



NORTHAMPTONSHIRE POLICE, FIRE & CRIME PANEL

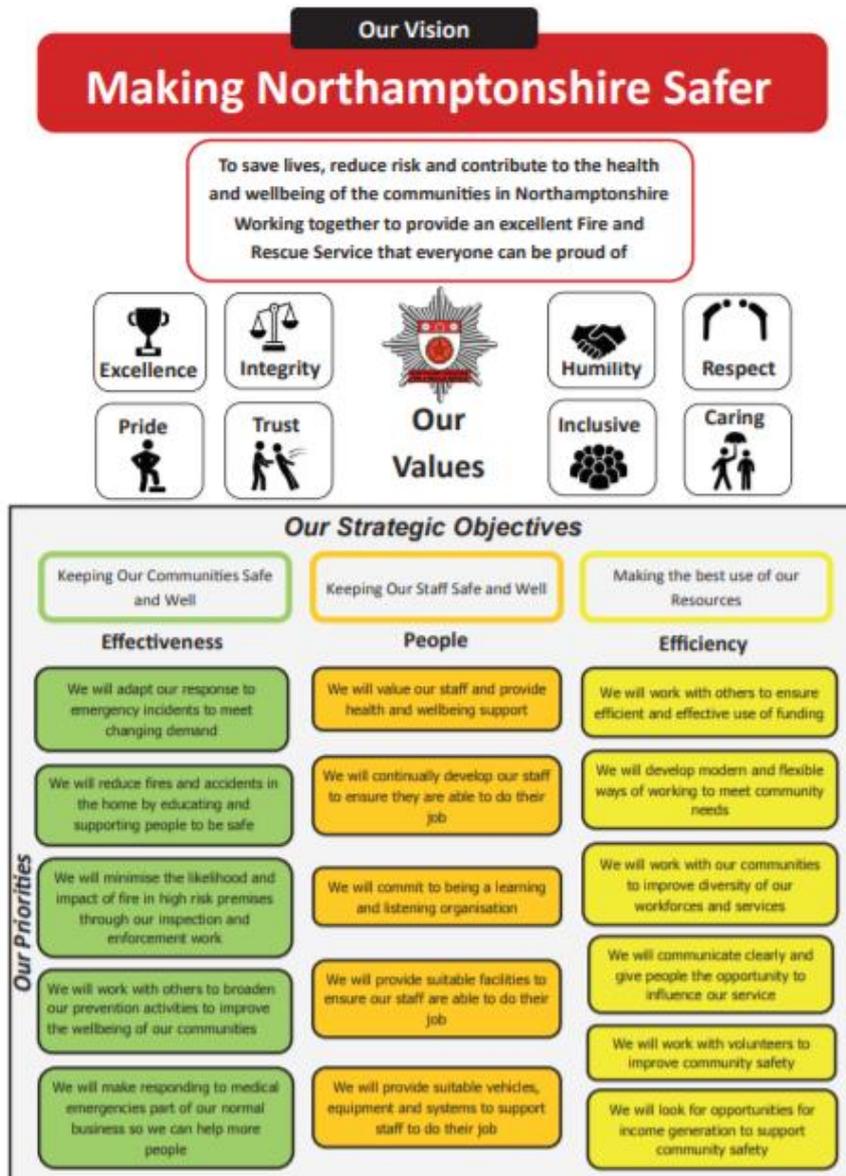
9th September 2021

Office of The Northamptonshire Police Fire and Crime Commissioner Fire & Rescue Plan Update

1. Introduction

1.1 This report updates the Panel on the work of the Northamptonshire Police and Crime Commission and the progress being made in relation to the delivery of the Fire and Rescue Plan for Northamptonshire.

2. Delivering the Fire and Rescue Plan



Our Vision

Making Northamptonshire Safer

To save lives, reduce risk and contribute to the health and wellbeing of the communities in Northamptonshire
Working together to provide an excellent Fire and Rescue Service that everyone can be proud of



Excellence



Integrity



Our
Values



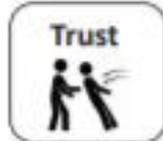
Humility



Respect



Pride



Trust



Inclusive



Caring

Our Strategic Objectives

Keeping Our Communities Safe and Well

Effectiveness

We will adapt our response to emergency incidents to meet changing demand

We will reduce fires and accidents in the home by educating and supporting people to be safe

We will minimise the likelihood and impact of fire in high risk premises through our inspection and enforcement work

We will work with others to broaden our prevention activities to improve the wellbeing of our communities

We will make responding to medical emergencies part of our normal business so we can help more people

Keeping Our Staff Safe and Well

People

We will value our staff and provide health and wellbeing support

We will continually develop our staff to ensure they are able to do their job

We will commit to being a learning and listening organisation

We will provide suitable facilities to ensure our staff are able to do their job

We will provide suitable vehicles, equipment and systems to support staff to do their job

Making the best use of our Resources

Efficiency

We will work with others to ensure efficient and effective use of funding

We will develop modern and flexible ways of working to meet community needs

We will work with our communities to improve diversity of our workforces and services

We will communicate clearly and give people the opportunity to influence our service

We will work with volunteers to improve community safety

We will look for opportunities for income generation to support community safety

Our Priorities

2.1 Work Delivered by NFRS

- 2.2 **Investing in the Front Line** - As the Police, Fire and Crime Commissioner for the county, I am proud of the work we have undertaken to invest in and improve the Fire and Rescue Service. Ten transferees have now been welcomed to the Northamptonshire Fire & Rescue family which I funded in addition to 20 recruits that were needed earlier this year to replace outgoing staff. The ten firefighters will now be working out of Daventry and Rushden fire stations, having recently completed their intensive training at the fire training centre in Chelveston.

Of the ten starters, three had served as on-call firefighters in Northamptonshire but wanted to make the role full-time – while seven have moved from other services in the country. The move also offers an alternative job path for many of them, with previous careers of the new intake including spells working in logistics, the food industry and the Royal Air Force. It's really exciting to welcome ten new recruits to Northamptonshire Fire & Rescue Service. We made a commitment to the people of Northamptonshire that we would make them even safer. It's really pleasing to hear these new recruits say they joined us because the fire service is on the move and is a good place to come and work.

- 2.3 **Throw Lines** - Thanks to funding I have been able to provide, throw lines have now been installed at some of Northamptonshire's nature hotspots to offer greater protection for those who find themselves struggling in the water. The throw lines have been put in place with fixed boards which offer instructions to members of the public on how they can use them to rescue people from the water. The five boards have been installed by Northamptonshire Fire & Rescue Service in partnership with the Canal & River Trust and have been funded through my office of and the Northamptonshire Fire & Rescue fire grant. Four of the boards are already fully operational at Stoke Bruerne canal near Blisworth Tunnel; and the reservoirs at Welford, Sulby and Naseby. The final board will be erected at Boddington Reservoir. There are some beautiful to beauty spots featuring water in our county, and we want to ensure that our residents can enjoy them while they are out and about. This was a really great initiative and I was more than happy to make the funds available so that it could happen. A further five throw line boards will be installed in the Daventry area over the coming months through the Operation Unite project – which involves the police, fire and local authorities. The throw lines will be installed as a response to the tragic death of a 37-year-old man at Drayton Reservoir in October 2020.
- 2.4 **The Arson Taskforce** - During the Anti-social behaviour awareness week, the Fire and Rescue Service highlighted how they are helping to make communities safer which included the work of the Arson Task Force. Set up in 2004, the Arson Task Force (ATF) is a joint partnership between Northamptonshire Fire & Rescue Service and Northamptonshire Police.

The ATF has four key objectives: prevention, education, investigation and detection. Prevention is the ATF's top focus – deliberately started fires have a significant impact on communities and can lead to local areas going into disrepair, which is why doing everything possible to stop deliberate fires being set in a dangerous or even criminal way is so important.

Through the Fire Setter programme, the ATF engage with young people who start fires and commit offences of arson. The engagement will often involve schools, social services, parents or guardians and a variety of other interested agencies. Work is undertaken to try and educate young people about the impact of their choices, and to stop early signs of fire setting escalating to arson. At times people may not understand the dangers of what they are doing, or that it could have a massive impact on their future life and job prospects. Other areas of concern include void and vacant buildings. The ATF works with partners to ensure better management of void and derelict buildings. Responsible people and landowners are contacted and advised of their obligations under the law.

The ATF is a long-standing partnership between Northamptonshire Fire and Rescue Service and Northamptonshire Police. This working partnership is an important one for the county. It allows the two services to understand each other's data and information and risks posed across arson and deliberate fire setting. It enables the services to jointly help protect both people and property by problem solving and preventing future incidents. The ATF also deals with instances of domestic abuse where there are risks and threats of arson, supporting victims in fire safety. The team also works with partners to combat fly-tipping, knowing that dumped materials often provide the fuel for opportunistic arsonists.

- 2.5 **Fire Safety Risk Assessments** - With the easing of lockdown, Northamptonshire Fire and Rescue Service continues to support licensed premises. As more businesses started to open their doors, Northamptonshire Fire and Rescue Service (NFRS) have been reminding licensed businesses and licensee holders to review their Fire Safety Risk Assessments and ensure that they are following fire safety regulations. NFRS works closely with businesses across the county, providing advice and guidance to help them comply with their legal obligations. In the year leading up to the COVID lockdown in March 2020, The Protection Team carried out around 800 fire inspections at commercial premises. Whilst the pandemic restricted access to visit these premises, the Protection Team continued to support local business by providing phone consultations and visits where necessary, along with a package of information for business owners to help themselves. To support the reopening of more businesses, NFRS launched a comprehensive video showing how to calculate occupancy limits, a key fire safety consideration. The video has help business owners and managers undertake an assessment of their venue and work out the maximum capacity based on standing and seating floor space, as well as size and number of fire exits. NFRS encouraged every business opening their doors for the first time in many months, or those extending access to indoor facilities, to review fire safety plans and procedures. NFRS have also proactively contacted key business

types across the county to arrange fire safety inspections and as restrictions lift, along with carrying out unannounced visits.

2.6 **Portable Mannequins** - I have provided funding for new portable mannequins that will help to ensure that lifesaving resuscitation skills can be taught more easily across Northamptonshire. The new mannequins will be used by the Emergency Services Cadets to teach young people how to carry out CPR and will also be available for the Prevention team at Northamptonshire Fire & Rescue Service to use at community organisations and events. The dolls are easily transportable as they can be fitted into a small bag and are self-inflatable. The ten CPR kits will make a 'big difference' as a realistic training aid and I was honoured to be able to support our Emergency Services Cadets with funding for this new training equipment. I do hope they never have to put it into practice, but the skill of being able to save a life is a great thing and I am proud to have been able to support their learning. The Emergency Services Cadets is open to young people aged from 13 to 18 who have an interest in any of the emergency services, whether it's police, fire or ambulance. Cadets who study in all three of the specialties are all taught resuscitation skills, including making sure that the area in which they are treating someone is safe and clear from debris. Cadets are taught to check for danger, make sure that the airways are clear and that the person they are treating is breathing.

2.7 **Northamptonshire Fire and Rescue Service Performance** – As part of our ongoing commitment to increase the effectiveness and efficiency of the Fire and Rescue Service, we have reviewed and improved the manner in which NFRS report their performance. The reports I now receive provide an oversight of performance and demand trends over a three -year period, which enhances my ability to scrutinise the work of the Fire and Rescue Service and hold the Chief Fire Officer to account on behalf of the residents of Northamptonshire. I have attached a copy of the most recent performance report at Appendix A.

3. Holding the Chief Fire Officer to account

3.1 The purpose of the Fire Accountability Board is to support the PFCC in exercising the statutory duties of holding the Chief Fire Officer to account and forms part of a wider ranging programme of assurance across the breadth of Fire and Rescue activities.

3.2 The business of the Board covers areas of concern in performance and service delivery at a strategic level, strategic budget setting, medium term financial planning and other matters requiring ongoing levels of assurance.

3.3 Fire Accountability Board 9 February 2021

3.4 **Budget conditions letter update** - As part of the budget setting process for 2020/2021, the Commissioner and Chief Fire Officer agreed a budget conditions letter outlining areas that were to be delivered in this financial year. The Commissioner requires a paper which demonstrates the progress made to date on

the delivery of the agreed outcomes and measures. The Commissioner was largely assured that NFRS either had or were on track to deliver the conditions as set out and agreed between him and Chief Fire Officer for the financial year 202/21. He was assured that many of the conditions and already been met and particularly in relation to more effective financial management. Some areas still required improvements and these, as such might be reflected again in the forthcoming 2021/22 letter.

3.5 Road Safety - A key part of the Commissioners Police and Crime Plan and Fire and Rescue Plan relates to road safety. The Commissioner requests a report that outlines the activity the NFRS undertake in relation to road safety delivery and interventions. The Commissioner was satisfied and assured with the approach taken by NFRS in relation to the delivery of road safety, in particular their partnership approaches via NSRA. He accepted that there had been some decline in certain activity in the past months as a result of the Covid pandemic, meaning that face to face activity had reduced but was assured that plans existed to restart this at an appropriate time in the future.

3.6 Fire Accountability Board 9th March 2021

3.7 Performance update - The Commissioner requires a report of the performance against the measures and metrics contained within the IRMP. The Commissioner was assured that good progress continued to be made by NFRS in achieving the metrics relating to delivery of the IRMP and Fire and Rescue Plan. He stated that for future reports he was looking to move to presentation of the performance data and metrics on a rolling three-year trend as opposed to a quarter by quarter comparison. He raised with the Chief Fire Officer the sustainability of the improvements in appliance response times, now that some of the increased availability of RDS seen in the earlier days of the Covid pandemic were returning to normality. The Chief Fire Officer provided reassurance that he was confident that he and his team had in place plans to continue maintaining the positive results and trajectory seen in this regard over the past 18 months.

3.8 Covid 19 Response - During 2020 HMICFRS undertook an inspection in 44 Fire and Rescue Services across England and Wales. This inspection was to assess their response to the Covid 19 pandemic. These reports were published on 22nd January 2021. The Commissioner request a formal presentation of the finding of the report relating to NFRS, with if required, plans to respond to any recommendations and to highlight positive practice. The sector wide inspections were carried out between September and December 2020 and were largely positive. The Commissioner thanked all staff in NFRS that had contributed to the positive response to the pandemic. He welcomed the positive HMICFRS inspection report on the local response by the service and was assured by the positivity of the report. There were three areas for consideration from the inspection report. These were subject to discussion and the Commissioner was provided with assurances from the Chief Fire Officer that effective processes were in place to continue to progress against these observations.

3.9 Fire Accountability Board 13th April 2021

3.10 Budget conditions letter update - As part of the budget setting process for 2020/21, the Commissioner and Chief Fire Officer agreed a Budget conditions letter outlining areas that were to be delivered in this financial year. The Commissioner requires a paper which demonstrates the delivery against the agreed outcomes and measures. The Commissioner recognised the work that had been undertaken to meet most of the conditions in the budget letter. He specifically recognised the early progress in respect of Interoperability between Police and Fire and the enabling services work in ICT. However, the Commissioner was clear in his expectation that there is still more work to do, particularly in regard to ICT and ensuring a savings plan is identified by Fire to balance the medium-term plan. The Commissioner was assured in relation to increased pump availability and response times but made the point that response times need continuous management oversight to ensure the improvements are maintained.

3.11 Grenfell Enquiry - The Commissioner requires a quarterly update on the action plans and recommendations from the Grenfell Inquiry along with any resource or investment requirements arising from this. The Commissioner remains assured that NFRS have in place an effective response plan for actions arising from the Grenfell phase 1 inquiry. He sought the commitment of the Chief Fire Officer to ensure that progress continued on the same trajectory and the completion of remaining actions.

3.12 Fire Accountability Board 11th May 2021

3.13 Internal audits - The Commissioner requested a report relating to the internal audits which have taken place relating to NFRS in the financial year 2020/2021. The report provided an overview of the internal audit programme, outlined all the findings in relation to levels of assurance for each audit, whether they are acceptable or not, progress against those recommendations and timescales for completion of all of them. The Commissioner was assured that the NFRS internal audit programme was examining the correct areas of the business post the 2019 governance change and that progress was being made in relation to the recommendations and the activity required as a result. He noted that several actions following recommendations had slipped and was clear that he preferred realistic timescales for required changes to be implemented, rather than identifying potentially unrealistic early completion dates that then needed to be adjusted. Whilst articulating that further progress needed to be made in a few areas, such as asset management and in regard to some financial controls he was overall assured that positive progress was being made.

3.14 Fire Accountability Board 8th June 2021

3.15 Capital Investment and Savings Plan - The Commissioner requested a paper that outlines and presents the revised Capital Investment Plan for 2021/2022, alongside a proposed Savings Plan. Assistant Chief Officer Paul Bullen provided an overview of the Capital Investment Plan which was last presented to the Commissioner in April 2021. The paper contains a narrative with appendices and a separate spreadsheet

covering Fleet, Estates, ICT, Operational equipment and Financing. The Commissioner was assured that good progress has been made in preparing the savings plan, some savings can be immediately taken forward and other options for which further work will take place. Reserves are now sufficient to meet both unforeseen risks and to smooth the impact on timing of savings plans or funding receipts. The Commissioner was assured by the further work on the Capital programme which he has approved with a review in the Autumn to include ESN and any other unspecified areas.

3.16 HMICFRS Inspection - The Commissioner requested a paper that outlines evidenced progress against all recommendations from the HMICFRS Effectiveness, Efficiency and People Inspection 2018/19, as well as articulating preparations for the next planned round of inspections. Following the November 2018 inspection, the Service was informed by HMICFRS of two areas of concern. As a result, it was required to submit an action plan setting out how they would address them. The Commissioner recognised the good progress made by NFRS to issues identified in the 2018 HMICFRS inspection, particularly in relation to the identified causes for concern. The Commissioner sought reassurance that the service was properly prepared, and able to evidence, all the positive work it has undertaken in readiness for the next HMICFRS reinspection. Whilst the Commissioner was assured that progress has been made, he suggested that the Service was better able to articulate and evidence the areas where improvements had been completed. Where improvements were ongoing, they should also be able to clearly articulate why this was the case.

3.17 NFRS performance update - The Commissioner requires a report on the performance against the measures and metrics contained within the IRMP. The Commissioner recognised the work undertaken by the service in order to revise the quarterly performance report. The report was clear and articulated the key performance areas for NFRS and the delivery of the IRMP. The Commissioner was assured that progress was continuing in relation to pump availability and response times. The Commissioner discussed falling demand, a trend that can be seen year and urged the Chief Fire Officer to consider the opportunities that this provided for reform.

3.18 Fire Accountability Board 13th July 2021

3.19 Fire and Rescue Service Code of Ethics The NFCC, APCC and LGA have recently agreed a national Code of Ethics for Fire and Rescue Services. The Commissioner requested a paper that highlighted and outlined the key elements to this code and informed him as to how the Chief Fire Officer intends to incorporate this into existing service values, internal performance and misconduct processes and future promotion and development processes. The Commissioner welcomed the report from the Chief Fire Officer and was assured that the Chief Fire Officer and his team had responded positively to this recently agreed national code of ethics. He was grateful for the fact that they had already started work to properly embed this across the organisation, including into development, selection and recruitment, discipline and promotion processes. He indicated that he would be looking to raise

this at accountability board again in 9 months' time to seek examples of where this had made a difference.

3.20 Internal Audit Update The Commissioner requested a paper, following the Internal Audit paper from May 2021, which provides an overview of all internal audits, not reported in May 2021, to include all recommendations made from audits undertaken in 2020/2021, whether these recommendations have been accepted, progress against their completion and where not completed outlines the timescales for their completion. The Commissioner was assured that Northamptonshire Fire and Rescue Service had governance processes in place to receive, action and monitor internal audit recommendations and that the overall audit report position was more positive than last year. The Commissioner made the point that those areas where audit had reported less than satisfactory levels of compliance this year were broadly the same as those the previous year and he set a clear expectation that these areas would demonstrate at least a satisfactory level of compliance next year.

3.21 Fire Accountability Board 11th August 2021

3.22 Budget outturn position and Treasury Management Outturn 2020/2021 - The Commissioner considered a report which provided details of the final outturn position for Northamptonshire Fire and Rescue Service for the financial year 2020/2021. The report included the return relating to Treasury Management. Having reflected on the report, the Commissioner was pleased with the progress that has been made whilst acknowledging there is still some way to go. This was also acknowledged by the external auditors who recognised the significant progress that has been made, despite the fragile state of NCFRA reserves at the time of the governance transfer. In terms of the Budget Outturn report, The Commissioner was assured that he had seen further improvement in the budget and financial management from staff at NFRS. However, some areas require robust financial management and both Chief Fire Officer and Chief Finance Officer assured him that there was a plan in place to tackle these remaining areas. The Commissioner agreed three carry forward proposals that were articulated in the paper presented to him. With regard to the Treasury Management Outturn report, the Commissioner noted the paper presented to him. He was assured that there were effective processes in place, that complied with CIPFA guidelines relating to Treasury Management. The Commissioner noted the low level of income generated from investments but recognised that this was as a result of the current economic climate and the need to be prudent with public money.

3.23 Call handling and command and despatch system update - NFRS currently use call handling and command and despatch systems that will reach end of life and be unsupported in January and March 2023, respectively. Current arrangements for these services are in place for joint operation with Warwickshire Fire and Rescue Service and NFRS are during July 2021 issuing an invitation to tender for replacements with WFRS. The capital replacement programme has a sum allocated for this and the Commissioner has agreed to this RFQ process on the basis that the Chief Fire Officer will need to identify savings to pay for any product that he wishes

to procure over this amount where no option exists to deliver it for the amount set aside. The Commissioner requested a report that demonstrated the progress being made to identify where additional savings will be made if this is a course that the CFO intends to take and described the business continuity plan relating to the loss of either of these systems and how this would work if there was a permanent loss of these system ahead of any new system going live. The Commissioner was pleased to see that progress was being made on the tender for a replacement system. He reminded the Chief Fire Officer that there was an agreed financial envelope for the procurement of a new system and that in the event that the Chief Fire Officer wished to procure a product beyond this envelope, he would not sign an order until he was assured that the appropriate savings had been identified to meet this gap.

4. Summary of PFCC Decisions (Fire and Rescue Authority) taken

- [NFRS Decision Record 46 – Fire Budget and Precept 2021 and 2122](#)
- [NFRS Decision Record 47 – NFRS Insurance Variation](#)
- [NFRS Decision Record 48 – NFRS Pension Administration](#)
- [NFRS Decision Record 49 – Units 1-5 Baron Avenue](#)
- [NFRS Decision Record 50 – Type B Contract Variation](#)
- [NFRS Decision Record – 51 Belinda Ferrison House](#)
- [NFRS Decision Record 52 Occupational Health and Wellbeing](#)
- [NFRS Decision Record 53 Basic Occupational Health services](#)
- [NFRS Decision Record 54 Mobile Device Terminals](#)
- [NFRS Decision Record 55 Aerial Appliances](#)
- [NFRS Decision Record 56 PPE Contract variation](#)
- [NFRS Decision Record 57 Aerial Turntable Ladder Appliance Contract](#)
- [NFRS Decision Record 58 Smoke Alarms](#)
- [NFRS Decision Record 59 Digital Radios](#)
- [NFRS Decision Record 60 Joint IT Team](#)
- [NFRS Decision Record 61 B type appliances variation](#)
- [NFRS Decision Record 62 NFRS Youth Engagement Officer](#)
- [NFRS Decision Record 63 Compressor Replacement](#)
- [NFRS Decision Record 64 NFRS Cleaning Contract](#)
- [NFRS Decision Record 65 NFRS Pay Awards](#)

5. Recommendations

- 5.1 That the Northamptonshire Police, Fire and Crime Panel considers the content of the report and its appendix.

Stephen Mold
Northamptonshire Police, Fire and Crime Commissioner