



Hereford & Worcester
Fire Authority

Fire Authority Statement of Assurance

2019-20

Foreword

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

It covers three main areas:

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

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

More information about our plans can be found on the Service website and in our [Fire Authority Annual Report 2019-20](#).

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

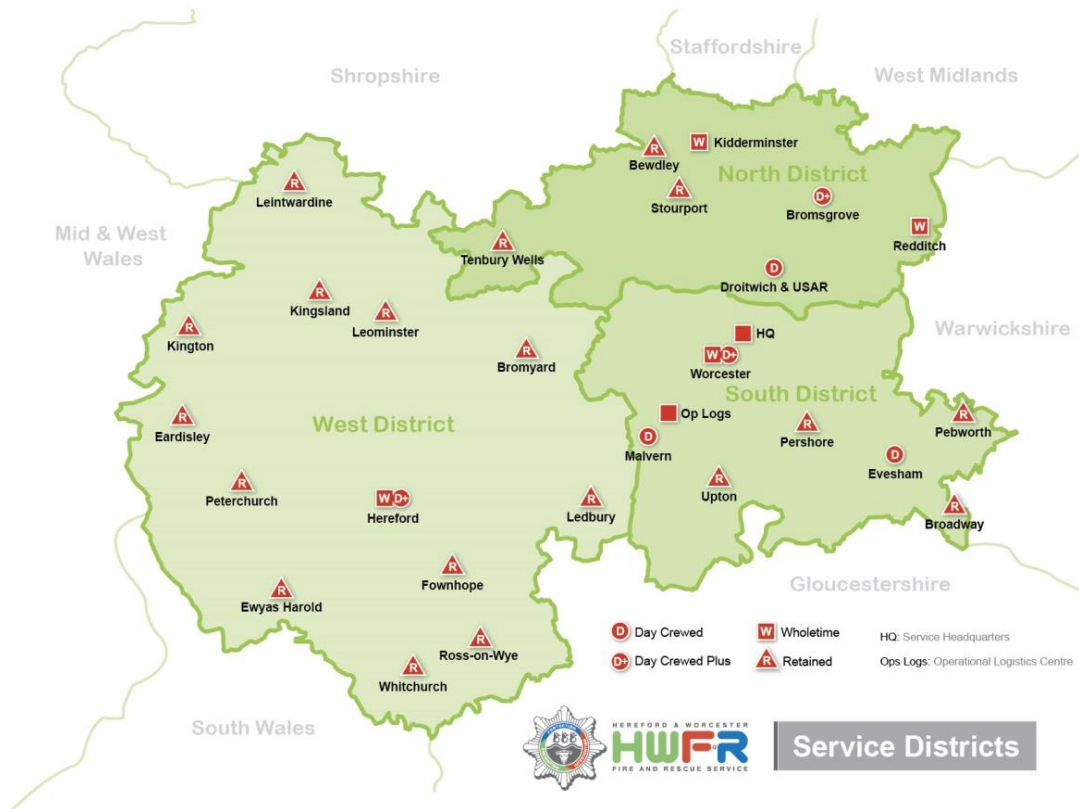


Councillor Roger Phillips,
Chairman of the Fire Authority

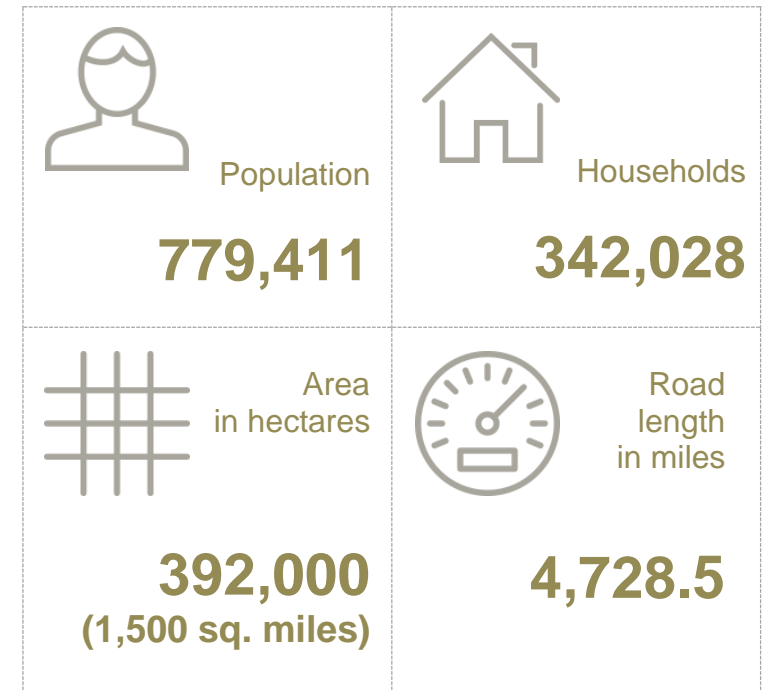


Nathan Travis,
Chief Fire Officer/ Chief Executive

About us



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 over three-quarters of a million people. About three-quarters of the population live in Worcestershire, with around 100,000 people





living in the city of Worcester. Herefordshire is a much more sparsely populated rural area with just over 191,000 residents. The area is also crossed by over 4,700 miles of roads, including the M5, M42 and M50 motorways. Population projections suggest that by 2026, over 806,000 people will be living in the two counties, with people aged 65 and over representing more than one in four of the total (25.9 per cent).

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

Each fire station has an On-Call crew of firefighters, who live or work locally and are available within five minutes should they be needed. Eight fire stations also have Wholetime crews, who are immediately available under normal circumstances.

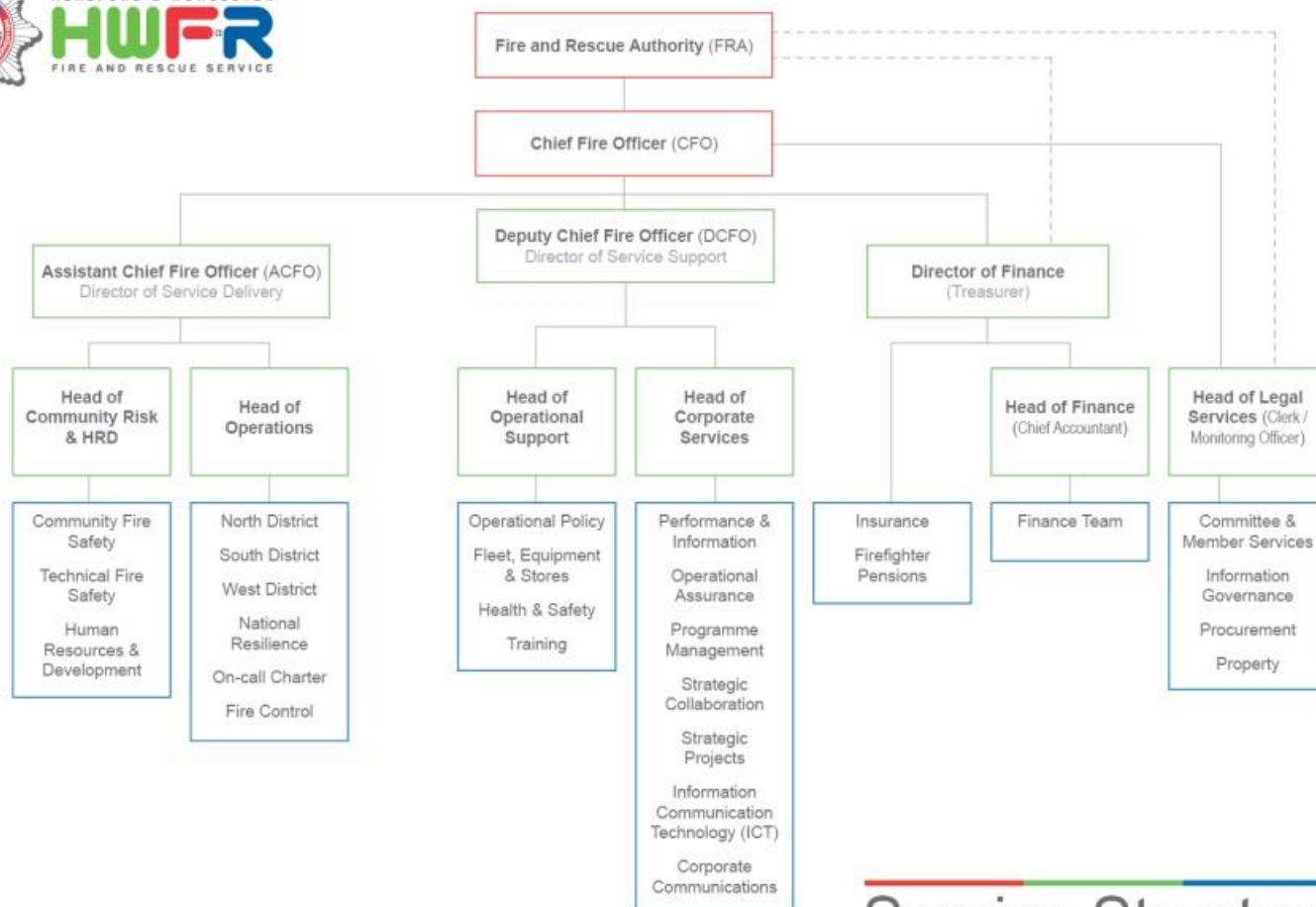
In addition to our fire stations, we have a Training Centre in Droitwich, a fleet maintenance and supplies centre called Operational Logistics in Malvern and a number of locally based training facilities. Our Service Headquarters is now based at Hindlip Park, Worcester, which is also the campus for West Mercia Police Headquarters. We completed our move to Hindlip at the end of 2018.

At the end of March 2019, we employed 738 members of staff (570 full time equivalent – FTE – because many of our staff work part-time hours). Firefighters make up approximately 80 per cent of the workforce assisted by professional teams providing support and enabling services such as financial, human resources and legal services. There were also 22 Fire Control officers, who are the frontline for receiving emergency calls and deploying crews to incidents.

 Workforce*	233 Wholetime Firefighters (232 FTE)	366 On-Call Firefighters (219 FTE)
	40.7%	38.4%
	22 Fire Control Staff (19 FTE)	117 Support Staff (100 FTE)
 Assets	Fire Stations	Fire Engines
	27	41

* all percentages based on FTE numbers (rounded)

The Service is structured into three directorates – Service Delivery, Service Support and Finance. Most staff are directly involved in delivering prevention, protection and response services. These services are designed to keep the communities of Herefordshire and Worcestershire as safe as possible by working with local people, partner organisations and businesses to try to make sure emergency incidents don't happen in the first place, as well as being able to respond promptly and effectively to any emergencies that do occur.

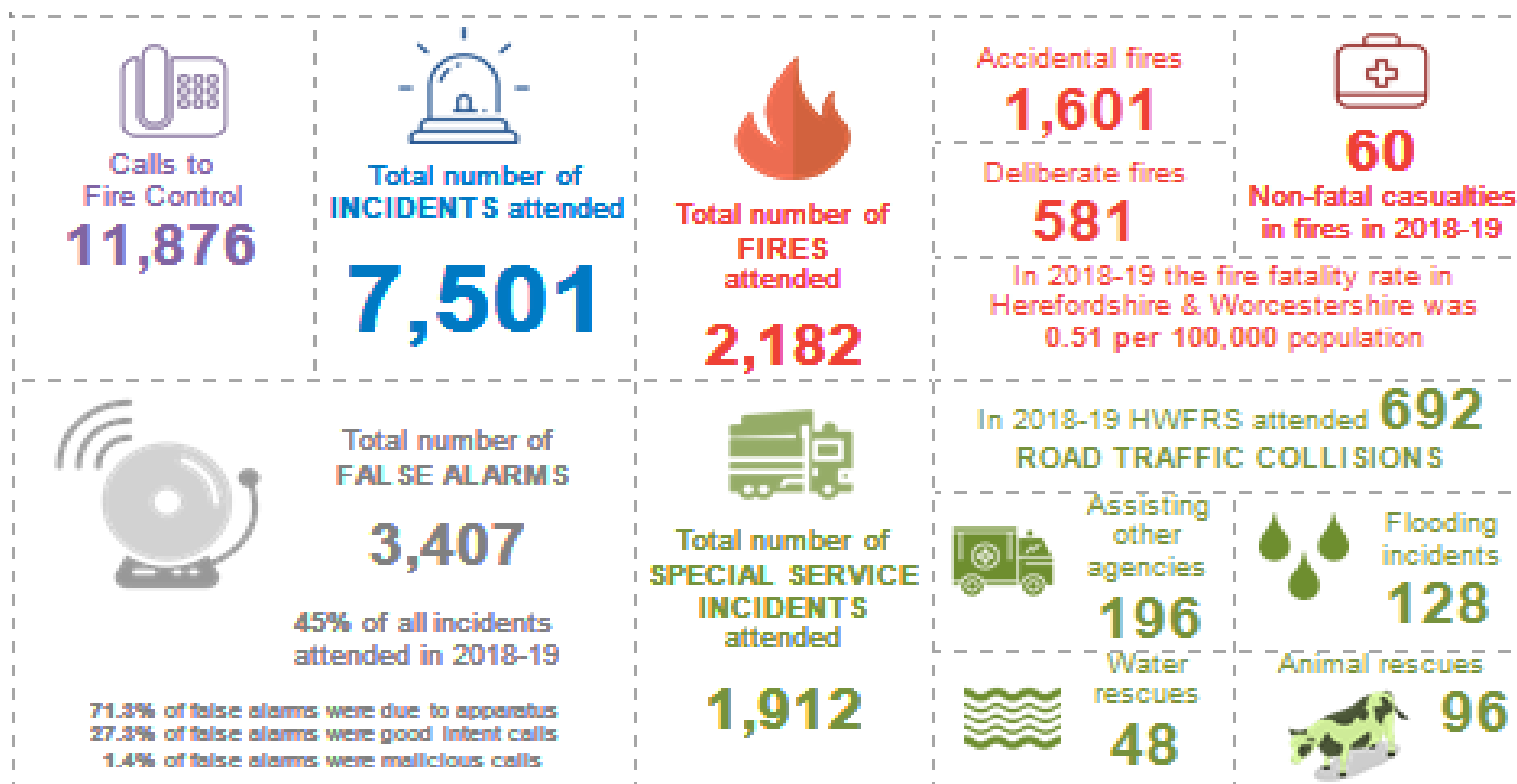


Service Structure

In 2018-19 we attended 7,501 incidents, about 144 each week. This was 570 more than the previous year, though almost half of this accounted for by an increase in grassland and outdoor fires, largely during the summer 2018 heatwave. A significant proportion of incidents were false alarms (3,407 incidents or 45 per cent of all incidents). There was also a small increase a small increase in the number of road traffic collisions we attended, but flooding

incidents, animal rescues and dealing with spills and leaks were all down on last year.

More details on population, Service resources and incidents attended can be found in the [Fire Authority Annual Report 2019-20](#) on our website. Further information on population demographics can also be found in the [CRMP Demographic Profile 2018](#), which can also be found on the website.



Governance

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

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

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

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

things in the right ways for the right people in a timely, inclusive, open, honest and accountable manner.

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

The main elements of the governance framework are as follows:

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

required by the statutory duties under the Local Government Act 1972, the Local Government Finance Act 1988 and the Accounts and Audit (England) Regulations 2015.

- Ethical Framework and Code of Conduct – in place for all staff, and familiarisation is included in the induction process.

The Authority's Strategic Risk Register (SRR) is reviewed quarterly at the Service's Senior Management Board and is reported annually to the Audit and Standards Committee. The SRR identifies risks to the success of the organisation and puts effective control measures in place to mitigate their effect. Examples of risks include severe weather, pandemic influenza and fuel shortages. A [summary of the latest Strategic Risk Review](#) was presented to the Committee in July 2019.

During the year, the Worcestershire Internal Audit Shared Service (WIASS) carried out a number of full audits in relation to Corporate Governance (including Health & Safety arrangements) and System/Management Arrangements. The audits examined Key Performance Indicators, the Retained Duty

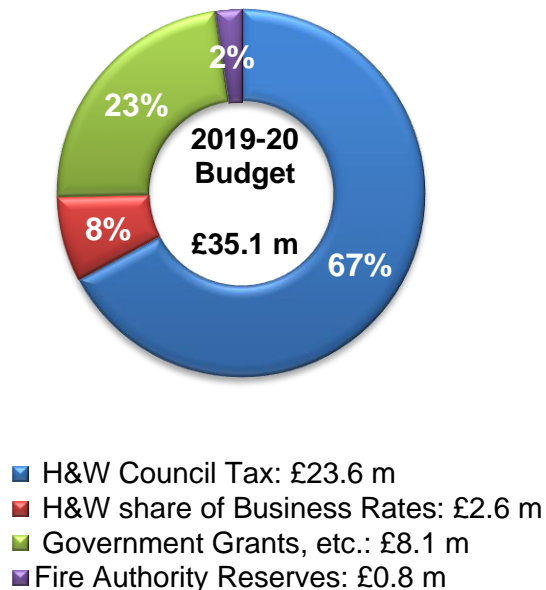
System, Fleet Maintenance, GDPR Application and USAR & Technical Rescue. Each audit received '*full*' or '*significant*' assurance in complying with the Accounts and Audit (England) Regulations 2015 and the terms of the Internal Audit Charter between WIASS and the Authority. The [full report](#) of the Chief Internal Auditor is available in the Fire Authority section of the Service website.

Last year we reported that the West Mercia Police and Crime Commissioner (PCC) had been given the go-ahead from government to take on the role of the Fire Authority. However, the current Fire Authority, together with Shropshire & Wrekin Fire Authority, submitted a judicial challenge against the government's decision, arguing that the evidence did not support the proposed move to the PCC on the grounds that it would not realise overall value for money for the public, when compared to what the existing Fire Authorities could achieve together. The judicial review hearing was held in June 2019 and a decision is awaited.

Finance

Funds available to the Fire and Rescue Service continue to reduce. The revenue budget for 2019-20 is £35.1 million, 18 per cent less in real terms than in 2010-11. Our funding comes from three main sources, the majority of which comes from Council Tax as shown in the following chart:

How the Service is paid for: 2019-20



The cost to the average household in Herefordshire and Worcestershire in 2019-20 (Council Tax Band D) is £84.34, representing about 23p per day. This is above the £78.11 average

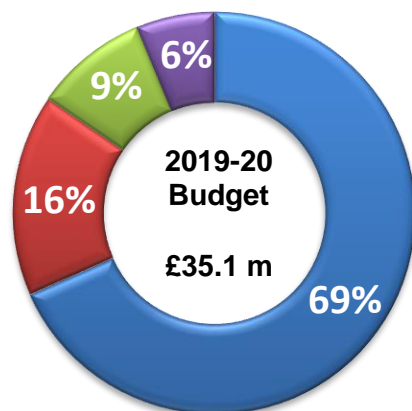
for comparable Fire Authorities in 2019-20, but significantly lower than the highest cost of £103.50. The Service continues to receive a low level of central government grant funding, compared to other Fire and Rescue Services.

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

The latest [Statement of Accounts](#) covers the Authority's financial year ending 31 March 2019 and is available on the Service website along with the External Auditor's audit opinion. The Statement of Accounts also includes the Annual Governance Statement.

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

How the budget is spent: 2019-20



- Employees
- Fleet, equipment, ICT, property
- Capital financing *
- Other running costs **

* capital financing is interest and provision to repay loans

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

To provide further assurance, every year a structured programme of internal audit reports is carried out, supported by an independent annual external audit. The internal audits are carried

out by the Worcestershire Internal Audit Shared Service (WIASS) in line with the Public Sector Internal Audit Standards 2013. These audits examine key aspects of how the Service conducts its business including:

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

Five audits of Accountancy & Finance Systems were carried out by WIASS during the year and they found '*full*' assurance for the three core financial areas – Main Ledger, Creditors and Debtors - and '*significant*' assurance for the Payroll and Pensions areas. No '*limited*' or '*below assurance*' areas were reported. The [full report](#) of the Chief Internal Auditor is available in the Fire Authority section of the Service website.

The annual external audit is currently undertaken by Grant Thornton UK LLP and provides an independent assessment of the Fire Authority's arrangements to secure economy, efficiency and effectiveness in its use of resources. It focuses on arrangements for securing financial resilience and prioritising resources within

tighter budgets. This year's [external audit](#) found that the Authority continues to have proper arrangements in place to ensure it delivers value for money in its use of resources and that the Annual Governance Statement (AGS) *'fairly reflects the Authority's risk assurance and governance framework and we confirm that we are not aware of any significant risks that are not disclosed within the AGS.'*

Frontline response (operational) services

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

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

Last year's [Midpoint Review of the CRMP](#) along with a [Demographic Profile](#) and updated [CRMP Risk Review 2018](#) are available on the Service website. Each local Fire Station also has its own Station Risk profile, updated annually. The profiles can be found in the [Fire Stations](#) section of the Service website by following the links to individual Fire Stations.

The latest [Fire Authority Annual Report 2019-20](#) provides more detail on progress made in delivering our plans and services over the previous year. It also includes our CRMP Action Plan for 2019-20, which sets out the services we will be delivering over the forthcoming year, including how we organise our fire and emergency cover arrangements in the light of changing risks and resources.

Highlights from last year include the development of the Safe and Well Visits programme, a series of fire safety advice sessions to residents and owners of high rise buildings in the wake of the Grenfell Tower tragedy, the start on site of the new Wyre Forest Emergency Services Hub building, and a wide range of multi-agency collaboration initiatives and exercises. Another milestone in the year was the completion of our Headquarters relocation alongside West Mercia Police at their Hindlip Park campus in Worcester. This brings both emergency services' senior management, control and support services together in the same place, and we believe this will bring many benefits over the years as we share a joint focus on keeping our communities safe.

We also [formalised](#) our continuing work with Shropshire Fire and Rescue Service by establishing a [Strategic Fire Alliance](#), which will give us improved capacity and resilience and will help to make sure we can continue delivering our services successfully into the new decade. Three immediate joint priorities were identified:

- a. [Fire Control](#): scoping future requirements for ensuring a resilient Command & Control function,
- b. [IRMP/CRMP](#): reviewing options for aligning integrated risk management planning processes, and
- c. [ICT](#): developing organisational arrangements for provision of Information & Communications Technology functions.

Strategic Fire Alliance development strands



Each of these priorities was developed further during the year. In particular, [the current CRMP was extended](#) by one year to enable both Services to work together on the preparation of new CRMPs (called an Integrated Risk Management Plan in Shropshire Fire and Rescue Service) to cover the period 2021 to 2025.

In addition to the Service's Active Incident Monitoring process, the programmes of Operational Assurance audits continued throughout the year to help ensure firefighter practical skills, fire stations and fire control processes meet safety critical requirements. Findings continue to be positive and any actions needed are noted and followed up.

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

Over last summer, inspectors from [Her Majesty's Inspectorate of Constabulary and Fire & Rescue Service](#) (HMICFRS) carried out an in-depth review of our Service, focusing on how effective and efficient we are and how well we look after our people. Their report found we were good at keeping communities safe and doing our job effectively, but it also found areas where we could use our limited resources more efficiently and support our workforce better.

A summary report of the inspection is set out in the [Fire Authority Annual Report 2019-20](#), available on the Service website. The [full inspection report](#) is also available on the HMICFRS website.

Action to address issues raised in the inspection report are set out in an [Improvement Plan](#), which is updated quarterly and published on the Service website.

In the light of the HMICFRS inspection report and in keeping with the Service's drive for continuing excellence, the Service has reviewed its overall purpose, vision and values to make sure it is firmly focused on making our communities safer.

These new principles are captured below:

Our new **Core Purpose** states simply why we are here:

“Keeping people safe from fire and other risks – responding efficiently and effectively to incidents and emergencies.”

This reflects our core work in prevention, protection and response and focuses firmly on keeping our communities safe.

Supporting our Core Purpose, there is the Vision and Mission statement. The Vision is aspirational, showing what we want to achieve, while the Mission shows what we will do every day to try to achieve the Vision.

The **Vision** builds on and clarifies the ‘Saving More Lives’ vision first introduced in 2016:

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

The Service’s **Mission** to achieve this has also been clarified:

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

Supporting these principles, the Service has also adopted a new set of core Values, which set out what is most important to us about the way we work. They help the Service to identify the right ways of working and acting within our organisation and with the public and our partners, and they help us to make important decisions. The **Core Values** are:

Integrity

We will do the right thing and show fairness and consistency in our approach, taking responsibility for the decisions we make and the actions we take.

Teamwork

By working collaboratively, we can exceed expectations and go beyond the achievements of individuals.

Honesty

We will be truthful in our actions and duties to build trust amongst our colleagues and within the communities we serve.

Openness

We will act in a way that is transparent and open to review and will welcome new or innovative ways of thinking.

Respect

We value the differences between individuals and will create an inclusive environment which recognises everyone’s experiences and opinions.

Directory of assurance documents

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

A. Governance

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

- [Annual Governance Statement 2018-19](#) (included in the Statement of Accounts 2018-19)
- [Code of Corporate Governance](#)
- [Fire Authority Constitution](#)
- [Fire Authority and Committees](#)
- [Transparency](#)

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

Links to national legislation and other guidance:

- [Fire and Rescue National Framework for England 2018](#)
- [Fire and Rescue Services Act 2004](#)
- [Local Government Transparency Code 2015](#)
- [Her Majesty's Inspectorate of Constabulary and Fire & Rescue Services \(HMICFRS\)](#)
- [West Mercia Police and Crime Commissioner business case](#)

B. Finance

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

- [Annual Statement of Accounts 2018-19](#)
- Link to previous [Statements of Accounts](#)
- [Budget and Precept 2019-20 and Medium Term Financial Plan](#), [Appendices 1-8](#) and [Appendix 9](#)

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

- [Internal Audit Annual Report 2018-19](#) (including Internal Audit Charter)
- [Internal Audit External Assessment 2017-18 – update report](#)
- [External Audit Findings Report 2018-19](#)

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

- [Council Tax 2019-20](#)
- [Invoice payments over £250](#)

- [Pay Policy Statement](#)

Links to national legislation and other guidance:

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

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

- [Statements of Assurance](#)

C. Operations

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

- [Fire Authority Annual Report 2019-20](#)
- [Community Risk Management Plan 2014-2020](#)
- [Midpoint Review of the CRMP](#)
- [CRMP Demographic Profile 2018](#)
- [CRMP Risk Review 2018](#)
- [Annual Performance 2018-19](#)
- [Link to Strategies](#)

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

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

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

Links to national legislation and other guidance:

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

Your right to know: access to information

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

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

What do you think of our Statement of Assurance?

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

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

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



You can also follow us on

Twitter www.twitter.com/hwfire



or find us on

Facebook www.facebook.com/hwfire

Alternatively you may write to:

Hereford & Worcester Fire and Rescue Service Headquarters,
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Worcester
WR3 8SP

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