

FOREWORD

Staffordshire Commissioner – Police, Fire and Rescue, Crime

Staffordshire's Fire and Rescue Service is one of the most important organisations in supporting and protecting communities across our county. In August 2018, governance of fire and rescue became my responsibility, alongside the governance of policing.

This provides new opportunities for the two services to collaborate more and to share some support and administrative functions, as well as some buildings. It means over time, more money can be used by both services operationally, in the heart of our communities.

This document sets out the high-level strategy for the fire and rescue service in Staffordshire and reflects the new opportunities, as well as growing financial challenges. That said, the organisation is well placed with strong foundations on which to build, adapt and improve even further. In future, now that the governance of fire and rescue, as well as policing sits with my office, new strategies and aspirations will be developed to reflect the opportunities this brings.

I held numerous 'Straight Talk' sessions with firefighters and support staff in order to understand more about the service and the people working in it. The sessions were invaluable and also provided an opportunity to hear concerns about what the future holds. I found the energy and commitment of the people working in the fire and rescue service very impressive.

The future finances for most public services are likely to remain tight and, as society continues to evolve, the complexity of the issues faced by emergency services on a daily basis will not get any easier.

I want to be straightforward and honest about the change, challenges and pressures the Fire and Rescue Service faces and how they will be dealt with. That will mean some hard choices about the future and the way that services are delivered.

This document seeks to set out the high-level strategy to ensure the fire and rescue service can continue to provide the exceptional, and crucial, support and protection needed in communities across Staffordshire and Stoke-on-Trent.

Matthew Ellis, Staffordshire Commissioner

INTRODUCTION

Over the past decade, the work fire and rescue services do has changed significantly. Staffordshire Fire and Rescue Service provides a broad range of services to keep people safe at home, at work and at leisure. The number and types of emergencies attended has also changed. Even though there had been a downward trend for many years, the service has seen an increase in blue-light response over the last three years.

Staffordshire Fire and Rescue Service's prevention work is far broader than many would realise, and is targeted towards those who are most at risk, whether due to their age, infirmity, physical disability, mental health or drug and alcohol abuse for example. The problems people face can be complex and multi-faceted, so the need for this approach to ensuring people are safe and well, which has set the standard for other services, is more vital than ever.

Societal, environmental and government policy changes are beginning to impact on service demand in terms of this prevention work and responding to more incidents. The population is increasing and more houses are being built, but it is also ageing and more people are being supported to live at home independently for longer. After years of reductions, drug use has started to increase, the type of drug abuse is changing and funding for drug and alcohol abuse treatment services has reduced.

The tragic events at Grenfell Tower have increased the emphasis on technical fire safety inspections of premises and the use of enforcement powers. Staffordshire Fire and Rescue Service is already responding positively to this challenge, but this is specialist activity which requires an uplift in capacity. The service has also had to evolve to be able to deal with complex and challenging potential threats, such as dealing with terrorist incidents or severe weather events.

At the same time, the service will face financial pressures in the next few years. In Staffordshire, around £0.5m efficiency savings must be delivered in 2019/20 as part of the final year of a four-year central government comprehensive spending review. The indications are the service will be subject to further funding reductions from 2020 onwards, in addition to financial pressures from nationally agreed pay awards and increasing employer pension contributions.

Dealing with these pressures will require some difficult choices to be made. Some aspects of service will need to be protected at all costs and perhaps strengthened, while others may need to be significantly reformed. The service will need to do some things differently, use assets differently and share resources with other organisations, so that the maximum available funding can be directed towards services which keep people safe.

This challenge is not unique to Staffordshire and Stoke-on-Trent. The need for reform across the service is clear. The Government has set out its ambition *"to make fire and rescue more accountable, more effective and more professional than ever before...building on the great strides in prevention and collaboration that fire and rescue services have already made"*. The national reform agenda is made up of 3 distinct pillars – Efficiency and Collaboration, Accountability and Transparency and Workforce Reform, all of which are reflected in this plan.

With these challenges and the national reform agenda in mind, this Fire and Rescue Plan sets out the Staffordshire Commissioner's strategic vision and priorities for 2019/20. It serves as an interim plan, to be revised and refreshed following the Police and Crime Commissioner elections in May 2020. It

fulfils the requirement of the Fire and Rescue National Framework for England, which sets out high level expectations and priorities for fire services. In the spirit of operational independence, the Chief Fire Officer will produce the Corporate Safety Plan and Integrated Risk Management Plan, which will reflect the strategic priorities from this plan and the detailed requirements of the National Framework.

Our four priorities are:

Prevention and early intervention

Protecting Staffordshire and its people

Public confidence

Service reform

PRIORITY Prevention and Early Intervention

Our aim is to prevent fires and other incidents that require a service response and provide early help to individuals, families and communities to reduce risk.

Why is this important? Working closely with other agencies we can deliver effective and targeted prevention work that keeps people safe and alleviates pressure on fire response services.

Staffordshire Fire and Rescue has been at the forefront of work to expand the scope of traditional home fire safety checks into ‘Safe and Well Checks’, and now carries out 25,000 every year. While the main focus is to reduce fire risk, those visited are also provided with advice and support on a range of health and wellbeing factors - which may contribute to the risk of them becoming a victim of a fire in the home - and are referred to other agencies for further support where required. The challenge is to build on these solid foundations to make sure prevention work is better targeted towards those most at risk. There are also on-going education and awareness programmes in place for people of all ages, designed to drive the long-term behavioural changes needed to reduce risk.

We will:

- Continue to work towards a ‘Connected Staffordshire’ approach across Staffordshire and Stoke-on-Trent, which means services will share data to ensure services are targeted towards people and places most at risk;
- Expand the work of safe and well checks designed to reduce the risk of fire in a person’s home by strengthening local partnerships and empowering staff from all agencies to intervene early to provide the support people need, particularly the most vulnerable members of our communities;
- Follow up safe and well interventions to ensure improvements are sustained, the impact is evaluated and any learning is applied to other cases;
- Ensure initiatives to engage young people in the work of the fire service, educate them on fire safety and divert them from harm, are brought together with similar activities in policing in a more cohesive and coordinated way.
- Ensure the approach to road safety in Staffordshire and Stoke-on-Trent is reinvigorated and refocused to drive down the number of collisions that result in death or serious injury;
- Develop the workforce to ensure it has the capability and capacity to deliver effective prevention work.

Outcomes

- Prevention work is directed towards those most at risk, as identified through sharing and analysis of partnership data and intelligence.
- Staff are competent in assessing vulnerability, providing advice and support, referring people to other agencies where appropriate, and following up to ensure interventions have been effective.
- People, who have received safe and well checks, feel safer, understand the factors that might increase the risks they face and are better equipped to prevent fires and other hazards.

- Behavioural change reduces the likelihood of fire and other emergencies occurring.

PRIORITY Protecting Staffordshire and its People

Our aim is to protect people, premises and the environment through the right balance of education, advice and support and the use of enforcement powers where necessary.

Why is this important? We can keep people safe by ensuring those responsible for buildings comply with fire safety regulations. We can help keep our firefighters safer in dealing with incidents. We can limit the environmental damage caused by fires in public spaces.

Changes in legislation have led to a reduction in fire safety activity across the sector. However, the Grenfell Tower fire tragedy and the subsequent Building Regulations and Fire Safety Review led by Dame Judith Hackitt is rightly placing greater emphasis on making protection services more effective. Staffordshire Fire and Rescue Service has made great strides since 2016 in working with local authority and other social housing providers and third party management companies to retrofit sprinkler systems to residential buildings with five or more storeys.

The hot summer of 2018 saw a dramatic increase in outdoor fires. This is costly for the taxpayers of Staffordshire and Stoke-on-Trent, but the environmental cost is incalculable. Much of this, however, could have been avoided as it is estimated 75% of these fires were started deliberately or through reckless behaviour.

Agencies are working together to tackle the problem of illegal waste sites in Staffordshire and Stoke-on-Trent. These sites are not only a blight on the landscape, but can present a major fire hazard.

We will:

- Ensure risk-based inspection processes and enforcement activities are targeted towards the highest risk, effective and properly resourced;
- Revisit and revitalise the audit process by which the service identifies high-risk premises to ensure inspection activity is properly targeted. This will be enhanced by better information sharing and joint analysis with other agencies;
- Strike the right balance between advising and supporting co-operative businesses to achieve compliance and robust enforcement where it's needed;
- Bring agencies together to do more to protect high risk public spaces;
- Maintain the pace of the Community Sprinkler Programme to reduce the risk to occupants of multi-occupancy buildings within the scope of the programme;
- Lobby for the installation of sprinkler systems to new multi-occupancy residential premises to become a regulatory requirement;
- Continue to work with the Environment Agency, Staffordshire Police, local authorities and other agencies to ensure co-operation and coordination of enforcement activity in relation to permitted and unpermitted waste sites.
- Consolidate the existing range of services provided to support businesses that are affected by fire or fall victim to crime into a more joined-up service 'offer' to businesses in Staffordshire and Stoke-on-Trent.

Outcomes

- Those responsible for premises are aware of and understand their duties in relation to fire safety and comply with legal requirements.
- People and properties are protected by either preventing fires from happening in the first place or limiting the effect of fires when they do occur.
- The risk of environmental damage caused by grassland fires is reduced.
- The number and scale of illegal waste sites is reduced.
- Firefighter safety is improved.

PRIORITY Public Confidence

Our aim is to maintain the current high levels of public confidence and trust in the service.

Why is this important? So that the people of Staffordshire and Stoke-on-Trent can be reassured their fire and rescue service is accessible, visible and responsive.

People expect their fire and rescue service to plan, prepare and be there when they need it and in Staffordshire and Stoke-on-Trent their levels of confidence in this respect are very high. The service is also continually reviewing and testing plans for dealing with a new range of major threats, from climate change to waste crime and terrorism.

Over a period of years, the service has developed its operating model by changing its crewing policies, vehicle fleet mix and working locations to take into account changing levels and types of demand. It will continue to do so through its Corporate Safety Plan, which is the Integrated Risk Management Plan (IRMP) required by legislation. Given new demands and the current financial challenge, more imaginative and radical options for managing incident demand must be developed and some difficult decisions taken. This may involve deploying staff and using assets differently and applying greater discretion to how low-risk incidents and non-essential activities are dealt with.

We will:

- Ensure the right resources are in the right place at the right time to respond to fires and other emergencies, considering the balance between whole-time and on-call firefighters, generalist and specialist roles, shift patterns and working locations;
- Ensure the service continues to meet its obligations under the Civil Contingencies Act and the National Resilience Model, but also looks to achieve greater consistency in the way mutual aid services between Staffordshire and other fire and rescue services are provided and charged for;
- Further develop work between Staffordshire Fire and Rescue Service, Staffordshire Police and other emergency services in examining their joint response to incidents. This local initiative is additional to the requirements of the Joint Emergency Service Operating Principles (JESIP) which set out how emergency services should jointly respond to major emergencies;
- Explore opportunities for fire and rescue teams to respond to incidents, which might be initially reported to other agencies. For example, gaining access for paramedics at 'concern for welfare' incidents or carrying out emergency treatment at cardiac arrest incidents;
- Continue to work to reduce repeated demand from the same locations and from false alarms.

Outcomes

- Fire and rescue response continues to meet community expectations, risk is well managed and community and firefighter safety is maintained or improved.
- The service is well prepared to meet its national resilience commitments.

- Incident response is delivered more efficiently and effectively by tackling repeat and avoidable demand.
- Recruitment and retention of on-call staff is improved.
- Staff feel valued and confident they have the capacity, skills and resilience to manage demand.

PRIORITY Service Reform

Our aim is to ensure Staffordshire Fire and Rescue is fit for a changing future and the most effective and efficient in the sector.

Why is this important? So that the people of Staffordshire & Stoke-on-Trent can be reassured that their money is being used efficiently and effectively.

Staffordshire Fire and Rescue Service and the Staffordshire Commissioner, in his capacity as the Fire and Rescue Authority, are keen to make swift progress against the three pillars of the national Fire Reform agenda: Efficiency and Collaboration, Accountability and Transparency and Workforce Reform. Some of the work that needs to be done is set out in other parts of this plan.

There are well-established collaborative arrangements in place between Staffordshire Fire and Rescue Service and Staffordshire Police for fleet management and maintenance, occupational health and supplies and logistics. 2019 will see similar joint arrangements being introduced for procurement, finance, estates management, human resources and corporate communications.

While the professions of firefighting and policing will remain distinct and separate, all opportunities to collaborate will be taken where there are clear benefits from doing so.

The fire and rescue sector firefighter workforce is not generally reflective of the communities it serves and organisational culture has been identified nationally as a major challenge in achieving the required change. Nationally the firefighter workforce is 5.7% female and 4.1% BAME, in Staffordshire it is 8.14% female and 4.37% BAME. Clearly there is more work to do to ensure that our firefighter profile is representative of our community.

We will:

- Continue to implement police/fire collaboration, to deliver effective and efficient emergency services that provide value for money;
- Identify and pursue opportunities to collaborate with other Category 1 responders;
- Bring together the best in new ways of working and the technology that supports it from fire and rescue and policing services to deliver benefits for both organisations; better information sharing, improved interoperability, greater mobility and increased productivity;
- Form joint project teams to implement common technologies, such as the Emergency Services Network critical communications system;
- Make better use of our best buildings by enabling fire and rescue and police staff to share accommodation;

- Ensure there are robust processes in place to understand present and future service demand and risk to provide a sound and transparent evidence base for resource allocation and funding decisions;
- Implement strong evaluation processes to provide a better understanding of productivity and impact the service is having against the outcomes it is working towards;
- Increase the diversity of the workforce to better reflect the community we serve, promoting inclusion and addressing any organisational or cultural barriers to achieving this.

Outcomes

- Collaboration is at the heart of everything we do and delivers improved efficiency and effectiveness.
- Better value for money from sharing buildings and other assets and income generated from the disposal of surplus assets.
- An understanding of current and future demand can be demonstrated and communities and staff are confident in the plans in place to meet it.
- The workforce better reflects the communities it serves.

Governance and Accountability

Statutory role of the Staffordshire Commissioner

In his role as the Fire and Rescue Authority, the Commissioner has a responsibility to:

- Set out the strategic vision, priorities and objectives within a Fire and Rescue Plan, the basis on which the service is held to account;
- Make sure the fire and rescue service is efficient and effective;
- Set the fire and rescue budget and determine the council tax requirement;
- Appoint a Chief Fire Officer to lead and manage the service, and hold them to account for doing so, and if necessary dismiss them;
- Approve the fire and rescue service's Integrated Risk Management Plan (IRMP), called the Corporate Safety Plan, stating the high level risks to Staffordshire and Stoke-on-Trent and the guiding principles to how the service will balance resources and deliver services.

Performance Management

The performance of the service has a real and lasting impact on the communities of Staffordshire and Stoke-on-Trent and it is the Commissioner's responsibility to ensure the best possible service is delivered and to put in place the changes required to enable this, for example by approving investment in certain activities or challenging policy and practice in others.

The Commissioner therefore, must put in place a performance framework that demonstrates how well the service is performing, so he can hold the Chief Fire Officer to account. Since the Commissioner took over governance of the service in 2018, new arrangements have been put in place to scrutinise performance and financial management and revisions to the performance framework are planned. There are a number of scrutiny mechanisms in place that allow for escalation of any problematic areas, including a public performance meeting which is live-streamed.

The Commissioner produces an Annual Report, which will demonstrate the progress made against the Fire and Rescue Plan. The fire and rescue service produces an Annual Governance Statement, which will report how the service has performed against the IRMP. Both the Fire and Rescue Plan and the IRMP are designed to meet the requirements of the Fire and Rescue National Framework for England.

Police, Fire and Crime Panel

The panel consists of members of local councils and independent members. The role of the panel is to:

- Consider the Commissioner's Fire and Rescue Plan, Police and Crime Plan and Annual Report;
- Scrutinise the Commissioner's achievement against his plans at public meetings;
- Review the Commissioner's proposals for the amount of council tax people pay for fire and rescue and policing;

- Consider the Commissioner's proposals for the appointment of a new Chief Fire Officer, Chief Constable, Deputy Commissioner and other key roles.

Ethics, Transparency and Audit Panel

Public confidence is about trust and having a fire and rescue service, which is open and transparent, where activities can be examined and scrutinised to help improve reassurance and the service provided to communities. The Ethics, Transparency and Audit Panel (ETAP), which was introduced in 2014 and has been recognised nationally for its work in holding policing to account, has now had its remit extended to cover the fire and rescue service.

External Scrutiny

As part of a pilot phase of inspections, Staffordshire Fire and Rescue Service helped shape a national inspection programme conducted by Her Majesty's Inspectorate of Constabularies and Fire and Rescue Services (HMICFRS), which will complete its third tranche of inspections in 2019. The service will respond positively and swiftly to the findings of local inspections and ensure it learns from best practice in other parts of the country.

This process will be assisted by the new national Fire Standards Board, which will set and maintain professional standards for the sector. As with policing services, the Staffordshire Commissioner highly values the inspection process as a means of supporting accountability for the delivery of efficient and effective services locally.

Finance

The total 2019/20 net revenue budget requirement for the service is £40.936m and consists of two main elements; Settlement Funding (£14.3m) shown below and Council Tax (local precept).

The Council Tax for 2019/20 was approved by the Staffordshire Commissioner with band D set at £73.53 (£1.45 per week) and will raise £26.6m in funding for 2019/20.

Settlement Funding from central government consists of three funding streams shown below, with the 1% share of local business rates based upon a forecast received from the local billing authorities.

	2018/19 £m	2019/20 £m	Movement £m
1% share of Local Business Rates	3.691	3.667	(0.024)
Business Rates Top-up	5.846	5.962	0.116
Revenue Support Grant (RSG)	5.255	4.675	(0.580)
Total Settlement Funding	14.792	14.304	(0.488)

For 2019/20 the Revenue Support Grant (RSG) was almost £0.6m less than the previous year. The RSG has reduced by £4.8m over the four year period from 2016/17 to 2019/20, which increases the pressure to deliver further efficiencies and raise additional funds locally through Council Tax. The setting of Council Tax is under the control of the Staffordshire Commissioner in his role as the Fire and Rescue Authority.

The budget recognises the costs pressures that are currently in place, which includes pay inflation (following the removal of the public sector pay cap), business rates, increasing level of general inflation, and the revenue consequences of capital spend and impact upon future borrowing requirements.

The pay budget reflects the upwards pressure on pay and includes the impact of a 3% assumed pay award for 2019/20 for operational staff. The Fire Brigades Union remains in discussion with fire service employers through the National Joint Council and the Government regarding the pay claim for 2019, which is above the assumed levels within the budget and Medium Term Financial Strategy (MTFS). There is therefore risk associated with the assumed level of pay award budgeted for 2019/20 and into the medium term.

Following the 2016 valuation of the Firefighters' Pension Schemes, a significant increase in the required employer contribution rate has been introduced by the Government's Actuarial Department (GAD) impacting all Firefighters' Pension Schemes. For Staffordshire, an average increase of 14.8% in employer contributions will cost around £1.8 million per annum. While the Home Office has agreed to fund 90% of this increase for 2019/20, should the full liability for the increased costs be passed to the Staffordshire Commissioner, the impact of this in future years will be significant and will require immediate reductions to service provision.

The 2019/20 budget includes £0.5m of efficiency savings to be achieved during the budget year, equivalent to a 1.2% reduction in the total budget. This is the final year of an approved plan to deliver

£3.5m of savings in the four years 2016/17 to 2019/20. This includes reviews of service areas, non-pay budget reviews and procurement savings.

Resources

Staffordshire Commissioner www.staffordshire-pfcc.gov.uk

Business Case for Joint Governance of Police and Fire and Rescue in Staffordshire
<https://staffordshire-pfcc.gov.uk/cms/wp-content/uploads/PCP-24-07-17-Business-Case.pdf>

Staffordshire Fire and Rescue Service <https://www.staffordshirefire.gov.uk/>

Police, Fire and Crime Panel
<https://www.staffordshire.gov.uk/Your-council-and-democracy/Staffordshire-PFC-panel/Staffordshire-Police-Fire-and-Crime-Panel.aspx>

Fire and Rescue National Plan for England
https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/705060/National_Framework_-_final_for_web.pdf

Local Government Association Fire Vision 2024
https://www.local.gov.uk/sites/default/files/documents/10.20%20-%20Fire%20Vision%202024_4.pdf

National Fire Chiefs Council <https://www.nationalfirechiefs.org.uk>

Her Majesty's Inspectorate of Constabulary and Fire and Rescue Services
<https://www.justiceinspectors.gov.uk/hmicfrs/>