

# COMMISSIONERS FOR FIRE & RESCUE SERVICE

Papers for the Board of Commissioners Committee to be held on:

**Friday 25 October 2024, 1200hrs**

**In person at South Wales Fire & Rescue Service Headquarters,  
Forest View Business Park, Llantrisant, CF72 8LX**

**Or**

**Remotely via MS Teams**

**Please ensure you join the meeting 15 minutes prior to meeting  
time**

**Meeting Link: [https://bit.ly/BCC\\_251024](https://bit.ly/BCC_251024)**

**Any issues please contact  
01443 232000 and ask for Governance Support**

## **A G E N D A**

1. Apologies for Absence
2. Declarations of Interest

Commissioners are reminded of their personal responsibility to declare both orally and in writing any personal and/or prejudicial interest in respect of matters contained in this agenda in accordance with the provisions of the South Wales Fire and Rescue Authority (Exercise of Functions) (Wales) Directions 2024 and the Local Government Act 2000.

3. Chairperson's Announcements
4. To receive the minutes of;

- a. Board of Commissioners of South Wales Fire & Rescue Service Committee Meeting held on Thursday 26 September 2024.

	b. Local Pension Board Committee Meeting held on Wednesday 03 July 2024	9
5.	Update on Outstanding Actions	15
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Signature of Monitoring Officer:



## **MEMBERSHIP**

### **Commissioners:**

C	Foulkes
V	Randeniya
Baroness	Wilcox
K	Williams

## COMMISSIONERS FOR SOUTH WALES FIRE AND RESCUE SERVICE

### MINUTES OF THE COMMISSIONERS FOR SOUTH WALES FIRE AND RESCUE SERVICE MEETING HELD ON THURSDAY 26 SEPTEMBER 2024 AT 1000 HRS IN MEETING ROOM 08 AND REMOTELY VIA TEAMS

#### COMMISSIONERS PRESENT:

Carl Foulkes, Chair  
Kirsty Williams  
Vij Randeniya

#### APOLOGIES:

Baroness Wilcox of Newport

**OFFICERS PRESENT:** T/CFO Stuart Millington, ACO Alison Reed – Director of People Services, T/ACFO Brian Thompson - Director of Technical Services, Dominic Mika – Director of Strategic Change and Transformation, Lisa Mullan – Head of Finance, Procurement and Property, T/AM Matt Jones – Head of Operations, Gabrielle Greathead – Interim Monitoring Officer, T/AM Mike Wyatt – Risk Reduction, Christian Landeg-John – Advisor to Commissioners, Wayne Thomas – T/Head of Corporate Support

#### 1. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

There were no declarations of interest made.

#### 2. CHAIRPERSON'S ANNOUNCEMENTS

There were no Chairperson's announcements.

#### 3. TO RECEIVE THE MINUTES OF

##### a. BOARD OF COMMISSIONERS FOR SOUTH WALES FIRE & RESCUE SERVICE MEETING HELD ON THURSDAY 29 AUGUST 2024

The Commissioners agreed the minutes from Thursday 29 August 2024 as a true record of discussions and no matters arising.

##### b. FINANCE AND AUDIT COMMITTEE MEETING HELD ON FRIDAY 26 JULY 2024

The Commissioners agreed the minutes from Friday 26 July 2024 as a true record of discussions and no matters arising.

#### **4. UPDATE ON OUTSTANDING ACTIONS**

Kirsty Williams asked for clarity to be added to the action log item surrounding the Health and Safety comparative data and to include the timescales of when this will be brought back to the meeting.

#### **5. REPORTS FOR DECISION**

##### **5.1 WELSH LANGUAGE STANDARDS – ANNUAL MONITORING REPORT**

Wayne Thomas, Temporary Head of Corporate Support provided an overview of actions that the organisation has undertaken to comply with the different classes of Standards during the financial year 2023/24 and request the Commissioners approve the publication of the report. Kirsty Williams commented that the style and presentation of the report is very accessible and user friendly to allow people to engage with the report.

There was a discussion whether the Service captures data around the amount of home fire safety visits conducted through the medium of Welsh and if there is an active offer for the public to request visits through the medium of Welsh. Wayne Thomas suggested that the home fire safety team can include an additional question on their script relating to language preference. Brian Thompson and Mike Wyatt will look further into capturing this data along with our Business Fire Safety inspections.

Wayne Thomas explained that in terms of home fire safety advice, this is created bilingually, and the Community Safety team attends Welsh medium schools for educational awareness. The Commissioners noted that it would be positive to show the figures of number of Welsh schools attended and agreed where we don't have the data, it can be added to our improvement area.

Carl Foulkes queried the statistics of Welsh speakers in the Service showing as zero Welsh skills and queried whether this is down to a data capturing issue. As a Service, we want to encourage our staff to recognise that they do have some basic conversational Welsh language skills and not underestimate their ability to speak Welsh. Carl Foulkes queried whether our Control staff can converse bilingually. CFO Millington advised that it is a standard requirement for our Control room to be able to speak bilingually.

The Commissioners agreed that in terms of targets and milestones there is good points to add to our next steps and milestones piece to demonstrate where we want to be with our targets and approach. The Commissioners would like to see additional information on the Services' objectives and contributions to the Wales million speakers strategy.

## **RESOLVED THAT**

- 5.1.1 The Commissioners welcome the report and approve the recommendation to publish the report.
- 5.1.2 The Commissioners ask that we pull data elements on the operational aspects and a next steps section and link into the targets and approach for the future.

## **5.2 COMMITMENT TO NFCC CORE CODE OF ETHICS**

Dominic Mika, Director of Strategic Change and Transformation requested the Commissioners support to reassert our adoption and commitment to the NFCC Code of Ethics principles.

The report sets out the 5 ethical principles which provides the foundation for all fire and rescue services. The Code of Ethics have been discussed at the middle managers meetings and transformation roadshows. Vij Randeniya stated it is important that this talked about in the Service as it sets the standard on how things are done.

Carl Foulkes stated that everyone should be aware of the Code of Ethics and it is important that we relaunch and consider how we make this relevant to fit South Wales Fire and Rescue Service. It was discussed how we engage with our staff about adopting the Code of Ethics and a setting a communications plan with our statement. Kirsty Williams would like this to be brought back to the Board of Commissioners in six months for an update on our position.

## **RESOLVED THAT**

- 5.2.1 The Commissioners agreed the recommendation of the Service's adoption of the NFCC Core Code of Ethics.
- 5.2.2 The Commissioners affirmed their commitment to improving the values, culture, fairness and diversity of the Service by an organisational statement based on the NFCC Core Code of Ethics.
- 5.2.3 The Commissioners request an update on our position in six months' time.

## **6. REPORTS FOR INFORMATION**

### **6.1 SWFRS AUTOMATIC FIRE ALARM (AFA) RESPONSE CHANGE UPDATE**

Mike Wyatt, Temporary Area Manager provided a verbal update on the current progress of the Automatic Fire Alarm (AFA) response change. The team have been working under a new communication strategy and have made rapid progress. The new webpage is live and FAQs are being continually updated based on feedback and questions. Social media messages, letters and bilingual leaflets handed to crews has been completed, with further leaflets being sent out on 27 September. Individual local authorities have been written to. The email address is live and feedback is being actioned on a daily basis. There will be engagement stakeholder meetings which are being collated from the webpage and Newport Museum will be offered to attend due to their concerns. An educational animation is sent out on a weekly basis across our social media platforms. David Lozano has been working closely with Media and Communications to execute the engagement and communication strategy.

#### **RESOLVED THAT**

- 6.1.1 The Commissioners welcomed the update and acknowledge the progression that has been made on the AFA response change.

### **6.2 STATEMENT OF ACCOUNTS 2023/2024**

Lisa Mullan, Head of Finance, Procurement and Property provided an overview of the Statement of Accounts for 2023/24. The document summarises the financial position and helps demonstrate accountability and transparency. The report is related to 1 April 2023 to 31 March 2024 and considers the statutory ISA260 report, the final audited statement of accounts and the letter of representation.

The Statement of Accounts has been circulated to the Chair prior to this meeting for signing upon agreement from the Chair. Once agreed and signed, the documents will be added to our website.

Lisa Mullan summarised that there were changes since the draft and reassured the Commissioners there were no adjustments. Kate Harvard, Audit Wales explained with all being well, the Auditor General will certify the accounts as there are no significant issues. Kate explained it is their intention to issue an 'unqualified' audit of the report and thanked Lisa Mullan and her Finance team for the work they have delivered well within the statutory lines. Carl Foulkes reiterated that they recognise the 'unqualified' audit statement and congratulated the Finance team.

## **RESOLVED THAT**

- 6.2.1 The Commissioners received the ISA 260 report of the Appointed Auditor and noted the letter of representation.
- 6.2.2 The Commissioners noted and authorised the audited Statement of Accounts and the Chair will sign the document following the meeting.

## **7. FORWARD WORK PROGRAMME FOR BOARD OF COMMISSIONERS FOR SOUTH WALES FIRE & RESCUE SERVICE 2024/2025**

CFO Millington stated that all areas for today's meeting have been brought to the meeting and we are back on track with the Forward Working Programme.

There was a discussion around the South Wales Fire and Rescue Service inspection report. CFO Millington will do a gap analysis and this will be brought to the December Board of Commissioners. Brian Thompson advised that he has an operational staff member dedicated to the work on operational effectiveness reports that will report to him. Brian Thompson will provide a written update on the progress. Kirsty Williams advised it would be useful to have an update on the other thematics and to schedule in an appropriate section for an update.

CFO Millington updated the group that the NFCC new Firefighting national operational guidance and the foundation for firefighting documents have been approved for publication.

## **8. TO CONSIDER ANY ITEMS OF BUSINESS THAT THE CHAIRPERSON DEEMS URGENT (PART 1 OR 2)**

There were no items that the Chairperson deemed urgent.

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## **COMMISSIONERS FOR SOUTH WALES FIRE AND RESCUE SERVICE**

### **MINUTES OF THE LOCAL PENSION BOARD COMMITTEE HELD ON WEDNESDAY, 03 JULY 2024 IN MEETING ROOM 8 & REMOTELY VIA TEAMS**

**OFFICERS PRESENT:-** T/ACFO Dean Loader (Chair) – Director of Service Delivery, ACO Alison Reed – Director of People Services & Scheme Manager, Mr Chris Williams – Head of ICT, Ms Gabbie Greathead – Interim Monitoring Officer & Legal Services Manager, Mr Gareth Tovey – Fire Brigades’ Union, Mr Dave King – Fire & Rescue Service Association, Mr Ian Traylor – Pensions Service Director, RCTCBC,

#### **1. APOLOGIES**

CFO Stuart Millington

#### **2. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST**

Each Member of the board declared a personal non-prejudicial interest in each agenda item.

#### **3. CHAIR’S ANNOUNCEMENTS**

The Chair welcomed each board member to their first meeting and introductions were made.

#### **4. APPOINTMENT OF NEW CHAIR AND REVIEW OF THE LOCAL PENSION BOARD COMMITTEE TERMS OF REFERENCE (TOR)**

The ACO People Services wished to confirm the appointment of a new Chair of the Local Pension Board with immediate effect, namely Temporary Assistant Chief Fire Officer Dean Loader, Director of Service Delivery.

The ACO People Services also invited board members to review the terms of reference (TOR) for the Local Pension Board as set out in the Members’ Handbook.

Mr Gareth Tovey raised that the Commissioner’s appear to have discharged functions and will not be sitting on this board which he believed was a concern and risk going forward.

The ACO People Services advised that, in line with scheme manager guidance on who should be scheme manager, there was an opportunity to delegate the role of the scheme manager hence why the Commissioner's have approved the ACO People Services into the role.

A discussion arose around the appointment of a Deputy Chair and it was agreed that a flexible approach be taken and a decision made at the time of the Chair's unavailability.

#### **RESOLVED THAT**

- 4.1 Members of the board confirmed the appointment of the new Chair, namely Temporary Assistant Chief Fire Officer Dean Loader, Director of Service Delivery.
- 4.2 Members of the board reviewed the TOR for the Local Pension Board Committee, contained within the Members' Handbook.
- 4.3 The ACO People Services agreed to raise Mr Tovey's concerns with the Commissioners.
- 4.4 The ACO People Services to arrange for the Members' Handbook be uploaded to the intranet to ensure access for all staff.
- 4.5 The Chair to clarify point D under chapter 2 of the Members' Handbook and report back.

#### **5. PUBLIC SECTOR TOOLKIT**

The ACO People Services advised it is a requirement for members of local pension boards to undertake training as part of their role. She advised that, following the meeting, she would take members through an online training package to include governance and breaches of the law etc as part of their role which would give board members a good grounding in discharging their duties. She further advised that the training is required to be undertaken prior to the next meeting of the board, ideally within the next 4 weeks. A link to the toolkit will be provided for members of the board.

#### **RESOLVED THAT**

Members of the board noted the update.

Mr Dave King joined the meeting at 10:26hrs due to technical issues.

## **6. REVIEW OF KEY PERFORMANCE INDICATORS**

The Pension Service Director reported on the Service Level Agreement (SLA) between South Wales Fire & Rescue Service and Rhondda Cynon Taf County Borough Council which sets out the manner in which certain duties and responsibilities are expected to be carried out. A key element of the SLA is the reporting on actual performance activity against the agreed key delivery Service Standards. The report is intended to provide officers with an update on key activity undertaken during the reporting period and shares the performance data for the period December 2023 to March 2024.

Mr Gareth Tovey advised he would see value in a discussion around the meaning of KPIs. He requested clarification on what KPIs mean to those accessing their pensions and for those individuals to be able to scrutinise them.

The ACO People Services agreed to bring the SLA to the next meeting which will assist members in identifying their responsibilities.

A discussion arose around the self-serve statistics at page 53. Mr Gareth Tovey requested a tight timescale in getting the issue rectified for scheme members. Mr Ian Traylor explained the member self-serve figures for the 2015 scheme are low when compared to the 1992 self-serve figures. He agreed to provide this detail at the next meeting. Communication will be sent to encourage sign up.

The ACO People Services wished to report on the relationship between the Service and the pension providers at RCT who work very closely and positively. She further advised that South Wales are the only Service who provide immediate detriment payments.

### **RESOLVED THAT**

- 6.1 Members of the board noted the performance data included at Appendix 1 attached to the report.
- 6.2 Members of the board noted the relevant pension administrative overview and update included at Appendix 2 attached to the report.
- 6.3 More detail to be provided on the self-serve statistics.
- 6.4 Additional communication will be sent on the annual benefit statement to ensure scheme members have a full understanding of its content.

## **7. PUBLIC SECTOR PENSION SCHEME LEGISLATION – MCCLOUD & O'BRIEN REMEDY EXERCISES AND THE PENSIONS DASHBOARD**

The ACO People Services reported on the statutory timelines imposed by the recent changes to Public Sector Pension Scheme legislation and more specifically Firefighter Pension Schemes, more commonly known as the McCloud and O'Brien (Matthews 2) pension remedy exercises.

In addition, the Pensions Dashboard Project, which is being implemented by the Department for Work and Pensions (DWP) is now gathering pace and the connection date for schemes, in the fire sector, is October 2025.

Pensions dashboards are digital services including apps, websites and other tools which savers will be able to use to see their pension information in one place. This includes information on their state pension. A saver will use dashboards to search the records of all pension schemes to confirm whether or not they are a member.

Mr Gareth Tovey raised the HMRC tax issue and queried if the Service anticipates any delays, if so, would there be a risk to the Service if timescales are not adhered to and could members of the board be assured that the Service is not taken to court. The ACO People Services confirmed that she has chased the LGA for an update on the current position.

Mr Gareth Tovey queried if the Service was confident that all 473 scheme members had been written to. The ACO People Services confirmed the Service has reached out to all those at risk, unless they have not informed the Service of change of address, she was relatively confident that all involved in the first exercise have been captured. She further advised that any concerns can be raised at a national level however will continue to monitor the position.

The Head of ICT raised the pension dashboard where public service pension schemes can be viewed via a portal, regular updates can also be viewed here.

### **RESOLVED THAT**

- 7.1 Members of the board noted the content of the report.
- 7.2 Members of the board noted the statutory obligation placed on the Scheme Manager to ensure that these timelines are met for all 3 national projects.

## **8. PUBLICATIONS, UPDATES, INFORMATION (STANDARD ITEM)**

The ACO People Services shared relevant publications, updates and information relating to pension matters with members of the board.

### **RESOLVED THAT**

Members agreed to review the publications which were shared for information and awareness purposes, as attached at Appendix 1.

## **9. FORWARD WORK PROGRAMME FOR LOCAL PENSION BOARD 2024/2025**

The ACO People Services presented the Forward work Programme for 2024/2025.

A discussion arose around good communication with scheme members and the implementation of pension schemes. Mr Gareth Tovey suggested 'video style' updates in place of lengthy reports as a way of updating scheme members. He advised if this is done effectively it may reduce the number of queries that the pension team receive.

### **RESOLVED THAT**

9.1 Members of the board noted the content of the Forward Work Programme for 2024/2025 and agreed to the addition of SLA, KPI & Communication Updates.

## **10. TO CONSIDER ANY ITEMS OF BUSINESS THAT THE CHAIRPERSON DEEMS URGENT (PART 1 OR 2)**

There were no items of business that the Chair deemed urgent.

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## AGENDA ITEM NO 5

<b>UPDATE ON OUTSTANDING ISSUES ARISING FROM PREVIOUS MEETINGS</b>
--

<b>Minute No</b>	<b>Item</b>	<b>Action</b>	<b>Leading Officer</b>	<b>Current Status:</b>
08/24 6.1	Your Health Delivery Group	ACFO Dean Loader to present an update on Your Health to the Board of Commissioners in 3 months.	ACFO Dean Loader	This update has been included in the Forward Work Programme to be presented at the December 2024 Board of Commissioners meeting.
08/24 6.1	Health and Safety comparison data	ACFO Dean Loader and Head of Corporate Services Wayne Thomas to look at comparison Health and Safety data between SWFRS and other Wales Fire and Rescue Services.	Wayne Thomas	The data will be brought back to the Board of Commissioners meeting in December 2024 to be presented as a part of the Your Health Delivery Group update.

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AGENDA ITEM NO 6

**Reports for Decision**

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**THIS REPORT IS NOT EXEMPT AND IN THE PUBLIC DOMAIN****SOUTH WALES FIRE & RESCUE SERVICE**AGENDA ITEM NO 6.i  
25 OCTOBER 2024

BOARD OF THE COMMISSIONERS

REPORT OF THE DIRECTOR OF STRATEGIC CHANGE AND  
TRANSFORMATION**APPROVAL OF THE ANNUAL IMPROVEMENT PLAN 2024 - 2025****THIS REPORT IS FOR APPROVAL**REPORT APPROVED BY THE DIRECTOR OF STRATEGIC CHANGE AND  
TRANSFORMATION  
PRESENTING OFFICER - TEMPORARY HEAD OF CORPORATE SUPPORT,  
WAYNE THOMAS**SUMMARY**

The organisation must publish its Annual Improvement Plan reporting on achievements and performance against objectives set for 2023/2024 and key priorities for 2025/2026 against the long-term Strategic Themes within the Service's ten-year Strategic Plan. The Plan must be published by the deadline date of 31<sup>st</sup> October 2024 in readiness for the formal 12-week statutory consultation period.

**RECOMMENDATIONS**

It is recommended that Commissioners:

1. Approve the final version of the Annual Improvement Plan in Appendix 1 for publication and engagement events for full consultation on the SWFRS Internet site by 31 October 2024.

**1. BACKGROUND**

- 1.1 Commissioners will be aware of the requirement to publish the Annual Improvement Plan by the statutory deadline of October 31<sup>st</sup>, in accordance with the requirements of the Local Government (Wales) Measure 2009. The final document is based on a similar style and format to previous years and incorporated into a fresh design to reflect the transformation and change journey the Service is undertaking.

- 1.2 While reporting on performance for the preceding financial year 2023/2024, the Annual Improvement Plan is also a consultation vehicle for reviewing the long-term Strategic Themes for the Service as well as the objectives for the upcoming financial year 2025/2026. The document outlines how these themes and objectives support the achievement of Wellbeing Goals as part of the Wellbeing of Future Generations (Wales) Act 2015. It will also meet our statutory obligations as per the Local Government (Wales) Measure 2009 and the Welsh Governments Fire & Rescue National Framework.

## **2. ISSUE / PROPOSAL**

- 2.1 The Plan provides an overview of the Service's performance for the preceding financial year 2023/2024. This includes narratives of how the Service has progressed our previous objectives, the outcomes of our audit programmes and key performance indicator totals against their respective projections. This enables the organisation to maintain a focus on continuous improvement and accountability.
- 2.2 A 12-week statutory consultation will commence upon the publication of the Annual Improvement Plan, which will shape the long-term Strategic Themes and identify the improvement objectives and priorities we will implement for the upcoming year 2025/2026.
- 2.3 Strategic Themes and objectives are our top-level plan and have been considered in accordance with our contribution toward the Wellbeing of Future Generations (Wales) Act 2015 and the Welsh Government Fire & Rescue National Framework. These objectives meet our statutory obligations under the Local Government (Wales) Measure 2009 and provide greater clarity and focus on what we will do as a Service.
- 2.4 Transformation and improvement are key themes running throughout the Plan to ensure that we demonstrate the Service's commitment to the recommendations and requirements of the Morris Review and Thematic Reviews to continually enhance delivery of services.
- 2.5 The results of the 12-week public consultation will be reported to the Commissioners before publication of the annual update to the Strategic Plan 2020/2030 in March 2025.

### **3. IMPLICATIONS**

#### **3.1 Community and Environment**

3.1.1 Diversity, Inclusion, Cohesion and Equity - Equalities outcomes were considered in the development of the Strategic Themes within the Annual Improvement Plan. In determining relevant departmental actions to deliver the priorities, objectives and themes, diversity, inclusion, equalities and well-being outcomes will be considered.

3.1.2 Well-Being Of Future Generations (Wales) Act 2015 – Publishing, consulting, and monitoring our progress in meeting our objectives, and effectively implementing planned improvement strategies as necessary, enable us to ensure that we positively influence the long-term impacts of our decisions and actions on future generations. This contributes to the seven well-being goals that will help address global problems such as poverty, health inequalities and the impacts of climate change.

3.1.3 Consultation and Communications: Public consultation influences our planning activities for the upcoming financial year. These activities are then used to demonstrate our compliance with the various laws, regulations and standards that we are required to adhere to.

#### **3.2 Regulatory, Strategy and Policy**

3.2.1 Legal - Section 5 of the Local Government (Wales) Measure 2009 requires Fire and Rescue Authorities to consult citizens and communities about their general duty to improve and their improvement objectives.

3.2.2 Financial - Delivery of these strategic themes are primarily addressed within the commitments of the Medium-Term Financial Strategy or will be met as part of the financial planning for subsequent years.

#### **3.3 Resources, Assets and Delivery**

3.3.1 Consultation feedback is considered in setting the Service's objectives and priorities, but resources are not directly allocated or impacted.

## 4 EVALUATION & CONCLUSIONS

- 4.1 The Plan provides an overview of the Service's performance for the preceding financial year 2023/2024, which has been considered during our planning activities for the year. This ensures that the Service maintains a focus on continuous improvement and accountability.
- 4.2 The organisation's long-term Strategic Themes have been reviewed to consider the objectives identified as part of the Service's Transformation Programme, and wider improvement activities proposed for 2025/2026. The pre-consultation exercise reported previously, also demonstrated that there was a predominantly positive response to the organisation's Strategic Themes. It is proposed that the organisation's current long-term Strategic Themes are consulted upon as they currently stand.
- 4.3 In addition to reporting on performance for the preceding financial year 2023/2024, the Annual Improvement Plan is a consultation vehicle for reviewing the long-term Strategic Themes for the Service as well as the objectives for the upcoming financial year 2025/2026.

## 5 RECOMMENDATIONS

- 5.1 It is recommended that Commissioners:

- 5.1.1 Approve the final version of the Annual Improvement Plan in Appendix 1 for publication and engagement events for full consultation on the SWFRS Internet site by 31 October 2024.

<b>Contact Officer:</b>	David Canning Planning, Performance and Risk Manager	
<b>Background Papers</b>	<b>Date</b>	<b>Source / Contact</b>
None		

<b>Appendices</b>	
Appendix 1	Annual Improvement Plan 2025/2026

**FRONT COVER****APPENDIX 1****DRAFT**

**SOUTH WALES FIRE AND RESCUE SERVICE**  
Annual Improvement Plan

How we did in 2023-2024  
and  
what we plan to do in 2025-2026

**THIS DOCUMENT IS ALSO AVAILABLE IN WELSH**

## Contents

Foreword

Introduction

The Well-being of Future Generations Act (Wales) 2015

**TO BE COMPLETED WHEN DOCUMENT IS FINALISED**



## **Foreword from Commissioners**

To be finalised.

## Chief Fire Officer

Hello, and welcome to our latest Annual Improvement Plan.

This plan serves to celebrate and reflect upon all we have achieved as an organisation in 2023-2024, but also details our plans and Strategic Themes to help us achieve our mission of keeping South Wales safe by reducing risk in 2025-2026 and beyond.

The Service has had a challenging year following the publication of the Independent Culture Review Report, and the decision taken by the Welsh Government to replace the Fire and Rescue Authority with four Commissioners.

I took over as Interim CFO in February 2024 on secondment from North Wales Fire and Rescue Service, and despite the difficulties we have faced, I am proud of the work that has taken place across the organisation and the inroads that have been made in responding to the 82 recommendations contained within the Independent Cultural Review, and the progress made against the previous Chief Fire and Rescue Advisor and Inspector for Wales thematic review recommendations and other areas contained within the Commissioners for South Wales Fire Authority terms of reference.

Under this umbrella, a coordinated approach was called for, resulting in the subsequent launch of the Step Forward Transformation programme – a portfolio of nine projects that will take the Service forward and ensure it is fit for future generations.

The appointments of a Director of Strategic Change, Head of Communications and Engagement, Head of Finance and Culture Change Manager will help ensure effective leadership across the organisation and drive continuous improvement to make the Service an inclusive and welcoming workplace where everyone feels valued.

This year has seen us come under a period of intense external scrutiny, and whilst as a Service we have received much criticism and focus on work that still needs to take place, it is equally important to recognise and celebrate our organisation's successes.

Earlier this year SWFRS joined the largest UK Fire and Rescue Service convoy to deliver vital life-saving equipment to our Ukrainian counterparts.

We also became the first fire and rescue service in Wales to introduce a 52-week paid maternity provision and have been honoured with the prestigious Ministry of Defence (MoD) Employer Recognition Scheme (ERS) Silver Award, reflecting our commitment to supporting the Armed Forces Community and status as an employer of choice.

Another significant change for the Service comes under the proposed changes to the way we respond to automatic fire alarms (AFAs) from 6<sup>th</sup> January 2025. Following a public consultation, we will be adopting a nighttime only risk to high-risk premises, freeing up valuable time and resources and allowing us to focus on our core commitment 'To make South Wales safer, by reducing risk'.

I will shortly be stepping down and handing over the baton to my successor Air Vice-Marshal Fin Monahan OBE DFC PhD who is committed to taking SWFRS even further forward and to ensure that it is held in the highest regard by staff and the public alike. It is our shared ambition that SWFRS is a sector-leading inclusive employer of choice, who prioritise the communities that we serve now and into the future.

## **Director of Strategic Change & Transformation**

I am proud of our Service and the dedication and commitment we show in reducing risk to the communities of South Wales. We continue to grow, learn and improve to make sure we meet the changing risks to the public. Our firefighters are highly trained so that we can respond effectively to a range of emergencies when our communities need us the most. We should celebrate the work that we do within our communities to reduce risk and prevent emergencies. Our 47 fire stations remain at the heart of the communities of South Wales, and our staff continue to serve the public, so that we can be there when you need us 24 hours a day, every day of the year.

We remain committed to improving our services to the public and have developed an ambitious transformation programme, with a focus of leadership, effective communication and engagement, and showcasing the positive impact we have within our communities. Through nine priority improvement projects, identified by staff, we aim to be the best that we can be and are working together to deliver this programme for change.

## Introduction

South Wales Fire and Rescue Service (SWFRS) is responsible for providing an efficient and effective fire and rescue service (FRS) to 10 unitary authorities with a total population of over 1.5 million people. Geographically we are responsible for rural, coastal, and urban settings covering over 2,800 square kilometres. Census data shows that we serve some of the most densely populated and fastest growing communities in Wales.

The services we must provide are set out in legal requirements and mandatory duties including:

- The Fire and Rescue Services Act 2004
- The Local Government (Wales) Measure 2009 ('the Measure')
- The Well-being of Future Generations Act 2015 ('the WFGA')
- The Welsh Government Fire and Rescue National Framework 2016

In addition, we have a range of duties as an employer and public body. Designated as a 'Welsh Improvement Authority', the Measure requires us to set and publish improvement objectives and to consult on these, demonstrating that our plans have regard to the seven aspects of improvement:

- |                           |                  |
|---------------------------|------------------|
| • Strategic effectiveness | • Sustainability |
| • Service quality         | • Efficiency     |
| • Service availability    | • Innovation     |
| • Fairness                |                  |

We are required by the WFGA to set and publish well-being objectives designed to maximise our contribution towards improving the social, economic, environmental, and cultural well-being of future generations of people in Wales. Under the 'sustainable development principle', which comprises of seven goals, we must take all reasonable steps to meet these objectives. Each year we publish a statement as part of our annual report on our progress, including our response to any recommendations from the Future Generations Commissioner for Wales.

We have a duty to keep the people, communities, businesses, and environment of South Wales safe from fires and other hazards. To do this effectively and efficiently, for now and for future generations, we continually consider the needs and views of our communities, identifying and assessing risk while monitoring emerging challenges. This Improvement Plan looks back to 2023-2024 and reviews delivery against the plans and performance indicators we set out. It also looks forward to 2025-2026, outlining our proposed objectives and activities which are open to public consultation.

Over the last year, the Service has seen a period of intense scrutiny. Our future plans recognise the need for wide reaching and meaningful change with oversight and support from the Board of Commissioners. Their Terms of Reference, alongside recommendations from the Independent Culture Review and other sector-wide reports, have been combined to map our improvement priorities for implementation via a coordinated transformation agenda. The Step Forward programme brings together a portfolio of projects that will take the Service forward, supporting individual development, recognising and encouraging involvement, to ensure the Service is fit for the future.

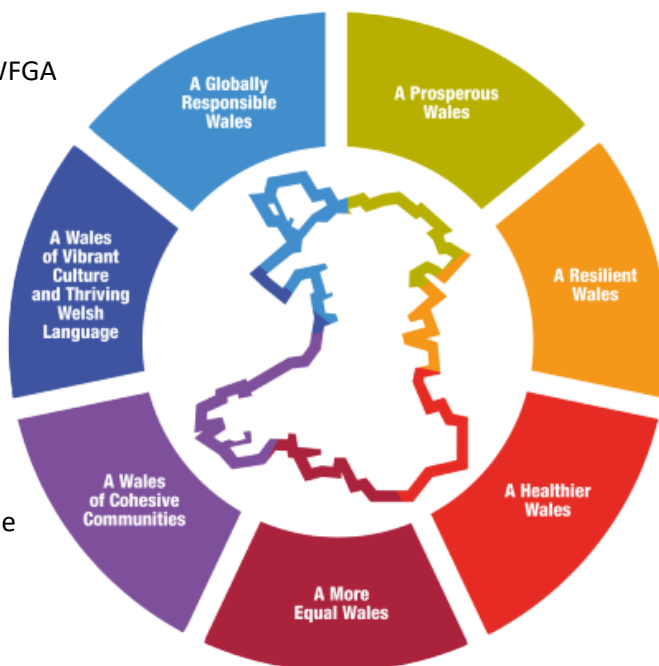
## Well-being Statement

The sustainable development principle of the WFGA states that:

**Public Services bodies should act in a manner which seeks to ensure that the needs of the present are met, without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs.**

We are committed to meeting our duties under the WFGA.

As we develop our Strategic Themes, which are the high-level priorities shaping our plan, the seven WFGA goals are considered to ensure we contribute to their achievement.



The WFGA also identifies the following five ways of working which we must consider and act in accordance with when planning and making decisions:

- Balancing short term needs with **long-term** needs – Taking a longer-term view in our Strategic Plan 2020-2030 allows us to consider how future trends and changes will impact the public and our services, including climate and demographic change.
- Putting resources into **preventing** problems – Our preventative activity ranges from working with businesses and building owners to make premises safe to working with individuals and groups to change behaviour, all with the aim of preventing the need for an emergency response.
- Using an **integrated** approach by balancing social, economic, and environmental needs – Our planning process is undertaken collectively by involving various stakeholders including our staff, our partners and members of the public, to ensure the impact of proposals are fully explored.
- **Collaborating** with others to help meet well-being objectives – We work with a wide range of partners at a strategic and local level.
- **Involving** others to reflect the diversity of an area – Our consultation and engagement activities ensure there are opportunities to contribute views and ideas.



Long-term



Preventing



Integration



Collaboration



Involvement

Success of the WFGA in Wales has been recognised by the United Nations with a declaration on the Responsibilities of the Present Generations Towards Future Generations and a call to place future generations at the centre of decision making.

## The Socio-economic Duty 2021

Public bodies in Wales must consider how strategic decisions affect those who live in less favourable social and economic circumstances, for example, experiencing poverty or unequal access to services such as transport. Such disadvantage can result in inequalities of outcome including poorer health, lower educational attainment, and less favourable work opportunities. We therefore give due regard to socio-economic disadvantage in making strategic decisions, which contributes to the WFGA goals. Decisions considered by Commissioners or senior managers must be accompanied by consideration of their socio-economic impact.

We complete Equality Impact Assessments when developing projects, amending or writing policies, designing initiatives/campaigns, etc, and these assessments are kept under review to ensure our activities are truly inclusive. By addressing any barriers to accessing our services, our focus is on the people we serve.

## Social Partnership and Public Procurement (Wales) Act 2023

The Act directs public bodies in Wales which are in scope for the Social Partnership Duty to a framework which complements the WFGA and the Socio-economic duty in its four key principles:

- Social Partnership – consulting and working with trade unions or, where there is no recognised trade union, other staff representatives when setting well-being objectives and taking strategic decisions on their delivery.
- Socially Responsible Procurement – requires publication of a procurement strategy that ensures consideration of factors other than cost in public spending, including supply chain management.

The Wales Fire & Rescue Service Procurement Strategy 2022-2027 defines sustainable procurement as: *“the process whereby organisations meet their needs for goods, services, works and utilities in a way that achieves value for money on a whole life basis in terms of generating benefits not only to the organisation, but also to society and the economy, whilst minimising damage to the environment”*

- Fair Work – substituting ‘fair work’ for ‘decent work’ in the Prosperous Wales well-being goal focuses on providing conditions that enable a healthy, inclusive environment that is attentive to well-being.
- Sustainable Development – assessing how the impact of decisions made today affects future generations.

These responsibilities are recognised in our current processes and plans. We have continued to build on positive relationships with trade unions by holding engagement sessions and regular meetings with Commissioners and senior leaders. We are committed to delivering on the recommendation of the Independent Culture Review, with particular focus on well-being.

The Wales’s Fire and Rescue Service’s Procurement Strategy 2022-2027 continues to be reviewed, to ensure the new duty is implemented effectively. For our Service, our sustainable development principles document directs our decision-making processes. We have also identified Key Priority objectives as important areas for improvement, including.

- **Economic, Social and Environmental Impact** – To not only obtain optimum value for the Service in terms of whole life cost (from acquisition to disposal) and quality outcomes through effective sourcing, supply and performance monitoring, but also

to provide benefit to society, the economy, and the environment, both now and in the future.

- **Sustainable Procurement** – integrate sustainability considerations into the procurement process, apply the Sustainable Risk Assessment (SRA) framework and execute the sustainable procurement action plan and supplier engagement strategy.
- **Community Benefits** - delivery of social, economic and environmental benefit through effective application of Welsh Government Community Benefits guidance must be an integral consideration in procurement.

## Community Risk Management Plans (CRMPs)

Each of our 47 fire and rescue stations produce an annual CRMP including an assessment of demographics, to better understand the communities they serve, and local risks/priorities including building/premises risks, water, and roads. These plans also highlight community activities and initiatives that are planned and delivered locally and support the work of Public Service Boards (PSBs).

In this Improvement Plan, we provide an overview of the area we serve, highlighting some of the specific challenges faced and how they impact our communities. This demonstrates the thread joining our stations' plans to our strategic priorities, linked by our work with unitary authorities and coordinating bodies, including local PSBs.

## Our Public Service Boards

The PSBs report annually on their progress to show how responsibilities under the WFGA are being met. They prepare and publish local well-being plans that highlight change needed within each geographical region and what steps are being put in place to achieve this.

To ensure that we are effective members of the PSBs, we always consider the long-term implications of our actions. We look to collaborate and take an integrated approach to deliver a service that will help people feel safe and well in their daily lives.

Our work with the PSBs demonstrates our commitment to improve the social, economic, environmental, and cultural well-being of Wales, along with the sustainable development principle of the WFGA, the seven goals of the WFGA and applying the five ways of working.

Please click on the relevant logo below to visit a PSB website.



## Independent Culture Review & Transformation Programme

The Independent Culture Review, authored by Fenella Morris KC and published in January 2024, has been the catalyst for significant change for the Service, from the transfer of governance responsibilities to a Board of Commissioners appointed by Welsh Government to reflection on and review of key assumptions and practices.

Within the scope of this plan, which reviews activities in 2023-2024 and looks forward to 2025-2026, we continue to assess the Review and how we will address its findings. This is in the context of broader challenges for the fire and rescue sector and emergency services. Recent publications included:

- Sound the Alarm: The Governance of Fire and Rescue Services (Welsh Parliament Equality and Social Justice Committee, June 2024)
- Standards of behaviour: The handling of misconduct in fire and rescue services (HMICFRS, August 2024)
- Governance of Fire and Rescue Authorities (Audit Wales, September 2024)

Considering the 82 recommendations made by Fenella Morris KC that were addressed in our initial action plan as well as direction from these and other reports, we recognised this resulted in an extensive list of issues. This has required coordination of our approach to ensure we do not lose sight of the changes called for by the Independent Culture Review but deliver wider change effectively and efficiently.

We have therefore launched the **Step Forward** programme – a series of coordinated projects to ensure the Service is prepared to meet future demands and challenges. At the heart of the programme are focussed actions that will assist, support and develop our staff:

- Governance & strategy
- Leadership
- Communication & engagement
- Ethics, values & behaviours
- Policies & procedures
- Talent management
- Diversity, Inclusion, Cohesion & Equity (DICE)
- Digital transformation
- A safe & positive environment

Alongside these projects, further work relating to the Commissioners' terms of reference has continued including completion of the review of grievance cases and projects addressing operational implementation of thematic reviews.

We are in regular dialogue with Welsh Government on progress and receiving support from across the sector, including other FRSs, NFCC and the wider public sector. To inform long-term improvement, we have requested an independent assessment of the Service by HMICFRS to supplement the culture review. This will provide the basis for future strategic planning and prioritisation, with the intent:

To create a safe, modern fire and rescue service in South Wales and to ensure everyone is treated with dignity and respect, free from discrimination, bullying, harassment and inappropriate behaviours





Our work to achieve this aim is underpinned by the NFCC Core Code of Ethics, a set of five ethical principles that provide a basis for promoting good behaviour and challenging inappropriate behaviour. Everyone in every fire and rescue service is expected to follow the Code and we are embedding its principles in all aspects of our work and interactions.

These principles are echoed in our transformation programme with projects that will promote understanding and accountability. By ensuring that we act in accordance with the Code, we will ensure excellence not only what we do but the way that we do it.

## Responding to thematic reviews and Audit Wales reports



**Learning from Grenfell (2021)** reports on action taken by the three Welsh FRS against the recommendations contained within the Grenfell Tower Enquiry (GTI) Phase 1 report.

Our progress: We are continuing to make progress against the recommendations including specialist skills training for staff and development of a co-operation between emergency services action plan, Site-Specific Risk Information (SSRI), operational tactical plans (OTPs), initial attendance plans and venue response plans which are available to crews on fire engines.

A dedicated evacuation radio channel has been developed, which means our Joint Fire Control (JFC) can now talk directly to the bridgehead, a secure area inside a building where firefighters can operate safely during an incident, creating a single communication link. The High-Rise Working Group (HRWG) have been testing and perfecting the communications link since October 2023. An ongoing exercise programme for this is being rolled out to all Wholetime Crews, Tactical Managers, and Fire Control Operators. As JFC is shared with Mid and West Wales FRS (MAWWFRS), it has been agreed that they will both use the evacuation comms strategy to avoid any confusion. An electronic version of this direct evacuation communication is currently being explored and developed.

A Life Survival Guidance (LSG) booklet and plans has been developed and made available to all fire engines. JFC have also established an LSG working group to co-ordinate their response with MAWWFRS.

In May 2024, a review looked at our current position, existing procedures, protocols and practises against the recommendations of the National Fire Chiefs Council (NFCC) response to the Grenfell Inquiry and this thematic review. Our HRWG have amended their action plan accordingly and it is anticipated that all actions against the phase 1 recommendations will be completed by April 2025.



**Broadening the role of firefighters in Wales (2021):** Considering the outline specification developed by the Broadening of the Role Working Group, convened by Welsh Government in 2020, the review considers capacity within the three Welsh FRS to carry out additional work arising from broadening of the role, safely and without detriment to core functions.

**Our Progress:** A Delivery Board has been established with membership from a cross section of the Service, including representation from the Fire Brigades' Union (FBU). Subject matter experts will be asked to support the group where necessary and to help inform their decisions and keep stakeholders engaged, focus groups or sub-groups will be established for specific aspects. The structure, responsibilities and reporting processes of the Delivery Board have been outlined in a scoping document and will be communicated throughout the Service once approved.

The Delivery Board collects data to support action plans and review progress. Data includes information from other FRS, relevant guidance or legislation, and an analysis of SWFRS training, exercising and risk reduction activity. Reviewing this data and stakeholder feedback will enable finalisation and publication of the action plan.

**FRS Operational Training (2022):** Considers existing station work routines and the Retained Duty System (RDS) and how these impact time available for skills maintenance training and exercising, focusing on core and additional skills for firefighters and supervisory managers.

**Our progress:** A Thematic Review Training Delivery Group has been established comprising of subject matter experts from throughout the Service to deliver the seven recommendations outlined in the Welsh Fire Advisor's Thematic Review of Operational Training.

The group are currently focussing their efforts on gathering the data required to carry out the unconstrained analysis of training in relation to the acquisition and maintenance of the nine core competencies of a Firefighter role and the additional competencies relating to the specialist skill sets that SWFRS deliver, such as Bariatric, Line and Water Rescue, to name a few.

The Training Department has already part completed activities that contribute towards the remaining recommendations such as the development of a suite of micro-teaches, and this work will continue simultaneously.

Once the unconstrained analysis has been completed, reviewed and published, the group will shift their focus on to the completion of the remaining recommendations, with an anticipated completion date of April 2025.



**Audit Wales: Fire False Alarms:** Reviews the impact of Fire False Alarms on SWFRS performance and recommends exploration of other approaches, strengthening use of data to scrutinise activity.



**Fire False Alarm Reduction – South Wales Fire and Rescue Authority**

Audit year: 2022-23  
Date issued: May 2023  
Document reference: 3570A2023

**Our progress:** These false alarm calls occur when an automatic fire (AFA) detection system is activated and upon investigation by the FRS it is found that a fire has not occurred. A comprehensive report detailing the impact of unwanted fire signals (UFS) on the Service, other FRS' AFA response, and risk

analyses and benefits of proposed change has been presented to, and agreed by, our Board of Commissioners. Our Business Fire Safety (BFS) team are working with people across the Service to finalise the communications plan to inform the public, businesses and other services, who will have the opportunity to attend dedicated engagement sessions. Training and communication for staff is ongoing. A schedule for monitoring and evaluating the impact of the change is in place, to ensure we are maximising benefits whilst reducing risk.

Full details of the change, the benefits and frequently asked questions can be accessed by this QR code.

## Transformation: Step Forward Programme

The focus of the Step Forward Programme is delivering change – taking the Service forward to ensure it is able to meet the needs of our staff and communities now and is ready to meet future challenges. While this is rooted in our response to the Independent Culture Review Report published by Fenella Morris KC, the scope of the programme recognises that wide-reaching culture change needs strong organisational foundations.

The programme therefore encapsulates development of governance, leadership, digital and communication functions alongside projects focussing on ethics, values & behaviours, and diversity, inclusion, cohesion & equity. This approach will support the Commissioners in delivering sustainable change, informed by His Majesty’s Inspectorate of Constabulary and Fire and Rescue Services (HMICFRS) assessment of the Service’s efficiency, effectiveness and care for its people.

As the programme has commenced in 2024-2025, many projects are underway or will have been started before the next financial year. However, they will continue to develop and deliver through 2025-2026 and beyond, as we embed more robust systems for monitoring performance and the health of the organisation and plan towards our long-term goals

- A step forward for SWFRS - ready for future challenges
- Helping each of us step forward, supporting individual development and recognition
- Empowering individuals to act, to speak up and be involved
- Stepping forward – to support each other

### Governance & strategy

This project will deliver three workstreams to secure the stability and performance of the Service:

- Ensuring we are robust in **delivery of statutory functions** – this refers to the statutory functions of the Fire and Rescue Authority, set out in legislation with a review of the National Framework expected.
- **Transparency and scrutiny**, which will clearly set out our processes for producing accessible information alongside new ways of working with stakeholders.
- **Decisions made and shared** is an extension of the first two workstreams, acknowledging the need for openness – this workstream will establish decisions are taken at the right level, and that they are communicated and enacted.

### Leadership

While there will be a focus on the Senior Leadership Team, this project will recognise leaders in all areas and roles across the Service and their development needs.

- **Assured leadership standards** via benchmarking and application of relevant Fire Standards, to demonstrate effective leadership of the Service.
- To support effective leadership, a programme to **develop leaders** will ensure the right skillsets.
- And a workstream that will focus on leadership **setting direction** – setting targets and driving continuous improvement through a clear, shared vision.

### Communication & Engagement

While communication and engagement are intrinsic to all projects, this focussed activity will see two important strands:

- **Involving and engaging** within the Service and also with our communities and stakeholders, mapping out activities and supporting engagement across the organisation.
- Secondly, **communicating change** – not only the changes that are delivered but our aspirations for the future and the change that we want to make, developing a shared commitment.

### **Ethics, Values & Behaviours**

Sharing understanding of the principles the Service is built on, that inform our attitudes and behaviours and are also reflected in decision making, procedures and the way we work.

- The NFCC **Core Code of Ethics** provides the foundation for this project, and these principles will continue to be promoted and widely discussed.
- We will build on the Core Code with a review and refresh of **our values**, considering what these means to our culture.
- Developing and embedding our values will see us **setting standards** that are clearly described and understood, ensuring we can hold ourselves and others to account.
- And finally, recognising the importance of our history and stories as we approach the Service's 30th anniversary in 2026, the **"We are ..."** initiative will draw together records, artifacts and memories of the Service and local stations to build an archive for the future.

### **Policies & Procedures**

The vital role of effective policies and procedures was clear in the Culture Review Report, setting the boundaries for decisions and actions. This project will see a holistic approach taken, addressing systems as well as specific procedures.

- This will start with **effective processes** for development, publication and monitoring of policies and procedures, including consultation mechanisms and monitoring.
- Ensuring **consistent policies and procedures** will address the form and accessibility of documents, looking at potential to simplify and streamline while delivering a clear and comprehensive document library.
- With significant specific direction and recommendations regarding **handling of misconduct**, ensuring procedures are clear, issues raised are acted upon and all roles are clearly set out will be at the core of this work.
- To ensure all procedures are applied and administered effectively and fairly, **training and guidance** will be developed and rolled out.

### **Talent Management**

With the transformation of People Services bedding in, this project captures the full career journey, building on other projects to embed our values and culture at all points. It will include strands to ensure fair processes in all points throughout career pathways, describing and considering career journeys and how progression can be supported. There will be specific focus on developing:

- On-Call processes and support.
- Apprenticeship Academy for those at the start of their careers.
- Our recruitment processes so that we are recognised as an employer of choice, attracting a diverse workforce.

### **Diversity, Inclusion, Cohesion & Equity**

This project will convey our aspiration for a **fair and equitable** Service by supporting activity across the programme while developing an **evidence base** to demonstrate progress on culture change. Workstreams will build on existing DICE activity in developing **staff networks** and supporting **neurodiversity**.

### **Digital Transformation**

Recognising the importance of data, digital and technology capability in all areas of fire and rescue activity, and how this will support culture change, efficiency and effectiveness, this project coordinates plans to develop skills and systems to transform our digital landscape. It will ensure coordination of activity and the capacity in our systems and use of data to inform our planning and report on performance.

### **A safe and positive environment**

The overall goal of the Step Forward programme, this project brings together many of the day-to-day aspects of the workplace that are important to us and we should expect – inclusive facilities that help us deliver our best, support when we need it and the confidence to ask for that support, as well as recognition of a job well done.

## About us: our communities

This section describes our communities and considers their specific needs and risks. For this overview we have considered a range of data sources including:

- Census 2021 data.
- The Welsh Index of Multiple Deprivation (WIMD) which measures relative deprivation, ranking the 1,909 Lower Super Output Areas (LSOAs – geographic areas of about 1,500 people) in Wales from most to least deprived.
- the World Health Organisations 'Climate Change in Wales' health impact assessment (published July 2023) that explores the wider impact of climate change in Wales.
- Welsh Government's Wellbeing of Wales: 2023 assessment of progress against the seven national wellbeing goals (published September 2023).
- PSBs' local wellbeing assessments.

We serve 10 unitary authorities, covering an area of approx. 2,800km<sup>2</sup> (1,081 sq miles) including 3.7km<sup>2</sup> (1.4 sq miles) of inland water. The area is a mix of urban communities, including the cities of Cardiff and Newport, as well as large valleys, towns and sizable rural areas.

**Population:** With a resident population of over 1.5 million people, we protect half the population of Wales. While there was an overall increase of 2.9% in our population from 2011 to 2021, two unitary authorities recorded a reduction (Blaenau Gwent by -4.2% and Caerphilly by -1.6%). The largest population increase was in Newport (+9.5%) followed by Cardiff (+4.7%), Bridgend (+4.5%) and Vale of Glamorgan (+4.4%).

Our communities are amongst the most diverse in Wales – latest Census figures report that in 2021 8.6% of our population identified as ethnicity other than White compared with 6.2% for the whole of Wales. This varies across the area with the most diverse populations residing in Cardiff and Newport.

**Aging population:** All areas have seen an increase in the 65+ age group, with Monmouthshire (+26.3%) and Vale of Glamorgan (+25.7%) recording the largest change, as well as largest proportions of total population at 25.9% and 22% respectively. This contrasts with 14.5% of Cardiff and 17.0% of Newport populations aged over 65.

**Risk:** Slowing population growth and an aging population will see increased demand for public services. Households are expected to become smaller with an increase in single person households, identified as a risk for the elderly and those with health-related conditions that limit mobility.

**Response:** We expect demand for risk reduction interventions to rise based on our evaluation of community risk and this is driving our focus on developing strategic partnerships to aid targeting of prevention activities. We therefore target our prevention work and home safety check interventions at this demographic, looking to engage with individuals that are aged over 65, or households with single parents. We work with partners to identify and support vulnerable individuals within our communities.

**Risk:** With the working age population growing more slowly, we may face increased challenges for our workforce planning. Recent changes in the employment market such as low unemployment rates and high vacancy levels may emerge as longer-term patterns and the challenge for us, like other employers, will be to be recognised as an employer of choice.

**Response:** We must do all we can to be an employer of choice both with regards to attracting and retaining employees, such as competitive wages, benefits, and career development opportunities. We will ensure an effective onboarding process to equip new employees with the knowledge and resources needed to succeed.

**Socio-economic status:** Though Wales is keeping pace with the rest of the United Kingdom, there has been weak real income and productivity growth overall (Wellbeing of Wales Report, 2023). This will continue to be impacted by the current cost-of-living crisis, including high inflation and continuing economic slowdown.

The 2021 census report showed that four of the top 10 local authorities in England and Wales with highest rates of economically inactive, long-term sick or disabled residents aged 16-64 are in the Service's area: Blaenau Gwent 36.1%, Merthyr Tydfil 34%, Caerphilly 32.2% and Rhondda Cynon Taf 30.6%.

These findings are echoed by the WIMD which shows almost a quarter of LSOAs in Newport and Merthyr Tydfil are ranked in the 10% most deprived and in Blaenau Gwent, 85% of LSOAs are ranked in the 50% most deprived. As the WIMD identifies Monmouthshire as having zero LSOAs that are most deprived, it highlights the disparity between our communities in our Service and the need for diversity in our approach.

**Risk:** Socio-economic disadvantage increases risk, often impacting access to services for those with least resilience to changing circumstances.

**Response:** We engage with our communities and local partners to develop intelligence and referrals for those deemed at highest risk from fire. We undertake a range of community engagements, from wider events, targeted community interventions, to individual Home Safety Checks visits which involve a person-centred assessment of fire risk at home.

Inherent to monitoring and evaluation of the needs of our communities and our own performance is better use of data. This has been identified in recent audits. We recognise the importance of partnership working and this includes robust data sharing mechanisms which we are developing to add value to our own data and contribute to the work of others.

**Risk:** People from more deprived areas in Wales were more likely to report poorer scores against the four mental well-being indicators included in the Annual Population Survey conducted by the Office of National Statistics (ONS). Though Cardiff ranks third amongst Welsh unitary authorities for adult mental well-being and has improved since 2016-2017 by a greater margin than the Welsh average, Public Health Wales reports that Merthyr Tydfil and Rhondda Cynon Taff are below the Wales average for mental wellbeing and have the highest levels of deprivation in the Cwm Taf Morgannwg (CTM) PSB area.

**Response:** As a Service, we are establishing well-being areas at all sites and increasing our green spaces on stations for use by our staff and local communities. We take part in 'Time to Talk Day', a national mental health conversation day, and place importance on the positive mental health of our staff.

**Risk:** Those with poor mental health are twice as likely to smoke. There has also been an increase in the use of e-cigarettes in the last year, which present fire risks due to lithium batteries.



**Response:** We continue to offer advice on smoking cessation and additional fire safety in the home to smokers.

Our response for lithium-ion batteries is noted in the environmental section of this document.

**Risk:** Cwm Taf Morgannwg (CTM), Cardiff, and the Vale of Glamorgan PSBs all identify dementia as increasing significantly within the next 20 years.

**Response:** As a Service, we have delivered specific dementia awareness training to our station crews and our Home Safety Practitioners have additional training for complex cases. We also support Dementia Awareness week and have formed partnerships with local dementia groups.

**Risk:** Obesity is noted as the leading public health concern in Wales as the numbers increase year on year for children and adults. Poverty and the cost of food have been barriers to a healthy diet in Wales since before 2020 and climate change is impacting this as extreme weather disrupts food production and poorer soil quality impacts on crop yields.

**Response:** We continue to develop training and equipment resources to provide an effective response for bariatric casualties, including working in partnership with National Health Service (NHS) colleagues, as we have seen increased call for our support. Work continues to assess the impact on our services from the increased demand to assist other agencies.

**Education and skills:** The largest influence on employment and income comes from skills and qualifications. In our area, there are three universities: Cardiff University, University of South Wales and Cardiff Metropolitan University, as well as five further education colleges with multiple sites.

**Risk:** Eight of our 10 unitary authorities have populations with the 10 lowest qualification rates for Wales.

**Response:** Our Youth and Community Safety Teams have developed courses and initiatives which support young people to develop skills and experience, including our Fire Cadets programme.

We also provide advice on staying safe in rented accommodation and student halls.

For the 616 local education authority (LEA) across 627 sites, we have a programme of school visits to raise awareness of environmental and behavioural risks associated with fire, water and road safety. These sessions are delivered by local crews and dedicated risk reduction specialists. School Arson Vulnerability Assessments are also carried out due to the risk associated with school sites. This activity helps to forge local partnerships and cooperation.

**Environmental:** The impact of climate change has become apparent in recent years with increases in wildfires during periods of prolonged hot, dry weather. We usually see an increase in wildfires during early spring but are now seeing a second spike during the summer resulting in an increase in fires attended and placing extra demand on our crews.

**Risk:** The highest rates of wildfires occur in the Welsh valleys.

**Response:** We continue to work in partnership with communities, educating on the dangers and damage that wildfires cause, and liaising with land managers to reduce risk. Our expertise is recognised worldwide, with personnel deployed to support European colleagues and

engaging with international experts at conferences and events. We are supporting development of all-Wales wildfire training, collaborating with FRS and partners including Natural Resources Wales (NRW).

Extreme weather events have the potential for more water-related incidents, with climate change projections predicting an increase in heavy summer rainfall events leading to surface water flooding, in addition to more frequent winter storms.

**Risk:** Whilst urban areas are more exposed to the impacts of flooding, Public Health Wales suggest that rural communities will be exposed to a large proportion of flooding and wildfires due to accounting for 82% of the land area of Wales.

**Response:** We work closely with partners to identify areas most at risk, provide prevention awareness to local people, and devise multi-agency strategies in case of flooding.

Our Water Rescue Strategy 2021-2025 is on schedule, progress made includes:

- We are in the final stages of training all our wholetime stations to Type D; meaning we will have the capability to rescue people with teams wearing appropriate personal protective equipment (PPE) and the ability to carry out wade rescues.
- All our Rescue Tender stations have been uplifted to Type C; meaning they are a team that can perform swift water rescue techniques to rescue people.
- A programme is running for a PPE trial at Cardiff Central Fire Station, with a view that all water and flood rescue technicians (Type C) will have their own personal PPE by 2025.
- We have taken delivery of a new boat that will serve Cardiff Bay which is located on the dry pontoon at the mouth of Cardiff Bay and crewed by Penarth Fire Station.
- All our emergency response boat engines have been upgraded to 40hp to ensure that we have the capacity to perform a rescue in the most challenging of flood conditions. These assets are located at Barry Emergency Services Station, Malpas Fire Station and Ebbw Vale Fire Station.

Our Road and Water team work closely with our Statistics team using data to strategically target communities most at risk and ensure our resources are distributed appropriately. We continually work with Water Safety Wales to disseminate water safety information and to keep up to date with current water safety guidance. We also support Royal National Lifeboat Institution (RNLI) in their campaigns and work to promote water safety.

**Transport and travel:** South East Wales contains over 9,100km (5,650 miles) of roads, including the A470, A465, A40, A449 and M4, and 837,000 passengers moved through Cardiff Airport during 2023.

Welsh Government also has an ambition for a carbon neutral public sector by 2030. Air quality is being affected by climate change and air pollution is a recognised cause of avoidable ill health and deaths. Petrol and diesel-fuelled transport are a major contributor to air pollution in our towns and cities.

**Risk:** Many current transport modes are having a negative impact on the environment and health, leading to exploration of alternative options, such as active travel and electric and hydrogen vehicles.

**Response:** We continue to review our own plans to reduce our carbon footprint, including our use of electric vehicles and have signed up to the Cardiff, Vale of Glamorgan, and Gwent public sector Healthy Travel Charters to demonstrate our commitment to more sustainable travel.

**Risk:** The increased use of lithium-ion batteries in products ranging from toys and handheld power tools to e-scooters and electric vehicles has been identified as an emerging risk. This is a safe energy source when handled with care, but should batteries be damaged or overheat during use or when charging, they present a fire risk. There have also been a number of incidents locally and nationally relating to the disposal of lithium-ion products, causing fires on refuse lorries and at waste disposal sites.

**Response:** We are liaising with other FRS to better understand this risk and how to respond, coordinated by a working group with representatives from across the Service. We have also issued guidance on safe use, storage and disposal of lithium-ion batteries. Our Training and Development team have been invited to deliver courses on the risks of fire and road traffic accidents involving electric and hybrid vehicles to partner organisations including South Wales Police, Welsh Ambulance Service, Traffic Wales and vehicle recovery organisations.

**Cultural:** Our region has a rich heritage that has resulted in the environment, both natural and manmade, we now enjoy. The Wye Valley has been designated an Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty and Blaenavon industrial landscape is recognised for the evidence it retains of the British Industrial Revolution. The Glamorgan coast from Aberthaw to Porthcawl is a designated Heritage Coast while the Severn Estuary was designated as a Special Area of Conservation in 2009.

**Risk:** There are 690 protected Scheduled Monuments of archaeological importance, including Roman remains, burial mounds, earthworks and industrial sites.

**Response:** Awareness of these locations will help us to work with others, particularly Cadw and local authorities, as we plan for and respond to environmental events such as flooding and wildfires. There are 6,000+ listed buildings within the Service’s area and we recognise our role in protecting local heritage, developing SSRI reports and having response plans in place for key buildings.

Welsh Government’s target to increase the number of Welsh speakers to one million by 2050 is supported by the Service’s commitment to the Welsh Language. Our Welsh Language compliance report, providing an overview of how the Service has complied with the Welsh Language Standards (WLS) was published on 30<sup>th</sup> September.

**About us: our Service**

**“To make South Wales safer, by reducing risk”**

Our mission statement describes the overall purpose of South Wales Fire and Rescue Service: what we do, who we do it for, and how and why we do it. As well as a statutory duty to provide services, from responding to fires or carrying out inland water rescues to prevention and risk reduction, we must work in partnership for the benefit of our communities, now and in the future. This is aided by understanding our communities and the challenges we face.



## Annual Improvement Plan

South Wales Fire and Rescue Service operates from 47 fire and rescue stations which comprise:

- 20 Wholetime stations, nine of which also have an On-Call complement
- 27 On-Call stations

We share 10 stations with colleagues from other emergency services.

- 1 with South Wales Police
- 7 with the Welsh Ambulance Service NHS Trust (WAST)
- 1 with WAST, South Wales Police and The Coastguard
- 1 with WAST and Gwent Police

Joint Fire Control, operated with Mid and West Wales Fire and Rescue Service, is in the Joint Public Service Centre at South Wales Police HQ.

Colocation, joint working and liaison with other emergency services help us to effectively protect and support our communities. Other departments, such as corporate, have established working relationships with these partners which reinforces our joint working model and efficacies.

Cardiff Gate Training and Development Centre provides a dedicated resource to deliver operational training to the highest standard. Our Occupational Health Unit (OHU), based in Pontyclun, supports our staff in their health and wellbeing.

From our Headquarters in Llantrisant, our teams support our crews and deliver additional services to our communities through proactive prevention and protection activities.

**We employ 1,646 staff (as of 31st March 2024), some of whom hold more than one contract. They are made up of:**

- 815 Wholetime Operational Staff
- 593 On-Call Operational Staff
- 36 Fire Control Staff
- 96 Auxiliary Reserve Staff
- 347 Non-Operational Staff, comprising Corporate, Fire Safety, Training and Fire Cadet personnel

#### **Staff Demographics 31<sup>st</sup> March 2024**

##### **Sex:**

The statistics relating to sex are determined by HMRC defined categories used for payroll and pension purposes.

##### **Overall**

- Male: 82% (1,350)
- Female: 18% (296)

##### **Uniform**

- Male: 91% (1,210)
- Female: 9% (120)

##### **Non-uniform**

- Male: 48% (168)
- Female: 52% (179)

<b>All Staff</b>		
<b>Grade</b>	<b>Female</b>	<b>Male</b>
Other (Grade 1-5 / Firefighter)	15% (158)	85% (874)
Supervisory Manager (Grade 6-9 / Crew Manager - Watch Manager)	20% (108)	80% (437)
Middle Manager (Grade 10-18 / Station Manager - Group Manager)	25% (39)	75% (116)
Strategic Manager	27% (4)	73% (11)
<b>Uniform</b>		
<b>Grade</b>	<b>Female</b>	<b>Male</b>
Other (Grade 1-5 / Firefighter)	10% (97)	90% (829)
Supervisory Manager (Grade 6-9 / Crew Manager - Watch Manager)	5% (18)	95% (359)
Middle Manager (Grade 10-18 / Station Manager - Group Manager)	8% (7)	92% (80)
Strategic Manager	0% (0)	100% (9)
<b>Non-uniform</b>		
<b>Grade</b>	<b>Female</b>	<b>Male</b>
Other (Grade 1-5 / Firefighter)	53% (63)	47% (55)
Supervisory Manager (Grade 6-9 / Crew Manager - Watch Manager)	52% (90)	48% (83)
Middle Manager (Grade 10-18 / Station Manager - Group Manager)	47% (32)	53% (36)
Strategic Manager	67% (4)	33% (2)

**Other categories of demographics:**

- 65% (1,062) of staff are aged 16-45
- 1.2% (19) of staff have self-identified as being minority ethnic, compared to 21% of the population of South Wales. 97% of staff either preferred not to provide their ethnicity or their ethnicity is undisclosed.
- 0.5% (8) % of staff have self-identified as being disabled, compared to 21% of the population of South Wales. 51% of staff either preferred not to provide their disability status or their status is undisclosed.
- 0.4% (6) % of staff have self-identified as being something other than straight or heterosexual, compared to 3% of the population of South Wales. 70% of staff either preferred not to provide their sexual orientation status or their status is undisclosed.
- We understand the importance of recognising gender identity, and staff can disclose this on our HR system. We have not published this information due to the risk of identifying individuals as the numbers are small.

**Risk:** Having such high numbers of undisclosed equality data impacts our ability to adequately support all staff.

**Response:** We have recently changed our equality categories to align with Census data, this allows us more effective comparison. This change has caused an increase in the number of undisclosed as some categories became obsolete.

Our DICE (Diversity, Inclusion, Cohesion and Equity) team has developed a campaign about the purpose and benefits of completing this information which has been rolled out across the Service. Plans are being developed to ensure monitoring and review of equality data becomes part of business as usual and is provided to Welsh Government.

**Turnover**

Staff turnover was 10% in 2023-2024, the same as in the previous year.

There have been 50 retirements across the Service in 2023-2024, 48 of whom were aged 46 or above, this compares to 54 retirements in the previous year, all of whom were 46 or above.

There has been a 7% increase in the turnover of our staff in Joint Fire Control, whilst turnover rates across other areas of the Service were similar.

	2022-2023	2023-2024
Wholetime	6%	6%
On-Call	17%	18%
Control	15%	22%
Corporate Staff	11%	10%

\*Turnover is calculated by dividing the number of leavers from the Service by the average of the number of staff employed at the start of the year and the number of staff employed at the end of the year.

**Risk:** If turnover at Joint Fire Control continues to increase, this could impact our ability to answer calls and mobilise response due to loss of experience and skills.

**Response:** Subsequent to a successful recruitment campaign, we have increased minimum crewing levels per watch from six to seven and are working towards increasing this further to eight. A new recruits' course is being delivered in November 2024.

## Recruitment

- 1,276 candidates applied to become Wholetime Firefighters with us during our recruitment campaign commencing in January 2024, with 82 being successful. This compares with 1,292 candidates when the previous Wholetime recruitment campaign was conducted in January 2021, 93 of whom were successful.
- 12% (157) of candidates were women this year, with 10% (8) being successful. 12% (151) of candidates were women when the previous Wholetime recruitment campaign was conducted in January 2021, with 23% (21) being successful. 6% (47) of Wholetime Firefighters as of 31<sup>st</sup> March 2024 are women.
- 4% (51) of candidates identified as minority ethnic, from 3% (39) in the previous campaign. 5% (4) of successful candidates this year identified as minority ethnic. 1% (1) of successful candidates in the previous campaign identified as minority ethnic. 97% (786) of Wholetime Firefighters as of 31<sup>st</sup> March 2024 have not provided their ethnicity in their personal information or have preferred not to say.
- The profile of successful candidates was younger this year, with 82% (67) under 35 years of age compared with 72% (67) in the previous campaign (when more candidates were selected during the recruitment process).

**Risk:** If we do not attract diverse candidates through our recruitment process we will not have a workforce reflect our communities and may not be seen as an employer of choice.

**Response:** Ethnic origin diversity increased in wholetime applicants this campaign whereas female representation maintained the same. This shows steady progress, but more work is needed to ensure this is continued in various roles within the Service.

Our DICE Business Partner is developing a DICE network of Service-wide champions that will engage in outreach activities with both internal and external communities. This network has launched our DICE Pledge which contains some straightforward, practical actions that have been designed to help us on our journey to become more inclusive and diverse, creating fair opportunities for all and promoting individual and collective well-being.

Our DICE pledge will help make a positive difference to employees and the wider communities we serve by:

- Creating a better workplace for future generations by becoming more diverse of thought, and therefore innovative and creative in our approach to reducing risk and keeping our communities safe.
- Leaving a positive legacy by helping to build a fairer and more inclusive Wales for future generations.

We are working to improve our collection and use of data at all stages of recruitment and employment to better understand the experience of staff throughout their career journey. This will also help us monitor our progress in delivering the necessary change highlighted by the Independent Culture Review by evaluating the effectiveness of our policies and procedures.

## Staff Wellbeing and Personal Development

As part of our annual Personal Review (PR) process, staff rated their overall energy levels at work as 7.7 out of 10. This is an improvement on 7.2 out of 10 in the previous year.

Staff rated their overall engagement level at work as 7.7 out of 10. This is lower than 8.0 out of 10 in the previous year.

The above is annually reported to our senior leadership team as a temperature check of where the Service is, and this overview is used to shape support given to staff.

Overall staff sickness improved in 2023-2024 compared to the previous year, driven by less operational sickness although sickness among non-operational staff did rise. The total number of shifts/days lost to sickness fell by 8% (from 32,249 in 2022-2023 to 29,668 in 2023-2024). The number of operational shifts/days lost to sickness fell by 14% (from 28,109 in 2022-2023 to 24,115 in 2023-2024), whilst we saw a 34% rise in shifts/days lost to sickness by Corporate Staff (from 4,141 in 2022-2023 to 5,553 in 2023-2024).

**Risk:** Continued high rates of shifts/days lost to sickness of corporate staff could impact the resilience and morale of staff and the effectiveness of departments.

**Response:** A restructure and reallocation of responsibilities has been undertaken in People Services which includes our Occupational Health Unit (OHU) and triage processes. The Service needs to determine exactly what OHU provision is needed as requirements have evolved over time with more emphasis on mental health and counselling services being in demand. The review of OHU has commenced, including discussions with our OHU General Practitioners (GPs), to ensure we have sufficient resource and resilience in place to support staff.

We are upskilling managers to effectively support their teams and providing regular communications with advice to individuals about maintaining mental, physical and emotional wellbeing and reminding them of available support options.



Design from last year: new stats on page after

## 2022-2023 Statistics Overview



**34,682** calls received by Joint Fire Control for South Wales Fire and Rescue Service area, including:

**1,052** calls referred to other agencies.

**2,500** did not require emergency response and were dealt with by Joint Fire Control.

**10,413** repeat calls relating to incidents already in progress.



**18,705** incidents attended.



**6,031**

fires including:

**623**

accidental dwelling fires

**1,228**

grass/wildfires

**2,706**

refuse fires

**71.0%** of fires attended were deliberate



**8,746**

false alarms in response to:

**5,419**

automatic fire alarms

**3,023**

calls made with good intent

**304**

malicious calls



**3,928**

Special Service calls including:

**848**

road traffic collisions

**47**

water rescues

**3,033**

other emergency incidents\*

Risk reduction activity included:



**987**

school visits



**12,309**

home safety checks



**655**

fire safety audits

\* Other non-fire incidents requiring attendance of an appliance or officer

**\*\*\*Will be placed into infographic similar to above\*\*\***

## **2023-2024**

- Calls received: 36,913
- Calls referred to other agencies: 1,098
- Repeat calls: 12,044
- 402 hoax calls
- 4,585 calls were successfully challenged by Joint Fire Control avoiding unnecessary mobilisations or the recall of fire engines
- Total incidents attended: 19,004
- Total Fires: 5,460 – ADFs: 621
- Grass/wildfires: 904
- Refuse fires: 2,429
- 68.5% of fires attended were deliberate
- Total False Alarms: 9,465
- 5,983 automatic false alarms
- 3,226 false alarms made with good intent
- 256 malicious false alarms
- Special Service Calls: 4,079
- RTCs: 870
- Water Rescues: 64
- Other emergency incidents: 3,145
- 968 School Key Stage 1-4 visits to 36,658 children
- 15,003 HFSCs
- Fire Safety Audits: 625

## How we performed in 2023-2024

It is essential that we review our performance to monitor our efficiency and effectiveness. We set annual forecasts against Welsh Government's Strategic Performance Indicators and compare our performance against other Fire and Rescue Services, regularly sharing data to inform this monitoring and provide benchmarking data for comparison.

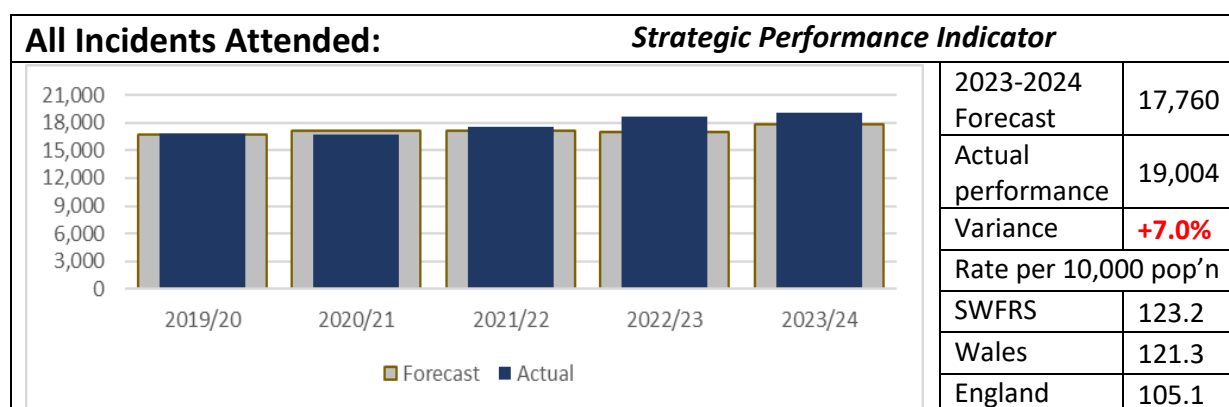
This section gives information on how we have performed against our strategic indicators and other key performance measures.

### Calls Received

In 2023 – 2024:

- South Wales Fire and Rescue Service received 36,910 calls, a 6.4% increase on the previous year.
- 33% of all calls (12,044) were repeat calls for incidents already notified.
- 3% of all calls (1,099) were referred to other agencies.

Our call challenge policy helps us to manage calls which could result in unnecessary mobilisation to false alarm incidents. We ask key questions and ascertain the caller's location. We then verify if the call is made with good intent and assess the risk. Joint Fire Control can then identify malicious calls. In the last year this avoided 4,587 unnecessary mobilisations.



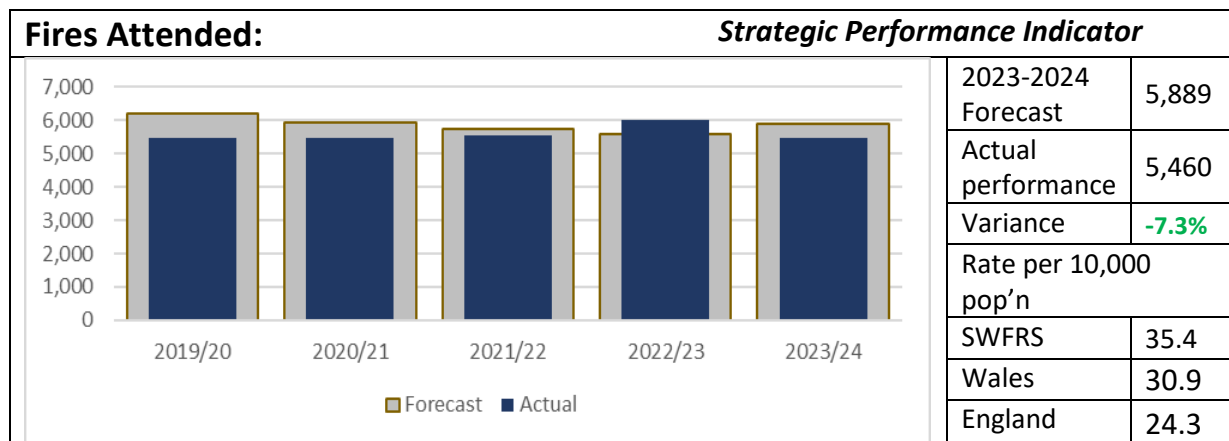
We attended 294 more incidents in 2023-2024 than the previous year, an increase of 1.6%.

- False Alarms increased by 719, (8.2%)
- Other Special Service Calls increased by 129 (4.2%)
- Road Traffic Collisions increased by 22 (2.6%).
- Crews attended the fewest number of fires recorded since the current Incident Recording System (IRS) was introduced in April 2009, a decrease of 571 (9.5%).

A review of each incident type follows. To review risk and coordinate activity including training, operational response and risk reduction, working groups develop specialist expertise which is disseminated across the Service and with partners where appropriate.

For information from other services:

- Home Office – Fire and rescue incident statistics (England) [Online](#)
- Mid and West Wales Fire and Rescue Service [Website](#)
- North Wales Fire and Rescue Service [Website](#)
- Stats Wales [Online](#)



Fires attended decreased by 9.5% to 5,460 in 2023-2024, compared to the previous year. Around 70% of all fires attended are set deliberately.

#### Refuse fires

- are consistently the most common type of fire attended, representing around 45% of all fires.
- 90% of refuse fires are set deliberately.
- have reduced by 10% in 2023-2024 compared to the previous year.

We have established a Refuse Fires Working Group to coordinate campaigns and work with partners so we can better understand and respond to the risk and community nuisance these incidents cause.

#### Grass or wildfires

- account for 15-20% of all fires each year.
- 90% of grass fires are set deliberately.
- reduced by 26.5% in 2023-2024 compared to the previous year. This was largely due to an extended period of hotter, drier weather experienced in 2022-2023, wetter weather in 2023-2024 along with intervention by our Arson Reduction Team (ART) including landowner engagement role, Key partners NRW and local authorities. Proactive initiatives to prevent wildfires including using innovative machinery such as all-terrain vehicles, brush cutters and robo-mowers.

Our valleys communities are particularly affected by these grass fires, hence our ongoing work with partners in the local area. With the impact of climate change, we expect there to be longer, drier summers interspersed with more intense storm events in future.

#### Dwelling fires

- have been steadily reducing over the past 10 years.

## Annual Improvement Plan

- around 10% of dwelling fires are set deliberately.

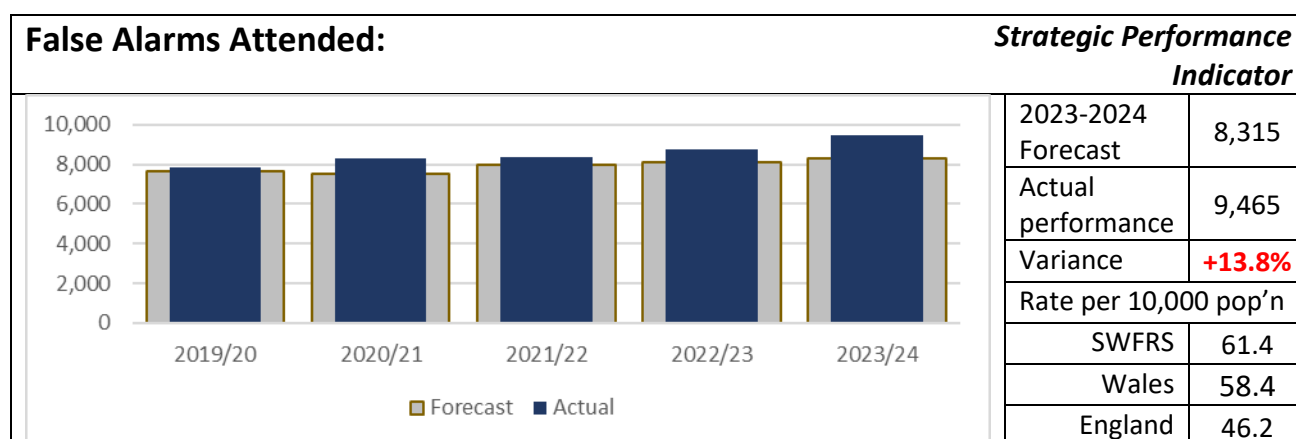
**Accidental Dwelling Fires (ADFs)**

- are a focus of our prevention work.
- reduced by 2 from 623 to 621 in 2023-2024.
- cooking related fires are consistently the most frequent cause of accidental dwelling fires (ADFs) (around 60% each year).

Fires caused by **Lithium-Ion Batteries** have increased by 271%, from 14 in 2022-2023 to 52 in 2023-2024.

We have established a Lithium-Ion Working Group to identify and manage the increasing risk from lithium-ion battery products.

**Benchmarking** – Fires attended per 10,000 population is higher than for both all of Wales and England. South Wales (-4.2), All Wales (-4.7) and England (-7.3) recorded lower per 10,000 population figures this year, with all three regions having the fewest fire incidents since the latest recording system was introduced in April 2009.



A false alarm is recorded when a location is attended for a fire or non-fire incident but on arrival no incident exists. False alarms can be due to apparatus, good intent or malicious and related to Fire or Special Service incident types.

False alarms increased by 8.2% in 2023-2024 compared with the previous year, from 8,746 to 9,465.

As indicated by the chart above, there has been a steady increase in our crews attending false alarms in recent years.

This rise is driven by our attendance at more fire false alarms due to apparatus (which are initiated by fire alarm and fire-fighting equipment operating).

**Fire False Alarms due to Apparatus**

- rose by 10.4% compared with the previous year, from 5,419 to 5,983.
- accounted for 63.2% of all fire false alarm incidents in 2023-2024.
- 13.3% (794 incidents) occurred in purpose built multiple occupancy flats

## Annual Improvement Plan

- 12.3%, (736 incidents) occurred in hospitals/medical care facilities.
- have increased this year at single occupancy dwellings (+39.8%, from 241 to 337) and educational facilities (+20.6%, from 578 to 697).

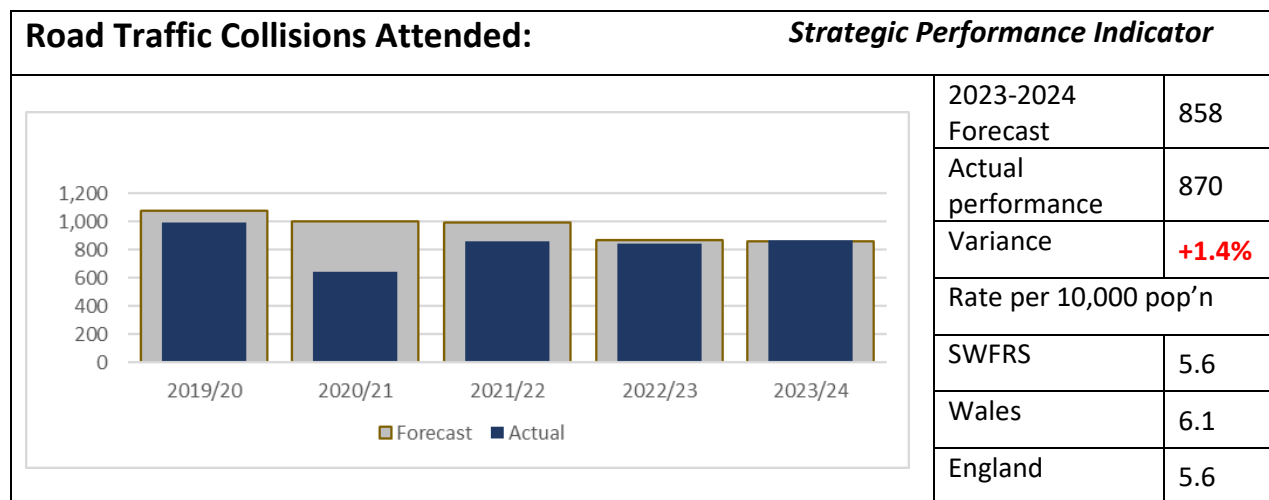
A comprehensive report detailing the impact of Automatic Fire Alarms (AFAs) on the Service, other Fire and Rescue Services' AFA response, and risk analysis and benefits of proposed change has been presented to, and agreed by, our Board of Commissioners. Please refer to page 12 for further information.

**Good Intent False Alarms**

- rose by 6.7% compared with the previous year, from 3,023 to 3,226.
- have increased this year at purpose built multiple occupancy flats (+32.4%, from 188 to 249) and single occupancy dwellings (+14.5%, from 751 to 860).

**Malicious False Alarms** fell by 15.8% compared with the previous year, from 304 to 256. Our Call Challenge policy continues to improve verification of calls made with good intent.

- **Benchmarking** – False Alarm incidents attended per 10,000 population is higher than for both all of Wales and England. All three regions saw a rise in the per 10,000 population this year, with Wales rising more than England (South Wales, +4.0, All Wales +5.0 and England +1.4). All three regions saw a rise in the number of False Alarms due to Apparatus (South Wales, +10.4%, All Wales +13.3% and England +9.5%).



The number of Road Traffic Collisions (RTCs) we attended increased by 2.6%, from 848 in the previous year to 870 in 2023-2024.

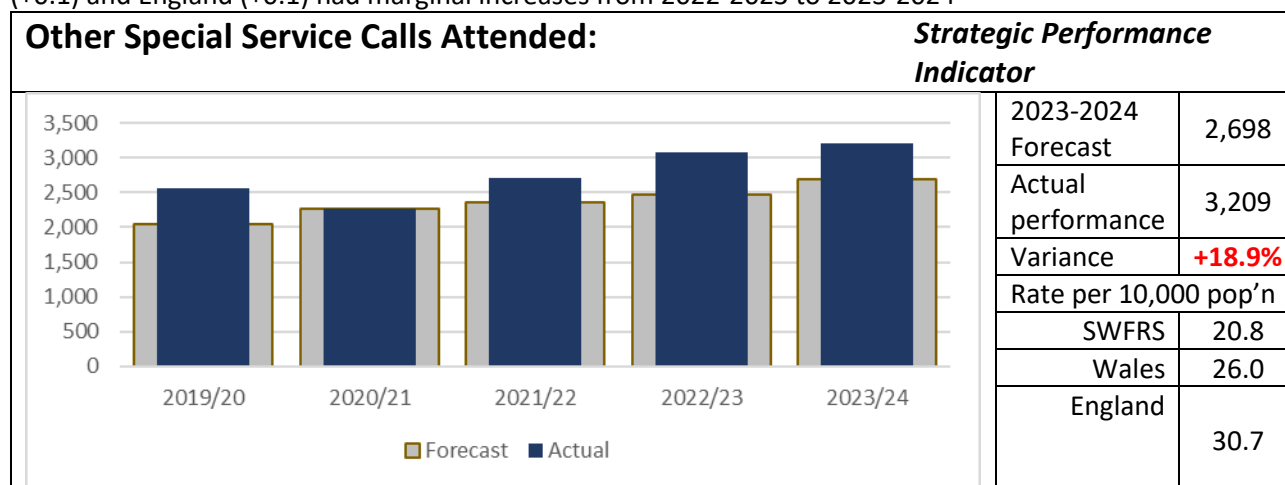
- Cardiff and Rhonda Cynon Taf accounted for 18% each of all RTCs attended this year.
- RTCs where a person(s) required extrication from a vehicle decreased by 5.6%.
- Multiple vehicle RTCs accounted for 19.5% of all RTCs, compared to 28.7% in the previous year.
- The number of fatalities at incidents we attended rose from 21 last year to 23. Younger fatalities (aged 17-24) increased from 3 to 4 and older fatalities (aged 65-79) from 3 to 5.

## Annual Improvement Plan

- Cardiff saw the largest improvement in fatality figures, with zero in 2023-2024 compared to 7 in the previous year.
- Injuries from RTCs decreased by 9.9%.

During 2023-2024, the Welsh Government introduced 20mph speed limits on certain roads in residential areas. The immediate impact on incidents attended by SWFRS may be limited as we attend a higher proportion of the most serious accidents on non-residential roads. We will continue our collaborative work with partners to deliver key road safety messages and education across South Wales.

**Benchmarking** – The number of RTC's our crews attended per 10,000 population is the same as in 2022-2023 and is now equal to the number attended per 10,000 population in England. All Wales (+0.1) and England (+0.1) had marginal increases from 2022-2023 to 2023-2024



Other Special Service Calls (SSCs) are non-fire incidents excluding Road Traffic Collisions (RTCs) and include but are not limited to medical incidents and rescue of persons, major environmental disasters like flooding or hazardous material incidents, domestic incidents such as persons locked in/out and suicide/attempts and prior arrangements to attend or assist other agencies.

In 2023-2024, there was a 4.2% increase in Other SSCs compared with the previous year, from 3,080 to 3,209.

As shown by the chart above, there has been a steady increase in our crews attending Other SSCs in the last three years. This rise is driven by additional partnership work crews are doing in support of the Ambulance Service and Police. Work continues to assess the impact on our services from the increased demand to assist other agencies.

#### Assisting other agencies

- incidents rose by 29.7% compared with the previous year, from 666 to 864.
- the number of incidents requiring assistance for bariatric patients increased by 38.5%, from 221 to 306.

#### Flooding

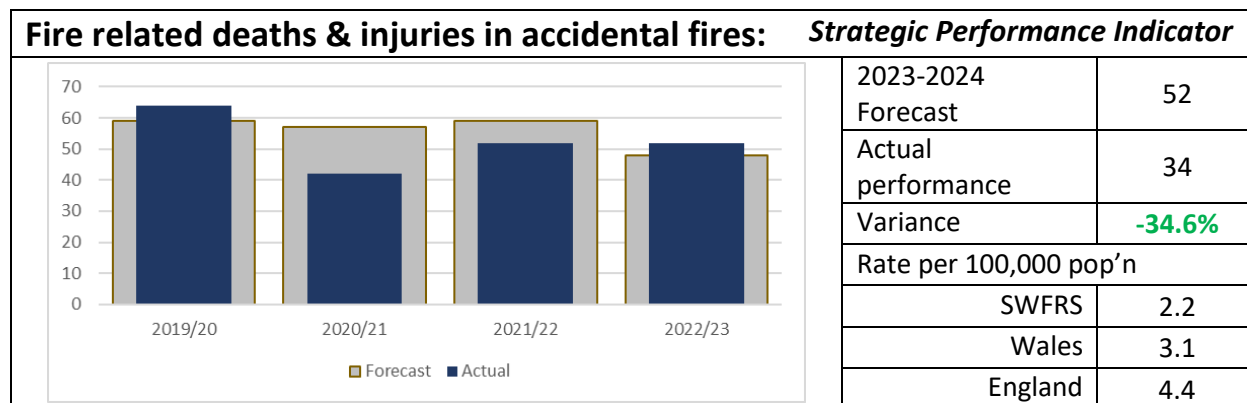
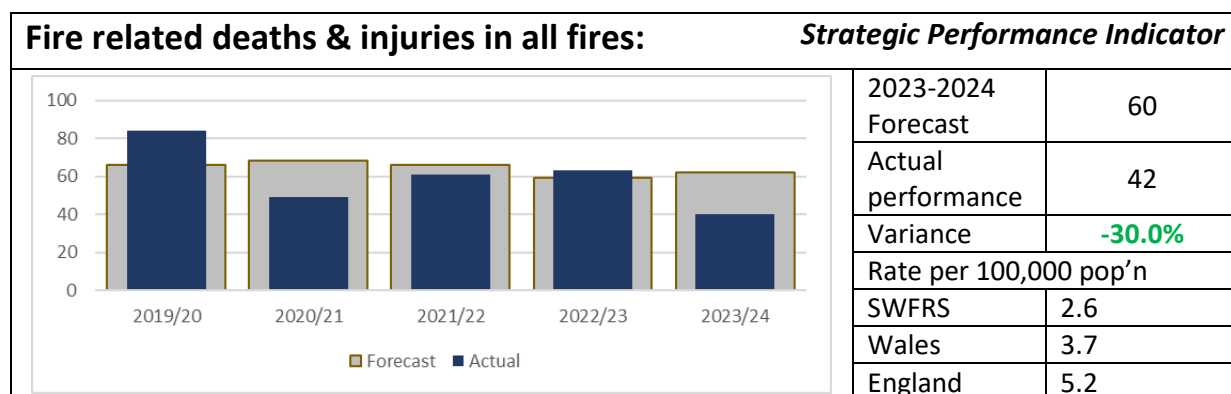
- incidents decreased by 3.5% compared with the previous year, from 255 to 246.

## Annual Improvement Plan

- the number of flooding incidents requiring water to be pump out of decreased by 35.9%, from 39 to 25.

**Water rescues**

- have increased by 36.2% in 2023-2024, from 47 to 64.
- 28.1% of rescues occurred in the Cardiff area, with incidents around Cardiff Bay and the River Taff embankment being most common.
- Benchmarking** - The number of Other Special Services Calls our crews attended per 10,000 population remains below that of All Wales and England. Rates in South Wales (+0.6) and All Wales (+0.5) rose slightly, whilst rates grew by more in England (+2.6) from 2022-2023 to 2023-2024.

**Total fire related fatalities and injuries**

- show a longer-term trend of reducing, with an annual average of 67.0 in the previous ten years and an average of 59.6 in the last five years.
- the number of fatalities reduced from 6 in 2022-2023 to 4 in 2023-2024.
- 23% of all fire related fatalities and injuries occurred in the 20% most deprived areas. This is a reduction from 47% in 2022-2023 and 35% in 2021-2022.



With the introduction of the Socio-economic Duty, SWFRS continues to think about how our strategic decisions can improve inequality of outcome for people who suffer socio-economic disadvantage. Inequality of outcome relates to any measurable difference in outcome between those who have experienced socio-economic disadvantage and those who have not. The Welsh Index of Multiple Deprivation (WIMD) is the Welsh Government's official measure of relative deprivation for small areas in Wales. It identifies areas with the highest concentrations of several different types of deprivation covering Income, Employment, Health Education, Access to Services, Community Safety, Physical Environment and Housing.

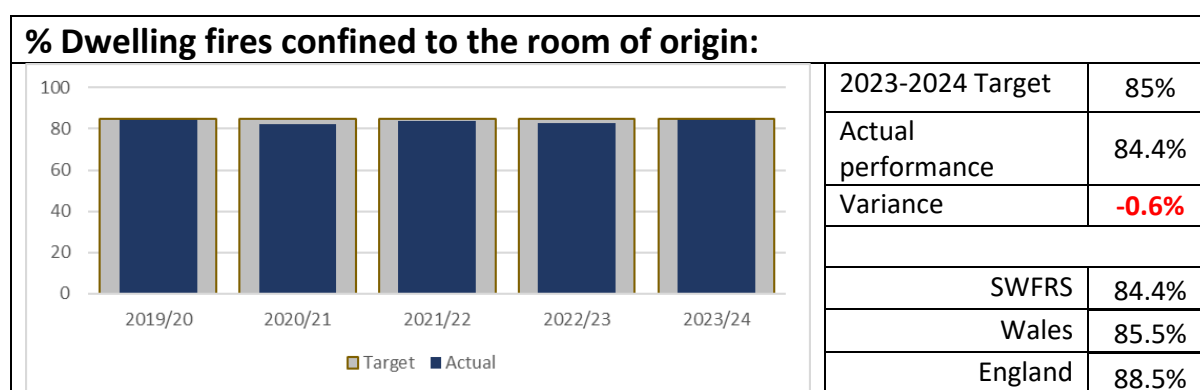
**Benchmarking** – The number of Deaths & Injuries from all fires per 100,000 population in South Wales remains lower than All Wales and half that of England. South Wales saw the largest fall in 2023-2024, -1.4. The All Wales rate fell by -0.3, whilst the rate in England rose by +0.2.

### Accidental fire related fatalities and injuries

- decreased from 52 victims in 2022-2023 to 34 in 2023-2024.
- fatalities reduced from 5 in 2022-2023 to 3 in 2023-2024.
- 6% of fatalities and injuries in accidental fires occurred where the ignition source was smoking related. This is a reduction from 16% in 2022-2023.

### Accidental Dwelling Fires (ADFs)

- in the last five years, the average age for fatalities was 71.9. 54% were living alone and over pensionable age.
- the average age of people suffering non-fatal injuries was 49.7.
- cooking was the most common cause of injuries (26%).
- 
- **Benchmarking** – The number of Deaths & Injuries from accidental fires per 100,000 population in South Wales remains lower than All Wales and half that of England. The rate in South Wales fell by -0.8 in 2023-2024. The All Wales rate fell by -0.9, whilst the rate in England rose by +0.1.



**For this indicator, a higher percentage is better.**

This is a measure in fires in permanent dwellings where there was heat/smoke damage only or a fire was contained to the room where it started or did not spread beyond the roof or roof space.

- Dwelling fires confined to the room of origin increased to 84.4% in 2023-2024 compared to 82.7% in the previous year.

- Out of the 687 total dwelling fires attended in 2023-2024, 580 were confined to the room of origin.
- Where an alarm was present, 88.1% of dwelling fires were confined. Where no alarm was present, 80.7% were confined.
- At arrival on scene, 95 fires had already spread beyond the room of origin. This equates to 13.8% of total dwelling fires and 88.8% of dwelling fires not confined.
- Fires that recorded rapid fire growth (due to factors such as the presence of petrol/oil products, gases, cooking oil/fat etc) accounted for 16 (2.8%) of the 580 dwelling fires contained to room of origin and 20 (18.7%) of the dwelling fires not contained.
- Where rapid fire growth was not recorded, 86.6% of fires were confined. Where rapid fire growth was recorded, 44.4% were confined.
- Of the 107 fires that were not confined to the room of origin, 25 (23.4%) started in the kitchen, 24 (22.4%) started in the bedroom and 11 (10.3%) started in the living room. The remaining 47% are related to other rooms within the home.
- **Benchmarking** - The percentage of dwelling fires confined to the room of origin is lower than that of North Wales (90.9%) and England (88.5%), and higher than Mid Wales (82.7%). Some Services, however, differ in the manner they capture fire spread.


## Unitary Authorities

### Sources of information

- Population Statistics – 2011 v 2021 Census Comparison
- School Engagement – Key Stage visits, Crucial Crew and Grassfire Talks
- Audits – Fire Safety Audits carried out by Business Fire Safety
- Site Specific Risk Information – Premises with predetermined response information held

Schools - Maintained school (those funded and controlled by the local education authority) sites at September 2023, excludes pupil referral units, includes Special Schools

### BLAENAU GWENT

	1 Wholetime and 3 On-Call fire and rescue stations:	
	27 Tredegar (On-Call) 35 Abertillery (On-Call)	37 Ebbw Vale (Wholetime) 38 Brynmawr (On-Call)

Prevention		Protection		Response	2022-2023	2023-2024
Home Fire Safety Checks	901	Audits carried out	24	Fires	513	467
% over 65	37% ( <i>age undisclosed 32%</i> )	Site Specific Risks Information	90	False Alarms	413	394
School engagement		Maintained Schools (nursery, primary, secondary, special)	25	RTCs	32	33


## Annual Improvement Plan

61 sessions	2,498 young people			Other SSCs	133	158
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Population	2011	2021
Total	69,814	66,904
16 and under	16,271	14,388
Over 65	12,477	13,523
Single person households – Aged over 66		4,361

Environment	
Area km <sup>2</sup>	109
Cadw listed buildings	53
Scheduled Monuments	12
High Rise Buildings	0

**BRIDGEND**


	2 Wholetime with On-Call complement and 5 On-Call fire and rescue stations:	
	01 Bridgend (Wholetime/On-Call) 02 Porthcawl (On-Call) 03 Kenfig Hill (On-Call) 05 Pencoed (On-Call)	06 Ogmores Vale (On-Call) 07 Pontycymmer (On-Call) 08 Maesteg (Wholetime/On-Call)

Prevention		Protection		Response	2022-2023	2023-2024
Home Fire Safety Checks	1,442	Audits carried out	92	Fires	455	492
% over 65	41% ( <i>age undisclosed 29%</i> )	Site Specific Risks Information	113	False Alarms	722	790
School engagement		Maintained Schools (nursery, primary, secondary, special)	59	RTCs	80	81
148 sessions	6,259 young people			Other SSCs	265	281

Population	2011	2021
Total	139,178	145,488
16 and under	32,072	31,988
Over 65	24,854	30,095
Single person households – Aged over 66		8,535

Environment	
Area km <sup>2</sup>	246
Cadw listed buildings	375
Scheduled Monuments	59
High Rise Buildings	0

**CAERPHILLY**


	2 Wholetime with On-Call complement and 3 On-Call fire and rescue stations:	
	21 Aberbargoed (Wholetime/On-Call) 24 Caerphilly (Wholetime/On-Call) 28 Rhymercy (On-Call)	30 Abercarn (On-Call) 31 Risca (On-Call)

Prevention		Protection		Response	2022-2023	2023-2024
Home Fire Safety Checks	1,984	Audits carried out	36	Fires	884	838
% over 65	36% ( <i>age undisclosed 41%</i> )	Site Specific Risks Information	147	False Alarms	889	914
School engagement		Maintained Schools (nursery, primary, secondary, special)	86	RTCs	96	108
268 sessions	7,724 young people			Other SSCs	287	326

Population	2011	2021
Total	139,178	145,488
16 and under	32,072	31,988
Over 65	24,854	30,095
Single person households – Aged over 66		8,535

Environment	
Area km <sup>2</sup>	246
Cadw listed buildings	378
Scheduled Monuments	59
High Rise Buildings	0

**CARDIFF**

	4 Wholetime fire and rescue stations:	
	49 Whitchurch 50 Roath	51 Cardiff Central 52 Ely


Prevention		Protection		Response	2022-2023	2023-2024
Home Fire Safety Checks	2,617	Audits carried out	181	Fires	1,117	1,097
% over 65	20% ( <i>age undisclosed 59%</i> )	Site Specific Risks Information	474	False Alarms	2,371	2,640
School engagement		Maintained Schools (nursery, primary, secondary, special)	127	RTCs	155	160
213 sessions	7,611 young people			Other SSCs	770	785

Population	2011	2021
Total	346,090	362,310
16 and under	84,866	88,510
Over 65	45,552	52,497
Single person households – Aged over 66		16,526

Environment	
Area km <sup>2</sup>	140
Cadw listed buildings	866
Scheduled Monuments	30
High Rise Buildings	166

## Annual Improvement Plan

**MERTHYR TYDFIL**


	1 Wholetime with On-Call complement and 1 On-Call fire and rescue stations:	
	25 Treharris (On-Call)	26 Merthyr Tydfil (Wholetime/On-Call)

Prevention		Protection		Response	2022-2023	2023-2024
Home Fire Safety Checks	590	Audits carried out	19	Fires	261	296
% over 65	21% ( <i>age undisclosed 54%</i> )	Site Specific Risks Information	59	False Alarms	312	377
School engagement		Maintained Schools (nursery, primary, secondary, special)	24	RTCs	42	37
66 sessions	2,181 young people			Other SSCs	120	147

Population	2011	2021
Total	58,802	58,839
16 and under	14,049	13,661
Over 65	9,796	11,112
Single person households – Aged over 66		3,464

Environment	
Area km <sup>2</sup>	111
Cadw listed buildings	235
Scheduled Monuments	46
High Rise Buildings	1

**MONMOUTHSHIRE**

	5 On-Call fire and rescue stations:	
	40 Abergavenny 41 Monmouth 42 Usk	43 Chepstow 44 Caldicot

Prevention		Protection		Response	2022-2023	2023-2024
Home Fire Safety Checks	829	Audits carried out	54	Fires	227	188
% over 65	33% ( <i>age undisclosed 42%</i> )	Site Specific Risks Information	91	False Alarms	511	524
School engagement		Maintained Schools (nursery, primary, secondary, special)	33	RTCs	75	69


## Annual Improvement Plan

43 sessions	1,516 young people			Other SSCs	171	156
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Population	2011	2021
Total	91,323	92,957
16 and under	20,821	18,329
Over 65	19,043	24,042
Single person households – Aged over 66	6,534	

Environment	
Area km <sup>2</sup>	850
Cadw listed buildings	2,420
Scheduled Monuments	201
High Rise Buildings	0

**NEWPORT**


	3 Wholetime fire and rescue stations:	
	45 Malpas 46 Maindee	47 Duffryn

Prevention		Protection		Response	2022-2023	2023-2024
Home Fire Safety Checks	1,538	Audits carried out	65	Fires	962	700
% over 65	21% ( <i>age undisclosed 58%</i> )	Site Specific Risks Information	157	False Alarms	1,127	1,127
School engagement		Maintained Schools (nursery, primary, secondary, special)	56	RTCs	80	86
109 sessions	6,481 young people			Other SSCs	336	317

Population	2011	2021
Total	145,736	159,587
16 and under	37,383	38,957
Over 65	23,751	27,063
Single person households – Aged over 66	8,495	

Environment	
Area km <sup>2</sup>	190
Cadw listed buildings	436
Scheduled Monuments	70
High Rise Buildings	12

**RHONDDA CYNON TAF**

	3 Wholetime with On-Call complement and 6 On-Call fire and rescue stations:	
	9 Treorchy (On-Call)	15 Pontypridd (Wholetime/On-Call)
	10 Tonypany (Wholetime/On-Call)	16 Hirwaun (On-Call)
	11 Ferndale (On-Call)	17 Aberdare (Wholetime/On-Call)
	13 Gilfach Goch (On-Call)	18 Abercynon (On-Call)
	14 Pontyclun (On-Call)	

Prevention	Protection	Response	2022-2023	2023-2024
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## Annual Improvement Plan

Home Fire Safety Checks	2,371	Audits carried out	71	Fires	822	805
% over 65	41% ( <i>age undisclosed 31%</i> )	Site Specific Risks Information	185	False Alarms	1,072	1,277
School engagement		Maintained Schools (nursery, primary, secondary, special)	113	RTCs	156	157
190 sessions	6,202 young people			Other SSCs	555	570

Population	2011	2021
Total	234,410	237,651
16 and under	56,356	54,510
Over 65	40,073	46,626
Single person households – Aged over 66		14,049

Environment	
Area km <sup>2</sup>	424
Cadw listed buildings	373
Scheduled Monuments	89
High Rise Buildings	2

## TORFAEN

	2 Wholetime and 2 On-Call fire and rescue stations:	
	32 Cwmbran (Wholetime)	34 Abersychan (On-Call)
	33 New Inn (Wholetime)	39 Blaenavon (On-Call)

Prevention		Protection		Response	2022-2023	2023-2024
Home Fire Safety Checks	1,324	Audits carried out	27	Fires	418	288
% over 65	39% ( <i>age undisclosed 39%</i> )	Site Specific Risks Information	100	False Alarms	653	671
School engagement		Maintained Schools (nursery, primary, secondary, special)	32	RTCs	42	50
70 sessions	3,167 young people			Other SSCs	186	179


Population	2011	2021
Total	91,075	92,276
16 and under	22,112	20,946
Over 65	16,370	19,155
Single person households – Aged over 66		5,694

Environment	
Area km <sup>2</sup>	126
Cadw listed buildings	260
Scheduled Monuments	21
High Rise Buildings	3

## VALE OF GLAMORGAN

	1 Wholetime, 1 Wholetime with On-Call complement and 2 On-Call fire and rescue stations:
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## Annual Improvement Plan

	04 Cowbridge (On-Call) 19 Llantwit Major (On-Call)	20 Barry (Wholetime/On-Call) 22 Penarth (Wholetime)
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Prevention		Protection		Response	2022-2023	2023-2024
Home Fire Safety Checks	1,399	Audits carried out	56	Fires	372	289
% over 65	41% ( <i>age undisclosed 37%</i> )	Site Specific Risks Information	192	False Alarms	676	751
School engagement		Maintained Schools (nursery, primary, secondary, special)	53	RTCs	90	89
129 sessions	6,022 young people			Other SSCs	257	290

Population	2011	2021
Total	126,336	131,939
16 and under	30,305	29,953
Over 65	23,055	28,990
Single person households – Aged over 66		8,491

Environment	
Area km <sup>2</sup>	335
Cadw listed buildings	743
Scheduled Monuments	113
High Rise Buildings	8



## South Wales Fire and Rescue Service's 2023-24 Audits

### Audit of Accounts

Each year Audit Wales audits the Service's financial statements. Audit of our accounts for 2023-2024 has been delayed by Audit Wales from the usual deadline of 31<sup>st</sup> July to 30<sup>th</sup> November. The associated Notice of Completion will be published once the audit is completed.

<b>Accountancy</b>	<i>Audited</i>	<i>Published</i>	<i>Budgeted</i>
	<b>2022-2023</b>	<b>2023-2024</b>	<b>2024-2025</b>
	<b>£MILLION</b>	<b>£MILLION</b>	<b>£MILLION</b>
Employee Related Costs	67.0	70.6	73.7
Premises Related Expenses	5.6	6.4	7.2
Training Expenses	1.7	1.6	1.8
Supplies and Services	6.2	6.5	5.8
Transport Related Expenses	1.6	1.6	1.7
Contracted Services	1.2	1.8	1.4
Capital Costs / Leasing	4.6	5.0	5.3
Income	-5.9	-1.6	-1.1
<b>Total</b>	<b>82.0</b>	<b>91.9</b>	<b>95.8</b>

### Our budget for 2024-2025

<b>Private Finance Initiative Grant</b>	<b>£886k</b>	<b>Capital Programme</b>	<b>£</b>
		Property	£5.8m
		Vehicles	£2.4m
		Equipment	£195k
		ICT equipment	£290k

### Internal Audits

Our internal audit programme is an integral part of our improvement process, providing an objective perspective on aspects of our service. These audits are carried out by TIAA, our contracted internal auditor. Each audit assesses an area of activity against four levels of assurance (substantial, reasonable, limited or none), and provides recommendations to address areas for improvement. The recommendation actions are recorded in our Business Management Information System (BMIS) where they are monitored until implementation is complete.

During 2023-2024, 12 audits were scheduled and reports have been received for six, two of which were rated substantial assurance, three were rated reasonable assurance and one was rated with limited assurance.

## Annual Improvement Plan

Date period	Audit Name	Assurance Level
2023-2024	0365 Implementation	Reasonable Assurance
2023-2024	Airwave/ Emergency Services Network	Deferred to 2024-2025
2023-2024	Assets Mobile Phones	Reasonable Assurance
2023-2024	Budgetary Control	Substantial Assurance
2023-2024	Core - HR Pay Award	Awaiting comments from SLT
2023-2024	Electric Vehicle Charging	Limited Assurance
2023-2024	Estates Strategy – Property Compliance	Awaiting comments from SLT
2023-2024	Health & Safety Management	Returned to TIAA awaiting feedback
2023-2024	ICT Data Assurance	Returned to TIAA awaiting feedback
2023-2024	Pensions	Substantial Assurance
2023-2024	Station Visits	Reasonable Assurance
2023-2024	Sustainability	Reasonable Assurance

### External Assessment: HMICFRS

The Commissioners have identified the need for a complete picture of the Service's performance to supplement the Independent Culture Review. His Majesty's Inspectorate of Constabulary and Fire & Rescue Services (HMICFRS) has therefore been asked to carry out an assessment based on the framework developed for inspections of FRs in England. Currently in the third round of independent inspections since 2018, these reports provide a benchmark to monitor progress, highlighting areas of good practice as well as where improvement is needed.

There are three key areas of assessment:

- the operational service provided to the public (including prevention, protection and response);
- the efficiency of the Service (how well it provides value for money, allocates resources to match risk, and collaborates with other emergency services); and
- how well the Service looks after its people (how well it promotes its values and culture, trains its staff and ensures they have the necessary skills, ensures fairness and diversity for the workforce and develops leadership and service capability).

### Annual Improvement Plan

Whilst an inspection or assessment of this kind has yet to take place within a Welsh fire and rescue service, other public bodies in Wales (including health, schooling, and policing) are inspected on a routine basis to allow the public to see how well their local service is performing and improving year on year.

The assessment will enable the Commissioners, the Service, and Welsh Government to gain a comprehensive understanding of the current performance of the organisation which will provide a baseline to measure our improvement, better benchmarking against other FRSs, and ultimately deliver better outcomes for the public.

## Our Strategic Themes

The table below sets out the eight Strategic Themes which are the foundation for our Strategic Plan 2020-2030. Our annual improvement objectives are built within these themes, which also structure our priorities and planning as we work to deliver on our mission statement:

“To make South Wales safer, by reducing risk.”

We have mapped these themes to the Well-being of Future Generations Act (Wales) 2015 (WFGA) to demonstrate how our priorities contribute to the seven well-being goals and to the priorities of our Public Service Boards (PSBs).

Strategic Theme	Supports WFG Goals
<p><b>Keeping you Safe</b></p> <p>Focussing on prevention work to help reduce the need for you to call us</p>	
<p><b>Responding to your Emergency</b></p> <p>Ensuring we respond quickly and effectively when you need us</p>	
<p><b>Working with Partners</b></p> <p>Working with the South Wales PSBs and other partners to deliver a fire and rescue service that meets your needs</p>	
<p><b>Engaging and Communicating</b></p> <p>Ensuring all our communities and staff are involved in helping us provide an excellent service</p>	

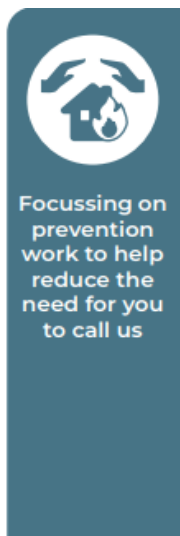
Strategic Theme	Supports WFG Goals
<p><b>Protecting our Environment</b></p> <p>Carrying out our activities in a way that helps sustain the planet for future generations</p>	
<p><b>Using Technology Well</b></p> <p>Continually look to use the latest technology where it can improve our service to you</p>	
<p><b>Valuing our People</b></p> <p>Supporting a diverse workforce that represents your community, is well trained and motivated to deliver our service</p>	
<p><b>Continuing to Work Effectively</b></p> <p>Ensuring our Service provides value for money and is clearly accountable</p>	

## WFG Goals



## Our achievements in 2023-2024

### Keeping You Safe



#### What does this mean?

By Keeping You Safe we will understand the risks in our local communities and focus on prevention to reduce the risk of fire, injuries, road traffic accidents and water related incidents. We achieve this through the use of risk-based data, working with our partners, engaging with our communities, educating future generations and targeted intelligence on vulnerable locations.

This theme supports the following Well-being Goals:



A resilient  
Wales



A Wales of cohesive  
communities



A healthier  
Wales



A globally  
responsible Wales

#### We will keep you safe by:

- Reducing the impact of false alarms on our resources
- Reducing the number of fires in the home and understanding the causes and behaviours of them
- Reducing the number of Road Traffic Collisions (RTCs)
- Reducing the number of deliberate fires
- Improving safety in and around water
- Improving fire safety in buildings in our communities

#### What we planned to do in 2023-2024 and what we have achieved so far:

**Continue to work with partners on initiatives to reduce the number of deliberate fires** – this will build on already successful partnerships and ensure safety messages achieve the broadest reach across the communities of South Wales.

We are working with Public Service Boards (PSB's), Natural Resources Wales (NRW), and waste operators to map each Unitary Authority (UA) to establish the links between the frequency of refuse collections and deliberate fires. Also, the Arson Reduction Team (ART) members have embedded themselves within local police stations to create closer working relationships with the PSB's.

ART worked with six primary schools across Rhondda Cynon Taff (RCT) and partners including NRW and South Wales Police (SWP) to co-author a children's book highlighting the dangers that deliberate fires can cause. To mark the start of the wildfire season, *Lula and the Flame* was presented and a documentary and talking books (Welsh and English with sign language) were also produced by Community Storywork. Operation Dawns Glow was relaunched on St David's Day, with a patriotic plea to work together to eliminate the impact of grass fires across Wales and build a healthier and more resilient Welsh landscape for the future.

## Annual Improvement Plan

Station Commanders have been driving initiatives through their Community Risk Management Plans (CRMPs) to better understand and identify hazards, analyse risks and inform decision making and validation through public engagement in their station localities.

**Find new ways to promote safety messages** – for example, creating new interactive “games” to engage with children and promote home safety.

Our Youth and Fire Safety Intervention Teams have acquired electronic devices to download educational games focused on fire risks, with plans to develop our own tailored software for our communities. Additionally, the team have also created a “virtual decisions” educational package using electronic and virtual reality tools to teach the importance of positive choices. A new initiative called Street Firefighter aims to engage young people in low engagement communities, encouraging healthier lifestyles and resilience. The REFLECT project partners with organisations across South Wales to educate and engage young people aged 11-25 on the dangers of arson, car crime, and anti-social behaviour, fostering community relationships and better life decisions. The Media and Communications team continues to promote campaigns, initiatives and safety updates to raise public awareness of risks.

**Work to understand those who are at most risk in our communities** – by understanding risk within our communities, we can ensure our risk reduction resources are better targeted and reach those who need our support the most.

The Learning Evaluation After Fire (LEAF) project collects data from individuals who have experienced accidental dwelling fires to improve services and safety approaches, and to provide targeted support through our Community Safety practitioners. By collaborating with partners and utilising data sets like Exeter, Acorn, and census data, the team identifies the most vulnerable community members. Having data sharing agreements with organisations such as the NHS helps us to identify those most at risk in our communities, for example demographic and risk factors for residents aged 65 or over. Acorn combines geographic and demographic data to match housing types with fire incident data, helping to pinpoint high-risk areas and improve fire safety interventions.

**Explore opportunities to improve our capture of information on buildings and other settings** – by developing our fire investigation capability, high-rise audit programme, land management plans and collection of information by crews at operational incidents, we will make our communities safer and improve firefighter safety.

The Business Fire Safety Team has established a forum with Welsh Government, other Welsh Fire and Rescues Services (FRS's) and fire engineers to create a risk-based inspection program for high-rise buildings. They continue to audit high-rise residential buildings for structural deficiencies in line with amendments to the legislation. A land management information system is being developed to share data on high-risk locations, with additional data now accessible via the Services Mobile Data Terminals (MDTs). The Fire Investigation team is collaborating with the Office of Product Safety and Standards to identify trends, share data to improve consumer safety. A pilot program has commenced at six fire stations involves operational crews conducting fire safety checks at smaller commercial premises, with data monitored to enhance firefighter safety.

**Promote water safety awareness amongst our communities** – we will target locations and groups at greater risk by sharing information with our partners.

#### Annual Improvement Plan

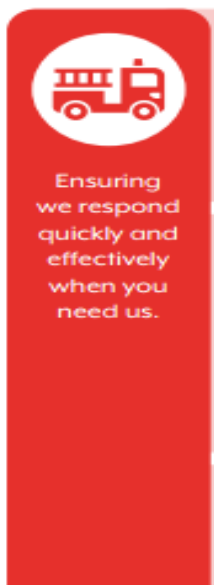
Our Water Safety team collaborated with the Royal National Lifeboat Institution (RNLI) focusing on drowning prevention messages in Crucial Crew (essential life skills workshops) for children in years 6 and 7. The team also launched the Waterside Responder initiative, offering free guidance and throwlines to businesses near water to prevent accidental drownings. Communication of water safety messages were enhanced using data from various sources, including the WATER Incident Database (WAID). Our teams continue to work closely with Water Safety Wales and RNLI to target specific risk areas and promote safety.

**Expand our road safety 30-20 Options, Seatbelt Options and Domino initiatives** – our initiatives will continue to promote the messages of our Fatal Five campaign highlighting the main contributory factors that cause serious RTCs.

In September 2023, Wales introduced a 30-20mph speed limit reduction. Our fire stations and Road Safety Team collaborated with partners to deliver educational sessions around this change and other road safety campaigns. The Domino presentation remains an effective tool for educating students on the impacts of peer pressure and lack of experience on driving and passenger behaviour, highlighting the Fatal Five campaign's key messages: speed, mobile phones, seatbelts, concentration, and drink and drug driving.



## Responding to your Emergency



### What does this mean?

This focuses our commitment to respond quickly to emergencies with the right resources ensuring we are prepared to meet the evolving needs of our communities. This includes an ageing population, supporting other agencies with specialist responses, the impacts of climate change, and advancements in technology such as lithium-ion battery fires.

This theme supports the following Well-being Goals:



A resilient Wales



A healthier Wales

### We will respond to your emergency by:

- Responding effectively when you need us
- Doing all we can to ensure our On-Call Duty System (OCDS) crews are available
- Training our Firefighters, Joint Fire Control staff and other staff to respond to current and future risks in our communities

### What we planned to do in 2023-2024 and what we have achieved so far:

**Develop and introduce new specification 4x4 fire engines** – to enhance our response capability with additional agility.

We purchased seven new fire engines capable of delivering over 3,000 litres of water a minute and accommodating up to six crew members. The new design appliances have four-wheel drive capability to respond more effectively in adverse conditions.

**Ensure our systems for recording and sharing risk information effectively supports our activities** – reviewing our collection and collation of information will confirm information is available when needed by those who need it when it is needed.

Our operational working groups' structure has been reviewed and revised to improve decision-making processes and to maintain effective oversight. Reporting for Site Specific Risk Information (SSRI) has enhanced the information available for our crews, in preparation for a new Operational Intelligence System (OIS) due to be implemented over the next three years. Electronic tablets are also being trialled at six fire stations to enhance data sharing and to collect and view risk information. The Risk Reduction department have developed a new system to improve information sharing between different teams to identify and support those most in need in our communities.

**Conduct research into emergency response to fires involving electric vehicles** – this will support our development to meet changing risks and demands.

### Annual Improvement Plan

We set up a working group to address emergency responses to fires involving electric vehicles and lithium batteries. The Operational Appliances and Equipment Team (OAET) attended industry events and engaged with manufacturers, leading to the purchase and trial distribution of six Electric Vehicle Blankets (EVBs) at Rescue Tender stations, with corresponding training. In addition, Joint Fire Control (JFC) procedures were updated to ensure EVBs are deployed to Electrical Vehicle (EV) fires. EVBs have also been placed at higher risk locations for example the entrances of the Brynglas and Gibraltar Tunnels.

**Review the structure of JFC and recruitment activities** – so that we can continue to guarantee an efficient and effective response to emergency calls by our experienced and trained team.

As the first point of contact, integral to responding to emergencies, the Joint Fire Control (JFC) has recruited seven new members to meet demand and improve resilience. A new recruitment campaign is also scheduled for early 2024-2025. Minimum crewing on watches has been raised from six to seven, with plans to increase to eight and a maximum of 12 crew per watch in 2024-2025.

**Ensure our training programmes prepare our personnel for future challenges** – in addition to considering operational training and future demands on the Service, we will support staff in their chosen career development pathways.

Eight members of Joint Fire Control (JFC) have qualified as Airwave Communication Tactical Advisors and four as National Control Liaison Officers, with a focus on continuing professional development. Our Operational Development Team, in collaboration with Skills for Justice Awards, has also become the first Fire and Rescue Service to develop accredited qualifications for wildfire response.

Our High-Rise Working Group, using findings from the Welsh Government's Thematic Review "Fire and Rescue Services in Wales: Learning from Grenfell" and National Operational Guidance, has created a new Standard Operational Procedure (SOP) and Evacuation Guidance, which are being taught in real-world scenarios. 23 exercises have taken place with Operational and JFC staff, and an additional two exercises have been completed with On-Call stations from Merthyr and Abersychan, with all wholtime stations being trained by March 2025. Additionally, a smoke curtain training program around the use of Breathing Apparatus (BA) has been developed and a Tactical Officer's High-Rise course is being established in collaboration with West Midlands Fire and Rescue Service.

**Explore opportunities to increase the delivery of online training to develop operational competence** – this will allow training to be delivered more flexibly, integrated with operational activities, and reduce the requirement for travel to a central venue.

Online training packages for core skills, large animal rescue, trauma, Breathing Apparatus (BA), and Road Traffic Collisions (RTCs) are now available to all staff on the intranet. Webinar-style training for Electric Vehicles, RTCs, and BA updates is also being delivered via Microsoft Teams, providing flexibility for different watches on stations, helping further reduce our carbon footprint. The Operational Development and Review Team (ODRT) has provided online training to station commanders and crews about their roles, key incident themes and debrief systems to enhance operational learning on the ground. Junior Officer seminars are also being delivered online to supplement face-to-face meetings, ensuring quick dissemination of critical information.

**Promote vacancies through expanded social media use and face-to-face engagement activities** – through a calendar of Firefighter Fit sessions and participation in careers fairs, we will raise awareness of career opportunities; recruitment of On-Call Firefighters has remained a priority.

Fire stations promoted recruitment opportunities at local community events and continued collaborating with Skills for Justice to identify suitable applicants, inviting them to drill nights to meet crews and experience

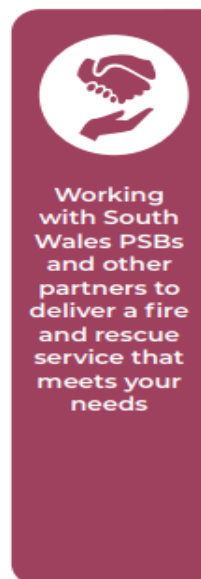
#### Annual Improvement Plan

aspects of the Firefighter role. The Media and Communications Team launched a new recruitment campaign for On-Call Firefighters, using the hashtag #YouCan and featuring a video of current staff sharing their experiences. New recruits' courses for On-Call Firefighters have been trialled over three weekends to minimize the need for time off from primary employment, to assess the impact on increased applicant numbers.

**Recruit, maintain, develop and exercise Service Emergency Fire cover capability, including Auxiliary Firefighters and concept of operations. Work with external contractor to ensure working partnership is effective.**

Operation Ategol is a strategic plan to ensure emergency fire and rescue services meet legal obligations under the Fire & Rescue Service Act 2004 and the Civil Contingencies Act 2004, focusing on business continuity and keeping our local communities safe. The plan includes recruiting more auxiliary firefighters and control personnel, along with ongoing training and exercises for these roles and strategic managers.

## Working with Partners



### What does this mean?

Strong partnerships help us to enhance services by working together to deliver joined up provisions, prevent resource duplication and maximise public funds for our communities in South Wales. Collaboration improves public experiences through better understanding and referrals between organisations. By integrating social partnership into our decision-making and well-being goals, we ensure that staff, their representatives, and partners have a say in our improvement plans and how we deliver services together.

This theme supports the following Well-being Goals:



A resilient  
Wales



A Wales of cohesive  
communities



A globally  
responsible Wales



A prosperous  
Wales

### How we will work with our partners:

- Working with Public Service Boards (PSBs) to support our communities
- Working with our partners to deliver our services where they are needed
- Continually reviewing and building on our existing partnerships, embedding principles of social partnership

### What we had planned to do in 2023-2024 and what we have achieved so far:

**As PSBs launch their Local Well-being Plans 2023-2028, we will ensure our continuing engagement** – this will enable us to better understand the challenges faced by our communities and to support those most in need.

Our collaboration with Public Service Boards (PSBs) involves senior leaders from SWFRS attending meetings to develop strategies and support our local communities. Station Commanders are assigned to PSB subgroups to ensure we are represented at all levels. This enhances our knowledge, understanding, and helps ensure our work aligns and strengthens our partnerships. We are at the early stages of data sharing with Aneurin Bevan University Health Board Trust to collaborate on intelligence to inform strategic decision making and business plans.

**Map our current partnership working activities and data sharing agreements** – this will help us to identify and develop new opportunities for collaboration.

Our Community Safety team has reviewed partnership arrangements, and a new Partnership Officer is in place to identify future opportunities. A referral process with St John Ambulance Wales is in place, and work continues with Public Health Wales on assisting bariatric patients utilising All-Wales NHS Manual handling guidance to identify a referral pathway. We support the Joint Emergency Services Estates Group (JESEG) in finding shared premises, using Data Map Wales for information sharing trials. Collaboration with Mid and West Wales Fire and Rescue Service (MAWWFRS) has led to a draft data sharing agreement for cross-border incidents, which will enhance response capabilities.

Annual Improvement Plan

**Review and enhance relationship with Local Resilience Forum (LRF) partners and National Resilience in Wales** - to ensure cohesive and collaborative approach to risks, threats and harm to our communities in line with emerging risks.

LRF groups are multi-agency partnerships made up of representatives from local public services, including the emergency services, unitary authorities, the NHS, and others. These agencies are known as Category 1 Responders, as defined by the Civil Contingencies Act. We have representation on each group to ensure there are joined up approaches to emerging risks, threats and potential harm to our local communities.

**Reviewing our working arrangements with external agencies to ensure suitable support for our mental health provisions for staff** – to ensure we offer our staff an effective range of support.

Our Occupational Health unit in Pontyclun offers a counselling service to all colleagues for mental health support. Additionally, staff have access to the Employee Assistance Programme (EAP), which provides telephone consultations, online chat, and face-to-face counselling, with the additional option of referrals to national mental health charity MIND. We also benefit from a Nurse Therapist from the Department of Liaison Psychiatry, University Hospital of Wales, who assists in assessing and treating staff with mental health issues such as stress, anxiety, depression, PTSD, and panic.

## Involving and Communicating



### What does this mean?

We engage our communities, stakeholders and staff in delivering excellent services by offering a variety of opportunities to shape our current and future activities. We are continually exploring new methods to share information, especially focusing on connecting with underrepresented groups through local activities and the efforts of our crews in public engagement and service promotion.

This theme supports the following Well-being Goals:



A resilient  
Wales



A Wales of cohesive  
communities



A Wales of vibrant  
culture & thriving  
Welsh language



A more equal  
Wales

### We will involve and communicate by:

- Involving our communities, making sure they have their say in what we do
- Helping to keep our communities safe by delivering safety education and attending community events
- Ensuring we develop and promote communication channels within the Service
- Recognising the role of social partnership, further developing open and transparent relationships with stakeholders

### What we planned to do in 2023-2024 and what we have achieved so far:

**Expand and promote channels that enable our staff and stakeholders to provide feedback and comment on our plans and services** – by developing and promoting new engagement and consultation mechanisms, we will improve our capacity to receive feedback from staff and members of our communities.

We were the first FRS to introduce the Crimestoppers Speak Up service for confidential reporting of workplace concerns and relaunched the Shout forum for staff engagement following the publication of the Morris Report. We have also developed a Youth Forum for 13-18 year-olds to shape future plans and trial risk reduction initiatives. Our website's accessibility has been reviewed using the Silktide Index (standards for web accessibility), and work continues to improve its functionality. We trialed new methods of communication to promote safety messages and recruitment including radio and digital screens and we continue to monitor the success of our campaigns. Colleague communication in the form of staff briefings and Transformation Roadshows have been held to engage staff in plans and updates around change and transformation plans.

Annual Improvement Plan

**Improve coordination of our involvement in community events and activities, providing support for fire and rescue stations** – this will help our stations in developing their local involvement and role within their communities.

Our stations have increased their participation in local community events to promote service information, safety messages, and recruitment opportunities. We continue to organise and coordinate the annual 999 Emergency Services Day at Cardiff Bay and hold local Station open days across South Wales with partners like South Wales Police and Welsh Ambulance Services, featuring live demonstrations and safety information in a family-friendly setting. We host seasonal events such as fireworks displays across South Wales to drive community engagement. Crews attend high rise residential buildings to give advice on fire and carry out fire safety checks we commenced with higher risk premises first as part of this initiative. We continue develop partnerships with unitary authorities, key venues and event organisers to ensure that risks are identified and mitigated so oversight is maintained for major events, in conjunction with our Business Fire Safety team (BFS).

**Share more information on the range of activities undertaken by South Wales Fire and Rescue Service** using digital and non-digital methods – the responsibilities of a modern fire and rescue service are wide ranging and, as a public body in Wales, we also have a role in delivering on a broader agenda, particularly in respect of the Well-being of Future Generations Act.

Achieving our vision and mission to make South Wales safer by reducing risk incorporates many aspects of our work. Not only do we prevent and respond to fire emergencies we also attend water and flooding incidents, rescue people and animals, provide home safety checks, educate communities and our future generations, work with partners, keep businesses safe, attend transport accidents and carry out urban search and rescues.

In all our plans, decisions and activities we incorporate the Well-being of Future Generations (Wales) Act 2015. The act requires SWFRS to plan the long-term impact of our decisions, to work better with people, communities and each other, and to prevent persistent problems such as poverty, health inequalities and climate change.

Through our station open days and 999 Emergency services day we showcase our skills in other core areas of the Service, examples being demonstrations of: water and line rescues; aerial platform rescues; and casualty extrication from vehicle accidents. Other initiatives included the creation of two new volunteer roles around public engagement and drowning prevention messages in locations with known water hazards, in addition we continued awareness raising of our On-Call Firefighter opportunities across South Wales.

**Launch a standardised engagement toolkit for use across the Service** – this will provide resources for planning, delivering, and evaluating events and other engagement activities. To provide consistency in our approach to engagement and allow us to collate data on events and areas for improvement.

We have created an engagement toolkit that provides comprehensive guidance for planning, delivering, and evaluating activities, such as recruitment events, local shows, and Service-wide consultations. Additionally, the Station Event Management Plan has been updated to include templates covering all essential considerations like Health & Safety, site facilities, key contacts, event promotion, risk management, refreshments, and cancellation procedures. These updates ensure that all events are conducted efficiently and safely.

## Protecting and enhancing our environment



### What does this mean?

We are committed to protecting our environment and its natural resources, ensuring that we sustain South Wales now and for future generations. Our work is deeply rooted in community engagement, striving to ensure the natural environment is both safe and accessible. Understanding protected sites and fostering local initiatives are crucial, whether we're collaborating with schools or supporting local partnerships.

This theme supports the following Well-being Goals:



A globally Responsible Wales



A healthier Wales



A resilient Wales



A Wales of cohesive communities

### How we will protect our environment:

- Reducing the usage of single use materials
- Expanding the use of electric vehicles
- Reducing our energy use and carbon footprint
- Considering how our activities impact on the environment
- Reducing the amount of waste produced

### What we had planned to do in 2023-2024 and what we have achieved so far:

**Review developments in fuel and other technologies to identify opportunities that might be beneficial to the Service's fleet asset replacement policy and procurement strategy** – to evaluate and progress our aspiration for a greener fleet.

We have continued to replace petrol and diesel powered vehicles with electric vehicles (EVs) or hybrids along with supporting infrastructure. We currently have 47 electric vehicles, 46 self-charging hybrids, and 2 plug-in hybrids collectively making up 21% of our total fleet - a 3% increase on the previous period. We aim to have 70% of the light fleet electric vehicles by 2030 and we have plans to support this with a more powerful charging infrastructure.

EV charging is now available at 42 sites, with rapid chargers added at four sites this year. We are prioritising suitable wholtime stations for the next round of Welsh Government Energy Service funding (supporting community and public sector organisations in Wales to transition to net zero).

An evaluation with the Mid and West Wales Fire and Rescue Service has also taken place to explore alternative fuels such as biodiesel to contribute to our carbon reduction plan.

**Implement an accredited Environmental Management System** – so that we can gain recognition for our environmental practices and demonstrate our commitments to sustainability, consideration of environmental impacts, compliance with legislation, and environmental protection.

We have started to plan for the Environmental Management System (EMS) accreditation and a gap analysis was completed, identifying the necessary actions to achieve this. We have begun work on our Initial Environmental Review (IER), Environmental Policy and Improvement Plan, and have drafted a proposal for an EMS data management system. We are aiming to complete these early in 2025, therefore attaining Level 1 of



## Annual Improvement Plan

the EMS. Attainment of higher levels has already been mapped out and work will continue on this throughout next year.

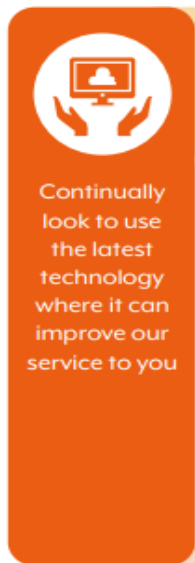
**Develop an open dialogue with staff on our carbon reduction position and the challenges we face** – by engaging and involving colleagues across the Service, we will increase awareness of our activities and encourage innovative solutions.

We have drafted our Sustainability Engagement strategy and are planning a voluntary Sustainability Champions Group. We have been planning an environmental training package for staff and are part of a working group to develop a National Fire Chiefs Council (NFCC) approved Carbon Literacy toolkit for fire and rescue services across the UK. A new Sustainability page on our staff intranet provides a central hub for information and updates on sustainability activities, including data on carbon emissions and energy. As part of our commitment to Healthy Travel Charters, we conducted a Service-wide commuting survey to understand staff travel habits, with results and recommendations for sustainable travel options published. We have also started a new waste collection contract to comply with new recycling legislation. To fulfil our duty under the Environment (Wales) Act 2016, land management is now part of station plans, helping them to understand site risks and the ecological value to the community. We will continue to measure the impact of our sustainability actions and report progress through quarterly carbon accounts on our intranet, Welsh Government returns, and an annual environmental report.

**Agree and define the standard requirements of a sustainable building** – in the longer term, this will ensure our buildings are resource-efficient and environmentally responsible throughout their life cycle.

The new Urban Search and Rescue (USAR) Wales facility at Whitchurch Fire Station opened and has been designed with sustainability in mind. The new building contains photovoltaic solar panels providing an estimated 10,287 kWh of electricity per year, and annual CO<sub>2</sub> savings of 2,184kg and a 400V battery system to ensure self-sufficiency. The planning application for New Inn Fire Station has now been approved, aiming for a net-zero carbon rating using sustainable materials and advanced systems. The application also included provision of green spaces to enhance biodiversity and provide habitats for local flora and fauna. Additionally, 70% of our sites now have LED lighting, and 30 of 50 locations have been updated with Building Management Systems (to control and monitor a building's electrical equipment) with the remaining sites to be addressed as part of the refurbishment programme. Smart meters are being installed at all our sites for better power usage monitoring, and new drying rooms have been installed at 19 sites following successful trials, with more scheduled as part of the refurbishment programme. The Fire Fighters Charity's 'Bag it and Bank it' recycling scheme has donated 487 tonnes of clothing and raised over £100,000, with two of our Stations ranking in the top three (Cwmbran and New Inn Fire Station) across the United Kingdom.

## Using Technology Well



### What does this mean?

In our progressively evolving digital world, it's crucial to use technology and manage data responsibly. That's why our systems are constantly developing to ensure data security while supporting our operations. Our Step Forward transformation programme will ensure that technology is employed to drive efficiencies so that we become more effective in our service delivery.

This theme supports the following Well-being Goals:



A globally responsible Wales



A resilient Wales



A healthier Wales

### How we will use technology well:

- Using the most suitable technology and equipment to improve our services
- Reviewing the standard and use of technology and equipment across the service

### What we planned to do in 2023-2024 and what we have achieved so far:

**Explore the use of digital devices to promote new and innovative working practices** - use of portable devices for recording information and updating records could deliver sustainable efficiencies in data management.

The use of our 24/7 helpdesk system has been extended to more departments, improving request and workload management. We have publicised QR codes for Crimestoppers and the Fly Mapper app to facilitate public reporting of concerns and fly-tipping. Most recruitment activities are now conducted online, enhancing efficiency and the applicant experience. Additionally, tablets have been secured for Operational Risk Management which will be used to support staff, to be more easily connected to the Services IT systems when operating outside of our premises. They will also be useful in supporting better capability and accessibility in meetings, also contributing to reduced used of paper.

**Review the Service's Management Information System to ensure data is available for monitoring and planning activities** - ensuring we use 'evidence-based' decision making.

Our Business Management Information System (BMIS) includes a wide suite of data dashboards and reports that are used to identify areas of improvement and to monitor ongoing performance, which now includes a suite of reports for the Training and Development Team that simplify the monitoring of course registrations and completions. The Service's ICT systems, which will include our BMIS system, will be subject to a wholesale review as part of the Digital Transformation project, which is one of the nine projects that make up our Step Forward Transformation and Change Programme.

Annual Improvement Plan

**Exploring technology to expand our suite of risk reduction activities** - use of technology can increase our risk reduction reach through efficiencies and engaging a wider audience.

An Operational Intelligence System (OIS) project commenced to identify and evaluate a new system to replace Business Fire Safety system (BFS) which provides a central repository for data collected on premises visited. The system will in addition allow identification of risks, allocation of work and production of correspondence. Future releases will allow us to implement additional risk-based modules such as Site Specific Risk Information (SSRI).

**Enhance and grow the recently introduced electronic Risk Based Inspection Programme for non-domestic premises, based on the risk to life safety of relevant persons** - this will support pre-planned visits to check compliance in accordance with the requirements of the Regulatory Reform (Fire Safety) Order.

An electronic audit form has been developed to improve the information available on the Risk Based Inspection Programme. Additionally, a working group was formed to find a new system provider for the programme. The group received input from potential providers and is currently reviewing options to inform the decision-making process before awarding a contract.

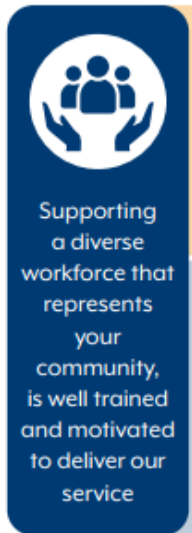
**Continue the programme to upgrade all servers** - replacing or upgrading servers will enable us to review applications and reduce costs while increasing efficiency and security.

Our ICT department have continued work on upgrading of all our servers which will ensure we are using technology at its optimum. This will allow us to review our software applications and make more improvements and therefore improve efficiency.

**Develop a messaging system that will enable Occupational Health to confirm appointments via text messages and receive updates on those successfully received** - this will improve efficiency and reduce the number of missed appointments.

Plans to develop a messaging system for confirmation of Occupational Health appointments via text messages have been postponed as we consider a more comprehensive Patient Management System as an alternative.

## Valuing our people



### What does this mean?

We value and appreciate our people as our most vital asset in reaching our goals and providing outstanding service to our communities. Success requires having the right individuals, equipped with the appropriate skills, values and behaviours, in the right positions at the right times. We constantly strive to ensure our workforce reflects the diversity of the communities we serve, and everyone should have access to development opportunities to achieve fulfilling careers.

This theme supports the following Well-being Goals:



A more equal Wales



A healthier Wales



A prosperous Wales



A Wales of vibrant culture & thriving Welsh language

### We will value our people by:

- **Delivering fundamental change in our culture, responding to the recommendations of the Independent Culture Review**
- **Attracting a workforce that reflects and represents our communities**
- **Developing our people by identifying training and development opportunities**
- **Supporting our people to feel well, healthy and valued at work**
- **Delivering on the recommendations of the Investors in People report**
- **Encouraging and support a bilingual culture across the Service**

### What we planned to do in 2023-2024 and what we have achieved so far:

**Review and raise awareness of the Service's full range of employee benefits programmes** - to ensure it supports all colleagues and is promoted and accessible.

Our Learning and Development (LD) Team introduced the Coaching and Mentoring Plan to train a group of staff in a formally recognised standard of coaching. This has helped colleagues to enhance and engage in coaching-style conversations, such as personal reviews and with career development pathways. In September 2023, we launched a new Employee Assistance Programme (EAP) to provide additional health and wellbeing support for staff across the Service. Additionally, a new application for all staff will be launched, offering a more user-friendly platform and a broader range of benefits than previously available.

**Ensure all staff have access to a learning pathway** - so that all employees can build their knowledge and skills to support their career with the Service.

Our Learning and Development team (LD) launched the Pathways programmes to support development of skills and working towards progression and promotion. All staff have access to a Pathway with a range of levels to support development within their current role but also provide opportunities to select personalised learning plans to help their prospects for promotion.

Annual Improvement Plan

**Reshape our equality, diversity and inclusion framework to meet the needs and challenges of a modern fire and rescue service** - this will ensure our services and processes are fair and accessible.

The Independent Culture Review highlighted shortcomings in the way the Service deals with staff experiences with regards to equality, diversity and inclusion. Implementing the Morris Report recommendations will help us overhaul our frameworks and procedures and make SWFRS a better place to work. Our Strategic Equality Plan has been re-written and we have launched a new Inclusive Action Plan with objectives assigned to relevant directorates and the senior leadership team (SLT) lead for accountability and monitoring. Additionally, a cultural benchmarking forum was held for staff to provide feedback in a safe environment, which was then published on our internal Culture Dashboard, accessible to all staff.

## Continue to work effectively



### What does this mean?

As a Public Service we aim to provide value for money and demonstrate clear accountability. We will continue to adopt new and improved methods of working through our Step Forward Transformation programme. We will enhance and develop the services we provide, ensuring our activities are rigorously scrutinised through robust internal performance monitoring, internal audits, external independent assessments and benchmarking against other modern fire and rescue services.

This theme supports the following Well-being Goals:



A prosperous  
Wales



A Wales of vibrant  
culture & thriving  
Welsh language



A healthier  
Wales

### How we will continue to work effectively:

- Being clear and publicly accountable
- Maximising value for money while improving our service
- Developing new ways of working

### We measure our progress by monitoring:

- Outcomes of internal and external audit programmes
- Benchmarking against other fire and rescue services
- Audit Wales opinion on financial statements
- The number of complaints and compliments received

### What we planned to do in 2023-2024 and what we have achieved so far:

**Prepare and plan for the impact of The Procurement Bill and Public Procurement & Social Partnership Bill** – this will ensure we are compliant with public procurement regulations to ensure efficiency, transparency, and flexibility.

Our Procurement Team has developed a sustainable toolkit that guides procurement leads through a series of questions related to environmental sustainability along with a set of principles to ensure our work with contractors includes and promotes environmental considerations. We have also participated in the Welsh Government's consultation on the regulation of the Procurement Bill, and members of our Procurement Team are registered for Welsh Government's training on this matter.

**Review and amend procedures following any future legislative changes in Wales** – to ensure we can discharge our duties as a regulatory body.

### Annual Improvement Plan

We have continued our efforts to implement the national McCloud Pension Reform Exercise (public sector pension change from final salary to career average and age discrimination for younger workers) and the Matthews Pension Remedy (retained part time firefighters being treated less favourably and being able to buy back pensionable benefits). Cases have been prioritised as recommended by legislation. Also, staff training has been provided on Section 156 of the Building Safety Act 2022 which was implemented by Welsh Government. This legislation applies to all non-domestic premises and the actions required by the 'Responsible Persons'.

**Review our disposal procedures** – to ensure our assets, from vehicles to furniture, are managed throughout their lifecycle. Our Procurement Policy and process already promotes consideration of disposal when procuring items but this year we have been reviewing our existing processes for disposal of items:

We have reviewed and implemented our asset disposal and waste management procedures. Examples include vehicle disposal at auctions and donations to third world countries; storing reusable items such as furniture for future use; and recycling old uniforms. We have provided staff with clear waste disposal guidelines to continue to promote sustainability and efficient resource management.

## How we developed our plan for 2025-2026

Our strategic planning process is a year-round cycle aligned to the financial year. In the first six months from April we monitor delivery of our plans, with progress and performance reports scrutinised within departments and by our Senior Leadership Team (SLT) and the Commissioners. We review the impact of our actions in the previous year and engage with our staff and stakeholders to gather the broad range of information required to create and publish our Annual Improvement Plan by the end of October.

### Initial Consultation

An important step is the three-week initial consultation which this year commenced on 23<sup>rd</sup> May 2024. We asked our staff, stakeholders and key partners to help us shape our plans by sharing their concerns and asking whether we had the right priorities and were doing what they thought we should be doing. Feedback from the pre-consultation will help inform future planning and what our priority actions will be for 2025-2026.

The survey, available in Welsh and English, was promoted by email to our stakeholder register and to all staff via email, internal newsletters, the staff app and on the Service intranet.

We received 53 responses the majority of which were from staff or others affiliated to the Service, with general agreement that all eight of our Strategic Themes remain important.



*Strategic Theme Importance to Respondents (on a scale of 1-5, with 5 being very important and 1 being not important at all) – Based on 53 responses in 2024 and 88 responses in 2023.*



## Annual Improvement Plan

### Complaints and Compliments

We considered complaints to identify any recurring issues. A total of 72 complaints had been received in 2023-2024, which was a slight increase from 66 received the previous year.

We received 112 positive messages and letters of appreciation during 2023-2024. This feedback is shared Service wide. Examples of these are:

- My mother visited the Station today to personally thank the Firefighters who arrived at the fire at her home. It is our belief that if it wasn't for the fast acting, professional way the officers worked together my mother would have lost the whole of the house that my dad built. Yes, there is a lot of structural damage but that can be mended, my mother's life wouldn't have been had the fire gone out of total control. Saying thank you doesn't seem enough, but my mother and all her family are eternally grateful. Keep doing what you doing you too are saving lives. (Dec 2023)
- Please can you pass on my sincere thanks to the crew that attended a young man in distress today. They were professional, compassionate and extremely caring. I wish I had taken some of the names of the crew caring for him, but they were all amazing. I feel today we can be quick to criticise, and slow to compliment hence this email. Thankfully the young man recovered, but they continued to stay with him then with police help trying to get him home or to medical attention. (Aug 2023)
- I had a visit this morning by two of your fire officers. Both officers were extremely helpful and friendly. They helped with all my queries and concerns and helped me feel more confident in the fire safety of my home. I had requested help with my fire alarms, which they provided and fitted for me. But they also checked the safety of my electrical outlets too, which was something I hadn't considered. I have now spread the word to anyone who will listen to me, to book a home visit for themselves. I was thoroughly impressed with this service, and I want to say thank you to everyone involved. (Feb 2024)

### Identifying priorities

As well as considering information from the initial consultation, we looked at demand by analysing incident trends alongside our performance, the wider context of our activities by horizon scanning and reviewing other plans, particularly from our PSB partners, and audit feedback to identify areas for improvement.

Consultation responses were also reported to the Commissioners with their feedback incorporated into our plans.

Meetings were held with Heads of Service and other managers to reflect on feedback and to identify priorities for 2025-2026, considering progress being made on plans being implemented in the current year.

A high-level outline of our plans for 2025-26 can be found on pages TBC to TBC.

The publication of this Annual Improvement Plan marks commencement of our 12-week consultation to inform our strategic plan for the coming year and beyond. We welcome all suggestions and feedback. Details of how to get involved can be found at the end of this document.

**Initial Consultation - Themes and Responses**

<b>Key themes</b>	<b>Issues raised</b>
Working effectively in prevention and response	Ensuring availability to meet demand 24/7 Service-wide, which requires investment in people and resources. Being visible in our communities and working towards shared aims and objectives with our partners. Focus on prevention. Reduce attendance at false alarms
Cultivating a positive working environment by enabling and supporting staff	Making staff feel valued and supporting their physical and mental health. Recruiting the best people and providing training and skills development. Consulting staff and listening to their ideas, communicating better. Adequate talent management and succession planning.
Communication, engagement, relationship building and education	Using public engagement to communicate safety messages to our communities, building relationships to reduce risk at a local level. Improve internal communications and promote the Service better. Engage with young people.
Effective governance, leadership, investment and transformational change	Taking a measured approach to the implementation of Culture Review recommendations. Building a strong leadership team that implements clear strategies. Evidence based decision-making and better planning with working practices that demonstrate value for money.
Working effectively together and with partners	Improve information sharing internally and externally. Reduce silo working and improve clarity on our objectives. Improve technology.

With a combination of Wholetime and On-Call stations, our priority is to maintain cover, and this will be supported by our plans to introduce a dynamic cover tool that will enable Joint Fire Control managers to visualise risk and cover on a live basis. They will be able to test potential redeployment of assets before standby moves are implemented. This proactive approach will aid our effectiveness and efficiency. Changes to our On-Call training plan has improved availability and retention.

We recognise the importance of partnership working, which is one of our strategic themes and embedded in our ways of working. Work with other organisations is intrinsic to many roles within the Service and will continue to be developed as we share our plans and objectives.

Our prevention activity will be supported by the introduction of the Safelincs for online home safety requests and plans for improvements to our community risk management system will help us to assess risk and deliver safety messages. We are working towards a change to the way we respond to automatic fire alarm (AFA) calls from January 2025 which will release additional capacity for risk reduction activities. We are working towards publication of station CRMPs, sharing our local plans and our assessment of local risk as part of our governance project to increase transparency.

Our stations are important within their communities, and this has been celebrated by a programme of open days and 999 events, held with the support of other emergency services and partners. They are a valuable way for us to engage with the public, share safety messages and deliver safety messages.

Through our Youth Team, we already have good engagement with young people and related partners, but we will develop this through focus groups and youth forums, providing them with a voice in our planning and helping to shape our services.

Since the publication of the Independent Culture Review, we have been working to embed lasting and meaningful change to the Service. Recruitment and promotion processes have been reviewed and changes

### Annual Improvement Plan

made, induction processes have been developed and we have embarked on an ambitious transformation programme. We recognise that our staff are our greatest asset and we will continue to challenge ourselves to deliver a safe and positive working environment for all.

Communication internally and externally continues to be a focus and will be supported by recruitment of a new Head of Communications as part of our Senior Leadership Team. Regular meetings are held with staff by senior managers with feedback shared, and we review our communications channels to ensure they are effective.

We recognise the challenges we face in recruitment and retention, so will be working on understanding career journeys to inform our workforce planning.

Better governance is fundamental to delivery of our plans and is supported by the Step Forward transformation programme. We await updated guidance from Welsh Government but in the meantime continue to develop and improve our processes, improving scrutiny and transparency. This will be informed by improvements in performance monitoring and reporting that will be aligned with strategies setting our direction in the medium and long term.

## What we plan to do in 2025-2026

Our vision remains to make South Wales safer by reducing risk, which is being reviewed as part of our Transformation Step Forward Programme. This aim, established in our Strategic Plan 2020-2030, is fundamental to our activities and shapes our planning which is structured around eight Strategic Themes, outlined earlier in this document.

As well as delivering an effective response to our communities when they need us, this model ensures our plans are aligned to the principle of the Wellbeing of Future Generations Act:

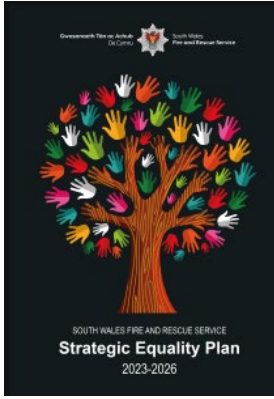
All public services should act in a manner which seeks to ensure the needs of the present are met, without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs.

The themes and related objectives have developed in consultation with our staff, communities, partners and other stakeholders. In the following pages, we outline our work in developing our proposals for 2024-2025 and outline our priorities for further development and improvement.

These plans are open to consultation for 12 weeks from publication of this Improvement Plan. You can find details of how to **Have Your Say** at the end of this document. Please take a few minutes to tell us what you think.

We are committed to building equality, diversity and inclusion into everything we do – from valuing and developing our people to delivering person-centred services to the communities of South Wales. You can find out more about how we plan to achieve this in our Strategic Plan and other key plans, available on our website or via links below.

Annual Improvement Plan



Rob Media to review please

## Keeping You Safe

### This means ...

We will keep our communities safe by taking an evidence-led approach to identifying and evaluating risk. We will ascertain and address emerging issues, monitoring our own data and taking regard of evidence from the wider fire and rescue sector and other sources. This will ensure our campaigns, interventions and activities reach those most at risk.

Our programmes will be regularly reviewed and evaluated to ascertain their effectiveness. In these reviews and when developing new approaches, we will engage with stakeholders to ensure their effectiveness. We recognise the importance of working together and will seek opportunities to build on our established record of partnership working to maximise the impact of our safety messages and interventions, from road and water safety to working with young people and reducing wildfires. Core programmes involving educational visits to schools and home safety are continually monitored, recognising their importance in taking our crews into the communities they serve.

Development will continue of underlying strategies to support our prevention and protection work, including implementation of the change to our automatic fire alarm (AFA) response and tracking high rise buildings. We will enter the final phase of our Water Rescue Strategy - Our overarching aim is to ensure that those that use South Wales' waterways are safer as a result of our commitment to ensuring we have the highest level of water rescue capability.

### Our objectives:

- Reducing the impact of false alarms on our resources
- Reducing the number of fires in the home and understanding the causes and behaviours of them
- Reducing the number of Road Traffic Collisions (RTCs)
- Reducing the number of deliberate fires
- Improving safety in and around water
- Improving fire safety in high-rise buildings in our communities

### Our priorities in 2025-2026 will include

- Embedding and assessing the change to our AFA response strategy, due to be implemented in January 2025. This will focus on sleeping risk, reducing our attendance to alarms at commercial premises unless a fire is confirmed. The additional resource available from this change will support training and risk reduction activities.
- Evaluate and consider extending our trial of commercial safety checks, offering advice and signposting business owners to appropriate information.
- Developing our Risk Based Inspection Programme with procurement and implementation of a new recording system.
- Establishing reporting and monitoring channels to assess community-based risk, feeding into local station plans and Service-wide activities. This will utilise a wide range of data to inform our strategic planning.

## Annual Improvement Plan

- Implement the final phase of our Water Rescue Strategy so that the people who use our waterways are safer.

## **Responding to your emergency**

### **This means ...**

We always seek to provide an efficient and effective response to our communities when needed. This requires us to have highly trained personnel with the right equipment available so that the safety of our communities is never compromised. We will continue to invest in our firefighters and Joint Control Staff to ensure that they can respond to the wide range of incidents we face now and, in the future, based on assessment of risk. This work will be informed by operational learning which will be directed to improving our response.

We will continue to coordinate and take part in joint training and exercises with other fire and rescue services and multi-agency training to test arrangements for the most complex incidents, taking regard of national guidance for best practice and continuing our support for National Resilience activities.

### **Our objectives:**

- Responding effectively when you need us
- Doing all we can to make sure that our On-Call Duty System (OCDS) crews are available
- Training our firefighters, Joint Fire Control staff and other staff to respond to current and future risks in our communities

### **Our priorities in 2025-2026 will include**

- Increasing use of data to monitor performance, measuring improvement against key metrics.
- Reviewing pre-determined attendance (PDA) models to ensure their alignment with community risk.
- Creating a structured post-incident review framework that captures learning from incidents and exercises, using data and insights to inform training, improve operational procedures, and share best practices service-wide.
- Ensuring adequate on-call firefighter availability with a target of all stations maintaining 70% on-call firefighter availability.
- Ensuring all operational firefighters have timely access to current risk-based information for every incident they attend, fully aligned with our risk management frameworks.
- Completing work to address the recommendations of the thematic reviews:
  - Learning from Grenfell
  - Broadening the role of firefighters in Wales
  - Fire and Rescue Service operational training
- Align our exercise programme to risk, also formalising our cross-border exercise programme.

**What we plan to do in 2025-2026****Working with our Partners****This means ...**

We have a well-established and proud history of working with partners to deliver measureable improvements, efficiencies and meet future demands. This includes contributing to local priorities and assisting in improving community well-being. We recognise the benefits of working in partnership with other organisations to deliver best value services for the communities we jointly serve and that sharing knowledge and skills is at the heart of our Service's future.

We will extend our existing partnership activities as well as developing new, innovative relationships that will support our improvement journey. From exploring training and development opportunities to working with local community groups, this will ensure we leverage skills and resource and share back with our own knowledge and expertise.

Investment in effective collaboration requires effective governance, so we will be clear on the mutual benefits that can be achieved, from data sharing to opportunities for co-location.

Continuing to build on our relationship with representative bodies, we embrace the principles of working in social partnership in relation to well-being objectives and strategic decision making.

**Our objectives:**

- Working with PSBs to support our communities
- Working with our partners to deliver our services where they are needed
- Continually reviewing and building on our existing partnerships, embedding principles of social partnership

**Our priorities in 2025-2026 will include**

- Working with NFCC on embedding fire standards as a performance tool.
- Identifying opportunities to work with partners in support of our leadership development programme.
- Working with trade unions to ensure the principles of social partnership are reflected in our processes: cooperation, respect, trust, voice and participation, and mutual gains.



## **Involving and Communicating**

### **This means ...**

We will improve the way we engage with and involve our staff, stakeholders, communities, and partners by taking a proactive approach to communication. We will promote and inform on the work we undertake, the challenges we face and make stakeholders aware of the ways they can be involved in shaping our services for the future.

We believe that we can effectively deliver our key messages through ensuring a continued focus on education, engagement, and communication. Working as part of a well-connected community can deliver wider improvement than working alone, therefore ensuring greater opportunity to keep residents, businesses and visitors to South Wales safer. We will explore and develop innovative ways to communicate, including working with partners to add value to their channels and bring additional value to our own, and different technologies and means of communication.

### **Our objectives:**

- Involving our communities, making sure they have their say in what we do
- Ensuring that we engage with our staff and make sure they are engaged with the Service and have their say in what we do
- Helping to keep our communities safe by delivering safety education and attending community events
- Ensuring we develop and promote communication channels within the Service
- Recognising the role of social partnership, further developing open and transparent relationships with stakeholders

### **Our priorities in 2025-2026 will include**

- Developing a communication and engagement strategy that supports internal and external engagement.
- Developing ways for stakeholders, including staff, partners and communities, to have a say and be involved in our plans for improvement.
- Update and upgrade the Service's internet and intranet systems to deliver effective platforms for external and internal users to find the information they need.
- Improving transparency by sharing information, explaining our processes and promoting our values.
- Embedding the structure of staff meetings and briefings, building the Shout internal communication brand.
- Evaluating our communications reach and effectiveness.

## **Protecting and Enhancing our Environment**

### **This means ...**

At South Wales Fire and Rescue Service, we, like the rest of the Welsh public sector, are working towards net zero carbon status by 2030. This means that we are reducing carbon emissions within our buildings, fleet, and supply chain and will then offset emissions that cannot be reduced within operations (invest in carbon sequestration opportunities) – imagine an equation in balance – that is the place of harmony we want to achieve.

We also work with people on the ground as a trusted presence, and can offer people a voice and advocate for our communities on issues of safety and fairness, as we adapt to a warming world and its implications, in the name of reducing risk, raising awareness, and protecting the environment.

We know that technology and infrastructure have to meet us halfway, but we must also have the support and commitment from people within the organisation. We must understand the challenges we face, and what we personally can do to help – and there will be something for everyone.

Our new Carbon Reduction and Biodiversity Action Plans will set out our plans to 2030. We commit to embracing renewable energies to support sustainability and the environmental goals of the WFGA.

### **Our objectives:**

- Implementing, embedding, and centralising sustainability policies and procedures
- Decarbonising our fleet and providing sufficient charging infrastructure to staff and visitors
- Reducing our energy usage and carbon footprint
- Implementing an accredited environmental management system
- Reducing the amount of waste produced and improving recycling rates

### **Our priorities in 2025-2026 will include**

- Reducing waste produced and increase recycling efficiency
- Beginning development of our first carbon neutral station
- Implementing an accredited Environmental Management System and work with partners to protect the environment
- Climate risk assessing estate, assets and services and develop adaptation strategies
- Identifying ways to enhance and develop our well-being areas and green spaces
- Preparing for an electrified fleet by improvements to our charging infrastructure
- Trialling use of biofuels to reduce impact of diesel miles
- Installing energy generation at appropriate sites

## **Using Technology Well**

### **This means...**

We continuously review our use of technology to improve our processes and systems, as we recognise that this plays a vital role in how well we deliver our services and utilise our resources, including making information as accessible to our staff where and when needed. From our operational firefighting techniques and equipment to our back-office support systems, we intend to maximise technological advances and improve service delivery. Technology development will make a positive contribution to the wider well-being of our staff and the communities we serve, ensuring operational resources are best placed to respond effectively to incidents.

A programme of digital transformation will support wider organisational change, from finance and budget management to people services and workforce development. With changes to governance and scrutiny frameworks, there will be opportunities to gain additional value from the data we hold through evaluation and monitoring. Digital transformation will also support other strategic aims, including improving communication by enhancing our online platforms.

We recognise the need to continually test our systems and have robust business continuity arrangements in place. However, we also recognise security and cyber threats and continue our work on system assurance.

### **Our objectives:**

- Using the most suitable technology and equipment to improve our services
- Reviewing the standard and use of technology and equipment across the Service via the Digital Transformation Programme

### **Our priorities in 2025-2026 will include**

- Developing digital leadership to guide strategic use of our digital assets and new or emerging technologies.
- Ensuring digital literacy is incorporated into our training plans, ensuring our staff have skills appropriate to their roles to create, evaluate and share information.
- Review existing People Services system considering recent restructure and changing requirements.
- Implement a new Operational Intelligence System, enabling sharing of information between teams and improved reporting.
- Explore the concept of the digital fireground, ensuring effective comms and up to date information are available to our crews and commanders at incidents.
- Complete our trial of aerial and water drones to enhance our incident command and rescue capabilities.
- Implement a dynamic cover tool that will improve our availability, supporting us in moving from a static degradation plan.

## **Valuing our people**

### **This means ...**

We are committed to delivering a programme of change that will ensure our staff feel valued, respected and trusted, and recognised for the contributions they make every day. Our workforce should represent the communities we serve, be diverse, equally valued and have access to development and professional opportunities. Our aspiration is to be an employer of choice, to do this we will support our people to be their best.

Recent challenges have impacted all of us, bringing significant change to the Service. We expect the HMICFRS assessment of the Service to identify additional opportunities for improvement. In the coming year we will continue to develop and deliver our transformation programme, with our people at the heart of this work. We are committed to improving our culture, values and behaviours which will be supported by better communications, governance and data. While there will be key points of contact to instigate this change, such as initial training and induction sessions, we will ensure every opportunity is used by developing resources and toolkits for use in different approaches by leaders at every level.

Our provision for mental and physical health is valued and will be supplemented by a cultural wellbeing strategy and continued focus on health and safety arrangements. We will evaluate the effectiveness of all aspects by establishing and monitoring performance measures.

### **Our objectives:**

- Delivering fundamental change in our culture, responding to the recommendations of the Independent Culture Review
- Attracting a workforce that reflects and represents our communities
- Developing our people by identifying training and development opportunities
- Supporting our people to feel well, healthy, and happy at work
- Encouraging and supporting a bilingual culture across the Service

### **Our priorities in 2025-2026 will include**

- Improving our workforce planning to ensure we have the right skills to deliver our services, with improved resilience and succession planning.
- Developing our culture of learning and improving with new training opportunities delivered in a variety of formats, including leadership skills at all levels.
- Embed recent improvements to our recruitment and promotion procedures, using feedback to evaluate future cycles.
- Develop robust reporting to inform our DICE (Diversity, Inclusion, Cohesion and Equity) activities.
- Review operational Protective Personal Equipment (PPE) and improve our processes for cleaning contaminated PPE to improve the health of our firefighters and those involved in handling kit, including a long-term infrastructure project.



### **Continuing to work effectively**

**This means ...**We will continue to develop our planning processes, demonstrating the thread from our station plans to our strategic aims and drawing in improvement goals from across all departments. This work will focus on risk by using a wide range of data to inform our assessments. We will produce and share strategies that set out our goals as an organisation in the medium and long term, developing new ways of working that provide assurance to our stakeholders.

Recognising the need for improved monitoring and evaluation, we will enhance performance reporting, both internally and externally. This will support greater transparency and accountability. We will continue to act on feedback, including the HMICFRS assessment of the Service, to identify and implement improvements.

We will take regard of guidance from Welsh Government with regard to governance while implementing change to our internal governance model. It is essential that these are robust as we continue to support the Commissioners in their current role and as they evaluate the maturity of the Service in preparation for new arrangements.

We will continue to seek efficiencies and improvements that deliver value for money as part of a programme of effective stewardship of public assets.

#### **Our objectives:**

- Being clear and publicly accountable by reviewing the organisation's governance structures.
- Maximising value for money while improving our service
- Developing new ways of working
- Undertaking a wholesale review of the organisation's performance

#### **Our priorities in 2025-2026 will include**

- Develop new governance and performance frameworks that will support service wide improvement.
- Ensure policies and procedures are effective in documenting Service processes and regularly reviewed.
- Implement effective project management processes and evaluation strategies.
- Ensure all business areas are resilient through business continuity tests and exercises.
- Act on new National Framework and performance indicators expected to be published by Welsh Government (Sound the Alarm report, Recommendation 4).

## Welsh Language

We are committed to fulfilling our duty to ensure the Welsh language is not treated less favourably than the English language and support those who choose to communicate via the medium of the Welsh language. In accordance with the Welsh Language Standards 2015, the South Wales Fire and Rescue Authority received a Compliance Notice from the Welsh Language Commissioner setting out the Welsh Language Standards that apply to the Authority. This [Compliance Notice](#) is published on our website and gives details about what services citizens can expect to receive in Welsh. We seek to engage with Welsh speakers and learners to improve the overall standard of our service provision.

### Alternative Versions

We publish a “quick read” version of this plan and both versions will be available on our website with “Speak the website” audio facility which also provides a translation option. If you would like this information in another format, please contact us.

### Have Your Say

We are always looking for ways to improve our services and to ensure the information we provide is meaningful. All feedback is reviewed and considered as we develop our plans. For regular updates and invitations to take part in consultations and surveys, join our [Stakeholder Register](#).

Consultation on our proposed priorities for 2025-2026 is open for 12 weeks from publication of this document – complete the survey at [Have Your Say 2025](#).

You can contact us at any time using any of the methods shown.

#### Write to us



Service Performance and Communications  
South Wales Fire and Rescue Service  
Forest View Business Park, Llantrisant, CF72 8LX



#### Website

[www.southwales-fire.gov.United Kingdom](http://www.southwales-fire.gov.United Kingdom)



#### Email

[www.southwales-fire.gov.United Kingdom/contact-us](mailto:www.southwales-fire.gov.United Kingdom/contact-us)



#### Call us

01443 232000



@SWFireandrescue



@SWFireandrescue



@sw\_fire\_and\_rescue

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**THIS REPORT IS NOT EXEMPT AND IN THE PUBLIC DOMAIN****SOUTH WALES FIRE & RESCUE SERVICE**AGENDA ITEM NO 6.ii  
25 OCTOBER 2024

BOARD OF THE COMMISSIONERS

REPORT OF THE INTERIM MONITORING OFFICER

**CHANGES TO THE CONSTITUTION****THIS REPORT IS FOR DECISION**REPORT APPROVED BY THE INTERIM MONITORING OFFICER  
PRESENTING OFFICER INTERIM MONITORING OFFICER, GABRIELLE  
GREATHEAD**SUMMARY**

The purpose of the report is to recommend and seek Commissioners approval of the changes to the South Wales Fire & Rescue Authority Constitution.

**RECOMMENDATIONS**

That the Commissioners note and approve the amended South Wales Fire & Rescue Constitution.

**1. BACKGROUND**

- 1.1 Section 37 of the Local Government Act 2000 requires South Wales Fire & Rescue Authority (“the Authority”) to keep up to date and publish its Constitution.
- 1.2 Major amendments to the Constitution must be formally approved and adopted by the Board of Commissioners.
- 1.3 The Constitution sets out in clear language how the Authority works and how it makes decisions. It sets out the governance of the Authority and highlights the way in which the Authority makes decisions and carries out its functions. The Constitution was last updated in 2022.

## 2. ISSUE / PROPOSAL

- 2.1 Following the implementation of the legislation The South Wales Fire and Rescue Authority (Exercise of Functions) (Wales) Directions 2024 in February, the functions of the Fire and Rescue Authority have been transferred to the Commissioners for South Wales Fire and Rescue Service.
- 2.2 Namely the following functions must be exercised by the Commissioners (which include and are not limited to):
  - a) Part 1 (local arrangements for civil protection) and Part 2 (emergency powers) of the Civil Contingencies Act 2004;
  - b) section 5A (powers of certain fire and rescue authorities) and Part 2 (functions of fire and rescue authorities) of the Fire and Rescue Services Act 2004;
  - c) Part 1 (local government improvement) of the Local Government (Wales) Measure 2009;
  - d) Parts 3 (enforcement) and 4 (offences and appeals) of the Regulatory Reform (Fire Safety) Order 2005;
  - e) the Fire and Rescue Services (Emergencies) (Wales) Order 2007.
- 2.3 The appointment of the Commissioners is an intervention by Welsh Ministers under statutory powers (under the relevant legislation, being the Local Government (Wales) Measure 2009). In addition to the functions outlined at 2.2 above, the Commissioners are bound by the Terms of Reference stipulated by Welsh Government, which means their role extends beyond the governance, budgetary and oversight functions of the previous Fire Authority members.
- 2.4 Following review, changes and amendments have been incorporated into a revised and updated South Wales Fire & Rescue Constitution 2024, attached at Appendix 1 to reflect the new governance arrangements and delegation of powers/responsibilities following the intervention protocols being enacted by Welsh Government.
- 2.5 When the Welsh Government issue further directions to instate new governance arrangements or remove the Commissioners at the end of the intervention, the Constitution will need revising further to reflect those new arrangements.

### **3. IMPLICATIONS**

#### **3.1 Community and Environment**

3.1.1 Ensuring that the appropriate governance arrangements are in place is also consistent with the sustainability duty under the Well-being of Future Generations (Wales) Act 2015 and the well-being goals of a more equal Wales and a Wales of cohesive communities.

#### **3.2 Regulatory, Strategy and Policy**

3.2.1 Legal - Section 37 of the Local Government Act 2000 requires the Authority to keep up to date and publish its Constitution.

3.2.2 Governance & Audit - The Constitution is integral to the Service's governance arrangements and sets out the main principles of how the Authority operates, how decisions are made and the procedures which are followed.

3.2.3 Financial & Procurement – The Constitution contains both the financial regulations, and the procurement rules intended to promote good procurement practice and public accountability and deter corruption.

#### **3.3 Resources, Assets and Delivery**

3.3.1 The Constitution sets out the way in which the Authority makes decisions and carries out its functions to ensure all our services are delivered within the law, fairly, equitably, openly, and transparently.

### **4 EVALUATION & CONCLUSIONS**

4.1 The Authority is required to have and keep up to date a Constitution.

4.2 The South Wales Fire and Rescue Constitution has been updated following the Welsh Government legislation implemented on 5th February 2024 which indicates that the South Wales Fire and Rescue Authority functions must only be exercised by the Commissioners.

### **5 RECOMMENDATIONS**

5.1 That the Commissioners note and approve the amended South Wales Fire & Rescue Constitution.

<b>Contact Officer:</b>		Gabrielle Greathead Interim Monitoring Officer	
<b>Background Papers</b>		<b>Date</b>	<b>Source / Contact</b>
None			
<b>Appendices</b>			
Appendix 1	South Wales Fire & Rescue Service Constitution 2024.		

## AGENDA NO 6.ii – APPENDIX 1

**The Commissioners for South Wales Fire & Rescue Service –  
Constitution 2024**

Please see below Link:

[Agenda No 6.ii - App 1 Commissioners Constitution April 2024 GG 1.pdf](#)

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AGENDA ITEM NO 7

**Reports for Information**

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**THIS REPORT IS NOT EXEMPT AND IN THE PUBLIC DOMAIN****SOUTH WALES FIRE & RESCUE SERVICE**AGENDA ITEM NO 7.i  
25 OCTOBER 2024

BOARD OF THE COMMISSIONERS

REPORT OF THE AREA MANAGER, RISK REDUCTION

**SWFRS AUTOMATIC FIRE ALARM (AFA) RESPONSE CHANGE UPDATE****THIS REPORT IS FOR INFORMATION**

REPORT APPROVED BY ASSISTANT CHIEF FIRE OFFICER, BRIAN THOMPSON

REPORT PRESENTED BY AREA MANAGER, MIKE WYATT

**SUMMARY**

The Commissioners had agreed unanimously for work to commence on how South Wales Fire and Rescue Service (SWFRS) could mitigate the substantial impact that Automatic Fire Alarms (AFAs) have on our operational response, risk reduction activities and training events.

**RECOMMENDATIONS**

The recommendation is that the Commissioners for SWFRS note this report as providing an update on progress.

**1. BACKGROUND****1.1 Update on Progress**

- 1.1.1 A significant amount of work has been completed to date with work ongoing to complete all outstanding actions.
- 1.1.2 Our communications strategy allows us to inform and engage with member of the public, business owners and those responsible for the premises affected. This communication strategy is a live document which is constantly being updated and reviewed.

- 1.1.3 A new AFA webpage is live and provides information and guidance on the changes. The webpage contains a new email address [afaenquiries@southwales-fire.gov.uk](mailto:afaenquiries@southwales-fire.gov.uk) which allows stakeholders an opportunity to request further information, advice or provide comments relating to the proposed changes. A Frequently Asked Questions (FAQ's) page is continually being monitored and updated.
- 1.1.4 An animation has been created and placed onto the webpage and other channels including Facebook, Twitter and LinkedIn.
- 1.1.5 An information leaflet has been developed and distributed to all stations for handing out by operational crews when attending AFAs between September 2024 and January 2025. This leaflets also contains a QR code with a link to the new webpage.
- 1.1.6 Social media messages have been created and released on the 13th of September.
- 1.1.7 Letters to Alarm Receiving Centres (ARC's) and impacted stakeholders in both Welsh and English were distributed on the 3<sup>rd</sup> of September. This correspondence was issued electronically along with an accompanying hard copy letter.
- 1.1.8 On the 19<sup>th</sup> of September, correspondence was sent to the following organisations to inform them of the changes:
- Health Boards x 3
  - Shared Services Partnerships
  - Care Inspectorate Wales
  - Welsh Government
  - Further Education establishments
  - Community Housing Cymru (CHC)
  - Top 100 businesses / organisations who we have received the most AFA's.
- 1.1.9 Additionally, a briefing note has been issued to the Group Managers in the Operations department for sharing with the Public Service Boards (PSBs).

## 2. ISSUES

- 2.1 No significant issues to report in this period. There is ongoing management of workload to ensure progress is maintained on this project.

### **3. IMPLICATIONS**

#### **3.1 Community and Environment**

##### **3.1.1 Equality, Diversity, and Inclusion**

There will be no impact to faiths or beliefs including sensitive times of day or year. In addition, the change in procedure does not benefit or disadvantage anyone with disabilities.

##### **3.1.2 Well-Being Of Future Generations (Wales) Act:**

Schools which are deemed at high risk can as part of the exception process receive a night-time-only response.

##### **3.1.3 Socio Economic Duty**

As part of the proposed AFA response strategy changes, domestic residences with monitored alarm systems will continue to receive a response between the hours of 18.00 and 07:59hrs. This will include blocks of flats under the responsibility of councils and housing associations.

##### **3.1.4 Equality Impact Assessment**

An Equality Impact Assessment has been completed.

#### **3.2 Regulatory, Strategy and Policy**

**3.2.1** The British Standard for Fire Alarms states in Clause 19 and subclause 35.2.7 the need to avoid delay in summoning the fire and rescue service when the fire detection and fire alarm system of a residential care premises operates.

**3.2.2** The proposed response change to AFA's includes a continued unfiltered or unchallenged 24-hour response to residential care premises and therefore the proposed model has no impact on the British Standards.

**3.2.3** Service Policy – Updates required to CM-04 mobilising procedures, OP-09.008-Unwanted Fire Signal Reduction, SOP 6.18.

**3.2.4** National Policy. The majority of UKFRS are currently updating their AFA response policies. National Fire Chiefs Council (NFCC) are in the process of creating a national guidance working group for UwFS reduction. SWFRS has representation on this NFCC working group.

### 3.3 **Resources, Assets and Delivery**

#### 3.3.1 Human Resources and People Development

A project team has been established and consists of members from the Operations department, Business Fire Safety (BFS), Control, Service Performance and Communication (SPC), and Media and Communications.

#### 3.3.2 Assets and Resources

An education and engagement campaign will incur promotion and media costs. A budget has been agreed.

## 4 **EVALUATION & CONCLUSIONS**

4.1 The project timeline is challenging and we currently slightly behind schedule. However, we are confident that we can make up for this delay, providing that no further challenges or additional setbacks occur.

### 4.2 **Next Steps**

4.2.1 We are in the process of finalising a radio advertisement campaign that will broadcast our message throughout the Service area.

4.2.2 We are responding to enquiries from members of our communities following the distribution of the letters and media messages in September.

4.2.3 Stakeholder meetings will be scheduled for those who express an interest from October – December 24.

4.2.4 Develop training package for Fire Control Operators with delivery scheduled for the 1<sup>st</sup> of December.

## 5 **RECOMMENDATIONS**

5.1 The recommendation is that the Commissioners for SWFRS note this report as providing an update on progress.

<b>Contact Officer:</b>	Brian Thompson ACFO Technical Services	
<b>Background Papers</b>		
	<b>Date</b>	<b>Source / Contact</b>
Time for Action. A report exploring the impact of false alarms in Wales.	2015	Welsh Gov.
Fire False Alarm Reduction – South Wales Fire and Rescue Authority.	May 2023	Audit Wales.
NFCC – Developing a risk methodology, other building fire, draft report version 3	March 2023	NFCC

<b>Appendices</b>	
	None

**Report Title: AFA Response Change Proposal – Update for Commissioner’s (October 2024)**

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## AGENDA ITEM NO 7.ii

<b>FORWARD WORK PROGRAMME FOR THE BOARD OF COMMISSIONERS FOR SOUTH WALES FIRE AND RESCUE SERVICE 2024/25</b>					
<b>Expected Date of Report</b>	<b>Report Name</b>	<b>Purpose of Piece of Work</b>	<b>Information or Decision</b>	<b>Lead Director/ Contact Officer</b>	<b>Progress</b>
Oct 2024	Annual Improvement Plan	To consider and approve annual improvement plan	D	Contact Officer: Wayne Thomas	On Agenda
Oct 2024	Amendments to Constitution	To consider and approve amendments to SWFRS Constitution	D	Contact Officer: Gabrielle Greathead	On Agenda
Oct 2024	Update on Unwanted Fire Signal Response	To provide Commissioners with an update on the progress of changes to the Service response model for unwanted fire signals prior to a public consultation process.	I	T/T/ACFO SD  Contact Officer Mike Wyatt	On Agenda
Dec 2024	Carbon Reduction Plan and Progress Reports	To advise Commissioners on the progress towards the actions set out in the Carbon Reduction and Biodiversity Plans	I	ACO CS  Contact Officer: Lisa Mullan	
Dec 2024	Independent Remuneration Panel for Wales' Draft Report	To consider the IRPW's draft Annual Report and enable comments to be submitted to the Panel within required timescales.	I	ACO CS  Contact Officer:	

<b>FORWARD WORK PROGRAMME FOR THE BOARD OF COMMISSIONERS FOR SOUTH WALES FIRE AND RESCUE SERVICE 2024/25</b>					
<b>Expected Date of Report</b>	<b>Report Name</b>	<b>Purpose of Piece of Work</b>	<b>Information or Decision</b>	<b>Lead Director/ Contact Officer</b>	<b>Progress</b>
Dec 2024	Audit Wales Thematic Reviews Report (24/25 Targeted High Risk Prevention)	To consider the recommendations made by Audit Wales following their review of targeted high risk prevention.	I	T/ACFO SD  Contact Officer: Dean Loader	
Dec 2024	On call Strategy	To provide Commissioners with an update on SWFRS on call strategy	I	Contact officer: Mark Kift	
Dec 2024	Your Health Delivery Group Update to Commissioners	ACFO Loader to present an update on Your Health to the Board of Commissioners.	I	Contact Officer: Dean Loader	
Dec 2024	Update on Unwanted Fire Signal Response	To provide Commissioners with an update on the progress of changes to the Service response model for unwanted fire signals prior to a public consultation process.	I	T/T/ACFO SD  Contact Officer Mike Wyatt	
Feb 2025	Annual Budget Setting report 2025/26	15 <sup>th</sup> February is the statutory date to set the annual net, revenue budget. This report will update Commissioners on information arising from Local Authority budget consultation process.	D	Treasurer  Contact Officer: Lisa Mullan	



<b>FORWARD WORK PROGRAMME FOR THE BOARD OF COMMISSIONERS FOR SOUTH WALES FIRE AND RESCUE SERVICE 2024/25</b>					
<b>Expected Date of Report</b>	<b>Report Name</b>	<b>Purpose of Piece of Work</b>	<b>Information or Decision</b>	<b>Lead Director/ Contact Officer</b>	<b>Progress</b>
Feb 2025	Update on Unwanted Fire Signal Response	To provide Commissioners with an update on the progress of changes to the Service response model for unwanted fire signals prior to a public consultation process.	I	T/T/ACFO SD  Contact Officer Mike Wyatt	
Mar 2025	Pay Policy 2025/26	To consider the Service's Pay Policy Statement in compliance with the Localism Act 2011 and associated guidance.	D	ACO PS  Contact Officer: Alison Reed	
Mar 2025	Gender Pay Gap Report 2024	To update on the analysis of the gender pay gap across the Service.	D	ACO PS  Contact Officer: Alison Reed	
Mar 2025	Unwanted Fire Signal Response Proposal - Update	To present the proposals for consideration of changes to the Service response model for unwanted fire signals prior to a public consultation process.	D	T/T/ACFO SD  Contact Officer Dean Loader	
Mar 2025	Strategic Themes and Objectives for 2024/25 – Plan Publication	Commissioners to approve the proposed strategic themes and objectives for 2024/25	D	ACO CS  Contact Officer: Sarah Watkins / Wayne Thomas	
Mar 2025	Setting Statutory Strategic Performance Indicators and Strategic Objectives	To set the targets for the following financial year.	D	T/ACFO SD  Contact Officer: Dean Loader	

<b>FORWARD WORK PROGRAMME FOR THE BOARD OF COMMISSIONERS FOR SOUTH WALES FIRE AND RESCUE SERVICE 2024/25</b>					
<b>Expected Date of Report</b>	<b>Report Name</b>	<b>Purpose of Piece of Work</b>	<b>Information or Decision</b>	<b>Lead Director/ Contact Officer</b>	<b>Progress</b>
Mar 2025	Internal Audit - Annual Plan Report 2025/26	To provide an opinion on the adequacy and effectiveness of risk management, control and governance processes based on the internal audit work undertaken during the financial year. This will support the statement of internal control.	D	Contact Officer: Lisa Mullan	
Mar 2025	Calendar of Meetings for next municipal year 2025/26	To present Commissioners proposed dates of Board & Committee meetings for the next municipal year.	D	ACO CS	

## AGENDA ITEM NO 8

**To consider any items of business that the Chairperson deems urgent  
(Part 1 or 2)**

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1.	Apologies for Absence	
2.	Declarations of Interest	
	Commissioners are reminded of their personal responsibility to declare both orally and in writing any personal and/or prejudicial interest in respect of matters contained in this agenda in accordance with the provisions of the South Wales Fire and Rescue Authority (Exercise of Functions) (Wales) Directions 2024 and the Local Government Act 2000.	
3.	Chairperson's Announcements	
4.	To receive the minutes of;	
	a. Board of Commissioners of South Wales Fire & Rescue Service Committee Meeting held on Thursday 26 September 2024.	3
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