



Hereford & Worcester Fire and Rescue Service

Statement of Assurance

2022-23



HEREFORD & WORCESTER
HWFR
FIRE AND RESCUE SERVICE



Contents

Foreword	1
Our Service in 2022-23	2
Our People	3
Our Purpose	4
Service Structure	5
Our Ethical Principles	6
Our Work in 2022-23	7
Governance Assurance	9
Financial Assurance	11
Operational Assurance	13
Directory of Assurance Documents	15
Contact Us	Back Cover

Foreword

The Statement of Assurance is an annual report designed to provide assurance to the communities of Herefordshire and Worcestershire that we are doing everything we can to respond to emergencies when our communities need us, and provide effective and efficient prevention and protection services.

The Statement follows national guidance set out in the 2018 Fire and Rescue National Framework for England, which requires Fire and Rescue Authorities to provide assurance to our community and to Government on governance, financial and operational matters. It also needs to have due regard to the expectations set out in the National Framework and the Authority's own Community Risk Management Plan (CRMP).

The Statement covers the year up to 31 March 2023 and highlights some of the work we are doing to drive excellence across our whole Service, and signposts readers to other documents and reports where more detail can be found. It sits alongside our strategies, plans, policies and procedures including the CRMP, the Annual Service Review and Annual Service Plan, the Annual Governance Statement and the Annual Statement of Accounts. All documents can be viewed on the [Publications](#) page of the Service website.

As Chairman of the Fire Authority and Chief Fire Officer, we are confident that our governance, financial and operational assurance arrangements continue to be effective and appropriate in supporting our aim to deliver our services to the best of our abilities for the communities of Herefordshire and Worcestershire.

We trust that readers will also be assured that we have conducted our business in accordance with the law and proper standards and have used our public funding efficiently, effectively and economically.



Councillor Kit Taylor
Chairman of the Fire Authority



Jonathon Pryce
*Chief Fire Officer/
Chief Executive*

Our Service in 2022-23

Hereford & Worcester Fire and Rescue Service (HWFRS) provides prevention, protection and emergency response services across Herefordshire and Worcestershire. The two counties cover a large, mostly rural area of around 1,500 square miles (3,920 square kilometres), and is home to 790,700 people, three-quarters of whom live in Worcestershire.

To cover this very large area, we organise our services around three Districts – North, South and West – which provides a balanced response to community risk.

Core Purpose

Keeping people safe from fire and other risks – responding efficiently and effectively to incidents and emergencies



686 (764 roles)
Staff Members



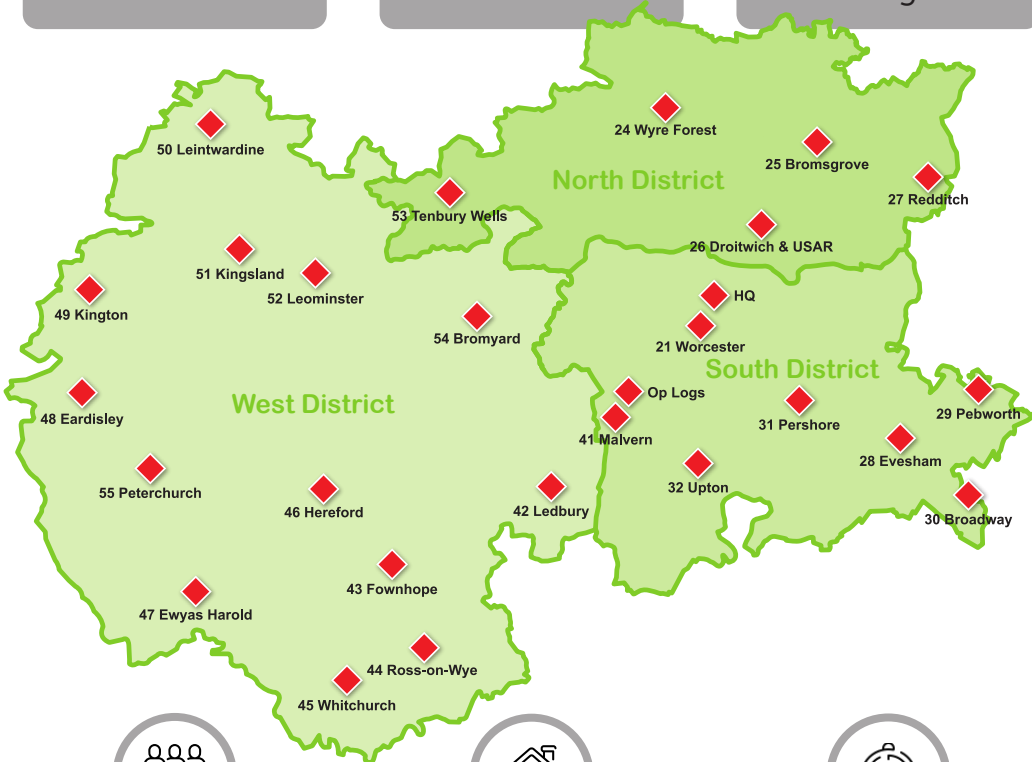
25
Fire Stations



41
Fire Engines



£37.0 Million
Budget



4,755
Road length
in Miles



790,700*
Population



342,700*
Households



392,000
Area in Hectares



43,805**
Businesses

*Census 2021

**Office for National Statistics 2022-23

Our People

Staff Structure



The Service is led by the Chief Fire Officer/ Chief Executive with the support of the Strategic Leadership Board (SLB), made up of Directors and Assistant Directors. The Service employs 686 full-time and part-time members of staff, who work in 764 roles. Firefighters make up approximately 80% of the workforce, assisted by professional teams providing support and enabling services such as financial, human resources and legal services. The 26 Fire Control firefighters are the frontline for receiving emergency calls and deploying crews to incidents. There are also 15 active volunteers supporting community safety activities.

Gender Balance

This is an improvement from 18% female - 82% male ratio recorded in March 2022.



19%



81%

Ethnic Minority Representation

Ethnic minority representation in the Service remains the same as at March 2022.



10%

Within the community*



6%

Within the Service

Staff Sickness

12.95 days/shifts were lost per person in 2022-23, an increase of 6.36% compared to 2021-22. The 2022-23 figure includes Covid-19 sickness absence, while the 2021-22 figures did not.



*Census 2021

Our Purpose

Our Purpose, Vision and Mission represents our commitment to putting the community first, keeping people safe from fire and other risks and protecting the most vulnerable. They underpin everything we do, which benefits us as individuals, the whole Service and everyone in the communities we serve. You can find out more on our [Service website](#).

Purpose

Why we are here

Keeping people safe from fire and other risks. Responding efficiently and effectively to incidents and emergencies.

Vision

What we want to do

Saving More Lives: Building on our successes to continue to make a difference, improve lives and help secure resilient communities.

Mission

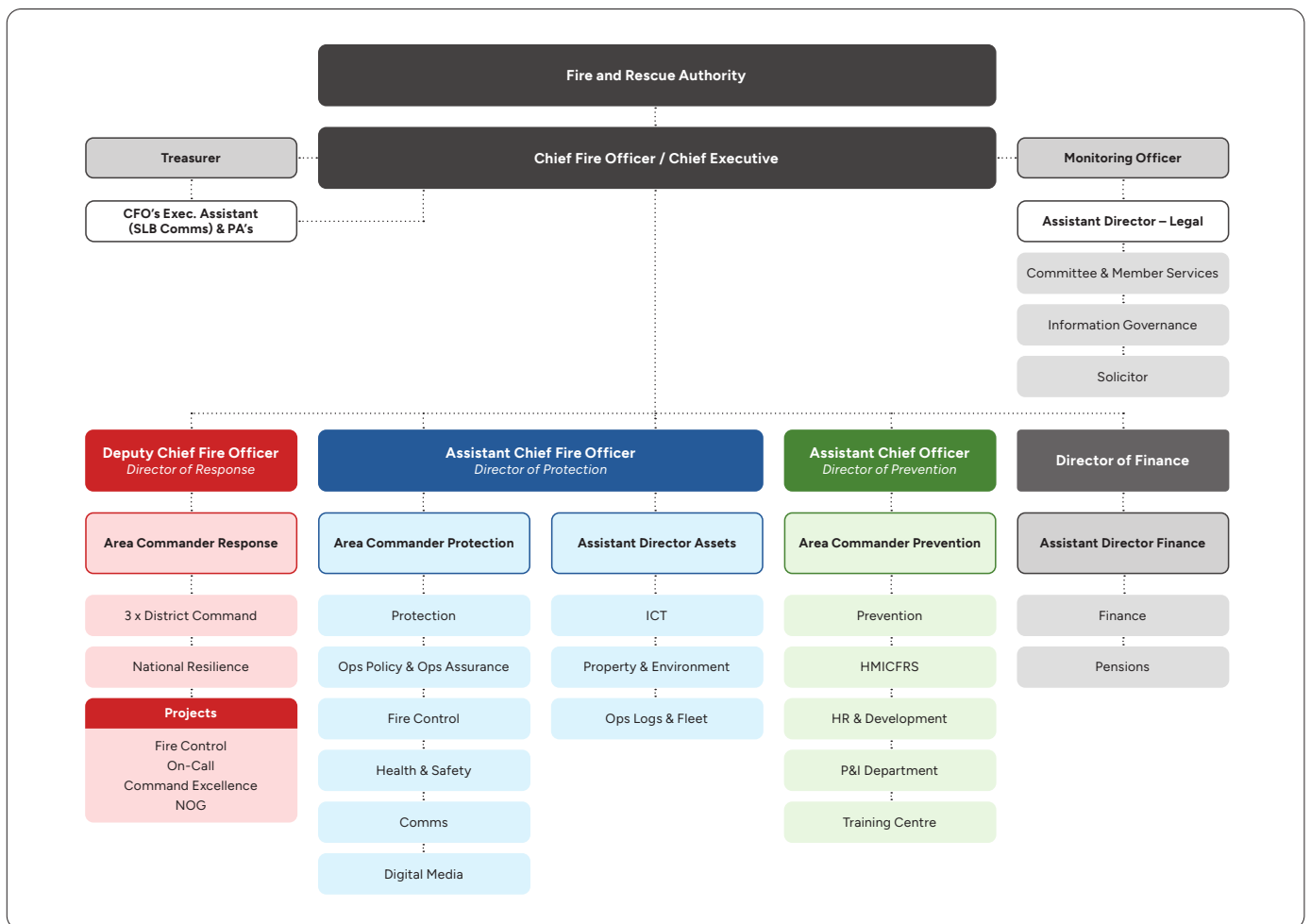
What we do every day

As one professional team we will work hard every day to deliver high quality, sustainable services to our communities.



Service Structure

Over the year, we made a number of small but significant adjustments to our structure. The revised structure reflects the important focus on our three primary functions: Response, Protection and Prevention. Each of these functions has a dedicated Director with a clear line of responsibility and accountability to lead and deliver their respective Core Strategies. The structure helps to embed the Core Code of Ethics for Fire and Rescue Services and also aligns with the way HMICFRS inspect and assess the Service. You can find more about each Department on the [Service website](#).



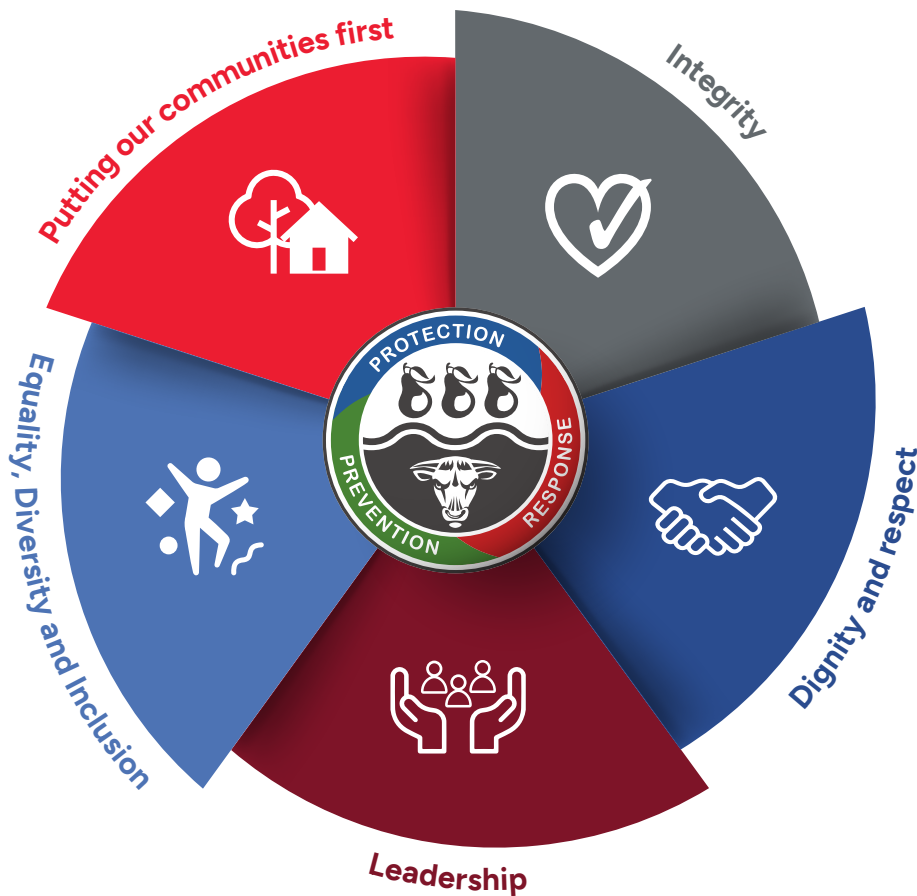
Our Ethical Principles



NFCC
National Fire
Chiefs Council



Over the year, we have continued to embed the [Core Code of Ethics for Fire and Rescue Services](#) in England. Jointly developed by the National Fire Chiefs Council, the Local Government Association and the Association of Police and Crime Commissioners, the Code consists of five clear ethics principles, which provide the basis for promoting good behaviour and challenging inappropriate behaviour. By adopting the Code as our guiding set of values, we are committed to championing ethical behaviours that help to improve organisational culture and workforce diversity, ensuring that communities are supported in the best way.



Putting our communities first



We put the interest of the public, the community and service users first.

Integrity



We act with integrity including being open, honest and consistent in everything we do.

Dignity and respect



We make decisions objectively based on evidence, without discrimination or bias.

Leadership



As positive role models, we are accountable for everything we do and challenge all behaviour that falls short of the highest standards.

Equality, Diversity and Inclusion



We stand against all forms of discrimination, create equal opportunities, promote equality, foster good relations and celebrate difference.

Our Work in 2022-23

During 2022-23, our 24/7 emergency response service dealt with fires, road traffic collisions, flooding and many other emergencies. This year, we saw a 9% increase in the overall number of incidents we attended, rising from 7,477 in 2021-22 to 8,137 in 2022-23. Not surprisingly given the record-breaking heatwave over the summer months, much of the increase related to a 22% increase in the number of fires we attended, of which we saw a 39% increase in outdoor fires. While there was a 31% increase in flooding incidents during the year, the overall number of Special Service incidents attended only rose by 1%. We also saw a 7% increase in False Alarm calls attended.

Focus on Operational and Organisational Excellence

Our aim is to drive excellence in ourselves and in everything we do, so we can deliver a highly professional service and maintain high standards.

Over the year, we continued to focus on driving excellence throughout the Service. We have featured this in our [Annual Service Review 2022-23](#), but some examples are also worth noting here:

Response

- Small but significant changes in our operational approach, such as more assertive firefighting tactics, are helping to deal with incidents quickly, reducing damage and risk to life, and minimising our impact on businesses, communities and the environment.

- Following public consultation, a new Attendance Performance Measure (APM) was adopted, which will help to give residents a more realistic picture of the response times they can expect in the event of an emergency incident, and will give fire and rescue crews an opportunity to review occasions when attendance falls outside expected response times.

Protection

- Over 1,000 complex premises were inspected to ensure fire safety compliance.
- An additional 164 Fire Safety inspections were carried out by operational crews, and ambitious targets have been set to increase this number in future years.
- Implemented new Fire Safety legislation, supporting safety in commercial premises including high-rise buildings.

Prevention

- All areas of improvement set by His Majesty's Inspectorate of Constabularies and Fire and Rescue Services (HMICFRS) were fully addressed, ensuring we can provide an even better prevention service to the public.
- The launch of a new Home Fire Safety Visit programme saw a substantial increase in targeted checks rising from 3,301 in 2021-22 to 6,519 in 2022-23.
- Introduced an internal quality assurance process in line with the National Fire Chiefs Council's Person-Centred Framework, helping to improve standards and ensuring consistent high quality levels when carrying out Home Fire Safety Visits.

Workforce

- Adoption of the national Code of Ethics for Fire and Rescue Services has provided a clear, consistent message to our communities about the ethical standards they can expect from us.
- Results from an excellent response to a Staff Survey carried out at the beginning of 2023 show that HWFRS is considered a good place to work and is creating a positive employee experience. Employees felt proud to work for HWFRS, enjoy working with colleagues, and most feel that they belong at HWFRS, including employees from under-represented staff groups. The feedback will be used to further develop engagement within the workforce, linking into wider cultural organisational development work.



- In spring 2023 a comprehensive Cultural Audit was carried out by ioda, independent research and training specialists. There was an exceptional response to the audit and most respondents highlighted that HWFRS is on a forward-thinking, positive and progressive equality, diversity and inclusion (EDI) journey. HWFRS was seen as a good service with people who understand its values and care about the organisation and the communities we work with/for. Most felt able to challenge inappropriate behaviour and all respondents had a good understanding of the Core Code of Ethics. The full findings, including action points and areas for development, can be found in the Cultural Audit documents on the Service website.
- Commissioned a high-quality EDI training programme to be delivered to all staff during 2023-24. The training has been developed to integrate the findings of the Staff Survey and the Cultural Audit, and aims to help staff to grow and develop their skills about EDI and also how we can all keep improving our culture and behaviours in the workplace.

Value for Money

- Significant progress on major projects, representing an investment of around £16 million in key infrastructure providing modern, high quality facilities for the Service.

Governance Assurance

Making sure our governance arrangements are delivering our services effectively and efficiently



The Service's governing body is Hereford & Worcester Fire Authority. It is made up of 25 local councillors, 6 from Herefordshire Council and 19 from Worcestershire County Council. The West Mercia Police and Crime Commissioner may also attend in a non-voting capacity.

The Authority:

- makes sure the Service carries out its duties in relation to fire prevention, fire safety, firefighting and rescues, including road traffic collisions and other emergencies such as flooding, as set out in the Fire and Rescue Services Act 2004
- makes sure due regard is given to the terms and requirements set out in the Fire and Rescue National Framework for England, as updated in 2018
- sets the budget and approves the Service's overall direction
- appoints the Chief Fire Officer and makes sure the Service has the right people, equipment and training to deliver their services effectively and efficiently in the best interests of the communities of Herefordshire and Worcestershire.

The Authority normally meets four times a year and is supported by three main committees. Most meetings are held in public.

Full details of the Authority, committees, meetings, reports and decisions can be found on [Fire Authority](#) page of the Service website.

The Authority has a responsibility to ensure its business is conducted in accordance with the law and proper standards, and that public money is safeguarded and properly accounted for. This is supported by a [Code of Corporate Governance](#) setting out how good governance will be promoted.

The main elements of the governance framework are:

- [Constitution](#) – defines the roles and responsibilities of the Authority, Committees, Members and Officers;
- [Audit and Standards Committee](#) – reviews arrangements for identifying and managing the Authority's business risks and the approval of policies;
- **Monitoring Officer** – provides advice on the scope of powers and responsibilities of the Authority, and has a statutory duty to ensure lawfulness and fairness of decision making;
- **Chief Financial Officer (Treasurer)** – ensures the sound administration of the financial affairs of the Authority as required by the statutory duties under the Local Government Act 1972, the Local Government Finance Act 1988 and the Account and Audit (England) Regulations 2015;
- **Code of Conduct** – including the Ten General Principles of Public Life.

Each year, the Authority prepares an Annual Governance Statement setting out how it meets its responsibilities. The [2022-23 Annual Governance Statement](#) provides assurance in relation to seven Core Principles:

- A.** Behaving with integrity, demonstrating strong commitment to ethical values and respecting the rule of law;
- B.** Ensuring openness and comprehensive stakeholder engagement;
- C.** Defining outcomes in terms of sustainable economic, social and environmental benefits;
- D.** Determining the interventions necessary to optimise the achievement of the intended outcomes;
- E.** Developing the entity's capacity, including the capability of its leadership and the individuals within it;
- F.** Managing risks and performance through robust internal control and strong public financial management;
- G.** Implementing good practices in transparency, reporting and audit to deliver effective accountability.

The Annual Governance Statement is prepared in accordance with the 'Delivering Good Governance in Local Government Framework 2016' published by CIPFA/SOLACE. As part of this, the Audit & Standards Committee considers reviews of corporate governance arrangements to ensure that the Authority's governance arrangements are working correctly and are relevant to the current environment.

No significant governance issues have been identified at this time and the Annual Governance Statement was signed off by the Chairman of the Fire Authority and Chief Fire Officer/Chief Executive on 19 April 2023.

Audit

During the year, the Worcestershire Internal Audit Shared Service (WIASS) carried out a number of audits in relation to Corporate Governance and System/Management Arrangements. These audits help to ensure our systems and controls are adequate, effective and functioning correctly.

The audits examined the Training Centre Droitwich, Office of the Police and Crime Commissioner Estates, ICT, Stores & Equipment and Fleet. These audits found no limited or below assurance areas and no high priority recommendations were made. The [Internal Audit Annual Report 2022-23](#) is available on the Service website for further information.

Information Governance

The Service collects and maintains information and data to enable us to carry out our statutory duties. The Information Governance service within the Legal Services team ensures information is kept secure and is used fairly and properly. The [Access to Information](#) page of the Service website provides more information, including links to the Freedom of Information and Data Protection acts.

Further information can be found in the [Fire Authority Document Library](#).

Financial Assurance

Ensuring our financial arrangements are in order and providing good value for money



The Fire Authority is responsible for ensuring public money is properly accounted for and used efficiently and effectively. To ensure that sound financial management policies are in place, the Authority adheres to and implements the provisions of the Financial Regulations.

The Regulations cover all aspects of financial management and planning, the management of risks and resources, financial systems and processes, arrangements for joint working and delegation limits.

Assurance is provided through an Annual Statement of Accounts. The Statement is designed to provide a true and fair view of the financial position, including a statement of income and expenditure. In preparing the Statement, the Treasurer follows the Chartered Institute of Public Finance and Accountancy (CIPFA) Code of Practice on Local Authority Accounting in the United Kingdom.

It was intended that the Authority's draft unaudited 2022-23 Statement of Accounts would be available on our website by 31 May 2023. However, due to the late completion of the audit of the [Statement of Accounts 2021-22](#) and information still being outstanding from external organisations, it has not been possible to achieve this date. The audit has now been completed by Grant Thornton UK LLP (external auditors), and confirmation has been given that the accounting treatment adopted by the Authority is correct. However, a national issue surrounding accounting for pensions has emerged, which could impact on the figures in the financial statements.

As soon as all relevant information is available to the Authority, the accounts will be completed and a revised target date for the Authority's draft, unaudited 2022-23 Statement of Accounts will be available on the Service's [Accounts](#) webpage.

Audit

The Fire Authority's arrangements to secure economy, efficiency and effectiveness in its use of resources is subject to internal and external audit by Worcestershire Internal Audit Shared Service and Grant Thornton UK LLP respectively.

Internal audit worked with external audit to help to avoid duplication of effort, provide adequate coverage for the 2022/23 financial year so that an internal audit opinion can be reached, and support external audit by carrying out reviews in support of the accounts opinion work. The internal audit covered the core financial areas of Accountancy and Finance Systems: Main Ledger (including budgetary control and bank receipts), Creditors (accounts payable), Debtors (accounts receivable), and Payroll & Pensions. All areas examined provided assurance, including full assurance for three core financial areas, and there were no limited or below assurance areas reported.

The Authority is satisfied that its financial management arrangements conform with the governance requirements of the CIPFA Statement of the Role of the Chief Financial Officer in Local Government. In addition, the key financial systems are continually reviewed by the Internal Auditor. There were no major weaknesses identified in the 2022-23 financial year.

Budget

Each year, the Authority approves a Medium-Term Financial Plan, which sets out the resources needed to deliver our services, and agrees and annual budgets. Budget Monitoring reports have been presented to the Policy and Resources Committee throughout the year and have shown that the Authority's finances continue to be well controlled. The increased cost of pay settlements in 2022/23 is likely to lead to budget pressures in the medium term. However these are well understood and a report with options for future efficiencies will be brought forward for consideration at a future date.

The budget for 2022-23 was £37.0 million and a summary of how it was spent is included in the [Annual Service Review 2022-23](#). The annual cost to the average Council Tax Band D household was £89.40 or less than 25 pence per day. Full details of the budget and [Council Tax](#) are available on the Service website.

Efficiency and Productivity Plan 2023-24

Under the Fire and Rescue National Framework, each stand-alone Fire Authority was required to publish and submit to the Home Office an Efficiency and Productivity Plan. As part of the joint Home Office/ Local Government Association/National Fire Chiefs Council submission to the last Comprehensive Spending Review, the fire and rescue sector committed to providing 2% efficiencies in non-pay budgets and a 3% increase in Wholetime Firefighter productivity.

The Efficiency and Productivity Plan sets out the ongoing financial challenge currently faced by the Authority and illustrates the recent transformation savings that have been delivered by the Service. Key areas covered in the Plan include the Budget & Medium-Term Financial Plan, Reserves, Precept, Collaboration, Asset Management & Investment in Technology, Resourcing, Efficiency and Productivity. The [Efficiency and Productivity Plan 2023-34](#) is available on the Service website.

Transparency

In addition to ensuring prudent financial management, the Authority is committed to promoting openness and accountability in local decision making, public spending and democratic processes. As part of this, it has adopted a [Transparency Code of Practice](#), which includes details of payments for goods and services to external bodies and suppliers above £250, details of salaries, allowances and expenses paid to staff and Members.

Operational Assurance

Organising our services to make sure risks are well understood and we have the right resources in place to tackle them effectively and safely.



Within the statutory responsibilities set out in the Fire and Rescue Services Act 2004, the Civil Contingencies Act 2004 and other strategic legislation and guidance, we organise our services to make sure our firefighters and communities are kept as safe as possible.

We aim to provide the best training and equipment for our firefighters to do their jobs safely and ensure they have the best incident command and operational leadership available. We continually assess the level of risk across the two counties and use this to help organise how we target our prevention and protection services.

Our overall plans are set out in the [Community Risk Management Plan 2021-25](#) (CRMP) and our Core Strategies; [Response](#), [Protection](#) and [Prevention](#). Together, they represent our four-year strategy for keeping people, their homes, communities and the environment safe. Supporting them are a host of enabling strategies and plans, including the [People Strategy](#) and the annual Medium-Term Finance Plan. The strategies and plans are available on the Service website, and the following diagram highlights the main areas of focus for our work.



In the [Annual Service Plan 2022-23](#), we set out a number of objectives we wanted to achieve over the year. The objectives were designed to provide a priority focus on what we were going to do in 2022-23 towards delivering our Community Risk Management Plan 2021-25 and our Response, Protection and Prevention Core Strategies.

The [Annual Service Review 2022-23](#) sets out how we achieved these objectives, which covered a wide range of operational and organisational priority actions for the year.

Operational Audits

The Service continued its programme of Operational Assurance audits throughout the year. These audits help to ensure that all operational staff maintain their skills, knowledge and competence in carrying out their critical roles. It covers the three main areas of assurance: preparedness, response and learning.

There are procedures in place to ensure the maintenance of up-to-date Competence Training Records (CTR) including the completion of safety critical training courses. Key areas covered during the year were Practical Skills audits ensuring both technical knowledge and practical awareness of guidance and operating procedures in areas such as using breathing apparatus, fire behaviour, trauma, high-rise incidents, water rescue, ladders and pumping procedures.

There is also an ongoing programme of Station Assurance audits. These audits cover a wide range of areas: CTR, fire control, health & safety, information governance, intel, operational logistics and fleet, operational policy, personnel management, prevention, protection and station records. They also ensure the completion of Active Incident Monitoring and development plans. Districts also carry out station exercises, often with neighbouring Fire and Rescue Services, in areas such as Incident Command and Road Traffic Collision incidents.

Further operational learning is gained through post-incident debriefs, maintaining knowledge of National Operational Guidance (NOG) and learning from safety events and exercises through National Operational Learning (NOL) and Joint Organisational Learning (JOL). These often cover major operations with Ambulance, Police, other Fire and Rescue Services and other partners in a range of exercises such as counter terrorism, rail incidents, high-rise incidents and carbon monoxide incidents.

Findings continue to be very positive in relation to practical and technical abilities and in competencies demonstrated, and any outstanding actions required are noted and followed up.

Risk Management Framework

The Service's Risk Management Framework is designed to ensure that the Authority identifies strategic risks and applies the most appropriate and cost-effective control mechanisms to manage those risks wherever possible. It also provides a robust audit trail showing how the Service has considered and mitigated those risks, should an issue be subject to scrutiny.

The Service maintains a Strategic Risk Register (SRR) as an overarching document highlighting the highest impact risks to the Service. Risks are continually monitored and reviewed by departments in their departmental risk registers. Most identified risks can be eliminated or reduced through control measures, but higher or more prevalent risks may be elevated to the SRR.

Where appropriate, the SRR may also incorporate wider risks identified at a national level through the UK's National Security and Risk Assessment and at a regional level through the Community Risk Register prepared by the West Mercia Local Resilience Forum, of which the Service is a member.

Directory of Assurance Documents

Governance

- [Annual Governance Statement 2022-23](#)

Other key governance documents can be found by following the links on the [Transparency Code of Practice](#) page of the Service website.

Key legislation includes:

- [Fire and Rescue Services Act 2004](#)
- [Civil Contingencies Act 2004](#)
- [Regulatory Reform \(Fire Safety\) Order 2005](#)
- [Fire and Rescue Services \(Emergencies\) \(England\) Order 2007](#)
- [Fire and Rescue National Framework for England 2018](#)
- [Local Government Act 1999](#)
- [Localism Act 2011](#)
- [Equality Act 2010](#)
- [Policing and Crime Act 2017](#)
- [Crime and Disorder Act 1988](#)
- [Health and Safety at Work etc. Act 1974](#)
- [Fire Safety \(England\) Regulations 2022](#)
- [Building Safety Act 2022](#)
- [Data Protection Act 2018](#)

Finance

- [Annual Statement of Accounts 2021-22](#)
- [Link to previous Statements of Account](#)
- [Budget and Precept 2022-23 and Medium-Term Financial Plan, Precept Appendices 1-9, Appendix 10 Statement of Prudential Indicators](#)
- [Internal Audit Annual Report 2022-23](#)
- [Efficiency and Productivity Plan 2023-24](#)

Other key finance documents can be found by following links on the [Your Right To Know page](#) of the Service website.

Other legislation and guidance includes:

- [Local Government Finance Act 1988](#)
- [Accounts and Audit Regulations 2015](#)
- [Local Government Transparency Code 2015](#)
- [Public Sector Internal Audit Standards](#)
- [Local Audit and Accountability Act 2014](#)
- [Chartered Institute for Public Finance and Accountability \(CIPFA\) Codes of Practice](#)

Operations

The Fire Authority publishes reports on all its services, including the overall strategy, operational performance, policies and financial plans. Key documents can be found on the [Publications page](#) of the Service website and through the [Publication Scheme](#).

Links include:

- [Annual Service Review 2022-23](#) and the [Annual Service Plan 2023-24](#)
- [Community Risk Management Plan 2021-2025](#)
- [Cultural Audit 2023](#)

The Service website also provides a wide range of information about the Fire Authority and the services delivered by the Fire and Rescue Service. The [Home page](#) will take you to all the links including essential Safety and Advice information and guidance, News and Events and recruitment opportunities through our Join Us page.

Contact us

We always welcome any views or comments on our reports and plans, so if you want to contact us about any issues, please visit our website at www.hwfire.org.uk where you will find full contact details along with links to further information about our services and activities.

If you have any general enquiries, please call 0345 122 4454 or email us at info@hwfire.org.uk.

You can also follow us on Twitter and like us on Facebook @hwfire

Alternatively, you can write to us at:
Hereford & Worcester FRS Headquarters
Hindlip Park
Worcester
WR3 8SP

If you would like this information in an alternative language or format such as large print or audio, please contact us on 0345 122 4454

Your right to know: Access to information

A great deal of information on the Service is available in the public domain through our Publications Scheme and Transparency links on the Service website. If you need assistance, Service staff will help you to obtain the information you want, unless disclosure would be against the law.

You have a right to request information under the [Freedom of Information Act 2000](#), which gives you a general right of access to recorded information held by the Service. The Act is designed to ensure greater accountability, as well as to promote a more open culture. If you want to know what personal information is held about you, you can make a request under the [Data Protection Act 1998](#). To find out more, please click on the [Access to Information](#) link.



HEREFORD & WORCESTER
HWFR
FIRE AND RESCUE SERVICE

