

## **Police, Fire and Crime Panel – 14 February 2022**

### **Staffordshire Fire & Rescue Service**

### **Safety Plan 2020 - 2024 Update Report**

Report of the Police, Fire & Crime Commissioner

#### **1. Purpose of Report**

- 1.1 This report is to update the Police, Fire and Crime Panel on the delivery of the Staffordshire Fire and Rescue Service Safety Plan (SP - Integrated Risk Management Plan - IRMP). The publication of the Safety Plan fulfils the legislative obligations as defined within the Fire and Rescue Service National Framework for England 2018.

#### **2. Recommendation**

- 2.1 That the Panel note the update on the delivery of the SP 2020 – 2024 and make comment as appropriate.

#### **3. Background**

- 3.1 The IRMP is a document that each Fire and Rescue Authority in England is required to produce. Whilst there is no specific template that the Authority is required to follow, there is guidance detailed within the Fire and Rescue Service National Framework for England 2018 on the content of the plan. Each plan must:
  - reflect up to date risk analyses including an assessment of all foreseeable fire and rescue related risks that could affect the area of the authority;
  - demonstrate how prevention, protection and response activities will best be used to prevent fires and other incidents and mitigate the impact of identified risks on its communities, through authorities working either individually or collectively, in a way that makes best use of available resources;
  - outline required service delivery outcomes including the allocation of resources for the mitigation of risks;
  - set out its management strategy and risk-based programme for enforcing the provisions of the Regulatory Reform (Fire Safety) Order 2005 in accordance with the principles of better regulation set out in the Statutory Code of Compliance for Regulators, and the Enforcement Concordat; cover at least a three-year time span

and be reviewed and revised as often as it is necessary to ensure that the authority is able to deliver the requirements set out in this Framework;

- reflect effective consultation throughout its development and at all review stages with the community, its workforce and representative bodies and partners; and
- be easily accessible and publicly available.

3.2 Following the transfer of governance from the Stoke-on-Trent and Staffordshire Fire and Rescue Authority to the Staffordshire Commissioner, a new Safety Plan 2020-2024 was developed which was published in August 2020.

3.3 The Safety Plan was designed to underpin the previous Staffordshire Commissioners Fire and Rescue Plan and four priorities for the Service were determined following consultation in 2020 across Staffordshire.

The four priorities outlined in the current commissioner's Fire and Rescue Plan are:

- A flexible and responsive Service
- Protect people and places
- Help people most at risk stay safe
- A fire and rescue service for tomorrow

3.4 The four priorities that the Service is delivering against are: -

3.4a) Prevention and Early Intervention

We aim to develop a detailed community risk profile of Staffordshire so that we can use our resources in the most efficient and effective way.

3.4b) Protecting Staffordshire and its people

We aim to reduce and remove risks in communities by using a combination of prevention, protection and response activities and help make Staffordshire a safer place to live, work and visit.

3.4c) Public Confidence

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

In order to demonstrate the Services performance against the key measures as detailed within the Safety Plan 2020-2024.

The key measures as detailed are: -

- Total number of incidents attended
- Number of accidental dwelling fires
- Number of accidental fire deaths and injuries
- Number of Safe and Well Visits completed

- Number of accidental business property fires
- Number of road traffic collisions (RTCs) attended
- Number of people killed or seriously injuries (KSIs) at RTCs
- Number of automatic fire alarms we attend

#### 3.4d) Service Reform

We aim to develop and support a diverse, healthy and highly professional workforce who are motivated and empowered to improve our Service.

## 4. Progress to Date

### 4.1 Prevention and Early Intervention

The impact of C19 on the work undertaken by the Service has been and continues to be significant and as such the way in which the Service has delivered its prevention and early intervention activities has been amended in line with the various C19 restrictions applied over the last few months.

As we continue to follow Government guidance and change our Policy and procedures to keep up to date and keep our staff as safe as possible we have flexed working practices many ways. These include changes to the government's Plan B and the most recent changes to the isolation periods and LFT testing on days 5 and 6 which has had a positive impact on staff availability.

We continue our vital partnership work supporting the NHS, Staffordshire County Council and Stoke City Council with the delivery of the vaccine and testing of the public within communities to control and reduce the spread of the virus.

During the last quarter we have continued to support the fight back against COVID 19 taking a proactive position with Vaccine and medication deliveries. These involve Fire staff collecting the COVID Anti-Viral drug from a Pharmacy in Stoke or Stafford and delivering to Homes of the most vulnerable in the county.

Further work within the Vaccine equality working group led to the service establishing a Vaccine centre at Fire Service HQ during the Christmas to New Year gap. This was extremely successful delivering 792 vaccines 61 to children and 646 boosters. Our continued partnership working has led to the service being nominated for a national award shortlisting for the Partnership Awards run by national trade publication HSJ (Health Service Journal).

The multi-agency approach by the Council, the NHS and Staffordshire Fire and Rescue Service targeting communities where take-up of COVID-19 vaccinations was known to be low.

A roving team, known as the Targeted Vaccination Team, have been able to go out and launch pinpoint operations to make sure that no-one has been left behind in the quest to get everyone protected. Examples of this activity include Dearnsdale Fruit Farm near Stafford, Equality House Community Centre in Hanley, The Travelling community and the homeless.

Other activities include:

- Movement of NHS equipment
- Delivery of the vaccine to harder to engage communities such as fruit farm workers, Traveller communities, the homeless and the Afghanistan evacuee community.
- Establishing medical facilities at short notice, including the vaccination events at Leek moorlands hospital and the medical centre at the Afghanistan evacuee hotel.
- Surge Testing within outbreak areas of the county
- Use of Fire Service premises to deliver the vaccine to our communities
- Delivery of the Vaccine to schools to support the schools vaccination programme.
- Support with the Winter Flu vaccine rollout for school children and our own staff.
- Use of the targeted vaccination team to support the Booster vaccine uptake and rollout.
- Increased partnership working with Staffordshire County Council, Stoke City Council and the NHS to establish the targeted vaccination trailer. Picture below.

So far the work we have been involved in has delivered 11,762 Vaccines (jabs in arms), tested around 4000 people and got stuck in to the heart of the response to the Pandemic and restoration/recovery phase for our communities. This work continues as partnerships grow in strength.



From an internal viewpoint we continue to run our own internal test and trace to protect and maintain availability of all emergency staff. Policies and procedure have maintained a fluid approach and moved within Government guidance to ensure the safety of all our staff. We are currently working towards winter plan B as set out by the government. Lateral Flow testing of staff remains a priority to stopping the spread of the virus in the workplace.

4.1a) Working with Jo Hardy from NFCC to produce a Theory of Change (TOC) document alongside a toolkit which will enable us as a service to look in more detail at what our Early Intervention offer could/should look like in the future. Reviewing our ability to deliver targeted educational programmes which align to the principles of Early Intervention by developing protective factors which are evidence-based to enable young people to cope with life's challenges and reduce their vulnerability.

We are also working with local colleagues to investigate what is currently delivered in the county and to see if there are any new links we could forge to strengthen our offer.

Our education offer and team are expanding. We now deliver Safe+Sound; support and engage our volunteers across the service; work with businesses to support and educate wherever and whenever needed; and are starting to investigate what our early intervention education offer could look like, working together with the NFCC Early Intervention Group.

Online delivery of Safe+Sound on the Learn Live Channel is going very well and will continue until, at least, July 2022 with a weekly programme every Wednesday (term time only) and a number of 'Special' programmes aimed at other audiences within our community.

September to December 2021 (Autumn Term) saw **34,293** devices tune in either live or on demand, which averages at **2450** per week.

A 'special' programme aimed at Key Stage 4/5 young people was released on 9<sup>th</sup> December with **1366** devices viewing – this was a new target audience requested by SFRS PDLs, the number of devices viewing is excellent as this is a hard to reach new audience. The content is unsuitable for under 14s and included;

- Nitrous Oxide
- Fire Safety
- Online grooming
- Knife Crime
- Railway Safety
- Strong passwords

Also a 'special' home safety programme was also produced aimed at adults. The plan is for technicians and other relevant staff to promote this when doing Home Fire Safety Visits. No viewer numbers are available yet as the programme was released on demand only with no 'live' launch.

We are working closely with Learn Live to promote the Safe+Sound programme nationally, this is being advertised now and the 'launch' will be Wednesday 2<sup>nd</sup> March at 10am. This will have huge benefits for our local schools as we will be engaging partners from further afield to develop videos for inclusion in our programmes which will improve and develop our weekly content even more.

4.1b) Our Business Support Officer has responded to the needs of the community to support our NHS and general health services and the vulnerable among our communities in many ways. In the early stages of the pandemic we were responsible for huge amounts of PPE dispersal / distribution in and around the county, along with substantial food deliveries around the county, reaching hundreds of needy people.

We then started the roll out of the Lateral Flow Testing (LFT) training regime in and across the service. We were instrumental in identifying and assessing various locations to provide the LFT's, to the wider community, this involved site visits and producing suitability reports and health and safety assessments etc. The pandemic then led us to the vaccination program. Duties during this period included providing mobilisation and placement of the mobile vaccine pod, assisting hospitals with vaccinations in targeted locations etc.

We have provided courses and qualifications to our local businesses using a blended learning approach of on site and on line learning along with online only direct delivery, leading to evaluations praising our adapted delivery methods.

We have responded face to face wherever needed throughout the pandemic, following all current and relevant guidelines. One example is the fire at Slater's Country Inn on the 26 November 2021. This had a direct impact on numerous businesses located at their shopping village. This was a complex and frustrating incident for all concerned and it would not have been conducive to attempt to provide help and support remotely or using IT platforms. We responded swiftly and provided help and support as the incident was being dealt with by operational crews, working closely with our client, operational crews, environmental agencies, local authority representatives etc. Our support involved the following:

- A full explanation of what was happening
- What to do in the first instance in regard to aiding recovery
- Informing and passing information to the insurance company
- Contacting and working with other businesses involved in the incident
- Providing regular updates in regard to operational progress and next steps
- Assisting with actions to ensure public / employee safety (dangerous structures, asbestos, electrical / gas safety etc.)
- Advising the client in regard to choosing loss assessors and working with loss adjusters
- Assisting the client to manage the aftermath of such incidents, working with third parties, interpreting reports / specific requirements etc.
- We will of course provide post incident training and continued support as required

This particular incident will take months to resolve as there will be complex issues to deal with and numerous insurance companies, investigators and interested parties to deal with going forward. Clearly the work we carried out at this incident was recognised and appreciated by the client and others involved as they took time to

address the CFO and state their gratitude to the operational crews and support services that attended.

4.1c) **Volunteering** - Volunteering opportunities have been limited but the volunteers have, in the main, remained positive and engaged thanks to the support of the Volunteer Coordinators. There are currently 62 volunteers in the service. During October, November and December the volunteers were involved in several 3 pump exercises, they provided support for flu vaccinations and the Covid vaccine roll out; one of our volunteers works for Network Rail and has done some volunteering with L&D on joint training planning; and our Chaplains were able to provide bereavement support. A total of **324.33** volunteer hours were given in the last quarter.

	ESDG	NSDG	WSDG
October	21	14.5	68.33
November	0	3	125
December	3	2	87.5
	24	19.5	280.83
<b>Total</b>	<b>324.33</b>		

With coronavirus cases above the England and West Midlands average, the Service volunteered the use of several of our fire stations as sites for local walk-in COVID vaccination centres to our NHS partners. We wanted to help make it possible for everyone eligible for the vaccine to have easy access to a vaccination site, both for their own health and the safety of the wider community.

Members of staff supported NHS colleagues, acting as marshals at Leek Moorlands hospital for children's vaccination clinics and over the festive period when our HQ site was opened up as a walk-in vaccination centre to support the drive for more people to receive booster doses.

4.1d) **Water safety**- In good weather, people enjoy the outdoors and will take the opportunity to cool off in the sea, lakes or rivers. In recognition of this, we adopted a different approach to our *water safety campaign* this year. Instead of telling of people to stay out of the water our messages focussed on improving understanding of the risks and what to do if you get into difficulty. To improve awareness amongst young people we messaged parents and teenagers, through *Safe and Sound*, our own social channels and through paid social media using the hashtag #Floattolive.

**Standards**- The new *Prevention Fire Standard* was launched during August. This is the seventh professional Fire Standard published by the *Fire Standards Board* (the Board) so far and it compliments and builds on those already approved: Community

Risk Management Planning; Code of Ethics; Emergency response driving; Operational preparedness; Operational competence and Operational learning.

Like the other standards, the aim of this standard is to help drive continuous improvement across the sector. Bringing more consistency to how services conduct and evaluate their Prevention activities was a priority for the Board in light of the recommendation made by Her Majesty's Inspectorate of Constabulary and Fire and Rescue Services (HMICFRS) after their first round of inspections of services in England. The Prevention team will assess and monitor our progress against achieving the standard.

**Road safety-** During October, the Service issued a warning to drivers about the *dangers of handling and storing fuel* at home as motorists responded to the 'fuel crisis' by flocking to forecourts to fill up their vehicles. We reminded motorists to take extra care when filling up and, in an effort to deter stockpiling, be aware of the risks of inappropriate handling or storage of such highly flammable materials.

**Fire safety-** In November, residents were reminded to *celebrate Bonfire Night safely*, the dangers of fireworks and of the spread of coronavirus. With less people attending professionally organised public displays for fear of catching COVID we reminded our communities of the firework code and warned against garden bonfire parties due to the risk of fires getting out of control.

**Location change-** Staffordshire Civil Contingencies Unit (CCU) moved from the Stafford fire station site to its new permanent base at fire Headquarters in July. The new accommodation provides an improved training, exercise and response capability. CCU will be working on enhancing video-conferencing and tactical response facilities. The move is part of the project to vacate and redevelop the Stafford Fire Station site.

4.1d) **Princes Trust** - Since the previous update, new forms of delivery have been developed with a blended approach of face-to-face and virtual learning being successfully implemented. The delivery staff continue to spend a considerable amount of time supporting students through on-line group chats, workshops and in-depth 1-1's. In addition to innovative schemes of work and teaching materials that continue to be developed, producing positive results.

Since June 2021, there have been a further two Get Started programmes and three Explore programmes. This has seen 42 young people all with positive outcomes progress onto employment, Teams, volunteering or referral to educational programmes.

There have been two Team programmes concluded in this period also, where 14 young people completed the programme in August at Cannock and a further 15 young people completed the programme with Stone and Cannock combining programmes

due to staffing difficulties. The latter also involved the first residential in nearly two years while keeping within national guidelines.

There are a further six Team programmes scheduled for the next 12 months along with five Get Started and six Explore programmes.

All of these programmes continue to be adapted, ensuring they remain compliant to the latest COVID restrictions.

## 4.2 Protecting Staffordshire and its people

- 4.2a) We have continued to review our localised measures to help protect our staff and our communities from the risk of catching COVID as we continued to see high levels of infections in Staffordshire. We have up-dated our internal **COVID Workplace and People Guidance** as appropriate in response to changes in Government policy. There is a legislative obligation on the Service to ensure the safety of our workforce whilst continuing to provide our services safely to our communities and maintain our emergency response availability. This is the rationale behind the decisions made that relate to the wearing of facemasks in the workplace, the continued use of twice weekly lateral flow testing, and the continued hands, face, space and ventilate.

Whilst we have continued to maintain a COVID-secure environment, we encouraged our staff who were able to work from home to do so around the festive period to help keep infection rates low with the emergence of the new more virulent Omicron variant.

**National Fire Chiefs Council** (NFCC) published a report, which explores how **fire and rescue services supported their communities during the COVID 19 pandemic**, and Staffordshire is one of the Services. The report highlighted our involvement in improving the take up of COVID vaccinations supporting the Staffordshire Vaccination Equality Group, by helping with pop-up vaccination clinics.

The new **Protection Fire Standard** was launched at the national Prevention & Protection conference in early September 2021. This standard will aim to address both the recommendations made by the Grenfell Tower inquiry and also the findings of **HMICFRS** concerning fire and rescue services' competency and capacity of protection provision and raising levels of fire engineering knowledge and understanding with operational and other relevant staff. As with the Prevention Standard, the Service took an active part in the consultation around the development of the standard.

The Service regularly inspects business premises to make sure that they comply with fire safety legislation. We aim to help and support to businesses to operate safely, but we will consider, and where necessary, take legal action where lives are at risk. It is hoped that by taking such action we will deter other business owners from failing to take their responsibilities seriously and encourage them to take necessary fire

precautions to keep their premises safe from fire. On 27 October, at Stoke-on-Trent Crown Court the owner of premises in Penkhull pleaded guilty to a single offence of ***breaching the Regulatory Reform (Fire Safety) Order 2005*** and was sentenced to 12-months' community service and ordered to pay full costs within 28 days.

The breach came to light following a serious fire at the premises in May 2020 in which several occupants had to be rescued from the burning building. A number of people suffered from the effects of smoke inhalation and were taken to hospital. One man was admitted with serious burns. The premises had been converted from sole commercial use (as a recording studio) into mixed commercial and residential usage without the appropriate planning approval. The owner failed to take general fire precautions, placing people at serious risk as the fire occurred in the building where people were sleeping.

4.2b) In late 2020 SFRS entered into collaboration with Midland Heart to install sprinklers in a number of their properties. What started as an idea to retrofit sprinklers in a single block of flats in Lichfield subsequently turned into a much bigger project to provide sprinklers in 8 different buildings across the wider West Midlands area. Given the scale of this project, it has involved a lot of planning and preparation but the results are now starting to be seen.

- **Charnwood House** is a 5-storey building containing 11 duplex flats in Lichfield that is both owned and managed by Midland Heart. Staffordshire Fire and Rescue Service have committed to match funding the cost of the sprinkler installation. On-site works finally began in December and all internal works – i.e. pipework and boxing in - have now been completed. To ensure an adequate water supply, a dedicated sprinkler tank is to be provided, however this requires separate planning permission because it is to be located outside. Approval is expected imminently and once received will allow the system to be connected up and completed.
- **Andrews Court** is an 8-storey building providing sheltered accommodation in Lichfield. Although managed by Midland Heart, they don't own it and accordingly any decision on sprinklers would need approval from residents. Although residents initially voted in favour of sprinklers in early 2021, there have been a number of delays as the cost of the installation has increased significantly since the initial quote was obtained. Discussions with residents are ongoing as Midland Heart explore a number of other options and we are still hopeful that sprinklers will be installed in the future.
- **School Court** is a retirement living scheme containing 41 flats in Hednesford. With only 2-storeys, this building was never the focus of the Community Sprinkler Project but as part of their bigger project, Midland Heart identified this a building they felt would particularly benefit from sprinklers. Installation of the system didn't commence until December but the system was finished and commissioned before Christmas. Not only does this confirm the relative ease and speed that which sprinklers can be installed, but more so it highlights the bigger intent of the Community Sprinkler Project - by working so closely with housing providers on schemes that we deem high risk (i.e. high

rise), we hope to increase confidence and create momentum such that they will want to continue on their own sprinkler journeys.

In the north of the county, Stoke on Trent City Council are continuing their programme of retrofitting sprinklers at all 18 of their high and medium-rise blocks of flats across the city and this month work commenced on their next two buildings. **Jack Ashley Court and Travers Court** are two 5-storey blocks in Fenton and work will be ongoing for the next few months.

### **4.3 Public Confidence**

4.3a) In order to ensure improving outcomes for the communities of Stoke-on-Trent and Staffordshire key performance measures are reported to the Public Performance Meeting (PPM) on a six monthly basis and compared to the same period from the previous two financial years.

#### **Total Incidents Attended**

- Between April and September 2021 Staffordshire Fire and Rescue Service attended **4537** incidents. In the same 6 month period the service attended **4552** incidents in 2020 and **4601** incidents in 2019 (pre Covid-19).
- There is a small decrease in the total number of incidents attended within the same period from 2020 **(-0.33%)** and 2019 **(-1.41%)**
- Between April and September 2021, primary fire incidents have increased by **1.46%**, secondary fire incidents have decreased by **-13.77%**, and special service call Incidents have increased by **17.45%** from the same period in 2020.
- Road traffic collision attendance has increased by **22.81%** from the previous year, with the largest reduction noted in false alarm attendance (Good Intent), with a decrease of **-24.94%**.
- Over the last three years of data for all incidents attended, April to September 2021 denotes a negligible **decrease** in demand from the averages of the previous three years.

#### **Accidental Dwelling Fires**

- Between April and September 2021, the Service attended **224** accidental dwelling fires compared to **253** during the same period in 2020 and **294** in the same period of 2019. The top causes of these fires remain the same as the previous years; cooking related incidents and faulty equipment which are relatively static in trend.
- Over the last three years of data for accidental dwelling fires attended, April to September 2021 denotes a **decrease** in demand from the averages of the previous three years.

## **Fatalities and Injuries of Accidental Dwelling Fires**

- Between April and September 2021 there has been a reduction in the number of fatalities as a result of accidental dwelling fires from the same period in the previous two years, with **0** fatalities recorded. In 2020 **1** fatality was recorded and in 2019 **3** fatalities were recorded within the same period.
- Between April and September 2021 there has been an increase in the number of injuries as a result of accidental dwelling fires from the same period in the previous two years, with **12** injuries recorded. In 2020 **9** injuries were recorded and in 2019 **6** injuries were recorded within the same period.

## **Safe and Well Visits**

- Between April and September 2021, **3392** safe and well visits were completed in comparison to **1018** from the same period in 2020 and **14513** from the same period in 2019.
- Due to the impact of Covid-19 there was a significant decrease in the number of physical safe and well visits completed throughout 2020 and the beginning of 2021 due to the required social distancing measures. In order to adapt during this period of uncertainty, a process was put into practice by the Service to assess and conduct 'non-contact' engagements via telephone to ensure service was maintained. This method of contact is not fully captured and reflected in the figures provided.

## **Accidental Business Property Fires**

- Between April and September 2021 the Service attended **71** accidental business property fires in comparison to **64** in the same period of 2020 and **96** in the same period of 2019. The top cause of this type of incident is faulty equipment.
- Over the last three years of data for accidental business property fires attended, April to September 2021 denotes **no change** in demand from the averages of the previous three years.

## **Road Traffic Collisions (RTC)**

- Between April and September 2021, the Service attended **316** road traffic collisions in comparison to **235** from the same period in 2020 and **354** from the same period in 2019. The Service does not attend all RTC's that occur across the county therefore this figure does not represent the totality of RTC's experienced across Stoke-on-Trent and Staffordshire.
- Over the last three years of data for road traffic collisions attended, April to September 2021 denotes an **increase** in demand from the averages of the previous three years. This is noted as a national trend.

## Automatic Fire Signals

- Between April and September 2021, the Service attended **782** automatic fire alarms in comparison to **710** from the same period in 2020 and **790** from the same period in 2019.
  - The Service introduced a revised automatic fire alarm policy in 2020 which defines the methodology the Service adopts when in receipt of these types of calls. Fire Control utilise a call challenge process for automatic fire alarms and between April and September 2021 **1178** calls from the total of **1960** automatic fire signals received were not attended as they were screened out by the process of call challenge.
- 4.3b) **HMICFRS** - The Service was due to be inspected by **HMICFRS** as part of the next round of the current inspection programme in the Spring/Summer of 2022. The Chief Fire Officer and the Staffordshire Commissioner requested the inspection be brought forward to explore a small number of concerns raised in relation to the way the Service conducts some of its people related practices.

The Service has worked hard to develop a positive and inclusive working environment, values and culture and we remain focused on developing this to underpin the way we serve our communities, carry out our role and work together. This inspection will help to identify best practice and further opportunities for learning and improvement, which will ensure that our culture and working practices are as inclusive and supportive as possible and enable people to perform at their best.

HMICFRS agreed to the joint request and pre-inspection activity started in July with the completion of a **document and data return**, which we submitted ahead of the due date.

Fieldwork aspects of the inspection took place over the period 1 September to 21 October 2021. The Principal Officers welcomed the inspection team to the Service with a **Strategic Briefing**. The focus of the briefing was around a few key areas, our changes since the first inspection, our progress against our 5 areas for improvement, our progress against the outcomes of the COVID 19 bespoke inspection and our priorities for the forthcoming year.

HMICFRS has had to carry out much of its inspection activity remotely in the last year due to the COVID pandemic to help reduce the risk to the sector, staff and public. The current inspection was carried out using a blend of virtual / on-site interviews, desktop exercises, focus groups and station reality testing.

To conclude the inspection process, Principal Officers, the Staffordshire Commissioner and the Chief Executive of the Commissioner's office took part in a virtual **'hot-debrief'** in November. The Inspectorate was complimentary of the support

its team received from everyone in the Service during all stages of the inspection process and expressed its thanks to all those who participated in the desktop activities, focus groups, reality testing, interviews and surveys. Over the course of the inspection HMICFRS spoke to approximately 180 members of staff. In addition, to partners, the Staffordshire Commissioner and Chief Executive of the Commissioner's office.

This inspection looked at how effective and efficient the Service is at keeping people safe from fire and other risks, and how well the Service looks after its people. Its findings were in many ways positive, although it highlighted issues that we are continuing to invest time and effort in to improve. As with any process like this, there are some findings that we are challenging with HMICFRS in defence of our approach and the extensive complications from the COVID pandemic.

The hot debrief gives us the earliest possible opportunity to work on areas identified for improvement. The findings shared in this debrief are still subject to change as HMICFRS assess the information further before the final report and the debrief did not provide any indication of a final grading. The final report is expected to be published in June or July 2022.

Areas have been identified that we need to look at and apply our resources too. Some of the considerations have already been highlighted through our own Culture report and we are working towards addressing these. Our Chief Fire Officer has committed to focus on improving performance management, setting out clear expectations for every department and every team.

Staffordshire Fire and Rescue Service's **new website** went live in September. The new version allows for an improved user experience and enhanced accessibility features to make sure we are reaching all communities within Staffordshire. With over 60 per cent of visitors to the site using a mobile device, the user interface has been designed to be mobile first, to improve user experience, enhance engagement and make the journey through the website much more streamlined. It is also visual instead of text heavy and uses new branding throughout to reflect the modern service, providing a channel, which allows us to be open and transparent with our communities.

In November Staffordshire Fire and Rescue Service's **annual Statement of Assurance for 2020/21** was published, detailing our performance and the financial, governance and operational arrangements in place for the period 1 April 2020 to 31 March 2021.

The aim of producing this statement is to provide our communities with clear information regarding the Service's performance against the priorities set out in our Safety Plan. We will also take the opportunity to talk about our future plans in the document. To view the Statement of Assurance – click [here](#).

The latest national **State of Fire report** – click [here](#) - demonstrates the enormous contribution that the fire sector has made during the global pandemic. The flexibility of all of our staff has been evident throughout demonstrating that our staff can support partners in responding to a variety of tasks. Locally we have been working hard to ensure that our fire safety or protection teams have been strengthened and this will mean that our buildings are as safe as possible for both residents and firefighters alike, this is something that has also been reflected within the national report. The need to accelerate the diversity within the sector is acknowledged and this is something that the Service is focussing upon locally in order to improve. This linked with our continued drive to further develop the culture within the organisation is a priority for the Service, as is the wellbeing of our people.

#### 4.4 Service Reform

4.4a) As part of the inspection process, **HMICFRS conducted a staff survey**. We encouraged participation in the staff survey via iNews, the intranet, emails and at team meetings, as it is important that the views of our people and their opinions be captured. This survey was anonymous and responses will be shared with the Service when the final report is issued for pre-publication checks, in a way that protects the identities of those who have chosen to respond. Representative bodies and the shared services HR function were also invited and responded to the survey. A total of 216 (26%) survey responses were received, with a further 62 (17%) from on-call staff. This compares favorably with responses received to the staff survey in the Round One inspection in 2019, being 16% and 4% from on-call. The staff survey is not considered in isolation, and the results can be used to help inform future improvements to service delivery.

We also took the launch of the staff survey as an opportunity to remind people about **HMICFRS's independent reporting line**, which is open to all fire, and rescue service staff in England. The purpose of this line is to provide staff with a mechanism to inform HMICFRS of any issues, and areas of good practice, which they feel should be taken into consideration both prior to and during inspection. This is not a whistleblowing service, or a route for complaints to be resolved. It is simply a way in which to gather additional evidence outside of fieldwork.

The Fire Service has partnered with **Say-So** – which provides an independent, confidential service where people can raise any workplace concerns that they may feel they cannot raise with colleagues. This was recognised as an area of weakness for the sector and the Service is committed to ensuring all its people have a voice which is heard. Say-So is another mechanism to ensure this, and it should be seen to compliment trades union or direct contact through line management. It is then hoped that Say-So will become a useful tool in the continual improvement we are making to our culture.

The **Culture Report**, which is an in-depth review of the feedback provided by staff in the Culture Sessions earlier this year, was published on 18 October. The report has been broken down into four key areas summarising the issues raised and providing some anonymised comments to add context. Following publication of the report the Service has embarked on a series of activities to look at how the culture can be improved further. Senior leaders have come together to analyse the report and look at how we can approach things differently and staff are encouraged to work within their teams and share ideas on how the culture in the Service can improve further or what they see as the opportunities to resolve the issues raised.

The Service's **Statement of Intent** was published as an acknowledgement that the Service, like all organisations, has its problems, but that we welcome people with both visible and invisible differences and hold all our staff to the highest standards in terms of supporting equality, diversity and inclusion. It sets out the Service position regarding inappropriate behaviours and is not intended to stifle, but to encourage constructive conversations around equality, diversity and inclusion within teams. It is designed to support our staff in terms of being able to raise issues and concerns regarding inappropriate behaviours. This statement linked with the **Core Code of Ethics** are key aspects of the Service's approach to cultural change.

To support the embedding of the national **Core Code of Ethics** all staff were asked to complete a new **LearnPro module**, taking them through the code, what it means and why it is important. A number of ethical dilemmas will also be distributed to managers to encourage discussions around ethics and the standards of behaviour expected across the Service.

We also encouraged staff to feedback to us on how they would prefer us to communicate with them with a **review** of the **iNews** online publication and a focus on **staff recognition**, welcoming ideas as to how best to recognise and reward exceptional performance by colleagues.

The next phase of our whole-time/competent on-call transfer process started towards the end of August. The **whole-time recruits' courses** had been delayed because of the pandemic and as such, the Service were one full course short of where we would have been affecting crewing levels. The whole-time course started in September, with a number of competent on-call firefighters being placed straight out on watches. In September, applications were invited to join our **whole-time Watch Manager pool**.

**We encouraged our staff to take part in the NFCC's consultation on the Job Description and Person Specification for the role of a firefighter.** This consultation included a Job Description and Person Specification for the core role of a firefighter, as well as information regarding service-specific duties and guidance on how these might be dealt with where appropriate. We recognise the importance of participating as our responses will help to shape the document and enable the NFCC

to deliver a quality product endorsed and supported by the fire and rescue service sector.

The shared HR function is developing a new **Workforce Strategy** which will set out how we will continue to work towards our Safety Plan priority of 'Developing a diverse, healthy, and highly professional workforce who are motivated and empowered to improve our Service'. A new dedicated head of recruitment, has just been appointed and will support our aim of working with our communities and partners to improve the diversity of our workforce.

In October, the Service Management Board approved a decision to make some changes to how the **annual training programme** will be delivered, taking aspects of what has worked well before and embracing future technological opportunities to reduce our environmental impact, increase the Service's outreach approach and decentralise some aspects of course delivery. The Learning and Development department has already been working to reinstate the rope rescue (Safe Working at Heights level 3) capability at Stafford with the Emergency Response team and our new provider. Some of our supervisory and middle management training has been redesigned in line with the NFCC's Leadership and Management project.

**Expressions of interest** were invited from across the Service for individuals with an interest in becoming a **coach or mentor**, providing an excellent development opportunity for those individuals with the aim of building a network of career support for colleagues across the organisation.

To support the wellbeing of our staff **flu vaccination clinics** were held at Fire HQ, Burslem, Cannock, Lichfield Fire Stations and Police Headquarters. These were open to both fire and police colleagues, offering free flu vaccinations, in a bid to protect the health of our people during the flu season.

Mind, The Royal Foundation, The Ambulance Staff Charity, The Fire Fighters Charity, and Police Care UK have launched **Blue Light Together** – a brand new website designed to support emergency responders - click [here](#) for the link. We told our staff about the new hub via our internal i-news publication. The independent site offers specialised information and resources around looking after your mental health and wellbeing. We also raised awareness in November about:

- Men's Mental Health Awareness Month - the campaign which offers support for men suffering from mental health issues.
- Transgender Awareness Week – during which transgender people and their allies take action to bring attention to the community by educating the public about who transgender people are, sharing stories and experiences, and advancing advocacy around the issues of prejudice, discrimination, and violence that affect the transgender community.

In August, we launched our new **Firewatch Azure people information management system**. The new version of Firewatch is no longer hosted within our own ICT infrastructure, instead it sits in the Azure Cloud Based Hosting Solution managed by the providers Infographics.

To ensure we improved and maintain security of access across this provision all our users must complete a process called Multi-Factor Authentication (MFA) when they log in. The Firewatch team produced a series of training videos and briefing document to guide users through the new log in processes for the various elements of the system.

Since the implementation of the new Firewatch system, the Firewatch team have been working on the **MobileApp**. It is envisaged that the app will be of greatest benefit to on-call staff, allowing them to manage their personal availability 'on the move' via their mobile device. However, in the future, use of the MobileApp may well expand to other users.

A trial of the MobileApp is being conducted with a small number of stations. Engagement and feedback from users at these trial stations is 'key' to ensuring a successful roll-out across the rest of the service at a point in the future. Once the trial is completed, and any issues resolved or further enhancements made the Firewatch team will arrange user training during the station's drill period.

4.4b) **Wholetime Firefighters** - Following a successful recruitment campaign in late 2020 and the completion of the wholetime course 1/2021 in April 2021, course 2/2021 with 15 wholetime trainee firefighters commenced on the 3<sup>rd</sup> September 2021. The course was returned to an original 15 week course to include a week of exercises covering a range of incident types)

This course was the second wholetime course planned and delivered since the start of the C19 pandemic and as such presented the service with additional unique challenges and organisational risk in that the potential for the pandemic to disrupt the course and affect trainees and Learning & Development (L&D) staff and affect the outcomes of the corporate safety plan was significant without a range of additional measures that were put in place to ensure the risk was minimised. As a result, the course took place with C19 security and workplace compliance at the heart of the program. This meant that a number of non-safety critical elements will be taught once they are in the workplace as a result of changes to the planned program.

A number of trainees were assessed individually throughout the course to ensure that they had access to specific resources and learning support to assist them for the duration of the course and beyond.

The trainees took part in their passing out ceremony on the 17<sup>th</sup> December, which was restricted due to dynamic changes in government Covid guidance as the usual family

involvement could not be safely supported. The ceremony involved the presentation by the Chief Fire Officer of certificates and by the Deputy Chief Fire Officer of awards for overall performance (the silver axe), breathing apparatus procedures and rescue techniques awards.

Following the end of course debrief the new Apprentice Firefighters took up their postings in early January after a short period of leave over the Christmas period and have now commenced their apprenticeship.

Due to unforeseen establishment changes, during the latter part of 2021, the original plan for 50 wholtime trainees undergoing initial training based at Learning & Development and progress through to complete the Operational Firefighter Apprenticeship program within 24 months was adjusted to support the maintenance of operational firefighter numbers and crewing levels. This resulted in 6 competent on call firefighters, who had been successful in the original wholtime process being brought forward and placed directly onto wholtime shift/day crewed stations without the requirement to complete their training again, avoiding duplication, other than an ensuring any specific development needs were identified with support from L&D. This being after a review of entry routes into the service by the Director of Response. A further recruitment /transfer process in September/October 2021 saw a further 10 competent firefighters placed in a similar way with a small number remaining in a recruitment pool for additional resilience

A further wholtime course of 8 wholtime trainees is planned to commence in April 2022 plus two initial on call modules in January (commenced) and September for a total of 32 on call firefighter trainees This will build on their 20 week on station initial development modules. In addition the on call support team pilot scheme have been given support and guidance to train additional on call firefighters in their core skills locally on station adding to the organisational learning & development capacity and flexibility. This process is subject to quality assurance and investment by L&D and a small number of trainees have successfully completed this approach to date

- 4.4c) The High Potential Programme continues to support people by providing development experience's and opportunities. During 2022 the programme is going to ripple out to a new group of individuals and combine our culture journey with individual development. A business case is being prepared in conjunction with Staffordshire Police Organisation Development team to roll out the individual coaching tools, and team development principles across the workforce. This work is combining with, and supporting the organisational development which is being undertaken by the Service Insights team.
- 4.4d) In 2021, the Insights and Engagement department along with colleagues from the Service completed 146 workshops to discuss *Our Culture*. These sessions were delivered mainly through video conferencing, but there were also some face-face workshops provided where everyone had an opportunity to share their views. From

the analysis of the notes taken from the sessions, a report was written and shared across the Service in October 2021.

In November 2021 – January 2022 a request was made to the whole organisation to provide feedback with ideas and solutions to the points that were in the report. From this, 48 points were provided that will then support the action plan to *Our Culture* that is being prepared with the Insights and Engagement department and the Principal Officers.

- 4.4e) **Grenfell** - The Phase 1 report covers the events of the fire that occurred on 14<sup>th</sup> June 2017 and the response from the London Fire Brigade. A significant number of recommendations (ninety-seven in total) based upon the findings from the incident – are being managed locally by Staffordshire Fire and Rescue Service through a task and finish group. Many of the actions have national implications and they are being strategically managed at a national level by the National Fire Chiefs Council (NFCC). Updates on strategic issues continue to be shared from the NFCC with all FRS's through its Central Programme Office and Building Safety Programme Team.

### **SFRS actions**

The actions identified are complex and wide ranging and they have been allocated to lead officers in order to for them to implement specific areas of work and record progress. The main themes that are being reviewed are relevant to High Rise Residential Buildings (HRRBs) and include:

- Training
- Incident Command
- Operational Guidance and Learning
- Communications
- Equipment
- Stay Put Policy and Evacuation
- Foreseeable Risk
- Fire Safety Information
- Firefighter Physical and Mental risk
- Working with other stakeholders

### **Work ongoing**

We are now investing in improved communications with Fire Control through MAIT and Airwave which will improve communications between control rooms between partners.

We are working together to implement National Operational Guidance by spring 2022 and have introduced a mobilising officer's group.

## **Next steps**

A review of our JESIP training and awareness will commence in February. Training has taken place between Fire control and Fire officers working on improving communications between the fire ground and Fire control once evacuation is initiated. This will be a priority going forward which links to our overall operational training, any new equipment required and improving our command support functionality, when dealing with Tall Building incidents and specifically evacuation.

## **Conclusion**

The Police, Fire and Crime Panel will continue to receive updates in line with their proposed work plan for the coming year and as requested.

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