



**Suffolk Fire and  
Rescue Authority**

# Statement of Assurance

## 2019 – 2020

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## 1. Statement of Assurance

This Statement of Assurance details the Suffolk Fire and Rescue Authority financial, governance and operational arrangements that were in place for the period 1 April 2019 to 31 March 2020. The Statement is produced in accordance with the Fire and Rescue National Framework '[Guidance](#) on Statements of Assurance for Fire and Rescue Authorities in England.'

I am satisfied that Suffolk Fire and Rescue Authority ensured that its business was conducted in accordance with the law and proper standards, and that public money was properly accounted for and used efficiently and effectively. I am further satisfied that the requirements of the Fire and Rescue National Framework for England have been met.

I am proud of the fire and rescue service we provide and of the people who work so hard to keep our communities safe.

On behalf of Suffolk Fire and Rescue Authority, I will continue to progress the matters identified under 'further plans'. I am committed to developing the Service so that it can continue to provide an effective, efficient and resilient fire and rescue service for the people of Suffolk, those who visit our county, and for the wider community in case of national emergency.



Councillor Richard Rout  
Cabinet Member for Environment and Public Protection  
Suffolk County Council



## 2. Introduction

As Chief Fire Officer of Suffolk Fire and Rescue Service I am pleased to introduce our Statement of Assurance for 2019/2020.

The Statement was first made a requirement of the 2012 [Fire and Rescue National Framework for England](#) (revised May 2018). It reinforces my commitment to provide our communities with clear information about how we manage public funds and assure the effectiveness of our financial, governance and operational fire service arrangements.

Suffolk Fire and Rescue Service provides a 24/7 emergency response service to deal with fires, road traffic collisions and a wide range of emergencies. Our staff also deliver activities to reduce fires and road traffic collisions, improve community safety, enforce fire safety legislation and reduce risk in the community. We work ever more closely with other blue light responders to maximise the benefit of public spending and ensure Suffolk remains a safe county. We aim to keep deaths and injuries from fire and road traffic collisions at the lowest possible level; fire-related crime is low; businesses are aware of their responsibilities regarding fire safety; people feel safe in their homes; and that our community is assured they have a fire service able to respond well to all reasonably foreseeable emergencies.



Mark Hardingham  
Chief Fire Officer



### **3. Scope of Responsibility**

Fire and Rescue Authorities carry out their functions within a defined statutory framework. The key legislation and Acts defining these requirements include:

- a. Fire and Rescue Services Act 2004
- b. Local Government Act 1999
- c. Localism Act 2011
- d. Policing and Crime Act 2017
- e. Fire and Rescue Services (Emergencies) (England) Order 2007
- f. Civil Contingencies Act 2004
- g. Health and Safety at Work Act 1974
- h. Regulatory Reform (Fire Safety) Order 2005
- i. Fire and Rescue National Framework for England (revised May 2018)

Every fire and rescue authority must have regard to the National Framework in carrying out their functions, and every authority must publish an annual statement of assurance of compliance with the Framework.

The statement should outline the way in which the authority and its fire and rescue service has had regard, in the period covered by the document, to the National Framework, the Integrated Risk Management Plan (IRMP) and to any strategic fire and rescue plan prepared by the authority for that period. The authority must also provide assurance to their community and to government on financial, governance and operational matters.

The Fire and Rescue Services Act 2004 is the principal legislation for fire and rescue services in England and Wales. It imposes upon every fire and rescue authority a duty to provide a fire and rescue service that is: equipped to extinguish fires; protect life and property from fires; rescue people from road traffic collisions and respond to other emergencies. Services must also be equipped to receive and respond to calls for assistance, ensure that staff are properly trained and equipped, and gather risk information to deliver a safe and effective service.

The Act additionally requires fire and rescue authorities to provide communities with fire safety education and advice to reduce deaths and injuries from fire. The Act permits the Secretary of State to publish National Framework requirements that set central government priorities for authorities. Fire and rescue authorities are required to pay due regard to the National Framework.

### **4. COVID-19 (Coronavirus) response, adaptation, and recovery**

During the end of 2019 and the start of 2020, a new and emerging virus infection was identified and confirmed as COVID-19, also known as coronavirus. The outbreak was first identified in Wuhan, China, in December 2019, with the World Health Organization (WHO) declaring the outbreak a Public Health Emergency of International Concern on 30 January 2020 and a pandemic on 11 March 2020. Cases of Coronavirus were starting to be detected within the UK during January/February 2020 and the UK was put into lockdown on 23 March in an unprecedented step to attempt to limit the spread of coronavirus.

The UK lockdown involved the Government requesting members of the public to stay at home and only leave the house to undertake essential journeys, i.e. purchase of food, or to undertake exercise. Key workers, including Fire and Rescue Services, should continue to provide their respective services to the public, however, control measures were put in place to limit the spread of the virus within these settings.

Suffolk Fire and Rescue Service were required to continue to offer an emergency response and other services which responded to areas of fire service related high risk in communities. To do this the Service adapted its working arrangements to enable these services to the public to continue.

## **5. Financial Assurance**

Suffolk Fire and Rescue Authority is required under the Local Government Act to ensure that public money is properly accounted for and used efficiently and effectively. As part of Suffolk County Council (SCC), the Service follows the council's financial procedures for budget setting, monitoring and the production of final accounts.

The County Council's Chief Finance Officer prepares an Annual Statement of Accounts, which includes the Fire and Rescue Service. The accounts detail the council's financial performance in accordance with the Chartered Institute for Public Finance and Accountancy (CIPFA) code of practice. The final accounts are submitted to the Audit Committee for approval.

Suffolk County Council's Annual Statement of Accounts is examined by external auditors who provide independent assessment that the statement presents a true reflection, and that appropriate accounting and financial systems are in place. Their report reviews arrangements for securing economy, efficiency and effectiveness in the use of resources.

The council's Statement of Accounts for the year ending 31 March 2020 was externally audited in line with Audit Commission Act (1998) guidance. The Statement of Accounts for 2019/20 and external auditor's letter are published on Suffolk County Council's website: <https://www.suffolk.gov.uk/council-and-democracy/budget-council-tax-and-finance/council-accounts/>

### National Benchmarking Data





Annual financial and performance data for all English Fire and Rescue Authorities is published nationally, enabling comparisons to be made between each geographical area.

Financial data is collected each year by the Chartered Institute of Public Finance and Accountancy (CIPFA) and performance data is reported annually by the Home Office. In comparison to other fire and rescue services, Suffolk is routinely shown as low-cost and performing well. Suffolk Fire and Rescue Service is in the lowest quartile of cost-per-head of population, with an expenditure of £33.17 per head of population, compared to the national average of £38.12.





The following tables are drawn from a more comprehensive benchmarking report that compares Suffolk Fire and Rescue Service to 42 Fire and Rescue Authorities in England (where current data has been published nationally). The data used is for the financial year 2019/20.

Table 1 (below) shows Suffolk in the lowest quartile cost per head of population fire and rescue service in the country. Suffolk's current cost is £33.17, £4.95 below the national average (£38.12 per person).

**Table 1. Efficiency - £ per head of population**

<b>Measure (comparison with Fire Authorities)</b>	
<b>Efficiency - £ per head of population (average £38.12)</b>	
Upper Quartile - HIGHEST £ COST 	<b>£41.80 - £48.04</b>
Mid to Upper Quartile 	<b>£38.04 - £40.24</b>
Mid to Lower Quartile 	<b>£34.46 - £37.96</b>
Lower Quartile - LOWEST £ COST 	<b>£30.61 - £34.10</b> <b>SUFFOLK = £33.17</b>

**Table 2. Efficiency - £ per Hectare**

<b>Measure (comparison with Fire Authorities)</b>	
<b>Efficiency - £ per Hectare (average £211.71)</b>	
Upper Quartile - HIGHEST £ COST 	<b>£228.39 - £1,057.90</b>
Mid to Upper Quartile 	<b>£149.61 - £207.32</b>
Mid to Lower Quartile 	<b>£90.98 - £147.25</b>
Lower Quartile - LOWEST £ COST 	<b>£30.82 - £88.42</b> <b>SUFFOLK = £66.42</b>

Suffolk compares favourably to other authorities' expenditure. For example, the Service is in the lowest quartile in:

- a. Cost per head of population (table 1)
- b. Cost per hectare (table 2)
- c. Ratio of uniformed officers per fire station
- d. Cost per fire station and fire appliance

(Data from: LG Inform (<https://lginform.local.gov.uk/> and <https://www.gov.uk/government/collections/fire-statistics>)

Suffolk Fire and Rescue Service's (SFRS) budget for 2019/20 was £21.583m with a confirmed full year spend of £21.496m, an underspend of £0.087m. The under spend was due to lower operational response staffing and fleet costs as a result of no spate conditions compared to the previous year alongside a reduction in call outs across the whole year.

Earmarked reserves and grant funding continued to support projects such as Service Redesign, Private Finance Initiative (PFI), increasing blue light collaboration, a more resilient on-call service, and enhanced fleet, equipment and property provision.

As of 1<sup>st</sup> April 2019, service specific general reserves were pooled alongside all other SCC Directorates to create one single pooled reserve which would be available for all SCC services to meet predominately one off additional unforeseen costs. As a result, SFRS no longer holds its own operational reserve.

Earmarked reserves held as of 1<sup>st</sup> April 2019 totalled £2.714m and at year end was £2.713m. £2.256m of this reserve is held to assist with the annual PFI contract costs.

Fire no longer holds any reserves relating to renewals or capital as these are now part of SCC Capital Financing scheme. All capital bids and planning are now considered as part of this process.

The established capital programme supports realisation of statutory responsibilities (e.g. Police and Crime Act 2017) with the creation of additional shared 'blue light' fire, police and ambulance stations. This is predominately funded by a £4.9m transformation grant awarded in 2014 by the Department for Communities and Local Government (DCLG). The total grant spent at the end of 2019-20 was £2.4m; a balance of £2.5m is carried forward for shared facilities planned, or in progress, during 2020/21 and beyond for Stowmarket and Ipswich.

Of our 35 stations, 11 are conditioned to a c£80m Private Finance Initiative scheme; facilities have been completely re-provided or undergone extensive refurbishment.

Spend on a rolling 10-year risk-critical renewal plan for fleet and equipment in 2019/20 was £0.6m. Many of proposed plans of spend in 2019/20 have been moved into 2020/21 due to various delays relating to procurement, delivery and complexity in projects along with the impact of Covid19. These include new enhanced rescue fire engines (including road traffic collision equipment), incident command vehicles and the development of Wattisham Training Centre



The Fire Service was not required to make any additional savings in 2019/20 towards the Council's savings targets but changes to the use of reserves and continuing to support the SCC capital financing strategy have assisted the Council in meeting its overall targets.

## 6. Governance Assurance

The Fire and Rescue Authority for Suffolk is Suffolk County Council, consisting of 75 elected councillors. Most of the Authority's daily business is discharged through the Council's Cabinet. The Cabinet Member for Suffolk Fire and Rescue Service for 2019/20 was Councillor Richard Rout.

Suffolk County Council, as Suffolk Fire and Rescue Authority, is responsible for ensuring Suffolk Fire and Rescue Service operates in accordance with the law. It must ensure public money is safeguarded, properly accounted for, and is used efficiently and effectively. The Fire and Rescue Authority also have a duty to continually improve the way its functions are carried out and to collaborate with other blue light emergency services.

Governance principles adopted by the Council follow those set out in the document: 'Delivering Good Governance in Local Government' produced by CIPFA and the Society of Local Authority Chief Executives. The Suffolk County Council constitution sets out a commitment to good governance and describes the Council's governance framework and processes. Suffolk's Constitution, which includes the Scheme of Delegation, is published on the Council's website:

<https://www.suffolk.gov.uk/council-and-democracy/the-council-and-its-committees/theconstitution/>

The Council publishes its Annual Governance Statement through the Audit Committee. The Statement sets out the Council's governance arrangements, which apply to, and include, Suffolk Fire and Rescue Service.

Performance is assured through several routes:

- SCC full council reviews performance of [SCC Priorities 2017-21](#) which include fire service performance;
- SCC Cabinet considers fire service performance as part of their role in agreeing the IRMP;
- SCC Audit Committee considers the annual Statement of Assurance. The committee also scrutinises other papers that have a fire service element; for example SCC Statement of Accounts and Annual Governance Statement 2019-20 ([Statement of Accounts](#) and [Annual Governance Statement 2019-20](#));
- SCC Scrutiny Committee considers performance;
- SCC Leadership Team (Cabinet and Corporate Management Team) considers fire service outcomes within the SCC quarterly performance report;
- SCC Cabinet Members meet regularly with the Chief and Deputy Chief Fire Officers;
- Labour and Liberal Democrat Group Leaders meet periodically with the Chief Fire Officer;
- A cross-party group of seven Members constitute the SFRS Steering Group and consider performance reports and more general fire service matters;
- SFRS Operational Assurance and Performance and Improvement Boards provide assurance regarding operational matters and drive performance improvement;

- SFRS Peer Challenges were completed 2010, 2013 and 2017;
- SFRS were inspected by Her Majesty’s Inspectorate of Constabulary and Fire & Rescue Services (HMICFRS) in spring 2019. The results of the inspection were published in December 2019 on the [HMICFRS Website](#).

The Council’s Constitution sets out the framework for political and managerial leadership. This framework, and the wider leadership of the Council and Fire and Rescue Service, is underpinned by the ASPIRE organisational values. These values help us deliver the Council’s priorities for Suffolk through to 2021. This planning approach is reflected through the Council and the fire service’s IRMP and three-year Service Plan.



- A – Achieve: “We are the best we can be”*
- S – Support: “We work as one team”*
- P – Pride: “We take pride in and are proud of what we do”*
- I – Inspire: “We model the ASPIRE values”*
- R – Respect: “We give and earn respect”*
- E – Empower: “We empower, encourage and motivate people”*

The Chief Fire Officer (CFO) is a member of the Council’s Corporate Leadership Team and reports to the Chief Executive. Monthly meetings with the Corporate Leadership Team and Cabinet review policy development in advance of Cabinet and Full Council meetings. A close working relationship exists between the Chief Fire Officer and Cabinet Member, who has a much broader remit for Environment and Public Protection beyond the fire and rescue service. In addition to informal day-to-day contact, the relationship is conducted through fortnightly one-to-one meetings and regular, more formal, Directorate briefings for the Cabinet Member, supported by the Deputy Chief Fire Officer.

Councillors from the different political groups contribute to fire and rescue service business through the Fire and Rescue Service Steering Group. This meets quarterly, has agreed terms of reference, and is chaired by the Cabinet Member. The Group provides a steering function, ensuring that the fire authority meets the expectations and requirements set out in the National Framework. The group also guides the development of the IRMP, the annual Statement of Assurance, and reviews Service performance. Regular written briefings are provided for Councillors, and meetings held with the lead member of the opposition party and other political groups as required.

Political engagement with fire and rescue service representative bodies (Fire Brigades Union, Fire Officers’ Association, the Fire and Rescue Services Association and Unison) is managed through the Fire Service Joint Forum. This is a cross-party councillor group supported by the Chief Fire Officer and senior staff. It is chaired alternately by the Cabinet Member and representative body. The Joint Forum considers issues associated with fire and rescue service employee relations and policy development. The forum complements the daily arrangements that support effective industrial relations management.

A 'golden thread' links the County Council and Fire and Rescue Service governance and management arrangements:

- Suffolk County Council Leadership Team (Corporate Leadership Team and Cabinet) – CFO attendee
- Suffolk County Council Corporate Leadership Team – CFO attendee
- Fire and Public Safety Directorate Management Team (Suffolk Fire and Rescue Service, Trading Standards, Emergency Planning and Health and Safety)
- Suffolk Fire and Rescue Service Strategy Group (senior fire officers at the following levels: Brigade Manager, Area Manager) – CFO chair
- Suffolk Fire and Rescue Service assurance, functional, team and individual meetings

Leadership of the Service is supported through a range of communication channels and management arrangements. These include senior officer face-to-face visits and presentations, regular manager forums, weekly information bulletins to all staff, regular Chief Fire Officer managers' brief, the publishing of key messages and a regular Chief Fire Officer blog. The Service also uses the Council's intranet site and Fire SharePoint system for sharing important news and information and has introduced a SFRS Communications App that is available for all staff to download on their mobile phones and to receive regular messages and information. In 2019/20 fire stations and departments were visited, with updates provided by senior officers on relevant key issues such as financial and IRMP service delivery challenges and opportunities. The Fire Service participated in the County Council's annual staff survey and undertook considerable work to follow up survey results with targeted focus groups to better understand, and respond to, staff feedback.

To support effective blue light collaboration, a separate governance structure (with FRS, SCC, Police, Police and Crime Commissioner and Ambulance) leads and delivers an ambitious programme of blue light collaboration. The detail of this is set out in the 2017 Scrutiny report '[SFRS Improving services through collaboration](#)'. This governance arrangement has been in place for almost three years and has matured into excellent professional and political relationships.

## **7. Operational Assurance**

Our property portfolio includes 39 sites, with 35 fire stations located in Suffolk's largest towns and villages. Four stations; Bury St Edmunds, Lowestoft South, Ipswich East and Ipswich Princes Street are crewed around the clock, seven days per week. Two additional stations; Haverhill and Newmarket, are 'day crewed' and revert to on-call crewing in the evenings and at weekends. We have flexible crewing, On Call Crewing Reserve (OCCR) which can be sent to any fire station to support local crewing arrangements during weekdays when on-call firefighter availability is more challenging. The remaining stations are crewed solely by on-call firefighters, who respond to the station when required.

The Service employs around 420 on-call and 199 wholetime operational staff. Due to the largely rural nature of the county, operational cover is heavily reliant on on-call firefighters.

Sixty five (fulltime equivalents) non-operational staff were employed in support functions, established in line with county council pay and grading arrangements. Most middle and senior managers are uniformed officers; Suffolk has 26 flexible duty operational officers and a further

30 supervisory uniformed officers who work in prevention, protection, support services and training.

Suffolk Fire and Rescue Service operates a fleet over 140 vehicles, including 43 front line fire engines, and a range of equipment to deal with reasonably foreseeable emergencies. The number and types of vehicles and operational equipment is routinely reviewed to ensure their fitness to react to the risk identified within the county, and beyond.

The three core activities delivered by Fire and Rescue Services are; Prevention, Protection and Response.

### Prevention

Supporting SCC priorities:

- Health, Care and Wellbeing
- Efficient and Effective Public Services

Fire Prevention aims to reduce risk, therefore preventing deaths, injuries from accidental dwelling fires and other emergencies such as Road Traffic Collisions and water incidents.

The Service delivers many diverse programmes which enhance community safety, including:

1. Road safety education for identified high risk road users, including a 'Fire bike' motorcycle safety scheme delivering a national franchised safety course and our own programme "It Can Wait" aimed at young drivers, preventing distractions while driving.
2. Working with young people who are demonstrating an unhealthy interest in fire, individually and in schools.
3. Working with young people in secondary education, providing role models, and offering pastoral support.
4. Promoting confidence and healthy living for young people in cadet schemes.
5. Helping older and vulnerable people to live independently and safely in their homes, reducing the risk of fire.

Community Fire Volunteers, Prevention practitioners and firefighters carry out free Safer Home Visits for Suffolk's most vulnerable residents. They supply and fit safety features in homes such as smoke detectors, fire retardant bedding and provide advice on safety, security and wellbeing. Where appropriate, people can be referred to partner agencies such as Adult Social Care and other support networks.

In 2019/20 our staff and trusted partners carried out 2,876 Home Visits, of which 2,077 were in households containing at least one person (+65 years of age), and 424 in households containing at least one person living with a disability. Partners carried out 94 visits, however, our focus area is to increase this figure.

This represents an 18.5% increase on year 18/19 due to better use of operational staff, improved data collection, clearer reportable definitions of what a home visit is and an increase in referrals from our professional partners.

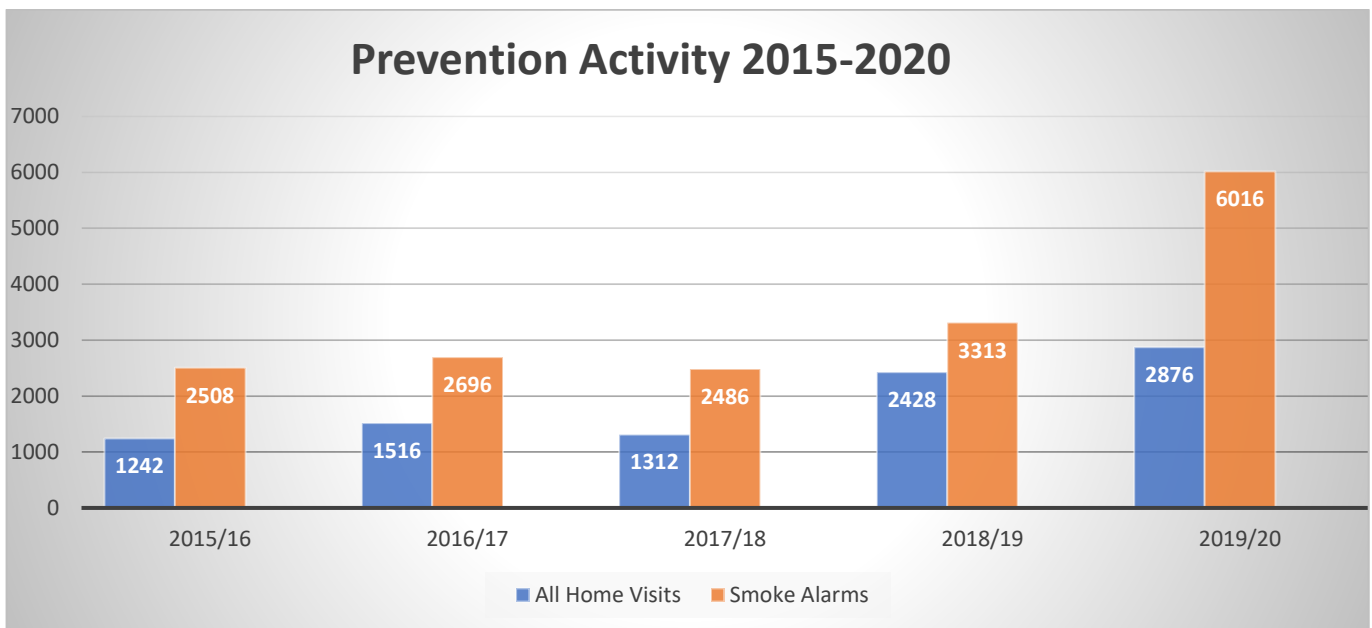
We fitted 6016 smoke detectors over the same period; this figure includes both standard and sensory equipment. This is still an area of growth particularly in the sensory support sector.

We also undertook many engagements via post. This is especially valuable when the customer does not wish to receive a visit, or they do not qualify under our assessment criteria.

2019/20 also saw 606 fire prevention campaigns and initiatives delivered; these included 42 Youth Diversion activities, 180 Youth Fire Safety events and 384 other fire prevention campaigns/initiatives (e.g. road safety campaigns, partnership working).

Combined, these activities account for 7,261 hours of initiatives and activities.

**Figure 1.** Prevention Activity – Number of Home Visits and Smoke Alarms fitted



## Protection

Protection staff follow the NFCC National Framework for competency. The team includes staff working to differing terms and conditions; all training and roles are mapped to ensure staff receive role-appropriate training and acquire the skills they need.

Protection is primarily focused on enforcement of the Regulatory Reform (Fire Safety) Order 2005. Officers complete audits generated through the annual Service Risk-Based Inspection Programme (RBIP) of buildings to establish compliance with fire safety law.

Premises are selected for audit based on the risk they may present to those who work in or visit them. Buildings where people sleep, such as High Rise, Hospitals, Hotels and Residential Care homes, are considered higher risk and are audited at least every 3 years. All other premises types are also audited to provide a snapshot of the county risks. Audits are undertaken on receipt of information regarding poor fire safety conditions or where there has been a fire.

The number of audits carried out in 2019/20 was 783, an increase of 59.5% on the previous year. 10 formal notices were issued under the provisions of the Regulatory Reform (Fire Safety) Order; 4 Enforcement and six Prohibition Notices.

The time spent processing formal notices also impacted on the number of audits undertaken; however they indicate that we target, through events such as 'Joint Agency Impact Days', premises that put people most at risk. These days involve Protection, Prevention and Local Authority Environmental Housing Officers; targeting a different town each month, our aim is to provide education, advice, and a balanced intelligence-based joint inspection programme for premises in both residential and commercial areas.

These premise types were chosen following investigations into:

- Local and national incidents.
- Historic and current risks/high activity protection areas.
- Results/feedback from trials.

Our Protection department undertakes activities in addition to the work directly related to the Regulatory Reform (Fire Safety) Order. In 2019-20 officers completed 838 Building Regulation referrals, 506 other consultations (e.g. licences or Houses of Multiple Occupation).

#### Grenfell Tower fire and Public Inquiry.

The Grenfell Tower fire started shortly before 1am on 14 June 2017 in the Royal Borough of Kensington and Chelsea, West London. The fire originated in a flat on the 4<sup>th</sup> floor and quickly spread up the outside of the building resulting in the whole building being involved in fire. A total of 227 people escaped the Tower, and 72 people tragically lost their lives as a result of the fire.

A Public Inquiry was instigated by the Government to investigate the circumstances surrounding the fire and loss of life. Sir Martin Moore-Bick was appointed to lead the Public Inquiry with the focus to investigate the cause and origin of the fire, the means by which it was able to spread throughout the building and how the building came to be in a condition which allowed that to happen. Related matters, such as the response of the London Fire Brigade (LFB), the scope and effectiveness of building regulations and the response of central and local government to the disaster also formed part of the Terms of Reference. Phase 1 of the Public Inquiry was presented to parliament in October 2019, with Phase 2 of the Public Inquiry currently underway.

Phase 1 recommendations include further guidance for Fire and Rescue services. Suffolk Fire and Rescue Service are implementing the recommendations of the Grenfell Tower Public Inquiry. The recommendations are wide ranging and place requirements on Government, London Fire Brigade, all fire and rescue services, and building owners. For fire and rescue services these include:

- Fire Services have knowledge and understanding of materials used in high-rise buildings.
- Fire Services undertake training of personnel regarding the risk of fire taking hold in the external walls of high-rise buildings.
- Fire Services to make suitable arrangements for obtaining information needed for the purposes of extinguishing fires and develop plans of the building identifying the location of key fire safety systems.

- Buildings have a premises information box, containing relevant information regarding the layout, fire safety features, lifts and stairwells within the premises.
- Fire Services have a communication link between the control room and the incident commander.
- Fire Service control rooms have adequate call handling arrangements for large volumes of calls and staff receive training on the transition from “stay put” to “get out”.
- Buildings have an evacuation policy which is practiced and tested.
- The installation of sprinklers are considered by housing providers responsible for high-rise buildings containing multiple domestic premises.

Full details of the Grenfell Tower Public Inquiry can be found at:

[www.grenfelltowerinquiry.org.uk](http://www.grenfelltowerinquiry.org.uk)

The National Fire Chiefs Council (NFCC) is coordinating how fire and rescue services respond to the findings of the Public Inquiry and will continue to issue detailed guidance to all FRS until the recommendations have been met. There is much we have already done regarding building safety and phase 2 of the inquiry is currently underway and further recommendations will be considered when published.

We continue to work with the MHCLG Minister’s Building Risk Review (BRR) programme to ensure the safety of residents through a number of activities, including closer working with other inspecting authorities and responsible persons, provision of up-to-date operational risk information and realistic training for our firefighters.

### Response

SFRS is continuously striving to improve on-call station availability across the County.

The On-Call Crewing Reserve (OCCR) was established in 2016 to improve station availability levels across the county. The team continues to evolve, developing skills essential for maintaining station availability. In May 2019 an assurance paper was presented to SFRS Fire Strategy Group (FSG). This paper outlined the progress made and outlined the vision for the team moving forward.

- Nine wholtime firefighters’ positions to specifically support station availability across the county. The team is directed by a coordinating manager ensuring key stations are available during the peak operational hours of 07:00-17:30 Monday to Friday.
- The OCCR support the Prevention Department with targeted fire safety advice or within our more rural communities.
- The OCCR support the Risk and Resilience Department, inspecting high risk properties across the county ensuring up to date information is maintained and available to operational crews.
- Where station crewing levels permit, additional firefighter’s are deployed by the OCCR manager. This further enhances station availability across the County.

To improve speed of response and availability of on-call fire engines, we developed a new light rescue pump that operates out of Wrentham fire station with a crew of between two and five personnel. We also operate a ‘reduced crew’ response following an extensive trial and consultation. Any appliance which is mobilised with a reduced crew is supported by the mobilisation of the next nearest appliance.



We work closely with the SCC Joint Emergency Planning Unit. Plans for responding to changes in the national threat level were tested in 2017 when the level rose to 'critical' from 'severe'. Exercise Eagle has provided operational assurance for a Sizewell B off-site emergency. During 2018 we undertook Flood Recovery and Counter Terrorism exercises involving SFRS.

Regional training supports operational readiness through Joint Operating Principles for wider response to terrorist attacks.

### Operational learning and assurance

Service Learning- A service strategy and policy is in place whereby operational incidents are debriefed as appropriate. Debriefs will include partner agencies in addition to SFRS personnel, ensuring best practice and lessons are identified progressed improving the delivery of the service.

National Learning- in accordance with the services commitment to public and staff safety, the Operational Assurance Manager ensures that learning outcomes are considered, and relevant areas updated through the Operational Change Team. SFRS uses a variety of information sources and engagement; such as the National Operational Learning (NOL) platform, the Joint Organisational Learning (JOL) dashboard, Coroners Regulations releases (28/29 reports), recommendations from the Health and Safety Executive, and regional FRS engagement, to inform organisational learning and to contribute to our continuous improvement. The ability to share our Service learning is released on the NOL platform for other fire and rescue services and blue light partners as appropriate, with one such being a mud rescue from a tidal area in 2020.

We are an active member of the Local Resilience Forum (LRF) which aids us in meeting our obligations under the Civil Contingencies Act, the chair role is due to return to Fire and Rescue in 2021. The service hosts two key roles of the LRF; Partnership manager and Planning Officer roles. Service risk management arrangements align with the local community and national risk registers ensuring that we have the appropriate response and recovery plans and resources to meet these risks and our duties. The plans are reviewed and exercised periodically through the LRF.

COVID-19 national pandemic- impact and restrictions- the global outbreak of coronavirus has impacted the UK since early 2020 and is likely to continue for the next 12 months. These impacts are being felt at both national and local level. We are working with partners through the Multi-Agency Strategic Coordinating Group, Recovery Coordinating Group and Tactical Coordinating Group (which SFRS leads and facilitates) ensuring the resilience of our Service and the continuation of our critical activities. In response to this we have revised our internal governance arrangements to support the management of this situation and adapt to our 'new normal' working arrangements. This is an unprecedented situation and a long-term risk for us to manage to ensure the safety of our staff and the communities we serve.

National and Mutual Aid arrangements- We have formal mutual assistance arrangements, sections 13 and 16 of the Fire and Rescue Services Act 2004, in place with our neighbouring Services (Cambridgeshire, Essex & Norfolk) improving resilience and capacity in border areas with assistance at larger scale incidents and emergencies.



SFRS is a signatory to the National Mutual Aid protocol and has deployed assets on national basis in previous years with the costs being covered by the requesting Fire and Rescue Service.

The Authority has an agreement in place with Cambridgeshire Fire Authority for the provision of a 999 Fire Control Service. The Combined Fire Control is based in Huntingdon and serves both counties. The arrangement is governed through a formal legal agreement and performance is managed through Governance Boards.

Internal and External Assurance- a Service strategy and policy is in place ensuring that all SFRS departments and premises are audited by the Operational Assurance department and in line with policy. Findings are reported to the department and Operational Assurance Board with an action tracker activated for areas of improvement and notable good practice being identified and shared accordingly.

The Service is subjected to several external audit processes including HMICFRS and Suffolk County Council audit services, ensuring compliance and identifying areas requiring improvement and of good practice. SFRS was one of a limited number of Services in England to get an overall 'good' report from the HMICFRS however we continue on our path of continual improvement and have identified plans and actions in several areas.

Business Continuity Management- is an integral part of our corporate risk management process with all Fire and Rescue Services having to satisfy the requirements of the Civil Contingencies Act and Fire and Rescue Services Act 2004. SFRS is required to 'write and maintains plans for the purpose of ensuring, so far as reasonably practicable, that if an emergency occurs in the authority is able to continue its functions'. The plans are reviewed and tested periodically to ensure they are fit for purpose and current.

#### Internal operational assurance

A range of internal and external audit, review and assurance arrangements is established. Internal audits are overseen centrally and focus on fire stations and functional areas. The team also review operational incidents, incident command and risk-critical support functions, such as fire workshops, engineering and firefighter training.

Fire stations and departments are routinely audited every three years, with more regular audits undertaken where a need arises. Twelve internal audits were completed in 2019/20, their outcomes and actions monitored by the Operational Assurance Board. Themed audits of Live Fire training at the SFRS training centre, and the appliances Mobile Data Terminals ran over this financial year.

Response to significant emergencies is assessed through a formal debrief process which the main agencies, partners, officers, fire control, and crews are represented. This is an established process, designed to highlight notable practice, identify operational learning, and to promote continuous improvement of service delivery. In 2019/20, seven formal debriefs were completed and their outcomes used to influence and improve provision of training, equipment and operational guidance.

The Service's internal audit and review arrangements supplement formal audits carried out by the county council's Audit Service, who undertake separate and independent audits to those described above. As Suffolk Fire and Rescue Service sits within the overall governance

framework of Suffolk County Council, the outcome of audits carried out across other council functions has a bearing on our practices, policies and ways of working.

SFRS is part of the National Framework for Occupational Safety and Health. The Eastern region group, of which Suffolk is a member, has a partnership agreement for regular external audit utilising the Royal Society for the Prevention of Accidents (RoSPA) Quality Safety Audit (QSA) process to scrutinise safety management systems.

## **8. Performance Management**

Suffolk Fire and Rescue Service managers monitor and manage performance to ensure the best possible services are provided and that timely action is taken where any performance issues are highlighted.

Managers complete regular Performance Development Reviews (PDR), following the ASPIRE principles. Frontline operational staff undertake yearly Training Needs Assessments, conducted by their line manager. It is planned to introduce PDR's for all staff from April 2020. Performance issues are dealt with informally in initial stages, moving to formal performance management procedures where necessary. Personnel wishing to develop and progress within the organisation are tested for their personal qualities and attributes and, where found suitable for development, access formal development that can lead to opportunities for promotion.

The Service celebrates the excellence of its staff at an annual Fire and Rescue Service Awards ceremony and through further nominations for external awards such as 'Stars of Suffolk'. The Service also has a good record of staff being awarded through the British Honours system.

A Management Information System and Key Performance Indicators assist in the recording, presentation and management of Service performance. Quarterly and annual outturn reports are submitted to the Suffolk County Council corporate leadership team. These reports are monitored by managers, the Cabinet Member and Elected Members, providing opportunity to consider and, where necessary, improve performance.

To support transparency regarding performance, during 2019/20 we published data on response standards on our website: <https://www.suffolk.gov.uk/suffolk-fire-and-rescue-service/about-suffolk-fire-and-rescue-service/> ); this is updated every six months.

Some key areas of our 2019/20 performance are set out in this section.

### **Incidents**

The number of incidents we attend has reduced significantly in the last ten years; but has more recently plateaued. However, the 2018/19 year saw unprecedented hot weather, causing spate conditions which led to a significantly busy summer. Most of the additional incidents were undergrowth, grass and crops caused by the extremely dry conditions. National fire statistics are available on the Home Office website, and can be broken down by fire authority for a more detailed analysis.

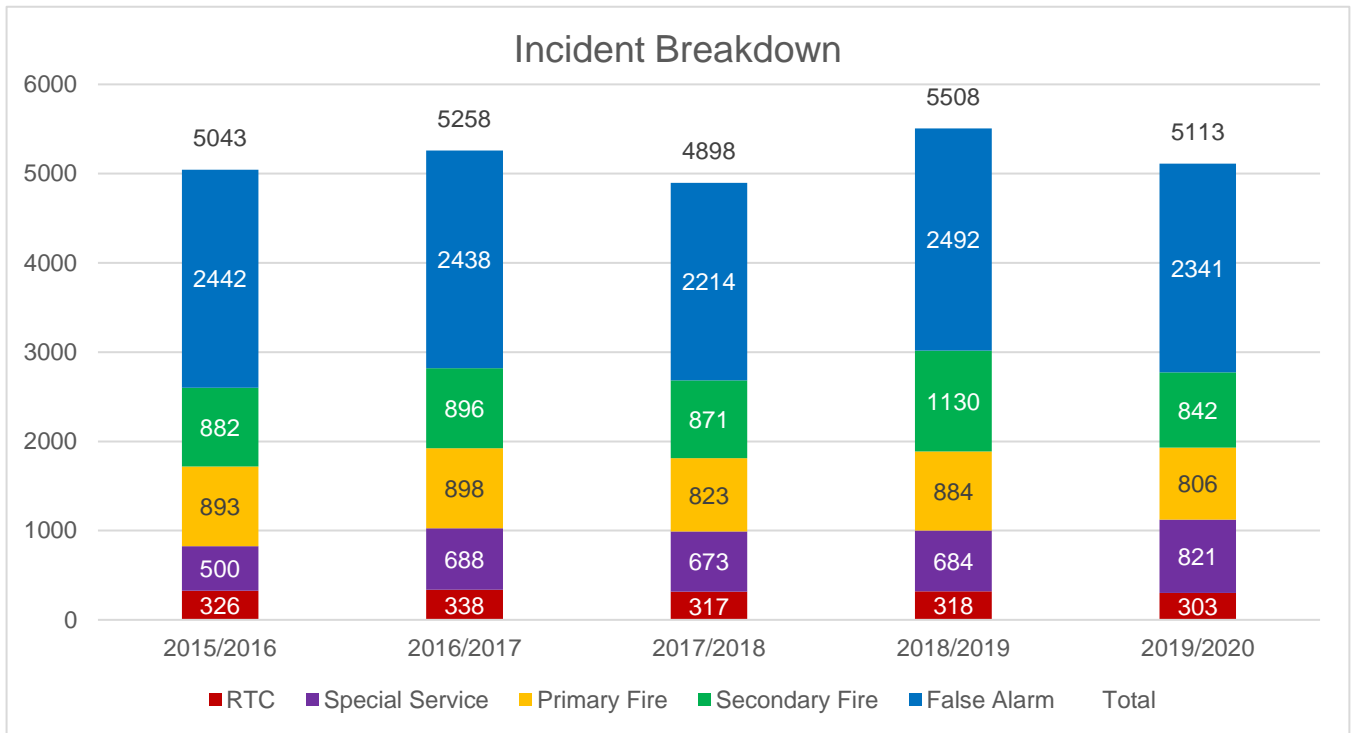
<https://www.gov.uk/government/statistical-data-sets/fire-statistics-data-tables>

The national statistics include incident reports up to July 2020.

To provide the most up to date information on Suffolk incidents, Figure 2 shows locally produced information using data up to, and including, 30<sup>th</sup> September 2020. The figures may therefore differ from those previously published, and those published by the Home Office.

The information is drawn from published incident reports. The figures include all incidents in Suffolk, ‘officer only’ mobilisations, and ‘over the border’ (OTB) incidents where our fire engines have attended incidents outside Suffolk.

**Figure 2.** Breakdown of SFRS incidents in Suffolk and in neighbouring counties (OTB’s), where we completed the incident report, in the last five financial years (locally produced data).



In 2019/20, Combined Fire Control staff answered 8553 ‘999’ calls for Suffolk, and our crews attended 5113 emergencies.

### Fires

In 2019/20 we attended 806 primary fires (fires in buildings, vehicles and outdoor structures, or any fire involving casualties, rescues, or fires attended by five or more fire engines). This is a decrease of 78 (8.8%) from the number attended in 2018/19.

Secondary fires (grassland, wasteland, derelict buildings, chimney fires etc) totalled 842 in 2019/20, a decrease of 25.5% (288 incidents) from the 1130 of the previous year. The 2018/19 figures reflect the very hot summer in 2018 where there was a significant increase in secondary fires.

### Road Traffic Collisions

The number of road traffic collisions has decreased considerably from 479 (1994-1998 average) to 303 in 2019/20. Since 2015/16 the number of road traffic collisions attended annually by SFRS has reduced by 23. Road traffic collision prevention continues to be an important element

of Prevention work. During 2019/20 the Service worked closely with stakeholders and agencies as part of Suffolk’s Roadsafes Board.

**Special Service**

The number of Special Service incidents totalled 821 in 2019/20, an increase of 137 (20%) from the 684 the previous year. The graph (Figure 2) shows a significant increase in Special Service incidents for 2019/20. There is no one reason for this increase; it is a combination of more incidents where we assisted other agencies and an increase in incidents linked to flooding and water.

**False Alarms**

In 2019/20 we attended 2,341 calls which turned out to be false alarms. This is a decrease of 151 from 2018/19. False alarms represented 45.8% of the 5,113 calls attended in 2019/20.

Only a small number of automatic fire alarm (AFA) calls are found to be fires. Where this is the case the call is later re-categorised as a fire. In 2019/20, 40 AFA calls were re-categorised as fires, representing approximately 2.5% of all AFA calls. Work continues to reduce the occurrences of unwanted fire signals.

The following figures are drawn from National fire statistics which are available on the Home Office website <https://www.gov.uk/government/statistical-data-sets/fire-statistics-data-tables>

**Figure 3.** Comparison of fire figures in 2018/19 to 2019/20 (published Home Office data).

Type of fire/premises	2018/19	2019/20	% Difference
Primary fires total	852	734	-13.9%
Secondary fires total (+chimney fires)	1091	803	-26.4%
Dwelling fires (House, Bungalow, Flat, etc.) excludes chimney fires	281	276	-1.8%
Non-Domestic Buildings	151	134	-11.3%

**Fatalities and Casualties**

In comparison to national levels, Suffolk continues to have a relatively low annual fire death rate, with an average of 4.8 deaths per year over the period 2015/16 to 2019/20. In 2019/20 there were 6 fire fatalities.

The annual average number of casualties (from minor injury to life-threatening burns) in fires over the period 2015/16 to 2019/20, was 110. In 2019/20 there were 179 fire casualties, an increase of 46.7% from the 122 recorded in 2018/19. This substantial increase is due to one

incident where a coach caught fire and 72 casualties, who were led to safety, were checked by ambulance crews at the scene. Our ambition remains to achieve zero fire deaths and reduce the number of casualties to as few as possible. Service focus has remained on delivering effective fire prevention and protection advice to make people safer from fire in their homes and when at work, and in providing effective emergency response to fires when they do occur.

**Figure 4.** Number of fatalities and casualties at incidents attended by SFRS in Suffolk (Data tables and information taken from National Fire Statistics from the www.GOV.UK website @ 23.09.20)

	2014/15	2015/16	2016/17	2017/18	2018/19	2019/20
Fire Fatalities	4	5	6	3	4	6
Fire Casualties (0502b)	75	93	81	75	122	179
Road Traffic Collision Fatalities (0904a)	9	21	16	13	12	Not yet Available
Road Traffic Collision Casualties (0904b)	237	207	235	223	219	Not yet Available
Other Special Service Fatalities (0904a)	18	14	51	53	29	Not yet Available
Other Special Service Casualties (0904b)	63	78	115	110	173	Not yet Available

#### People killed or injured in road traffic collisions

The average number of fatalities at road traffic collisions attended by Suffolk Fire and Rescue Service was 14.2 per year over the period 2014/15 to 2018/19. There were 12 fatalities in 2018/19. (2019/20 data is not yet available from the Home Office).

#### **Appliance and Firefighter Availability**

Four of Suffolk’s fire stations are crewed 24/7 and a further two fire stations are crewed during weekdays by full time firefighters; there are also on-call crews at these stations. When the full-time crew of these stations is on an emergency call, on-call crews are called in, providing near 100% availability of the Service’s full-time fire stations.

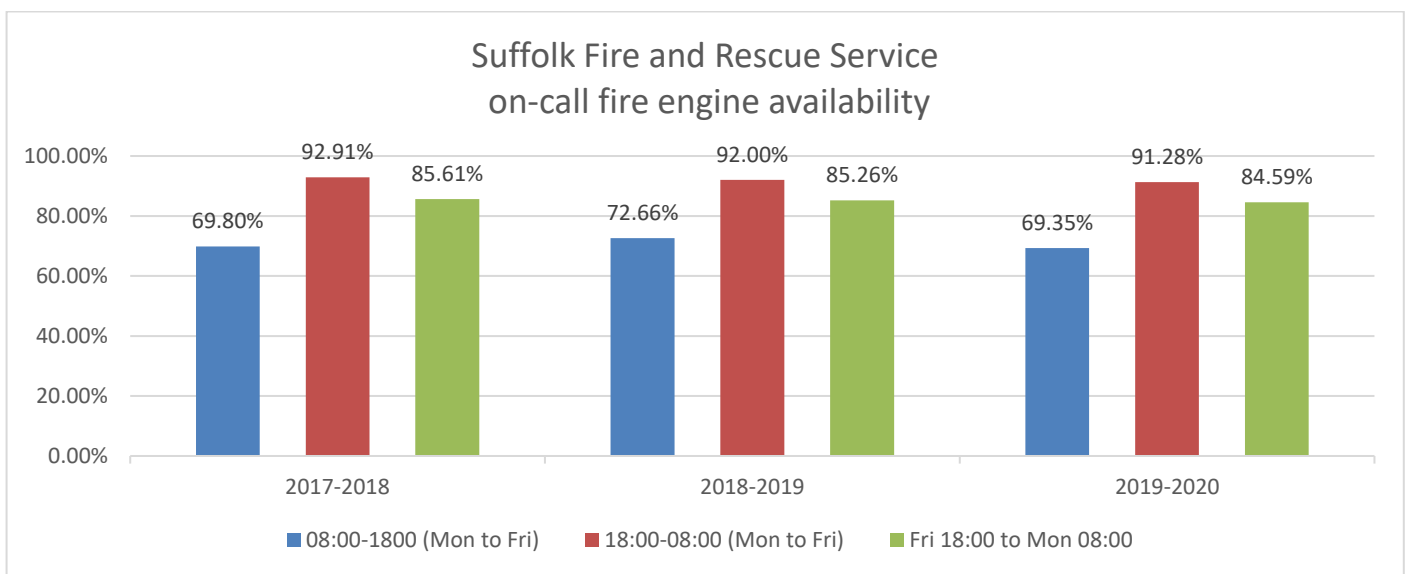
#### On-call firefighter availability

Outside of the main towns of Ipswich, Bury St Edmunds, Lowestoft, Haverhill and Newmarket, 29 stations are crewed solely by on-call staff. Full-time firefighters provide an immediate response to emergencies, with on-call firefighters normally responding to their station within 5-6 minutes.

On-call fire station availability (full availability) in 2018/19 was 83.76%, decreasing to 82.28% in 2019/20. Availability improves at nights and weekends but falls during working weekdays due primarily to the employment commitments of on-call firefighters.

On-call fire engine availability is a priority for the Service and work continued in 2019/20 to seek improvements through several initiatives. Our on-call crewing reserve (OCCR) has made an impact on the availability of key on-call stations during the working week: In 2019/20, 164 incidents were responded to by local crews whose availability was maintained by the OCCR. This is a slight reduction of 10 (5.75%) from the number responded to in 2018/19. It does, however, continue to mean that incidents were responded to more quickly by local firefighters. This strategy will continue in future years, complementing our continued efforts to recruit and retain more on-call firefighters.

**Figure 5.** On-call fire engine availability 2017/18; 2018/19 and 2019/20 (data taken 23rd October 2020).



### 999 Emergency Response Times

Nationally there is a trend, reflected in Suffolk, for increased fire service response times. This is attributed in part to traffic volume and road congestion, particularly in urban areas. Other local factors, such as the adoption of safer driving techniques (drive to arrive) and the requirement for crews to dress in firefighting protective clothing before leaving station also contribute to increased attendance times, albeit these practices have been in place for several years.

The national statistics for response times for 2019/20 are produced by the Home Office and are not available until December 2020. The statistics below are therefore for the year 2018/19.

#### [Fire Incident Response Times: April 2018 to March 2019, England](#)

Home Office returns show:

- Average response time to primary fires in Suffolk of 11.01 minutes in 2017/18, increasing to 11 minutes 26 minutes in 2018/19

- Average Response times to dwelling fires in Suffolk of 10.27 minutes in 2017/18, decreasing to 9.32 minutes in 2018/19
- Average response time to other building fires in Suffolk was 10.46 minutes in 2017/187, increasing to 11.03 minutes in 2018/19
- Average response times to road vehicle fires in Suffolk was 10.57 minutes in 2017/18 increasing to 11.50 minutes in 2018/19.

Overall in Suffolk, for all incidents in 2019/20, the first fire engine arrived on average in 9 minutes and 54 seconds from the time firefighters were first alerted to the call. The average time for on-call crewed fire engines to arrive at an incident was 12 minutes and 10 seconds. Full-time firefighter crewed fire engines arrived in 8 minutes on average. (These figures are obtained from locally produced live data and were correct on 1<sup>st</sup> October 2020).

Response times in rural counties such as Suffolk are significantly influenced by the availability of on-call firefighters. Work continued throughout 2019/20 to improve on-call availability and response times. This work is ongoing as described in Section 6 (Operational Assurance).

### Suffolk's locally-set Response Standards

Prior to 2004, targets for response times to fires and other emergencies were based on a prescriptive national framework. In 2004 fire and rescue authorities were provided freedom to develop local standards to reflect local risk. In 2010/11 the Suffolk Fire and Rescue Authority agreed a revised set of performance standards for emergency response.

**Figure 6.** Performance against agreed Response Standards

Performance Standard	Target	2017/18	2018/19	2019/20
Response Standard 1 - Attend 80% of property fires within 11 minutes of alert (1 <sup>st</sup> fire engine)	80%	67.11%	66.5%	68.95%
Response Standard 2 - Attend 80% of property fires within 16 minutes of alert (2 <sup>nd</sup> fire engine)	80%	72.99%	72.41%	73.87%
Response Standard 3 - Attend 80% of Road Traffic Collisions within 13 minutes of alert	80%	76.53%	73%	72.28%

N.B. Data is locally produced, from incident reporting forms (data recorded 1<sup>st</sup> October 2020). This information will be subject to validation at year-end.

### Performance and ICT Review

In April 2016, in response to an identified need, we appointed a Performance and Improvement Manager to produce and manage statistical information. This appointment confirmed suspected gaps in our ability to produce information quickly and using reliable IT processes. This was further confirmed in a 2017 review of Fire IT.

In response to the review findings, we appointed a temporary 'Transformation Manager' to work with both the Performance and Improvement Manager and Fire IT to improve our reporting and analytical capabilities and maximise assistance from County ICT. This position has now been made a permanent Fire IT and Business Change Manager. It is intended that this appointment will result in closer and more effective reporting and analysis capability and access efficient and cost-effective digital solutions.

## 9. Fire and Rescue National Framework

The Fire and Rescue National Framework was revised and re-published in May 2018, setting out central government priorities and objectives for fire and rescue authorities. The Framework identifies high-level expectations of Government but does not prescribe operational matters, which it considers are best-managed by local authorities in consultation with communities. The priorities in the revised Framework are for authorities to:

- make appropriate provision for fire **prevention** and **protection** activities and **response** to fire and rescue related incidents
- **identify and assess** the full range of foreseeable fire and rescue related **risks** their areas face
- **collaborate** with emergency services and other local and national partners to increase the efficiency and effectiveness of the service they provide
- be **accountable** to communities for the service they provide
- develop and maintain a **workforce** that is professional, resilient, skilled, flexible and diverse

The Fire and Rescue Authority has considered the expectations of the National Framework and ensured that these are being met in an appropriate manner, as detailed in the following sections.

### Identify and Assess Risk

Corporate risk management is completed within the Council's internal risk management arrangements and monitored, reviewed, scored, and recorded on the Council's JCAD system. Community Risk Management is managed through the national and local community risk registers maintained by Government and the Suffolk Resilience Forum.

Control measures are developed to manage and mitigate risks and embedded within business continuity plans, delivering mission-critical activities and minimum acceptable levels of service. The highest strategic-level risks are reported to the council's Corporate Leadership Team, Directorate Management Team and Fire Strategy Group. Risk is also managed and mitigated through the IRMP process.

To better identify and link FRS and partners' developing risks to our IRMP, a FRS Strategic Assessment of Risk (SAoR) has been developed with the assistance of SCC Knowledge and Intelligence team. We are utilising the team's skills and knowledge of existing and developing risk within our County to improve our risk identification and mitigation strategies.

The SAoR is a strategic document that informs the Fire Authority's IRMP, and the associated Service Plan. The SAoR captures summary information about SFRS workforce, and response,



prevention and protection data. It is informed by 38 different data sets and sources of information such as; Suffolk demographics, ethnicity and diversity, health, housing, deprivation, transport infrastructure, industry and associated risks, tourism, and environmental risks. The document concludes with a summary assessment of predicted changes in Suffolk over the next 20 years.

Our IRMP sets out how we assess, understand, and manage risk. It considers what creates risk, (e.g. analysis of deprivation and special risks); what that means for SFRS, (e.g. types of incidents expected, and attended); how that risk is assessed through National and Local Risk Registers; and how SFRS manages that risk through Prevention, Protection and Response activities and provision.

SFRS has a strong risk-reduction focus through the LRF, and collaboration with blue-light services and local authorities. These relationships help us form a clearer appreciation of the risk environment to develop approaches to manage risk to an acceptable level. We are making progress with gathering more information and building understanding of high-risk and COMAH (Control of Major Accident Hazard) sites. We have assessed and gathered risk information for around 500 risk sites or premises and enjoy strong relationships with key providers such as Sizewell and Felixstowe Port. Site-specific response plans have been developed with site owners and are linked to the Community Risk Register.

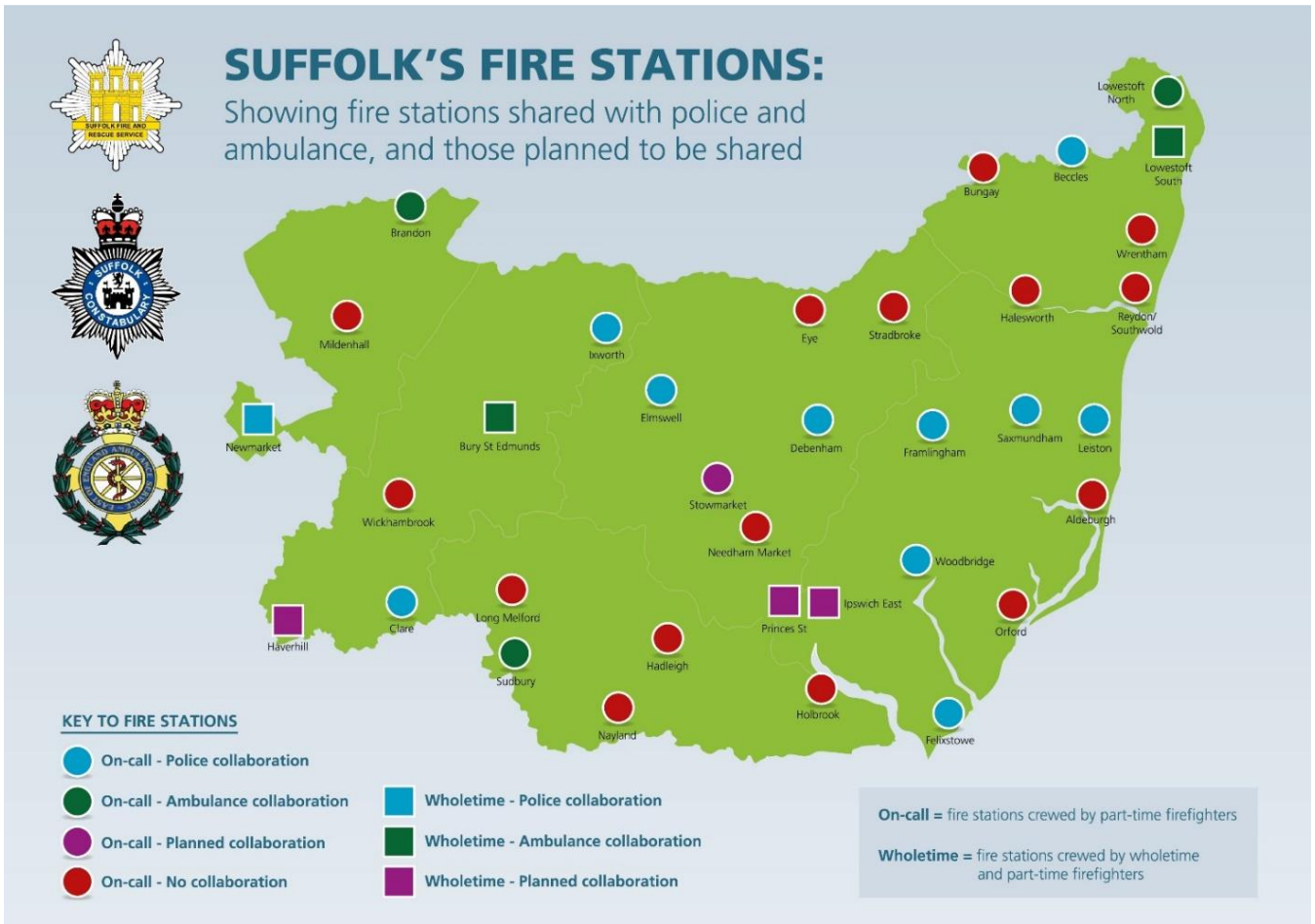
The proposals for Sizewell C nuclear power station will continue to require significant analysis and a Service response to consultation phases. We will influence factors that encompass: emergency response; the built environment; road, rail and marine transport infrastructure; site safety; fire prevention and protection for workers and the public; recruitment and retention of our staff; ability to respond to foreseeable emergencies; correct equipment, vehicles, training and personnel. Further emerging risks are identified through the LRF risk assessment working group.

Our Risk-Based Inspection Programme directs the work of our Protection officers and ensures premises are inspected from a risk score based on occupancy, size, type, date of last inspection, number of fires and national and local trends or incidents.

### Collaboration - Blue Light

In June 2014 Suffolk Fire and Rescue Service secured £4.93m DCLG grant funding to establish an emergency services shared estates programme. Our plan was to develop and share a number of fire stations with Police and/or Ambulance colleagues. We now share 16 stations with blue light partners, with plans for a further four collaborations.

Plans for Stowmarket and central Ipswich are being developed with work expected to commence during 2020. In addition to creating more efficient public sector estates, we are assessing how the sharing of other resources and information can improve the efficiency and effectiveness of service to the public.



Our commitment to property sharing has underpinned further collaboration. Examples include; Emergency Services Cadet Schemes, unmanned aerial reconnaissance vehicles (drones), analysis of cross-service operational and non-operational demand, Prevention initiatives, and closer operational working that supports national Joint Emergency Services Interoperability Programme (JESIP).

Collaboration - Personal Protective Equipment (PPE)

Our previous contract for supply and management of firefighting PPE ended in April 2019. Following in-depth technical assessment and subsequent staff consultation on their preferred PPE solution, replacement PPE was issued in May 2019. We provided a seamless transition from our previous provider to the new contract alongside many other fire and rescue services and led by Kent fire and rescue service.

Collaboration - Combined Fire Control

Our Combined Control, based at Cambridgeshire HQ, has been in operation for more than nine years. It is established under a Fire and Rescue Services Act Section 16 agreement which details its governance, performance and funding.

The Control has a well-established suite of policies and procedures for call handling and incident support. These are based on national guidance and are subject to regular audit and review.

Combined Fire Control employs dynamic mobilising protocols and staff are empowered to deviate from the pre-determined attendance should the need arise. This flexibility can result in the resources sent being either increased or decreased, depending on the intelligence gathered during the call-handling phase of the emergency.

Control has effective fall-back arrangements in place with West Sussex Fire Control, with plans to create a networked link between the control rooms.

The venture has substantially reduced control and mobilising costs in both Services – c£400k per annum in Suffolk. Suffolk and Cambridgeshire were awarded a £3.6 million grant from Central Government to improve resilience and secure better technology for future 999 Fire Control arrangements. The benefit of this is being maximised through the shared service arrangement.

### Collaboration – SCC

Suffolk Fire and Rescue Service is a service delivery area of the SCC Fire and Public Safety Directorate. As such, the Service benefits from generic ICT, Finance and Human Resource services provided through County Council shared services. Other corporate functions such as Property, Procurement, Facilities Management, Communications, Democratic Services and Legal are provided through the County Council or other parties.

Such provision of back office services is cost-effective and allows access to the extensive support and knowledge afforded by a major local authority employer.

### Accountability - Integrated Risk Management Planning (IRMP)

An IRMP is a requirement of central government, through the Fire and Rescue National Framework for England. The IRMP must identify and assess all reasonably foreseeable fire and rescue related risks that could affect its community, including those of a cross-border, multi-authority and/or national nature. The IRMP is informed by both the established National and Community Risk Registers, linked through Local Resilience Forum, and Civil Contingencies responsibilities.

The IRMP must demonstrate effective consultation with the community, workforce, representative bodies and partner organisations. The current IRMP was subject to pre-consultation engagement, followed by a 8-week public and stakeholder consultation facilitated by Suffolk County Council Consultation and Engagement Department.

The Plan must cover a three-year time span and be reviewed and revised as often as is necessary to ensure fire and rescue authorities are able to deliver the requirements of the Framework. This review must include reaction to regional or national events such as the Grenfell Tower tragedy.

The Authority's current IRMP is available on our website [Suffolk Fire and Rescue Service Integrated Risk Management Plan 2019-22](#)

### Accountability – HMICFRS

As a pre-cursor to a revised inspection regime, the new Inspectorate of Constabulary and Fire and Rescue Services selected three Services to pilot, test, and refine their proposed inspection programme. Suffolk was chosen, together with Staffordshire and West Yorkshire. Our Service was the first of the pilot Services visited, assisting in development of the programme and hosting

inspectors for a trial inspection in March 2018. The learning for both parties was significant and gave SFRS opportunity to build upon previous Peer Review outcomes with objective feedback from the inspectorate.

Learning from the review and the pilot inspection focused managers on areas for improvement and also highlighted successes. Suffolk was formally inspected by HMICFRS during the Summer 2019. The final report was published in December 2019 and we received a rating of 'Good' in the 3 inspection areas, giving a result of 'Good' overall.

The full report for Suffolk Fire and Rescue Service can be accessed [here](#).

	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li data-bbox="169 680 999 745">  The extent to which the service is effective at keeping people safe and secure from fire and other risks is good.         </li> <li data-bbox="169 779 999 844">  The extent to which the service is efficient at keeping people safe and secure from fire and other risks is good.         </li> <li data-bbox="169 878 906 943">  The extent to which the service looks after its people is good.         </li> </ul>	<p style="text-align: center;">Effectiveness - Good</p> <p style="text-align: center;">Efficiency – Good</p> <p style="text-align: center;">People - Good</p>

HMICFRS have been commissioned by the Home Office to undertake a Covid thematic review of all Fire & Rescue Services in England, focussing on service pandemic command structures and identifying any collective learning. Our inspection is planned for November 2020 and a national report is planned to be published in December 2020

Accountability - Transparency of Performance Information

All performance data required by the Home Office, including response times, incident numbers and types, fatalities and casualties is available on the Home Office website; <https://www.gov.uk/government/statistical-data-sets/fire-statistics-data-tables#fatalities-and-casualties>

A new 'Fire Service Manager' information system is being further developed to produce information internally for managers, Fire Strategy Group and Councillors. This system will help us monitor, manage and present operational and other performance information to a wide range of audiences, address any negative trends and confirm and identify positive performance.

Information is published on our website; <https://www.suffolk.gov.uk/assets/fire-rescue-and-emergencies/about-suffolk-fire-and-rescue-service/Deluxe-i-sheet-October-2020.pdf>

This link displays headline figures commonly requested by the public, and is refreshed every six months.

## Workforce - Health and Safety

Firefighting, responding to emergencies, training and other public safety-related activities presents risk to employees. Alongside statutory and common law requirements to provide a safe and healthy environment for our employees and those affected by our actions, SFRS continues to prioritise the development of systems and culture, identified in the annual [Suffolk Fire and Rescue Service Plan 2019-22](#).

There is clear structure within SCC and SFRS to support effective management of health, safety and wellbeing. The Chief Fire Officer chairs the Council's Safety Health and Wellbeing Board, the Deputy Chief Fire Officer represents the fire and rescue service, and the Community Risk Management Area Commander chairs the fire and rescue service Health and Safety Committee.

The Health and Safety Manager role is a dedicated management post, with role responsibilities based on HSE guidance and Approved Codes of Practice.

'Safe systems of work' are established for operational incidents, training and general non-operational work activity, based on national guidance. They contain key risk and control measures and supporting information to assist firefighters resolve operational incidents effectively and safely. They also underpin training, assessment and development of staff.

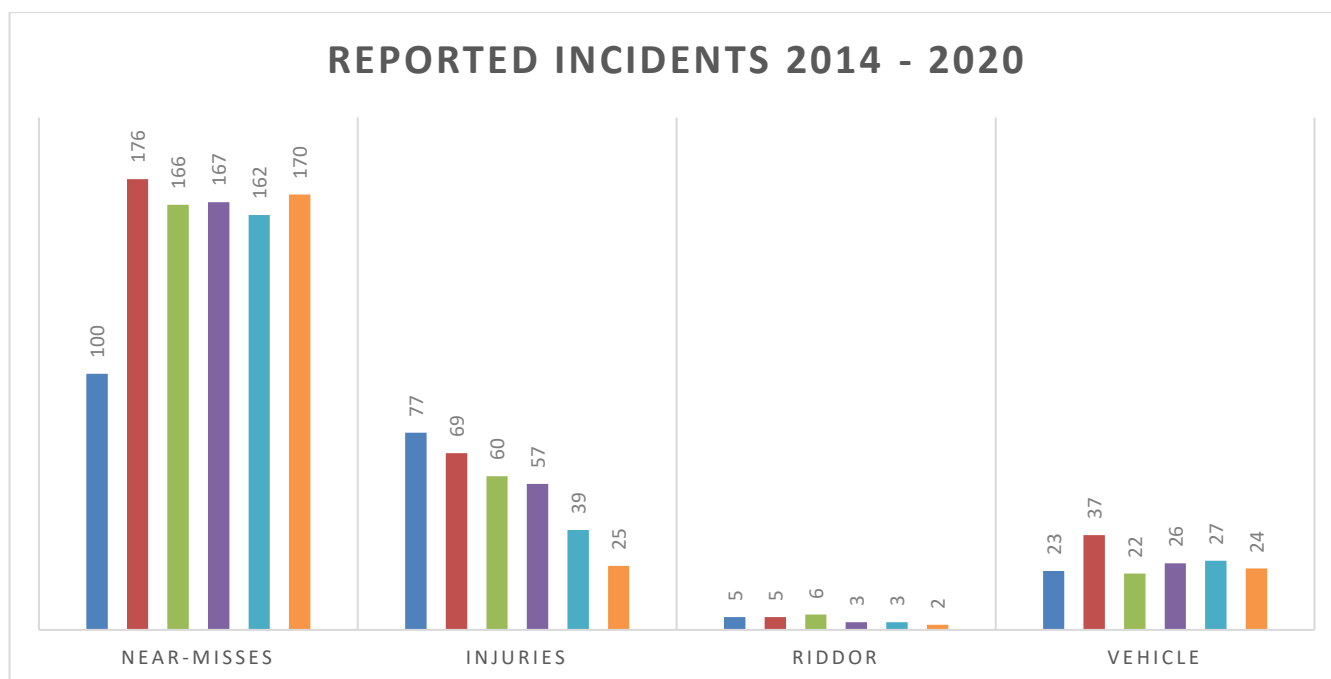
All staff are provided with health and safety training relevant to their role, such as; senior managers' health and safety workshops, the National Examination Board in Occupational Safety and Health (NEBOSH) General Certificate the Institution of Occupational Safety and Health (IOSH) managing safely qualifications. Selected managers are trained in accident investigation techniques to identify any potential failure in health and safety systems.

The Service monitors and reacts to health and safety data such as accidents and near misses. These are reported to the Fire Strategy Group, the National Fire Chiefs Council (NFCC) and the Home Office. Accidents and near miss occurrences are investigated.

In 2019/20, 25 personal injuries were recorded, a reduction from 39 recorded in 2018/19. There were 24 vehicle accidents, a decrease of 3 from the 27 reported in 2018/19. Two accidents were reportable under the Reporting of Injuries, Diseases and Dangerous Occurrences Regulations (RIDDOR) in 2019/20, which is a reduction of 1 report when compared to the 3 RIDDOR reportable incidents in 2018/19.

Staff reported 170 near-miss events in 2019/20, an increase of 8 when compared to the 162 near-miss reports in 2018/19. Near-miss events are circumstances where staff report a potential hazard but where there is no associated accident or injury. Reporting near-miss incidents helps to reduce the risk of accidents and staff are encouraged to report these. Safeguarding events are also recorded on the near-miss system but they are progressed via the Multi Agency Safeguarding Hub (MASH) through a senior duty officer.

**Figure 7.** Accidents and Near Misses 2014/15 – 2019/20



Workforce – Fitness, Health & Wellbeing

Our approach to wellbeing is linked to SCC Working Well for Suffolk Strategy. The fire and rescue service have access to the benefits of the SCC Occupational Health contract, with specific FRS considerations. In recognition of emerging mental health issues, we utilise SCC’s Mental Health toolkit providing access to mental health first aiders and if necessary, access to specialist counselling services. A critical incident management process is in place to provide support following exposure to traumatic events however we are in the process of reviewing this and anticipate a transition to the nationally recognised ‘TRIM’ process in 2021. Further wellbeing initiatives have been developed and now include a dedicated wellbeing group committed to promoting a range of mental health issues via regular updates and a quarterly magazine.

Our health, safety and wellbeing team work closely with managers, staff, and representative bodies. Focus on firefighter safety is front and back loaded, evidenced through investment in training, PPE, appliances, equipment, innovative firefighting technologies, operational guidance and learning from incidents to inform new, safer approaches.

Mandatory annual fitness testing has been implemented to comply with national best practice. The appointment of a Health and Wellbeing Officer has been key in this introduction and we will seek to further enhance firefighter fitness initiatives and support over the coming years.

We support staff with disabilities, and wherever possible, have made reasonable adjustments to ensure staff are retained and feel supported and valued.

## Workforce – Training, Learning and Development – (TLD).

The training, learning and development of our personnel is a Service priority, reflected within our Service Plan. Training is provided to all firefighters, officers, and non-operational staff throughout the year to improve knowledge, skills, and experience in key areas, and ensure people can carry out their roles safely and effectively. TLD promote an inclusive learning environment for our staff, with an emphasis on coaching and encouragement.

Such is the importance placed on the training, learning and development of our staff, Our senior management team have secured and committed capital funding of circa 1 million pounds to the modernisation and improvement of our training facility at MOD Wattisham. These projects will include a new facility for training our staff in live firefighting and the wearing of breathing apparatus for search and rescue. This will incorporate the use of a burner unit which will provide realistic training whilst minimising the exposure of our staff to harmful products of combustion and cutting down on traditional timber burning. This will promote a cleaner environment and forms part of our commitment to greener ways of working.

Further improvements to our site will also include a new training and welfare complex which our TLD staff will work from. The complex will have upgraded classrooms, office accommodation and welfare facilities as well as a dedicated Incident Command Suite. This will utilise state of the art technology to provide immersive and realistic scenario-based training to our incident commanders and officers, ensuring they have the most up to date skills to respond to and safely manage incidents.

Suffolk has signed up alongside our five regional fire service partners to the National Operational Guidance programme (NOG), which seeks to standardise and improve operational procedures across Fire and Rescue services. Suffolk has taken a lead role in the roll out of this programme and we have already completed the move to Incident Command NOG. This has also helped embed Joint Emergency Service Interoperability Programme (JESIP) principles which improve Multi Agency working at operational incidents.

The close relationship with Cambridgeshire FRS, manifesting itself practically through Combined Fire Control, has been a strong driver for rationalisation of mobilisation policy and procedure across the two Services, each benefitting from the other's best practice arrangements. Both services are key stakeholders in the Emergency Services Communications Project (ESMCP) which seeks to improve technology and infrastructure nationally to provide the highest level of efficiency in Emergency Service communications.

Collaborative opportunities with regional colleagues and partner agencies are explored to support Training, Learning and Development activity, including assistance in quality assurance.

Whilst there are legal obligations to provide training for its employees, Suffolk Fire and Rescue Service (SFRS) recognises staff and team development helps people to be the best they can be, which in turn improves the service we provide with a motivated and skilled workforce. Every role and person in our Service has an impact on our vision and mission, and we aim to provide a culture where all staff are supported to take personal responsibility for their own learning and development and deliver the best outcomes possible to the public and each other. The right training, learning and development helps ensure the safety of all our personnel and therefore the communities we serve, assisting our vision of *working together to make Suffolk a place where people lead safe and healthy lives.*



SFRS training, learning and development content is informed through a variety of means including:

- As principal customer of the training, learning and development department (TLD), the needs of fire station-based staff are mainly catered for via an annual Training Needs Assessment (TNA) process.
- The TNA process is complimented by a risk-assessed rolling program of required training, which is covered over either a three-year cycle or as determined by the subject qualification and best practise.
- Face to face management meetings and the PDR process (Personal Development Review).
- Recruitment needs.
- National, Regional and Service operational learning or health and safety findings deemed to be high risk - these may require alteration to training plans during the year.
- National high-profile events or Major incidents.
- Her Majesty's Inspectorate of Constabulary and Fire & Rescue Services (HMICFRS) - local and national findings from inspection.
- Cultural change – assisting to embed an inclusive culture throughout the Service.
- Changes to national guidance and legislation.
- New vehicles and equipment place demand on TLD within rollout and cascade planning.

TLD are engaged in national work-streams including: contributing to the development of a new leadership framework with the National Fire Chiefs Council (NFCC); development and delivery of a new firefighter apprenticeship standard as part of a national working group; supporting SFRS Protection department stakeholders to help develop a new fire engineering apprenticeship standard; sitting on the regional fire and rescue service Learning and Development board; and, being a key stakeholder in the introduction of National Operational Guidance Programme (NOGP).

Collaboration with regional services and partner agencies is important to us. Areas in which TLD currently collaborate include incident command training and assessment, driver training, technical rescue training, breathing apparatus training for local industry firefighting teams, Rail Incident Officer training for Network Rail and trauma training with our East of England Ambulance Service colleagues. We also take part in multi-agency exercises through our Local Resilience Forum. We work closely with the MOD, maintaining our operational training school within a military base and we hope to further our collaborative practices by providing blue light training to partner agencies such as to doctors who attend emergency incidents.

In the 2019 to 2020 training year, the training team delivered a total of 166 courses from the training centre. This equates to 334 course days, 1422 instructor days and 2790 student days of development. In addition, the instructor group delivered 194 single course days delivered at fire stations utilising a total of 214 instructor days and providing 1369 days of student learning.

#### Workforce - Staff engagement and focus groups

We are committed to be an improving organisation, evidenced through staff survey, focus groups, engagement with external consultants, and peer review. The outcomes from this comprehensive engagement and inward reflection are being developed into a Continuous Improvement Plan. This plan is the 'roadmap' for development of organisational culture and



many of its workstreams have already started; e.g. the Staff Engagement Group work on Vision and Values and PDR.

We are determined our Service will be a great place to work for everybody and have completely revised and improved our approach to Equality and Inclusion to support this. We are key partners in the Council's Equality and Inclusion work and have established Strategic and Practitioner Equality and Inclusion groups. We continue to use positive action to increase recruitment of women and people from black and minority ethnic communities.

During spring 2018 staff were encouraged to complete a survey that sought their views on organisational culture, leadership and inclusivity. Survey results are being addressed through the Continuous Improvement Plan and other avenues such as equality and inclusion work and the Strategic and Practitioner Equality groups. The groups have agreed and published an Equality and Inclusion statement that steers group activity to influence cultural change. Consultants, Equality Works (EW), reviewed our Equality and Inclusion culture through interviews and focus groups across the Service.

Our aim is to develop a culture of trust where people are empowered to use their own good judgement on all occasions and are supported to make decisions at the lowest appropriate level.

The next planned SCC staff survey will take place in October 2020.

## **10. Future of Finance, Governance and Operational Assurance**

### Governance

A 'governance' options appraisal was completed by the Police and Crime Commissioner (PCC) in Autumn 2017. The Policing and Crime Act 2017 allows for a PCC to examine the benefits in taking control of the fire and rescue service; the Act also requires proactive blue light collaboration.

The PCC's appraisal did not identify significant benefits in a change of governance for the fire and rescue service; no further business case was therefore progressed. Scope for further collaboration with Suffolk Constabulary was identified and we continue to work closely with the PCC and police to reduce costs and provide more effective community risk management and blue-light response across Suffolk.

During 2017/18 we re-examined our internal planning structure and developed a revised, linked strategy. Plans for the next three years, aligned to the SCC Key Priorities and Business Plan, were finalised in April 2018. Service-specific plans and high-level statements are aligned to a new 'golden thread' that translates strategic SCC priorities through a number of stages into FRS tactical plans and individual responsibilities. This thread has been communicated and is accessible and visible in digital form across the Service.

### Operational Assurance

The Peer Review and pilot HMICFRS inspection of 2017/18 were catalysts for introduction of a more formal assurance structure within the Service. Review of the remit of the Fire Strategy Group precipitated the formation of new assurance boards:

- Operational Assurance

- Performance and Improvement
- Project and Programme Management
- Workforce Planning Group

All four boards consist of senior and specialist managers and report to the Fire Strategy Group. The boards have terms of reference that support the Service's improvement and transparency programmes and will provide an enhanced structure for efficient and effective management of resources. The boards were embedded and further developed during 2018/19, supporting the 'Golden Thread', the requirements of the National Framework and HMICFRS improvement agenda. The HMICFRS full inspection during summer 2019, gave an overall result of 'Good' and we received positive comments regarding the structure and contents of the Golden Thread suite of documents.

Completion of the 2019-22 IRMP considered proposals related to Speed of Response measures, automatic fire alarm attendance, shift and duty systems, and how we respond to road traffic collisions and non-fire emergencies.

Further plans include:

- Investment in Control infrastructure and review of performance.
- Delivering on the findings from the HMICFRS action plan
- Improved Equality and Diversity training and development.
- Investment in Fire ICT including an improved programme and project management approach.
- Implementation of the regional approach to National Operational Guidance

## 11. Links to Key Documents

[Fire and Rescue National Framework for England](#)

[Suffolk Fire and Rescue Service Integrated Risk Management Plan 2019-22](#)

[The Fire and Rescue Services Act 2004](#)

[Section 3 of the Local Government Act 1999](#)

[Audit Commission Act 1998](#)

[Regulation 11 of the Accounts and Audit \(England\) Regulations 2011](#)

[SCC Priorities 2017-21](#)

[The Civil Contingencies Act 2004](#)

[The Regulatory Reform \(Fire Safety\) Order 2005](#)

[The Fire and Rescue Services \(Emergencies\) \(England\) Order 2007](#)

[The Localism Act 2011](#)

[The Health and Safety Act at Work, etc. Act 1974](#)

[Suffolk Fire and Rescue Service Peer Challenge Report 2017](#)

[Her Majesty's Inspectorate of Constabulary and Fire and Rescue Services Suffolk Report](#)

[Suffolk Fire and Rescue Service Strategic Assessment of Risk 2018-2021](#)

[Suffolk Fire and Rescue Service Plan 2019-22](#)

[Home Office National Statistics](#)

[Police and Crime Act 2017](#)