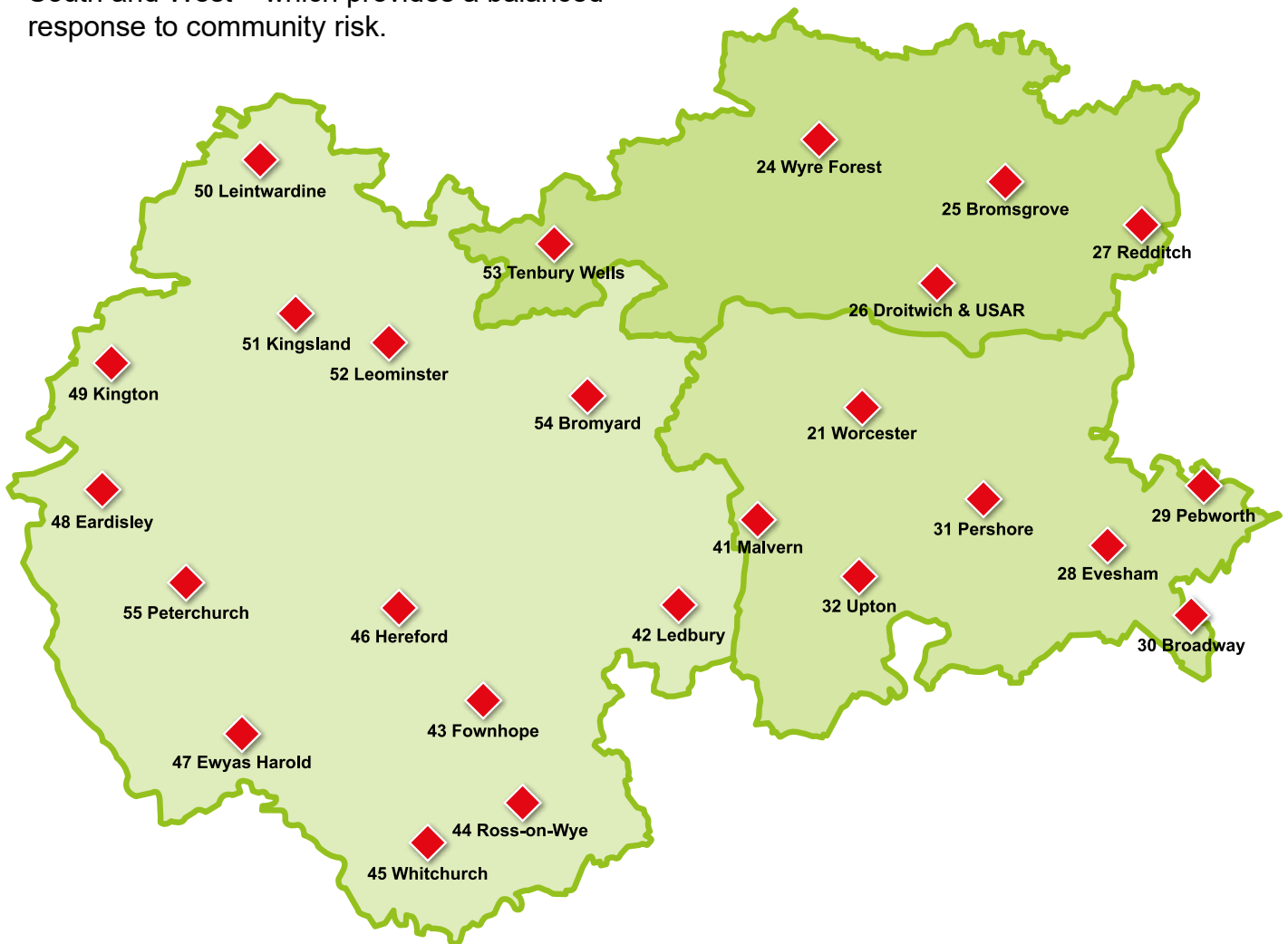
Hereford & Worcester Fire and Rescue Service (HWFRS) provides prevention, protection and emergency response services across Herefordshire and Worcestershire.

The two counties cover a large, mostly rural area of 1,500 square miles and are home to 791,685 people, three-quarters of whom live in Worcestershire.


To cover this very large area, we organise our services around three Districts – North, South and West – which provides a balanced response to community risk.


Within the area we have 25 fire stations, mostly located in the main towns, with 41 frontline fire engines supported by 28 specialist vehicles. These are placed strategically to be able to respond effectively and in a timely manner whenever an emergency call is received.

You can read more about our area and the Service on our [website](#).



791,700*
Population 

355,600*
Households 

4,755
Road length
in Miles 

392,000
Area in
Hectares 

**Mid-2021 estimates*

Our Service in 2021-22

Who We Are

Hereford & Worcester Fire and Rescue Service (HWFRS) works to keep people safe from fire and other risks. We employ over 690 full-time and part-time members of staff in 770 roles, delivering a wide range of prevention, protection and emergency response services across Herefordshire and Worcestershire (an area of 392,000 hectares with a population of over 790,000 people).



Purpose

Why we are here

Keeping people safe from fire and other risks. Responding efficiently and effectively to incidents and emergencies.

Vision

What we want to do

Saving More Lives: Building on our successes to continue to make a difference, improve lives and help secure resilient communities.

Mission

What we do every day

As one professional team we will work hard every day to deliver high quality, sustainable services to our communities.

251
Wholetime
Firefighters



368
On-Call
Firefighters



24
Fire Control
Firefighters



127
Support
Staff



In 2021-22 our Fire Control service dealt with over 16,000 calls and we attended over 7,400 incidents, including property and countryside fires, road traffic collisions, water rescues, collapsed structures, hazardous materials and animal rescues (an average of about 142 incidents every week).



16,212
Calls to
Fire Control



7,419
Incidents
attended



1,605
Fires



2,385
Special Service
Incidents

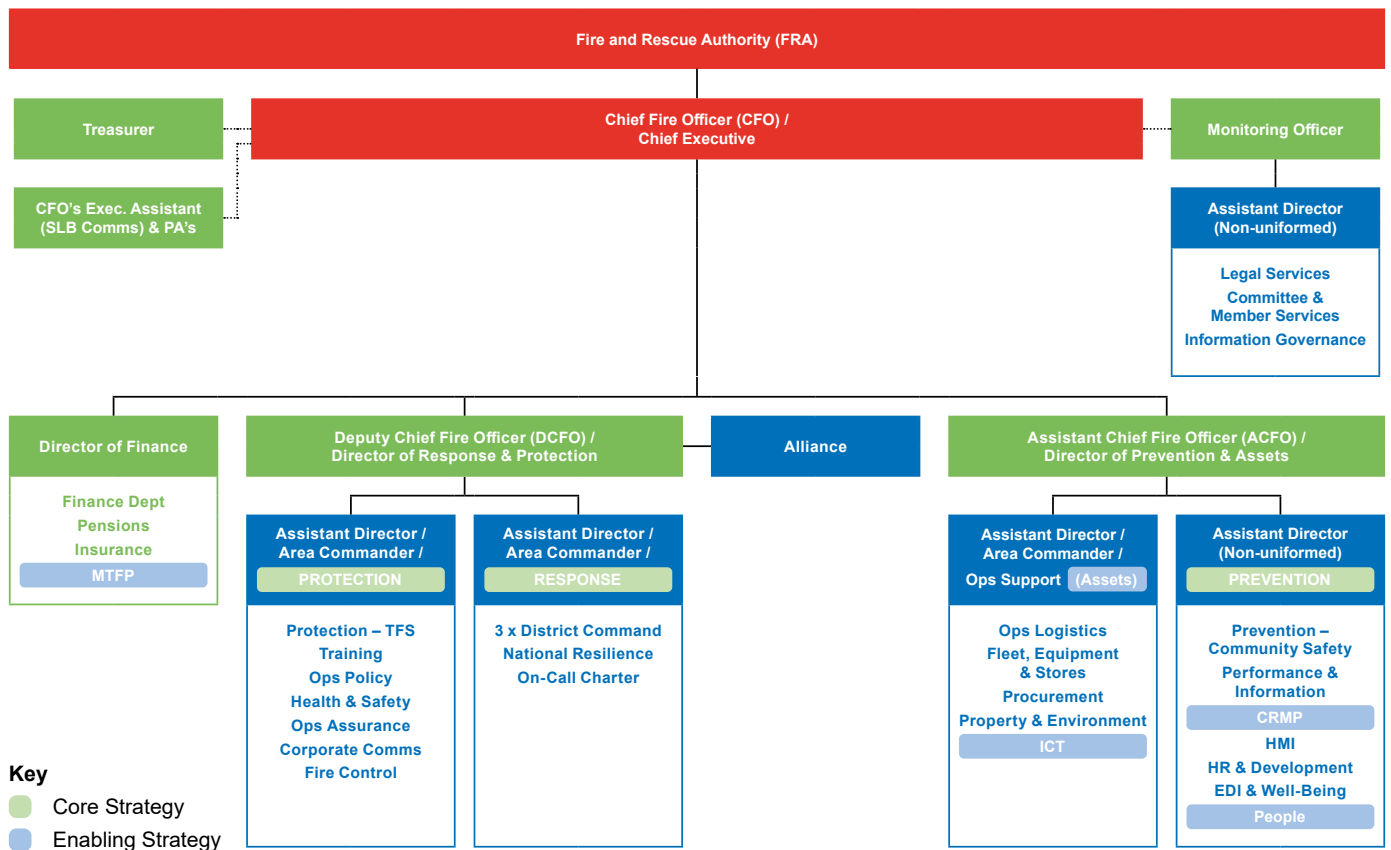


3,429
False Alarms

Our core purpose, vision and mission guide us in our work to make the communities of Herefordshire and Worcestershire safer. To do this effectively we need to ensure we understand and appreciate the diversity of the communities we serve, and have a workforce that is inclusive and fully represents and understands those communities.

Our Structure

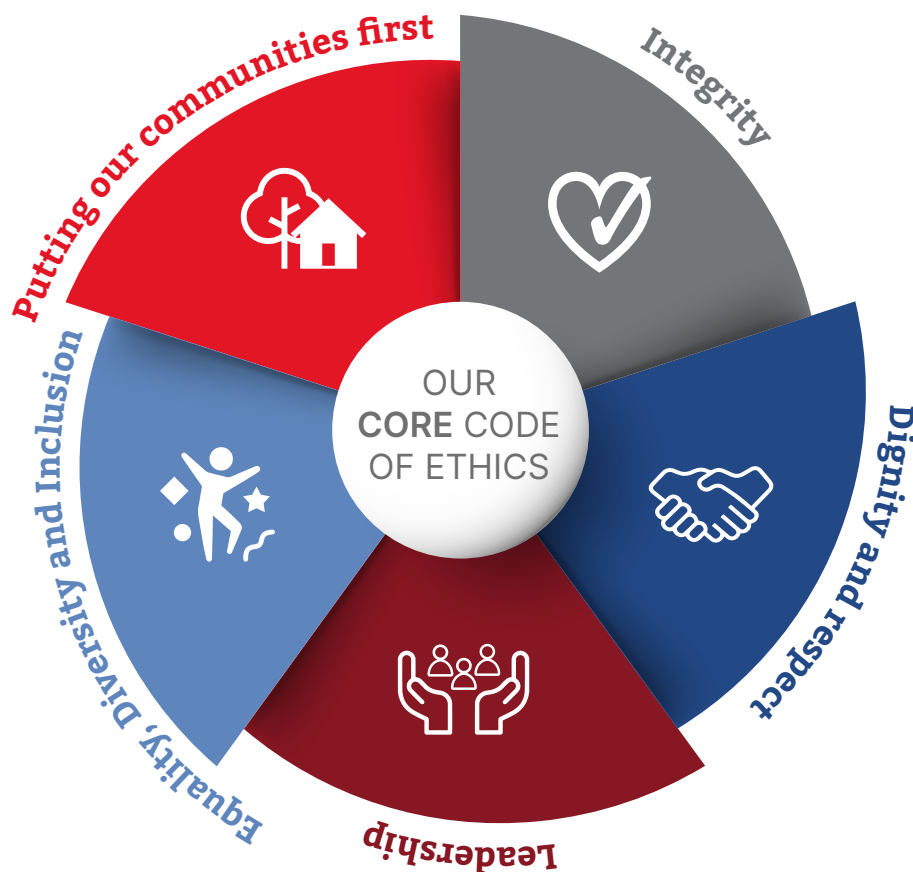
The chart shows how we organise our core Prevention, Protection and Response services into directorates, and most staff are directly involved in delivering these services. They are assisted by professional teams providing support and enabling services such as finance, human resources, legal services and information and communications technology. There is also a Fire Control team, who are the frontline service for receiving emergency calls and deploying crews to incidents.



You can read more about how we are structured and managed on the [About Us](#) page on our website.

Our Ethical Principles

How we deliver our services to achieve our core purpose is guided by the Core Code of Ethics for Fire and Rescue Services in England, which has been jointly developed by the National Fire Chiefs Council, the Local Government Association and the Association of Police and Crime Commissioners. The Code sets out five ethical principles, which provide the basis for promoting good behaviour and challenging inappropriate behaviour. By adopting the Code as our guiding set of values, we are committed to championing ethical behaviours that help to improve organisational culture and workforce diversity, ensuring that communities are supported in the best way.



Putting our communities first

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

Integrity

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

Dignity and respect

We make decisions objectively based on evidence, without discrimination or bias.

Leadership

As positive role models, we are accountable for everything we do and challenge all behaviour that falls short of the highest standards.

Equality, Diversity and Inclusion

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

Our Work in 2021-22

In 2021-22, our Fire Control service dealt with over 16,000 calls and we attended over 7,400 incidents, about 142 incidents each week. This was about 6% more than the previous year. Although we attended fewer Fires (down by 4% on the previous year), there was a 19% rise in Special Service (non-fire) incidents. This is mainly accounted for by a 32% increase in the number of road traffic collisions attended following the gradual relaxation of Covid-19 restrictions.

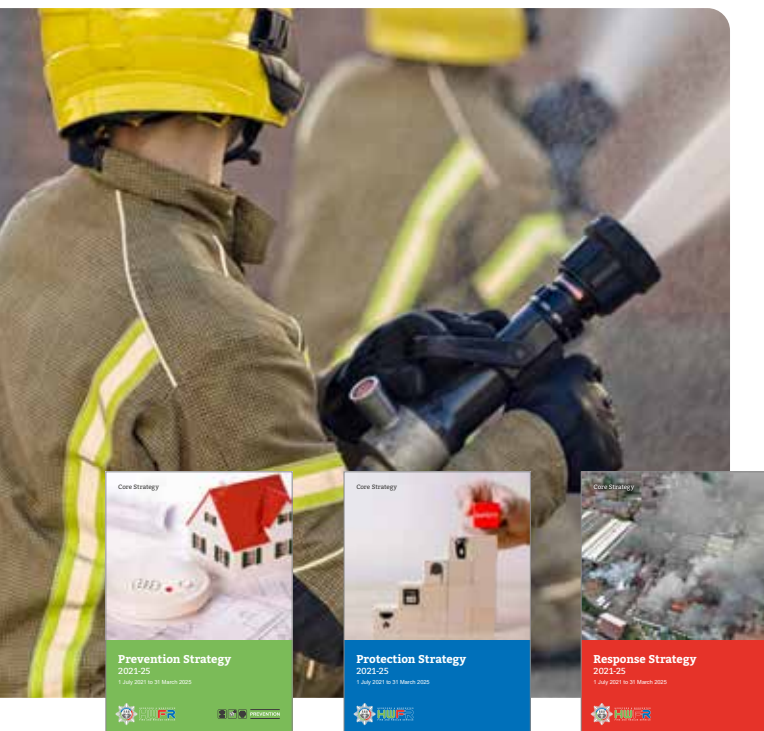
Over the year, we also carried out many other activities to reduce risk and improve community safety, including home fire safety visits, inspecting buildings and enforcing fire safety legislation.

You can read more about our work in the [Annual Service Review 2021-22](#), which provides an overview across all aspects of our work including Response, Protection, Prevention, Training and Fleet & Equipment. You can also read about our plans for the coming year in our [Annual Service Plan 2022-23](#). Both are available on the Service website.

Organisational and Operational Excellence

During the year, we embarked on a transformational programme of work to drive excellence throughout the Service. We want to be constantly learning and improving, celebrating our achievements but also challenging ourselves to ask if we could do better. We want everyone to take ownership and responsibility for their own performance as well as supporting others to deliver the best service we can for the communities of the two counties. This year, to support our plans we have:

- Replaced Senior Management Board with a Strategic Leadership Board (SLB) and a separate Statutory Officers Group (SOG). This will allow SLB to focus on leading, managing and driving the Service's core and enabling strategies, plans and policies, while the SOG will focus on governance, legal and political matters and take on a scrutiny and assurance role.
- Launched the three Core Strategies to help focus resources and align everything we do behind them so we can drive efficiency and value, and embrace greater accountability, responsibility and ownership throughout the organisation.
- Initiated Trans2 leadership training for all managers to help them support personal development and improvement across our workforce.
- Promoted Command Excellence with the opening of our new Multi-Agency Command Suite at Worcester fire station, providing state-of-the-art facilities for incident command learning, training, rehearsing and testing skills.
- Ensured ongoing commitment to adopting National Operational Guidance as the primary guidance for operational staff, helping to ensure consistent standards, interoperability and notable practice across the fire sector.
- In recent months, we have also adopted the NFCC Core Code of Ethics.



Governance Assurance: 1

The Service's governing body is Hereford & Worcester Fire Authority. It is made up of 25 local councillors, six from Herefordshire Council and 19 from Worcestershire County Council. Since October 2016, the Fire Authority has included the West Mercia Police and Crime Commissioner (PCC) in a non-voting capacity.

The Authority:

- makes sure the Service carries out its duties in relation to fire prevention, fire safety, firefighting and rescues, including road traffic collisions and other emergencies such as flooding, as set out in the Fire and Rescue Services Act 2004
- makes sure due regard is given to the terms and requirements set out in the Fire and Rescue National Framework for England, as updated in 2018
- sets the budget and approves the Service's overall direction
- appoints the Chief Fire Officer and makes sure the Service has the right people, equipment and training to deliver their services effectively and efficiently in the best interests of the communities of Herefordshire and Worcestershire.

The Authority normally meets four times a year and is supported by three main committees. Most meetings are held in public.

Full details of the Authority, committees, meetings, reports and decisions can be found on [Fire Authority](#) page of the Service website.

The Authority has a responsibility to ensure its business is conducted in accordance with the law and proper standards, and that public money is safeguarded and properly accounted for. This is supported by a [Code of Corporate Governance](#) setting out how good governance will be promoted.

The main elements of the governance framework are:

- [Constitution](#) – defines the roles and responsibilities of the Authority, Committees, Members and Officers
- [Audit and Standards Committee](#) – reviews arrangements for identifying and managing the Authority's business risks and the approval of policies
- **Monitoring Officer** – provides advice on the scope of powers and responsibilities of the Authority, and has a statutory duty to ensure lawfulness and fairness of decision making
- **Chief Financial Officer (Treasurer)** – ensures the sound administration of the financial affairs of the Authority as required by the statutory duties under the Local Government Act 1972, the Local Government Finance Act 1988 and the Account and Audit (England) Regulations 2015
- **Code of Conduct** – including the Ten General Principles of Public Life

Information Governance

The Service collects and maintains information and data to enable us to carry out our statutory duties. The Information Governance service within the Legal Services team ensures information is kept secure and is used fairly and properly. The [Access to Information](#) page of the Service website provides more information, including links to the Freedom of Information and Data Protection acts.

Further information can be found in the [Fire Authority Document Library](#).

Governance Assurance: 2

Each year, the Authority prepares an [Annual Governance Statement](#) (AGS) setting out how it meets its responsibilities.

It provides assurance in relation to seven Core Principles:

- A:** Behaving with integrity, demonstrating strong commitment to ethical values and respecting the rule of law,
- B:** Ensuring openness and comprehensive stakeholder engagement
- C:** Defining outcomes in terms of sustainable economic, social and environmental benefits,
- D:** Determining the interventions necessary to optimise the achievement of the intended outcomes
- E:** Developing the entity's capacity, including the capability of its leadership and the individuals within it,
- F:** Managing risks and performance through robust internal controls and strong public financial management
- G:** Implementing good practices in transparency, reporting and audit to deliver effective accountability.

We have reviewed compliance against these Principles and are assured that all elements are met. This is set out in the [AGS Assurances 2021/22 and Action Plan 2022/23](#), which shows compliance with all the core and supporting principles of good governance.

The Annual Governance Statement for 2020-21 has been audited by the External Auditors and included in the [External Audit Findings 2020/21 report](#) and [Letter of Representation 2020/21](#).

Internal Audit

During the year, the Worcestershire Internal Audit Shared Service (WIASS) carried out a number of audits in relation to Corporate Governance and System/ Management Arrangements. These audits help to ensure our systems and controls are adequate, effective and functioning correctly.

The audits examined Procurement and Contracts, Covid-19, Young Fire Fighters & Volunteering and Safeguarding, and there were no 'limited' or 'below assurance' areas. The [Internal Audit Annual Report 2021-22](#) is available on the Service website for further information.

Update on future governance

The provisions of the 2017 Policing and Crime Act enable Police and Crime Commissioners (PCCs) to take on responsibility for fire and rescue services.

The West Mercia PCC subsequently submitted a plan to take on governance of both Hereford & Worcester and Shropshire fire and rescue services. The plan was approved by Government, but it was subject to a legal challenge by both Fire Authorities.

A judicial review of the challenge in June 2019 upheld the Home Secretary's decision. However, in the light of changing circumstances, the legal proceeding concluded.

Following his re-election in May 2021, the West Mercia PCC reiterated his intention to pursue a takeover of governance for fire services in West Mercia.

Financial Assurance

The Fire Authority is responsible for ensuring public money is properly accounted for and used efficiently and effectively. To ensure that sound financial management policies are in place, the Authority adheres to and implements the provisions of [Financial Regulations](#), updated in January 2020.

The Regulations cover all aspects of financial management and planning, the management of risks and resources, financial systems and processes, arrangements for joint working and delegation limits.

Assurance is provided through an Annual Statement of Accounts. The Statement is designed to provide a true and fair view of the financial position, including a statement of income and expenditure. In preparing the Statement, the Treasurer follows the Chartered Institute of Public Finance and Accountancy (CIPFA) Code of Practice on Local Authority Accounting in the United Kingdom.

The Fire Authority's arrangements to secure economy, efficiency and effectiveness in its use of resources is also subject to an independent assessment annually by External Auditors.

The final [Statement of Accounts 2020-21](#) covers the Authority's financial year ending 31 March 2021 and is available on the Service website, along with the [Unaudited Statement of Accounts 2021-22](#) for further information.

The External Auditors, Grant Thornton UK LLP, considered the Fire Authority's financial resilience as part of their work on assessing value for money and found no issues. More detail can be found in their [Annual Report 2020-21](#).

Internal Audit

To provide further assurance, every year a structured programme of internal audit reports of accountancy and finance systems is carried out by Worcestershire Internal Audit Shared Service in line with Public Sector Internal Audit Standards.

During the year, four audits were undertaken. The audit found an assurance level of "full" for three core financial areas (Main Ledger, Creditors and Debtors), and "significant" assurance for Payroll & Pension. A proposed review of Financial Processes was deferred. Further details can be found in the [Internal Audit Annual Report 2021-22](#).

Budget

Each year, the Authority approves a [Medium Term Financial Plan](#), which sets out the resources needed to deliver our services, and agrees an annual budget. A Budget Monitoring report is also presented to the Fire Authority quarterly.

The budget for 2021-22 was £35.3m and a summary of how it was spent is included in the [Annual Service Review 2021-22](#). It shows that the annual cost to the average Council Tax Band D household was £87.69 or £1.68 per week. Full details of the budget and [Council Tax](#) are available on the Service website.

Transparency

In addition to ensuring prudent financial management, the Authority is committed to promoting openness and accountability in local decision making, public spending and democratic processes. As part of this, it has adopted a [Transparency Code of Practice](#), which includes details of payments for goods and services to external bodies and suppliers above £250, details of salaries, allowances and expenses paid to staff and Members.

Operational Assurance: 1

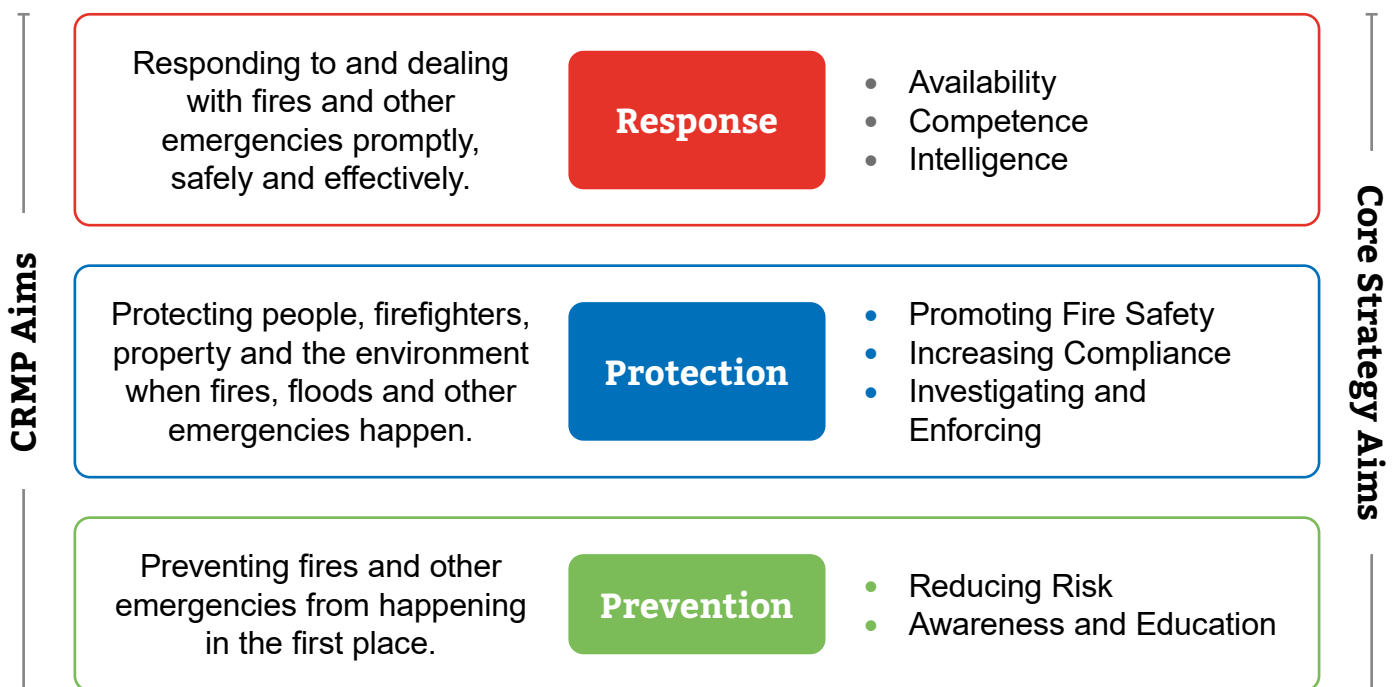
Framed by statutory responsibilities set out in the Fire and Rescue Services Act 2004, the Civil Contingencies Act 2004 and other strategic legislation and guidance, we organise our services to make sure our firefighters and communities are kept as safe as possible.

We aim to provide the best training and equipment for our firefighters to do their jobs safely and ensure they have the best incident command and operational leadership available. We continually assess the level of risk across the two counties and use this to help organise how we target our prevention and protection services.

Our overall plans are set out in the [Community Risk Management Plan 2021-25](#) (CRMP), and are supported by our three Core Strategies. The Core Strategies provide a focus for how we will deliver our response, protection and prevention services as effectively and efficiently as we can. The can be viewed on the [Publications](#) page of the Service website.

You can read more about our key priorities, plans and activities in the [Annual Service Review 2021-22](#) and the [Annual Service Plan 2022-23](#).

The diagram below highlights the key themes and work areas of the CRMP and the three Core Strategies.



Invest to Improve

Supporting our plans is our [Invest to Improve](#) programme, which aims to make long term improvements in key elements of core service delivery and infrastructure, aligned to strategic objectives set out in the Core Strategies.

The programme includes improvements such as:

- the new Incident Command Suite at Worcester,

- plans to improve On-Call firefighter recruitment,
- technological improvements to support training, communications and tracking/testing/tracing equipment,
- a joint fire investigation project with Shropshire Fire and Rescue Service and
- further work to support prevention, protection and environmental sustainability.

Operational Assurance: 2

Operational Audits

The Service continued its programme of Operational Assurance audits throughout the year. The audits are important in ensuring that all operational staff maintain their skills and competence in carrying out their critical roles.

Key areas covered during the year were Practical Skills audits which focus on safety-critical operational areas, and Station Assurance audits which look at how effective local management processes are.

Practical Skills audits are completed annually by all Watches and On-Call units. They look at technical knowledge, such as compartment searching, tactical ventilation, high rise buildings and wildfire, alongside practical assessments, such as kit checks, using Mobile Data Terminals and trauma scenarios.

Station audits cover a range of areas such as understanding health and safety requirements, community safety, community risk and operational policy in order to make sure correct procedures are understood and followed.

Findings continue to be very positive in relation to practical and technical abilities and competencies demonstrated, with any outstanding actions needed noted and followed up.

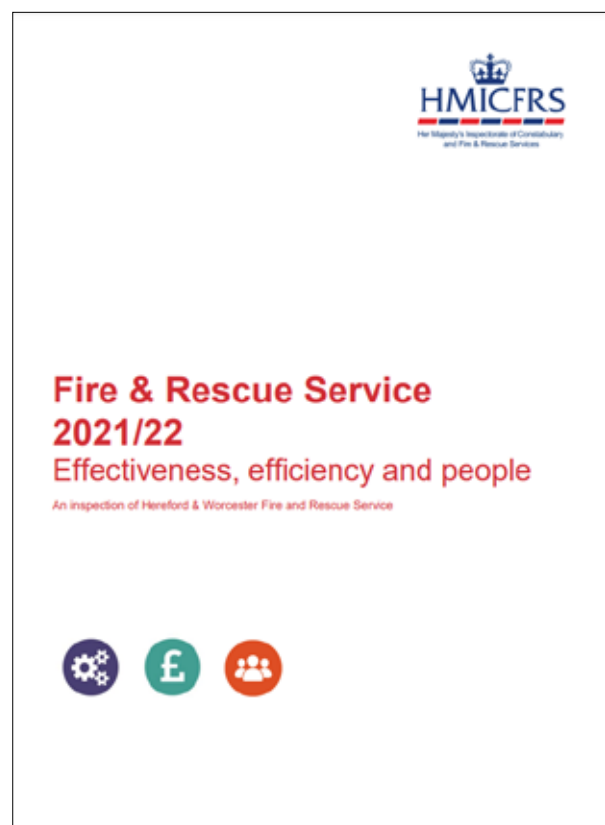
HMICFRS

His Majesty's Inspectorate of Constabulary and Fire & Rescue Services published their second full inspection report in December 2021.

It highlighted areas of good performance, such as how we respond to major and multi-agency incidents and protect the public through fire regulation, but it also details areas where improvements can be made, such as how efficiently we use our limited resources and how we support and develop our people.

The inspectors were encouraged by all the improvements we have made since their last inspection, and we are well underway in working through initiatives to address all issues raised in the latest report. Updates on progress are published in an [Improvement Plan](#), which is reported quarterly to the Fire Authority.

You can read the full inspection report by clicking here: [HMICFRS inspection report](#)



Directory of Assurance Documents

Governance

- [Annual Governance Statement 2021-22](#)

Other key governance documents can be found by following the links on the [Transparency Code of Practice](#) page of the Service website.

Key legislation includes:

- [Fire and Rescue Services Act 2004](#)
- [Civil Contingencies Act 2004](#)
- [Regulatory Reform \(Fire Safety\) Order 2005](#)
- [Fire and Rescue Services \(Emergencies\) \(England\) Order 2007](#)
- [Fire and Rescue National Framework for England 2018](#)
- [Local Government Act 1999](#)
- [Localism Act 2011](#)
- [Equality Act 2010](#)
- [Policing and Crime Act 2017](#)
- [Crime and Disorder Act 1988](#)
- [Health and Safety at Work etc. Act 1974](#)

Finance

- [Annual Statement of Accounts 2021-22 \(unaudited\)](#)
- [Link to previous Statements of Account](#)
- [Budget and Precept 2021-22 and Medium Term Financial Plan, Precept Appendices 1-9 and Appendix 10 – Statement of Prudential Indicators](#)
- [Internal Audit Annual Report 2021-22](#)
- [External Audit Findings 2020-21 and Letter of Representation 2021](#)

Other key finance documents can be found by following links on the [Your Right To Know](#) page of the Service website.

Other legislation and guidance includes:

- [Local Government Finance Act 1988](#)
- [Accounts and Audit Regulations 2015](#)
- [Local Government Transparency Code 2015](#)
- [Public Sector Internal Audit Standards](#)
- [Local Audit and Accountability Act 2014](#)
- [Chartered Institute for Public Finance and Accountability \(CIPFA\) Codes of Practice](#)

Operations

The Fire Authority publishes reports on all its services, including the overall strategy, operational performance, policies and financial plans. Key documents can be found on the [Publications](#) page of the Service website and through the [Publication Scheme](#). Links include:

- [Annual Service Review 2021-22](#) and the [Annual Service Plan 2022-23](#)
- [Community Risk Management Plan 2021-2025](#)

The Service website also provides a wide range of information about the Fire Authority and the services delivered by the Fire and Rescue Service. The [Home](#) page will take you to all the links including essential [Safety and Advice](#) information and guidance, [News and Events](#) and recruitment opportunities through our [Join Us](#) page.



Contacting us

We always welcome any views or comments on our plans, so if you want to contact us about any issues, please visit our website at www.hwfire.org.uk where you will find full contact details along with links to further information about our services and activities.

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

Alternatively, you can write to us at:
Hereford & Worcester FRS Headquarters
Hindlip Park
Worcester
WR3 8SP

If you require a paper version, or information in an alternative language or format such as large print or audio, please contact us on 0345 122 4454.

Your right to know: Access to information

A great deal of information on the Service is available in the public domain through our Publications Scheme and Transparency links on the Service website. If you need assistance, Service staff will help you to obtain the information you want, unless disclosure would be against the law.

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



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