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Nottinghamshire and City of Nottingham Fire and Rescue Authority

Date: Friday 26 July 2024

Time: 10.30 am

Venue: Joint Fire / Police HQ, Sherwood Lodge, Arnold, Nottingham, NG5 8PP

Members are requested to attend the above meeting to be held at the time, place and date mentioned to transact the following business

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'M. J. [unclear]'. The signature is written in a cursive style.

Solicitor, Clerk and Monitoring Officer to the Nottinghamshire and City of Nottingham Fire and Rescue Authority

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Any councillor who is unable to attend the meeting and wishes to submit apologies should do so via the Personal Assistant to the Chief Fire Officer at Fire Services Headquarters on 0115 8388900

If you need any advice on declaring an interest in any item above, please contact the Governance Officer shown on this agenda, if possible before the day of the meeting.

Governance Officer: **Laura Wilson**
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The agenda, reports and minutes for all meetings of the Fire and Rescue Authority can be viewed online at:

<https://committee.nottinghamcity.gov.uk/ieListMeetings.aspx?CIId=224&Year=0>

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Nottinghamshire & City of Nottingham Fire & Rescue Authority

MINUTES of the meeting held at Joint Fire / Police HQ, Sherwood Lodge, Arnold, Nottingham, NG5 8PP on 24 May 2024 from 10.33 am - 10.53 am

Membership

Present

Councillor Michael Payne (Chair)
Councillor Audra Wynter (Vice Chair)
Councillor Callum Bailey
Councillor Richard Butler
Councillor John Clarke MBE
Councillor Robert Corden
Councillor Sybil Fielding
Councillor Tom Hollis
Councillor Anwar Khan
Councillor Gul Nawaz Khan
Councillor Salma Mumtaz
Councillor Nayab Patel
Councillor Samina Riaz
Councillor Tom Smith
Councillor Nigel Turner
Councillor Roger Upton
Councillor Jason Zadrozny
Gary Godden

Absent

Councillor John Lee

Colleagues, partners and others in attendance:

Bev Bull - Head of Finance and Treasurer
Craig Parkin - Chief Fire Officer
Mick Sharman - Assistant Chief Fire Officer
Malcolm Townroe - Solicitor, Clerk and Monitoring Officer
Damien West - Assistant Chief Fire Officer
Laura Wilson - Senior Governance Officer

1 Appointment of Chair

Resolved to appoint Councillor Michael Payne as Chair of the Authority for the 2024/25 municipal year.

2 Appointment of Vice-Chair

Resolved to appoint Councillor Audra Wynter as Vice-Chair of the Authority for the 2024/25 municipal year.

3 Apologies for Absence

Councillor John Lee

4 Declarations of Interest

None.

5 Minutes

The minutes of the last meeting held on 23 February 2024 were confirmed as a true record and signed by the Chair.

6 Chair's Announcements

The Chair, Councillor Michael Payne, welcomed the new members and thanked the previous members for their hard work.

7 Membership of the Authority, Appointments to Committees and Boards, and Dates of Future Meetings

Malcolm Townroe, Solicitor, Clerk and Monitoring Officer, presented the report, confirming the membership of the Authority following the annual meetings of the County and City Councils, confirming the committee structure, requesting nominations to committees and boards, confirming dates of meetings, and seeking to appoint Chairs of certain committees from those appointed to serve on them.

He informed the Authority that the City Council appointments have been amended to include Councillor Gul Khan in place of Councillor Nick Raine.

The Chair informed the Authority that work would be done to move the June meetings, and that the outcome of this will be communicated to members.

Resolved

(1) To note the following appointments:

The City Council has appointed the following members:

Councillor Anwar Khan (Labour)
Councillor Gul Khan (Labour)
Councillor Salma Mumtaz (Labour)
Councillor Nayab Patel (Labour)
Councillor Samina Riaz (Labour)
Councillor Audra Wynter (Labour)

The County Council has appointed the following members:

Councillor Callum Bailey (Conservative)
Councillor Richard Butler (Conservative)
Councillor John Clarke (Labour)
Councillor Robert Corden (Conservative)
Councillor Sybil Fielding (Labour)
Councillor Tom Hollis (Independent Alliance)
Councillor John Lee (Conservative)
Councillor Michael Payne (Labour)
Councillor Thomas Smith (Conservative)
Councillor Nigel Turner (Conservative)
Councillor Roger Upton (Conservative)
Councillor Jason Zadrozny (Independent Alliance)

- (2) To approve the Committee structure.
- (3) To approve the following appointments to Committees, Chairs and meeting dates:

- (a) Nottinghamshire and City of Nottingham Fire and Rescue Authority
(10.30am)

26 July 2024
20 September 2024
13 December 2024
28 February 2025
23 May 2025 (AGM)

- (b) Policy and Strategy Committee

Meeting Dates (10am)

5 July 2024
15 November 2024
31 January 2025
4 April 2025

Membership

Councillor Michael Payne (Chair)
Councillor Sybil Fielding
Councillor Tom Hollis
Councillor Nigel Turner
Councillor Roger Upton
Councillor Audra Wynter

- (c) Human Resources Committee

Meeting Dates (10am)

28 June 2024
8 November 2024
24 January 2025
28 March 2025

Membership

Councillor Audra Wynter (Chair)
Councillor Robert Corden
Councillor Tom Hollis
Councillor Gul Khan
Councillor John Lee
Councillor Nayab Patel

- (d) Community Safety Committee

Meeting Dates (10am)

14 June 2024
11 October 2024
10 January 2025
14 March 2025

Membership

Councillor Jason Zadrozny (Chair)
Councillor Robert Corden
Councillor Anwar Khan
Councillor Gul Khan
Councillor Samina Riaz
Councillor Nigel Turner

(e) Finance and Resources Committee

Meeting Dates (10am)

21 June 2024
18 October 2024
17 January 2025
21 March 2025

Membership

Councillor John Clarke (Chair)
Councillor Callum Bailey
Councillor Richard Butler
Councillor Sybil Fielding
Councillor Anwar Khan
Councillor Salma Mumtaz
Councillor Tom Smith

(f) Personnel Committee

Meeting Dates

As and when required

Membership

Councillor Richard Butler
Councillor Gul Khan
Councillor John Lee
Councillor Nayab Patel
Councillor Samina Riaz
Councillor Roger Upton
Councillor Audra Wynter

(a) Appointments Committee

Meeting Dates

As and when required

Membership

Councillor Sybil Fielding
Councillor Tom Hollis
Councillor John Lee
Councillor Michael Payne
Councillor Roger Upton
Councillor Audra Wynter

(1) To approve the following appointments

(a) Strategic Inclusion Board

Councillor Callum Bailey
Councillor Sybil Fielding
Councillor Michael Payne
Councillor Roger Upton
Councillor Audra Wynter
Councillor Jason Zadrozny

(b) Pensions Board

**Councillor Sybil Fielding
Councillor Nayab Patel (as substitute)
Assistant Chief Fire Officer Mick Sharman**

8 Exclusion of the public

Resolved to exclude the public from the meeting during consideration of the remaining items in accordance with Section 100A of the Local Government Act 1972, under Schedule 12A, Part 1, Paragraph 3, on the basis that, having regard to all the circumstances, the public interest in maintaining an exemption outweighs the public interest in disclosing the information.

9 Minutes

The exempt minutes of the meeting held on 23 February 2024 were confirmed as a true record and signed by the Chair.

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NOTTINGHAMSHIRE
Fire & Rescue Service
Creating Safer Communities

Nottinghamshire and City of Nottingham
 Fire and Rescue Authority

2023/24 REVENUE AND CAPITAL OUTTURN

Report of the Chief Fire Officer

Date: 26 July 2024

Purpose of Report:

To report to Members on the provisional financial performance of the Service for 2023/24, analysing significant variances against the original revenue and capital budgets. The outturn position gives Members an overview of the financial position following the completion of the unaudited Statement of Accounts for 2023/24.

Recommendations:

It is recommended that Members:

- Approve the transfer of £802k of underspends to Earmarked Reserves (Section 2.14).

Earmarked Reserve	Amount £'000
External Audit Fees – carry forward	144
Training Tower Remedial Work – carry forward	130
Fire Cover Review – carry forward	53
Disaggregation of Tri-Service/Existing Mobilisation System	300
Capital Funding Equalisation	175
Total	802

- Approve the slippage of £2.678m on the capital programme (Section 2.20, Table 4 and Appendix B).

- Approve the 2024/25 budget for the appliances (£433k) and Service Development Centre (£479k) to be accelerated into 2023/24 (Section 2.19).
- Approve the slippage of £28k on light vehicles to be repurposed for rural firefighting and equipment (Section 2.24).
- Approve the repurposing of the capital budget underspend that is funded by borrowing of £145k (Section 2.46):
 - £60k to enable further electrical charging points to be allocated throughout the estate (Section 2.31).
 - £68k for remedial work to bring the towers up to the required standard for safe working at height training to be undertaken.
 - £17k to be utilised to fund any overspends on existing schemes.
- Approve the following increases to the 2024/25 capital programme (Section 2.47)
 - £100k increase to the Access and Inclusion scheme.
 - £367k increase to the Energy Reduction and Decarbonisation scheme.
 - £894k increase to the fire appliances scheme, £367k of this relates to aligning the budget to original approved scheme budget and £527k is due to the increase in the contract pricing linked to CPI.

CONTACT OFFICER

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1. BACKGROUND

- 1.1 The purpose of this report is to give Members information regarding of the Authority's financial performance in 2023/24. The outturn position may be subject to change if any issues are identified by the finance team prior to the audit of the accounts, or if any issues are identified by the auditors during the audit which require amendments to revenue or capital expenditure. Any changes will be reported to Finance and Resources Committee at a future date.
- 1.2 Members will be aware that the audit of the 2021/22 accounts has been delayed and the 2022/23 audit is still to commence. These audits are to be carried out by Ernst Young.
- 1.3 The 2023/24 accounts are due to be audited by KPMG, with work commencing in July 2024.

2. REPORT

- 2.1 The 2023/24 revenue budget of £49.965m was approved by the Fire Authority in February 2023. The approved budget included a £404k use of the budget pressure support reserve to address the budgeted funding deficit. During the year, additional use of other specific earmarked reserves were approved, increasing the budget to £50.258m. Total expenditure for 2023/24 was £48.931m, representing an underspend by £1.327m (2.64%).
- 2.2 From this underspend, £327k carry forward requests have been received, where the Service has not been able to complete a specific piece of work in-year and the work and costs will be completed in 2024/25, this reduces the underspend to £1.000m (1.99%). In addition to the carry forwards, £475k is being requested to be moved into earmarked reserves, £300k for future anticipated costs regarding the existing mobilisation system whilst the replacement system is being implemented, and a new reserve of £175k is to be established to support the revenue costs of capital schemes. The £404k use of the budget pressure reserve is not required, and £121k is to be moved to the general fund reserve.
- 2.3 Table 1 below shows a summary of expenditure and funding, assuming that approval is given for the transfers to earmarked reserves outlined in Table 2.

Table 1 – Summary Expenditure and Funding Position

	Original Budget 2023/24	Revised Budget 2023/24	Actual 2023/24	Variance 2023/24
	£'000	£'000	£'000	£'000
Employees	39,939	40,128	39,393	(735)
Premises	4,111	4,318	4,078	(240)
Transport	2,219	2,225	2,420	195
Supplies and Services	4,394	4,573	4,571	(2)
Third Party Payments	950	951	1,024	73
Support Services	172	171	127	(44)
Capital Financing	2,692	3,093	2,979	(114)
Sales Fees and Charges	(425)	(519)	(495)	24
Other Income	(4,087)	(4,682)	(5,166)	(484)
Net Revenue Expenditure	49,965	50,258	48,931	(1,327)
Funding				
Net Expenditure				
Pension Grant	(2,340)	(2,340)	(2,340)	0
Revenue Support Grant	(6,189)	(6,189)	(6,189)	0
Non-Domestic Rates	(11,286)	(11,286)	(11,286)	0
Council Tax	(29,746)	(29,746)	(29,746)	0
Budget Pressure Reserve	(404)	(404)	0	404
Net Contributions to/-from Other Earmarked Reserves		(293)	509	802
Total Funding	(49,965)	(50,258)	(49,052)	1,206
Net General Fund Surplus	0	0	(121)	(121)

WHOLETIME PAY

2.4 Wholetime pay is underspent by £379k in total as at March 2024, due to vacancies in the establishment. At the end of March 2024, the number of posts was 16 FTE below the approved establishment. There were 11 transferees from other fire and rescue services in year and 20 apprentice firefighters will commence their training in April 2024. Overtime has been used to cover the ridership in the short term, resulting in a £85k overspend against the preplanned overtime budget.

ON-CALL PAY

2.5 The On-call pay budget is underspent by £219k. The largest variances relate to retaining fees (£62k) and training (£55k). On-call pay can vary significantly from month to month depending on levels of activity. The number of mobilisations can be highly variable and activity levels have generally been lower than expected in 2023/24, notwithstanding spikes of

activity relating to flood events. Expenditure on training has been lower than budgeted, due to lower levels of recruits requiring training as a result of having dual contract firefighters. Therefore, this budget has been reduced for 2024/25.

NON-UNIFORMED PAY

2.6 Non-uniformed pay is underspent by £206k overall, due to vacancies in the establishment.

REDUNDANCIES AND SETTLEMENTS

2.7 There is an overspend of £21k relating to settlement and redundancy costs which were not included in the budget.

PENSIONS

2.8 The pensions budgets are overspent by £59k overall. The largest variance relates to gratuity payments, which has an overspend of £28k.

PREMISES COSTS

2.9 Premises costs are underspent by £240k. Significant variances include:

- A £151k underspend relating electricity and a £51k overspend relating to gas. Energy costs have fluctuated significantly since the invasion of Ukraine in February 2022, making budget predictions difficult.
- Business rates are underspent by £89k, due to a revaluation of West Bridgford station.
- A £148k underspend on planned building maintenance is mainly due to completion of works slipping into 2024/25. Offsetting this is a £90k overspend relating to reactive building repairs and maintenance. The overspend has been driven by a number of activities, including the removal of asbestos from Eastwood station.

TRANSPORT RELATED COSTS

2.10 There is an overspend of £195k. Significant variances include:

- A £359k underspend relating to fuel. Fuel prices have reduced during the year, in addition stock levels at year end are adequate.
- A £371k overspend on unplanned fleet maintenance. This is due to extending the useful life of the fleet, and due to unscheduled repairs to water and foam tanks.
- A £83k overspend on outsourced vehicle maintenance. This relates to specific repairs that cannot be carried out by the main contracted company.
- A £18k overspend relating to mileage claims and public transport costs. There are a number of reasons for this, including an increase in detachments resulting from wholetime vacancies, and mileage

allowances/public transport costs paid to staff compulsorily transferred to the Joint HQ.

- A £39k overspend on tyres which has arisen due to extending the useful lives of some vehicles.

SUPPLIES AND SERVICES

2.11 Supplies and services is overspent by £2k. Significant variances include:

- A £100k overspend relating to computer software maintenance contracts. Some of this overspend will be due to the completion of capital projects resulting in ongoing revenue costs, and some is due to higher than expected inflationary increases. The budget has been increased for 2024/25.
- A £33k underspend relating to non-contracted ICT services. This budget is mainly used for the payment of consultants to carry out work for which the Service does not have the internal expertise. Expenditure can fluctuate depending on the needs which arise during the year.
- A £36k overspend relating to Firelink contract charges. The contractual price increases are linked to RPI inflation. In 2023/24 the prices have increased by 13.5%, which exceeds the 5% budgeted increase. The budget has been increased for 2024/25.
- The budget for contributions to partnership working is underspent by £52k. This is mainly due to the budget relating to the Emergency Services Network Dimetra Communications Service no longer being required as the work is being carried out in-house. This budget has been removed in 2024/25.
- Consultation costs is underspent by £54k, this is mainly due to projects not being carried out in 2023/24.
- There are collective overspends relating to smaller budgets for equipment, phone lines, furniture, materials and other supplies and services offsetting the underspends.

OTHER INCOME

2.12 There is a surplus of £484k. Significant variances include:

- £87k relating to secondment income not provided for in the budget.
- £262k relates to a surplus on interest receivable due to increased interest rates and higher than expected level of funds being available for investment, due to slippage in the capital programme.

CAPITAL FINANCING COSTS

2.13 There is an underspend by £114k for capital financing costs. £100k of this underspend relates to revenue funding set aside for the replacement mobilising system (RMS) server costs. As this work did not complete in 2023/24, the £100k has been transferred to the RMS earmarked reserve as approved in the last monitoring report presented to Finance and Resources Committee.

RESERVES

- 2.14 As a part of the outturn position it is proposed that £802k be transferred to earmarked reserves (see Table 2).

Table 2 – Request for Transfers to Earmarked Reserves

Earmarked Reserve	Amount £'000
External Audit Fees – carry forward	144
Training Tower Remedial Work – carry forward	130
Fire Cover Review – carry forward	53
Disaggregation of Tri-Service/Existing Mobilisation System	300
Capital Funding Equalisation	175
Total	802

- 2.15 Including the above earmarked reserve movements, a net total of £509k has been transferred to earmarked reserves during the year, the total earmarked reserve balance as at 31 March 2024 is £5.846m.
- 2.16 After the proposed contribution of £121k to the general fund reserves for 2023/24, the general fund reserves stand at £5.082m as of 31 March 2024.
- 2.17 Total general fund and earmarked reserves as at 31 March 2024 are £10.928m. Movement in reserves during 2023/24 are summarised in Table 3 below and detailed movement in reserves can be found in Appendix A.

Table 3 – Breakdown of Reserve Movement During 2023/24

Reserves	Balance 01/04/23 £'000	Net Movement 2023/24 £'000	Balance 31/03/24 £'000
Earmarked	5,337	509	5,846
General Fund	4,961	121	5,082
Total	10,298	630	10,928

CAPITAL PROGRAMME

- 2.18 Provisional expenditure for 2023/24 is £7.271m, funded by £6.626m borrowing, £513k revenue contribution to capital outlay (RCCO) and £132k from capital grants. This is an underspend within the year of £1.952m against the revised budget of £9.223m.
- 2.19 The Service Development Centre and the appliances project have exceeded the budget for 2023/24 by £479k and £433k respectively, due to timing of the certification of the projects work crossing over the two financial years.

Approval is requested to bring forward £912k from the respective 2024/25 budget allocations into 2023/24.

- 2.20 Adjusting for the additional £912k budget allocations, increases the in-year underspend to £2.864m. Total slippage on the programme requiring budgets to be transferred into 2024/25 is £2.678m, resulting in an actual underspend of £186k. £41k of this underspend was to be funded by Emergency Services Mobile Communication Programme grant held in earmarked reserve, the grant will remain in earmarked reserves until needed.
- 2.21 A summary of variances is shown in Table 4, with a detailed breakdown scheme by scheme shown at Appendix B.

Table 4 – Capital Outturn Position 2023/24

	Revised Budget 2023/24	Actual 2023/24	Variance 2023/24	2024/25 Budget to be Moved into 2023/24	Slippage to 2024/25	(Under)/ Over Spend
	£'000	£'000	£'000	£'000	£'000	£'000
Transport	4,782	4,070	(712)	(433)	1,145	0
Operational Equipment	277	108	(169)	0	169	0
Property	1,917	1,927	10	(479)	436	(33)
IT and Communications	2,247	1,166	(1,081)	0	928	(153)
Total	9,223	7,271	(1,952)	(912)	2,678	(186)
Funded by:						
Borrowing	8,554	6,626	(1,928)	(912)	2,578	(145)
Revenue Contribution to Capital and Earmarked Reserves	654	513	(141)	0	100	(41)
Capital Receipts	3	0	(3)	0	0	0
Capital Grants	12	132	120	0	0	0
Total	9,223	7,271	(1,952)	(912)	2,678	(186)

An update on the major projects and variances is considered below.

TRANSPORT

- 2.22 Fire appliances (£2.981m in 2023/24, £2.416m in 2024/25): Angloco Ltd issued a revised build programme for the 17 new pumping appliances which resulted in quicker delivery time of the chassis from Scania. Permission is requested to bring forward capital expenditure from 2024/25 of £433k now the final outturn position is known.
- 2.23 Special appliances: Members are aware of the delay in the appointment of a delivery and build contractor for two aerial ladder appliances. In addition, the

Command Support Unit is still under construction. Therefore, it is requested £967k on special appliances is slipped into 2024/25.

- 2.24 Light vehicles: one Principal Officer car was not delivered by the end of 2023/24; delivery has now been received. Members are requested to approve the slippage of the £55k budget for this vehicle into 2024/25. In addition, Members are requested to approve the remaining budget of £28k to be slipped in 2024/25 and to be repurposed to fund additional costs anticipated for the rural firefighting equipment.
- 2.25 Rural firefighting: a rural firefighting working group has been established during the year to consider the options available to improve the Service's ability to effectively respond to rural incidents, the recommendations of the working group were approved by the Strategic Leadership Team in January 2024 and procurement processes have now commenced for the approved vehicles and equipment. However, £95k of the total £100k is requested to be slipped into the next financial year when the vehicles and equipment will be delivered.

EQUIPMENT

- 2.26 Replacement duty rig: a delay in receiving premarket samples has impacted on procurement timelines. Trials of new uniform are complete, however bulk purchase lead times are estimated to be between 7-9 months meaning this project will not be completed until financial year 2024/25. Members are asked to approve the slippage of £100k into 2024/25.
- 2.27 Personal issue dry suits: the dry suits, boots and thermal undersuits were not received in 2023/24, most items have now been received in 2024/25. £57k is requested to be slipped into 2024/25.
- 2.28 Marauding terrorist attack (MTA) equipment: this is funded by a capital grant previously received for MTA equipment which is held in the capital grant unapplied reserve. This is to be spent in 2024/25 to enable the Service to fund the National Inter-Agency Liaison Officer radios, therefore Members are requested to approve slippage of £12k into 2024/25.

ESTATES

- 2.29 Access and inclusion: due to the process of securing the finance for this project, the construction programme was delayed until January 2024. Works have commenced at Bingham, Harworth, Ashfield, Misterton and Blidworth fire stations. The project is progressing well against the revised programme, however £322k is requested to be slipped into 2024/25.
- 2.30 Service Development Centre (SDC) (£660k) 2023/24, (£1m) 2024/25: work is underway to improve and refurbish welfare and training facilities, fire house control system and enhancement of on-site training provision. The budget in 2023/24 is £660k, which includes an additional £160k allocated to install BA wash facilities at SDC and Mansfield fire station for firefighter safety. The work has been completed requiring budget allocated for 2024/25 to be

brought forward into 2023/24 (£479k). Approval is requested for the budget to be brought forward to 2023/24 as this project spans over two financial years.

- 2.31 Electric charging points (£25k in 2023/24): this is for the cost of the installation of vehicle charging points at selected fire stations. In addition, funding has been secured from D2N2 shared public sector charging network for four sites. It is requested that £60k is repurposed from the capital budget underspend to enable further points to be allocated throughout the estate.
- 2.32 Energy reduction and decarbonisation (£50k in 2023/24, £250k in 2024/25): detailed surveys to decarbonise Eastwood and Highfields fire stations have been completed, leading to a Public Sector Decarbonisation Scheme grant application for Highfields. The £50k budget allocated to 2023/24 has not been fully spent. A grant offer of £367k from the Public Sector Decarbonisation Scheme to fund the works to replace the gas boilers at Highfields has now been received, the £250k approved capital scheme for 2024/25 provides the match funding for the grant with any remaining budget to be used to fund the fees to design and undertake the works at Highfields. The slippage of £40k in 2023/24 is requested to be approved and slipped into 2024/25.
- 2.33 Joint Headquarters: an alternative offer for the sale of the former headquarters site, Bestwood Lodge, has been conditionally accepted, subject to planning permission. An increase on the previous offer means higher than forecast fees are to be expected. The capital receipt is expected in 2024/25. The slippage of £43k is requested to be slipped into 2024/25 for any additional fees for Joint Headquarters.
- 2.34 Worksop fire station opened in May 2022 and is fully operational. The works and retentions have been paid, a further £31k is required to resolve the heat pump technology issue and it is requested that the £31k be slipped into 2024/25. There is an overall underspend of £48k which is no longer required.

ICT

- 2.35 Replacement equipment £520k: the budget funds any replacement equipment which is required to keep the Service's ICT provision robust and sustainable. The more significant projects include software replacement for the Wide Area Network (WAN) which is required for mobilising (£120k), laptop replacement (£100k) and devices on appliances (£90k). The overall underspend of £86k is requested to be slipped into 2024/25.
- 2.36 Community Fire Risk Management Information System: this project relates to systems and process improvements to drive efficient ways of working and business automation. The overall underspend of £199k is requested to be slipped into 2024/25 to enable the Service to complete the project.
- 2.37 Cyber security: a consultant has been appointed to implement the system. The overall underspend of £22k is requested to be slipped into 2024/25.

- 2.38 Appliance handheld airwave radio: this project involves the purchase of 30 handheld radios and aims to improve business continuity and resilience. An order has been placed totalling £40k and the radios are now expected to be in service early in the 2024/25. An additional revenue contribution of £10k has been approved to fund the additional cost. The overall underspend of £29k is requested to be slipped into 2024/25.
- 2.39 System upgrades: a budget of £30k is set aside to upgrade core systems to enable them to be maintained and supported. This is no longer required, as budget has been built into 2024/25.
- 2.40 Airwave – Mobilisation System DCS: the £60k is requested to be slipped into 2024/25 for the purchase of the SANJ radios to go on the appliances.
- 2.41 Tri-Service Control Project: this is an ongoing project on the Systel MDT LEGO solution and servers, licenses, LAN and telephony. The underspend of £29k is requested to be slipped into 2024/25.
- 2.42 The cloud migration project and ICT SharePoint projects are now complete and therefore the respective £16k and £13k underspends are no longer required.
- 2.43 The Emergency Services Network/Emergency Services Mobile Communication Programme (ESMCP) (£41k) has been paused nationally. The scheme is to be funded by ESMCP grant which remains in earmarked reserves. The scheme is not being slipped into 2024/25, but will be re-established from the reserve once the programme is recommenced and timescales are known.
- 2.44 Tri-Service Mobilisation Infrastructure Replacement: no expenditure will be incurred this year and the £40k budget is no longer needed.
- 2.45 Replacement mobilising system: £567k has been paid in 2023/24. This project spans multiple years in the capital programme and the £403k remaining budget is requested to be slipped into 2024/25. Procurement for the numerous elements of this project is progressing, enabling a revised schedule of project expenditure to be established, this will inform the profiling of the scheme budget. Members will be updated on the profile of the scheme budget in the 2024/25 capital programme budget monitoring.

CAPITAL PROGRAMME CHANGES 2024/25

- 2.46 Approval is requested to repurpose the underspend funded by borrowing of £145k in 2024/25:
- £60k to enable further electrical charging points to be allocated throughout the estate.
 - £68k for remedial works to bring the towers up to the required standard for safe working at height training to be undertaken.
 - £17k for an increase to the light vehicle budgets to allow an MTA vehicle to be purchased.

The repurposing of the underspend means there is no increase to the existing overall approved capital programme.

2.47 In addition, approval is requested for the following increases to the 2024/25 capital programme

- £100k increase to the Access and Inclusion scheme. The increase is required due to additional costs being incurred and only a small contingency being built into the original budget. This will be funded from the efficiency programme reserve, as the cost includes improvements to Ashfield Fire Station to make it suitable as a wholetime station which is part of the efficiency programme.
- £367k increase to the Energy Reduction and Decarbonisation scheme for works at Highfields to be funded by the grant from the Public Sector Decarbonisation Scheme as reported to Finance and Policy committee in March 2024.
- £894k increase to the fire appliances scheme, £367k of this relates to aligning the budget to original approved scheme budget and £527k is due to the increase in the contract pricing linked to CPI. It is anticipated the additional capital funding requirements will be managed in year from slippage in other projects and the funding will be finalised at year end.

DEBTS WRITTEN OFF IN 2023/24

2.48 Two debts to the value of £134.00 has been written off during the 2023/24 financial year. This related to an overpayment of pension to a deceased pensioner.

3. FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

The financial implications are set out in the body of the report.

4. HUMAN RESOURCES AND LEARNING AND DEVELOPMENT IMPLICATIONS

There are no human resources or learning and development implications arising from this report.

5. EQUALITIES AND ETHICAL IMPLICATIONS

An equality impact assessment has not been undertaken because this report is not associated with a policy, function or service. Its purpose is to explain variances to the approved budget which reflects existing policies.

6. ENVIRONMENTAL AND SUSTAINABILITY IMPLICATIONS

There are no environmental and sustainability implications arising from this report.

7. LEGAL IMPLICATIONS

There are no legal implications arising from this report.

8. RISK MANAGEMENT IMPLICATIONS

There are no risk management implications that arise specifically from this report, however the regular receipt of financial reports is key to managing one of the most significant risks to the organisation, that of financial risk. Throughout the year, finance department staff work collaboratively with budget holders towards keeping expenditure within budget and improving financial performance and reporting to Finance and Resources Committee at regular intervals.

9. COLLABORATION IMPLICATIONS

There are no collaboration implications arising from this report.

10. RECOMMENDATIONS

It is recommended that Members:

- 10.1 Note the contents of this report.
- 10.2 Approve the transfer of £802k of underspends to earmarked reserves to support ongoing projects (Section 2.14):

Earmarked Reserve	Amount £'000
External Audit Fees – carry forward	144
Training Tower Remedial Work – carry forward	130
Fire Cover Review – carry forward	53
Disaggregation of Tri-Service/Existing Mobilisation System	300
Capital Funding Equalisation	175
Total	802

- 10.3 Approve the slippage of £2.678m on the capital programme (Section 2.20, Table 4 and Appendix B).
- 10.4 Approve the 2024/25 budget for the appliances (£433k) and Service Development Centre (£479k) to be accelerated into 2023/24 (Section 2.19).

- 10.5 Approve the slippage of £28k on light vehicles to be repurposed for rural firefighting and equipment (Section 2.24).
- 10.6 Approve the repurposing of the capital budget underspend that is funded by borrowing of £145k (Section 2.46):
- £60k to enable further electrical charging points to be allocated throughout the estate (Section 2.31).
 - £68k for remedial tower works to bring the towers up to the required standard for Safe Working at Height training to be undertaken.
 - £17k for increase the light vehicle budgets to allow an MTA vehicle to be purchased.
- 10.7 Approve the following increases to the 2024/25 capital programme (Section 2.47)
- £100k increase to the Access and Inclusion scheme.
 - £367k increase to the Energy Reduction and Decarbonisation scheme
 - £894k increase to the fire appliances scheme, £367k of this relates to aligning the budget to original approved scheme budget and £527k is due to the increase in the contract pricing linked to CPI.

11. BACKGROUND PAPERS FOR INSPECTION (OTHER THAN PUBLISHED DOCUMENTS)

None.

Craig Parkin
CHIEF FIRE OFFICER

Reserve Position at 31 March 2024

Reserve	Opening Balance 01/4/23 £'000	Movement into Reserve £'000	Use of Reserve £'000	Reallocation of Reserve Approved in MTFS £'000	Closing Balance 31/3/24 £'000
Resilience Crewing and Training	36	0	(2)	0	34
Prevention and Partnerships	261	161	(79)	0	343
Business Systems and Development	59	0	0	0	59
ESN Reserve	1,001	0	0	0	1001
Capital Reserve	0	304	0		304
Transformation and Collaboration	360	0	0	(71)	289
Operational Estates	480	53	0	(350)	183
Covid - 19	62	130	0	0	192
Other	15		0	(15)	0
Headquarters Move	370	157	(18)	0	509
Budget Pressures Support	49	0		(49)	0
Efficiency Programme	1,126	0	0	0	1,126
Replacement Mobilising System	900	0	(334)	10	576
Total Earmarked Reserves	619	400	(263)	475	1,231
General Reserve	4,961	121		0	5,082
Total Reserves	10,298	1,326	(696)	0	10,928

APPENDIX B

CAPITAL - BUDGET MONITORING REPORT – March 2024

Scheme	Revised Budget 2023/24	Actual 2023/24	Variance 2023/24	2024/25 budget to be moved into 2023/24	Slippage to 2024/25	(Under) /Over Spend
	£'000	£'000	£'000	£'000	£'000	£'000
Transport						
Special Appliances	1,355	388	(967)	0	967	0
Light Vehicle Replacement	346	263	(83)	0	83	0
Fire Appliances	2,981	3,414	433	(433)	0	0
Rural Equipment	100	5	(95)	0	95	0
	4,782	4,070	(712)	(433)	1,145	0
Equipment						
Replacement Duty Rig	100	0	(100)	0	100	0
Gas Tight Suits	50	50	0	0	0	0
BA Quick Connect Cylinder Valve	50	50	0	0	0	0
Digital Voice Recorders (MTA Grant)	12	0	(12)	0	12	0
Personal Issue Dry Suits	65	0	(65)	0	57	(8)
Water Rescue kit		8	8	0	0	8
	277	108	(169)	0	169	0
Estates						
Access and Inclusion	760	438	(322)	0	322	0
Training Development Centre (including BA Wash Facilities)	660	1,139	479	(479)	0	0
Electric Vehicle charging points	25	40	15	0	0	15
Estate Energy Reduction and Decarbonisation	50	10	(40)	0	40	0
Workshop Fire Station	192	113	(79)	0	31	(48)
Joint Headquarters	230	187	(43)	0	43	0
	1,917	1,927	10	(479)	436	(33)
IT & Communications						
Replacement Equipment	520	434	(86)	0	86	0
CFRMIS Quick Screens	100	51	(49)	0	49	0

Scheme	Revised Budget 2023/24	Actual 2023/24	Variance 2023/24	2024/25 budget to be moved into 2023/24	Slippage to 2024/25	(Under) /Over Spend
	£'000	£'000	£'000	£'000	£'000	£'000
CFRMIS Accessibility	150	0	(150)	0	150	0
Cyber Security	47	25	(22)	0	22	0
Appliance Handheld Airwave Radio Addition	30	1	(29)	0	29	0
Payroll, Finance and OHU Upgrade	30	0	(30)	0	0	(30)
Airwave - Mobilisation system DCS	60	0	(60)	0	60	0
ICT SharePoint Internet/Intranet	13	0	(13)	0	0	(13)
Tri-Service Control Project	103	74	(29)	0	29	0
Cloud Migration	30	14	(16)	0	0	(16)
ESMCP Grant from DCLG (ESN)	41	0	(41)	0	0	(41)
Emergency Services Mobile Communication Programme ESN	13	0	(13)	0	0	(13)
Tri Service Mobilisation Infrastructure Replacement	40	0	(40)	0	0	(40)
Replacement Mobilising System	970	567	(403)	0	403	0
RMS server	100	0	(100)	0	100	0
	2,247	1,166	(1,081)	0	928	(153)
Total	9,223	7,271	(1,952)	(912)	2,678	(186)
Financed by:						
Capital Grant	12	132	120	0	0	0
Capital Receipts	3	0	(3)	0	0	0
Revenue Contribution to Capital	654	513	(141)	0	100	41
Borrowing	8,544	6,626	(1,928)	(912)	2,578	145
Total	9,223	7,271	(1,952)	(912)	2,678	186

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NOTTINGHAMSHIRE
Fire & Rescue Service
Creating Safer Communities

Nottinghamshire and City of Nottingham
 Fire and Rescue Authority

INTERNAL AUDIT ANNUAL REPORT 2023/24

Report of the Chief Fire Officer

Date: 26 July 2024

Purpose of Report:

To bring to the attention of Members the Head of Internal Audit's Annual Report for 2023/24. The report identifies the key outcomes arising from the work of Internal Audit for 2023/24 and provides an audit opinion on the adequacy and effectiveness of the Authority's arrangements for governance, risk management and internal control. The Annual Report also includes the Internal Audit Plan for 2024/25.

This report also details the outcome of the 5 audits completed during 2023/24.

Recommendations:

It is recommended that Members:

- Note the outcome of the Internal Audit Annual Report for 2023/24 including the audit opinion of substantial assurance for the arrangements for governance, risk management and internal control.
- Note the outcome of 5 internal audits completed during 2023/2024.
- Note the 2024/25 Internal Audit Plan.

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1. BACKGROUND

- 1.1 Under the Local Government Finance Act 1988, section 112 and the Accounts and Audit (England) Regulations 2015 (as amended), the Authority has a responsibility to maintain an adequate and effective Internal Audit function and to annually review the effectiveness of its arrangements for Internal Audit.
- 1.2 Nottinghamshire County Council has provided an Internal Audit service to the Fire and Rescue Authority since its formation in 1998. The Internal Audit service works to best practice as set out in the 2017 Public Sector Internal Audit Standards (PSIAS), which is published by the Chartered Institute of Public Finance and Accountancy. (CIPFA).
- 1.3 The Fire and Rescue Authority are receiving the Internal Audit Annual Report for 2023/24 on behalf of the Finance and Resources Committee in accordance with its role as an audit committee.

2. REPORT

NOTTINGHAMSHIRE COUNTY COUNCIL INTERNAL AUDITOR'S REPORT

- 2.1 The Internal Audit Annual Report 2023/24 including the audit opinion is attached at Appendix 1 and provides an overall summary of the work undertaken for the whole year in relation to the approved Annual Audit Plan.

AUDIT OPINION

- 2.2 The Auditors have provided a view on the internal control environment and conclude that:

*“Based on the coverage and detailed outcomes, overall, we consider the collective evidence provides **substantial assurance** concerning the arrangements in place for corporate governance, risk management and the control environment.”* (see section 10, of the Annual Report at Appendix 1.)

- 2.3 The Public Sector Internal Audit Standards (PSIAS) recommend that the internal audit opinion should conclude on the overall adequacy and effectiveness of the organisation's framework of governance, risk management and control. The annual report provides an assurance level of “Substantial Assurance” individually to all three of these areas as well as the overall rating discussed in section 2.2 (see sections 22 – 24 of the Annual Report at Appendix 1).
- 2.4 The audit opinion forms part of the Authority's Annual Governance Statement.

2023/24 INTERNAL AUDIT PLAN PROGRESS

- 2.5 Six audits were planned for completion in the 2023/24 financial year. The Leading the Service (Fire Standard) audit has been postponed until 2024/25 to allow or more progress on implementing the Fire Standards. For the completed audits four were given substantial assurance and one was given limited assurance (see sections 14 – 15 of the Annual Report at Appendix 1).

Table 1 – Summary of 2023/4 Audits

Audit	Progress	Assurance Level	Appendix
Workforce Planning & Recruitment	Complete	Substantial	Appendix 2
Information Security (data and physical security)	Complete	Substantial	Appendix 3
Health & Safety	Complete	Substantial	Appendix 4
Business Continuity Planning	Complete	Substantial	Appendix 5
Contract Management	Complete	Limited	Appendix 6
'Leading the Service' standard	Postponed until 2024/25		

- 2.6 The Workforce Planning & Recruitment audit reviewed the processes in place to attain the right personnel, skills, and resources, now and in the future and the arrangements to ensure that the workforce profile is adjusted to meet changing needs. The audit provided Substantial Assurance around these arrangements – i.e., that risk levels are low. No recommendations were made. The report can be found at Appendix 2.
- 2.7 The Information Security (data and physical security) audit reviewed the arrangements for the security of premises, and service data. The report provided Substantial Assurance around these arrangements – i.e., that risk levels are low. There were two Priority 2 recommendations, to resume compliance checks at working sites, which lapsed during the Covid lockdown and to ensure the register of information sharing agreements is complete. The report can be found at Appendix 3 including a progress update on the recommendations.
- 2.8 The Health & Safety audit reviewed the procedures to manage health & safety incidents at work. The report provided Substantial Assurance – i.e., that risk levels are low. There were three Priority 2 recommendations, to consider obtaining the BSI ISO 45001 certification, to consider introducing a Health & Safety Risk Register and to complete a plan to address the shortfall in designated Fire Marshals at the fire stations. The report can be found at Appendix 4.

- 2.9 The Business Continuity Planning audit reviewed the Business Continuity Planning arrangements currently in place across the Service. The report provided Substantial Assurance – i.e., that risk levels are low. There was one Priority 2 recommendation, which was for the Business Continuity Test Report to record when the actions arising from the test have been addressed. This has been implemented and will continue to be implemented going forward. The report can be found at Appendix 5.
- 2.10 The Contract Management audit reviewed the adequacy of controls in place in relation to effective management of contracts. The report provided Limited Assurance – i.e., that risk levels are high. There were four Priority 1 recommendations and two Priority 2 recommendations all of which are in the process of being addressed. Four of the recommendations relate to improving the accuracy of data in the contracts register or published transparency data and two relate to improving consistency across the Service in holding regular contract management meetings and maintaining a lessons' learnt log. The report can be found at Appendix 6 including a progress update on the recommendations.
- 2.11 Where recommendations have been made the agreed actions are being implemented and the Corporate Risk Management Plan Assurance Board monitor the progress of the agreed recommendations.

2024/25 INTERNAL AUDIT PLAN

- 2.12 Appendix C of the Annual Report shows the internal audit plan for 2024/25 which has been agreed by the Head of Finance / Treasurer following consultation with the Strategic Leadership Team. There is sufficient flexibility to amend the plan if circumstances require alternative work to be carried out by the Auditors in the year.
- 2.13 The audits planned for 2024/25 are:
- Procurement
 - Data Protection (formerly known as GDPR)
 - Replacement Mobilisation System (RMS)
 - Firefighter remuneration system
 - Corporate Governance
 - “Leading the Service” Fire Standard (carried forward from 2023/24)

REVIEW OF INTERNAL AUDIT

- 2.14 The requirement for an Authority to maintain an Internal Audit function is derived from local government legislation, including Section 112 of the Local Government Finance Act 1988 and the Accounts and Audit Regulations 2015 in that a relevant body must:

“maintain an adequate and effective internal audit of its accounting records and of its system of internal control in accordance with the proper internal audit practices”

- 2.15 The responsibility for ensuring an effective internal audit function rest with the Authority Treasurer as part of their Section 112 obligations.
- 2.16 The Authority views Internal Audit as an integral part of the corporate governance framework, particularly in so far as it relates to the system of Internal Control. Whilst it is acknowledged that Internal Control is a managerial responsibility, it is considered that Internal Audit can provide managers with independent assurance that the system is working effectively and draw any deficiencies in the system to the attention of managers and elected members.
- 2.17 These assurances, however, can only be relied upon providing the internal audit service is adequate to meet the needs of the organisation and is provided professionally.
- 2.18 The Internal Audit Service of the Authority is provided under a Service Level Agreement with Nottinghamshire County Council and requires the Auditors to operate within the Public Sector Internal Audit Standards set down by the Chartered Institute of Public Finance and Accountancy (CIPFA). Operating to these standards will ensure that the Authority meets its obligations under statute.
- 2.19 In June 2022 the Authority adopted the Internal Audit Charter which defines the role of the Internal Audit Service. The Charter complies with the Public Sector Internal Audit Standards 2017, the Local Government Finance Act 1988 and the Accounts and Audit Regulations 2015.
- 2.20 There are regular reviews of audit plans and progress by senior managers and the audit team to monitor the work being carried out. Representatives from Internal Audit regularly attend both Finance and Resources Committee and Strategic Leadership Team meetings.
- 2.21 The External Auditors, in their general review of controls and as part of their specific annual audit, are required to comment on the adequacy or otherwise of Internal Audit. To date they have always been satisfied that the work of Internal Audit is sufficient for them to rely on their audit work and that the service is effective.

3. FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

Indirect financial implications relating to policy, procedure updates and staff training are contained within the report.

4. HUMAN RESOURCES AND LEARNING AND DEVELOPMENT IMPLICATIONS

There are no human resources or learning and development implications arising from this report.

5. EQUALITIES AND ETHICAL IMPLICATIONS

An equality impact assessment has not been undertaken because this is a report relating to the Authority's performance rather than new or amended policy. There are no ethical implications arising directly from this report.

6. ENVIRONMENTAL AND SUSTAINABILITY IMPLICATIONS

There are no environmental and sustainability implications arising directly from this report.

7. LEGAL IMPLICATIONS

Internal Audit is a mandatory function within fire authorities. The Local Government and Finance Act 1988 and Accounts and Audit Regulations 2015 identify a Fire Authority as a "relevant body", responsible for maintaining an adequate and effective internal audit function.

8. RISK MANAGEMENT IMPLICATIONS

Internal Audit forms part of the wider system of internal control which deals entirely with the Authority's exposure to financial, and to some extent non-financial risk. Presenting the annual report to the Authority enables Members to see the work of internal audit and the contribution that they make to the overall system of internal control.

9. COLLABORATION IMPLICATIONS

The Internal Audit service is provided by Nottinghamshire County Council.

10. RECOMMENDATIONS

It is recommended that Members:

- 10.1 Note the outcome of the Internal Audit Annual Report for 2023/24 including the audit opinion of substantial assurance for the arrangements for governance, risk management and internal control.

- 10.2 Note the outcome of 5 internal audits completed during 2023/2024.
- 10.3 Note the 2024/25 Internal Audit Plan (Appendix C of the Internal Auditors Annual Report).

11. BACKGROUND PAPERS FOR INSPECTION (OTHER THAN PUBLISHED DOCUMENTS)

None

Craig Parkin
CHIEF FIRE OFFICER

**Head of Internal Audit's Annual Report 2023/24
Report to the Chief Fire Officer, Nottinghamshire & City of Nottingham Fire &
Rescue Authority**

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Purpose of report

1. To provide the Head of Internal Audit's Annual Report for 2023/24, including our opinion on the adequacy of the Nottinghamshire & City of Nottingham Fire & Rescue Authority's arrangements for governance, risk management and control.

Requirement for internal audit

2. The practice of internal audit within fire authorities is mandatory. The **Local Government Finance Act 1988** and **Accounts and Audit Regulations 2015** identify a fire authority as a '**relevant body**', responsible for maintaining an adequate and effective internal audit function.
3. The internal audit function is purposed to review, assess, and report on the governance, risk management and control environment established by management to:
 - determine and monitor the achievement of objectives
 - identify, assess, and appropriately manage the risks to achieving objectives
 - facilitate policy and decision making
 - ensure the economical, effective, and efficient use of resources
 - ensure compliance with policies, procedures, laws, and regulations
 - safeguard assets and interests.
4. It is also expected to comply with the **Public Sector Internal Audit Standards (PSIAS)**, and guidance from the **Chartered Institute of Public Finance and Accountancy (CIPFA)**.

Appendix 1

Fulfilment of requirements

5. The Fire & Rescue Authority has an annually renewable agreement with Nottinghamshire County Council for the provision of internal audit services, and an Internal Audit Charter which was adopted in 2022.
6. We endeavour to review the key areas of governance, risk management and control environment over a multi-year cycle, as agreed with the Service. Our coverage is intended to take account of, and be complementary to, other sources of assurance provision. This annual report reviews both our own, and this independent, assurance.
7. Our mutual roles and responsibilities align with those prescribed in the PSIAS as follows:
 - **Chief Audit Executive (CAE)** - Chief Internal Auditor
 - **Senior Management** - Strategic Leadership Team (SLT), which meets monthly as the Community Risk Management Plan (CRMP) Assurance Board
 - **Board** - Finance and Resources Committee
8. The other aspects of our compliance with PSIAS and CIPFA guidance are set out in this report.

Audit approach and coverage

9. In 2023/24, and in early 2024/25, up to the time of compiling this annual report, we carried out and completed the following: -

Provision	Description
Audit assurance reviews	Completing the assurance reviews in the agreed plan, issuing reports, making recommendations, and agreeing actions.
Action tracking	Following up the implementation of agreed actions from audit reports issued in 2022/23, and outstanding actions from reports issued before that.
Review of overall arrangements	Mapping sources of assurance for governance, risk management and control, and providing an assurance opinion on each.

Audit opinion

10. Based on the coverage (above) and detailed outcomes (below), overall, we consider the collective evidence provides **Substantial Assurance** concerning the arrangements in place for governance, risk management and the control environment. The rationale for this opinion is as follows:
 - The assurance opinions on our audits are mostly substantial assurances, in particular for the core systems audited in this and recent previous years.
 - There were generally positive outcomes from following up the implementation of agreed actions from previous audit reports. Three key actions from one 2022/23 audit, Performance Management, are progressing despite not being fully actioned within the original planned timescales of February to December 2023.

Appendix 1

- **Other sources provided positive assurance in relation to governance, risk management, and control.**

Audit assurance reviews

11. **PSIAS** state that: ‘Adequate control is present if management has planned and organised in a manner that provides reasonable assurance that the organisation’s risks have been managed effectively and that the organisation’s goals and objectives will be achieved efficiently and effectively.’
12. Mostly, assurance reviews result in the issue of an opinion on the internal controls, the opinions being categorised as follows:
 - **Substantial Assurance:** arrangements are effective at managing the risks and achieving the objectives, with no or few control weaknesses of significance.
 - **Reasonable Assurance:** most arrangements are effective, but there are control weaknesses considered to be of greater significance.
 - **Limited Assurance:** as there are some fundamental control weaknesses, the arrangements pose an unacceptable level of risk in those areas.
13. If we find control weaknesses or identify test failures, we make recommendations to improve the controls, or compliance with them, and endeavour to agree with management the actions to be taken. We categorise actions according to a priority level:
 - **Priority 1 recommendations:** fundamental for effective arrangements, must implement to improve the controls and mitigate the most serious risks.
 - **Priority 2 recommendations:** desirable for effective arrangements, should implement to improve the controls.
 - **Advisory recommendations:** may also be raised in feedback to advise further on how to improve the controls.
14. In the areas reviewed in 2023/24, we provided the following opinions, and made the following number and priority level of recommendations:

Assurance level	Report	Recommendations	
		Priority 1	Priority 2
Substantial	Workforce Planning & Recruitment	0	0
	Information Security (data and physical)	0	2
	Health & Safety	0	3
	Business Continuity Planning	0	1
Reasonable	No audits were in this category.	-	-
Limited	Contract Management	4	2
Opinion not provided	‘Leading the Service’ standard – Progress against this national Fire Standard. Because of limited progress the audit has been rescheduled for late 2024/25.	-	-

Appendix 1

15. A summary of the recommendations and actions in the above reports is below:

Reports	Recommendations/Actions
Workforce Planning & Recruitment	All of our findings were positive and found the controls to be effective, therefore no recommendations were made.
Information Security (data and physical security)	Resume compliance checks at working sites, which lapsed during the Covid lockdown. The register of information sharing agreements to be complete, so that it can help ensure that the agreements are monitored and reflect best practice.
Health & Safety	Consider obtaining the BSI ISO 45001 certification. Consider introducing a Health & Safety Risk Register. Complete the plan to address the shortfall in designated Fire Marshals, at the fire stations.
Business Continuity Planning	Business Continuity Test Report to record when the actions arising from the test have been addressed.
Contract Management	Contracts Register to be up to date with the names of current Contract Managers, to help ensure all are aware of their contract management responsibilities. Ensure that all contracts are included in the Contracts Register Ensure that dates are correct in the Contracts Register (including contract start and end dates). Improve consistency across the Service in holding regular contract management meetings with contractors. Improve consistency across the Service in Contract Managers maintaining a lessons learnt log. Expired contracts can be removed from the information published about contracts on the website, for transparency purposes.

Action tracking (see also Appendix A)

16. **PSIAS** state that: *'The chief audit executive must establish a follow-up process to monitor and ensure that management actions have been effectively implemented or that senior management has accepted the risk of not taking action'*.
17. The NFRS Finance team annually requests and evaluates updates from action owners, reports these to the CRMP Assurance Board, and informs Internal Audit. This year's exercise revisited all the actions still to be implemented from reports issued in 2022/23 and earlier.
18. **Appendix A** illustrates the proportion of actions that have been implemented from previous years. Overall, there is a high implementation rate of 88% on all actions raised since 2018/19. 63% of the actions from 2022/23, whose dates for implementation have now passed, have been implemented. The new Head of Finance has informed us that she is to set up a tracker for all actions so that their implementation can be better monitored by the CRMP Assurance Board.

Appendix 1

Assurances on governance, risk management and control (see also Appendix B)

19. **PSIAS state:** 'The annual internal audit opinion must conclude on the overall adequacy and effectiveness of the organisation's framework of governance, risk management and control'.
20. Our annual report covers the adequacy and effectiveness of the Fire Service's framework of governance, risk management and control.
21. Internal Audit uses assurance mapping to identify and assess the sources of assurance – primarily based on information from governance documents and committee reports. Assurance maps summarise, group, and rate evidence according to the 'three lines model':
 - **1st line** – management policies, strategies, plans and controls, and internal support functions.
 - **2nd line** – compliance oversight, especially evident in reports to committees.
 - **3rd line** – external assurance, mostly auditors and inspectors

The assurance maps are in **Appendix B**.

22. Our opinion is that there is **substantial assurance** over the **Governance** arrangements (see Appendix B)
 - Governance arrangements are well structured with comprehensive reporting.
 - Plans are in place to achieve strategic goals and to identify and realise improvements.
 - There are regular reviews of performance.
23. Our opinion is that there is **substantial assurance** over the **Risk Management** arrangements (see Appendix B):
 - Risks are managed including through a corporate risk register that is actively maintained – reviewed, updated, and reported.
 - Community Risk Management Plan (CRMP) is in place, with arrangements to measure progress on its delivery.
 - Emerging national and local risk issues are identified and addressed by local actions.
24. Our opinion is that there is **substantial assurance** over the **Control** arrangements (see Appendix B):
 - Close control over the finances, including current and future spending, and the financial assets held.
 - Workforce requirements are identified and acted upon.
 - Workforce performance is managed.

Performance of Internal Audit

25. A summary of Internal Audit performance is shown below:

Appendix 1

Indicator	Performance
Job completion	Five assurance reviews completed, plus a memo communicating our interim findings on the audit we have had to postpone to the next year.
Timeliness of reporting	Four of the reports were issued in the year, and the remaining two in May 2024.
Days spent	81 planned days fully utilised.
Recommendations	100% agreed
Action tracking	Planned exercise completed by NFRS Finance team using the template provided by Internal Audit, and summarised in this report. The new Head of Finance is to set up a tracker for all actions so that their implementation can be better monitored by the CRMP Assurance Board.
Auditor experience	Four reviews by senior auditors; and two by an apprentice internal auditor. All under the supervision of the Internal Audit Team Manager.
Customer feedback	Average client satisfaction score of 3.4 (out of 4) from two completed questionnaires. Our target for a score of at least 3.0 has been met.

26. The Chief Internal Auditor carries out an annual self-assessment of compliance against the PSIAS. This incorporates the requirements of the Local Government Application Note (LGAN), which provides additional advice and guidance to providers of internal audit services in a local government setting, including fire authorities.
27. In addition to the self-assessment, the Internal Audit Service is subject to an External Quality Assessment (EQA) once every five years. The most recent EQA was carried out in March 2023.
28. The EQA is a robust evidence-based review of the whole Internal Audit Service comprising:
 - PSIAS review of the accuracy of the HOIA self-assessment and supporting evidence
 - Interviews with Members and Senior Officers regarding the service provision
 - A survey of service recipients capturing view on professionalism and quality of services
 - A review of the professional standards applied to the individual engagements undertaken by the staff within the service.
29. The EQA confirmed the accuracy of the self-assessment and concluded that the Internal Audit Service fully conforms to the requirements of the PSIAS and LGAN.
30. The Chief Internal Auditor has undertaken the self-assessment for 2023/24 following the approach that was deemed compliant by the EQA. For 2023/24, the self-assessment and outcomes have been used to enhance the basis of the annual Quality Assurance and Improvement Programme (QAIP) for the service.
31. The outcome from the self-assessment provides significant assurance that the Internal Audit service continues to conduct its work with due professional care and confirms the following in respect of the work carried out by the service in 2023/24:
 - The service applied a systematic, risk-based approach to the assurance work it delivered.
 - Internal Audit staff performed their duties with due regard to the code of ethics set out in the standards.

Appendix 1

32. The QAIP continues to capture scope for improvements in service compliance, with a consolidated action plan to provide a focus for continuous improvement in 2024/25. Key themes for further improvement centre around the following:
- A review of the Team's resources against its foreseeable workloads and capabilities in the deployment of specialist ICT audit resources.
 - Continuous update of our Audit Manual, to keep pace with professional changes and ensure compliance with the application of core audit quality processes.
 - Continuous 'in flight' quality reviews, to ensure compliance with the Audit Manual and professional standards as the audit engagement progresses.
 - Continued engagement with the development of professional standards that influence the PSIAS.

Audit planning for 2024/25 to 2026/27 (see also Appendix C)

33. **Appendix C** provides the annual audit plan for 2024/25 and incorporates a provisional three-year plan. Plans are derived from an audit universe consisting of previous audits and other potential audits, which is subject to risk assessment and subsequent consultation with the Head of Finance and SLT. The number of chargeable days for the delivery of each review is given, plus time for action tracking, assurance mapping, annual reporting, and other client facing support.
34. We endeavour to blend coverage of core processes and systems with more focused audits of current and emerging risks and developments.

Andrew Howarth, Internal Audit Team Manager

Simon Lacey, Chief Internal Auditor

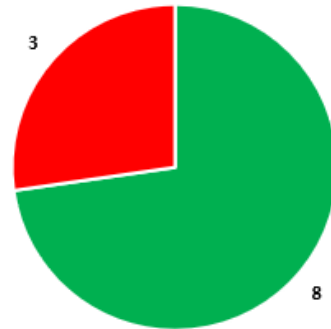
Appendix A

Implementation of internal audit recommendations from previous years

2022/23 Priority 1 Actions



2022/23 Priority 2 Actions



Priority 1 actions from earlier years (2018/19 to 2021/22)



Priority 2 actions from earlier years (2018/19 to 2021/22)



■ Completed ■ Not Actioned/WIP

The 3 incomplete Priority 1 actions from 2022/23 audits are all in progress, and are from our audit of Performance Management (reported in January 2023):

- The Data & Business Intelligence strategy is almost complete (original target date March 2023).
- A CFRMIS Project (Community Fire Risk Management Information System) is well underway, and will contribute to data quality through training, processes and a more user-friendly interface (original target date Dec 2023).
- Reporting on the Community Risk Management Plan (CRMP) already included (at the time of our audit) the targets for Community Outcomes and Workforce. Diversity targets have now been added, leaving only the targets for Governance & Financial Sustainability in development (original target date Feb 2023).

There are no outstanding actions from years earlier than those in the above pie charts.

Appendix B: Assurance maps for Governance, Risk Management and Control

Assurance Map for Governance

1 st Line	2 nd Line	3 rd Line
<p>Established governance structure including:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Authority • Committees • Strategic Leadership Team • Community Risk Management Plan (CRMP) Assurance Board • Area Managers Team • Operational Learning Board • Service Delivery Evaluation & Assurance Group • Collaboration Board <p>Committee Outcomes are regularly reported to the Authority meetings.</p> <p>Each Committee report includes consideration of Implications for Finance, HR, Equalities and Collaboration</p> <p>Community Risk Management Plan (CRMP) 2022-25 has 6 strategic goals including (for Governance):</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • support and develop our workforce and promote an inclusive Service. • continue our improvement journey to deliver an outstanding Service. • manage and invest in our Service to ensure it is fit for the future. 	<p>Annual Governance Statement 2022/23. This includes a review of the effectiveness of the Governance Framework, and how it complied with the local code of corporate governance, including the 7 CIPFA / SOLACE principles of Good Governance. It also considered Significant Issues for Governance in 2023/24. Its conclusion was that there are well developed and evolving governance arrangements in place that are fit for purpose.</p> <p>Annual Statement of Assurance 2022-23 A review of performance against the 6 strategic goals in the Community Risk Management Plan 2022-25 (CRMP). It details notable achievements.</p> <p>An Assurance Declaration stated that:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • it has met government expectations and responsibilities. • shown due regard for efficient and effective use of public money – and accounting. • adhered to the commitments set out in the Community Risk Management Plan (CRMP) for the period. <p>Service Delivery Performance Report produced quarterly to Community Safety committee.</p> <p>Review of Workforce Plan 2022-24. 30 new firefighters have been recruited.</p>	<p>His Majesty’s Inspectorate of Constabulary and Fire & Rescue Services (HMICFRS). The third inspection commenced in late 2023. At the previous visit (report July 2022) the Service was graded Good in all areas.</p> <p>The second HMICFRS inspection reported in July 2022. There were 4 Areas for Improvement (AFIs). All were completed including the 2 relating to Governance:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • AFI 1 - monitor, review and evaluate the benefits and outcomes of any collaboration activity. • AFI 3 - staff understand how to get wellbeing support. <p>HMICFRS spotlight report ‘Values and Culture in Fire and Rescue Services (report March 2023). Of the 20 relevant recommendations, the Fire Service has completed 12 and is well underway with work on the other 8.</p> <p>Externally Audited Final Accounts</p> <p>3 other external audits:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Babcock International Home Office audit of Terrorism Personal Protective Equipment. Found to be in good order and well organised, enabling a swift response if required.

<p>Gap analysis undertaken on the 16 National Fire Standards (from the National Fire Chief's Council (NFCC)) with a programme of work to ensure compliance.</p> <p>Futures 25 efficiency and improvement programme - one of its 4 workstreams is Governance Review: to support the efficiency and effectiveness of meeting structures and decision making, whilst maintaining proportionate control.</p> <p>Efficiency and Productivity Plan 2023/24. Required by the Home Office.</p> <p>Workforce Plan 2023-2025: To ensure staffing numbers, skills & health, fitness & well-being meet service needs and available budget. Includes an implementation plan with 20 actions.</p> <p>10-Year Workforce Diversity Plan. The Service commissioned its own review of equality, diversity and inclusion practice during 2021-22. Progress has been made. More work is planned.</p> <p>A Confidential Reporting Service for Employee Concerns put in place procured from an external provider. This addresses a recommendation arising from the:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Independent Culture Review of London Fire Brigade (Nov 2022) • Values and culture in fire and rescue services (HMICFRS, March 2023) <p>Procurement Thresholds revised in 2023 to reflect current prices – balancing financial control with efficiency and best value.</p>	<p>Equalities monitoring information reported to the HR Committee.</p> <p>The gender pay gap has decreased (improved) since the last year.</p> <p>High completion rates for mandatory staff training including (for Governance):</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 98.6% Equality & Diversity • 98.6% Diversity for Managers <p>Local Firefighter Pension Scheme Annual Report</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • National Resilience and Assurance Team (NRAT) Home Office audit of National Resilience Enhanced Logistic Support. Concluded that crews perform the role well and good resilience within the team. Small action plan. • NRAT audit of Flood and Rescue capabilities. Determined the Service is well prepared and qualified to respond. Small action plan. <p>Signed up to the British Deaf Association's (BDA) British Sign Language (BSL) Charter in 2018. As part of this the Service has made improvements and more are planned.</p>
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Opinion:

Substantial Assurance (Green)



Rationale:

Governance arrangements are well structured with comprehensive reporting.


Plans are in place to achieve strategic goals and to identify and realise improvements.

There are regular reviews of performance.

Assurance Map for Risk Management

1 st Line	2 nd Line	3 rd Line
<p>Community Risk Management Plan (CRMP) 2022-25 has 6 strategic goals including (for risk management):</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • help people stay safe from fires and other emergencies. • improve fire safety in the buildings people live and work in • respond immediately and effectively to emergency incidents. <p>Key Objectives set within these 6 Strategic Goals, in an Annual Delivery Plan</p> <p>Each Committee report includes consideration of Implications for Risk Management, Legal and Crime & Disorder.</p> <p>Member of Nottinghamshire Local Resilience Forum</p> <p>Workforce Plan 2023-2025: Considers risk of staff turnover, and developing skills to meet new and emerging risks (such as terrorist incidents and changing climate), cyber-attacks, increasing complexity of pension legislation.</p> <p>Recent Safeguarding, Disclosure and Barring legislation allows Fire and Rescue Authorities to conduct more comprehensive criminal record checks on their employees. This Fire Service is to extend these checks to relevant staff.</p>	<p>Corporate Risk Register reported to Finance & Resources Committee every 6-months.</p> <p>Annual Report of Information Governance 2022/23: No data breaches of a risk level that required reporting to the Information Commissioner's Office (ICO) 99% of staff have done mandatory Data protection training. Cyber Essentials Plus certification being renewed and scheduled for September 2023</p> <p>Actions being taken by the Service in response to the Manchester Arena Inquiry, on planning & preparation and response to the emergency. The Service's action plan has 53 recommendations. 32 have been completed and closed and 21 are being worked towards. Progress against all recommendations is on-track and are set to be completed by December 2024.</p> <p>Grenfell Tower Inquiry and Tall Building Response: All 47 recommendations in the Government Phase One Grenfell Tower Inquiry were completed by Dec 2021. The Service has continued to assess tall buildings and its related procedures.</p> <p>Resilience arrangements update went to the Policy & Strategy Committee.</p>	<p>The second HMICFRS inspection reported in July 2022. There were 4 Areas for Improvement (AFIs). All were completed including the 2 relating to Risk Management:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • AFI 2 - risk-based inspection programme to prioritise the highest risk premises and includes proportionate activity to reduce risk. • AFI 4 - when responding to a 999 call, mobile data terminals to be reliable to allow staff to access risk information. <p>Internal audit reports on the following 3 subjects had a Substantial Assurance opinion:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Information Security (data and physical) • Health & Safety • Business Continuity Planning


	<p>2023 Fatal Fires Review. Report on 4 fatalities. After each fatality the Serious Event Review Group is convened, including to learn lessons.</p> <p>High completion rates of mandatory staff training including (for Risk Management): 98.9% Major multi-agency incidents (JESIP) 99.0% Data Protection 99.3% Safeguarding 88.8% Fire Safety Awareness</p>	
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<p>Opinion:</p> <p>Substantial Assurance (Green)</p>		<p>Rationale:</p> <p>Risks are managed including through a corporate risk register that is actively maintained – reviewed, updated, and reported.</p> <p>Community Risk Management Plan (CRMP) is in place, with arrangements to measure progress on its delivery.</p> <p>Emerging national and local risk issues are identified and addressed by local actions.</p>
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Assurance Map for Control

1 st Line	2 nd Line	3 rd Line
<p>Financial framework including:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Scheme of Delegation • Standing Orders • Financial Regulations • Financial Procedures <p>Futures 2025 Efficiency Strategy to set a balanced budget in future years, whilst achieving service improvements. It will also fulfil the Home Office requirement to submit Efficiency and Productivity Plans for 2023/24. It has 4 workstreams:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Governance Review • Revenue Budget Management • Service Redesign • Culture; Equality, Diversity & Inclusion; and Leadership <p>Medium Term Financial Strategy 2024-25 to 2027-28 approved by the Authority. Includes Capital Strategy, Capital Receipts Strategy and Reserves Strategy</p> <p>Budget Proposals for 2024-25 to 2027-28 (including Council Tax 2024-25) approved by the Authority.</p> <p>Treasury Management Strategy 2024-25 approved by the Authority including Borrowing Strategy and Investment Strategy</p> <p>Pay Policy approved by the Authority.</p> <p>Authority approved the appointment of Assistant Chief Fire Officer and temporary Assistant Chief Fire Officer</p>	<p>Authority and its Committees receive updates on major projects including:</p> <p>Replacement Mobilisation System Mobile Data Terminal software contracts award Sale of former HQ building Refurbishment of Service Development Centre</p> <p>Financial Position monitored in reports to the Finance & Resources Committee:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • annual report on Revenue and Capital outturn • quarterly report on Revenue, Capital, And Prudential Code Monitoring Report, to <p>Treasury Management annual and mid-year reports including reviews of:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Capital Activity • Investment and Cash Management • Borrowing • Compliance with Treasury and Prudential limits <p>Annual Financial Accounts include an annual review of the effectiveness of the governance framework including the system of internal control.</p> <p>Human Resources Update quarterly to HR Committee. Starters, leavers, staffing numbers, sickness absence, disciplinary, grievance, harassment, and discrimination cases.</p> <p>PRINCIPAL OFFICER PAY REVIEW approved the pay of the Chief Fire Officer and Assistant Chief Fire Officer.</p> <p>People Strategy 2023-25. In Feb 2024 the Service was at the half-way point of implementing this.</p>	<p>Internal audit annual report.</p> <p>Internal audit report on Workforce Planning & Recruitment – with Substantial Assurance opinion.</p> <p>Action tracking to monitor implementation of internal audit recommendations.</p> <p>Fraud: External audit includes enquiries relating to the management of fraud risks</p>

<p>Authority endorsed the appointment of Head of Finance and Treasurer</p> <p>Fraud: Counter Fraud, Money Laundering, Corruption and Bribery Policy in place. Section in the Financial Regulations on Preventing Fraud & Corruption</p>	<p>The Workforce Plan 2023-25 identified recruitment needs. There was positive action to encourage the diversity of the applicants, which was reflected in the 34 successful applicants.</p> <p>Wholetime Apprentice Firefighter recruitment campaign. The first cohort of 20 recruits commencing their apprenticeship in April 2024, with a second course scheduled for January 2025.</p> <p>Fraud: The Service participates in the National Fraud Initiative (NFI) - reconfirm</p>	
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<p>Opinion:</p> <p>Substantial Assurance (Green)</p>		<p>Rationale:</p> <p>Close control over the finances, including current and future spending, and the financial assets held.</p> <p>Workforce requirements are identified and acted upon.</p> <p>Workforce performance is managed.</p>
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Appendix 1

Audit Universe	Audit needs assessment	Past and current audits - with opinion							Plan	Future plan proposals	
		2017-18	2018-19	2019-20	2020-21	2021-22	2022-23	2023-24	2024-25	2025-26	2026-27
Audit reviews											
Payroll	High	substantial				substantial					
Firefighters' remuneration system	Medium		substantial						11		
Members & staff expenses & allowances	Medium		reasonable								11
Pensions administration	High					substantial				11	
Workforce planning & recruitment	High							substantial			
Property & premises	Medium	reasonable									11
Facilities management	Medium					substantial					
Transport management	Medium										
Fuel recharges	Low			substantial							
Vehicle maintenance contract	Medium							reasonable			
Procurement	High								11		
Purchasing & creditor payments	Medium	reasonable			reasonable						11
Purchase cards	Low				reasonable						11
Contract management	High		reasonable					limited			
Income & debtors	Low	reasonable									
Capital programme	Medium			reasonable						11	
Asset management (incl. disposals)	Medium	reasonable				limited	reasonable				
Financial management (incl. CIPFA FM code)	Medium		substantial			reasonable					
Budget management	High						substantial				
Treasury management	Medium	reasonable			substantial						11
Counter-fraud & counter-corruption	Low										
Project management	Medium	reasonable								11	
Corporate Governance	High		reasonable						11		
Ethical Code	Medium					substantial					
Leading the Service (Fire Standard)	Medium								11		

Appendix 1

Health and safety	High		limited				substantial			
Data Protection (GDPR)	Medium			no opinion				11		
Performance management	High					reasonable				
Joint working	Medium					reasonable				
Risk management	High					substantial				
Business continuity planning	High						substantial			
Environmental/carbon footprint	Medium								11	
ICT service desk	Medium			reasonable						
Information security (data & physical)	Medium			no opinion			substantial			
Cyber security	High					exempt				
ICT strategy, transformation & change	Medium								11	
ICT access management	Medium									11
Replacement Mobilisation System (RMS)	Medium							11		
Cardiff Checks	Low	no opinion	no opinion	reasonable	substantial				11	
Prince's Trust (now ended)			limited							
Total review days								66	66	66
Other tasks										
Action tracking of previous recommendations								2	2	2
Annual audit report								5	5	5
Assurance mapping (within annual audit report)								4	4	4
Client management - planning, reporting, Committee								4	4	4
Total days								81	81	81

To: Chief Fire Officer

Subject: Fire Service - Workforce Planning & Recruitment

Date: April 2024

1 Introduction

1.1 Internal Audit have reviewed the controls NFRS have in place in relation to effective workforce planning arrangements. This included a review to ensure they have processes in place to attain the right personnel, skills, and resources, now and in the future, to enable them to provide an effective emergency response service and support their broader mission. In addition, we have reviewed arrangements in place to ensure that the workforce profile is adjusted to meet changing needs.

2 Audit opinion

2.1 In the areas examined, we assessed the controls to determine to what extent the risks are being mitigated.

2.2 In our opinion the level of assurance we can provide is: -



SUBSTANTIAL ASSURANCE Risk levels are low

3 Risk areas examined

3.1 During this audit we looked for controls to address the following key risks: -

<i>Risk title</i>	<i>Description</i>
Identifying the current workforce position	There may be a lack of understanding of current staffing levels, needs or challenges.
Expected change to the workforce.	Staff turnover rates and reasons may be unknown or misunderstood.
Future workforce needs and skills	Future staffing needs and sustainability may not align with organisational goals and strategy.
Gaps between current position and future needs	Qualitative and quantitative data may not be used to identify and address deficiencies between current and future workforce needs.
Workforce monitoring	There may be inadequate arrangements to regularly monitor changes in the workforce turnover or take prompt action when staffing issues arise.

3.2 The scale of the area reviewed is: -

Appendix 2

Metrics (Workgroup)	Number of Employees (FTE at 31 Dec 2023)	Staff Turnover 2021-22*	Staff Turnover 2022-23*	Staff Turnover 2023-24 (to Dec 23)*
Wholetime	412	34 (7.6%)	27 (6.5%)	24 (5.76%)
On call	242.5	31 (12.5%)	26 (10.7%)	17 (7.1%)
Support	162	43 (24.5%)	36 (21.6%)	14 (8.7%)
Total	816.5			
Starters in year		65	61	63

*Source: Workforce Plan 2023-25

4 Audit findings

4.1 Following our work, we consider the controls to be effective in the following risk areas: -

- **Identifying the current workforce position** – The workforce position is based upon staffing numbers, skills and predicted staff turnover. Details of the workforce position are recorded in the Workforce Plan which is amended annually. The Workforce Plan 2022-24 was devised and updated and approved by the Strategic Leadership Team (SLT) for the period 2023-25. The Workforce Plan was updated at the mid-year position and reported to HR Committee on 10th November 2023. This forms part of the business planning process which supports the delivery of the Strategic Plan. This shows workforce trends and issues based upon projections of turnover and information received from departments for the forthcoming year.
- **Expected changes in the current workforce position are identified** – Expected changes do take account of past experience of normal turnover rates, expected leavers and retirements and contract end-dates for non-permanent staff. Workforce reductions through retirement, resignation and due to end of contract are predicted in the Workforce Plan. Specific workstreams are in place to address resource gaps in the corporate function, ICT, Finance and Community Engagement. Processes are in place for departments to highlight resource challenges such as recruitment and retention, development of specialist skills and demands for ICT to support new systems.
- **Future workforce needs are identified** – Measures are in place to determine future workforce needs and any proposals with HR and learning and development implications are built into reporting templates so that consideration can be given to such requirements. Succession planning is outlined in the Workforce Plan. This includes the anticipated need for resources, specialist skills and difficult posts to fill.
- **Gaps between the current position and future needs** - Identifying and addressing gaps between the current workforce and future needs is evidenced. The Workforce Plan includes a gap analysis, which has identified areas with recruitment and retention difficulties. When the Workforce Plan is updated each year, departments are required to identify workforce implications, which are then contained within the plan. The Workforce Plan 2023-2025 forms part of the business planning process which supports the delivery of the Community Risk Management Plan (CRMP) and is undertaken by the People and Organisational Development (POD) department to establish workforce trends, identify potential workforce planning issues and formulate an action plan to address these issues. The plan is based upon projections of anticipated turnover and information received from all departments regarding their workforce needs for the forthcoming year. Other considerations in relation to gaps include promoting equality in the workforce and the well-being strategy which supports

Appendix 2

employees to maintain good physical, emotional and mental health and reduce sickness absence. Objectives also include ensuring that future needs reflect core competencies required in line with industry standards and any specialist capability requirements with the aim to develop and diversify the skills of the team to meet the organisational needs that are ahead of the service and consider major challenges such as the development of technology which will require different skill sets. Leadership programmes are in place for 2023-24, including the aspiring leaders programme and other programmes will help to retain and develop skills. This work will assist the Service in proactively identifying and developing people to maintain effective succession planning and for personal development.

- **Workforce position is regularly monitored** – Quarterly workforce metrics are reported to the CRMP Assurance Board and there is an overview of the Workforce Plan taken to HR Committee twice a year. HR metrics go to every HR Committee – 4 times a year and monitoring includes establishment numbers, starters and leavers, staff turnover and absence metrics. Unexpected changes in the workforce and actions taken to address these are taken to SLT along with plans to fill the gaps. In July 2023 various actions were agreed including recruitment campaigns and changes to service delivery. This is supported by an Implementation Plan which outlines risks, actions and officers responsible for agreed actions. However, we are advised that there is no formal follow up of this currently, although the intention is to pull together a working group to take an overview of anticipated issues to the Area Management Team meetings.

- 4.1 There were no control weaknesses and no failures to comply with the standard controls therefore, no recommendations are made. However, we recognise that the processes are ongoing and will need to be kept under review to ensure that risks are effectively managed.

**Audit conducted by: Angela Wendels
Senior Auditor**

**Audit supervised by: Andrew Howarth
Audit Team Manager**

Simon Lacey, Group Manager - Internal Audit & Risk Management

OFFICIAL SENSITIVE

To: Chief Fire Officer

Subject: Fire Service - Information Security (data and physical security)

Date:

[Click here to enter text.](#)

1. Introduction

- .1 We have reviewed the arrangements for physical across various areas of the Fire Service. This included a review of physical site security, including data security.
- .2 The objective of our review was to provide independent assurance that arrangements for the security of premises, and service data, are secure.

2. Audit opinion

- 1. In the areas examined, we assessed the controls to determine to what extent the risks are being mitigated.
- 2. In our opinion the level of assurance we can provide is: -

SUBSTANTIAL ASSURANCE Risk levels are low



3. Risk areas examined

- 1. During this audit we looked for controls to address the following key risks: -

<i>Risk title</i>	<i>Description</i>
Policies Procedures and Training	Policies, procedures and training provide clarity and consistency, by communicating what people need to do and why. Failure to provide adequate direction will increase the likelihood of breaches taking place.
Access Controls - access to buildings	Arrangements may not be suitably secure to prevent unauthorised access to premises and information assets.
Access Controls - access within buildings	Arrangements may not be suitably secure to prevent unauthorised access to premises and information assets.
Off-Site Access Controls	Arrangements may not be suitably secure to prevent unauthorised access to premises and information assets.

Incident Management	Failure to promptly respond to incidents, and learn from past events, could incur financial penalties by the regulator the Information Commissioner.
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4. **Audit findings**

1. The service engaged an external party earlier in the year to test physical security at several service locations. This work resulted in several recommendations that have been, or are being, progressed.

2. Following our work, and with reference to the above source of independent assurance available, we consider the controls to be effective in the following risk areas:

- **Policies Procedures and Training**

Policies were of a high standard, exhibiting effective version control. All the policies examined relevant to this review were found to be current and had been recently reviewed in accordance with the expected review periods. The service has recently introduced a register to record that staff have read and accepted core policies. This is at a formative stage but is a positive step in ensuring employees are informed whilst also emphasising the importance the service places on the direction being given to staff. Discussions are ongoing between the Data Protection Officer, the ICT Security Manager and SLT to determine how escalation for not affirming understanding and acceptance should be dealt with.

Training is provided to staff on both cyber and information security, with information security being mandatory.

- **Access Controls to Buildings**

Our review included a visit to three locations:

- Joint Headquarters
- Carlton Fire Station
- London Road Fire Station

At these locations we observed adequate perimeter security in the form of gated premises where some form of authentication was required to gain access.

Reliance is also placed on a physical penetration testing exercise that the service commissioned during the year. The results of this exercise were positive, with some improvements being identified that are currently being progressed. This testing also covered access controls within buildings.

Previously, compliance checks against security expectations were undertaken internally within the service. These were put on hold during lockdown and have yet to be reintroduced. A recommendation has been made to resume this practice.

- **Access Controls within Buildings**

We confirmed that internal door access controls operated within service premises visited and that further restricted access operated for sensitive areas such as server rooms.

- **Off-Site Access Controls**

Non-disclosure arrangements are established with external parties that support the ICT function.

Information sharing agreements are in place although the management and oversight of these could be enhanced. A recommendation, below, has been made to improve this area.

- **Incident Management**

We found that incidents are recorded, investigated and results reported to acted upon by senior officers.

Appendix 3

3. There were some control weaknesses and some failures to comply with the standard controls, resulting in remaining risks. The attached Action Plan sets out these weaknesses, and our recommendations to address them.

4. A summary of the recommendations made, together with brief details of the related findings, is set out below: -

<i>Priority level</i>	<i>Number of Recommendations</i>	<i>Recommended action timescales</i>
Priority 1	0	Immediate
Priority 2	2	Within two months

Priority 2 areas:

- Prior to Covid-19, officers from Estates, Information Governance and ICT would undertake compliance checks at NFRS sites. These checks have yet to be resumed but represent a pro-active approach to ensuring security is maintained and reinforces the message that security should be treated seriously.
- Information Sharing Agreements set out the framework for the sharing of personal data and documents, the purpose of the sharing, covers what happens to the data at each stage and puts in place standards that help all the parties involved in the sharing to be clear about their roles and responsibilities. Whilst such agreements are documented within the service, the register that records what agreements have been entered into, and the means by which to record when such agreements should be reviewed, is currently incomplete both in terms of agreements entered into and data that should be held in the register. The timelines for undertaking a number of reviews has also passed.

**Audit conducted by: Tony Maycock
Senior Auditor**

**Audit supervised by: Andrew Howarth
Team Manager**

**Simon Lacey
Chief Internal Auditor**

Audit Finding	Recommendation	Management Response
<p>Priority 2 areas (Desirable for effective governance, risk management and internal control, should implement recommendations to improve existing arrangements)</p>		
<p>1. Compliance and Monitoring Checks Historically, managers from Estates, Information Governance and ICT have jointly undertaken site audits within the service. These followed an established check list covering:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • physical security • building systems • visitor and contract management • ICT and information security. <p>These audits ceased because of the Covid remote working requirements and have yet to be resumed. It is expected that they will resume in the new year. Issues preventing a current resumption are inspection by His Majesty's Inspectorate of Constabulary and Fire & Rescue Services over the coming months and the recruitment to the post of ICT manager. We have made a specific recommendation to resume the site audits given their importance, not just in checking site security, but also in affirming the importance of security as well as aiding the Data Protection Officer in fulfilling their duties to monitor compliance with data protection laws.</p> <p>Risk: The service may fail to identify weaknesses in security promptly which may then allow for the vulnerability to be exploited.</p>	<p>1. The service resumes the joint site security checks undertaken jointly by officers from Estates, Information Governance, and ICT.</p>	<p>Response Audits are a vital component to assessing our current practices, identify security gaps, protect critical data and track the viability of current security strategies. Nottinghamshire Fire and Rescue Service is committed to ensuring its infrastructure and employee approach reflects recognised best practice. The development of current NFRS auditing process and criteria is underway and is envisaged to encompass the 2024 period for implementation.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • January: The development of the security steering group (SSG) put forward for discussion and adoption. Audit findings will be disseminated and reviewed by the group. • February: The development of reference control objectives and specific controls in line ISO 27000 series alongside a new NFRS Audit Procedure to link in with POL 2205 Data Protection Compliance Audit Policy • March: Submit to SSG for approval and sign off second bullet point results and outcomes alongside table of onsite visit timescales target for April 2024 commencement.

		<p>Date for implementation 16th of January 2024 first SSG meeting to take place and begin process. Audits to begin estimated April 2024, provided other points are met.</p> <p>Officer responsible for implementation Christopher Smith IG&DPO, Muhammad Hussain ICT Security Manager, Lesley Grace Estates Manager</p> <p>Update on recommendation July 2024 Currently establishing the Information Security Audit Framework going forward using international standards ISO 270001 which will cover,</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Physical security • Access control • Network security • Data security • Employee training and awareness • Equipment and software security <p>Aim for completion for Audit Framework in place by late October 2024 with onsite visits to be taken up by December 2024.</p> <p>Information Security Policies are being reviewed in August 2024 to comply with ISO 270001 standard.</p> <p>An NFRS Data Protection Impact Assessment is to be presented at Protective Security Group (19/07/2024) for approval.</p>
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		Information Asset register is being developed and is a requirement under ISO 270001 for compliance.
Audit Finding	Recommendation	Management Response
Priority 2 areas (Desirable for effective governance, risk management and internal control, should implement recommendations to improve existing arrangements)		
<p>2. Information Sharing Register</p> <p>The Information Governance section maintains a register of information sharing agreements that have been entered into. The register is however not complete, with the Data Protection Officer advising that recent agreements had not been entered pending a refresh of the register. We also observed that some of the fields within the current register do not contain the required information. These include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • the purpose for which information is being shared, • the date an agreement was signed and • when the agreement should be reviewed. <p>Where dates for a review of the arrangement are present, these dates have all passed and are now overdue.</p> <p>We also observed that the register lacks a unique reference number for each agreement. Use of a sequential referencing system would provide a degree of assurance that there is order and completeness to the register as well as aiding the search and location of stored agreements.</p> <p>Risk:</p> <p>The purpose of reviewing information sharing agreements allows for the service to verify that data sharing continues to be necessary along with other checks.</p> <p>If registers are not accurately maintained then organisational knowledge and awareness could become lost if officers with</p>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. All Information Sharing agreements should be recorded within the register. 2. The register of information sharing agreements should incorporate a unique reference number. 3. Entries within the information sharing register should be complete. 4. Information sharing agreements should be periodically reviewed to ensure that the purpose for information sharing remains valid. 	<p>Response</p> <p>Information sharing forms an essential part of Nottinghamshire Fire and Rescues capabilities. Enabling us to respond and carrying out key functions or assist other agencies with theirs. Nottinghamshire Fire and Rescue Service is committed to ensuring its infrastructure and employee approach reflects recognised best practice when it comes to sharing or receiving personal data.</p> <p>A review of the current ISA register is to be undertaken alongside the development of an NFRS ISA sharing hub to act as a central point of guidance and repository of current and new ISA development.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • February: Review current ISA register and assess current state with relevant owners. Update and schedule next review period. Cross reference with government guidance to ensure appropriate data is included for best practice. • March: development plans for NFRS ISA resources hub to be put forward and approved. Additional consideration of automated process to prompt review to be considered in line

<p>this knowledge leave the service or are absent for an extended period of time.</p>		<p>with the current policy centre system mechanics and screening mechanism to determine if an ISA required.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • April/May: Design and launch of Hub which will include existing ISA that are in force within the service. • June/July: Current ISA will be reviewed by this point and signed off as adequate and in compliance from the initial start in February. <p>Date for implementation Work to be undertaken on 4th of February with an estimated completion date by the 19th of July 2024. Work will be completed in stages between these points.</p> <p>Officer responsible for implementation Christopher Smith IG&DPO</p> <p>Update on recommendation July 2024 Development of the Information Sharing Register is underway, the first stage is to establish an Information Sharing Framework which has been drafted along with guidance. This is being put before the Protective Security Group for signoff and approval (19/07/2024).</p> <p>The next stage will be to review current sharing agreements we have logged and see if they are still relevant or need to be updated or terminated. This will then be uploaded to a Sharepoint list as the central register.</p>
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		<p>Final stage will be to audit departments to make sure no sharing agreement has been missed.</p> <p>Aim for completion by late September 2024.</p>
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Internal Audit Report

Report ref: 2023-05

OFFICIAL SENSITIVE

To: Chief Fire Officer
Subject: Fire Service - Health & Safety
Date: May 2024

5 Introduction

- 1.1 We have reviewed the Health & Safety (H&S) arrangements currently in place across the Service. We mainly focused on the past 12 months when looking at actions such as training, reporting, and risk management.
- 1.2 Health & Safety procedures are intended to manage health & safety incidents at work, from the recording of their occurrence, monitoring to identify actions to be taken in response to them, and the prevention, or mitigation of the impact, of their recurrence.

6 Audit opinion

- 6.1 In the areas examined, we assessed the controls to determine to what extent the risks are being mitigated.
- 6.2 In our opinion the level of assurance we can provide is: -



SUBSTANTIAL ASSURANCE Risk levels are low

7 Risk areas examined

- 7.1 During this audit we looked for controls to address the following key risks: -

<i>Risk title</i>	<i>Description</i>
Policies & Procedures	H&S might not be given sufficient priority by the Service in its planning.
Governance	H&S might not be given sufficient priority by the Service in its resourcing.
Training	Relevant staff might be unaware of their responsibilities for

	H&S.
Reporting and Recording of Incidents	H&S incidents might not be recorded, acted upon, and statutory reporting requirements not met.
Reporting: Management information	Main causes and trends of H&S incidents may not be identified and acted upon.
Risk Management	Significant H&S risks to the Service might not be identified and acted upon.
Assurance	Findings from internal or external assurance provision might not be acted upon.

7.2 The scale of the area reviewed is: -

125 H&S incidents were recorded in 2023. Only 2 of the incidents in the past year were reportable to the Health & Safety Executive (HSE) under the Reporting of Incidents, Diseases and Dangerous Occurrences Regulations (RIDDOR).

8 Audit findings

8.1 Following our work, we consider the controls to be effective in the following risk areas:

- There are H&S policies and procedures. These are publicised and available to staff on the intranet. The policy is underpinned by a current 'statement of intent' that emphasises the Service's commitment to health & safety including:
 - resourcing
 - training
 - systems & practices.

The procedures reflect the nature of the work, as a fire and rescue service. There is a process to keep the policies and procedures up to date. Policies and procedures also apply to visitors and contractors.

- There is a small, dedicated H&S team which is now fully staffed. This is supplemented by staff acting as first aiders and fire wardens, and the uniformed staff being necessarily trained in, and familiar with, such activities.
- There is training on H&S relevant to both uniformed and support staff. Statistics show a high level of staff completion of training e.g. 96% for manual handling, and 89% for fire awareness.
- The H&S incident reporting process is publicised to staff and straightforward to use. It is used, as illustrated by 125 incidents recorded in 2023. An 'action tracker' records actions taken in response to incidents, and their completion.
- The H&S Committee monitors the number of incidents, trends, and actions to address their causes.

- The Corporate Risk Register has a section on Health, Safety & Welfare onto which H&S risks can be escalated, including by the H&S committee. (But, as noted in the findings section of this report, there is no separate H&S risk register).
 - Since the team has been fully staffed, its internal H&S audits and quarterly fire station inspections are being returned to their planned frequency. Also, a monthly review of overdue investigations has been introduced, to check that actions are completed.
- 8.2 There were some lesser control weaknesses, resulting in remaining risks. The attached Action Plan sets out these, and our recommendations to address them.
- 8.3 A summary of the recommendations made, together with brief details of the related findings, is set out below: -

<i>Priority level</i>	<i>Number of Recommendations</i>	<i>Recommended action timescales</i>
Priority 1	0	Immediate
Priority 2	3	Within two months

Priority 2 areas:

- The Service does not have the certification BSI ISO 45001: Occupational Health & Safety.
- There is no separate H&S Risk Register
- There is a shortfall in fire marshals at fire stations

**Audit conducted by: Emily Jackson
Apprentice Internal Auditor**

**Audit supervised by: Andrew Howarth
Internal Audit Team Manager**

**Simon Lacey
Head of Internal Audit**

Audit Finding	Recommendation	Management Response
<p>Priority 2 areas (Desirable for effective governance, risk management and internal control, should implement recommendations to improve existing arrangements)</p>		
<p>1. BSI ISO 45001 certification The Service does not have the certification to the British & International Standard BSI ISO 45001: Occupational Health & Safety. We were informed that the Services intends to be at this level, but the certification has not been obtained for cost reasons.</p> <p><i>Risk: Reduced assurance over H&S systems, and possible undetected weaknesses in those systems.</i></p>	<p>Reconsider the value of obtaining the BSI ISO 45001 certification, compared to its cost.</p>	<p>Response</p> <p>The NFRS H&S department will always aim to work to best practise. Obtaining BSI ISO 45001 is a potential long-term goal that requires review from the SLT and therefore we are not able to give a due date for implementation currently but accept the recommendation.</p>
<p>2. Risk Register The Corporate Risk Register has a section on Health, Safety & Welfare onto which H&S risks can be escalated. But there is no separate H&S risk register.</p> <p><i>Risk: H&S risks might not be efficiently identified and monitored.</i></p>	<p>Consider introducing a H&S Risk Register, if this would assist with managing the main H&S risks to the Service.</p>	<p>Response</p> <p>This is currently an ongoing project which is being looked at service wide regarding departmental risk registers.</p> <p>Date for implementation Within 24 months.</p> <p>Officer responsible for implementation Risk & Assurance.</p>

Audit Finding	Recommendation	Management Response
<p>3. Fire Marshals At the Headquarters building, the Police Service provides the fire wardens and fire marshals. For the fire stations, we were informed that the H&S team intends to produce an action plan to address a shortfall in designated Fire Marshals. These are employees who work at fire stations where office staff are located. The shortfall is because of staff moving, or certificates expiring.</p> <p><i>Risk: Increased risk in the event of a fire.</i></p>	<p>The H&S Team should complete its plan to address the shortfall in designated Fire Marshals, at the fire stations.</p>	<p>Response The H&S department are currently working our way through reviewing all station fire risk assessments. Corrective actions will come from these including fire marshals which we will look to address as a priority.</p> <p>Date for implementation 12-18 months.</p> <p>Officer responsible for implementation Health & Safety.</p>

OFFICIAL SENSITIVE

To: Chief Fire Officer

Subject: Fire Service - Business Continuity Planning

Date: May 2024

9 Introduction

- 1.1 We have reviewed the Business Continuity Planning arrangements currently in place across the Service.
- 1.2 ¹An organisation does not have complete control over the business environment in which it operates. It requires fit for purpose Business Continuity Plans (BCPs) and Business Continuity Management arrangements to recover key processes following a disaster. Causes of this can include property damage such as from fire or flood, industrial action, sudden loss of key personnel, breakdown in key supplies, loss of power, cyber-security attack, or malfunctions of hardware or software.

10 Audit opinion

- 10.1 In the areas examined, we assessed the controls to determine to what extent the risks are being mitigated.
- 10.2 In our opinion the level of assurance we can provide is: -



SUBSTANTIAL ASSURANCE Risk levels are low

11 Risk areas examined

- 11.1 During this audit we looked for controls to address the following key risks: -

<i>Risk title</i>	<i>Description</i>
Governance; Policies & Procedures	Business Continuity Planning might not be given sufficient priority by the Service in its encouragement, resourcing, and policies.
Business Continuity Plans	BCPs might not be corporately managed for consistent and complete coverage across the Service.
Communication	Relevant staff might be unaware of their responsibilities

¹ This paragraph is taken from the Chartered Institute of Internal Auditors guidance on Business Continuity Planning, Feb 2023, which was used to inform the scope of this review.

	for the BCPs.
Testing	BCPs might not work in practice.

11.2 The Service has BCPs covering the following areas:

- Prevention
- Protection
- Response
- Tri-Service Control
- Strategic Leadership Team (SLT)
- ICT
- Finance
- Human Resources
- Training
- Estates / Transport / Procurement
- Business Intelligence
- Corporate Communications

12 Audit findings

12.1 Following our work, we consider the controls to be effective in the following risk areas:

- The Corporate Risk Management Group provides oversight and scrutiny of business continuity across the Service. This includes its strategy, planning and testing. The Group is attended by the Area Managers (Heads of Departments) and supported by the Business Continuity Manager.
- There is a Business Continuity Management Policy and a Business Continuity Management Strategy which are kept up to date.
- BCPs are in place for all key parts of the Service. There is a standard template for the format of the BCPs. This template includes addressing the critical activities to ensure that they maintain continuity. The BCPs cover all significant risks including:
 - Loss of staff
 - Loss of premises
 - Loss of supplies
 - Loss of ICT.

Additionally, the 'loss of fuel' is a significant service-wide risk that has its own Business Continuity Plan for fuel disruption.

- As well as each BCP addressing the loss of ICT and loss of systems, there is a separate BCP for ICT which forms the ICT Disaster Recovery Plan, to cover the restoration of ICT infrastructure and data.
- The BCPs are clear in allocating responsibilities to staff, including a nominated single point of contact (SPOC) for the service areas. Plans are available to relevant staff on the Resilience Direct system, and on Share Point.
- The BCPs are tested annually. They are also reviewed, for revision, every 2 years, or more frequently if the responsible Head of Department changes. The BCPs met these target dates except for a minor delay to one which, at

Appendix 5

the time of our audit in March 2024, had not been tested for 15 months, whilst awaiting the appointment of new departmental management. A test and review of this BCP is planned.

- The results of testing are documented and actions identified for the department, the Business Continuity Manager, or for escalation.
- Business Continuity is included in the Corporate Risk Register where it addresses relevant risks, including mobilising, employee engagement, workforce sustainability, and the availability of resources.

12.2 There was one lesser control weakness. This is in the attached Action Plan, with our recommendation to address it.

12.3 This is a summary of the contents of the Action Plan:

<i>Priority level</i>	<i>Number of Recommendations</i>	<i>Recommended action timescales</i>
Priority 1	0	Immediate
Priority 2	1	Within two months

Priority 2 area:

- The Business Continuity Test Report does not record when the actions arising from the Test have been addressed.

**Audit conducted by: Emily Jackson
Apprentice Internal Auditor**

**Audit supervised by: Andrew Howarth
Internal Audit Team Manager**

**Simon Lacey
Head of Internal Audit**

Appendix 5

Audit Finding	Recommendation	Management Response
<p>Priority 2 area (Desirable for effective governance, risk management and internal control, should implement recommendations to improve existing arrangements)</p>		
<p>1. Addressing the actions from Business Continuity testing The Business Continuity Test Report includes 2 sections for actions identified from the testing:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Actions required • Actions for Escalation <p>For completeness, the form could also record when these actions have been addressed.</p> <p><i>Risk: Actions from the Business Continuity Test might be overlooked.</i></p>	<p>The Business Continuity Test Report should record when the actions arising from the Test have been addressed.</p>	<p>Response Agree will ensure the Test Reports are updated as to previous updates and will address going forward.</p> <p>Date for implementation 1 May 2024</p> <p>Officer responsible for implementation Service Business Continuity & Emergency Planner</p> <p>This action has been completed. Reports do now contain updates on the actions identified for the recent testing areas. This will be done as a matter of course on test reports going forward. All actions and areas for escalation will be referred to and addressed at the next Corporate Risk Meeting.</p>



Internal Audit Report

Report ref: 2023-01

To: Chief Fire Officer – Nottinghamshire Fire and Rescue Service

Subject: Fire Service - Contract Management

Date: October 2023

13 Introduction

Internal Audit have reviewed the adequacy of controls NFRS have in place in relation to effective management of contracts. This included a review to ensure that the contracts register is maintained accurately and contracts are being managed in accordance with policy and contract requirements for a sample of cases. The selected contracts for review were:

Reference	Name of Contractor	Contract	Contract Manager	Due to Expire	Contract Value
PRN004375	Bytes Software Services Ltd	Microsoft Software Products & Associated Services	IT Manager	31/03/2024	£531,156
PRN004398	Civica UK Limited	Occupational Health Unit (OHU) Software	Occupational Health & Fitness Manager	11/01/2024	£ 40,728
PRN004108	Bristol Uniform	Fire Kit Laundering, Repair and Replacement	Procurement Manager	31/01/2028	£1,072,881

14 Audit opinion

14.1 In the areas examined, we assessed the controls to determine to what extent the risks are being mitigated.

14.2 In our opinion the level of assurance we can provide is: -



LIMITED ASSURANCE – Risk Levels are high



15 Risk areas examined

15.1 During this audit we looked for controls to address the following key risks: -

<i>Risk title</i>	<i>Description</i>
Contracts Register	Contracts Register may not be actively maintained and updated.
Policy, Guidance and Contract Formats	There may be a failure to adhere to policy or guidance on contract management.
Contract Management	Contracts may not be allocated to contract managers or there may be inadequate arrangements to identify and address under-performance.

15.2 The scale of the area reviewed is:

Metric	Expenditure
Total Value of all current contracts	£10.247m
Contract Spend Per Annum*	£2.203m
Number of current contracts (expiring after July 2023)	30
* Annual value of contracts is total contract values recorded in the In-Tend database divided by the number of years the contracts are scheduled to run for. There are also a number of contracts, including utilities which have a zero-value shown in the contract register but will incur a significant spend, however, these cannot be quantified in advance.	

16 Audit findings

16.1 Following our work, we consider the controls to be effective in the following risk areas: -

- **Contracts Register** - A contracts register has been established and is recorded in the In-Tend contract management database system. The system allows for data to be recorded, stored and reported upon in line with requirements of the transparency code. Transparency reports are uploaded monthly on the Fire Authority's website. However see recommendations in relation to improving the robustness of the contracts register below.
- **Policy, Guidance and Contract Formats** - A mandatory contracts management policy has been established and sets out comprehensive details and standards in relation to the effective maintenance of contracts. The aim of the policy is to ensure NFRS manages contracts in a commercial way, ensuring best value is achieved and provides contract holders with the information and guidance needed to carry out checks and ensure contracts are being managed effectively. However, recommendations have been made in relation to weaknesses in the application of the policy.

16.2 There were some control weaknesses and failures to comply with the standard controls, resulting in remaining risks. The attached Action Plan sets out these weaknesses, and our recommendations to address them.

16.3 A summary of the recommendations made, together with brief details of the related findings, is set out below: -

<i>Priority level</i>	<i>Number of Recommendations</i>	<i>Recommended action timescales</i>
Priority 1	4	Immediate
Priority 2	2	Within two months

Priority 1 areas:

- The In-Tend database has not been sufficiently updated with the name of the new contract manager when staff have left or taken over the contract management role. Current contract managers may not be fully aware of their contract management responsibilities.
- The contract register might not include all contracts. The Contract Management Policy requirement to maintain records in the In-Tend database is not fully complied with and some contracts and associated records are not uploaded to In-Tend.
- Contract dates were incorrectly recorded for some contracts and may be indicative of further errors.
- Contract management meetings are not consistently held for all contracts, including where issues have arisen, leading to inadequate contract management and inability to resolve issues quickly.

Priority 2 areas:

- The published transparency data showing current contracts includes expired contracts and requires updating and checking for accuracy.
- Lessons learnt logs are not maintained for all contracts, even where there are issues and problems.

**Audit conducted by: Angela Wendels
Senior Auditor**

**Audit supervised by: Andrew Howarth
Audit Team Manager**

Simon Lacey, Group Manager - Internal Audit & Risk Management

Priority 1 areas (Fundamental for effective governance, risk management and internal control, must implement recommendations to improve existing arrangements)

1. Contract Register - Contract Managers

It was identified that two of the contract managers listed in In-Tend for the three contracts examined no longer work for the Fire Service. However their names still appear on nine contracts on the register as the current contract manager.

We were also advised that the OHU Manager was not aware that she was the contract manager for the OHU system until the audit and had not seen the business case put forward by previous colleagues.

Neither the IT Manager nor the OHU Manager had seen the contract documentation until the time of the audit, and the OHU Manager has not seen a copy of the contract management policy.

Risk: Lack of contract management and poor records maintenance.

- a. A review of the Contract Register should be undertaken and where staff have left the organisation or are no longer working in their previous role, the Register should be amended to reflect the current contract manager.
- b. The Procurement Manager should have appropriate processes in place to identify when someone leaves or takes on the role as contract manager so that the database can be promptly updated.
- c. Newly assigned staff should receive a copy of any contracts which they are responsible for together with access to the contract management policy.

Response

Agreed

Date for implementation

April 2024

Officer responsible for implementation

Procurement Manager

Update on recommendation July 2024

- a. Contract Register review has been completed and amendments made to remove persons no longer in service from said contracts. There are two contracts where confirmation is being sought to identify the correct responsible officer this is due to changes in staffing structures.
- b. Leavers are identified when someone leaves the service via the Staters & Leavers on the informative. Reminders are then put into the Procurement Calendar to check for new contract ownership.
- c. Procurement training is scheduled for the next Middle Managers session. This will include training on the contract management policy and will include a reminder to Mangers that contract owners should transfer & explain contracts to newly assigned staff.

<p>2. Maintaining Contract Information and Documentation in the In-Tend Database</p> <p>We were advised that the Procurement Team are not always consulted concerning goods and services being procured, potentially resulting in non-compliant routes of procurement, value for money not being achieved and incomplete data in the procurement database. Whilst we are advised that Managers are periodically asked to notify the Procurement Team of any contracts which are not listed in the database, we could not be assured that every contract is included.</p> <p>The Contract Management Policy section 27 stipulates that ' In all instances, electronic versions of contracts should be stored on the NFRS contract management database to ensure relevant ongoing contract management information and documentation is retained and managed.'</p> <p>The contract database was examined in relation to the three contracts being tested and we ascertained that only the OHU Software documentation was held in In-Tend, although we were advised that documentation for all three was available in Sharepoint. The OHU Manager was not aware of the location of the contract prior to the audit.</p> <p>Risk: Best value may not be achieved due to inadequate oversight of contracts. Non-compliance with the Contract Management Policy concerning retention of data.</p>	<p>a. Procurement Team should carry out a review of transaction listings for expenditure to identify any large or repeat payments to the same supplier which indicate a potential contract may have been entered into. Following this, any contracts identified should be added to the database so that future procurements of these goods or service is done in a compliant way.</p> <p>b. A review of contracts held in Sharepoint and other locations is undertaken and any contracts missing from the In-Tend database be uploaded.</p>	<p>Response Agreed</p> <p>Date for implementation April 2024</p> <p>Officer responsible for implementation Procurement Manager in consultation with SLT</p> <p>Update on recommendation July 2024</p> <p>a. Data sourcing & sorting has been performed to highlight areas of repetitive costs. This has then been issued to senior department heads/ budget holders in May 2024 for them to review and advise Procurement accordingly via Contract Summary Detail Forms.</p> <p>b. To be actioned.</p>
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3. Contracts Register - Dates

(a) Sample of 3 contracts

A sample of three contracts (tabulated below) was reviewed as part of the audit. Several instances of inconsistencies between the dates shown on the contract and the dates held in the database were identified as indicated below:

Details	Per Contract	Per In-Tend	Errors found on In-Tend
Bristol Uniform Supply and Laundry Service PRN004108			
Start	17/2/20	1/2/20	Slight variance in date
End/contract length	16/1/28	31/1/28	As above
Expiry	16/1/28	31/1/28	As above
Extension end	16/1/28	31/1/20	Pre-dates contract
Re-tender Reminder	N/a	17/1/19	Pre-dates contract
Bytes Software Services (Microsoft Framework) PRN004375			
Start	1/4/20	1/4/20	
End/contract length	31/3/23	31/3/24	Shows contract period correctly as 36 months, but end date after 48 months
Expiry	31/3/23	31/3/24	Variance of one year
Extension end	Unknown	18/8/20	Extension date should be after expiry
Re-tender Reminder	N/a	18/8/21	This is 3 years before contract ends
Civica Occupational Health Software PRN004398			
Start	Started Nov 2022	2/1/22	2 months variance in start date
End/contract length	31/3/23	11/1/24	Variance of one year
Expiry	31/3/23	31/3/24	As above
Extension end	Nov 2026	15/6/25	Incorrect date
Re-tender Reminder	N/a	18/8/21	Pre-dates the contract start date

a. Contract dates for the three contracts sampled should be checked and amended in the contract register to ensure they are consistent with the dates set out and agreed in the contract. This applies to:

- start date
- end/contract length
- expiry date
- extension end date
- re-tender reminder dates.

b. A review of all current contracts on the contracts register should be undertaken with checks made to ensure that all have the correct start and end dates and contract period.

Response

Agreed

Date for implementation

April 2024

Officer responsible for implementation

Procurement Manager

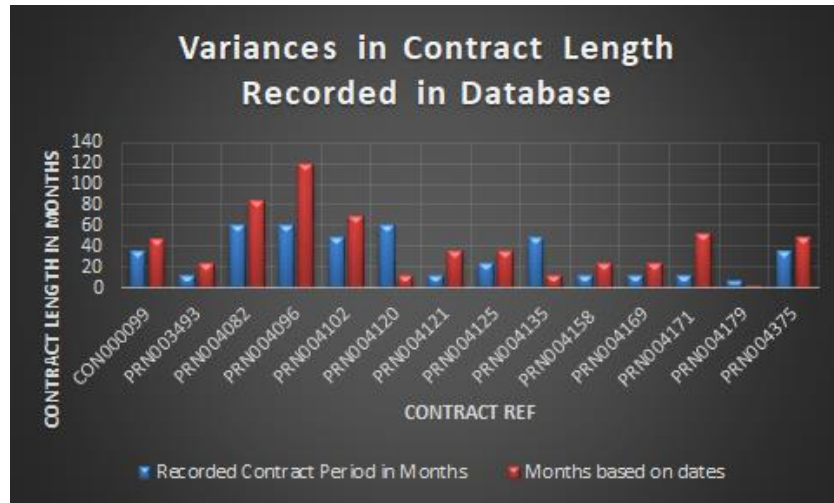
Update on recommendation July 2024

a. and b.

This has been undertaken and errors removed.

(b) All contracts - Start and End Dates

For the 77 contracts listed on the contract register, 22 had variances in terms of the start and end date compared to the contract length recorded. For example, a difference between the start and end date of 24 months but a contract length of 36 months. 14 of these had a variance of more than 6 months in contract length. One of the contracts had a listed length of 6,000 months. Excluding this and any contracts with less than 6 months difference, the following 14 variances were identified:



Risk: Contracts may expire with insufficient notice to re-tender which may lead to unscheduled contract extension and poor value for money.

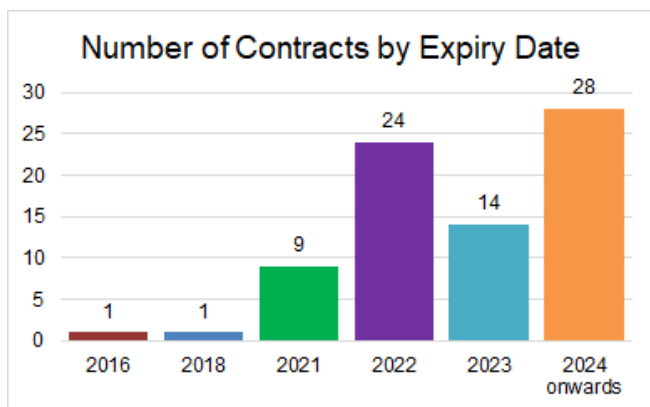
<p>4. Managing Relationships and Performance with Suppliers – Occupational Health Unit Software</p> <p>The Contract Management Policy section 36 says that contract managers should ensure that there are regular communication routes open with the supplier, to highlight any failings or exceptional performance with the delivery of the contract.</p> <p>The OHU Manager has advised that although she has found a key person who she contacts with issues, no regular performance meetings are taking place. Also, the supplier contact is only familiar with the generic system. As the system has been customised to the Fire Service’s specific requirements, and the project developer is no longer available, the bespoke elements are unsupported.</p> <p>The business case reasoning put forward for the development of the OHU software system included:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The old system being difficult to navigate • The old cohort records uploaded not being searchable • The system not being compatible with the current medical equipment in use at NFRS • Inability to report on service usage to identify trends or highlight areas of concern (e.g. mental health cases) <p>Since the installation, it has become evident that there are functionality issues, particularly with bespoke elements. The system is difficult to navigate, 3 out of 4 current staff have received no training, the old cohort records were scanned and attached as opposed to being uploaded and searchable, the added functionality in relation to compatibility with medical equipment is not operating and the reporting facility is inadequate.</p> <p>Risk: Inadequate arrangements in place to enable contract performance issues to be addressed.</p>	<p>a. All Contract Managers should be reminded that regular contract management meetings should be held with their contractor.</p> <p>b. A review of deliverables as per the agreed project scope for the OHU software should be undertaken by Management, including those originally involved in the procurement and those currently responsible for the contract.</p> <p>c. Regular meetings should be established between OHU management and Civica management to agree actions required and discuss progress against agreed deliverables and full functionality of the system against the specification.</p>	<p>Response Agreed</p> <p>Date for implementation April 2024</p> <p>Officer responsible for implementation Procurement Manager & Head of People and Organisational Development</p> <p>Update on recommendation July 2024 a. and c. Procurement training is scheduled for the next Middle Managers session. This will include training on the contract management policy.</p> <p>Further contract management training will be rolled out to contract managers.</p>
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Priority 2 areas

(Desirable for effective governance, risk management and internal control, should implement recommendations to improve existing arrangements)

5. Contracts Register - Out of Date Contracts

It was observed that the Contracts Register as at the end of June 2023 and also the transparency data published on the Fire Authority's website, which should show all current contracts, includes a large number of contracts that appear to have expired between 2016 and 2022. See table below. Also, 9 of the 14 contracts with an expiry date in 2023 had expired prior to the end of June 2023 when the transparency data was published.



Risk: The published transparency data may be out of date or the dates recorded in the contract register are incorrect or elements of both.

In accordance with the Transparency Code, the transparency report should be amended to only include contracts which are applicable for the period being reported upon.

Response

Agreed

Date for implementation

April 2024

Officer responsible for implementation

Procurement Manager

Update on recommendation July 2024

The report that generates the transparency data has now been amended to ensure only current contracts are shown.

<p>6. Lessons Learnt Log</p> <p>Para 18 of Contract Management Policy says: 'Knowledge management, key capturing of data and lessons learnt should be embedded within the contract management process.'</p> <p>Whilst we confirmed that records and correspondence are maintained for all contracts sampled, a lessons learnt log is only maintained for the Bristol Uniforms contract. This shows the issues and what actions have been taken or need to be taken to prevent a recurrence. This process allows remedial action to be taken during the life of a contract and also when the contract comes up for re-tendering. However, a log is not maintained for the OHU and Microsoft contracts.</p> <p>Risk: Appropriate remedial actions are not taken during the course of the contract or issues may not be flagged and remain unresolved.</p>	<p>Contract Managers should be encouraged to maintain a log to capture any issues identified during the contract.</p>	<p>Response Agreed</p> <p>Date for implementation April 2024</p> <p>Officer responsible for implementation Procurement Manager</p> <p>Update on recommendation July 2024 a. b. and c. Procurement training is scheduled for the next Middle Managers session. This will include training on the contract management policy.</p> <p>Further contract management training will be rolled out to contract managers.</p>
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NOTTINGHAMSHIRE
Fire & Rescue Service
Creating Safer Communities

Nottinghamshire and City of Nottingham
Fire and Rescue Authority

INTERIM VALUE FOR MONEY REPORTING 2021/22 and 2022/23

Report of the Chief Fire Officer

Date: 26 July 2024

Purpose of Report:

To present the External Auditors' interim value for money (VFM) report for Nottinghamshire and City of Nottingham Fire and Rescue Authority on the financial years 2021/22 and 2022/23.

Recommendations:

That Members note the contents of this report.

CONTACT OFFICER

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Head of Finance and Treasurer to the Authority

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1. BACKGROUND

- 1.1 The External Auditors are appointed through a national contract via Public Sector Audit Appointments (PSAA). The External Auditors for 2018/19 through to 2022/23 are Ernst Young LLP – (EY).
- 1.2 Both the 2021/22 and 2022/23 audits have been delayed due to resourcing issues at EY. This is a national issue caused by the increased amount of regulatory requirement and the lack of audit resources within the public sector. The 2021/22 audit commenced during July 2023 and a substantial amount of the audit had been completed. In February 2024, the Department of Levelling Up, Housing and Communities opened a consultation on 'Addressing the Local Audit Backlog in England'. The consultation proposed a backstop date for all accounts up to and including financial year 2022/23 to be cleared by 30 September 2024 and proposed to allow auditors to issue a modified or disclaimed opinion due to the backstop.
- 1.3 In light of the consultation, EY is not progressing any further work on the 2021/22 and 2022/23 Statement of Accounts. EY is continuing to progress their work for their commentary on VFM for 2021/22 and 2022/23.
- 1.4 The response to the consultation or any further guidance has not yet been published and has been delayed by the General Election, it is anticipated the initial proposed backstop date of the 30 September 2024 will be amended to a later date.

2. REPORT

- 2.1 The purpose of the interim VFM report is to explain the VFM work EY has undertaken during the financial period covering 2021/22 and 2022/23 and to highlight any significant weaknesses identified along with recommendations for improvement. The commentary covers the interim findings for audit years 2021/22 and 2022/23. The National Audit Office (NAO) has confirmed that where VFM reporting is outstanding for more than one year, the auditor can issue one report covering all years
- 2.2 The interim commentary on VFM reports no significant weaknesses and that the Fire Authority had proper arrangements in place in relation to financial sustainability, governance and improving economy, efficiency and effectiveness.
- 2.3 The draft interim commentary was received on 15 July 2024 and has been checked by Officers for accuracies, it is currently being finalised by EY to issue as the final interim commentary report. The final interim commentary report will be received and added as an appendix to this report prior to the meeting of the Fire Authority on 26 July 2024. EY will be present at the meeting to present their report.

- 2.4 The External Auditors will summarise their final view of the VFM arrangements as part of the Auditor’s annual report once the audit report has been issued for 2022/23.

3. FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

There are no financial implications arising from this report.

4. HUMAN RESOURCES AND LEARNING AND DEVELOPMENT IMPLICATIONS

There are no human resources or learning and development implications arising from this report.

5. EQUALITIES AND ETHICAL IMPLICATIONS

An equality impact assessment has not been undertaken because this report relates to statutory audit which is external scrutiny rather than a policy matter.

6. ENVIRONMENTAL AND SUSTAINABILITY IMPLICATIONS

There are no environmental or sustainability implications arising from this report.

7. LEGAL IMPLICATIONS

The external auditors have statutory powers and responsibilities set out in the Local Audit and Accountability Act 2014.

8. RISK MANAGEMENT IMPLICATIONS

The external auditors provide a key element of the assurances that are given to elected Members and members of the public with regard to the arrangements for value for money.

9. COLLABORATION IMPLICATIONS

There are no collaboration implications arising from this report.

10. RECOMMENDATIONS

That Members note the contents of this report.

11. BACKGROUND PAPERS FOR INSPECTION (OTHER THAN PUBLISHED DOCUMENTS)

None.

Craig Parkin
CHIEF FIRE OFFICER



NOTTINGHAMSHIRE
Fire & Rescue Service
Creating Safer Communities

Nottinghamshire and City of Nottingham
Fire and Rescue Authority

EXTERNAL AUDIT PLAN 2023/24

Report of the Chief Fire Officer

Date: 26 July 2024

Purpose of Report:

To present the external auditors' audit plan for work which they intend to carry out on the Authority's 2023/24 financial statements and value for money arrangements.

Recommendations:

That Members note the contents of this report and the External Audit Plan and Strategy for the year ending 31 March 2024 included as Appendix A.

CONTACT OFFICER

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0115 8388100 corporatecomms@notts-fire.gov.uk

1. BACKGROUND

- 1.1 The external auditors are appointed through a national contract via Public Sector Audit Appointments (PSAA). A new national contract is in place for 2023/24 to 2027/28.
- 1.2 The external auditors appointed for the Fire Authority for the period 2023/24 to 2027/28 are KPMG LLP.
- 1.3 As part of their responsibilities under the external audit regime, the auditors produce an annual plan setting out the areas that they will cover during their audit.

2. REPORT

- 2.1 The External Audit Plan provides an overview of the planned scope and timing of the statutory audit of Nottinghamshire and City of Nottingham Fire and Rescue Authority for those charged with governance. The full External Audit Plan and Strategy for the year ending 31 March 2024 is set out in Appendix A for Members' information.
- 2.2 In summary, it covers several areas:
 - Scope and materiality.
 - Significant risks, audit risks and approach.
 - Mandatory communications.
 - Value for money risk assessment and approach.
 - The audit team.
 - The audit cycle and timeline.
 - Fees.
 - Confirmation of independence.
 - The audit quality framework.
 - Revised International Standards on Auditing (ISA).
- 2.3 The plan identifies those risks requiring special audit consideration and procedures to address the likelihood of a material financial statement error as being:
 - The presume risk of management override of control.
 - Valuation of pension liability.
 - Valuation land and building.
- 2.4 The external auditors commenced their interim fieldwork in April 2024 and are planning to conclude their interim work and the undertake their final fieldwork in July and August 2024. The plan identifies the external auditors' aim to deliver their audit report by 31 October 2024. However, this is subject to change due to the level of consultation in the sector, regarding the scope and timing of local government audit.

3. FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

3.1 The contracted audit fee for the 2023/24 Statement of Accounts is £94,838 (£32,648 for 2022/23). There has been a significant increase in audit fees, this is due to additional work being required by the Code of Audit Practice, this additional work has been built into the fees, then fees have been increased further following the PSAA's national auditor appointment procurement for the period 2023/24 to 2027/28, which has resulted in a procurement adjustment of 151% for the new contract rates for audit firms.

3.2 The increase in the audit fee has been included in the approved budget.

4. HUMAN RESOURCES AND LEARNING AND DEVELOPMENT IMPLICATIONS

There are no human resources or learning and development implications arising from this report.

5. EQUALITIES AND ETHICAL IMPLICATIONS

An equality impact assessment has not been undertaken because this report relates to statutory audit which is external scrutiny rather than a policy matter. There are no ethical implications arising from this report.

6. ENVIRONMENTAL AND SUSTAINABILITY IMPLICATIONS

6.1 There are no environmental or sustainability implications arising from this report.

6.2 The external auditors' commentary on the arrangements for ensuring value for money includes reviewing and reporting on the financial sustainability.

7. LEGAL IMPLICATIONS

The external auditors have statutory powers and responsibilities set out in the Local Audit and Accountability Act 2014.

8. RISK MANAGEMENT IMPLICATIONS

The external auditors provide a key element of the assurances that are given to elected Members and members of the public with regard to the accuracy of the financial statements and the arrangements for value for money.

9. COLLABORATION IMPLICATIONS

There are no collaboration implications arising from this report.

10. RECOMMENDATIONS

That Members note the contents of this report

11. BACKGROUND PAPERS FOR INSPECTION (OTHER THAN PUBLISHED DOCUMENTS)

None.

Craig Parkin
CHIEF FIRE OFFICER

Nottinghamshire and City of Nottingham Fire Authority

DRAFT - Report to the Finance &
Resources Committee

External Audit Plan & Strategy for the year ending
31 March 2024

June 2024

Introduction

To the Finance & Resources Committee of Nottinghamshire and City of Nottingham Fire Authority

We are pleased to have the opportunity to meet with you on 21 June 2024 to discuss our audit of the financial statements of Nottinghamshire and City of Nottingham Fire Authority for the year ending 31 March 2024.

We have been appointed as your auditors by Public Sector Audit Appointments Ltd. The audit is governed by the provisions of the Local Audit and Accountability Act 2014 and in compliance with the NAO Code of Audit Practice. The NAO is consulting on a new Code of Audit Practice for 2023/24, therefore this plan will remain draft until the finalisation of that Code.

This report outlines our initial risk assessment and planned audit approach based on procedures completed to date. Our planning activities are still ongoing and we will communicate any significant changes to the planned audit approach to the members of committee. We note that an audit opinion has not been expressed on the prior period, once the prior period audit opinion has been expressed we will communicate any significant changes to the planned approach. We provide this report to you in advance of the meeting to allow you sufficient time to consider the key matters and formulate your questions.

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Overview of planned scope including materiality	3
Significant risks and Other audit risks	5
Audit Risks and our audit approach	6
Mandatory communications	11
Appendix	13

The engagement team

Richard Walton is the engagement director on the audit. He has 20 years of experience and previously worked with the Local Government audit sector.

Nicole Guo shall lead the engagement and is responsible for the work supporting our audit opinion.

Other key members of the engagement team include Bilal Ahsan who will lead our fieldwork.

Yours sincerely,



Richard Walton,

Director - KPMG LLP

21 June 2024

How we deliver audit quality

Audit quality is at the core of everything we do at KPMG and we believe that it is not just about reaching the right opinion, but how we reach that opinion. We consider risks to the quality of our audit in our engagement risk assessment and planning discussions.

We define 'audit quality' as being the outcome when audits are:

- Executed consistently, in line with the requirements and intent of applicable professional standards within a strong system of quality controls and
- All of our related activities are undertaken in an environment of the utmost level of objectivity, independence, ethics and integrity.

We depend on well planned timing of our audit work to avoid compromising the quality of the audit. This is also heavily dependent on receiving information from management and those charged with governance in a timely manner. The audit undertaken in the current year is dependent on the finalisation of the previous auditor's work over historical financial statements. We aim to complete all audit work no later than 2 days before audit signing. As you are aware, we will not issue our audit opinion until we have completed all relevant procedures, including audit documentation.

Restrictions on distribution

This report is intended solely for the information of those charged with governance and the report is provided on the basis that it should not be distributed to other parties; that it will not be quoted or referred to, in whole or in part, without our prior written consent; and that we accept no responsibility to any third party in relation to it.

Overview of planned scope including materiality

Our materiality levels

We determined materiality for the entity financial statements at a level which could reasonably be expected to influence the economic decisions of users taken on the basis of the financial statements. We used a benchmark of expenditure which we consider to be appropriate given the sector in which the entity operates, its ownership and financing structure, and the focus of users.

We considered qualitative factors such as ownership structure, debt arrangements, business environment, and users of accounts, when determining materiality for the financial statements as a whole.

To respond to aggregation risk from individually immaterial misstatements, we design our procedures to detect misstatements at a lower level of materiality £1,000k / 65% of materiality driven by our expectations of increased level of undetected or uncorrected misstatements in the period.

We will report misstatements to the audit committee including:

- Corrected and uncorrected audit misstatements above £77.5k.
- Errors and omissions in disclosure (Corrected and uncorrected) and the effect that they, individually in aggregate, may have on our opinion.
- Other misstatements we include due to the nature of the item.

Control environment

The impact of the control environment on our audit is reflected in our planned audit procedures. These may be updated depending on the outcome of the PY audit.

File review

We will undertake an appropriate prior year file review dependent on the final opinion issues by the previous auditors.

Entity Materiality

Entity	
Materiality for the financial statements as a whole	£1,550k (2.01% of expenditure)
Procedure designed to detect individual errors at this level	£1,000k
Misstatements reported to the Finance and Resources Committee	£77.5k

Materiality
£1,550k
2.01% of entity prior year expenditure £77,099k

Overview of planned scope including materiality (cont.)

Timing of our audit and communications

- We will maintain communication led by the engagement partner and manager throughout the audit. We set out below the form, timing and general content of our planned communications:
- Kick-off meeting with management in June 2024 where we present our draft audit plan outlining our audit approach and discuss management’s progress in key areas;
- Due to the work of previous auditors still on-going, we will be communicating dates for audit completion at a future Committee;
- Status meetings with management where we communicate progress on the audit plan, any misstatements, control deficiencies and significant issues;
- Closing meeting with management where we discuss the auditor’s report and any outstanding deliverables;
- Finance & Resources Committee meeting where we communicate audit misstatements and significant control deficiencies; and
- Biannual private meetings can also be arranged with the Committee chair if there is interest.

Using the work of others and areas requiring specialised skill

We outline below where, in our planned audit response to audit risks, we expect to use the work of others such as Internal Audit or require specialised skill/knowledge to perform planned audit procedures and evaluate results.

Others	Extent of planned involvement or use of work
Internal Audit	We will review the work of internal audit as part of risk assessment procedures but will not place reliance on their work
IT Audit team members	Our IT audit colleagues will perform our documentation of understanding the IT environment and any associated testing of general IT controls and/ or automated controls where identified. At the time of planning we have not identified any IT or automated controls which we will place reliance on.
KPMG Pensions Centre of Excellence	We will involve our pensions colleagues to review the pension liability valuation on the balance sheet during our audit
Actuaries	Our actuaries will review and challenge of actuarial assumptions underpinning the valuation of LGPS liabilities and Firefighters pension scheme liabilities.

Significant risks and Other audit risks

Our risk assessment draws upon our understanding of the applicable financial reporting framework, knowledge of the business, the sector and the wider economic environment in which Nottinghamshire and City of Nottingham Fire Authority operates.

We also use our regular meetings with senior management to update our understanding and take input from sector and internal audit reports.

Due to the current levels of uncertainty there is an increased likelihood of significant risks emerging throughout the audit cycle that are not identified (or in existence) at the time we planned our audit. Where such items are identified we will amend our audit approach accordingly and communicate this to the Finance & Resources Committee meeting .

Value for money

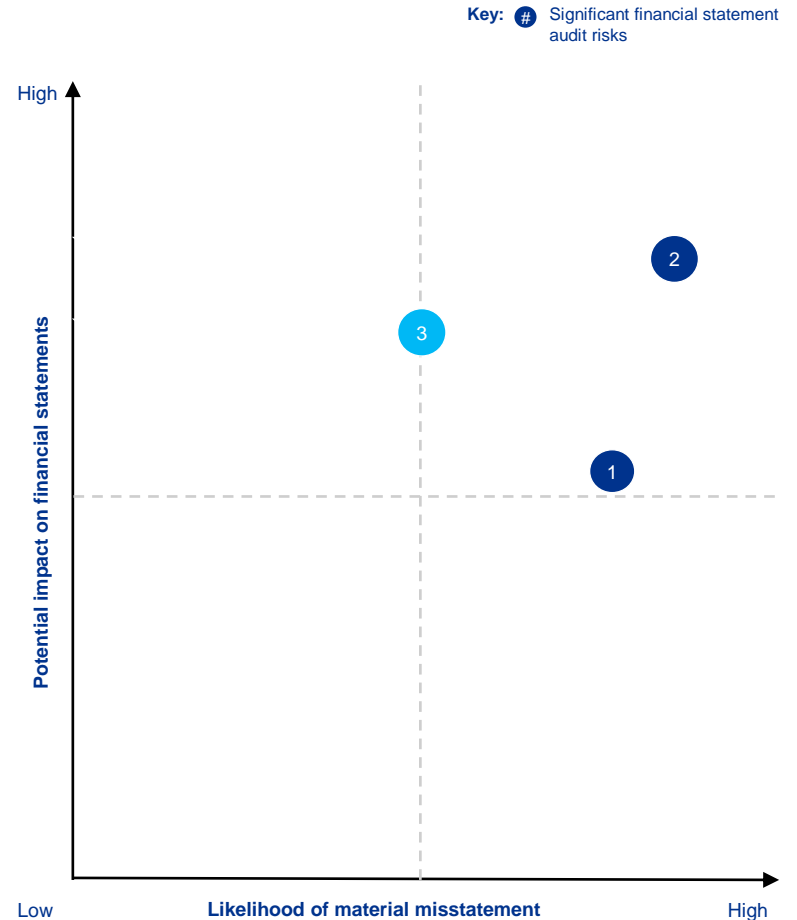
We are required to provide commentary on the arrangements in place for ensuring Value for Money is achieved at the Fire Authority and report on this via our Auditor's Annual Report. This will be published on the Fire Authority's website and include a commentary on our view of the appropriateness of the Fire Authority's arrangements against each of the three specified domains of Value for Money: financial sustainability; governance; and improving economy, efficiency and effectiveness. See Page 13

Significant risks

1. Management override of controls
2. Valuation of post retirement benefit obligations

Other audit risks

3. Valuation of land and buildings



Audit risks and our audit approach

1 Management override of controls(a)

Fraud risk related to unpredictable way management override of controls may occur



Significant audit risk

- Professional standards require us to communicate the fraud risk from management override of controls as significant.
- Management is in a unique position to perpetrate fraud because of their ability to manipulate accounting records and prepare fraudulent financial statements by overriding controls that otherwise appear to be operating effectively.
- We have not identified any specific additional risks of management override relating to this audit.

Note: (a) Significant risk that professional standards require us to assess in all cases.



Planned response

Our audit methodology incorporates the risk of management override as a default significant risk.

- Assess the underlying assumptions used to prepare accounting estimates.
- Assess accounting estimates for biases by evaluating whether judgements and decisions in making accounting estimates, even if individually reasonable, indicate a possible bias.
- Evaluate the selection and application of accounting policies.
- In line with our methodology, evaluate the design and implementation of controls over journal entries and post closing adjustments.
- Assess the business rationale and the appropriateness of the accounting for significant transactions that are outside the entity's normal course of business, or are otherwise unusual.
- We will analyse all journals through the year and focus our testing on those with a higher risk, such as journals impacting expenditure and revenue recognition posted during the final close down.

Audit risks and our audit approach (cont.)

2

Valuation of post retirement benefit obligations

An inappropriate amount is estimated and recorded for the defined benefit obligation



Significant audit risk

- The valuation of the post retirement benefit obligations involves the selection of appropriate actuarial assumptions, most notably the discount rate applied to the scheme liabilities, inflation rates and mortality rates. The selection of these assumptions is inherently subjective and small changes in the assumptions and estimates used to value the Fire Authority's pension liability could have a significant effect on the financial position of the Fire Authority.
- The effect of these matters is that, as part of our risk assessment, we determined that post retirement benefits obligation has a high degree of estimation uncertainty. The financial statements disclose the assumptions used by the Fire Authority in completing the year end valuation of the pension deficit and the year on year movements.
- We have determined that this risk applies to the Firefighters' pension scheme only and does not apply to LGPS. This is due to the fact that LGPS pension scheme defined benefit pension liability is less significant compared with Firefighters' pension scheme.



Planned response

We will perform the following procedures:

- Evaluate the competency, objectivity of the actuaries to confirm their qualifications and the basis for their calculations;
- Perform inquiries of the accounting actuaries to assess the methodology and key assumptions made, including actual figures where estimates have been used by the actuaries, such as the rate of return on pension fund assets;
- Agree the data provided by the audited entity to the Scheme Administrator for use within the calculation of the scheme valuation;
- Evaluate the design and implementation of controls in place for the Fire Authority to determine the appropriateness of the assumptions used by the actuaries in valuing the liability;
- Challenge, with the support of our own actuarial specialists, the key assumptions applied, being the discount rate, inflation rate and mortality/life expectancy against externally derived data;
- Confirm that the accounting treatment and entries applied by the Group are in line with IFRS and the CIPFA Code of Practice;
- Consider the adequacy of the Fire Authority's disclosures in respect of the sensitivity of the deficit or surplus to these assumptions.

Audit risks and our audit approach (cont.)

3

Valuation of land and buildings

The carrying amount of revalued Land & Buildings differs materially from the fair value



Other audit risk

The Code requires that where assets are subject to revaluation, their year end carrying value should reflect the appropriate current value at that date.

This creates a risk that the carrying value of assets not revalued in year differs materially from the year end current value.

The fact that the figures were not audited in the previous year increases uncertainty. Additionally, the control deficiencies identified by internal audit in prior years concerning disposals and land valuation add to the complexity and uncertainty.

We have not currently identified a significant risk relating to valuation of land and buildings due to the assets not being subject to a full valuation during the period, however we will continue to assess this during the audit.



Planned response

We will perform the following procedures designed to specifically address the significant risk associated with the valuation:

- We will critically assess the independence, objectivity and expertise of Nottingham valuation office, the valuers used in developing the valuation of the Fire Authority's properties at 31 March 2024;
- We will inspect the instructions issued to the valuers for the valuation of land and buildings to verify they are appropriate to produce a valuation consistent with the requirements of the CIPFA Code.
- We will compare the accuracy of the data provided to the valuers for the development of the valuation to underlying information;
- We will evaluate the design and implementation of controls in place for management to review the valuation and the appropriateness of assumptions used;
- We will challenge the appropriateness of the valuation of land and buildings; including any material movements from the previous revaluations. We will challenge key assumptions within the valuation as part of our judgement;
- We will agree the calculations performed of the movements in value of land and buildings and verify that these have been accurately accounted for in line with the requirements of the CIPFA Code; and
- Disclosures: We will consider the adequacy of the disclosures concerning the key judgements and degree of estimation involved in arriving at the valuation.

Audit risks and our audit approach

Expenditure – rebuttal of Significant Risk

Practice Note 10 states that the risk of material misstatement due to fraudulent financial reporting may arise from the manipulation of expenditure recognition is required to be considered.

Having considered the risk factors relevant to the Fire Authority and the nature of expenditure within the entity, we have determined that a significant risk relating to expenditure recognition is not required.

Specifically, the financial position of the Fire Authority, whilst under pressure, is not indicative of a position that would provide an incentive to manipulate expenditure recognition and the nature of expenditure has not identified any specific risk factors.

Audit risks and our audit approach

Revenue – Rebuttal of Significant Risk

Professional standards require us to make a rebuttable presumption that the fraud risk from revenue recognition is a significant risk. Due to the nature of the revenue within the sector we have rebutted this significant risk. We have set out the rationale for the rebuttal of key types of income in the table below.

Description of Income	Nature of Income	Rationale for Rebuttal
Council tax	This is the income received from local residents paid in accordance with an annual bill based on the banding of the property concerned. The Fire Authority is a precepting authority and so this income is collected by the billing authorities in the area.	The income is highly predictable and is pre-agreed with local authorities at the beginning of the year, due to the number of properties in the area and the fixed price that is approved annually: it is highly unlikely for there to be a material error in the population.
Business rates	Revenue received from local businesses paid in accordance with an annual demand based on the rateable value of the business concerned. The Fire Authority is a precepting authority and so this income is collected by the billing authorities in the area.	The income is highly predictable and is pre-agreed with local authorities at the beginning of the year, due to the number of properties in the area and the fixed price that is approved annually: it is highly unlikely for there to be a material error in the population.
Fees and charges	Revenue recognised from receipt of fixed fee services, in line with the fees and charges schedules agreed and approved annually.	The income stream represents high volume, low value sales, with simple recognition. The income stream is not expected to be material at year end. We do not deem there to be any incentive or opportunity to manipulate the income.
Grant income	Predictable income receipted primarily from central government	Grant income at a local authority typically involves a small number of high value items and an immaterial residual population. These high value items frequently have simple recognition criteria and can be traced easily to third party documentation, most often from central government source data. There is limited incentive or opportunity to manipulate these figures.

Mandatory communications - additional reporting

Going concern






Under NAO guidance, including Practice Note 10 - A local authority's financial statements shall be prepared on a going concern basis; this is, the accounts should be prepared on the assumption that the functions of the authority will continue in operational existence for the foreseeable future. Transfers of services under combinations of public sector bodies (such as local government reorganization) do not negate the presumption of going concern. However, financial sustainability is a core area of focus for our Value for Money opinion.

Additional reporting

Your audit is undertaken to comply with the Local Audit and Accountability Act 2014 which gives the NAO the responsibility to prepare an Audit Code (the Code), which places responsibilities in addition to those derived from audit standards on us. We also have responsibilities which come specifically from acting as a component auditor to the NAO. In considering these matters at the planning stage we indicate whether:

Work is completed throughout our audit and we can confirm the matters are progressing satisfactorily 	We have identified issues that we may need to report 	Work is completed at a later stage of our audit so we have nothing to report 
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We have summarised the status of all these various requirements at the time of planning our audit below and will update you as our work progresses:

Type	Status	Response
Our declaration of independence		No matters to report. The engagement team and others in the firm, as appropriate, have complied with relevant ethical requirements regarding independence.
Issue a report in the public interest		We are required to consider if we should issue a public interest report on any matters which come to our attention during the audit. We have not identified any such matters to date.
Provide a statement to the NAO on your consolidation schedule		This "Whole of Government Accounts" requirement is fulfilled when we complete any work required of us by the NAO to assist their audit of the consolidated accounts of DLUHC.
Provide a summary of risks of significant weakness in arrangements to provide value for money		We are required to report significant weaknesses in arrangements. Work to be completed at a later stage.
Certify the audit as complete		We are required to certify the audit as complete when we have fulfilled all of our responsibilities relating to the accounts and use of resources as well as those other matters highlighted above.

Mandatory communications

Type	Statements
Management’s responsibilities (and, where appropriate, those charged with governance)	<p>Prepare financial statements in accordance with the applicable financial reporting framework that are free from material misstatement, whether due to fraud or error.</p> <p>Provide the auditor with access to all information relevant to the preparation of the financial statements, additional information requested and unrestricted access to persons within the entity.</p>
Auditor’s responsibilities	<p>Our responsibilities set out through the NAO Code (communicated to you by the PSAA) and can be also found on their website, which include our responsibilities to form and express an opinion on the financial statements that have been prepared by management with the oversight of those charged with governance. The audit of the financial statements does not relieve management or those charged with governance of their responsibilities.</p>
Auditor’s responsibilities – Fraud	<p>This report communicates how we plan to identify, assess and obtain sufficient appropriate evidence regarding the risks of material misstatement of the financial statements due to fraud and to implement appropriate responses to fraud or suspected fraud identified during the audit.</p>
Auditor’s responsibilities – Other information	<p>Our responsibilities are communicated to you by the PSAA and can be also found on their website, which communicates our responsibilities with respect to other information in documents containing audited financial statements. We will report to you on material inconsistencies and misstatements in other information.</p>
Independence	<p>Our independence confirmation at page 20 discloses matters relating to our independence and objectivity including any relationships that may bear on the firm’s independence and the integrity and objectivity of the audit engagement partner and audit staff.</p>

Nottinghamshire and City of Nottingham Fire Authority

DRAFT - Value for money risk assessment

Our approach

June 2024

Value for money

For 2023/24 our value for money reporting requirements have been designed to follow the guidance in the Audit Code of Practice.

Our responsibility to conclude on significant weaknesses in value for money arrangements.

The main output is a narrative on each of the three domains, summarising the work performed, any significant weaknesses and any recommendations for improvement.

We have set out the key methodology and reporting requirements on this slide and provided an overview of the process and reporting on the following pages.

Risk assessment processes

Our responsibility is to assess whether there are any significant weaknesses in the Fire Authority's arrangements to secure value for money. Our risk assessment will continue to consider whether there are any significant risks that the Fire Authority does not have appropriate arrangements in place.

In undertaking our risk assessment we will be required to obtain an understanding of the key processes the Fire Authority has in place to ensure this, including financial management, risk management and partnership working arrangements. We will complete this through review of the Fire Authority's documentation in these areas and performing inquiries of management as well as reviewing reports, such as internal audit assessments.

Reporting

Our approach to value for money reporting aligns to the NAO guidance and includes:

- A summary of our commentary on the arrangements in place against each of the three value for money criteria, setting out our view of the arrangements in place compared to industry standards;
- A summary of any further work undertaken against identified significant risks and the findings from this work; and
- Recommendations raised as a result of any significant weaknesses identified and follow up of your previous auditor's recommendations.

The Fire Authority will be required to publish the commentary on its website at the same time as publishing its annual report online.

Financial sustainability

How the body manages its resources to ensure it can continue to deliver its services.

Governance

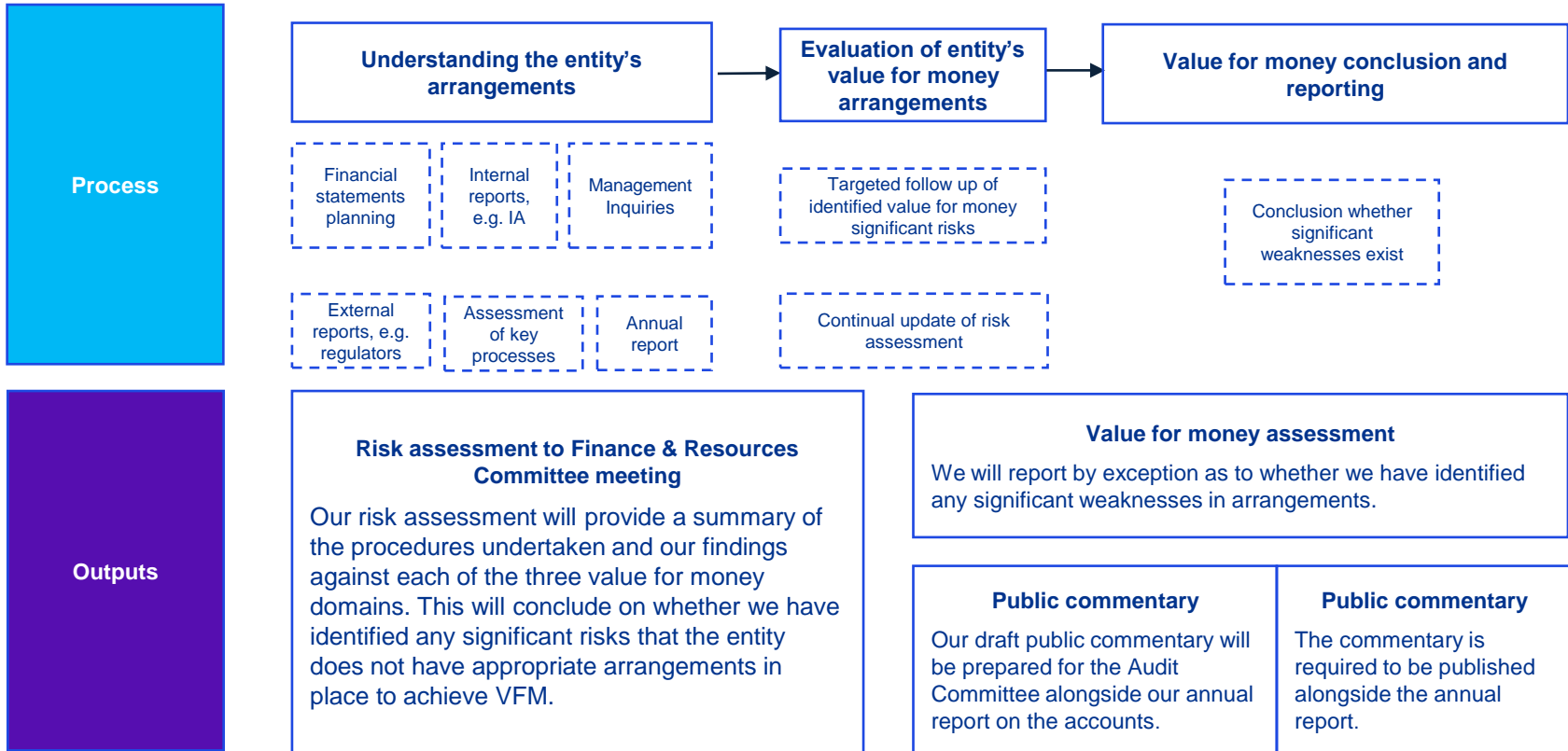
How the body ensures that it makes informed decisions and properly manages its risks.

Improving economy, efficiency and effectiveness

How the body uses information about its costs and performance to improve the way it manages and delivers its services.

Value for money

Approach we take to completing our work to form and report our conclusion:



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Audit team and rotation

Your audit team has been drawn from our specialist local government audit department and is led by key members of staff who will be supported by auditors and specialists as necessary to complete our work. We also ensure that we consider rotation of your audit partner and firm.



Richard is the director responsible for our audit. He will lead our audit work, attend the Finance & Resources Committee and be responsible for the opinions that we issue.



Nicole is the manager responsible for our audit. They will co-ordinate our audit work, attend the Finance & Resources Committee and ensure we are co-ordinated across our accounts and VFM work.



Bilal is the in-charge responsible for our audit for the first year. They will be responsible for our on-site fieldwork. He will complete work on more complex section of the audit.

To comply with professional standard we need to ensure that you appropriately rotate your external audit partner. There are no other members of your team which we will need to consider this requirement for:



This will be Richard's first year as your engagement lead. They are required to rotate every five years, extendable to seven with PSAA approval.

Audit cycle & timetable

Our schedule 2023-2024

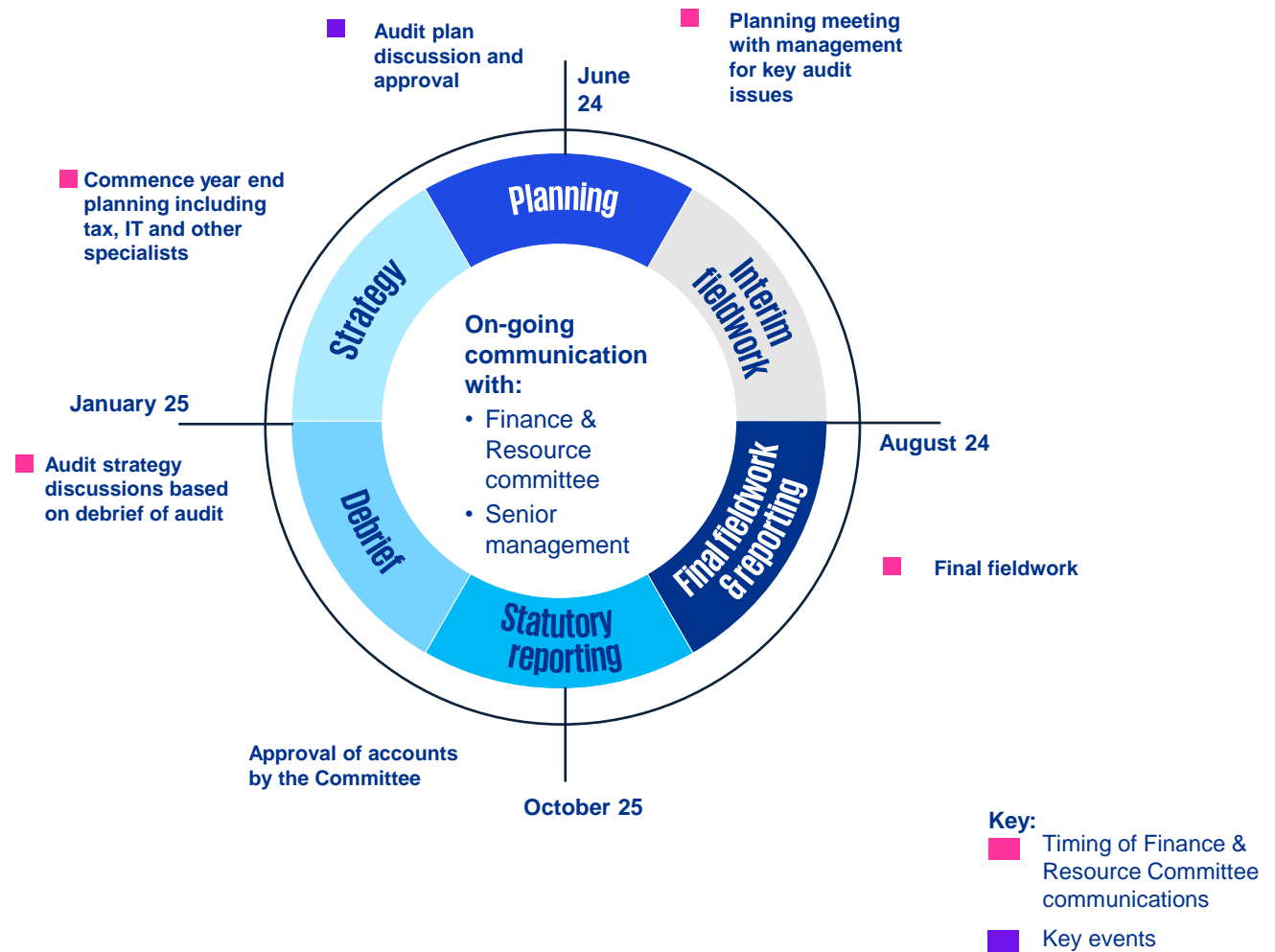
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We have worked with management to generate our understanding of the processes and controls in place at the Fire Authority in its preparation of the Statement of Accounts.

We have agreed with management an audit cycle and timetable that reflects our aim to sign our audit report by 31 October 2024.

This being the first year of KPMG as auditor we have undertaken greater activities to understand the Fire Authority at the planning stage. This level of input may not be required in future years and may change our audit timings.

Given the large amount of consultation happening in regard to the scope and timing of local government this audit schedule may be subject to change.



Fees

Audit fee

Our fees for the year ending 31 March 2024 are set out in the PSAA Scale Fees communication and are shown below.

Entity	2023/24 (£'000)
Statutory audit	94,838
TOTAL	94,838

As per PSAA's Scale Fees Consultation, the fees do not include new requirements of ISA315 revised (risk of material misstatement); or ISA 240 (auditor's responsibilities relating to fraud. The fees also assume no significant risks are identified as part of the Value for Money risk assessment. Additional fees in relation to these areas will be subject to the fees variation process as outlined by the PSAA.

Billing arrangements

Fees will be billed in accordance with the milestone completion phasing that has been communicated by the PSAA.

Basis of fee information

Our fees are subject to the following assumptions:

- Audit evidence files are completed to an appropriate standard (we will liaise with you separately on this);
- Draft statutory accounts are presented to us for audit subject to audit and tax adjustments;
- Supporting schedules to figures in the accounts are supplied;
- A trial balance together with reconciled control accounts are presented to us;
- All deadlines agreed with us are met;
- We find no weaknesses in controls that cause us to significantly extend procedures beyond those planned;
- Management will be available to us as necessary throughout the audit process; and
- There will be no changes in deadlines or reporting requirements.

We will provide a list of schedules to be prepared by management stating the due dates together with pro-formas as necessary.

Our ability to deliver the services outlined to the agreed timetable and fee will depend on these schedules being available on the due dates in the agreed form and content.

Any variations to the above plan will be subject to the PSAA fee variation process.

Confirmation of Independence

We confirm that, in our professional judgement, KPMG LLP is independent within the meaning of regulatory and professional requirements and that the objectivity of the Partner and audit staff is not impaired.

To the Finance and Resource Committee members

Assessment of our objectivity and independence as auditor of Nottinghamshire and City of Nottingham Fire Authority

Professional ethical standards require us to provide to you at the planning stage of the audit a written disclosure of relationships (including the provision of non-audit services) that bear on KPMG LLP's objectivity and independence, the threats to KPMG LLP's independence that these create, any safeguards that have been put in place and why they address such threats, together with any other information necessary to enable KPMG LLP's objectivity and independence to be assessed.

This letter is intended to comply with this requirement and facilitate a subsequent discussion with you on audit independence and addresses:

- General procedures to safeguard independence and objectivity;
- Independence and objectivity considerations relating to the provision of non-audit services; and
- Independence and objectivity considerations relating to other matters.

General procedures to safeguard independence and objectivity

KPMG LLP is committed to being and being seen to be independent. As part of our ethics and independence policies, all KPMG LLP partners/directors and staff annually confirm their compliance with our ethics and independence policies and procedures including in particular that they have no prohibited shareholdings. Our ethics and independence policies and procedures are fully consistent with the requirements of the FRC Ethical Standard. As a result we have underlying safeguards in place to maintain independence through:

- Instilling professional values.
- Communications.
- Internal accountability.
- Risk management.
- Independent reviews.

We are satisfied that our general procedures support our independence and objectivity.

Independence and objectivity considerations relating to the provision of non-audit services

Summary of non-audit services

No non- audit services provided

Confirmation of Independence (cont.)

Summary of fees

We have considered the fees charged by us to the Group and its affiliates for professional services provided by us during the reporting period.

Fee ratio

The ratio of non-audit fees to audit fees for the year is anticipated to be 0:1. We do not consider that the total non-audit fees create a self-interest threat since the absolute level of fees is not significant to our firm as a whole.

	2023/24
	£'000
Statutory audit	94,838
Total Fees	94,838

Application of the FRC Ethical Standard 2019

Your previous auditors will have communicated to you the effect of the application of the FRC Ethical Standard 2019. That standard became effective for the first period commencing on or after 15 March 2020, except for the restrictions on non-audit and additional services that became effective immediately at that date, subject to grandfathering provisions.

AGN 01 states that when the auditor provides non-audit services, the total fees for such services to the audited entity and its controlled entities in any one year should not exceed 70% of the total fee for all audit work carried out in respect of the audited entity and its controlled entities for that year.

We confirm that as at 15 March 2020 we were not providing any non-audit or additional services that required to be grandfathered.

Independence and objectivity considerations relating to other matters

There are no other matters that, in our professional judgment, bear on our independence which need to be disclosed to the Audit and Risk Committee.

Confirmation of audit independence

We confirm that as of the date of this letter, in our professional judgment, KPMG LLP is independent within the meaning of regulatory and professional requirements and the objectivity of the partner and audit staff is not impaired.

This report is intended solely for the information of the Audit and Risk Committee of the Group and should not be used for any other purposes.

We would be very happy to discuss the matters identified above (or any other matters relating to our objectivity and independence) should you wish to do so.

Yours faithfully

KPMG LLP

KPMG LLP

KPMG's Audit quality framework

Audit quality is at the core of everything we do at KPMG and we believe that it is not just about reaching the right opinion, but how we reach that opinion.

To ensure that every partner and employee concentrates on the fundamental skills and behaviours required to deliver an appropriate and independent opinion, we have developed our global Audit Quality Framework.

Responsibility for quality starts at the top through our governance structures as the UK Board is supported by the Audit Oversight Committee, and accountability is reinforced through the complete chain of command in all our teams.

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■ Commitment to continuous improvement

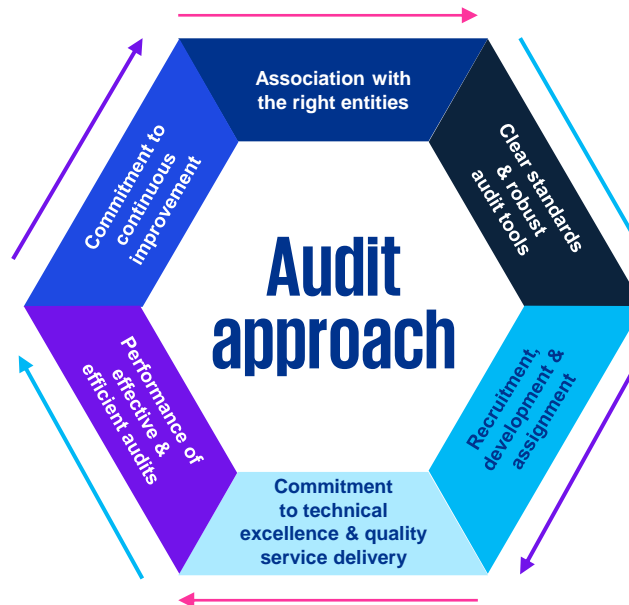
- Comprehensive effective monitoring processes
- Significant investment in technology to achieve consistency and enhance audits
- Obtain feedback from key stakeholders
- Evaluate and appropriately respond to feedback and findings

■ Performance of effective & efficient audits

- Professional judgement and scepticism
- Direction, supervision and review
- Ongoing mentoring and on the job coaching, including the second line of defence model
- Critical assessment of audit evidence
- Appropriately supported and documented conclusions
- Insightful, open and honest two way communications

■ Commitment to technical excellence & quality service delivery

- Technical training and support
- Accreditation and licensing
- Access to specialist networks
- Consultation processes
- Business understanding and industry knowledge
- Capacity to deliver valued insights



■ Association with the right entities

- Select entities within risk tolerance
- Manage audit responses to risk
- Robust client and engagement acceptance and continuance processes
- Client portfolio management

■ Clear standards & robust audit tools

- KPMG Audit and Risk Management Manuals
- Audit technology tools, templates and guidance
- KPMG Clara incorporating monitoring capabilities at engagement level
- Independence policies

■ Recruitment, development & assignment of appropriately qualified personnel

- Recruitment, promotion, retention
- Development of core competencies, skills and personal qualities
- Recognition and reward for quality work
- Capacity and resource management
- Assignment of team members and specialists

ISA (UK) 315 Revised: Overview



Summary

In the prior period, ISA (UK) 315 Revised “Identifying and assessing the risks of material misstatement” was introduced and incorporated significant changes from the previous version of the ISA.

These were introduced to achieve a more rigorous risk identification and assessment process and thereby promote more specificity in the response to the identified risks. The revised ISA was effective for periods commencing on or after **15 December 2021**.

The revised standard expanded on concepts in the existing standards but also introduced new risk assessment process requirements – the changes had a significant impact on our audit methodology and therefore audit approach.

What impact did the revision have on audited entities?

With the changes in the environment, including financial reporting frameworks becoming more complex, technology being used to a greater extent and entities (and their governance structures) becoming more complicated, standard setters recognised that audits need to have a more robust and comprehensive risk identification and assessment mechanism.

The changes result in additional audit awareness and therefore clear and impactful communication to those charged with governance in relation to (i) promoting consistency in effective risk identification and assessment, (ii) modernising the standard by increasing the focus on IT, (iii) enhancing the standard’s scalability through a principle based approach, and (iv) focusing auditor attention on exercising professional scepticism throughout risk assessment procedures.

Implementing year 1 findings into the subsequent audit plan

Entering the second year of the standard, the auditors will have demonstrated, and communicated their enhanced insight into their understanding of your wider control environment, notably within the area of IT.

A key area of focus for the auditor will be understanding how the entity responded to the observations communicated to those charged with governance in the prior period.

Where an entity has responded to those observations a re-evaluation of the control environment will establish if the responses by entity management have been proportionate and successful in their implementation.

Where no response to the observations has been applied by entity, or the auditor deems the remediation has not been effective, the audit team will understand the context and respond with proportionate application of professional scepticism in planning and performance of the subsequent audit procedures.

What will this mean for our on-going audits?

To meet the on-going requirements of the standard, auditors will each year continue to focus on risk assessment process, including the detailed consideration of the IT environment.

Subsequent year auditor observations on whether entity actions to address any control observations are proportionate and have been successfully implemented will represent an on-going audit deliverable.

Each year the impact of the on-going standard on your audit will be dependent on a combination of prior period observations, changes in the entity control environment and developments during the period. This on-going focus is likely to result in the continuation of enhanced risk assessment procedures and appropriate involvement of technical specialists (particularly IT Audit professionals) in our audits which will, in turn, influence auditor remuneration.

ISA (UK) 240 Revised: changes embedded in our practices

Ongoing impact of the revisions to ISA (UK) 240

ISA (UK) 240 (revised May 2021, effective for periods commencing on or after 15 December 2021) The auditor’s responsibilities relating to fraud in an audit of financial statements included revisions introduced to clarify the auditor’s obligations with respect to fraud and enhance the quality of audit work performed in this area. These changes are embedded into our practices and we will continue to maintain an increased focus on applying professional scepticism in our audit approach and to plan and perform the audit in a manner that is not biased towards obtaining evidence that may be corroborative, or towards excluding evidence that may be contradictory.

We will communicate, unless prohibited by law or regulation, with those charged with governance any matters related to fraud that are, in our judgment, relevant to their responsibilities. In doing so, we will consider the matters, if any, to communicate regarding management’s process for identifying and responding to the risks of fraud in the entity and our assessment of the risks of material misstatement due to fraud.

Area	Our approach following the revisions
<p>Risk assessment procedures and related activities</p>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1) Increased focus on applying professional scepticism – the key areas affected are: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • the need for auditors not to bias their approach towards obtaining evidence that is corroborative in nature or excluding contradictory evidence; • remaining alert for indications of inauthenticity in documents and records, and • investigating inconsistent or implausible responses to inquiries performed. 2) Requirements to perform inquiries with individuals at the entity are expanded to include, amongst others, those who deal with allegations of fraud. 3) We will determine whether to involve technical specialists (including forensics) to aid in identifying and responding to risks of material misstatement due to fraud.
<p>Internal discussions and challenge</p>	<p>We will have internal discussions among the audit team to identify and assess the risk of fraud in the audit, including determining the need for additional meetings to consider the findings from earlier stages of the audit and their impact on our assessment of the risk of fraud.</p>

FRC's areas of focus



Reporting on the effects of inflation and other uncertainties

The FRC released their [Annual Review of Corporate Reporting 2022/23](#) in October 2023. In addition, they have released three thematic reviews during the year should be considered when preparing reporting for the current financial period.

The reports identify where the FRC believes companies should be improving their reporting. Below is a high level summary of the key topics. We encourage management and those charged with governance to read further on those areas which are significant to the entity.

This year's Annual Review of Corporate Reporting identifies that companies continue to face significant economic and geopolitical uncertainty and annual report and accounts should therefore tell a coherent story about the impacts on the business and the assumptions the company has made in preparing the financial statements.

The FRC notes that interest rate rises in response to persistent inflation, the related impact on consumer behaviour, and limited growth present a particularly challenging environment for companies. Financial reporting needs to set out the impact of these issues on their business, and the assumptions which underpin the values of assets and liabilities in financial statements. Significant changes in discount rates and future cash flows are expected as a result and they should be highlighted.

The impacts of uncertainty on companies' narrative reporting and financial statements are numerous, but the FRC sets out its clear disclosure expectations for 2023/2024:

- Disclosures about uncertainty should be sufficient to meet relevant requirements *and* for users to understand the positions taken in the financial statements.
- The strategic report should give a clear description of the risks facing the business, the impact of these risks on strategy, business model, going concern and viability, and disclosures should be cross-referenced to relevant detail in the report and accounts.
- Transparent disclosure should be provided of the nature and extent of material risks arising from financial instruments.

Preparers should take a step back to consider whether the annual report, as a whole, is clear, concise and understandable and whether additional information, beyond the requirements of the standards, is necessary to understand particular transactions, events or circumstances.

FRC's areas of focus



Climate-related reporting

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The FRC released their [Annual Review of Corporate Reporting 2022/23](#) in October 2023. In addition, they have released three thematic reviews during the year should be considered when preparing reporting for the current financial period.

The reports identify where the FRC believes companies should be improving their reporting. Below is a high level summary of the key topics. We encourage management and those charged with governance to read further on those areas which are significant to the entity.

Companies in scope for either UK Climate-related Financial Reporting (through the Companies Act requirements last year) or Taskforce on Climate-Related Disclosures (TCFD) (through listing rules or other regulatory requirements) have now reported for the first time. Companies should be reconsidering these disclosures and reflecting any changes in the business or strategy that have happened since last years reporting, to ensure the disclosure remain relevant and reflects the impact of climate-related risk on the Company.

Climate-related risks remains an area of ongoing focus for the FRC as they embed the review of these disclosures into their routine annual reviews. The FRC has highlighted that it expects companies to provide improved disclosure explaining the linkage between narrative reporting on uncertainties such as climate change, and the assumptions made in the financial statements.

In respect of TCFD disclosures, the FRC notes that sustainability reporting requirements continue to evolve and companies are still at very different stages in their reporting in this area. The FRC expect in scope entities to provide a clear statement of consistency with TCFD which explains, unambiguously, whether management considers they have given sufficient information to comply with the framework in the current year. Companies must, in any case, comply with the new mandatory requirements for disclosure of certain TCFD-aligned information.

In relation to the specific thematic on metrics and targets they highlighted five areas of improvement:

- the definition and reporting of company-specific metrics and targets, beyond headline 'net zero' statements;
- better linkage between companies' climate-related metrics and targets and the risks and opportunities to which they relate;
- the explanation of year-on-year movements in metrics and performance against targets;
- transparency about internal carbon prices, where used by companies to incentivise emission reduction; and
- better linkage between climate-related targets reported in TCFD disclosures and ESG targets disclosed in the Directors' Remuneration Report.

FRC's areas of focus (cont.)

Impairment of assets

Heightened economic uncertainty, high inflation and higher interest rates have resulted in more instances of impairment or reductions in headroom, prompting the need for more detailed disclosures under IAS 36. The FRC notes that many of the queries it has raised with companies in the past year would have been avoided by clearer, more complete disclosures.

Disclosures should provide key inputs and assumptions applied, along with relevant values and sensitivity information where impairments could arise from reasonably possible changes in assumptions.

Assumptions and sensitivities should be consistent with information provided elsewhere in the annual report, including those related to climate and other commitments, and with the wider economic environment; where there are inconsistencies, these should be explained.

Discount rates should be consistent with the assumptions in the cash flow projections, particularly in respect of risk and the effects of inflation.

Judgements and estimates

Providing quality disclosures in this area remains particularly important in the light of ongoing economic and political uncertainty. The FRC has noted that often disclosures did not contain sufficient information about the key assumptions or appeared inconsistent with disclosures given elsewhere in the annual report.

Disclosures should explain the significant judgements made and provide quantified sensitivities where there is a significant source of estimation uncertainty. This includes judgements and estimates relating to the going concern assessment and accounting for inflationary features, including the use of discount rates. Significant estimates should be reassessed each year and changes to assumptions explained.

The FRC highlights the need for disclosures to clearly distinguish between estimates with a significant risk of a material adjustment to carrying amounts within the next year, and other sources of estimation uncertainty.

Cash flow statements

Cash flow statements have again been an area where the FRC have raised many queries and it remains one of the most common causes of prior year adjustments. Most queries raised by the FRC relate to unusual or complex transactions which have not been appropriately reflected in the cash flow statement.

Companies should ensure that descriptions of cash flows are consistent with those reported elsewhere in the report and accounts, with non-cash investing and financing transactions being excluded, but disclosed elsewhere if material.

In addition, companies should ensure that cash flows are appropriately classified between operating, financing and investing, and cash flows should not be inappropriately netted. Cash and cash equivalents should comply with the relevant definitions and criteria in the standard.

FRC's areas of focus (cont.)

Strategic report and other Companies Act 2006 matters

Strategic reports should focus not only on financial performance but should also explain significant movements in the balance sheet and cash flow statement. They should articulate the effect of principal risks and uncertainties facing the business, including economic and other risks such as inflation, rising interest rates, supply chain issues, climate-related risks and labour relations.

In addition, the FRC reminds companies that they should comply with the legal requirements for making distributions and repurchasing shares including, where relevant, the requirement to file interim accounts to support the transaction.

Financial instruments

Companies should ensure that the nature and extent of material risks arising from financial instruments (including inflation and rising interest rates), and related risk management, are adequately disclosed.

This includes disclosures being sufficient to explain the approach and significant assumptions applied in the measurement of expected credit losses, including concentrations of risk, and assessments should be reviewed and adjusted for forecast future economic conditions.

The effect of refinancing and changes to covenant arrangements should be explained, with information about covenants being provided unless the likelihood of a breach is remote.

Lastly, the FRC reminds companies that cash and overdraft balances should be offset only when the qualifying criteria have been met.

FRC's areas of focus (cont.)

Income taxes	Provisions and contingencies	Revenue	Presentation of financial statements and related disclosures	Fair value measurement
<p>Following their thematic review last year, the FRC reminds companies that the nature of evidence supporting the recognition of deferred tax assets should be disclosed, and should factor in any difficult economic environment.</p> <p>Additionally, companies should ensure tax-related disclosures are consistent throughout the annual report, uncertain tax positions are adequately disclosed, and material reconciling items in the tax rate reconciliation are presented separately and appropriately described.</p>	<p>Clear descriptions of the nature and uncertainties for material provisions or contingent liabilities, the expected timeframe and the basis for estimating the probable or possible outflow should be provided.</p> <p>Inputs used in measuring provisions should be consistent in the approach to incorporating inflation, and details of related assumptions should be provided.</p>	<p>Where variable consideration exists, companies should provide sufficient disclosure to explain how it is estimate and constrained.</p> <p>Accounting policies and relevant judgement disclosures should be provided for all significant obligations. Those disclosures should address in sufficient detail the timing of revenue recognition, the basis for recognising revenue over time and the methodology applied.</p> <p>Lastly, the FRC reminds companies that inflationary features in contracts with customers, and the accounting for such clauses, should be adequately disclosed and clearly explained.</p>	<p>The FRC expects companies to disclose company-specific information to meet the overall disclosure objectives of relevant accounting standards, and not just the narrow specific disclosure requirements of individual standards. They set out a clear expectation that additional information (beyond the minimum requirements of the standards) should be included where needed.</p>	<p>Fair value measurement has returned this year as one of the FRC's top ten issues raised in their correspondence with companies, and this has been the topic of a thematic review. Common queries raised include the omission of sensitivity disclosures and the quantification of unobservable inputs into fair value measurements.</p> <p>The FRC reminds companies that they should use market participants' assumptions, rather than their own, in measuring fair value.</p>

FRC's areas of focus (cont.)

Thematic reviews

Over the past year FRC has issued Thematic reviews on the following topics:

- Climate-related metrics and targets
- IFRS 13 Fair value measurement
- IFRS 17 Insurance contracts – Interim disclosures in the first year of application
- Reporting by the UK's largest private companies

2023/24 review priorities

The FRC has indicated that its 2023/24 reviews will focus on the following sectors which are considered by the FRC to be higher risk by virtue of economic or other pressures:



Travel, hospitality and leisure



Construction materials



Retail and personal goods



Gas, water and multi-utilities



kpmg.com/uk

Some or all of the services described herein may not be permissible for KPMG audited entities and their affiliates or related entities.

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NOTTINGHAMSHIRE
Fire & Rescue Service
Creating Safer Communities

Nottinghamshire and City of Nottingham
Fire and Rescue Authority

ANNUAL GOVERNANCE STATEMENT 2023/24

Report of the Chief Fire Officer

Date: 26 July 2024

Purpose of Report:

To seek the approval of Members to the signing of the Annual Governance Statement by the Chair of the Authority and the Chief Fire Officer.

Recommendations:

It is recommended that Members:

- Approve the draft Annual Governance Statement 2023/24 presented at Appendix A to this report;
- Delegate authority to the Chair of the Authority and the Chief Fire Officer to update the final Annual Governance Statement 2023/24 for any retrospective factors that occur between the draft Annual Governance Statement and the publication of the final Annual Governance Statement.

CONTACT OFFICER

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Media Enquiries Contact: Corporate Communication Team
0115 8388100 corporatecomms@notts-fire.gov.uk

1. BACKGROUND

- 1.1 The Annual Governance Statement is a statutory document which explains the processes and procedures in place to enable the Service to carry out its functions effectively. The Annual Governance Statement contains details of the most recent review of governance arrangements and sets out challenges for those arrangements going forward.
- 1.2 The Authority must approve the Annual Governance Statement each year prior to adopting the Statement of Accounts. Once approved by the Authority, the Chair of the Authority and the Chief Fire Officer can sign the Annual Governance Statement.
- 1.3 The Annual Governance Statement is expected to be up to date at the time of publication. The draft Annual Governance Statement was included in the draft unaudited 2023/24 Statement of Accounts which were made public on the website by 31 May 2024, in line with the Accounts and Audit Regulations 2015. It reflects the governance of the organisation as at 31 March 2024 taking into account factors up to the 31 May 2024, it is required to be updated to reflect any retrospective factors up to the approval of the final audited Statement of Accounts, such as the impact of HMICFRS inspection report and any audit reports received.
- 1.4 The Local Code of Corporate Governance was adopted by the Authority in February 2017. This Annual Governance Statement, and the annual review of governance is against this framework.

2. REPORT

- 2.1 The Annual Governance Statement 2023/24 sets out how the Service has complied with the current local code of corporate governance during the year and meets the requirements of the Accounts and Audit Regulations 2015 with regards to the preparation and approval of an Annual Governance Statement.
- 2.2 The draft Annual Governance Statement 2023/24 is attached to this report at Appendix A. It concludes that the Service has well developed and evolving governance arrangements in place that are fit for purpose. The reasoning behind this conclusion is outlined in the paragraphs below.
- 2.3 The Service's policies and procedures continue to be updated and reviewed.
- 2.4 The Local Code of Corporate Governance was adopted by the Authority in February 2017 and the Chartered Institute of Public Finance and Accountancy's Financial Management Code was adopted by the Authority in July 2021. The Authority's compliance against the Financial Management Code was reviewed by internal audit in 2021/22 – the report acknowledged that effective controls were in place regarding self-assessment, leadership, accountability, long term sustainability and value for money.

- 2.5 Whilst the 2021/22 and 2022/23 Statement of Accounts are yet to be audited, the external auditors, Ernst & Young (EY), issued unqualified audits for the first three years of their contract (2018/19 and 2020/21), which indicates that the financial systems in place are robust.
- 2.6 Despite the delays to the audit of the Statement of Accounts and value for money audits by the Authority's external auditors (EY), the Service's internal auditors (Nottinghamshire County Council) have completed a comprehensive audit programme which provides a high level of assurance. The Internal Audit Annual Report provided a judgement of 'Substantial Assurance' regarding the arrangements in place for corporate governance, risk management and the control environment.
- 2.7 Five internal audits have been completed within the year, four being graded as having 'Substantial Assurance' and one having 'Limited Assurance', where limited assurance was received, six recommendations have been agreed by management and actions to implement the recommendations are in progress.
- 2.8 The Internal Audit Charter was adopted by the Finance and Resources Committee in June 2022. The annual Internal Audit Plan is reviewed by the Strategic Leadership Team (SLT) and approved by the Finance and Resources Committee. All recommendations arising from internal audit reviews are actioned and monitored by SLT and the Finance and Resources Committee.
- 2.9 The Service's second full HMICFRS final inspection report issued in July 2022 provided a rating of 'Good' against all 11 areas of assessment. The Service is currently waiting for the HMICFRS final inspection report and ratings for the third inspection that took place in March and April 2024.
- 2.10 The Service continues to address any governance issues as they arise and commits to keeping governance arrangements under review.
- 2.11 On 17 July 2024, the Service received the Annual Review letter 2023-24 from the Local Government and Social Care Ombudsman (LGSCO). LGSCO is the final stage of the complaints process for fire and rescue authorities. The letter reports:
- No complaints and enquiries received in the period;
 - No decisions made in the period;
 - No requirements for compliance with recommendations recorded during the period.
- 2.12 LGSCO encourages the Service to report the letter with colleagues with scrutiny and oversight responsibilities and for it to be considered as part of the corporate governance processes. Therefore, the Annual Governance Statement will be updated between the draft and final to reflect this information.

3. FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

There are no financial implications arising from this report.

4. HUMAN RESOURCES AND LEARNING AND DEVELOPMENT IMPLICATIONS

There are no human resources or learning and development implications arising from this report.

5. EQUALITIES AND ETHICAL IMPLICATIONS

An equality impact assessment has not been undertaken because the Authority's approach to inclusion and equality already forms part of its governance framework. There are no ethical implications arising from this report.

6. ENVIRONMENTAL AND SUSTAINABILITY IMPLICATIONS

There are no environmental or sustainability implications arising from this report.

7. LEGAL IMPLICATIONS

The Accounts and Audit Regulations 2015, Part 1 Section 6, set out the requirement for an Authority to conduct an annual review of governance and prepare an annual governance statement. It also provides that an Authority must consider the findings of the review and approve the annual governance statement in advance of approving the Statement of Accounts.

8. RISK MANAGEMENT IMPLICATIONS

The governance framework of the Authority is the collection of systems, processes, culture and values which direct and control decision making and policy development within the organisation. The risk of not reviewing governance activity against this framework is that any weaknesses in governance may not be identified and rectified, thereby putting the organisation at risk of not achieving its objectives.

9. COLLABORATION IMPLICATIONS

There are no collaboration implications arising from this report.

10. RECOMMENDATIONS

It is recommended that Members:

- 10.1 Approve the draft Annual Governance Statement 2023/24 presented at Appendix A to this report.
- 10.2 Delegate authority to the Chair of the Authority and the Chief Fire Officer to update the final Annual Governance Statement 2023/24 for any retrospective factors that occur between the draft Annual Governance Statement and the publication of the final Annual Governance Statement.

11. BACKGROUND PAPERS FOR INSPECTION (OTHER THAN PUBLISHED DOCUMENTS)

None.

Craig Parkin
CHIEF FIRE OFFICER

NOTTINGHAMSHIRE FIRE AND RESCUE AUTHORITY
DRAFT ANNUAL GOVERNANCE STATEMENT

1 SCOPE OF RESPONSIBILITY

- 1.1 Nottinghamshire Fire and Rescue Authority (the Authority) is responsible for ensuring that its business is conducted in accordance with the law and proper standards, and that public money is safeguarded, properly accounted for, and used economically, efficiently, effectively, and equitably. The Authority also has a duty under the Local Government Act 1999 to make arrangements to secure continuous improvements in the way in which its functions are exercised having regard to a combination of economy, efficiency and effectiveness.
- 1.2 In discharging this overall responsibility, the Authority is responsible for putting in place proper arrangements for the governance of its affairs, facilitating the effective exercise of its functions, use of its resources and including arrangements for the management of risk and the maintenance of an effective internal control environment.
- 1.3 In 2017 the Authority approved and adopted a new local code of corporate governance, which is consistent with the principles of the 2016 CIPFA (Chartered Institute of Public Finance and Accountancy) / Solace framework *Delivering Good Governance in Local Government*:
- Behaving with integrity, demonstrating strong commitment to ethical values, and respecting the rule of law.
 - Ensuring openness and comprehensive stakeholder engagement.
 - Defining outcomes in terms of sustainable economic, social, and environmental benefits.
 - Determining the interventions necessary to optimise the achievement of the intended outcomes.
 - Developing the entity's capacity, including the capability of its leadership and the individuals within it.
 - Managing risks and performance through robust internal control and strong public financial management.
 - Implementing good practices in transparency, reporting, and audit to deliver effective accountability.

- 1.4 This statement sets out how the Authority has complied with the Code and also meets the requirements of regulation 6 of the Accounts and Audit (England) Regulations 2015 in relation to the publication of an annual governance statement.

2 THE PURPOSE OF THE GOVERNANCE FRAMEWORK

- 2.1 The governance framework comprises the systems, processes, cultures and values for the direction and control of the Authority and the activities through which it is accountable to, engages with, and leads the community. It enables the Authority to monitor the achievement of its strategic objectives and to consider whether those objectives have led to the delivery of appropriate and cost-effective services.
- 2.2 The system of internal control is a significant part of that framework and is designed to manage risk to a reasonable level. It cannot eliminate all risk of failure to achieve policies, aims and objectives and can therefore only provide reasonable and not absolute assurance of effectiveness. The system of internal control is part of an on-going process designed to identify and prioritise the risks to the achievement of Nottinghamshire Fire and Rescue Authority's policies, aims and objectives, to evaluate the likelihood of those risks being realised and the impact should they be realised, and to manage them efficiently, effectively, and economically.

3 THE GOVERNANCE FRAMEWORK

- 3.1 In addition to the Annual Governance Statement the Authority has a Code of Corporate Governance that the Authority will commit to in carrying out its duties and responsibilities. In this document, officers have identified against each of the Code's principles what source documentation or existing practice demonstrates how the Authority complies with the principles that make up the Code.
- 3.2 In developing a code of corporate governance, the Authority had the aim of seeking compliance with the CIPFA / Solace guidelines and recognised that these constitute good practice for local authority organisations.
- 3.3 The Local Code of Corporate Governance was adopted by the Authority in February 2017. This Annual Governance Statement, and the annual review of governance is against this framework.
- 3.4 Summarised below are some of the key elements of the systems and processes that underlie the Authority's governance arrangements:

Identifying and Communicating the Authority's vision and outcomes for citizens and service users

- 3.5 After consulting with the citizens of Nottinghamshire and service users, assessing current risks and service priorities, the Authority is required to prepare an Integrated Risk Management Plan (IRMP) that sets out the vision and service objectives for the organisation. The IRMP is delivered via the

Community Risk Management Plan 2022-25 (CRMP) which was approved by Fire Authority in February 2022.

- 3.6 The CRMP sets out how the service aims to achieve its vision of creating safer communities by being one of the best fire and rescue services in England.
- 3.7 Our ambition is focused around four strategic pillars:
- Community Outcomes,
 - Equality Diversity and Inclusion,
 - Strong governance and financial sustainability,
 - Our professional and committed workforce.
- 3.8 The plan sets out our priorities, focusing on six strategic goals which explain how we will deliver for our commitments.
- Strategic goal 1: We will help people stay safe from fires and other emergencies
 - Strategic goal 2: We will improve fire safety in the buildings people live and work in
 - Strategic goal 3: We will respond immediately and effectively to emergency incidents
 - Strategic goal 4: We will continue to support and develop our workforce and promote an inclusive Service
 - Strategic goal 5: We will continue our improvement journey to deliver an outstanding Service
 - Strategic goal 6: We will manage and invest in our Service to ensure it is fit for the future
- 3.9 The Plan sets out to achieve these goals using annual delivery plans which detail the key objectives for the year ahead. These cascade down to departmental business plans. Progress is monitored by the CRMP Assurance Board and reviewed through Fire Authority governance. Every year a Statement of Assurance is produced which outlines how the service has performed against the Strategic Plan. The 2023/24 Statement of Assurance will be presented for approval by Fire Authority in July 2024.

The Internal Control Environment

- 3.10 The Authority's internal control environment comprises many systems, policies, procedures, and operations. These can be broadly split into risk management, internal check/financial control, and internal audit. Internal check and financial control are targeted towards financial matters whereas risk management has a much broader brief and is more associated with the risk of non-achievement of objectives and targets. The system cannot eliminate all risks of failure to achieve the Authority's aims and objectives. Once a risk has been identified the Authority, where possible, will eliminate that risk. If this is not possible or not cost effective then procedures are established to manage the risk effectively, efficiently, and economically. Some of the significant control processes are outlined below.

Policy and Decision-Making Process

3.11 The Authority has democratic control over its activities via an approved committee structure with agreed powers and duties that are periodically reviewed. The Authority has a written constitution that sets out how the Authority operates, how decisions are made and the procedures which are followed to ensure these are efficient, transparent, and accountable. There is a formal briefing process prior to reports being finalised for Committee or Fire Authority meetings thus allowing key Members an opportunity to scrutinise proposed reports in detail. The Authority also runs Member seminars and training sessions to help Members discuss issues in more detail and in an informal environment.

Management Structure

3.12 The Authority has a clear management structure with defined roles and responsibilities. The Strategic Leadership Team (SLT) includes all department heads as well as the Principal Officers. The current structure empowers managers to make appropriate decisions but also places accountability at the centre of this process.

3.13 The Authority has an approved scheme of delegation to officers that is reviewed periodically by the Chief Fire Officer and the Clerk to the Fire Authority, with any changes being approved by the Fire Authority.

Established Policies, Procedures and Regulations

3.14 The Authority ensures compliance with established policies, procedures, laws, and regulations. The information regarding policies and procedures is held on the intranet, and these are continually enhanced and developed through the introduction of new policies and procedures as and when required. The Authority has established policies on anti-fraud and whistleblowing. The Authority carries out a regular review of financial regulations which clearly define how decisions are taken and the processes and controls required to manage risk. The list below outlines some of the key policies and process in place to enhance the internal control system, which are reviewed as and when required:

- Treasury Management Strategy
- Procurement Strategy
- Financial Regulations & Standing Orders
- Scheme of Delegation
- Counter Fraud, Money Laundering, Corruption and Bribery policy
- Whistleblowing Policy
- Complaints procedure
- Code of Corporate Governance
- Constitution
- Code of Conduct
- Code of Ethics
- Equality and Diversity framework

- Workforce plan
- Full range of robust policies and procedures to underpin the conduct of staff from operational procedures, discipline processes, through to performance development reviews.

Internal Audit Function

- 3.15 The requirement for an Authority to maintain an Internal Audit function is derived from local government legislation, including Section 112 of the Local Government Finance Act 1988 and the Accounts and Audit Regulations 2015 in that a relevant body must:

“maintain an adequate and effective internal audit of its accounting records and of its system of internal control in accordance with the proper internal audit practices”

- 3.16 The responsibility for ensuring an effective internal audit function rests with the Authority Treasurer as part of their Section 112 obligations.
- 3.17 The Authority has a strong Internal Audit function arrangement with Nottinghamshire County Council and has well-established protocols for working with External Audit. Finance and Resources Committee review all internal audit reports and receive an annual internal audit report providing an audit opinion on the Authority’s arrangements for governance, risk management and control as well as details of audits to be completed in the forthcoming year.
- 3.18 The Authority reviews Internal Audit as an integral part of the corporate governance framework

Risk Management Strategy

- 3.19 The Authority has a well-established and embedded risk management strategy. This is managed at the corporate/strategic level by The Finance and Resources Committee which receive regular reports on risk exposures both in terms of existing and emergent risk. Members scrutinise the Corporate Risk Register and receive explanations for changes. The Committee is advised by the Head of Finance and the Service’s Head of Risk and Assurance on behalf of the Chief Fire Officer.
- 3.20 The system of internal control is based on an ongoing process designed to identify and prioritise risks to the achievement of Service policies, aims and objectives, to evaluate the likelihood and impact of those risks being realised and facilitate a risk management culture to enable risks to be effectively assessed, managed, monitored and reported.

Business Continuity Management (BCM)

- 3.21 Under the Civil Contingencies Act (2004) (Part 1. Para 2(1) (C)) and The Fire and Rescue Services Act 2004 there is a duty for all Category 1 Responders

to prepare plans to ensure so far as reasonably practicable, that if in an emergency the Service can perform its core functions.

Best Value Duty/Efficiency

- 3.22 The Local Government Act 1999 requires that the Authority makes arrangements to secure continuous improvement in the way its functions are exercised, having regard to a combination of economy, efficiency and effectiveness. The Fire and Rescue National Framework for England also requires that the Authority to produce an Efficiency Plan, which is currently delivered through our Futures 2025 Efficiency Strategy. The requirement to deliver services within a reducing budget over recent years has increased the focus on Best Value. The Authority has procurement policies in place, providing a framework within which to buy goods and services which offer good value for money.
- 3.23 In 2023/24 and 2024/25 the Home Office has required that the Authority produce and publish Productivity and Efficiency plans. The plan requires the authority to demonstrate 2% non-pay efficiency savings and 3% increase in productivity. The [Productivity and Efficiency plans](#) are published in the website.

Financial Management

- 3.24 Financial management in the Authority and the reporting of financial standing is undertaken through a financial system which integrates the general ledger, sales ledger and purchase ledger functions and facilitates good budgetary control. Budget Managers are supported by Finance Officers in the use of this system for monitoring financial performance.
- 3.25 The timetable for publishing and auditing the Authority's Statement of Accounts is set out in the Accounts and Audit Regulations 2015, amended by the Accounts and Audit (Amendments) Regulations 2022. The deadline for publishing the unaudited accounts for 2023/24 is the 31 May 2024 and the approval by Fire Authority of the audited accounts is due by the 30 September 2024. (The deadline for the audited accounts may change following consultation on addressing the backlog in local government audits.)

Financial Management Code

- 3.26 In October 2019, CIPFA issued a new Financial Management Code. The purpose of the code is to support good practice in financial management and to assist authorities in demonstrating their financial sustainability. It contains a set of minimum standards for financial management for local authorities, including fire authorities. These cover the areas of:
- Organisational leadership – clear strategic direction.
 - Accountability – based on medium term financial planning.
 - Transparency – using consistent, meaningful and understandable data.
 - Adherence to professional standards.
 - Assurance.

- Long term sustainability.

3.27 The Financial Management Code was adopted by the Authority in July 2021.

4 REVIEW OF EFFECTIVENESS

4.1 The Authority has responsibility for conducting a review of the effectiveness of its governance framework including the system of internal control, at least annually. The review of effectiveness is informed by the work of the Strategic Leadership Team and other senior managers within the Authority who have responsibility for the development and maintenance of the governance environment, the Internal Audit annual report, and also by comments made by the external auditors and other review agencies and inspectorates.

4.2 Maintaining and reviewing the effectiveness of the governance framework throughout the financial year has been carried out by the following:

- The Authority and its Committees
- Management Review
- Internal audit
- HMICFRS (Her Majesty's Inspectorate of Constabulary and Fire & Rescue)
- External bodies

The Authority and its Committees

4.3 The format and structure of the Authority's democratic decision process is re-affirmed at the Annual General Meeting of the Fire Authority in May of each year and approval is given to the powers and make-up of the following committees:

- The Policy and Strategy Committee.
- The Finance and Resources Committee (which undertakes the role of the Audit Committee).
- The Community Safety Committee.
- The Human Resources Committee.
- The Personnel Committee.
- The Appointments Committee.

4.4 In addition to the above Committees, there are also boards for Strategic Inclusion and the Firefighters' Pension Schemes.

4.5 Terms of reference and responsibilities for all these Committees form part of the Authority's Governance arrangements.

4.6 A Constitutional Update Report was presented to Fire Authority in July 22. Members approved several amendments to the Scheme of Delegation to ensure that the constitution remains relevant and up to date. The revised Scheme of Delegation can be found on the [Service's website](#).

- 4.7 At the July 22 Fire Authority Members commented on the need for a more frequent schedule to review governance. This resulted in a [Governance Update](#) report being presented to its meeting on 16 December 22 which approved a small amendment to the Business Continuity Arrangements in the event that the Chief Fire Officer were to become incapacitated and an update on proposals to further review the Authority's Governance.

Management Review

- 4.8 Included in the day-to-day management of the organisation are a number of key officers, systems and procedures designed to provide core elements of the internal control mechanism, with a nominated lead officer responsible for reviewing the effectiveness of these systems.

Performance Management

- 4.9 There is a system of performance management and review embedded within the Authority's management structure and processes. The Corporate Risk Management Plan 2022-25 (CRMP) sets out the Authority's key objectives and these are broken down into annual delivery plans. These plans, along with any areas for improvement identified as part of the HMICFRS assessment, are monitored by the CRMP Assurance Board (which is made up of SLT members) and managed by the individual departmental management teams. The Board uses a performance management framework to monitor progress against the CRMP targets and HMICFRS recommendations.
- 4.10 Performance against the CRMP is reviewed in the Annual Statement of Assurance published each year.

Risk Management

- 4.11 Risk management at the strategic / corporate level forms part of the overall responsibilities of The Finance and Resources Committee and Members of this committee take a keen interest in the Corporate Risk Register which is reported to the Committee every six months.
- 4.12 Risk Management is an integral part of project management and business planning within the Corporate Support department and both this and operational risk management are considered strong. The Service has a Risk Assurance Team which is responsible for corporate risk, operational risk and health and safety risk. The purpose of this is to enhance the co-ordination of assurance activities and management of risk within the Service.

Business Continuity

- 4.13 Business continuity arrangements are regularly reviewed. The Covid-19 pandemic allowed for real life testing of plans and of the management systems and processes in place. The Business Continuity Management (BCM) group worked well alongside a newly created Task and Finish group which ensured that decisions were actioned in a timely manner.

- 4.14 Following on from Covid-19, all departmental business continuity plans have been reviewed and updated to reflect any learning. Plans were again tested whilst the Service prepared for potential industrial action over the pay dispute. Whilst this was settled in February without the need for industrial action, it has provided a further learning opportunity and BCM's have been updated to reflect lessons learned. During 2023/24 internal audit reviewed the service's BCM arrangements and delivered a judgement of substantial assurance.
- 4.15 Information Security (data and physical security) were also reviewed by internal Audit during 2023/24 and delivered a judgement of substantial assurance.

Professional Staff

- 4.16 The Authority employs appropriate professional staff:
- A Statutory Monitoring Officer is responsible for ensuring the legality of Authority actions and supporting the Committee decision making process. No actions of the Authority were deemed ultra vires in the year. All relevant laws and regulations are being complied with. During 2023/24 the monitoring officer role has been fulfilled by a qualified solicitor provided on a contractual basis to the Authority by the Legal Services Department of Nottingham City Council, this has been the arrangement for many years. From the 28 April 2024 the post holder has retired from Nottingham City Council and the Authority has approved the appointment of the post holder as Monitoring Officer employed directly by the Authority. Nottingham City Council continue to provide support for the Authority's wider governance structure.
 - The Treasurer to the Authority ensures the proper and effective administration of the financial affairs of the Authority and holds the key statutory responsibilities under Section 112 of the Local Government and Finance Act 1988. The role of Treasurer is provided by the Head of Finance and Treasurer post within the Service. This post holder for Head of Finance and Treasurer changed during 2023/24, with the former post holder leaving the Service in November 2023 and the new post holder commencing in March 2024. In the interim period the role of the Treasurer to the Authority was provided by the Chief Finance Officer for Nottinghamshire Police. The post holder is responsible for advising both senior managers and elected members on all financial matters in line with CIPFA's document *The Role of the Chief Financial Officer*. Each post holder during the year have been professionally qualified and have many years' experience within Local Authority Finance.

Financial Planning

- 4.17 The Medium-Term Financial Strategy sets out a 4-year financial plan which is approved by Fire Authority in December each year. This, alongside the CRMP, provides the framework for developing the annual budget for the coming year.

- 4.18 The draft budget is scrutinised by the Finance and Resources Committee in January each year prior to final approval in February by Fire Authority. This process ensures that a realistic and affordable budget is achieved.
- 4.19 The Authority continued to ensure it had good arrangements for managing its finances including strong leadership throughout the year. The financial planning process is well embedded and understood across the Authority by staff and Members. It ensures that funding is matched to the strategic goals identified in the CRMP. An in-house financial team, managed by the Head of Finance and Treasurer, maintains the correct competencies and ensures that the Strategic Leadership Team receives all appropriate information to support the key decisions and objectives of the service.

Budget Monitoring/Efficiency

- 4.20 Budget monitoring remains robust at both strategic and service level via the production of regular financial monitoring reports for both capital and revenue budgets alongside monitoring of treasury activity against the Prudential Indicators for the year. These reports, as well as being scrutinised by budget managers, are reported to the Strategic Leadership Team and quarterly to the Finance and Resources Committee.
- 4.21 Functional Heads also exercise a detailed degree of budget monitoring against both revenue and capital budgets.
- 4.22 The service presented its Futures 25 Efficiency Strategy to Policy and Strategy Committee in May 2022, with further reports being considered by the Authority in September 22, July 2023 and February 2024. The Strategy remains the vehicle for transforming the service and increasing efficiency and effectiveness in 2024/25.
- 4.23 The 2024/25 budget report considered by Fire Authority in February 2024 identified a potential £1.9m gap in funding for 2025/26 which remains to be addressed through careful budgeting and savings identified through the Futures 25 Efficiency Strategy and through a newly established Efficiency Roadmap to achieve further savings. The service is predicting that it will need to utilise the earmarked budget pressure reserve to smooth the budget gap whilst savings are fully achieved and embedded.

Financial Management Code

- 4.24 The Financial Management Code was adopted by the Authority in July 2021. A gap analysis was undertaken where a small number of improvements were identified.
- 4.25 Internal Audit have undertaken an audit of the Service's compliance against the Code. This provided a Reasonable Assurance level – i.e. that risk levels were acceptable. The report acknowledged that effective controls were in place regarding self-assessment, leadership, accountability, long term sustainability and value for money.

- 4.26 The report identified four recommendations, two of which have been actioned. The remaining two are still in progress:
- Leadership – Several policies and procedures in relation to governance arrangements have not been updated in accordance with the revision schedule and have been found to be out of date – progress has been made on this recommendation, with the updated Scheme of Delegation being approved at the December 2022 Authority meeting and the Members’ Allowances scheme being reviewed by the Independent Remuneration Panel and reported to The Fire Authority 23rd February 2024. A review of standing orders has been completed with the review of Financial Regulations.
 - Professional Standards – Financial Regulations, Financial Procedures and Statement of Financial Principles are out of date – these have been reviewed and updated, there has been a delay in finalising them due to the change in Head of Finance and Treasurer. This will be completed and presented to Finance and Resources Committee for approval by October 24.

Internal Audit

- 4.27 The Authority views Internal Audit as an integral part of the corporate governance framework, particularly in so far as it relates to the system of Internal Control. Whilst it is acknowledged that Internal Control is a managerial responsibility, it is considered that Internal Audit can provide managers with independent assurance that the system is working effectively and draw any deficiencies in the system to the attention of managers and elected Members.
- 4.28 These assurances, however, can only be relied upon providing the internal audit service is adequate to meet the needs of the organisation and is provided professionally.
- 4.29 The Internal Audit Service of the Authority is provided under a Service Level Agreement with Nottinghamshire County Council and requires the Auditors to operate within the Public Sector Internal Audit Standards set down by the Chartered Institute of Public Finance and Accountancy (CIPFA). Operating to these standards will ensure that the Authority meets its obligations under statute.
- 4.30 CIPFA published a guide on the role of the Head of Internal Audit in 2019 which led to the adoption of an Audit Charter in June 22, improved planning of audits and closer engagement with the Strategic Leadership Team (SLT) and the Chair of Finance and Resources Committee, which fulfils the role of the Audit Committee.
- 4.31 The annual audit plan is reviewed each year by SLT and Finance and Resources Committee but remains flexible to enable the Treasurer to adapt to any changing needs within the year.

4.32 All internal audit reports include an assessment of the internal controls and prioritised action plans, if relevant, to address any areas needing improvement. These reports are submitted to the Chief Fire Officer, the Head of Finance, Chair of the Finance and Resources Committee and the relevant managers as appropriate. All finalised reports are reviewed by SLT and submitted to the Finance and Resources Committee acting in its role as Audit Committee.

4.33 The Internal Audit Annual Report for 2023/24 will be reported to Fire Authority on the 26 July 2024. Within the report the auditors provided a view on the internal control environment and concluded that:

*“Based on the coverage and detailed outcomes, overall, we consider the collective evidence provides **substantial assurance** concerning the arrangements in place for corporate governance, risk management and the control environment.”*

4.34 Substantial Assurance means that arrangements are effective at managing the risks and achieving the objectives, with no or few control weaknesses. This is an improvement on previous years where a rating of Reasonable Assurance was awarded. The report gave the rationale for the opinion as follows:

- *The assurance opinions on our audits are mostly substantial assurances, in particular for the core systems audited in this and recent previous years*
- *There were positive outcomes from following up the implementation of agreed actions from previous audit reports.*
- *Other sources provided positive assurance in relation to governance, risk management, and control.*

4.35 Five 2023/24 audits have been finalised during the year. One of the planned audits for 2023/24 has been postponed until 2024/25 due to the area of work not being progressed enough to enable meaningful assurance to be given. A summary of the six 2023/24 planned audits are provided in the table below:

Summary of 2023/24 Audits

Report	Assurance Level
Contract Management	Limited – 6 recommendations made and agreed by management
Information Security (data and physical security)	Substantial
Workforce Planning & Recruitment	Substantial
Health & Safety	Substantial
Business Continuity Planning	Substantial
Leading the Service – National Fire Standard	None – audit postponed to 2024/25

4.36 The annual report also provided *substantial assurance* regarding each individual strand of governance, risk management and control arrangements, concluding that:

*Our opinion is that there is **substantial assurance** over the **Governance arrangements**:*

- *Governance arrangements are well structured with comprehensive reporting.*
- *Plans are in place to achieve strategic goals and to identify and realise improvements.*
- *There are regular reviews of performance.*

*Our opinion is that there is **substantial assurance** over the **Risk Management** arrangements:*

- *Risks are managed including through a corporate risk register that is actively maintained – reviewed, updated, and reported.*
- *Community Risk Management Plan (CRMP) is in place, with arrangements to measure progress on its delivery.*
- *Emerging national and local risk issues are identified and addressed by local actions.*

*Our opinion is that there is **substantial assurance** over the **Control** arrangements:*

- *Close control over the finances, including current and future spending, and the financial assets held.*
- *Workforce requirements are identified and acted upon.*
- *Workforce performance is managed.*

External Review

4.37 The External Auditors are appointed through a national contract via Public Sector Audit Appointments (PSAA). The External Auditors for 2018/19 through to 2022/23 were Ernst Young LLP – (EY). From 2023/24 to 2027/28 the External Auditors are KPMG.

4.38 The External Auditors are required by the International Standard on Auditing 260 (ISA 260) to communicate about the audit of the Authority's financial statements with those charged with governance. This communication is in the form of a written report which is presented to Fire Authority on completion of the Audit.

4.39 The principal purposes of the Auditors' report are:

- To present key issues identified during the audit of the financial statements for the year ended 31 March and any material misstatements in the accounts,
- To report on any key issues for governance,

- To report on the Auditors' Value for Money conclusion,
 - To give an "audit opinion" on the financial statements,
 - To report on the implementation of any recommendations in the previous year's ISA 260 report,
 - To seek approval to the management representation letter, which confirms the Authority's responsibilities and actions in relation to the financial statements.
- 4.40 Both the 2021/22 and 2022/23 audits have been delayed due to resourcing issues at EY. This is a national issue caused by the increased amount of regulatory requirement and the lack of audit resources within the public sector. The 2021/22 audit commenced during July 23 and a substantial amount of the audit has been completed. In February 2024 the Department of Levelling Up, Housing and Communities opened a consultation on 'Addressing the local audit backlog in England'. The consultation proposed a backstop date for all accounts up to and including financial year 2022/23 to be cleared by 30 September 2024 and proposed to allow auditors to issue a modified or disclaimed opinion due to the backstop.
- 4.41 In light of the consultation EY are not progressing any further work on the 2021/22 and 2022/23 Statement of Accounts, they are continuing to progress their work for their commentary on Value For Money (VFM) for 2021/22 and 2022/23 and this is expected to be reported to the Fire Authority in July 2024.
- 4.42 A response to the consultation or any further guidance has not yet been published.
- 4.43 The statement of accounts in the first 2 years of the contract with EY (2018/29 and 2019/20) both received an unqualified audit and unqualified VFM conclusion. The 2020/21 statement of accounts received an unqualified audit however a VFM conclusion is yet to be received. The previous years unqualified audits and VFM conclusions provides some assurance around that the financial systems in place are robust.
- 4.44 The ongoing delay in the audit of the Accounts presents a risk to the Authority as any audit findings will not be reviewed and corrected in a timely manner.
- 4.45 The contracted audit fee for the 2023/24 Statement of Accounts is £94,838 (£32,648 for 2022/23). There has been a significant increase in audit fees, this is due to additional work that is required by the Code of Audit Practice and supporting guidance published by the National Audit Office on behalf of the Comptroller and Auditor General, and following the PSAA's national auditor appointment procurement for the period 2023/24 to 2027/28, which has resulted in a procurement adjustment of 151% for the new contract rates for audit firms.

Her Majesty's Inspectorate of Constabulary and Fire and Rescue Services (HMICFRS) Inspection

- 4.46 In addition to the usual Internal and External Audit reviews, the Authority had a third inspection by the HMICFRS during Services during March and April

2024. The inspection includes an assessment of 11 areas, with possible gradings of outstanding, good, adequate (an additional grade added as part of the third inspection regime), requires improvement and inadequate for each area. The service is waiting for feedback.

4.47 The second inspection by HMICFRS was completed in October and November 2021. The final report was published July 22. The inspection graded the Service as Good in all 11 areas of assessment and gave an overall rating of Good. The grading was an improvement on the Service's first inspection rating of Requires Improvement in 2018. There were 4 Areas for Improvement (AFIs) identified which are:

- The Service should assure itself that its risk-based inspection programme prioritises the highest risks and includes proportionate activity to reduce risk.
- The Service should ensure that, when responding to a 999 call, mobile data terminals are reliable to allow staff to access risk information.
- The Service should make sure it effectively monitors, reviews and evaluates the benefits and outcomes of any collaboration activity.
- The Service should assure itself that staff understand how to get wellbeing support.

4.48 Actions have been taken to address each of the 4 AFI's. The AFI relating to understanding of well-being provision by staff was closed by the Policy and Strategy Committee 2 February 2024 and the other three AFI's were closed by Fire Authority 23rd February 2024.

Other External Audits

4.49 The National Resilience Assurance Team (NRAT) seek to provide assurance to the Government relating to national resilience arrangements. They do this through a comprehensive assurance programme. The Service had 5 areas audited by NRAT during 2023/24.

- **Marauding Terrorist Attack Capability.** NRAT concluded that the Service demonstrated that the MTA capability is in a very strong position with an effective and tested response evidenced. The audit highlighted that the Service's MTA specialist responders are well-trained and well-equipped, and that Service have evidenced strategic planning, allowing a swift and coordinated response to a terror attack.
- **National Interagency Liaison Officer Capability.** The Service were deemed to have a capable, knowledgeable, well-trained, and prepared NILO cadre and were commended by the national NILO group. Two actions for improvements were required, one has been implemented and the other will be complete by December 2024.

- **High Volume Pump Capability.** The Service received 15 instances of good and 1 area requiring improvement where the final action is in the process of being implemented.
- **Service's Flood and Rescue Capability.** The audit determined that the Service were deemed to have a prepared and capable flood rescue asset and were commended in the report. There was one area for improvement which is being completed.
- **Enhanced Logistical Support.** NRAT carried out an assessment of the Service's ELS capability. However, as the asset has now been removed from the Service in April 2024, following a change in the national model for this capability, it has not been possible for this assessment to be finalised. The Service's ELS capability has been widely commended over the years.

National Fire Standards

4.50 The National Fire Chief's Council (NFCC) are undertaking a body of work to set minimum standards for key operational and non-operational areas of work. To date 16 have been released:

- Fire Investigation
- Operational Competence
- Operational Learning
- Operational Preparedness
- Code Of Ethics
- Community Risk Management Plans
- Emergency Preparedness and Resilience
- Emergency Response Driving
- Prevention
- Protection
- Safeguarding
- Communications and Engagement
- Data Management
- Leading the Service
- Leading and Developing People
- Fire Control

4.51 The Service has undertaken gap analyses for the above standards and is undertaking a programme of work to ensure compliance. This is being monitored by SLT through the CRMP Assurance Board.

HMICFRS Report on Values and Culture of the Fire and Rescue Service

4.52 Following recent reports of misconduct, and the findings of the Independent Cultural Review of London Fire Brigade, the Minister of State for Crime, Policing and Fire commissioned a spotlight report into the values and culture of the Fire and Rescue Service.

- 4.53 HMICFRS considered the specific themes of values and culture (including bullying, harassment, and discrimination); training and skills; fairness and diversity; and leadership. The report was published on 30 March 2023.
- 4.54 The report presents 35 recommendations from HMICFRS to improve the sector. Of note, 20 are detailed as a requirement for Chief Fire Officers to deliver, whilst the other recommendations are directed to other national bodies such as the Local Government Association, the National Fire Chiefs' Council, the Home Office, Government, the Fire Standards Board, and Chief Constables.
- 4.55 The Service had an independent review of Equality, Diversity and Inclusion (EDI) undertaken in 2021 which presented recommendations, and a resulting 12-point action plan, that is being implemented.
- 4.56 This work has complemented and supported the Service's approach to embedding the Core Code of Ethics which has been progressed since their publication in 2021, alongside the Service's values which have been central to the Service's approach since 2015. The Service's own Behavioural Framework was updated to incorporate the Core Code of Ethics.
- 4.57 In order to maintain the focus, resource and momentum on these improvements, and to address the required recommendations of the HMICFRS spotlight report, the Service's EDI strategic lead is drawing together a single approach under the Service's Year Two Annual Delivery Plan.
- 4.58 This approach will see assurance against the delivery of the HMICFRS recommendations, but also oversee the delivery of the Service's commitment to embed an inclusive culture and approach at NFRS which is set out in the Services' Community Risk Management Plan (CRMP).
- 4.59 Whilst progress of this workstream will be monitored by the Chief Fire Officer through the CRMP Assurance Board, actions against the HMICFRS specific recommendation are also be reported to the Human Resources Committee.
- 4.60 An update report was presented to Human and Resources Committee 19 April 2024. In relation to the 35 recommendations, 20 of which are owned by Chief Fire Officers. Whilst some of the timescales have lapsed on these recommendations, 12 have been completed, with work well underway on the remaining eight recommendations.
- 4.61 A range of other workstreams relating to the Service's culture, diversity and inclusion aims and objective are being progressed. The Service continues to invest in the workforce and community engagement, via staff networks, the community advisory group and the community befriending scheme, including rolling out inclusive leadership training to all middle and senior leaders and undertaking a review of the prevention service to enhance dedicated resources for community engagement.

5 SIGNIFICANT ISSUES FOR GOVERNANCE IN 2024/25

Fire Authority Governance Arrangements

- 5.1 In May 2022 the Home Office released a White Paper on Reforming Fire and Rescue Services. This is the Government response to the recommendations from the Grenfell Tower Inquiry, the Kerslake Review (on the Manchester Arena Attack) and to build on the findings from Sir Thomas Windsor's State of Fire and Rescue reports. The White Paper covers three key areas: people; professionalism; and governance. It includes consultation on whether to transfer governance to an executive model such a Combined Authority Mayor or to the Police, Fire and Crime Commissioner model. The consultation ended on 26 July 2022, the response from the consultation was issued by Government in December 2023. An update on the consultation response was reported to the Fire Authority meeting 23 February 2024.
- 5.2 In summary, many of the consultation responses require further detail for the implications to be clearly understood and any implementation of changes identified will require legislative change, or changes to the National Framework Document. Fire Authority will continue to receive further updates on sector reform.

East Midlands Combined County Council Authority - Devolution Programme

- 5.3 In February 2024 regulations were passed to allow the East Midland Combined County Council Authority (EMCCA) to be created and in May 2024 an election to appoint the first Mayor of the EMCCA took place. The creation of the EMCCA covering Nottingham, Nottinghamshire and Derby and Derbyshire, sees the creation of a long-term investment fund totalling £1.14bn over 30 years to improve people's lives through better housing, improved transport, and new job opportunities.
- 5.4 Whilst the full implications on governance for the Fire Authority is unclear at present, it is expected that the service will benefit from the additional investment within the County.

2024/25 Budget

- 5.5 The Authority approved a budget for 2024/25 in February 2024 which required £139k use of General Fund Reserves. This includes an approved council tax increase of 2.95% and a Guaranteed Core Spending Power increase of 4%. Monitoring of expenditure against the budget is reported to Finance and Resources Committee.

Medium-Term Financial Strategy and 2025/26 Budget

- 5.6 Budgets for 2025/26 to 2027/28 are due to be agreed by Fire Authority in February 2025. When the current budget was set in February 2024 there was an expected deficit position for 2025/26 in the region of £1.9m.

- 5.7 The Futures 25 Efficiency Strategy was initially outlined at Policy and Strategy Committee in May 22 with the high level aims of identifying savings, as well as supporting increased productivity through investment in systems and process improvements. Updates were received by the Authority in July 2023 and February 2024. An Efficiency Roadmap has also been developed to support the 2025/26 budget onwards to deliver savings and ensure alignment of the new CRMP with the Medium-Term Financial Strategy.
- 5.8 The Fire Authority approved the creation of a Future 25 Programme earmarked reserves to provide resources to implement any necessary changes coming out of the Futures 25 programme and a Budget Pressure reserve to support future year budgets. Given these earmarked reserves and anticipated savings from the Future 25 programme and the Efficiency Roadmap, the service is confident that it will be financially secure going forward.

Pensions

McCloud

- 5.9 The McCloud remedy is ongoing regarding the transition arrangements in the 2015 firefighter's pension scheme which were found to be discriminatory on the grounds of age in December 2018. All members have now been moved to the 2015 pension scheme as from 1 April 22. The transition arrangements effective between 1 April 2015 and 31 March 22 need to be removed and members given the choice between their legacy scheme and the 2015 scheme between this period.
- 5.10 Following the ruling and lack of progress, the Fire Brigades Union (FBU) commenced legal proceedings in the High Court for three test cases against Fire and Rescue Authorities. Two of these cases were against this Authority as they related to former Nottinghamshire Fire and Rescue Service (NFRS) employees. A settlement agreement on these cases was reached on 8 October 2021.
- 5.11 In the interim, the Home Office issued some guidance to assist implementation of the remedy and a Memorandum of Understanding was agreed between the Local Government Association and the Fire Brigades Union in October 21. However, in November 21 the Home Office withdrew its guidance stating that there could be significant financial risk if Authority's decided to proceed implementing Memorandum of Understanding.
- 5.12 With the ongoing threat of legal action, Policy and Strategy Committee approved the continuation of implementing the Memorandum of Understanding on 1 April 22, acknowledging the financial risks that it may face.
- 5.13 New pension legislation was passed in October 23 which provides more certainty about how the remedy is to be applied. The service has a further 18 months to ensure that it is properly implemented. There remains unresolved complications and uncertainties around interest and tax implications.

Matthews

- 5.14 On-call firefighters employed between 1 July 2000 and 4 April 2006 were retrospectively allowed to join 2006 Firefighters' Pension Scheme in 2014 following the Matthews court case. Following a further European Court of Justice case (O'Brien) the UK Government have recognised the right for on-call firefighters employed before 1 July 2000 to elect to join the pension scheme from the start of their employment. Revised legislation was passed in October 23 and the service have a further 18 months to implement the remedy.
- 5.15 The Local Government Association is working alongside Fire Services to implement the changes and, an exercise is now underway to contact individuals who are affected. It will be necessary to estimate data for some individuals whose employment records are likely to have been deleted in order to comply with data protection legislation.
- 5.16 Nationally there are known issues with the Government Actuary's Department (GAD) calculator that is used to calculate the financial implications for individuals of the remedy and there are unresolved complications and uncertainties around interest and tax implications which are currently delaying implementation.
- 5.17 The corporate risk register includes a high risk in relation to the service ability implementing the pension remedies for McCloud and Matthews by the 31 March 2025. The Authority approved the creation of a £200k earmarked reserve to cover potential pension related remedy costs in April 2022 which remains in full, and the pension remedies have been identified as a contingent liability in the Accounts.

Internal Audit

- 5.18 The 2024/25 Internal Audit Plan is to be approved by Fire Authority in July 2024. It includes provision for 6 audits during 24/25. These are procurement, corporate governance, replacement mobilising system, data protection, firefighters' remuneration system and compliance with the National Fire Standard for Leading the Service.

External Audit

- 5.19 Delayed local audit opinions are a huge concern across the public sector. These delays have been caused by the increased amount of regulatory requirement and the lack of audit resources within the public sector as a whole and is not limited to NFRS.
- 5.20 In February 2024 the Department of Levelling Up, Housing and Communities opened a consultation on 'Addressing the local audit backlog in England', which closed on the 7 March 2024. The consultation proposed a backstop date for all accounts up to and including financial year 2022/23 to be cleared by 30 September 2024 and proposed to allow auditors to issue a modified or

disclaimed opinions due to the backstop. A response to the consultation has not yet been published.

- 5.21 In light of the consultation EY are not progressing any further work on the 2021/22 and 2022/23 Statement of Accounts, they are continuing to progress their work for their commentary on Value For Money (VFM) for 2021/22 and 2022/23 and this is expected to be reported to the Fire Authority in July 2024.
- 5.22 KPMG have commenced their interim audit work for the 2023/24 Statement of Accounts and VFM commentary. They are planning to undertake the final audit work in July/August 2024. However, they will not be able to conclude their audit opinion on the Statement of Accounts until the 2021/22 and 2022/23 audit opinions are issued. Potentially, they may need to complete additional work around the opening balances if modified or disclaimed opinions are given for the 2021/22 and 2022/23 accounts due to the proposed backstop.

HMICFRS

- 5.23 The service is expecting to receive the report on the findings from the third round of inspection and will undertake actions to implement any Areas For Improvement.
- 5.24 The latest HMICFRS State of Fire report was issued in May 2024, and a thematic inspection report on the handling of misconduct allegations in fire and rescue services is to be released. These reports will be reviewed, and any learning and action needed will be embedded within the Service.

6 CONCLUSION

- 6.1 Nottinghamshire Fire and Rescue Authority has well developed and evolving governance arrangements in place that are fit for purpose.
- 6.2 The Service's policies and procedures continue to be updated and reviewed (3.14).
- 6.3 The Local Code of Corporate Governance was adopted by the Authority in February 2017 and CIPFA's Financial Management Code was adopted by the Authority in July 2021 (sections 1.3 and 3.26 - 3.27). The Authority's compliance against the Financial Management Code was reviewed by Internal Audit in 2021/22 – the report acknowledged that effective controls were in place regarding self-assessment, leadership, accountability, long term sustainability and value for money.
- 6.4 Whilst the 2021/22 and 2022/23 Statement of Accounts are yet to be audited, the External Auditors, Ernst & Young (EY), issued unqualified audits for the first 3 years of their contract (2018/19 and 2020/21), which indicates that the financial systems in place are robust (see sections 4.37 – 4.45).

- 6.5 Despite the delays to the audit of the Statement of Accounts and Value for Money Audits by the Authority’s external auditors (EY), the Service’s internal auditors (Nottinghamshire County Council) have completed a comprehensive audit programme which provides a high level of assurance. The Internal Audit Annual Report provided a judgement of Substantial Assurance regarding the arrangements in place for corporate governance, risk management and the control environment (see sections 4.27 - 4.36).
- 6.6 Five internal audits have been completed within the year, 4 being graded as having Substantial Assurance and 1 having Limited Assurance, where limited assurance was received 6 recommendations have been agreed by management. Five other external reviews have taken place (see section 4.49), which in the main received reasonable or substantial assurance and action plans are being implemented for any required improvements.
- 6.7 The Internal Audit Charter was adopted by Finance and Resources Committee in June 2022 (section 4.30). The annual Internal Audit Plan is reviewed by SLT and approved by Finance and Resources Committee (4.31). All recommendations arising from internal audit reviews are actioned and monitored by SLT and Finance and Resources Committee (4.32).
- 6.8 The Service’s second full HMICFRS inspection provided a rating of Good against all 11 areas of assessment (sections 4.47 - 4.48).
- 6.9 The Service continues to address any governance issues as they arise and commits to keeping governance arrangements under review (see sections 4.6 – 4.7).

Signed.....

Signed.....

Councillor Michael Payne
CHAIR OF THE FIRE AUTHORITY

Craig Parkin
CHIEF FIRE OFFICER

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NOTTINGHAMSHIRE
Fire & Rescue Service
Creating Safer Communities

Nottinghamshire and City of Nottingham
Fire and Rescue Authority

ANNUAL STATEMENT OF ASSURANCE 2023-24

Report of the Chief Fire Officer

Date: 26 July 2024

Purpose of Report:

To present the Annual Statement of Assurance 2023-24 to Members for approval.

Recommendations:

That Members approve the Annual Statement of Assurance 2023-24 for publication.

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1. BACKGROUND

- 1.1 The Fire and Rescue Service National Framework places a statutory requirement on fire authorities to provide assurance on financial, governance and operational matters, with due regard to the expectations set out in the Community Risk Management Plan (CRMP).
- 1.2 The production of an Annual Statement of Assurance (ASoA) contributes to the requirement for greater public-sector transparency and accountability and through its publication offers and promotes accessibility to information.

2. REPORT

- 2.1 The ASoA 2023-24 (attached as Appendix A to this report) provides a review of how well the Service has performed, in the second year of the CRMP 2022-25, against the stated commitments.
- 2.2 The ASoA is designed to give the public assurance on performance in key delivery areas, defined as the Service's six strategic goals. An accessible version will be hosted on the Service's website, providing access to all.
- 2.3 The ASoA signposts other supporting information which can be accessed on the Nottinghamshire Fire and Rescue Service (NFRS) website or Fire Authority webpages, for example, the CRMP and the Statement of Accounts.
- 2.4 Highlights within the ASoA 2023-24 include:
 - Attended 10,595 incidents, a decrease of 7% on last year.
 - These incidents include 2,804 fires (a decrease of 30%) and 560 road traffic collisions.
 - Attended 1,335 incidents which involved rescues and humanitarian assistance from either buildings, vehicles, water, confined spaces, or heights.
 - On-call appliance availability was 86.47% (against a target of 85%).
 - Delivered 15,765 safe and well interventions, (against a target of 14,000) supporting a total of 16,248 people – more than the Service has ever achieved before.
 - Delivery of community safety activities including:
 - Safety Zone events to 1,896 Year 5 and 6 pupils from across the City and County.
 - 290 road, fire and water safety initiatives.
 - 44 national safety campaigns.

- 130 Firesetter safety interventions with young people.
 - Delivered 34 Data Intelligence Community Engagement (DICE) activities targeting the most vulnerable in communities.
 - Undertook 11 Community Reassurance and Engagement (CRaE) activities throughout Nottinghamshire.
 - Completed 1,180 full fire safety audits and 1,039 business safety checks (short fire safety audits) – within business premises. An increase of 96%.
 - The Service delivered 765 training courses, attended by 3994 delegates, from a portfolio of 140 different training courses.
 - Recruited to 93 roles: 39 wholetime firefighters, 25 on-call firefighters and 29 support staff roles.
 - 99.2% of the operational staff successfully passed annual fitness tests.
 - Fire Investigators investigated 87 serious fires across the county.
- 2.5 In addition to the services delivered above, the organisation has been working hard to continuously improve and develop. The following paragraphs detail some of the achievements of the Service in the last year.
- 2.6 Responding when Storm Babet brought exceptional levels of rainfall to Nottinghamshire which resulted in the flooding of some areas of the county. During this period, NFRS attended over 40 flood related incidents, led around 100 people to safety and evacuated over 200 residents from their homes.
- 2.7 From November 2023, the Service has returned to a wholetime crewing model at Ashfield fire station. This project also saw significant investment in a refurbishment of the station to ensure modern inclusive facilities.
- 2.8 Completed the first phase of improvement works at the Operational Training Centre to ensure it is inclusive for all, provides a better student experience and improves the way the Service manages contamination, ensuring that all new operational staff are supported, protected from risk and able to thrive – regardless of their background.
- 2.9 Started improvement building works at nine on-call stations to improve accessibility and provide an inclusive environment for staff and visitors.
- 2.10 Purchased 17 new fire appliances which are currently being built with ‘clean cabs’, which will help protect our firefighters from contaminants and carcinogens following operational incidents and will come into service during 2024/25.
- 2.11 Designed and purchased an improved Command Support Vehicle that will enable the Service to manage a large, complex incident more efficiently and effectively. This vehicle will be operational in late 2024.

- 2.12 Conducted 51 practical exercises, 62 Tactical Decision Exercises (TDEs), and 15 other specialist training events. These test the Service's capability in a range of emergency scenarios and effectiveness in working with other emergency partners.
- 2.13 During 2023/24, the number of female firefighters within the Service increased from 43 to 55 (across both on-call and wholetime), an increase of 27%. Firefighters from BAME backgrounds increased from 37 to 42 (an increase of 13%).
- 2.14 Rolled out new Mobile Data Terminals on all fire appliances, improving mobile working capability and giving crews better access to information.
- 2.15 Started to develop the new Community Risk Management Plan, scheduled for launch in April 2025.
- 2.16 In Spring 2024, the Service was inspected by His Majesties Inspectorate for Constabulary and Fire and Rescue Services (HMICFRS). This was NFRS's third inspection which again undertook a robust review of how the Service effectively manages risk and responds to incidents, how efficiently it uses its resources, and how well the Service looks after its staff. The Service is likely to get the inspection report in the summer of 2024.
- 2.17 Launched a new community referral pathway for safe and well visits on the website, developed through a partnership with National Fire Chiefs Council (NFCC), Fire Kills and Safelincs.
- 2.18 Launched a community befriending scheme, an initiative involving crews building relationships with 'hard to reach' and under-represented groups of people across the county.
- 2.19 Been accredited by White Ribbon UK for NFRS's continued commitment to preventing violence against women and girls in the communities of the city and county.
- 2.20 Supported the 'Safer Streets' programme led by Nottinghamshire Police in the city of Nottingham, by displaying signage on two fire appliances which highlights them as 'safe spaces' for women if they feel vulnerable while on a night out.
- 2.21 Continued to empower and engage with staff networks, as well as adding more. These include: Women's Network, LGBT+ Network, Ethnic Minority Alliance Network, Disability Matters Network, Veterans Network and Health Minds Network (new).
- 2.22 Led with Pride – NFRS attended Pride events in both Nottingham and Worksop. The Nottinghamshire Pride parade was once again proudly led by one of the Service's fire appliances, as the Service showed its support to the LGBT+ community.

- 2.23 Commissioned Nottingham Trent University to provide specialist analytics of the latest census and community data, to assist in improving understanding of the diverse needs of communities and also assist in creating safer communities.
- 2.24 The ASoA details all of the above, as well as many other notable achievements. These would not have been possible without the combined efforts from staff across the Service, collaboration with partner agencies and support from Fire Authority Members.

3. FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

There are no financial implications arising from this report.

4. HUMAN RESOURCES AND LEARNING AND DEVELOPMENT IMPLICATIONS

There are no human resources or learning and development implications arising from this report.

5. EQUALITIES AND ETHICAL IMPLICATIONS

- 5.1 An equality impact assessment has not been undertaken as this report does not represent a change in policy or practice.
- 5.2 The ASoA makes multiple references to NFRS's commitment to the Core Code of Ethics, including how the Service has adopted them and is continuing to promote and embed the Core Code within ways of working.

6. ENVIRONMENTAL AND SUSTAINABILITY IMPLICATIONS

There are no environmental or sustainability implications arising from this report.

7. LEGAL IMPLICATIONS

The Police and Crime Act (2017) Chapter 4 Section 11 outlines that the English inspectors must inspect, and report on the efficiency and effectiveness of, fire and rescue authorities in England.

8. RISK MANAGEMENT IMPLICATIONS

There are no risk management implications arising from this report.

9. COLLABORATION IMPLICATIONS

There are no collaboration implications arising from this report.

10. RECOMMENDATIONS

That Members approve the Annual Statement of Assurance 2023-24 for publication.

11. BACKGROUND PAPERS FOR INSPECTION (OTHER THAN PUBLISHED DOCUMENTS)

None.

Craig Parkin
CHIEF FIRE OFFICER



ANNUAL STATEMENT OF ASSURANCE

2023/2024



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Assurance Declaration

Introduction

Welcome to our Annual Statement of Assurance

In April 2022 we launched our Community Risk Management Plan 2022-25 (CRMP), which explains how we will deliver our services to you. The plan sets out our priorities, focusing on six strategic goals, and places a strong emphasis on improving our understanding of communities so we can protect our county's most vulnerable people and identify buildings most at risk from fire.

The Fire and Rescue National Framework for England requires us to report on our progress against our CRMP every year. We do this through our Annual Statement of Assurance (ASoA). This ASoA is the second to report on the current CRMP and gives us the opportunity to explain our progress and highlight the work we continue to undertake to fulfil our core purpose of creating safer communities.

2023/24 has been an eventful year which saw exceptionally inclement weather over the winter, with Storms Babet and Henk hitting the UK. The resulting flooding events posed a significant challenge to our workforce and presented a real test to our resources.

The economic and societal challenges caused by events here in the UK and overseas continued to impact on the service and its finances throughout the year and although the financial climate remains uncertain, we will continue to provide you with the very best service possible with the resources we have available.

Towards the end of the year, we welcomed a team from His Majesty's Inspectorate of Constabulary and Fire and Rescue Services (HMICFRS), as they began their latest inspection of our service. We look forward to

receiving their report later in the year, and will use the findings to assist us in our continuing journey towards becoming an outstanding service. We hope that you find our Annual Statement of Assurance interesting, and it gives you confidence that we continue to serve you in the best way possible.

During 2023/24



NOTTINGHAMSHIRE
Fire & Rescue Service
Creating Safer Communities



We attended **10,595** incidents, a decrease of **7%**



We attended **2,804** fires, a decrease of **30%**



There were **1,335** incidents which involved rescues and humanitarian assistance



We attended **4,992** false alarms, an increase of **8%** on 2022/23



Our on-call appliance availability was **86.47%**



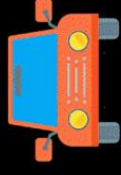
We attended **290** fire, road and water safety initiatives



Fitness tests were passed by **99.2%** of our operational staff



We completed **1,180** full fire safety audits and **1,039** Business Safety Checks



We attended **560** road traffic collisions compared to **582** in 2022/23



We provided **765** training courses for our staff



We conducted **15,765** Safe and Well Visits to **16,248** people



We attended emergency incidents in an average of **8 minutes and 15 seconds**

2023/24 In Focus

Responding to Storm Babet

In October Storm Babet brought exceptional levels of rainfall to Nottinghamshire and other parts of the UK which resulted in the flooding of some areas of the county. During this period, we attended over 40 flood related incidents, led around 100 people to safety and evacuated over 200 residents from their homes.



Ashfield Fire Station returns to Wholetime Crewing

Following our most recent Fire Cover Review, we recognised a shortfall in our resourcing in the Ashfield area relative to the risk in that area. As a result, from November 2023, we have increased the number of staff at Ashfield Fire Station to crew one fire engine 24 hours a day, with a second fire engine crewed by on-call staff. The change demonstrates our commitment to ensuring that our resources are directed to where they are most needed.



MDT Rollout

This year, we completed the rollout of new Mobile Data Terminals (MDTs) on all our fire appliances. As part of a wider project the new MDTs are designed to improve our mobile working capability and give crews better access to information while away from station.



Community Befriending Scheme

We have launched a community befriending scheme, an initiative involving crews building relationships with 'hard to reach' and under-represented groups of people across the county. The purpose of this scheme is to raise awareness of the services we provide and potential career opportunities, and to strengthen community relationships.



White Ribbon Accreditation

We are proud to announce that we have been accredited by White Ribbon UK for our continued commitment to preventing violence against women and girls in our communities. This leading charity has recognised our work with Nottinghamshire Collaboration, which is a network of partners committed to delivering positive culture change.



Leading Pride

We attended Pride events in both Nottingham and Worksop. The Nottinghamshire Pride parade was once again proudly led by one of our fire engines as we showed our support to our LGBT+ community. Members of our staff and their families attended the annual event, held in the streets of Nottingham city centre.



Improvements at Service Development Centre (SDC)

We have made improvements to our training facilities at SDC. The alterations have increased the classroom and office spaces, giving our students an improved learning experience. Upgrades have also been made to the breathing apparatus training facilities and washing and decontamination provision.

Improvements to fire stations

Alterations have been taking place at a number of on-call stations. The changes at Ashfield, Bingham, Blidworth and Harworth are part of our accessibility and inclusion project and our commitment to making our buildings fit for the future.

Our Values & Culture

Our ambition is not just about the work that we do, it is also focuses on the way in which we go about our work. Our values and culture are important to us and play a significant role in becoming an outstanding organisation.

Our values ensure that our staff put communities first and at the heart of all that we do. They are aligned with the national Core Code of Ethics, which is embedded in our leadership and behavioural frameworks. These frameworks set out the standards of behaviour that we expect of staff at all levels of the organisation.

Value & Respect	We value and respect others By treating our staff, our community and our service users with respect and consideration we become a more customer-focused and inclusive organisation
Professional	We are professional in all that we do We behave with integrity and take personal responsibility for our behaviour and decisions
Open To Change	We are open to change We open ourselves up to new ideas and become a more sustainable and stable organisation, ready for the future
One Team	We are one team working together to create safer communities

Annual Delivery Plan 2023/24

Our Annual Delivery Plan outlines the work we will do during the year towards delivering the commitments set out in our CRMP 2022-25.

It focuses on our six strategic goals:

- Strategic Goal 1: We will help people stay safe from fires and other emergencies
- Strategic Goal 2: We will improve fire safety in the buildings people live and work in
- Strategic Goal 3: We will respond immediately and effectively to emergency incidents
- Strategic Goal 4: We will continue to support and develop our workforce and promote an inclusive service
- Strategic Goal 5: We will continue our improvement journey to deliver an outstanding service
- Strategic Goal 6: We will manage and invest in our service to ensure it is fit for the future

In this ASoA we will present information about our performance and the work we have been doing to achieve the objectives outlined in the annual delivery plan for 2023/24.

Strategic Goal 1: We will help people stay safe from fires and other emergencies

This goal focuses on our statutory duty to prevent fires and other emergencies from happening.

In 2023/24 our key objectives were to:

- Deliver Safe and Well Visits to **14,000** homes to provide advice, install smoke alarms and other safety equipment, and make referrals to partner agencies for support, where required. We target this service at those people who are at higher risk of a fire in the home
- Develop our understanding of communities and the people who live in them, using data from the 2021 Census, to help target and engage with those most at risk, in an inclusive way
- Ensure all staff complete the mandatory safeguarding training needed for their roles, and that we make safeguarding referrals in line with the various Safeguarding Boards expectations
- Deliver fire, road and water safety education activities to those most at risk in the community
- Provide training and education to our partners on how to recognise the risks of fire and make appropriate referrals to us in line with our risk profile, known by the acronym CHARLIE

Our focus for improvements included:

- Upgrade our computer systems to increase our ability for mobile working and improve the productivity of our staff
- Improve the disabled access of our Safe and Well process including online services for obtaining home fire safety advice and making referrals for Safe and Well visits

- Improve engagement with residents from black and minority ethnic households and community organisations to ensure awareness of our CHARLIE profile and prevention services

During the year:

- We conducted 15,765 Safe and Well Visits supporting a total of 16,248 people – of these visits, 13,329 were completed by response crews
- 52.55% of our Safe and Well Visits were delivered to people over 65 and 43.64% were delivered to people who considered themselves to have a disability
- We commissioned Nottingham Trent University to provide specialist analytical knowledge of the latest census data and the people who live within our communities. This partnership will assist us in identifying and improving our understanding of the diverse needs of our communities and assist us in creating safer communities
- 99.3% of our staff have completed Level one safeguarding training. Crews based in the City have received enhanced safeguarding training in support of the 'Safer Streets' initiative
- 80% of referrals that we made to the Multi-Agency Safeguarding Hub (MASH) were accepted by their team. This exceeds our 60% target and is a reflection of the quality of our safeguarding training
- We delivered 34 Data Intelligence Community Engagement (DICE) activities targeting the most vulnerable in our communities. We also undertook 11 Community Reassurance and Engagement (CRaE) activities following serious fires in locations across Nottinghamshire. Through these activities, prevention teams, supported by crews visited a total of 6,734 properties
- We delivered Safety Zone events to 1,896 Year 5 and 6 pupils from across the City and County
- We delivered 290 fire, road or water safety initiatives
- We supported 44 national safety campaigns
- We continued to deliver our Firesetter programme and conducted 130 interventions with young people who had shown an interest in setting or playing with fire

Other Highlights

Our CRMP explains how our prevention work is vital to reducing the number and impact of emergency incidents. Through 2023/24 we have used our understanding of our communities to target our efforts where they are needed most and taken the opportunity to make every contact count.

Supporting vulnerable individuals

During this year we have launched a new community referral pathway for Safe and Well Visits on our website. The online tool has been developed through a partnership with National Fire Chiefs Council (NFCC), Fire Kills and Safelincs.

The tool enables members of the public to complete a form which will help to identify any potential risks within their home and provide tips to reduce those risks. From the self-assessment, we are able to identify those who would benefit from a Safe and Well visit. This new system will assist us in targeting our resources to those most at risk.

Our targeted Safe and Well visits offer advice on factors which increase vulnerability to fire and injury. This includes advice on stopping smoking, alcohol addiction, preventing falls, keeping warm in winter and general fire safety.

We have continued to educate and train our partners to identify individuals at increased risk of fire and make appropriate referrals, using the CHARLIE risk profile. 85% of referrals made by colleagues from other agencies including East Midlands Ambulance Service (EMAS) and local council departments were for people with a medium to high risk of fire, which demonstrates the effectiveness of the referral training we provide.

Community engagement

Our community engagement activities help raise awareness, reduce risk and prevent incidents.

In communities which have experienced a serious fire we carry out Community Reassurance and Engagement visits. We offer Safe and Well visits to residents alongside general fire safety advice to help prevent similar incidents from occurring.

We also proactively target communities most at risk from having a fire through our Data Intelligence Community Engagement visits.

Integration and collaboration

During 2023/24, we have continued to work closely with a wide range of partners and community organisations to identify those most at risk and keep them safe. This included being an active member of the Safeguarding Board and the Violence Reduction Unit.

We have supported the 'Safer Streets' programme led by Nottinghamshire Police in the city of Nottingham. Two of our appliances continue to display signage carrying a message which highlights them as 'safe spaces' for women if they feel vulnerable while on a night out. Enhanced safeguarding training has been provided to crews of the designated appliances.

We continue to play an active role in the Nottinghamshire Road Safety Partnership where we work with partners to reduce the number of people killed and seriously injured on our roads. These intervention activities include the 'Biker Down' and 'Operation Highway' initiatives. Similarly, we work as part of the Nottinghamshire Water Safety Partnership to help keep people safe near water.

As part of a schools-based education programme we participate in an initiative called 'Safety Zone'. Events were held at Ashfield fire station and Holme Pierrepont and involved partners including Nottinghamshire Police, British Transport Police, The National Grid, Royal National Lifeboat

Institution, VIA (County road safety team) and East Midlands Ambulance Service. Safety Zone delivers a range of interactive education sessions based on:

- Fire safety in the home
- First aid and CPR
- Knife crime
- Railway safety and safe travel
- Water safety and drowning prevention
- Electrical safety

Fire Investigation

Our fire investigation team works alongside the police and forensic experts to collect and examine evidence and determine the likely origin and cause of a fire.

As well as providing expert opinion to the coroner, police and insurance companies the team also provide advice to property owners and feed information on trends and patterns into other internal departments such as Prevention to help safeguard others who may be at risk from fire.

During 2023/24 our specialist fire investigators investigated 87 serious fires across the county.

Strategic Goal 2: We will improve fire safety in the buildings people live and work in

This goal is focused on our statutory duties to enforce fire safety regulations.

In 2023/24 our key objectives were to:

- Complete 1,500 fire safety audits, targeting buildings that present the highest risk
- Complete 1,000 business safety checks on business premises
- Continue to work as part of the Joint Audit and Inspection Team with Nottingham City Council staff, to inspect multiple-occupation residential buildings
- Promote fire safety in our communities through business engagement and networks
- Proactively work with building owners to reduce call outs to false alarms and people marooned in lifts

Our focus for improvements included:

- Working with regional partners to support the implementation of a new Building Safety Regulator
- Embedding changes in our ways of working in response to new responsibilities imposed by the Building Safety Act 2022

During the year:

- We completed 1,180 fire safety audits

- We carried out 1,039 business safety checks (short fire safety audits)
- We have continued to work alongside our partners as part of the Joint Audit and Inspection Team
- We completed 641 statutory building consultations and 310 statutory licensing consultations
- We conducted 105 shadow inspections in support of staff who are training as Fire Safety Advisers
- We experienced an increase of 8% in the number of incidents which turned out to be false alarms. We continued to work proactively with building managers to understand and address the causes of such incidents
- We attended 181 incidents involving persons trapped in lifts, which is a 2.25% increase on 2022/23

Other Highlights

Our Protection activity is focused on keeping people safe in buildings that are regulated under the Regulatory Reform (Fire Safety) Order 2005, Fire Safety (England) Regulations 2022 and the Building Safety Act 2022. This statutory legislation relates to non-domestic premises which includes business premises, hospitals and care homes, high-rise buildings and apartment blocks.

Business education and engagement

As part of our statutory duty to educate and advise businesses, our business support team have used a range of activities and methods to engage with local businesses to provide guidance, support and advice on fire safety matters. Following serious fires, the team undertake Business Reassurance and Engagement (BRaE) activities to provide reassurance and support to local businesses, including fire risk assessments, business continuity guidance and information on keeping their premises safe from

fire. In 2023/24 the team undertook 9 BRaE initiatives, leading to 66 related engagements with local businesses.

We have continued to provide advice to companies who have business premises within more than one fire and rescue service area through the Primary Authority Scheme.

We have continued to focus on reducing attendances at false alarms, providing support and engaging directly with the businesses and industries where statistics indicate higher rates of attendance.

However there has been an increase in monitored domestic smoke alarm activations which are increasingly being installed in the homes of vulnerable people. This reflects a national trend and can be attributed to a number of reasons.

During the life cycle of the 2022-25 CRMP, Nottinghamshire has seen an increase in the development of high rise residential buildings. This has created an increase in fire alarm systems and provision.

National Fire Chiefs Council guidance has also placed greater emphasis on buildings that are deemed to be of higher risk, requiring enhancements in fire alarm provision in coverage. Both cases have naturally resulted in the generation of increased numbers of unwanted fire signals.

Fire safety inspections

Our Protection department is responsible for auditing and inspecting non-domestic premises as part of our statutory duty.

We work with landlords, business owners and those with responsibility for the management of non-domestic premises to ensure that they comply with fire safety regulations designed to keep the public safe from fire.

Our inspections are undertaken by suitably qualified staff who provide advice, educate and, where necessary, issue advisory and statutory

enforcement notices to make sure buildings are managed and maintained in line with the law. We have increased the size of the inspections team to ensure that we can meet increasing demand and keep our communities safe.

We have continued to fulfil our duty as a statutory consultee for fire safety in new developments as part of the building control process.

We continue to develop the skills of the specialist staff within our teams to help ensure that we are prepared to meet the challenges that new legislation will bring in the future. This includes the development of staff in fire engineering, smoke control, sprinkler systems, external wall cladding and fire door safety checks.

Our supervisory managers are now trained to inspect business premises in accordance with the sector competency standards. This increased capacity allows the service to audit lower risk business premises to ensure that they comply with the relevant fire safety legislation.

Consultations

Our work has continued to improve fire safety standards across the county in non-domestic premises as we engage and consult with other regulators including Building Control, Environmental Health, the Health and Safety Executive, Nottinghamshire Police, the Care Quality Commission, Ofsted and the Food Standards Agency.

We are consulted on licensing applications and we are part of the consultation process for all planning applications.

Collaboration

Since the Fire Safety (England) Regulations 2022 became law in January, 2023, we have provided support to businesses regarding the implementation of the new legislation. The legislation has been implemented to improve the safety in high rise residential buildings and

provide safety critical information about the buildings to the fire & rescue service.

We are also supporting the new Building Safety Regulator in their work to implement new regulations designed to ensure new and existing high rise residential buildings keep their residents and visitors safe from fire.

The service is supporting this regional response by working in collaboration with our colleagues in Leicestershire Fire & Rescue Service and the Building Safety Regulator, which is part of the Health and Safety Executive, in a collaborative approach to the implementation of the new regulations.

We continue to support the National Fire Sprinkler Network and British Automatic Fire Sprinkler Association to help promote and provide guidance on the installation or retrofitting of sprinkler systems.

Strategic Goal 3: We will respond immediately and effectively to emergency incidents

This goal focuses on our statutory duty to respond to emergencies.

In 2023/24 our key objectives were to:

- Review resourcing with a particular focus on the emergency cover in the Ashfield area, following the findings of the Fire Cover Review in 2022
- Deliver training and revalidation to maintain the skills and competence of operational staff
- Respond to incidents within an average time of eight minutes
- Work collaboratively with regional partners to improve the effectiveness of our response to incidents

Our focus for improvements included:

- Work towards the replacement of our mobilising system in partnership with our colleagues in Joint Fire Control and Derbyshire Fire and Rescue Service
- Continue to invest in new fire appliances and specialist vehicles
- Review our mobile technology to improve access to information for our Crews, including providing additional mobile radio capability to improve communications at incidents

During 2023/24:

- We increased operational resource at Ashfield Fire Station which is now staffed 24 hours a day

- We responded to incidents in an average time of eight minutes and fifteen seconds
- We attended 10,595 incidents, a decrease of 7% when compared to 2022/23
- A reduction in wildfires due to less extreme temperatures than those experienced in 2022/23 saw a 30% decrease in fires to 2,804 incidents
- We attended 1,335 incidents which involved rescues and humanitarian assistance from either buildings, vehicles, water, confined spaces, or heights. This represented a very small decrease when compared to 2022/23 (1,341)
- We attended 560 road traffic collisions, a decrease of 4% when compared to 2022/23
- We responded to 2,239 special service calls such as assisting East Midlands Ambulance Service and responding to flooding. This was an increase of 6% on 2022/23 partly due to the impact of extreme weather events including Storm Babet and Storm Henk
- We delivered 765 training courses, attended by 3994 delegates, from a portfolio of 140 different training courses

In 2023/24 you continued to be served by 30 fire engines and a range of specialised vehicles at 24 fire stations across our county.

Our stations are made up of:

- Eight with wholetime crews
- Four with a mix of wholetime and on-call crews
- 12 with on-call crews

When we receive a 999 call for help, we respond immediately with the nearest appropriate fire engine and specialist equipment for the size and type of incident.

The exceptionally wet weather experienced in the Autumn and Winter led to the declaration of two major incidents related to Storm Babet in October, and Storm Henk in January. During this period our fire engines were busier

than usual attending special service calls and sometimes had to travel further or stay longer at incidents than we would normally expect.

This contributed to the average time that it took for response crews to attend some incidents exceeding our eight-minute target by fifteen seconds in 2023/24.

Local resilience

We have continued to work collaboratively with our regional partners to receive and provide operational assistance. We have maintained our agreements to ensure that we can provide mutual resilience, particularly at times of increased demand.

Using the Joint Emergency Services Operating Principles (JESIP), we work alongside other emergency services. Using these common operating principles, we deal with incidents effectively and minimise impact to our communities.

Many larger incidents require multiple partners to work together to resolve the incident. We are an active member of the Nottinghamshire Local Resilience Forum.

This statutory partnership of emergency services and other key partners, works together to share skills, information and expertise to build, test and exercise the Community Risk Register. This ensures that all partners are ready for an effective response when needed.

National resilience

The National Resilience Capabilities Programme (NRCP) is the government's central programme to increase the capability to respond to major incidents. As part of this we can be called upon to provide assistance locally, or if required, regionally or nationally.

In June we responded to a serious incident in Nottingham City Centre in which three members of our community tragically lost their lives.

The incident involved a joint response from the emergency services and other partners from across the region, highlighting that we may be called upon to provide a response to incidents other than those which we are more commonly associated.

Training and competence

We have around 650 firefighters who are trained to deal with a variety of incidents, to a high standard through:

- Practical and face-to-face training at our Service Development Centre
- Station based training
- Training exercises for different types of incidents
- E-learning

Exercises

To ensure we are prepared, and to test our response to emergencies, we have a structured exercise programme. Exercises range from small district-level exercises, to large multi-agency scenarios.

In 2023/24 we conducted:

- 51 practical exercises and 62 Tactical Decision Exercises (TDEs) that tested our capability in a range of emergency scenarios including high rise buildings, major road traffic collisions, water rescues, terrorist attacks, and hazardous material releases
- 15 other specialist training events specifically to test our effectiveness in working with other emergency partners

We also participated in large scale multi-agency exercises alongside our emergency service partners to ensure that we are able to work collectively to resolve incidents.

Most notably, one at Nottingham Ice Arena which tested our joint response to a significant emergency incident at an entertainment venue.

Wholetime Resourcing

In response to findings in our most recent Fire Cover Review, in November 2023 we made changes to the resourcing at Ashfield Fire Station to ensure the most effective emergency cover. Twenty-four wholetime supervisory managers and firefighters, split over four Watches, now provide 24 hour cover every day of the year.

Productivity

The performance of response crews in the delivery of our other services continued to improve in 2023/24. Last year, response crews delivered:

- 13,329 Safe & Well Visits (a 6% increase on 2022/23) enabling the service to exceed its target of 14,000 by over 12%
- 1,029 Business Safety Checks, which is nearly double the number completed in 2022/23 and surpassed the target that had been set
- 174 community befriending scheme activities

In addition, response crews have supported community safety education events, maintained operational competence through engagement in a full training and exercise programme, and ensured that all 542 documents relating to Site Specific Risk Information were kept up to date.

On-call availability

We have worked hard over the past year to further develop the sustainability of the on-call workforce, including the ongoing recruitment and training of additional employees.

With the assistance of our on-call support team throughout 2023/24 our on-call appliance availability averaged 86.47%. This exceeded our target of 85%, making us one of the best performing services for on-call availability in the country.

Specialist appliance review

During 2023/24 we continued the implementation of the recommendations of the special appliance review that was conducted in 2021/22. The review considered the efficiency and effectiveness of our special appliances fleet; how they meet the needs of our communities, where they are located, how they are crewed, and how they contribute to the mitigation of risk.

Projects to replace our aerial ladder capability and command support unit, and to introduce a new rural firefighting vehicle progressed with new appliances due to arrive in service during 2024/25.

New fire appliances

We have purchased 17 new fire appliances which are currently being built and will come into service during 2024/25. The new vehicles are being constructed with the 'clean cab' concept in mind, which will help protect our firefighters from potential contaminants and carcinogens following operational incidents.

Replacement Mobilising System (RMS)

During 2023/24 we began the process of implementing a replacement mobilising system in collaboration with our colleagues at Derbyshire Fire and Rescue Service. This is a significant strategic project for both services,

We have now awarded contracts and the replacement system is expected to be in use by October 2025.

Operational equipment

During 2023/24 we replaced some of the operational equipment carried on our fire appliances. This included:

- New Automated external defibrillators
- Ropes used for working at height incidents
- New branches for firefighting foam application
- Portable LED lighting
- Water rescue poles and attachments
- High pressure airbags on the Specialist Rescue Units

To improve communications at incidents we have procured additional radio equipment for our crews to use at incidents.

Decontamination facilities

During 2023/24 we have procured and installed specialist washing equipment at our Service Development Centre and Mansfield Fire Station. The new facilities will be able to deep clean breathing apparatus sets following operational incidents, where they can become contaminated with harmful carbonaceous and carcinogenic particles.

The equipment forms part of our ongoing commitment to protecting our crews from the toxins and products of combustion which can be encountered while doing their job.

Strategic Goal 4: We will continue to support and develop our workforce and promote an inclusive Service

This goal focuses on inclusion and the development and wellbeing of our workforce.

In 2023/24 our key objectives were:

- Welcome two cohorts of whole-time apprentice firefighters, to begin training in April and September
- Undertake community engagement and positive action to improve the diversity of applicants and appointees for roles at all levels of the service
- Promote employee health and wellbeing
- Deliver a range of learning opportunities to increase understanding of inclusion issues across our workforce
- Embed the Core Code of Ethics into our service values and behaviours, and act on the relevant learning from reports across the sector in relation to improving our culture

Our focus for improvements included:

- Review our leadership development programmes
- Introduce new uniform following the review of our service's standards of dress
- Streamline our recruitment processes to make them more efficient and reduce vacancy times

During 2023/24:

- 23 new wholetime apprentice firefighters began their initial training on two recruit courses held at our Service Development Centre
- We have continued to engage with a broad range of under-represented communities across the county to promote the service as an employer of choice
- We have made improvements to the way we signpost and promote the wide range of health and wellbeing support available to staff and continue to seek ways of enhancing our provision
- We have delivered inclusive leadership training to all middle and senior leaders and delivered a pilot course to supervisory managers
- We have delivered inter-faith awareness sessions at places of worship across the city
- We have delivered neurodiversity training aimed at employees and managers
- We have developed a plan for CPD sessions for our operational training team at our Service Development Centre. This includes neurodiversity, menopause awareness and coaching skills
- We have been developing a new Leadership Framework which will enable the service to manage talent and allow a more inclusive workplace. The new framework is aligned to the NFCC Leadership guidance and will assist us in developing leaders who are able to meet the changing roles across the organisation
- We have been implemented the recommendations from the recruitment review of 2022 to improve our recruitment processes. As a result of the actions it is anticipated that the appointment process will be speeded up, we will have more time to recruit to a vacancy, retention and development of staff will improve and there will be a reduction in agency costs

Other Highlights

Our people are at the heart of what we do, and ensuring their wellbeing, engagement and motivation strengthens the service that we provide to you. We are also focused on being an inclusive service, both in the services that we provide to you and within our own workplace.

Workforce and recruitment

At the end of 2023/24 we had a workforce of 826 people, compared to 812 in 2022/23. This is made up of 658 staff in operational roles and 168 staff in support roles. A total of 81 people left the service during the year, of whom 33 were wholetime firefighters, 25 were on-call firefighters and 23 were support staff.

During 2023/24, we recruited to 93 roles: 39 wholetime firefighters, 25 on-call firefighters and 29 support staff roles.

The number of female firefighters within the service increased from 43 to 55 (across both on-call and wholetime), an increase of 27%. Firefighters from racially marginalised groups increased from 30 to 34 (an increase of 13%).

We recognise, however, that our current workforce is not representative of the population of Nottinghamshire as reflected in local census figures, and more progress needs to be made in the long-term.

We are committed to improving the diversity of applicants for roles at all levels within the service, particularly for operational roles. We continue to engage in positive action activities within our communities, encouraging people to apply for a career as a Firefighter and supporting them through the application process.

During 2023/24 we undertook a number of activities with groups who are under-represented in our workforce across the county including:

- Nergiz, Kurdish Womens group
- Heya, Arab Womens group
- Her lohri Project
- Mojatu
- Hindu temple
- Ramgharia Sikh Gurudwara
- Refugee Forum, Homes for Ukraine

We also participated in a 6-week fire safety programme with Pythian Club where we engaged with young people from a number of faiths and cultural backgrounds.

While providing opportunities to improve the diversity of our workforce, these events also provide opportunities to deliver a community safety message whilst improving our own understanding of the faiths and diversity of the communities we serve.

During the 2023/24 recruitment campaign:

- There were 34 successful applicants
- 5 of the successful applicants were women
- 8 were from Black, Asian and minority ethnic backgrounds

We have commissioned an external agency, IN2PEOPLE to undertake an in-depth analysis of the individual, systemic, community and cultural barriers to recruitment and engagement from under-represented groups across the county.

From April 2024 the agency will be running focus groups, surveys and interviews to understand and recommend how the service can improve the diversity of our workforce.

Health & wellbeing

We promote employee health and wellbeing through a dedicated Occupational Health team, including a fitness advisor who provides fitness testing and rehabilitation programmes to maintain fitness and support those recovering from injury or illness. We also offer workplace gyms, on-line fitness programmes and access to counselling support. All of our operational staff are required to undertake annual fitness tests.

In 2023/24:

- 99.2% of our operational personnel passed their annual fitness test
- 43 accidents were reported in the workplace, compared with 35 in 2022/23
- 47 near misses were reported, compared to 38 in 2022/23
- Sickness absence accounted for the loss of 5.30% of working time for wholetime operational staff, which is below the national sector average of 6.16%. Sickness absence within support roles equated to 5.87% of working time, which was higher than the national sector average of 3.74%

All staff have access to an Employee Assistance Programme, including a 24/7 helpline and a cash-back plan to help toward the cost of routine health screening, treatments and consultancy and therapy fees.

Our staff also have access to post incident trauma-based therapy and Cognitive Behavioural Therapy for those experiencing mental health difficulties. A Peer Support scheme is also available to employees through a network of trained facilitators.

As part of a wider project of employers in the midlands, we conducted a staff survey in association with Mind, to review mental health in the workplace. The survey provided a wide range of data which we are using to

improve mental health awareness and culture with support from a team at The University of Derby.

Values & culture

Our service values are clearly defined and well understood by staff. They ensure that our staff put communities first and at the heart of what we do, and they are aligned to the Core Code of Ethics for Fire and Rescue Services in England.

During the last year we have continued to embed the Core Code of Ethics fire standard into our ways of working and behavioural framework, which underpins our values and sets out expectations about conduct.

In recent years, values and culture within the fire sector, and the wider public sector, have become topics of national debate and concern. In March 2023 HMICFRS presented its own assessment of values and culture across all the fire services in England, based on evidence collected from inspections since 2018.

The report highlighted examples of unacceptable behaviours in some services. It made 34 recommendations, 20 of which were tasked to Chief Fire Officers to implement within their services. By April, we had implemented 12 and were progressing the other 8.

During 2023/24 we launched 'Say So', an independent reporting tool to supplement and strengthen our existing reporting approach and support our commitment to improving culture.

Our 2021/22 inspection report from HMICFRS found that we had improved in all areas related to our people, however, we recognise that there is no place for complacency, and we await the report from our 2024 inspection to identify areas where we can improve further.

Following an EDI review which we commissioned in 2021, we have welcomed the return of the external adviser to assess our progress against the original recommendations and identify further areas for improvement. Of the 47 recommendations, the report highlighted that we had completed or made good progress against most of the actions.

We are strongly committed to maintaining a positive, inclusive workplace and ensuring our staff have the skills to meet the needs of our community when delivering services.

We continue to deliver a range of EDI training and e-learning including:

- Introduction to EDI
- Disability Awareness
- Learning Differences (neurodiversity)
- Religion and Faith training
- Diversity in Employment
- Working with Vulnerable People
- Equality Impact Assessment
- Deaf Awareness
- Trans awareness
- Unconscious bias
- EDI best practice and legislation

New Uniform

Following a review of our duty uniform in 2022/23 we have conducted trials and procurement of new workwear during this year. The new uniform is designed to be more inclusive and better value for money and is expected to be in use during 2024/25.

Employee networks

Supporting our employees and promoting a positive workplace culture is central to our ambitions of being an employer of choice and becoming a more inclusive service. Our employee groups and networks provide a voice for those who are under-represented in our workforce and the fire sector as a whole.

Women's Network

This year our Women's network celebrated its second anniversary. In an eventful year the network has made great strides in promoting and celebrating the role women play within the service. Regular meetings and events have contributed to our commitment to improving the representation of women in our workforce. These have included involvement in the uniform review process and inviting guest speakers who are role models within the sector to network meetings.

LGBT+ Network

The LGBT+ Proud Friends Network is open to all members of staff who are part of the LGBT+ community and people who are allies. The Network is a space for people to get support and learn more about different aspects of the LGBT+ community. We attended Worksop Pride and were once again honoured to lead the Notts Pride parade, with the biggest turnout of staff that we've ever had marching at the event.

Ethnic Minority Alliance Network (EMA)

Our EMA provides a platform for open, confidential and supportive discussions, for all employees. The alliance helps to create and support a culture where all members can participate and feel valued. This year we have employed the Human Library concept to help inform the service's approach to ethnic minority issues. Throughout the year we have provided opportunities for networking and support through a variety of multi-cultural initiatives. These have included Eid ul-Fitr, Easter, Vaisakhi, Eid-Al-Adha, Black History Month, Diwali/Bandi Chhor and Lunar New year. The network has been instrumental in the provision of culturally appropriate

uniform options including bandanas and scarves for use during religious focused engagement.

Disability Matters Network

Our Disability Matters Network contributes to all disability related outcomes within the service and plays a significant role in helping to achieve an inclusive workplace. Our members and allies have continued to influence delivery of service and promote disability confidence amongst the workforce.

Healthy Minds Network

To support our employees with mental health and wellbeing, this year, we have launched our 'Healthy Minds' network. The aim is to promote positive mental wellbeing through organised events and meetings, which lessen the stigma surrounding mental health while encouraging people to speak out about emotional matters and mental struggles more openly.

Strategic Goal 5: We will continue our improvement journey to deliver an outstanding service

This goal focuses on the continuous improvement of our services, systems and processes.

In 2023/24 our focus for improvements included:

- Undertake phase 2 of our Futures 25 programme, looking at service redesign and financial efficiencies
- Further develop our online repository of information about risks and communities for our public-facing teams
- Roll out new tablet computers on our appliances, to improve access to risk information and support mobile working
- Continue to develop our management information capability to better support performance management and decision making
- Ensure our intranet is readily accessible to all staff including those with different needs or access requirements
- Continue to respond to the recommendations of public inquiries, sector learning and new fire standards as they are published

During 2023/24:

- Phase 2 of our Futures 25 programme focused on service improvement, effectiveness and how we continue to serve our communities with integrity
- As part of our Futures 25 service improvement programme, we have conducted a review of our Prevention Team's activities and its roles. A revised organisation structure was agreed following consultation with staff, which will better support the evolving demands on our

prevention activities and the changing needs of communities, and enable increased levels of community engagement

- We have improved the IT infrastructure for our stations. All stations now have improved connectivity with the installation of a new inter-station network. The latest technology has been used to improve performance and resilience. We have also enabled the use of Microsoft Teams to enable group interactions between stations and other locations across the service
- We have been establishing requirements for new tablet devices for our fire appliances. The new equipment will assist crews when collecting data and risk information for prevention and protection purposes. The new devices are expected to be in use during 2025
- A service desk ticketing system has been introduced to several departments to improve efficiency, tracking and reporting of requests and issues. This system will be introduced to other teams during the coming year
- Following an audit by an independent organisation, we have made improvements to our service intranet. Changes have been made which will improve the accessibility and availability to all staff including, colour scheme changes to assist users with sight problems and those with dyslexia
- We have introduced a software support role to promote more effective use of our software systems. Part of this role involves educating and upskilling of staff across the service

Other Highlights

Cybersecurity

Cyberattacks are a constant threat to organisations and especially those in the public sector.

We continue to monitor and update our practices to make sure we are well placed to deal with current and future risks.

Over the past year, we have thwarted over 439,340 total threats. This includes spam, malware and viruses.

We have again achieved Cyber Essentials Plus certification standard. The independently verified accreditation demonstrates our cyber security commitment to the public and provides stakeholders and other partners with reassurance of compliance.

Strategic Goal 6: We will manage and invest in our service to ensure it is fit for the future

This goal is focused on financial and environmental sustainability and investment in our service to ensure it is fit for purpose.

In 2023/24 our key objective was to:

- Develop a strategy and roadmap for decarbonisation of our premises and activities

Our focus for improvements included:

- Undertake work to improve accessibility and inclusion of facilities at our premises
- Implement a central management system for electric vehicle charging facilities across our estate
- To become more inclusive in our decision-making and engagement by developing a community advisory group to advise on the service's work, reducing bias and promoting inclusion

During 2023/24:

- We developed our roadmap for decarbonisation as part of our commitment to the environment and sustainability. Feasibility and planning have been ongoing throughout the year and a funding grant has been secured for sustainability alterations at Highfields Fire Station from the Public Sector Decarbonisation Fund

- We have been looking at how our fire appliances may be fuelled in the future. A trial is underway at London Road Fire Station where the appliances are being fuelled using HVO Renewable Diesel, which could result in up to 90% lower CO2 emissions than regular diesel
- Utilising the D2N2 local partnership agreement, we have been able to increase the number of electric vehicle charging points across the service. 20 new charging points will now be available on stations at Edwinstowe, Newark, Retford, Warsop and Worksop
- As part of an accessibility and inclusion project, alterations have been progressing at Ashfield, Bingham, Blidworth and Harworth Fire stations with upgrades also being completed at Service Development Centre. Contracts have also been awarded for works to commence at other sites during 2024/25
- We have been exploring the possible benefits and feasibility of a central management system for electric vehicle charging at buildings across the service
- We have invested in new firefighting equipment, including 17 new fire appliances which will come into service during 2024/25
- We have continued to work alongside members of our Community Advisory Group, who meet on a bi-monthly basis. The group, comprising of individuals from diverse cultural backgrounds, participate in stakeholder panel meetings to provide assurance and advice on some of the key initiatives we carry out in our communities

Financial sustainability and capital expenditure

Throughout 2023/24, events in the UK and abroad had a significant impact on the economic climate. Inflation was 8.7% at the beginning of the year and has fallen to 2.3% at the end of the year.

We have benefited from the increase in interest rates in terms of the interest we earn on our cash balances, however this also increases our cost of borrowing for our capital programme.

Against this backdrop, we reviewed our capital expenditure plans for the next ten years. We have prioritised spending capital to support delivering our Strategic Goals.

This includes investing in new appliances, improvements our training and development centre and making essential improvements to our existing estate to improve accessibility and provide an inclusive environment for staff and visitors.

We will always try to provide the best possible service to our communities with the financial resources available. Providing value for money is a priority when planning for the future.

As part of those plans, we work hard to ensure that the service we provide is both financially and environmentally sustainable. This means ensuring that our buildings, vehicles and equipment remain fit for purpose and cost effective and allow us to provide an effective and efficient service.

Financial Performance

Under the Local Government Act 1999, fire and rescue services are responsible for ensuring that their business is conducted in accordance with the law and proper standards, and that public money is properly accounted for and used economically, efficiently and effectively.

We provide financial assurance through the publication of an Annual Statement of Accounts. This is a statutory requirement under the Accounts and Audit Regulations 2015, and the accounts are prepared following the Code of Practice on Local Authority Accounting. The financial statements are subject to review by independent auditors.

Our appointed external auditor for 2023/24 is KPMG. The auditors are responsible for auditing two key areas:

- Financial statements
- Use of resources – concluding on the arrangements for securing economy, efficiency and effectiveness (the value for money commentary)

Internal audit forms part of the wider system of internal control which deals with our exposure to financial, and to some extent, non-financial risk.

Our internal audit function is provided by Nottinghamshire County Council. The 2023/24 Internal Audit Annual Report provided a judgement of Substantial Assurance around the service's arrangements for corporate governance, risk management and the control environment.

The full report is to be considered by Fire Authority in July 2024. This will allow members to see the work of the internal audit and the contribution that it makes to the overall system of internal control.

2023/24 Financial Budget

The 2023/24 budget was set at £49.965m including the anticipated use of £404k of the budget pressure reserve. During the year additional use of other specific earmarked reserves were approved increasing the budget to £50.258m.

We underspent by £1m (1.99% of the revised budget), and the budget pressure reserve of £404k was not required.

The underspent budget has been moved to reserves:

£300k has been earmarked for anticipated costs relating to the existing mobilisation system whilst the replacement system is being implemented

£175k has been moved to a new reserve created to help manage the revenue costs of capital schemes

£121k has been moved to the General Fund Reserve

Capital expenditure for the year totalled £7.271m. This was lower than expected due to options and scoping works on some of the larger schemes taking longer than anticipated to ensure the best solutions are being pursued.

The major areas of spend were replacement fire appliances, training and development centre and replacement ICT equipment.

Reserves at the end of March 2024 were £10.9m.

Governance Statement

The Annual Governance Statement publicly explains how we manage our governance and internal control measures. It is a transparent account of how we ensure our financial management system is adequate and effective. It also ensures a sound system of internal control, assuring the utmost integrity in all of our work.

The Fire Authority also has a Code of Corporate Governance in which it reaffirms its duties and responsibilities. In this document officers support each of the code's principles with documentation or existing practices, demonstrating how the Fire Authority complies with the principles that make up the code.

We recognise the importance of transparency over how public money is spent. The Local Government Transparency Code 2015 has been used as the foundation for organisational transparency. In deciding what information we should make available, as a starting point we have used the recommended data sets as defined by this code.

Governance, Monitoring & Assurance

Various governance bodies and systems are required to deliver an efficient fire and rescue service to our communities.

Nottinghamshire and City of Nottingham Fire and Rescue Authority

This is often referred to as the Combined Fire Authority (CFA) and is responsible for ensuring we have the people, equipment and training needed to carry out our duties in relation to fire prevention; fire safety; firefighting and rescue; road traffic collision extrication and rescue and other emergency rescue activities such as responding to flooding or terrorism.

The authority consists of 18 elected councillors from Nottingham City Council and Nottinghamshire County Council. The group is made up of six councillors from Nottingham City Council, 12 councillors from Nottinghamshire County Council, and Nottinghamshire's Police & Crime Commissioner.

There are six committees that report to the Fire Authority. These are:

- Appointments
- Community Safety
- Finance and Resources
- Human Resources
- Personnel
- Policy and Strategy

Collectively these committees and the authority make decisions on key matters such as policy, strategy and budget. Meetings of the CFA and its committees are open to the public. Further information can be found on the city council's website.



Strategic Leadership Team

The Strategic Leadership Team is responsible for implementing the strategy and policy decisions taken by the CFA.

Under the direction of the Chief Fire Officer, the team meets to discuss service priorities, collectively understand emerging issues and determine whether additional formal reports or business cases are required for consideration.

CRMP Assurance Board

The CRMP Assurance Board focuses on the progress being made against the strategic goals in the CRMP. It meets monthly and is chaired by the Chief Fire Officer. It scrutinises performance reports and key performance

indicators from all areas of the service and oversees significant corporate projects.

Operational Learning Board

The Operational Learning Board meets to ensure that we can effectively learn from the operational incidents and exercises that have taken place.

This board also considers learning that has come from other fire and rescue services to ensure an efficient, safe and effective operational response and to support the goal of delivering an outstanding service. This board meets every two months.

Service Delivery Evaluation and Assurance Group

It is important to oversee the performance of our Prevention, Protection and Response departments to monitor our progress against the standards we set.

Risk and performance matters are considered, with the aim of addressing any areas of concern and highlighting and learning from areas of good practice. The Group meets on a quarterly basis.

Collaboration Board

We facilitate a Strategic Collaboration Board that looks for opportunities to work with Nottinghamshire Police and oversees current collaborations. The membership of the group includes the Chair of the Fire Authority, the Chief Fire Officer, the Chief Constable and the Police and Crime Commissioner.

We also have a Collaboration Board which facilitates governance and reporting of our Joint Fire Control with Derbyshire Fire and Rescue Service and explores areas for continued collaboration. This is attended by Fire Authority members and senior officers of both services.

External Assurance

HMICFRS Inspection

All fire and rescue services are subject to inspection from His Majesty's Inspectorate of Constabulary and Fire & Rescue Services (HMICFRS).

The aims of the inspection programme are to encourage improvement in the fire sector and to provide the public with accessible information about how their local service is performing.

This year we began the latest inspection process, which will continue through the spring, with the final report expected in the summer of 2024.

Any recommendations identified in the report will contribute to how we develop future business plans and deliver future service improvements.

In our 2021/22 inspection, HMICFRS rated us as 'Good'.

Assurance Declaration

The Combined Fire Authority functions within the clearly defined statutory and policy framework.

The key documents setting this out are:

- The Fire and Rescue Services Act 2004
- The Civil Contingencies Act 2004
- The Regulatory Reform (Fire Safety) Order 2005
- The Fire and Rescue Services (Emergencies) (England) Order 2007
- The Localism Act 2011
- The Fire and Rescue National Framework for England

Nottinghamshire and City of Nottingham Fire and Rescue Authority is satisfied that it has met government expectations and responsibilities expected of fire and rescue services with regard to the Fire and Rescue National Framework for England.

It is satisfied that it has shown due regard for public money and that it was properly accounted for and used efficiently and effectively.

It has adhered to the commitments set out in the CRMP for the period 1 April 2023 to 31 March 2024.



A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Michael Payne".

Councillor Michael Payne Chair of
the Combined Fire Authority



NOTTINGHAMSHIRE
Fire & Rescue Service
Creating Safer Communities

Nottinghamshire and City of Nottingham
Fire and Rescue Authority

STATEMENT OF PAY POLICY

Report of the Chief Fire Officer

Date: 26 July 2024

Purpose of Report:

To present a pay policy statement for approval by the Fire Authority, in line with the requirements of the Localism Act 2011.

Recommendations:

That Members approve the Statement of Pay Policy attached at Appendix A.

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1. BACKGROUND

- 1.1 The Localism Act 2011, Section 38(1), places a requirement on 'relevant authorities' to prepare pay statements for each financial year.
- 1.2 The Fire Authority is a 'relevant authority' as defined by Section 43(1) of the Act.
- 1.3 Pay statements must articulate an authority's own policies towards a range of issues relating to the pay of its workforce, particularly those of its senior officers and its lowest paid employees.
- 1.4 The pay statement must be agreed by the Fire Authority annually and be published and accessible.

2. REPORT

REQUIREMENTS OF THE LOCALISM ACT

- 2.1 The basis for Section 38(1) of the Act reflects the recommendations of the Hutton Report on Fair Pay in the Public Sector, published in March 2011. The Act drew on these recommendations to emphasise the need for accountability, transparency, and fairness in the setting of local pay and placed a requirement on elected Members to take a greater role in determining pay, and that such decisions should be set clearly within the context of the pay of the wider workforce.
- 2.2 To this end, pay policy statements must be considered by the full Authority and may not be delegated to a sub-committee. Any meetings at which pay policy is established, must be open to the public.
- 2.3 Additionally, the full Authority should be offered the opportunity to vote before large salary packages are offered in respect of new appointments. The threshold for these packages is to be set at the value of £100k and to include bonuses, fees and allowances and any benefits in kind.
- 2.4 The published policy statement must specifically include the approach to the publication of, and access to information relating to the remuneration of Chief Officers and Assistant Chief Officers.
- 2.5 The statement must also set out the policy on remuneration for highest and lowest paid employees and establish the relationship between the remuneration of its Chief Officers and other employees. The Authority does not currently use a pay multiple to establish a differential between the highest and lowest paid employees, and it is not intended that such a pay multiple be established within the current pay policy as pay is determined through robust evaluation processes and in-line with National Joint Council agreements applicable to all members of staff.

- 2.6 The policy must also set out the approach to other elements of remuneration, including bonuses, performance related pay and severance payments.
- 2.7 The policy also needs to set out the position taken on re-engagement of Chief Officers in receipt of a pension, (including under a contract for services) and any abatement measures in place across the workforce.
- 2.8 Details of severance payments, including redundancy, must also be explicit within the policy.
- 2.9 The Statement of Pay Policy is attached at Appendix A to the report.

PAY POLICY 2023 – 2024

- 2.10 If agreed, the proposed Statement of Pay Policy 2024 will be published and made available to the public.
- 2.11 The policy provides a summary of pay policy and practices across the Service, and in particular, details the pay policy for the Chief Fire Officer and other Principal Officers.
- 2.12 The main changes to the previous Statement of Pay Policy are as follows:
- Reference to the gender pay reporting outcomes which have been introduced from April 2017 under the Gender Pay Gap Reporting Regulations 2017, (Paragraph 1.6) which shows a gender pay difference in median pay of 7.78% (was 9.49 %).
 - Updates to pay information relating to mean average pay and pay multiples, (Paragraphs 1.8 and 1.9). Mean average pay is now £37,974 per annum.
 - Confirmation of national annual pay awards applied in 2023/24, (Paragraphs 2.4, 3.2, 4.2).
 - Increase in national annual rates of pay for Chief Fire Officers based on population band, (Paragraph 2.2.1, 2.2.2)
 - Confirmation that there were no compensation payments agreed in 2022-23, (Paragraph 6.3) as a result of compulsory redundancy.
 - Confirmation that there were two settlement payments made in 2022-23, (Paragraph 6.4).
 - Confirmation that there was one instance of early payment of pension payments to Local Government Pension Scheme members during 2022-23, (Paragraph 6.8) on grounds of efficiency.

3. FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

- 3.1 The financial impacts of this pay policy are reflected in the budgets of the Authority approved by the Fire Authority. These budgets are monitored by the Finance and Resources Committee on a quarterly basis.
- 3.2 In 2023/24, the Authority has funded termination benefits totalling £105k from its revenue budget, including £85k in pension strain payments. Termination benefits have been received by three individuals.

4. HUMAN RESOURCES AND LEARNING AND DEVELOPMENT IMPLICATIONS

- 4.1 The Service already has in place a number of policies and agreements in relation to pay and remuneration, appointments and severance payments. However, the provisions of the Localism Act 2011 place a requirement on all public bodies to publish such information as a single pay policy and make it accessible to external scrutiny.
- 4.2 There are no learning and development implications arising from the report.

5. EQUALITIES AND ETHICAL IMPLICATIONS

- 5.1 There are no direct equalities implications arising from the report, as this is a statement of current pay policy and practice. An equality impact assessment forms part of the policy development process.
- 5.2 The outcomes from the gender pay gap audit and equal pay review are reported through the Human Resources Committee.

6. ENVIRONMENTAL AND SUSTAINABILITY IMPLICATIONS

There are no environmental or sustainability implications arising from this report.

7. LEGAL IMPLICATIONS

The Localism Act places a statutory duty on authorities to publish an annual Statement on Pay Policy. The publication of the pay policy meets this obligation.

8. RISK MANAGEMENT IMPLICATIONS

As the Localism Act places a statutory duty on the Fire Authority, the Authority must be in a position to publish its agreed position on pay and remuneration each year. Failure to do so may lead to legal challenge.

9. COLLABORATION IMPLICATIONS

There are no collaboration implications arising from this report.

10. RECOMMENDATIONS

That Members approve the Statement of Pay Policy at Appendix A.

11. BACKGROUND PAPERS FOR INSPECTION (OTHER THAN PUBLISHED DOCUMENTS)

None.

Craig Parkin
CHIEF FIRE OFFICER



PAY POLICY 2024



CONTENTS

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Section One General Pay Policy

Section Two Pay Policy for Principal Officers

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Section Five Policy on Re-engagement and Pension Abatement

Section Six Severance Payments

INTRODUCTION

This statement of Pay Policy is provided in line with Section 38(i) of the Localism Act 2011 and is authorised by the Nottinghamshire and City of Nottingham Fire Authority.

Purpose

The purpose of this statement is to provide transparency to the pay policy adopted by the Nottinghamshire Fire and Rescue Service. The period covered by the review is the financial year April 2023 to 31st March 2024.

Accountability

The Combined Fire Authority is responsible for establishing the pay policy for the employees of the Nottinghamshire Fire and Rescue Service.

The Combined Fire Authority is directly responsible for reviewing the pay structure for Principal Officers including the Chief Fire Officer, Deputy Chief Fire Officer, Assistant Chief Fire Officer roles.

The Chief Fire Officer has delegated responsibility to establish appropriate gradings and salaries, for all other employees of the Nottinghamshire Fire and Rescue Service.

Pay Negotiating Bodies

The Authority applies the annual pay settlements negotiated by:

- The National Joint Council for Local Government Services.
- The National Joint Council for Local Authority Fire and Rescue Services.
- The National Joint Council for Brigade Managers of Local Authority Fire and Rescue Services.

The Authority undertakes negotiations with its recognised representative bodies on local agreements, which affects the terms and conditions of its employees, and which may include agreement of local allowances.

The Representative Bodies recognised for negotiating purposes are:

- The Fire Brigade's Union.
- The Fire Officers Association.
- UNISON.
- Fire Leaders Association.
- Fire and Rescue Services Association, (formerly the Retained Firefighters Union).

Section One - General Pay Policy

- 1.1 The Authority applies the pay scales adopted by the respective national Joint Councils for all its employees up to the level of Principal Officer.
- 1.2 The Authority has adopted the principle of applying the Living Wage rate as the minimum starting point for all substantive appointments. This is subject to annual review by the Centre for Research in Social Policy. From April 2016, the Service also adheres to the National Living Wage rate (for employees over 21) where this is higher than the Living Wage. Please note that the national minimum wage rates apply to some apprenticeship roles.
- 1.3 Local pay arrangements for Principal Officers are established through the provisions of the NJC for Brigade Managers of Local Authority Fire and Rescue Services and are reviewed biennially by the Fire Authority. Further details are set out in Section 2
- 1.4 The number and level of roles within the Service are determined by the Fire Authority on advisement from the Chief Fire Officer.
- 1.5 Pay policy reflects the different roles, duties and responsibilities undertaken by Service employees. This is reflected in pay differentials between different groups of workers and between workers in the same pay group. The pay bands established are based on nationally applied role maps, (operational employees) or grading bands established through a job evaluation process, (support employees).
- 1.6 Pay policy reflects adherence to the principle of “equal pay for work of equal value”. The Service has committed to undertake an independent equal pay audit on a 3-yearly basis, as a means of identifying any gender pay issues. In line with its duty under the Equality Act 2010, (Specific Duties and Public Authorities) Regulations 2017, the Service also undertakes a gender pay gap audit. As of 31 March 2024, this showed that the mean average difference in pay between female and male employees was -12.53% and the mean median difference in pay was -7.78%. Whilst pay rates are applied consistently according to job role, irrespective of gender, this differential reflects the fact that there are more men employed with senior, (higher paid) roles than women. The challenge for the service is to develop more women into managerial roles, particularly operational roles where women are under-represented. This requires more women to apply for and be successful in attaining operational roles, and to go onto apply for promotion.
- 1.7 In applying its policy, the Authority will work to eliminate any elements which may, directly or indirectly, discriminate unfairly on the grounds of sex, race, colour, nationality, ethnic or national origin, age, marital status, having dependants, sexual orientation, gender reassignment, religion or belief, trade union activity, disability, or any other factors. Part-time workers receive the

same pay and remuneration as full-time workers undertaking the same job role on a pro-rata basis.

Generic pay information

1.8 Mean Average Pay

The mean average pay is calculated based on salary for Fire-fighters, Control, and support employees. It does not include the On-Call Duty System Fire-fighters who are paid according to turnouts, (please refer to section 3.6).

The mean average pay for 2023-24 is £37,974, (as at 31/03/24). This compares to a mean average of £37,266 in 2022-23.

1.9 Pay Multiples

The idea of publishing the ratio of the pay of an organisation's top earner to that of its median earner, has been recommended in order to support the principles of Fair Pay, (Will Hutton 2011) and transparency.

The current ratio is 4.71:01 which compares to 4.55:01 in 2022-23. This will be monitored each year within the Statement of Pay Policy.

Section Two - Pay Policy for Principal Officers

2.1 General Principles

2.1.1 National pay awards negotiated by the National Joint Council for Brigade Managers of Local Authority Fire and Rescue Services, are applied by the Authority on an annual basis. This represents a cost-of-living increase.

2.1.2 In addition, a review of Principal Officer pay is undertaken on a two-yearly basis by the Combined Fire Authority. This is managed through the Policy and Strategy Committee and is approved by the full Combined Fire Authority.

2.1.3 This review is undertaken by the Clerk to the Fire Authority and Treasurer to the Fire Authority, who are appointed by the CFA to report to the Authority on the methodology applied and to make recommendations on Principal Officer pay. The last pay review was undertaken in 2023 and recommended no increase in pay for Principal Officers.

2.1.4 Principal Officer roles covered by the review include the Chief Fire Officer, Deputy Chief Fire Officer, Assistant Chief Fire Officer.

2.2 Establishing the Pay of the Chief Fire Officer

2.2.1 The National Joint Council for Brigade Managers of Fire Authorities, establishes a minimum salary for Chief Fire Officers based upon population size as follows:

Population band 1: up to 500,000

Population band 2: 500,001 – 1,000,000

Population band 3: 1,000,001 – 1,500,000

Population band 4: 1,500,000 and above (except London)

Population band 5: London

2.2.2 The population size for the Nottinghamshire Fire and Rescue Service is 1.1m. The minimum payment for the Chief Fire Officer is therefore based upon Population Band 3, which establishes a minimum rate of pay for 2023 – 24 at £131,326.

2.2.3 The base salary for the Chief Fire Officer role at Nottinghamshire Fire and Rescue Service is currently £179,525 within the range £161,573 to £179,525 per annum. Please refer to paragraph 2.3.1 for further details of pay policy on appointment.

2.2.4 The Chief Fire Officer is provided with a car limited to a purchase cost of 30% of their salary. This includes VAT and any cost associated with fitting home chargers for plug-in vehicles etc.

Also, the vehicle must have:

- A hybrid, electric or other alternatively fuelled, low emission engine.
- All wheel drive capability.
- Integrated phone connectivity.
- Satellite navigation.
- High level safety ratings and features in line with the fleet strategy such as parking sensors, protective mats etc.

2.2.5 Pension: The Service makes an employer contribution of 37.6% (2015 scheme), depending on individual membership. This is in accordance with the contribution made to all members of the Firefighter's Pension Scheme. The employee contribution for 2023-24 ranges from 11% to 14.5% depending on pensionable pay.

2.3 Local Pay Review

2.3.1 In 2013 the CFA revised the payment for Principal Officers from a single pay point to a 3-point model based upon length of service, as follows:

- Year One of appointment: 90% of full pay.
- Year Two of appointment; 95% of full pay.
- Year Three of appointment: 100% of full pay.

Progression through the pay band is subject to a review of performance.

- 2.3.2 The CFA has also revised the methodology for the review of Principal Officer pay based upon a comparator for the role of Chief Fire Officer. The review compares the pay levels of comparable Fire and Rescue Authorities in the same Family Group of 18 Fire and Rescue Services, and establishes an average median pay point as a benchmark salary, which is considered by the Combined Fire Authority when reviewing Principal Officer pay on a 2-yearly basis.
- 2.3.3 A pay review was undertaken in 2023, which resulted in no increase in local pay arrangements. The next pay review is scheduled for 2025 for application from January 2026.

2.4 **National Pay Review**

The national pay review undertaken by the NJC for Brigade Managers of Fire and Rescue Services, applied an increase of 3.0%, with effect from 1 January 2024.

2.5 **Other Principal Officer Pay**

The Authority has established a policy stating Principal Officer roles below that of Chief Fire Officer, would be paid as a proportion of the locally agreed Chief Fire Officer base pay rate as follows:

- Assistant Chief Fire Officer - 75%.

2.6 **Publication of Principal Officer Pay**

Details of Principal Officer Pay are published on the Nottinghamshire Fire & Rescue Service internet site. This can be found by opening the following hyperlink: [Senior Salaries Report 24-25](#)

2.7 **Principal Officer – internal pay comparators**

- 2.7.1 In 2023-24, the lowest paid role within the Service was £23,500 (fte), which reflects the Authority's commitment to the living wage, the highest paid role within the Service is £179,525. The Service does not have a policy of direct correlation between the highest and lowest paid roles i.e., it does not apply a pay multiple in establishing Principal Officer pay.

* This does not include apprenticeship rates.

- 2.7.2 The ratio of pay between the highest paid employee of the fire service and a median salary is set out in paragraph 1.8.

2.7.3 The pay, (including rota allowances) of the most senior officer below Principal Officer, (Area Manager) is 69.9% of Assistant Chief Fire Officer pay and 52.5% of Chief Fire Officer pay.

2.7.4 The pay of the most senior support role, (at salary maximum) below Principal Officer, (Area Manager – Support) is 54% of Assistant Chief Fire Officer pay and 40.5% of Chief Fire Officer pay.

It should be taken into account that the salaries of Principal Officers and other flexi-duty officers, reflects a requirement to provide duty cover on a 24/7 rota basis.

2.8 Re-engagement

Principal Officers are subject to the same re-engagement provisions as other Service employees. These are set out in more detail in Section 5.

2.9 Severance Payments

Principal Officers are subject to the same severance arrangements as other Service employees. These are set out in more detail in Section 6.

2.10 Other allowances

2.10.1 Principal Officers are provided with a car limited to a purchase cost of 30% of the full CFO base salary. This includes VAT and any cost associated with fitting home chargers for plug-in vehicles etc.

Also, the vehicle must have:

- A hybrid, electric or other alternatively fuelled, low emission engine.
- All wheel drive capability.
- Integrated phone connectivity.
- Satellite navigation.
- High level safety ratings and features in line with the fleet strategy such as parking sensors, protective mats etc.

2.10.2 Pension: (i) The Service makes an employer contribution of 37.6%, (2015 scheme) depending on individual membership. This is in accordance with the contribution made to all members of the Firefighter's Pension Scheme. The employee contribution for 2023-24 ranges from 11% to 14.5% depending on pensionable pay.
(ii) For Principal officers not eligible for the Firefighter Pension schemes, the provisions of the Local Government Pension Scheme will apply: the Service makes an employer contribution which equates to 19% for all members of the Local Government Pension Scheme. The employee contributes between 5.5% and 12.5% of pensionable pay depending on their salary band.

2.10.3 Business mileage is reimbursed using fuel cards.

2.10.4 Subsistence allowances: reimbursement of expenses when working away from the base location.

2.10.5 All employees are members of a corporate health scheme, which provides cash-back for dental, optical and consultancy fees, and access to consultations and counselling support. This is at a cost of £51.96 per employee per annum. Principal Officers are also members of this scheme.

Section Three - Pay Policy for Fire-fighters

- 3.1 This policy applies to Whole-time and On-Call Firefighters.
- 3.2 National pay awards negotiated by the National Joint Council for Firefighters of Local Authorities Fire and Rescue Services, are applied by the Authority on an annual basis. This represents a cost-of-living increase. A 5% pay award was applied by the NJC for Local Authority Fire and Rescue Services from 1st July 2023.
- 3.3 Pay is based upon the role undertaken and the stage of competence of each individual i.e., trainee, in development and competent.
- 3.4 A formal assessment of individuals is undertaken at each stage of development before moving to the next salary level. Maintenance of competence is a requirement at all levels of the Service and is reviewed annually.
- 3.5 Progression between roles is subject to a competitive selection process.

On Call Duty System

3.6 Employees employed on the On-Call Duty System, are paid an annual Retaining Fee and receive subsequent payments based on attendance at incidents and other activity – these include attendance at drill nights, disturbance fees, turnout fees, attendance fees, training fees, other authorised NFRS duties and compensation for loss of earnings. All payments are made in line with nationally agreed pay scales and rates.

3.7 Other allowances and payments

Pension contributions: the Service makes an employer contribution of 28.8% (2015 scheme), depending on individual membership. This is in accordance with the contribution made to all members of the Firefighter's Pension Scheme. The employee contribution for 2022-23 is either 11% or 14.5% depending on pensionable pay.

Flexible duty payment: under national conditions of service, a flexible duty payment is made to Station Managers, Group Managers and Area Managers

who provide flexible duty cover on a 24/7 rota basis, and who are available to attend emergency incidents when required and provide Duty Officer cover. This is paid at an allowance of 20% of base salary.

Area Manager rota payment: under local arrangements, Area Managers are paid a rota payment equating to 11.67% of salary.

Acting up: an allowance is paid on a daily basis where employees temporarily undertake the duties of a higher graded role. This is paid at the rate applicable to the role being undertaken. Employees must be qualified to undertake the higher-level role.

Overtime rates: paid for roles below Station Manager. This is paid at time and a half or double time on a public holiday or time may be granted in lieu at the appropriate enhanced rate.

Detachments: paid when operational employees are required to provide cover at other stations. Paid at 2 hours overtime rate.

Recall to duty: paid at a minimum of three hours at double time rates.

Continuous Professional Development Payment (CPD): under national conditions of service, a CPD payment is approved annually on an individual basis for employees with more than 5 years of service, (since attaining competence in role).

This is paid as an annual payment of £1,105 (whole-time employees), and £276.25, (retained). The payment made to retained duty system employees is paid on pro-rata basis, (minimum 25% of full value).

The payment is made by initial application and authorised at a senior management level. To be eligible, an individual must demonstrate evidence of CPD over and beyond that required for competence and have a good attendance, performance, and disciplinary record.

Additional Responsibility Allowance (ARAs): may be paid where employees perform duties outside of the national role map. At NFRS, two levels of payment are applied. The lower level is paid at £250 per annum and the higher level at £500 per annum. There are 59 higher level ARAs and 1 lower level in payment at the current time. Payments are conditional upon individual's performing additional duties / responsibilities and maintaining competence in these areas, this may include taking professional or vocational qualifications.

National Resilience Payment: a local payment is made for employees volunteering for crewing of the High-Volume Pump which forms part of the national resilience network. Volunteers are available on an on-call basis and could be required to operate outside of the county to respond to national emergencies. Current payments are for 2 individuals receiving a higher-level co-ordinators allowance of £1000. The payment is funded by national grant.

Local Resilience Payment: a payment to provide Business Continuity Support at short notice. Current payment is £2873 per annum.

Special Response Team: a local payment is made for employees volunteering for this tactical response team. Volunteers are available on an on-call basis. Current payments are £500 per annum and there are 46 employees receiving payments and 2 receiving £1000 for co-ordinating activity.

Incident Liaison Officers: a local payment is made for employees volunteering to be Incident Liaison Officers at Special Response incidents. Volunteers are available on an on-call basis. Current payments are £500 per annum and there are 8 employees receiving payments.

Messing Allowance: paid to station personnel who are responsible for catering arrangements on fire stations.

Spoilt Meals: paid when prepared meals are uneaten, as a result of attending an emergency call-out.

Kit Carrying Allowance: business mileage rate, as per national conditions paid to compensate operational employees who are required to transfer fire kit in their own vehicles.

Travel Allowance: a local allowance to cover additional travel costs when an operational employee is compulsorily transferred to another work base. A payment is made of the difference in mileage undertaken and is paid for 3 years, (compulsory transfer) or 18 months, (promotion).

Essential Car User: a lump sum is paid to employees who are required to use their own vehicles to undertake their job role. This is based on nationally determined allowances. The allowance may be off set against leasing arrangements for a vehicle, the balance of which is paid by the employee.

Business mileage: is reimbursed in line with nationally agreed rates.

Subsistence allowances: reimbursement of expenses when working away from the work base location.

Reimbursement of medical fees: this only applies to employees whose service commenced before November 1994. The reimbursement of fees cover dental, optical and prescription fees and are paid at NHS rates.

Health scheme membership: all employees are members of a corporate health scheme which provides cash-back for dental, optical and consultancy fees and access to MRI, PET scans and counselling support. This is at a cost of £51.96 per employee per annum.

Section Four - Pay Policy for Support Roles

- 4.1 This policy applies to employees covered by the NJC for Local Government Services and includes all non-operational support staff.
- 4.2 National pay awards negotiated by the National Joint Council for Local Government Services, are applied by the Authority on an annual basis if applicable. This represents a cost-of-living increase. This was an increase of £1925 from 1st April 2023.
- 4.4 The Authority has a locally agreed grading structure, which uses nationally recognised salary points, (spinal column points) across 9 grading levels. Each level is comprised of 5 salary points. Movement between grades is through a competitive selection process.
- 4.5 A job evaluation process, based on the national model, assesses all roles and allocates an appropriate grade according to the duties and responsibilities undertaken. Employees may apply for a review of their grade where permanent, substantial, and material changes have increased the level of duties and responsibilities attached to their role. Any substantive changes to grade must be authorised by the Chief Fire Officer and reported to the Authority.
- 4.6 On an annual basis, employees progress incrementally through their respective grade until they reached the maximum point of their grade. Progression is subject to satisfactory performance.

4.7 **Other Allowances and Payments**

Pension contributions: the Service makes an employer contribution which equates to 19% for all members of the Local Government Pension Scheme. The employee makes a contribution of between 5.5% and 12.5% of pensionable pay depending on their salary band.

Overtime: this is paid at the rate of time and a half for all grades and at double time on Sunday's, (after completion of 37 working hours per week). Employees receive double time, (plus time off in lieu) for working on public holidays. Time in lieu may be taken as an alternative to payment.

Acting Up: an allowance is paid if an employee is required to work at a higher-level role for a period of more than one month.

Honorarium: a discretionary payment may be made for duties undertaken outside of the normal job requirements, for an extended period of time. The maximum payable is £1800. Any payments above £1800 must be approved by the Fire Authority.

Stand by: employees required to attend work outside of normal office hours or to be on-call, are paid an allowance depending on the nature of the arrangements.

Essential Car User: a lump sum is paid to employees who are required to use their own vehicles to undertake their job role. This is based on nationally determined allowances.

Business mileage: is reimbursed in line with nationally agreed rates.

Disturbance: paid when an employee is required to move work location. Actual additional mileage is paid for a period of 4 years.

Subsistence Allowances: reimbursement of expenses when working away from the work base location.

Health Scheme: All employees are members of a corporate health scheme which provides cash-back for dental, optical and consultancy fees, and access to MRI, PET scans and counselling support. This is at a cost of £51.96 per employee per annum.

Section Five - Policy on Re-engagement and Pension Abatement

- 5.1 The Service does not normally operate a re-engagement, Policy.
- 5.2 Abatement of pension is applied when employees who retire from Service with pension benefits from the Firefighter's Pension Scheme, are successful in attaining another job within the Service through a competitive process. This means that they may not earn more in the new role than in their previous role when pension and salary are combined. This complies with the provisions of the Firefighter's Pension Scheme 1992 but does not apply to members of the Firefighter's Pension Scheme 2015.
- 5.3 The Service operates a Flexible Retirement Policy for employees in the Local Government Pension Scheme, which allows employees to take their pension benefits and be re-employed on reduced hours or at a lower grade without abatement of pension. This complies with the provisions of the Local Government Pension Scheme. There were 3 flexible retirement arrangements agreed during 2023-24.
- 5.4 In circumstances in which employees who have taken retirement benefits from the LGPS, (either as former NFRS employees or employees of another public-sector organisation) apply for a support role with the Nottinghamshire Fire and Rescue Service as part of a competitive selection process and are successful, no abatement of pension is applied.

Section Six - Exit Payments

- 6.1 In the event of redundancy, the Service applies statutory redundancy payments under the provisions of its Redundancy Procedure. This applies to both compulsory and voluntary redundancy situations.
- 6.2 In addition, members who are members, or who are eligible to be members of the Local Government Pension Scheme, may be awarded an additional compensation payment under the provisions of the Discretionary Compensation Payments Scheme. This payment is based upon age and length of service. A Discretionary Compensation Payments Board assesses each application to determine whether there are any exceptional personal circumstances to enhance the compensation element of the award. This applies to both compulsory and voluntary redundancy situations. A cap of 66 weeks' pay is applied in normal circumstances. This can be increased to up to 104 weeks in exceptional circumstances.
- 6.3 All recommendations for enhanced payments are subject to agreement by the Human Resources Committee. There were no compensation awards agreed as part of redundancy arrangements in 2023-24.
- 6.4 In exceptional cases, the Chief Fire Officer is authorised to agree a compensation payment as part of a compromise agreement when the employment of an employee is terminated by the Service, or in settlement of a claim. Such agreements are subject to confidentiality clauses. There was three such settlements in 2023-24.

Early Payment of Pension Benefits

- 6.6 Under the provisions of the Local Government Pension Scheme, employees aged over 55 who are made redundant or who are retired from Service on the grounds of efficiency, are awarded early payment of pension benefits.
- 6.7 In this case, a charge is made against the Fire Authority by the pensions fund, this is referred to as actuarial strain.
- 6.8 There was one early payment made in 2023-24 linked to grounds of efficiency.

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NOTTINGHAMSHIRE
Fire & Rescue Service
Creating Safer Communities

Nottinghamshire and City of Nottingham
Fire and Rescue Authority

UPDATE ON HIS MAJESTY'S INSPECTORATE OF CONSTABULARY AND FIRE & RESCUE SERVICES

Report of the Chief Fire Officer

Date: 26 July 2024

Purpose of Report:

To provide Members with an overview of the State of Fire and Rescue 2023 report published by His Majesty's Inspectorate of Constabulary and Fire & Rescue Services and to provide an update on Nottinghamshire Fire and Rescue Service's most recent inspection.

Recommendations:

That Members note the content of this report.

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1. BACKGROUND

- 1.1 His Majesty's Inspectorate of Constabulary and Fire & Rescue Services (HMICFRS) is, by Royal appointment, the inspectorate body for fire and rescue services in England.
- 1.2 Each year, His Majesty's Chief Inspector publishes a 'State of Fire and Rescue, Annual Assessment', which summarises the findings from the year's inspections of the sector.
- 1.3 On 9 May 2024, Andy Cooke QPM DL, published his second report to the Secretary of State under Section 28B of the Fire and Rescue Services Act 2004, based on the inspection reports published by HMICFRS between 20 January 2023 and 31 March 2024.
- 1.4 In March 2023, HMICFRS commenced the third full round of inspections, aiming to inspect all 44 Fire and Rescue Services (FRSs) within an 18 month period. Nottinghamshire Fire and Rescue Service's (NFRS) inspection took place between 23 February 2024 and 19 April 2024.

2. REPORT

- 2.1 The HMICFRS State of Fire report is an annual report which consolidates learning and findings from all inspections conducted by HMICFRS in FRSs in England within the review period. The report can be accessed here: [State of Fire and Rescue: The Annual Assessment of Fire and Rescue Services in England 2023 \(publishing.service.gov.uk\)](https://publishing.service.gov.uk)
- 2.2 The purpose of the State of Fire report is to support and drive continuous improvement through the identification of common areas of improvement and good practice.
- 2.3 This year's report summarises His Majesty's Chief Inspector's reflections on the fire and rescue sector's progress since the first inspections in 2018, findings from the values and culture in fire and rescue services spotlight report (March 2023) and initial findings from the thematic inspection on staff misconduct.
- 2.4 The report also considers information gathered from HMICFRS events such as the annual Chiefs and Chairs event where Chief Fire Officers and Chairs of fire and rescue authorities meet to discuss specific topics.
- 2.5 The report is split into two chapters; chapter one sets out the systemic challenges facing the fire and rescue sector and chapter two sets out the interim findings from the Round 3 inspections, identifying some key themes.

SYSTEMIC CHALLENGES

- 2.6 There are four main points highlighted within this section:
- At a national level, the fire and rescue sector has made some good progress, but the Government must press ahead with reforms;
 - Values, culture and the management of misconduct needs to 'urgently improve' across the sector;
 - Fire and rescue service leaders need to take a strategic approach to service improvements; and
 - HMICFRS requires additional powers to continue to make communities safer.
- 2.7 As Members will be aware, in 2019 HMICFRS made six national recommendations covering some of the structural aspects of the fire and rescue sector. The report highlights that three of these have been completed with the outstanding three recommendations – determining roles of FRS and their staff; reviewing and reforming structures for determining pay and conditions; and giving Chief Fire Officers operational independence – being a matter for the Government to resolve. The Inspectorate notes slow progress being made against these three areas and therefore highlights the need for sector reform.
- 2.8 The report covers in detail the need for the sector to improve its culture, values and misconduct management, citing that despite the focus on this area from HMICFRS, instances of inappropriate behaviour were still commonplace.
- 2.9 Following the second round of inspections, based on the Inspectorate's findings on values, culture, and fairness and diversity, causes of concern, inadequate grades and areas for improvement were issued to a significant number of fire services. Members can be assured that the Strategic Leadership Team continues to place the highest priority on ensuring an appropriate and inclusive culture exists at every level within the organisation, and that cultural considerations are embedded within decision making processes.
- 2.10 The report states that FRS leaders need to take a more strategic approach to service improvements, and that across the sector this has resulted in ineffective decision making and duplicated work.
- 2.11 The report states that HMICFRS needs more powers so it can continue to make communities safer, and that these powers should be in line with those legislative requirements that govern police forces' response to their inspections. Additionally, the Inspectorate has highlighted that FRSs should be able to request commissioned inspections in the same way as police forces do to fulfil their duty to deliver efficient and effective services to their communities.

INTERIM FINDINGS FROM ROUND 3 INSPECTIONS

- 2.12 As Members will be aware, HMICFRS has introduced an 'adequate' grade which sits in between 'requires improvement' and 'good', to deliver a more balanced reflection of the appropriate grade. In the third round of inspections, grades have fallen in some Services in relation to:
- Protection;
 - Multi-agency incidents;
 - Values and culture; and
 - Getting the right people with the right skills.
- 2.13 Of the 15 Services inspected, seven Services have 12 causes of concern in place, of which eight are new and four have been carried over from Round 2. Members will be aware that NFRS has had no causes of concern issued and the four areas of improvement issued following the last inspection were formally signed off at the Fire Authority meeting on 23 February 2024.
- 2.14 Workplace culture is once again highlighted as an issue for the sector, with HMICFRS stating that whilst progress is being made, some Services are struggling to make improvements. NFRS's biennial staff survey concluded on 14 July and a breakdown of the results and follow up actions will be brought back to the Human Resources Committee, which will provide Members with insight into NFRS's culture and the progress the Service is achieving in this area.
- 2.15 The report states that a lack of diversity is affecting public and staff trust in fire and rescue services and this has resulted in a 'requires improvement' or 'inadequate' grade being issued to six of the 15 Services inspected so far in Round 3. The Inspectorate identifies appropriate equality impact assessments (EIAs) as a solution to this; as Members will know, NFRS's recently refreshed EIA process will ensure the Service considers the needs of its staff and communities, meets its legislative obligations under the Equality Act 2010 and delivers more effective services.
- 2.16 Employee wellbeing remains a priority for HMICFRS, with a lack of oversight of secondary employment, in particular those individuals who are dual contractors being of particular concern.
- 2.17 The report highlights the problems some Services are having with maintaining an effective On-call duty system, citing the difficulties in the recruitment, retention and training for On-call personnel. Members will be aware of the support the On-Call Support Team (OCST) provides to On-call firefighters throughout the Service which, along with the dedication of NFRS On-call personnel, has resulted in On-call appliances being available for 86.5% of the time in 2023/24; one of the highest levels in the sector.
- 2.18 Only four out of the 15 Services inspected in Round 3 have electronic systems in place to manage information when dealing with incidents in high

rise buildings, and there has been inconsistent training delivered. Members should be assured that NFRS has implemented an electronic system for managing this information in collaboration with Derbyshire Fire and Rescue Service within Joint Fire Control and trained relevant personnel in its operation.

- 2.19 Protection activities are highlighted within the report as being inconsistently applied across the sector with unsuitable quality assurance processes and a failure to meet audit targets common areas discovered by the Inspectorate. In addition, difficulties in recruiting and retaining suitably experienced protection staff are also highlighted. The Inspectorate raises more effective partnership working and better engagement with businesses as potential methods to mitigate the issues discussed.
- 2.20 Members should be aware of the collaborative work undertaken by NFRS Fire Protection staff through the Joint Audit and Inspection Team (JAIT) with Nottingham City Council, which inspects multi-occupied, higher risk residential premises. NFRS Fire Protection staff are also able to access appropriate training and development to ensure their continuing competence and development in role.

NFRS INSPECTION

- 2.21 The NFRS inspection took place between 23 February 2024 and 19 April 2024.
- 2.22 Whilst the full report from NFRS's most recent inspection will not be published until late Summer 2024, initial high-level feedback has been given to the Chief Fire Officer which explicitly outlined the positive manner in which the inspectors were greeted whilst undertaking the inspection, and the high levels of engagement they found from all Service personnel.
- 2.23 When the inspection findings are published, a report will be brought back to Members to allow for scrutiny of the results and the resulting action plan.

3. FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

There are no financial implications arising from this report.

4. HUMAN RESOURCES AND LEARNING AND DEVELOPMENT IMPLICATIONS

There are no human resources or learning and development implications arising from this report.

5. EQUALITIES AND ETHICAL IMPLICATIONS

- 5.1 An equality impact assessment has not been undertaken because of the nature of this report.
- 5.2 As detailed in Paragraph 2.7, one of the six national recommendations that HMICFRS has assessed as complete is the implementation of the core code of ethics across the sector. Members will be aware of how the core code of ethics has been fully implemented across NFRS. This supports the Service's ambition to be an outstanding organisation through the recruitment and retention of a diverse and inclusive workforce.

6. ENVIRONMENTAL AND SUSTAINABILITY IMPLICATIONS

There are no environmental or sustainability implications arising from this report.

7. LEGAL IMPLICATIONS

- 7.1 The Local Government Act 1999 places a statutory duty on the Service to 'secure continuous improvement in the way in which its functions are exercised'.
- 7.2 The Police and Crime Act (2017) Chapter 4 Section 11 outlines that the English inspectors must inspect, and report on the efficiency and effectiveness of, fire and rescue authorities in England.

8. RISK MANAGEMENT IMPLICATIONS

There are no risk management implications arising from this report.

9. COLLABORATION IMPLICATIONS

There are no collaboration implications arising from this report.

10. RECOMMENDATIONS

That Members note the content of this report.

11. BACKGROUND PAPERS FOR INSPECTION (OTHER THAN PUBLISHED DOCUMENTS)

None.

Craig Parkin
CHIEF FIRE OFFICER

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NOTTINGHAMSHIRE
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Fire and Rescue Authority

COMMITTEE OUTCOMES

Report of the Chief Fire Officer

Date: 26 July 2024

Purpose of Report:

To report to Members the business and actions of the Fire Authority committee meetings which took place in March/April 2024.

Recommendations:

That Members note the contents of this report.

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1. BACKGROUND

As part of the revised governance arrangements the Authority has delegated key responsibilities to specific committees of the Authority. As part of those delegated responsibilities, the chairs of committees and the management leads report to the Authority on the business and actions as agreed at Fire and Rescue Authority meeting on 1 June 2007.

2. REPORT

The minutes of the following meetings are attached at Appendix A for the information of all Fire Authority Members:

Community Safety Committee	15 March 2024
Finance and Resources Committee	22 March 2024
Human Resources Committee	19 April 2024
Policy and Strategy Committee	26 April 2024

3. FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

All financial implications were considered as part of the original reports submitted to the committees.

4. HUMAN RESOURCES AND LEARNING AND DEVELOPMENT IMPLICATIONS

All human resources and learning and development implications were considered as part of the original reports submitted to the committees.

5. EQUALITIES AND ETHICAL IMPLICATIONS

An equality impact assessment has not been undertaken because this report is not associated with a policy, function or service. Its purpose is to update the Fire Authority on the outcomes of committee business. There are no ethical implications arising from this report.

6. ENVIRONMENTAL AND SUSTAINABILITY IMPLICATIONS

There are no environmental or sustainability implications arising from this report.

7. LEGAL IMPLICATIONS

There are no legal implications arising directly from this report.

8. RISK MANAGEMENT IMPLICATIONS

The Service's performance in relation to matters addressed through the committee structure is scrutinised through a range of audit processes. The Service needs to continue to perform well in these areas as external scrutiny through Comprehensive Performance Assessment and auditors' judgement is key to future Service delivery.

9. COLLABORATION IMPLICATIONS

There are no collaboration implications arising from this report, as the report seeks to provide Members with an update on the business and actions of Fire Authority committee meetings which have taken place in the last quarter.

10. RECOMMENDATIONS

That Members note the contents of this report.

11. BACKGROUND PAPERS FOR INSPECTION (OTHER THAN PUBLISHED DOCUMENTS)

None.

Craig Parkin
CHIEF FIRE OFFICER



**Nottinghamshire and City of Nottingham
Fire and Rescue Authority**

**Nottinghamshire and City of Nottingham Fire and Rescue Authority -
Community Safety**

**Minutes of the meeting held at Nottinghamshire Joint Fire and Rescue Service/
Police Headquarters - Sherwood Lodge, Arnold, Nottingham, NG5 8PP on 15
March 2024 from 10.00 am - 10.35 am**

Membership

Present

Councillor Robert Corden
Councillor Anwar Khan
Councillor Devontay Okure
Councillor Nick Raine
Councillor Nigel Turner

Absent

Councillor Jason Zadrozny

Colleagues, partners and others in attendance:

Bryn Coleman	- Area Manager for Prevention and Protection
Andy Macey	- Area Manager for Response
Damien West	- Assistant Chief Fire Officer
Laura Wilson	- Senior Governance Officer

21 Chair

In the absence of the Chair, Councillor Jason Zadrozny, Councillor Nick Raine took the Chair for the meeting.

22 Apologies for Absence

Councillor Jason Zadrozny – other County Council business.

23 Declarations of Interests

None.

24 Minutes

The minutes of the meeting held on 19 January were confirmed as a true record and signed by the Chair.

25 On-Call Duty System Update

Damien West, Assistant Chief Fire Officer, introduced the report updating the Committee on the achievements of Nottinghamshire Fire and Rescue Service's On-Call Sections in 2023/24 and the measures being taken to support their success in the future, highlighting that:

- (a) 16 out of the Service's 24 fire stations host an On-Call crew, and most of Nottinghamshire's 30 fire appliances are crewed by On-Call firefighters (16 during the day, and 17 at night).
- (b) On-Call firefighters are those who live or work within a short distance of their fire station and usually have alternative employment away from Nottinghamshire Fire and Rescue Service (NFRS) (although some also have another role with the Service on a dual-employment basis). They carry an 'alerter' which activates when they are required to respond to an emergency incident and provide up to 120 hours of availability each week. In addition, they maintain their operational competence by attending weekly training sessions and completing learning events.
- (c) Nationally, fire and rescue services (FRSs), are struggling to recruit and retain On-Call firefighters. Changes in society, such as people travelling further to work, house prices, general cost of living and busy lifestyles have all impacted On-Call firefighter recruitment and retention figures.

Andy Macey, Area Manager for Response, presented the report and highlighted the following points:

- (d) The key metric by which NFRS measures the success of its On-Call is appliance availability. The Service targets On-Call availability to be above 85%, with each individual section being available no less than 70% of the time. As of 17 February 2024, NFRS On-Call appliances have collectively been available 86.2% of the time during 2023/24. This places the Service in fourth place nationally when it comes to On-Call availability. Only Southwell fire station, at 69.8%, has fallen below the individual 70% minimum target.
- (e) Attending operational incidents is a key motivator for On-Call firefighters. Maintaining appliance availability therefore plays a significant role in their retention.
- (f) An innovative approach to maintaining appliance availability has been the introduction of the Service's On-Call Support Team (OCST). The team's primary function is to mobilise members to crew On-Call appliances where they would otherwise be unavailable. When fully established, the team consists of five whole time employees, all of whom have appropriate incident command and driving qualifications to enable them to fulfil any role on a deficient On-Call crew. During 2023/24 this team has contributed 1,452 hours to On-Call crewing.
- (g) Another innovation to maintain On-Call appliance availability in Nottinghamshire has been the introduction of alternative crewing over several years. This relates

to the crewing of standard fire appliances with three On- Call firefighters at times when the section is unable to maintain the traditional minimum crewing level of four. This has enabled On-Call appliances to remain available to attend operational incidents as an additional resource at the most serious, or as part of a pre-determined attendance at those that are less significant. The ability to alternatively crew appliances has contributed over 6.5% to On-Call appliance availability in 2023/24.

- (h) Some of the Service's On-Call firefighters also have another role within the Service on a 'dual employed' basis. There are currently 69 whole time firefighters who also perform an On-Call role. Not only does dual employment support the availability of On-Call appliances, but it also has many other benefits, including the sharing of knowledge and experience, and the breaking down of cultural barriers which had once existed between the On-Call and whole time staff.
- (i) Whilst the OCST, alternative crewing and dual employment have increased On-Call appliance availability, the sections that have the highest establishment numbers always perform better in this area. Targeted recruitment remains a real focus for On-Call sections and the OCST. In 2023/24, the delivery of local recruitment campaigns, 'have-a-go-days' and primary employer liaison have resulted in 24 new On-Call trainees beginning a career with NFRS. The ability for new trainees to now undertake modular ('safe-to-ride') initial training that has removed the potential barrier of a 13-week initial course, which has been cited by many as a key enabler to On-Call recruitment.
- (j) The success of On-Call recruitment in 2023/24 has meant that NFRS will end the year with up to 14 more On-Call firefighters than it had at the end of 2022/23, which bucks the national trend of reducing On-Call establishment numbers.
- (k) Whilst On-Call recruitment is crucial, the Service also recognises the importance of similar efforts being placed on the retention of existing On-Call firefighters. Currently, 85 of the Service's On-Call firefighters have between 10 and 40 years' experience in the role. This commitment and dedication to serving their local community cannot be understated, especially when considering that many of these On-Call staff provide over 120 hours of availability each week for those years.
- (l) Attending operational incidents is a key motivator for On-Call firefighters, however, nationally the number of operational incidents attended by FRSs is reducing. It has therefore been important to enhance the role of the On-Call firefighter with additional opportunities to attend operational incidents. One way this has been achieved is to have special appliances such as the welfare unit, water and foam bowser and high-volume pump crewed by On-Call sections and special attributes such as marauding terrorist attack capability provided by them.
- (m) Another way of increasing opportunities for the On-Call to attend operational incidents, has been the introduction of 'short-crewing'. This enables an On-Call firefighter to volunteer to undertake shifts on a whole time watch when there are

shortfalls in the whole time ridership, and when it does not affect the availability of their On-Call appliance. The concept of short-crewing was introduced during the Covid-19 pandemic, but has been retained as it has proved to be very popular and provides flexibility and resilience for the Service.

- (n) Retention has also been enhanced by providing On-Call firefighters with the opportunity to undertake the full firefighter role. Whereas other FRSs may not enable On-Call firefighters to undertake prevention and protection activities, this is encouraged in NFRS wherever an On-Call firefighter has the capacity to do so, and the benefit for communities can be evidenced.
- (o) For some, the potential for progression within the On-Call is a key factor in their decision to remain in role. Whilst dual employment has been beneficial in terms of enhanced appliance availability, an unintended consequence has been the proportion of dual employees who have successfully achieved On-Call supervisory manager roles. To counter this, every section is permitted to recruit to an additional temporary crew manager role for the development of their firefighters who are solely On-Call employees.
- (p) National research has shown that alongside attendance at operational incidents, another crucial factor in an On-Call firefighter's decision to leave their role, is the feeling of being under-valued. In 2023/24, NFRS has taken several steps to address this. At Christmas, the OCST facilitated arrangements for each On-Call section to have a 12-hour period free from providing availability so that they could celebrate with family and friends. Social media promotion of the achievements of On-Call sections has increased, and a letter of appreciation will be sent to On-Call firefighters from the Chief Fire Officer at the end of 2023/24.
- (q) Removing complexity from the On-Call role is also important. The introduction of Fire Service Rota for the start of 2023/24 has improved an On-Call firefighter's ability to access real-time insights into the availability of their section, and to arrange their periods of unavailability at any time that suits them. It is now far easier for On-Call firefighters to be on call when needed, but also free when possible.
- (r) To ensure appropriate support can be provided, during 2023/24, District Manager responsibilities have been reviewed and realigned to provide them with more capacity to be available to support and attend the On-Call sections for which they are responsible.
- (s) In 2024/25, NFRS will continue to focus on the On-Call. Initial training courses are planned for August and September so targeted recruitment campaigns have begun. To support the OCST's decisions regarding the mobilisation of team members to improve On-Call appliance availability, the upcoming Fire Cover Review will consider the impact on attendance times when each On-Call fire appliance is unavailable. Opportunities to attend operational incidents will be further enhanced by the introduction of three rural firefighting vehicles which will each be crewed by On-Call sections. More opportunities to undertake prevention and protection activities will also be provided with the increase of achievement targets for both safety and welfare visits and business safety

checks, and the community befriending scheme will be rolled out to On-Call sections too. In addition to this local work, throughout 2024/25, NFRS will remain committed to supporting national On-Call working groups at both practitioner and strategic levels.

Members commended the Service for its achievements and the good work taking place.

Resolved to note the report.

26 Review of Fatal Fires 2023

Damien West, Assistant Chief Fire Officer, presented the report updating the Committee on the fatal fire incidents that Nottinghamshire Fire and Rescue Service attended between 1 January and 31 December 2023, and highlighted the following points:

- (a) Within the 2023 calendar year, there has been a decrease in fire fatalities from the preceding five years with four incidents resulting in four fatalities within 2023. The annual figures are:

Calendar Year	Number of Fire Fatalities	Number of Incidents
2023	4	4
2022	7	4
2021	7	7
2020	4*	3
2019	6	7
2018	10	7

**an incident in 2019 resulted in a death in 2020, due to the length of time spent in hospital receiving treatment.*

- (b) Whilst every loss of life is a tragedy, it is also an opportunity for NFRS to learn lessons and, where necessary, adapt its approach to prevention and response activities, and engagement with partner organisations.
- (c) One fatal fire incident occurred in January 2023, two fatal incidents in June 2023 and one in December 2023. Of the four fatal incidents, three of these incidents took place in a domestic premises whilst one took place in a vehicle.
- (d) Of the four fatal incidents, two incidents took place in the Mansfield District, one took place in Nottingham City, and one took place in the Bassetlaw District. The four fatalities were adults over the age of 45. The youngest fatality was 47 years old and the oldest 61 years old.
- (e) Two of the four incidents were determined as accidental causation, with one being deliberate ignition and one where the cause remains as undetermined and under Police investigation.
- (f) NFRS's fatal fire (CHARLIE) profile was examined against the four incidents:
- two of the four fatalities lived alone;

- all had underlying medical conditions, mobility impairments or mental health issues;
 - three of the fatalities were known smokers;
 - two had care and support packages in place from local health providers;
 - all four incidents had working smoke alarms, three of which were monitored systems.
- (g) Of the four fatal incidents, one address was previously known to NFRS regarding previous interaction. Work continues to raise awareness with partner agencies to ensure that referrals are made to NFRS for all vulnerable people, and especially those who are subject to in-home care provisions.
- (h) NFRS commissions a Serious Event Review Group (SERG) following any incident resulting in death or serious injury from fire. The group is convened as soon as is reasonably practicable after a fatal fire or serious event has occurred to manage the Service's response. The group's responsibilities include reviewing the Service's response to the incident, planning for immediate prevention activities to take place, deciding on appropriate messages that the Service will put out to the media, interrogating systems to ascertain what knowledge was held on the person(s) involved and what information had been shared with partners, and ensuring that the welfare needs of attending crews have been met.
- (i) Community Reassurance and Engagement (CRaE) activities take place as soon as possible following a fatal fire to offer engagement at a time of heightened awareness of the local communities. This involves a high-visibility presence of response and prevention personnel in an affected area to carry out door-to-door visits.
- (j) Of the fatal incidents which took place in domestic premises in 2023, each area received a CRaE. This resulted in a total of 620 properties being given safety advice. Of these properties, 165 safe and well visits were conducted, with 39 smoke alarms fitted.
- (k) Where a serious but non-fatal incident takes place, CRaE activity will still be considered to reassure communities. NFRS also work with the 'Safer Houses' scheme to ensure that living standards and home fire safety within the private rental sector is supported.
- (l) The Service continues to fund a seconded Occupational Therapist from the public health sector. This role continues to work closely with prevention and fire investigation teams to identify trends and areas for collaborative working between NFRS and the NHS. This work aims to prevent future fires, injuries and ultimately fatal incidents, as well as improving a person's standard of living where required and reducing duplication and inefficiencies between partner agencies.
- (m) The CHARLIE fatal fire profile is continually reviewed to ensure this still reflects the demographic of fatal fire or serious fire injury incidents that NFRS attend. The CHARLIE profile questionnaire, used by NFRS staff and partners, is also analysed to ensure standardisation of the approach and identification of risks.

- (n) The Service is undertaking a review of the CHARLIE profile in 2024 to ensure that the Service's identification of, and targeting of, those most at risk from fire continues to be accurate. Efforts will continue to educate partner organisations of the CHARLIE profile and when appropriate referrals should be made to the Service. Support from Members to continue promoting the CHARLIE profile and referrals from partner organisations is also seen as key.
- (o) Prevention staff will continue to focus on safety messages and proactive engagement with communities, linked to the outcomes from fire investigations, where criminal and Coronal limitations allow.
- (p) The Prevention Team has embedded links with Nottinghamshire County, and Nottingham City, Trading Standards teams. The work focuses on electrical appliances which may cause fires and highlighting trends which are fed back to manufacturers to allow for recall notices to be issued.

Members commented that these fatalities had been tragic losses and that their thoughts were with the families of the victims.

During the discussion that followed the following comments were made:

- (q) There is an increasing number of lithium ion battery fires, which are used in vapes, eScooters, etc, as those not made to European standards can cause a risk if they are not charged and stored correctly. Reputable products that aren't tampered with and are charged correctly are safe.
- (r) There will be a renewed campaign on lithium ion batteries focussing on the risks of inappropriate charging, the disposal of damaged batteries, and the importance of charging and storage not taking place in areas that are used as a means of escape.
- (s) Lithium ion battery fires can not be put out as they create their own heat source, so they have to burn themselves out, for example, if an electric car catches fire, it has to be submerged in water for a number of days to stop the fire spreading until it is burnt out.
- (t) Technology grows quicker than regulations and fire fighting techniques, and more needs to be done to ensure that regulations can keep up with the speed of development in technology to keep everyone safe.

Resolved to note the report.



Nottinghamshire and City of Nottingham Fire and Rescue Authority - Finance and Resources

Date: Friday 22 March 2024 **Time:** 10.00 am

Venue: Joint Fire / Police HQ, Sherwood Lodge, Arnold, Nottingham, NG5 8PP

Members are requested to attend the above meeting to be held at the time, place and date mentioned to transact the following business

Clerk to the Nottinghamshire and City of Nottingham Fire and Rescue Authority

Agenda	Pages
1 Apologies for Absence	
2 Declarations of Interests	
3 Minutes Minutes of the meeting held on 19 January 2024, for confirmation	3 - 8
4 Revenue, Capital and Prudential Code Monitoring Report to 31 January 2024 Report of the Chief Fire Officer	9 - 28
5 Corporate Risk Management Report of the Chief Fire Officer	29 - 60

Any councillor who is unable to attend the meeting and wishes to submit apologies should do so via the Personal Assistant to the Chief Fire Officer at Fire Services Headquarters on 0115 967 0880

If you need any advice on declaring an interest in any item above, please contact the Governance Officer shown on this agenda, if possible before the day of the meeting.

Governance Officer: Laura Wilson
0115 8764301
laura.wilson@nottinghamcity.gov.uk

Agenda, reports and minutes for all public meetings can be viewed online at:-
<http://committee.nottinghamcity.gov.uk/mgListCommittees.aspx?bcr=1>

If you would like British Sign Language interpretation at the meeting, please contact the Service at least 2 weeks in advance to book this, either by emailing enquiries@notts-fire.gov.uk or by text on SMS: 0115 824 0400



Nottinghamshire and City of Nottingham Fire and Rescue Authority

Nottinghamshire and City of Nottingham Fire and Rescue Authority - Human Resources

**Minutes of the meeting held at Sherwood Lodge, Arnold, Nottingham, NG5 8PP on
19 April 2024 from 10.00 am - 10.40 am**

Membership

Present

Councillor Robert Corden
Councillor Patience Uloma Ifediora
Gul Nawaz Khan
Councillor Nick Raine (Chair)

Absent

Councillor Tom Hollis
Councillor John Lee

Colleagues, partners and others in attendance:

Leila Berry - Assistant Chief Fire Officer
Nick Linthwaite - HR Manager
Matt Sismey - Organisational Development and Inclusion Manager
Jane Garrard - Governance Officer

15 Apologies for Absence

Councillor Tom Hollis – other Council business

16 Declarations of Interests

None

17 Minutes

The minutes of the meeting held on 10 November 2023 were confirmed as a correct record and signed by the Chair.

18 Human Resources Update

Nick Linthwaite, HR Manager, and Matt Sismey, Organisational Development and Inclusion Manager, presented the report updating the Committee on key human

resources metrics for the period 1 October to 31 December 2023 and key equalities metrics for the period 1 October 2023 to 31 March 2024. They highlighted the following information:

- a) During the reporting period, there were 12 new starters and 20 employees left the organisation. There was a total of 414 wholetime staff against an establishment of 431 posts. The Service undertook a national transfer process to fill this gap and as a result 15 firefighters (11 firefighters, 2 crew managers and 2 watch managers) were appointed – four of whom started employment during the reporting period, and a further 11 started in early 2024. The Service has undertaken a wholetime apprentice firefighter recruitment campaign, which resulted in 34 individuals being appointed.
- b) Absence during the reporting period increased by 299.5 days compared to the previous quarter. This largely relates to seasonal factors, and absence figures are historically higher during that quarter. Long-term absence equated to 57.4% of sickness absence - 47.9% for operational employees and 70.7% for support employees.
- c) For the on-call workforce there was an increase in absence of 122 days compared to the previous quarter. This was a decrease compared to the same quarter in 2022/23. Long-term absence equated to 58.6% of sickness absence.
- d) Sickness absence mirrors national trends with musculo-skeletal and mental health issues the most significant reasons for absence. For wholetime staff, NFRS ranks 16 out of 35 Services for days lost per employee. For on-call staff, NFRS ranks 16 out of 22 Services for days lost per employee. For support staff, NFRS ranks 34 out of 35 Services for days lost per employee. For support staff there is an average of 11.87 days lost per employee compared to the sector average of 7.72 days. Long-term sickness equates to 70% of this.
- e) During the reporting period there had been one disciplinary hearing and that resulted in dismissal, and one grievance which was not upheld. Four employees did not pass their probationary period and were dismissed on capability grounds.
- f) During the reporting period, there had been no significant change in key indicators (proportion of female firefighters; proportion of black, Asian, and minority ethnic employees (BAME); proportion of lesbian, gay or bisexual employees; and proportion of disabled employees) compared to the previous six months.
- g) During the reporting period, women constituted 16.9% of the workforce; employees from BAME backgrounds constituted 5.8% of the workforce; employees identifying as being lesbian, gay or bisexual constituted 3.9% of the workforce; and disability declaration was at 4.6% of the workforce. The proportion of the workforce identifying as lesbian, gay or bisexual was particularly positive as it compared to 2.68% of the population in Nottinghamshire in the national census, however this was the first time that it was measured so figures may change in future years.

- h) Women were employed in 10.3% of wholetime operational roles and of these, 5.6% are supervisory roles, 3.4% were middle manager roles and 22.2% were strategic operational roles.
- i) Employees from BAME backgrounds represented 6.2% of wholetime operational roles. 5.6% of these were supervisory roles but there were no BAME employees in middle or senior manager roles. Work will be taking place over the next few months to develop talent management tools that identify potential and support development of those individuals.
- j) For support roles, the position in terms of the proportion of the workforce with protected characteristics is really encouraging - there is a 50/50 split between men and women; employees from BAME backgrounds represent 9.5% of these roles; 10% of roles are held by people with a disability declaration; and 5.9% of employees in these roles identify as lesbian, gay or bisexual.
- k) The Service is working with Nottingham Trent University to improve its understanding of representation in the City and County to inform development of a 10 year Workforce Diversity Plan. This Plan will be brought to a future meeting of the Policy and Strategy Committee.
- l) The Service is also working with partners to hold focus groups to help improve understanding of the barriers to recruitment and what can be done to encourage people from a diverse range of backgrounds to apply to join the Service.

During the subsequent discussion the following points were made:

- m) There are some female employees from a BAME background but the number is small. The Service wants to do more to better understand their experience and what considerations there are for it as an employer. The outcomes of this work will be brought back to a future meeting of the Committee.
- n) There is a need for more targeted support for employees with protected characteristics, including through support and positive action. Work is taking place to develop supervisory managers through development pathways. This is important because it will then enable people to have the opportunity to subsequently progress into middle and senior management roles. There will be work taking place over the next 12 months on talent management.
- o) The proportion of sickness absence amongst support staff that was long-term absence is high and the worst in the country. This is not the position that the Service wants to be in. During the reporting period, there were 12 people on long-term sickness absence for a variety of reasons. 10 of those individuals are now back at work or have finished work, and hopefully the metrics will improve. Trends in the reasons for absence are reviewed and if an issue that relates to work is identified, it is referred to the relevant department to be addressed.
- p) Absence management processes are followed, which can lead to occupational health involvement and a range of support is available including talking therapies and there is rehabilitation and physiotherapy support available from the Firefighters Charity. The Service has a fitness adviser to provide support on

issues such as musculo-skeletal concerns. Regular case reviews take place, which support staff to get back to work with modified duties if necessary. Wellbeing is a core part of the People Strategy.

- q) In terms of support for employees identifying as lesbian, gay or bisexual, the Service has worked with Stonewall for a number of years and has changed its policies and improved training. There is an active and prominent LGBT+ Network. There is good attendance at Pride events and support for Allies within the Service is strong. There has been targeted advertising over the last few years. The actions that are being taken are working and need to continue.
- r) In relation to ensuring that all employees with a disability have a declaration, the Service tries to go beyond just compliance and is very aware of these issues. More recently there has been a focus on non-visible disability, including neurodiversity and there is more to be considered in terms of training and guidance.

Resolved to note the report.

19 Wholetime Recruitment Process 23-24

Matt Sismey, Organisational Development and Inclusion Manager, presented the report about the outcomes from the positive action recruitment to wholetime firefighter roles that took place between April and August 2023. He highlighted the following information:

- a) The advertising process was supported by the Futures Group and involved a range of activities to promote the idea that a firefighting career can be for everybody. Activities included targeted advertising through social media, posters and leaflets; awareness days at stations; radio adverts on Dawn FM, Kemet FM and Radio Faza; fitness sessions focused on women; attending community events; and linking in with job centres.
- b) There were 461 applicants, of which 34 were successful. 15 of these 34 successful applicants had engaged with the positive action activity. The rates of success by those with protected characteristics were the best for a long time – 14.7% for women; 24% for those from a BAME background; and 14.7% of those with a declared disability.
- c) 17 of the new firefighter apprentices are starting employment on 22 April with a second cohort to commence in January 2025.

The Committee welcomed this positive work to widen the diversity of employees in the Service, noting that given the relatively low numbers of employees with protected characteristics within the existing firefighter workforce this will have a big impact.

Resolved to note the report.

20 HMICFRS Values and Culture Spotlight Report Update

Leila Berry, Assistant Chief Fire Officer, presented the report updating the Committee on the progress that has been made against the recommendations for Chief Fire Officers made within the spotlight review of the values and culture in fire and rescue services published by His Majesty's Inspectorate of Constabulary and Fire and Rescue Services in March 2023. She highlighted the following information:

- a) Of the 20 recommendations owned by Chief Fire Officers, 12 have been completed and work is well underway on the remaining 8 recommendations.
- b) Actions that have been undertaken include introducing a 'Say So' confidential reporting line to allow anonymous reporting of issues; relaunch of the 'Little Acorns' staff suggestions scheme as a route for escalating issues and amplifying the employee voice; review of the policy framework resulting in the Harassment and Bullying Policy being replaced by a Dignity at Work Policy; review of harassment and bullying cases with action taken to resolve issues; and amplifying the employee voice in areas such as recruitment and procurement.
- c) Action taken in direct response to the recommendations doesn't represent the totality of work on issues relating to values, behaviour and culture. The Service has also been looking at the core code of ethics and service values.
- d) There is further work to be done in relation to background checks. The Service is looking to extend its requirements beyond the basic check. A draft policy has been developed and is currently in consultation with the trade union. It is hoped that it will be possible to implement this soon.
- e) There is also more work needed on equality and diversity issues. The Service is taking action to recruit a more representative workforce and enhance progress pathways for employees with protected characteristics. Workforce diversity plans will be brought to a future meeting of the Committee.
- f) It is proposed that progress will continue to be reported to the Committee until all recommendations have been satisfactorily addressed.

Committee members made the following point:

- g) It is important to have enhanced DBS checks for employees, especially those responding to incidents and going into people's homes, as a protection for citizens. It is acknowledged that some employees may have concerns about this, but enhanced DBS checks are used effectively in many other public services so hopefully it will be possible to resolve those concerns.

The Committee welcomed the work that has taken place so far to address the recommendations.

Resolved to:

(1) note the report; and

(1) receive future updates on progress against the recommendations made within the spotlight review of the values and culture in fire and rescue

**services published by His Majesty's Inspectorate of Constabulary and Fire
and Rescue Services in March 2023.**



Nottinghamshire and City of Nottingham Fire and Rescue Authority - Policy and Strategy

Minutes of the meeting held at Joint Fire / Police HQ, Sherwood Lodge, Arnold, Nottingham, NG5 8PP on 26 April 2024 from 10.00 am - 10.56 am

Membership

Present

Councillor Michael Payne (Chair)
Councillor Richard Butler
Councillor Sybil Fielding
Councillor Patience Uloma Ifediora
Councillor Nigel Turner

Absent

Councillor Tom Hollis
Councillor Jonathan Wheeler
(substituted by Councillor Richard Butler)

Colleagues, partners and others in attendance:

Leila Berry - Assistant Chief Fire Officer
Craig Parkin - Chief Fire Officer
Mick Sharman - Assistant Chief Fire Officer
Damien West - Assistant Chief Fire Officer
Laura Wilson - Senior Governance Officer

15 Apologies for Absence

Councillor Jonathan Wheeler (Councillor Richard Butler substituting)
Malcolm Townroe

16 Declarations of Interest

None.

17 Minutes

The minutes of the meeting held on 2 February 2024 were confirmed as a true record and signed by the Chair.

18 Governance Arrangements

Craig Parkin, Chief Fire Officer, presented the report detailing the updated arrangements for the provision of the Clerk and Monitoring Officer following the termination of the existing provision arrangements with Nottingham City Council, and highlighted the following points:

- (a) Since inception of the Authority in 1998 Clerking and Monitoring Officer arrangements along with governance services have all been provided by Nottingham City Council under a buy-back of services arrangement. Irrespective of this provision, the Authority still had to formally appoint the Monitoring Officer which it did with the current incumbent, Malcolm R. Townroe, in July 2005. Mr Townroe has now confirmed his retirement from Nottingham City Council with effect from 28 April 2024.
- (b) Following confirmation of the proposed retirement of Mr Townroe from Nottingham City Council the Chief Fire Officer, in consultation with the Chair of the Authority, served notice on Nottingham City Council to terminate the buyback of the Clerk and Monitoring Officer provision. This takes effect from the date of Mr Townroe's retirement. It does not affect the provision of governance services which will be the subject of further review going forwards.
- (c) Given that Mr Townroe has already been appointed to act as the Authority's Clerk and Monitoring Officer, it is proposed that he be appointed directly as an employee of the Authority on an annualised hours or part time basis immediately following his retirement from Nottingham City Council. This will ensure continuity of the current Clerk and Monitoring Officer provision and also provide an element of corporate memory around the governance agenda. Given that Mr Townroe is also a qualified solicitor his title with the Authority will be reviewed to reflect this.
- (d) The cost of employing the Clerk and Monitoring Officer directly will be contained within the existing financial envelope for the provision of Clerk, Monitoring Officer and governance services.

Members welcomed the continuity that the appointment will provide.

Resolved to note

- (1) The arrangements with regard to the direct employment of the Clerk and Monitoring Officer.**
- (2) That arrangements for provision of governance services will be reviewed in due course.**

19 10-Year Workforce Diversity Planning

Leila Berry, Assistant Chief Fire Officer, presented the report providing an update on the Service's progress in developing a 10-Year Workforce Diversity Plan, and highlighted the following points:

- (a) The Service's work to improve the diversity of its workforce has been ongoing for nearly two decades. Numerous reports produced by Central Government have been highly critical of the slow pace of change within the sector.
- (b) The Service commissioned its own review of equality, diversity and inclusion practice during 2021-22 and a revisit was undertaken at the end of last year. One of the recommendations was that 'Resources to match aspiration: shift from expecting Equality, Diversity and Inclusion (EDI) service delivery excellence and workforce

diversity to reflect the population whilst under-resourcing the work that it takes to achieve this, to a longer-term approach, with more courageous proactive positive action and engagement enabled by stable staffing and budget commitment to achieve success.

- (c) Whilst the pace of change has been slow, some encouraging progress has been made over the years, particularly in improving the numbers of female firefighters and employees who are Lesbian, Gay or Bisexual. However, progress in attracting racially marginalised groups to the Service is not where the organisation would want it to be. In particular, attraction rates of women of colour to employment at the Service remain low and this needs to be addressed as part of this work.
- (d) To improve performance in this area it is proposed that the Service develops a 10-Year Plan. To do this in a methodical way, the following phases will be used - analysis; plan; do; and review.
- (e) The analysis phase consists of three separate workstreams, the first of which involves analysis and insight of the most recent Census data commissioned via Nottingham Trent University (NTU). This work will support the Service's understanding of Nottinghamshire's changing communities and will inform both this programme of work relating to the attraction and recruitment of diverse talent, as well as supporting wider community engagement initiatives across the Service. This work started in March 2024 and will last approximately six months.
- (f) Whilst the quantitative work undertaken by NTU is important, the qualitative insights to be gained from talking to community members is as valuable. A second piece of work starting this month will enable NFRS to gain a better understanding of the perceptions of under-represented groups in Nottingham who may face barriers in accessing employment opportunities or services. The Service has data demonstrating that City residents are underrepresented in its workforce and so the focus will be on this geographical area and those groups who are under-represented in the workforce, including women and ethnic minorities.
- (g) A third party with expertise in this area will be delivering this work between April and July. They will present their findings and recommendations to the Strategic Leadership Team at the end of their field work. This work, alongside the work that NTU is supporting, will enable NFRS to build its diversity plan based on firm foundations. The final part of this work is a desktop review of the research papers and sector-based reports which are in the public domain. This will also be used to inform the planning process.
- (h) Socio-economic deprivation will also be a key area of focus for the Service during the analysis phase. As a result of independent EDI review this has now been added to the Service's equality impact assessment process and template.
- (i) By July 2024, the Service will have a better understanding of what conclusions have been drawn by the quantitative and qualitative studies and Members will be briefed via the Strategic Inclusion Board and the Human Resources Committee.
- (j) The outcomes of the analysis phase will also start to inform a short-term workplan for the newly established Community Engagement Team which will sit in the Fire

Prevention Department. The Community Engagement Team will include both uniformed and non-uniformed colleagues, with a focus on community safety and positive action activities, including youth engagement. The Service's positive action offering will become more comprehensive and consistent than it has been previously with a focus on a regular presence in communities, not just during firefighter recruitment campaigns.

- (k) Defining the ambition and setting smarter targets will happen post analysis phase. By the autumn of this year, the Service will have undertaken the analysis and insight necessary to formulate meaningful and measurable objectives as part of the 10-year plan. Members are a key stakeholder in this work and regular feedback will be sought.

During the discussion which followed, the following points were made:

- (l) It is important that the work of the team is commended, and it is recognised that this report demonstrates that the Authority is self-reflective as it highlights the further work required as well as the progress made to date.
- (m) There is a need to increase representation further, but the Plan is ambitious and falls within the remit of the Human Resources Committee for ongoing monitoring.
- (n) The Plan provides clarity and focus and will demonstrate results over time, which will re-instil confidence in the community.

Resolved to

- (1) Endorse a long-term commitment to workforce diversity via a 10-year Diversity Plan.**
- (2) Note the contents of the report.**
- (3) Agree to receive future updates via the Human Resources Committee.**

20 Manchester Arena Inquiry - Volume Two: Update

Damien West, Assistant Chief Fire Officer, presented the report providing an update on progress in relation to the recommendations within Volume Two of the Manchester Arena Inquiry, and highlighted the following points:

- (a) On 22 May 2017, a homemade explosive device was detonated in the foyer of the Manchester Arena following an Ariana Grande concert. 22 people were killed and 1,017 were injured, many of them being children, with several hundred more left suffering psychological trauma.
- (b) Volume Two of the Manchester Arena Inquiry was published on 3 November 2022. Volume Two focussed on the impact of any inadequacies in the planning and preparation by the emergency services and in the emergency response. This includes whether any inadequacies undermined the ability of the response to save life or contributed to the extent of the loss of life.
- (c) An initial report was first presented to the Policy and Strategy on 27 January 2023 which outlined the approach the Service was taking to implement the identified sector learning.

At that meeting, Members agreed to receive update reports to enable oversight and scrutiny against the Service's action plan.

- (d) The Service's Risk and Assurance Team led on the review of the report and is overseeing the Service's action plan, which has 53 recommendations. Each recommendation is defined as to the action required to deliver the improvement and has a timeframe of completion. Of the 53 recommendations, 32 have been completed and closed and 21 are being worked towards. Progress against all recommendations is on-track and are set to be completed by December 2024.
- (e) As an example of some of the learning that has been implemented, the Service has reviewed all of its operational policy and procedures relating to marauding terrorist attacks (MTA). Amendments have been made in collaboration with regional partners. The Service also has an agreed programme to roll out the new national guidance – Joint Operating Principles for MTA, Edition 3.
- (f) Internal scrutiny of the Service action plan is through the Community Risk Management Plan (CRMP) Assurance Board which is chaired by the Chief Fire Officer.
- (g) The National Fire Chiefs Council (NFCC) Operations Committee has also established a strategic board to ensure consistency in responses across all UK Fire and Rescue Services, with quarterly reporting established to track progress of individual fire and rescue services.
- (h) The Service is actively working with colleagues within the Nottinghamshire Local Resilience Forum (LRF) to implement the learning via a specifically created Manchester Arena Inquiry sub-group. NFRS chairs this sub-group, which has attendance from all Category One and relevant Category Two responders. This group has identified 55 recommendations from the Volume Two report with relevance to the LRF.
- (i) The LRF's action plan defines each recommendation and sets out the timeframe of completion for each. Whilst coordination and engagement across all partners has faced some initial challenges, full completion is anticipated to be by December 2024. Of the 55 recommendations, 33 have been completed and closed and 22 are being worked towards. Scrutiny of the work of the sub-group is through the LRF's Resilience Working Group, with exceptions reported to the full LRF meeting.
- (j) As well as learning from the Volume Two report, in February, colleagues from Manchester Fire and Rescue Service, who were involved in the Manchester Arena organisational debrief, came into Service and presented a case study on the incident, which gave a real insight into events that happened on the night, as well as highlighting some further learning. This learning will be reviewed alongside the MAI action plan.
- (k) In March the Service undertook a full scale, 'no-notice', exercise to test the application of some of the learning from the MAI action plan. This exercise involved the evacuation of around 7000 people from a sports venue, then a realistic MTA scenario, and involved all blue light partners. Special thanks are given to the Ice Arena, the Nottingham Panthers and their fans for their involvement.
- (l) The exercise is subject to a full review and formal debrief report. One key

area of assurance already known was the effective response of the Service's MTA capability, supporting resources and Officers, and initial on scene multiagency working, which is an area which received criticism in the inquiry report.

- (m) The Service will continue to progress the recommendations internally and across the LRF, reporting progress via the governance structure. Progress reports will be presented to the CRMP Assurance Board and to Fire Authority Members, through the Community Safety Committee, at key milestones, with a proposed final sign-off to the Fire Authority in December 2024.
- (n) His Majesty's Inspectorate of Constabulary and Fire & Rescue Services is expected to audit progress against the recommendations of the Volume Two report during the next tranche of inspections.
- (o) Specific MTA funding from Government has been reduced from £56,000 a year to £19,500 a year, as of April 2023. This reduction will lead to a requirement, after 2024, for the replacement of equipment and facilitation of training to be funded from Service budgets, which do not currently meet this requirement. The additional cost will be addressed as part of Service financial planning.

During the discussion which followed, the following points were made:

- (p) Thoughts are with those killed and injured during the horrific attack and their families.
- (q) The response from staff and practical testing of arrangements is commended.
- (r) The reduction in funding from £56,000 to £19,500, particularly given the recent attacks in Nottingham using a vehicle and knife, is unacceptable and representations will be made to try to get the decision changed.
- (s) In relation to the 55 recommendations identified by the LRF, communication with partners is ongoing regarding the deadline for completion.

Resolved to

- (1) Note the update and endorse the actions being taken by the Service in response to the Manchester Arena Inquiry.**
- (2) Receive further reports for the monitoring and scrutiny of the implementation of learning through the Community Safety Committee.**

21 Exclusion of the public

Resolved to exclude the public from the meeting during consideration of the following item in accordance with Section 100A of the Local Government Act 1972 (under Schedule 12A, Part 1, Paragraphs 3) on the basis that, having regard to all the circumstances, the public interest in maintaining the exemption outweighs the public interest in disclosing the information.

22 Mobilisation Project Update and Mobile Data Terminal (MDT) Software Contracts Award

Mick Sharman, Assistant Chief Fire Officer, presented the report.

Resolved to approve the recommendations in the report, as amended at the meeting.

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