

# Making it Happen

## 3 Public confidence

Report regularly on our progress and communicate openly about our plans so that, they are clearly understood, meet our legal duties and provide assurance to the public in a way which is transparent and easy to scrutinise.

A flexible and responsive service  
(Staffordshire Commissioner)

From 1 August 2018, in addition to overseeing Staffordshire Police, the Staffordshire Police Fire and Crime Commissioner (PFCC) became responsible for the governance of Staffordshire Fire and Rescue Service with responsibility for ensuring the local community is protected by an effective fire and rescue service and holding the Chief Fire Officer to account for delivering that vision.

The PFCC must produce a Fire and Rescue Plan setting out the strategic vision, priorities and objectives for the fire and rescue service in the county. Whilst our plans could be combined, we have agreed to develop separate plans. In developing the objectives in our Safety Plan, we have taken into account the four strategic priorities set out in the commissioner's Fire & Rescue Plan.

**We propose to publish our Safety Plan as a 'live' document on our website rather than publish in printed format, as this is more efficient and better for the environment. Readers will be able to print their own hard copy for reference if they wish to do so. By doing this, we will also be able to demonstrate the clear links between the priorities in our Safety Plan, the risks we face across Staffordshire, and how our local station plans support our prevention, protection and response activities. This means we can also adapt our plan in line with the changing needs of our communities and clearly show you the impact, or effect, of any changes we make.**

Underneath this Safety Plan sits a hierarchy of more detailed directorate and departmental plans. We ensure that our plans are simple to understand, revised annually and based on realistic and achievable expectations. Through our planning process, we should be able to evidence and clearly demonstrate why something should be done and importantly to identify how it will make a difference. Public and firefighter safety is paramount, using our finances and resources to deliver better outcomes for our communities. These plans will be available on our website and will show how we use prevention, protection and response activities to prevent fires and other incidents and reduce the impact of identified risks on our communities.

It is important that we review our plans and performance regularly to ensure that we are targeting our activity appropriately and consistently improving and innovating our prevent, protect and response activities.

Our local service delivery groups ensure that best practice is identified and shared by scrutinising our performance at a very detailed level.

Oversight of our performance is provided by a number of strategic scrutiny boards (both internally and via the Staffordshire Commissioner's office), which provide challenge ensuring we continue to deliver the most efficient and effective service whilst keeping our communities and firefighters safe.

Both the commissioner's plan and this Safety Plan are subject to scrutiny by the Police, Fire and Crime Panel. Regular public performance meetings are held which include reports on our performance ensuring progress against local and national performance indicators remains on track.

The Fire and Rescue National Framework for England requires us to provide assurance on financial, governance and operational matters. We do this by publishing an annual Statement of Assurance, which we use as a reporting mechanism to let you know how we are doing and tell you about progress against the objectives in our Safety Plan. We will continue to do this and we will also use it as an opportunity to keep you informed about our plans once we fully understand the impacts of the challenges we face.

The next few years are likely to be the most challenging and uncertain we have known. Therefore, we will continue to work through various scenarios, which will help us understand and prepare for the possible issues that we may face. This work will help to inform how we consult, engage and where necessary negotiate in order to allocate resources and shape our service to ensure we maintain the best possible outcomes for our staff and communities.



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### His Majesty's Inspectorate of Constabulary and Fire & Rescue Service (HMICFRS)

The Policing and Crime Act of 2017 includes provisions for HMICFRS to conduct assessments and issue reports concerning the operational efficiency, effectiveness and leadership of fire and rescue authorities in England, in addition to carrying out all national policing assessments.

The primary goals of these inspections are to enhance the quality of fire and rescue services and minimise local risks, identify good practice, drive transformation and foster greater openness and responsibility towards local communities. Through its inspections, HMICFRS enables the public to see how well their local service is performing and improving.

#### These inspections focus on three key themes:

- **Effectiveness** (how effective we are at keeping people safe and secure from fire and other risks)
- **Efficiency** (how efficient we are at keeping people safe and secure from fire and other risks)
- **People** (how well we look after our people).

In 2022, HMICFRS completed its second full assessment of all fire and rescue services in England. Its report – Effectiveness, efficiency and people 2021/22 – Staffordshire Fire and Rescue Service was published on the 27th July 2022. The report acknowledged that we are ‘Good’ at being effective in understanding and preventing fires and other risks and responding to major and multi-agency incidents. Inspectors also said we are ‘Good’ at identifying people in our communities who are most at risk from fire and we work with our partners to reduce this risk.

The inspection noted how we have responded positively and proactively to learning from the Grenfell Tower tragedy and have improved the safety of residents in Staffordshire who live in high-rise buildings through our sprinkler scheme.

We were also rated as ‘Good’ in how we make the Service affordable now and in the future. We continuously look for ways to improve our effectiveness and efficiency and in doing so we need to make sure that we make best use of new technologies to transform the way we provide our services.

The Inspectors rated us ‘Good’ at getting the right people with the right skills, managing performance and developing leaders as well as how we look after the health, safety and wellbeing of our staff.

However, there were a number of areas in which we were rated as ‘Requires Improvement’. HMICFRS has made some recommendations in the report, and has identified 20 ‘Areas for Improvement’, which the Service has now created an action plan to address. The progress of this action plan is scrutinised internally through the Service’s governance boards, and by the PFCC. Whilst disappointing, only by going through this inspection process can we identify and make improvements, in order to make things better for our staff and our communities.

In its Round 3 Inspections, which commenced in 2023, HMICFRS will measure fire and rescue services against the ‘characteristics of good performance’. These characteristics describe the levels of performance needed for a service to achieve a grade of ‘good’ and assessments are given with the aims of promoting improvements in fire and rescue and highlighting where a service is doing well and where it needs to improve.

HMICFRS ratings are similar to those used by OFSTED for school inspections. In previous inspections services would attract a rating of, outstanding, good, requires improvement or inadequate. A change to this current round of inspection is the addition of an ‘adequate’ grade. This brings the assessments in line with those of policing and enables HMICFRS to state more precisely, where it considers improvement is needed and highlight good performance more effectively. Inspection reports are available to the public via the HMICFRS website:

[www.justiceinspectors.gov.uk](http://www.justiceinspectors.gov.uk)

