

# Cabinet

Date: **Monday 7 August 2023**

Time: **10 am**

Venue: **Council Chamber, County Hall, Martineau Lane,  
Norwich NR1 2DH**

## Membership

Cllr Kay Mason Billig	Chair. Leader and Cabinet Member for Strategy and Governance
Cllr Andrew Jamieson	Vice-Chair. Deputy Leader and Cabinet Member for Finance
Cllr Bill Borrett	Cabinet Member for Public Health and Wellbeing
Cllr Penny Carpenter	Cabinet Member for Children's Services
Cllr Margaret Dewsbury	Cabinet Member for Communities and Partnerships
Cllr Fabian Eagle	Cabinet Member for Economic Growth
Cllr Jane James	Cabinet Member for Corporate Services and Innovation
Cllr Graham Plant	Cabinet Member for Highways, Infrastructure and Transport
Cllr Alison Thomas	Cabinet Member for Adult Social Care
Cllr Eric Vardy	Cabinet Member for Environment and Waste

## Advice for members of the public:

This meeting will be held in public and in person.

It will be live streamed on YouTube and members of the public may watch remotely by clicking on the following link: [Norfolk County Council YouTube](#)

We also welcome attendance in person, but public seating is limited, so if you wish to attend please indicate in advance by emailing [committees@norfolk.gov.uk](mailto:committees@norfolk.gov.uk)

We have amended the previous guidance relating to respiratory infections to reflect current practice but we still ask everyone attending to maintain good hand and respiratory hygiene and, at times of high prevalence and in busy areas, please consider wearing a face covering.

Please stay at home if you are unwell, have tested positive for COVID 19, have symptoms of a respiratory infection or if you are a close contact of a positive COVID 19 case. This will help make the event safe for attendees and limit the transmission of respiratory infections including COVID-19.

## A g e n d a

### 1 To receive any apologies.

### 2 Minutes

To confirm the minutes from the Cabinet Meeting held on 3 July 2023

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### 3 Members to Declare any Interests

If you have a **Disclosable Pecuniary Interest** in a matter to be considered at the meeting and that interest is on your Register of Interests you must not speak or vote on the matter.

If you have a **Disclosable Pecuniary Interest** in a matter to be considered at the meeting and that interest is not on your Register of Interests you must declare that interest at the meeting and not speak or vote on the matter

In either case you may remain in the room where the meeting is taking place. If you consider that it would be inappropriate in the circumstances to remain in the room, you may leave the room while the matter is dealt with.

If you do not have a Disclosable Pecuniary Interest you may nevertheless have an **Other Interest** in a matter to be discussed if it affects, to a greater extent than others in your division

- Your wellbeing or financial position, or
- that of your family or close friends
- Any body -
  - Exercising functions of a public nature.
  - Directed to charitable purposes; or
  - One of whose principal purposes includes the influence of public opinion or policy (including any political party or trade union);

Of which you are in a position of general control or management.

If that is the case then you must declare such an interest but can speak and vote on the matter.

### 4 Matters referred to Cabinet by the Scrutiny Committee, Select Committees or by full Council.

### 5 Updates from the Chairman/Cabinet Members

### 6 Public Question Time

Fifteen minutes for questions from members of the public of which due notice has been given. Please note that all questions must be received by the Committee Team ([committees@norfolk.gov.uk](mailto:committees@norfolk.gov.uk)) by

5pm on Tuesday 1 August 2023. For guidance on submitting a public question, please follow this link: [Ask a question to a committee - Norfolk County Council](#)

Any public questions received by the deadline and the responses will be published on the website from 9.30am on the day of the meeting and can be viewed by clicking this link once uploaded: [Click here to view public questions and responses](#)

## **7 Local Member Issues/Questions**

Fifteen minutes for local member to raise issues of concern of which due notice has been given. Please note that all questions must be received by the Committee Team ([committees@norfolk.gov.uk](mailto:committees@norfolk.gov.uk)) by 5pm on Tuesday 1 August 2023.

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| <b>8 Hunstanton Independent Living</b>  | <b>Page 49</b>  |
| Report by the Executive Director of Adult Social Services   |                 |
| <b>9 Norfolk Fire and Rescue Service Statement of Assurance 2022/23</b>   | <b>Page 64</b>  |
| Report by the Chief Fire Officer  |                 |
| <b>10 Norfolk Fire and Rescue Service – HMICFRS (His Majesty's Inspectorate of Constabulary and Fire &amp; Rescue Services) Improvement Plan Update</b> | <b>Page 106</b> |
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| Report by the Director of Strategic Finance   |                 |
| <b>12 Reports of the Cabinet Member and Officer Delegated Decisions made since the last Cabinet meeting:</b>  |                 |
| To note the delegated decisions made since the last Cabinet meeting.  |                 |

### **Decision by the Leader and Cabinet Member for Strategy and Governance**

- [Stage 2 application to the National Institute for Health Research \(NIHR\) for funding to create a Health Determinants Research Collaboration \(HDRC\) in Norfolk](#)

### **Decisions by the Cabinet Member for Highways, Infrastructure and Transport**

- [Norwich – Norwich Airport Industrial Estate Link](#)
- [Norwich - Heartsease Fiveways Junction](#)
- [Planning the future of the Strategic Road Network Norfolk County Council consultation response](#)
- [NCC Response to Consultation on Proposed Rail Ticket Office Changes](#)

Tom McCabe  
Chief Executive  
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Date Agenda Published: 28 July 2023



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## **Cabinet**

### **Minutes of the Meeting held on Monday 3 July 2023 in the Council Chamber, County Hall, at 10am**

**Present:**

Cllr Kay Mason Billig	Chair. Leader and Cabinet Member for Strategy and Governance
Cllr Andrew Jamieson	Vice-Chair. Deputy Leader and Cabinet Member for Finance
Cllr Bill Borrett	Cabinet Member for Public Health and Wellbeing
Cllr Penny Carpenter	Cabinet Member for Children's Services
Cllr Margaret Dewsbury	Cabinet Member for Communities and Partnerships
Cllr Jane James	Cabinet Member for Corporate Services and Innovation
Cllr Graham Plant	Cabinet Member for Highways, Infrastructure and Transport
Cllr Alison Thomas	Cabinet Member for Adult Social Care
Cllr Eric Vardy	Cabinet Member for Environment and Waste

**Deputy Cabinet Members Present**

Cllr Lana Hemsall	Deputy Cabinet Member for Highways, Infrastructure and Transport
Cllr Greg Peck	Deputy Cabinet Member for Finance
Cllr Karen Vincent	Deputy Cabinet Member for Children's Services

**Executive Directors Present:**

Harvey Bullen	Director of Strategic Finance
Debbie Bartlett	Interim Executive Director of Adult Social Services
Grahame Bygrave	Interim Executive Director of Community and Environmental Services
Paul Cracknell	Executive Director of Transformation and Strategy
Kat Hulatt	Assistant Director of Governance
Tom McCabe	Chief Executive
Sara Tough	Executive Director of Children's Services

The Chair spoke about the Norfolk Show and congratulated the Fire Service for winning most effective and well laid out display. They had demonstrated one of the new fire engines and met the Prince of Wales.

**1 Apologies for Absence**

- 1.1 Apologies were received from the Cabinet Member for Economic Growth and the Deputy Cabinet Member for Adult Social Care

**2 Minutes from the meeting held on 5 June 2023**

- 2.1 Cabinet agreed the minutes of the meeting held on 5 June as an accurate record.

**3 Declaration of Interests**

- 3.1 None declared

- 4 Matters referred to Cabinet by the Scrutiny Committee, Select Committees or by full Council.**
- 4.1 No matters were referred.
- 5 Update from the Chair/Cabinet Members**
- 5.1 No updates were given.
- 6. Public Question Time**
- 6.1 The questions received are published in appendix A to these minutes.
- 6.2.1 Richard Adcock asked a supplementary question:
- Mr Adcock queried how eco-friendly Electric Vehicles were, as he believed that they cost up to 4 times more to buy and used 7 times more energy to build than other vehicles. Mr Adcock stated that Electric Vehicles used child labour in their construction and used fossil fuels in their running, stating that nuclear energy was not a green energy.
  - Based on these points he queried how effective such vehicles were for the environment.
- 6.2.2 The Cabinet Member for Environment and Waste replied that he was informed by evidence provided by the Government and informed sources which said that Electric Vehicles were more environmentally friendly than fossil fuel based systems. The Cabinet Member for Environment and Waste stated that he was only able to be led by scientific evidence provided to him.
- 6.2.3 The Chair added that the Council supported alternative forms of fuel and was uniquely placed to look at hydrogen production and other synthetic fuels. Electric Vehicles were not the only way forward and if the Council could help bring these options on stream they would do so.
- 7 Local Member Questions/Issues**
- 7.1 The questions received are published in appendix B to these minutes.
- 7.2.1 Cllr Webb asked a supplementary question
- Cllr Webb was surprised by the answer to her substantive question, as she felt families did not agree with the views outlined in this response. SENDCOs and mainstream schools wanted to be inclusive but Cllr Webb felt that early intervention was not available because of long waits for overstretched services, meaning schools were paying for alternative provision and using part time timetables.
  - She noted that schools were judged on their attainment and children with Special Educational Needs and Disabilities would impact their data.
  - She therefore asked how the programme would support children with Special Educational Needs and Disabilities.
- 7.2.2 The Chair pointed out that the Council was doing all it could to encourage schools to accept children with Special Educational Needs and Disabilities.
- 7.2.3 The Cabinet Member for Children's Services replied that there were issues, but

the department were doing all they could to get Education Health and Care Plans on track. The new programme being rolled out was positive for staff and children, allowing needs to be identified earlier allowing preventative support to be provided.

## **8. Improving outcomes – an integrated approach to establishing Mental Health Collaboratives for Adults, Children and Young People**

- 8.1.1 Cabinet received the report setting out commitments to achieve better outcomes and wellbeing for people across Norfolk and Waveney, through driving integration between health and social care so that services are less fragmented and better designed and organised around the people who use them.
- 8.1.2 The Cabinet Member for Public Health and Wellbeing introduced the report to Cabinet:
- As part of the new Integrated Care System there was an ongoing commitment to work more closely with colleagues in the NHS, with wider providers and the voluntary service to have more strategic thinking about how outcomes could be improved and have a joined-up approach to addressing issues for the people we serve
  - A joined-up system had been agreed as an ambition for a while, but the changes were now starting to be seen.
  - Covid showed what was possible when all parts of the sector cooperated, and it was now possible to capitalise on the work that was done. This would have real benefits in the areas where services were under huge pressure
- 8.1.3 The Interim Executive Director for Adult Social Services commented that this approach was a step change; the focus and effort of collaboratives was to think about outcomes and experiences for people using the service and focussing on coming together around people who use the services. The paper set out that there were two collaboratives running in parallel. The Mental Health collaborative for adults was earlier in development than that for children. The focus was around dementia, delirium and depression which impacted on all public health services.
- 8.1.4 The Executive Director for Children's Services commented that this was an opportunity to recognise the formal commitment being made by the Integrated Care Board and Norfolk County Council with key provider services in the health system to develop more effective services. It was important to think about if there were operational ways to come together in the future either structurally or through sharing budgets. Policy reforms could be built on, setting out a multi-disciplinary future for the council's work with children
- 8.2 The Cabinet Member for Adult Social Care commented that this was a welcome development and was well received at the Health and Wellbeing Board and Integrated Care Board meetings. Mental health and tackling it was everyone's business and touched all families in Norfolk. The Cabinet Member for Adult Social Care looked forward to developing a stronger collaboration.
- 8.3 The Cabinet Member for Finance endorsed the declaration of intent to work practically with the Integrated Care Board and bring together partners. He noted the clear move towards operational collaboration in the report which was

important as there was a demographic “time bomb” to address. The key priorities of the care strategy prioritised prevention as well as addressing inequality.

- 8.4 The Cabinet Member for Children’s Services endorsed the approach and looked forward to working with colleagues
- 8.5 The Chair noted that Covid-19 had changed a lot of things and brought mental health to the forefront, so working in collaboration was a good thing. This was positive and welcome news.
- 8.6 Cabinet **RESOLVED** to agree that Norfolk County Council actively participates in system-wide collaboratives to improve mental health for adults, and for children and young people

8.7 **Evidence and Reasons for Decision**

N/A

8.8 **Alternative Options for Both Proposals**

No alternative options are being suggested, other than to continue working as we are.

**9. Transport for Norwich – Update on Progress**

- 9.1.1 Cabinet received the report providing an update on the recent delivery of the Transport for Norwich programme along with related sustainable transport initiatives that are underway and highlights the success the County Council has in securing funding and delivering on the ground.
- 9.1.2 The Cabinet Member for Highways, Infrastructure and Transport introduced the report to Cabinet:
- This was an update on the progress in delivering the Transport for Norwich Programme. Norwich was one of the fastest growing cities in the UK and one of the largest centres of employment in greater south-east England, contributing more than £3 billion per year to the national economy
  - To support this the Council had a transport strategy for Norwich and a Climate Strategy putting carbon reduction and air quality at the heart of supporting a growing economy, strengthening communities and reducing the impact on the environment.
  - Over the past 5 years the council had been successful in bidding for and being awarded funding from the Government and the private sector which had reinforced the reputation of the Council as a local authority which delivered at pace through strong collaborative relationships with transport providers and a wide range of stakeholders.
  - Norwich was one of only 12 cities awarded Transforming Cities Funding and one of the first to deliver a project with this funding.
  - The council was delivering 70 new zero emissions buses in Norwich and Norwich would have one of the largest, full-electric bus depots in England.
  - £50m of Bus Service Improvement Plan funding was awarded in November 2022, which was one of the highest allocations in the country.



Strong progress had already been made delivering early elements of the Bus Service Improvement Plan and bus patronage was increasing

- Investment in walking and cycling continued through the Active Travel Fund and the council was rated by Active Norfolk as having strong local leadership, with an emerging walking and cycling network
- The delivery of electric vehicle charging points in Norwich and Norfolk was gathering pace. The council was in a place to deliver climate change mitigation measures in a way which reflected the unique characteristics of the County and the steps set out in the report would reduce carbon by 80,000 tonnes.
- The Cabinet Member for Highways, Infrastructure and Transport thanked officers, councillors and Cllr Martin Wilby, stakeholders and partners who helped to deliver projects and shape transport to meet the characteristics and requirements of Norfolk.
- The report stated that “the transport strategy for Norwich is one where Norwich and the strategic growth areas around it will become a place to thrive because affordable, shared, clean, active and accessible travel are the first choice for journeys. Sitting alongside the countywide Local Transport Plan and Climate Change Strategy, this puts carbon reduction and better air quality at the heart of supporting a growing economy, strengthening communities and reducing our impact on the environment.”

- 9.2 The Cabinet Member for Environment and Waste noted that the strategy demonstrated the integrated approach to addressing all issues. £14.7m funding for electric buses and £20m funding from First Buses was a boost for the Council’s ambition for a zero carbon transport system in Norfolk, which would improve health and the county’s carbon footprint. The report demonstrated that policies were linked together in many aspects
- 9.3 The Deputy Cabinet Member for Highways, Infrastructure and Transport echoed The Cabinet Member for Highways, Infrastructure and Transport’s sentiments, thanking the team for their work; she noted that the move to sustainable transport was based on choice.
- 9.4 The Cabinet Member for Public Health and Wellbeing noted the bus service improvement plan and the £31m capital and £18m revenue which would deliver opportunities for the county at a time when budgets were tight.
- 9.5 The Chair acknowledged that the Government had put a lot of money into Norwich showing they recognised how important the city was, and links into the suburbs. Pedestrian access to the city had also been improved. Delivery of these programme could be difficult however the results were positive. The Chair acknowledged the work of Cllr Martin Wilby on the Transport for Norwich Advisory Committee.
- 9.6 Cabinet **RESOLVED** to note the success of the County Council in bidding into various pots to deliver the Transport for Norwich strategy; and agrees to continue to press Government for funding to deliver infrastructure improvements both in Norwich and across the wider County.
- 9.7 **Evidence and Reasons for Decision**

This report provides an update on the recent delivery of the TfN programme.

No decisions are required.

## 9.8 **Alternative Options**

Norfolk County Council has committed to achieve 'net zero' carbon emissions on its estates by 2030, but within its wider area, to work with partners towards 'carbon neutrality'. Options to achieve this will be considered whenever opportunities are presented to secure funding.

## 10. **Norwich Western Link Update**

- 10.1.1 Cabinet received the report providing an update on the Norwich Western Link project and setting out a sensible approach to the next steps for the project which will mean the Council will be well-placed to finalise the planning application documents as and when approval is received from central government.
- 10.1.2 The Cabinet Member for Highways, Infrastructure and Transport introduced the report to Cabinet:
- The Norwich Western Link was an important part of Norfolk County Council's commitment to support its communities, businesses and to allow the economy to thrive while making sure it had the resources it needed.
  - Traffic was struggling each day on small roads and the economy was being held back by travel delays and congestion. The council was responsible for ensuring that Norfolk had the infrastructure it needed to grow and was working hard to develop proposals for the Norwich Western Link and good progress had been made. In recent months, there had been focus on developing proposal for the planning application.
  - Approval was being awaited from central Government on the projects outline business case that would give a funding commitment to submit the planning application. The strong business case showed that this project would provide high value for money.
  - Cabinet Members, MPs and partners continued to push for a decision on the business case. In the meantime, the report recommended a reasonable approach on the next steps in the project to put the council in a good position to finalise the planning application when approval was received from Government.
  - The Cabinet Member for Highways, Infrastructure and Transport was doing all he could to provide Norfolk with the infrastructure it needed, and the Norwich Western Link was at the centre of this commitment.
  - The report gave detail as to where the project was up to and why it was being carried out. It was an important scheme which would complete the Norwich Distributor Road and create a circulate link around Norwich, easing pressure around Norwich and in areas with high volumes of traffic. This would make it easier for people to walk and cycle by taking traffic out of villages.
- 10.2 The Cabinet Member for Public Health and Wellbeing represented 19 villages to the North and West of Norwich who suffered from traffic on rural lanes which were unsuitable for the volumes of traffic they received. The main industrial areas to the North of Norwich didn't have a route to the city and so much of this traffic went through the west of the city, reducing air quality and increasing congestion. Evidence showed that the Norwich Western Link would reduce

carbon emissions caused by traffic using small roads and improve air quality in these areas and would improve response times for emergency vehicles. The road would support the county for economic, environmental and social reasons.

- 10.3 The Deputy Cabinet Member for Finance discussed that most of the proposed Norwich Western Link would run through his division; villages in his division were affected by traffic using them as a rat run. He felt that if this project failed it would be a failure for Norfolk, noting the impact of traffic on small rural roads caused by emissions and large vehicles. He would continue to promote the benefits of the project to MPs.
- 10.4 The Cabinet Member for Environment and Waste noted that it was important to prepare for the planning application while waiting for the business case to be approved.
- 10.5 The Cabinet Member for Adult Social Care hoped that the Government would come to a speedy decision on the business case. She noted that it had taken a long time to gain agreement on the Long Stratton Bypass project, but it was hoped that this project would progress in spring 2024 which would improve air quality and safety in this area.
- 10.6 The Cabinet Member for Communities and Partnerships supported the comments of other Cabinet Members and discussed the high levels of congestion seen at peaks times in Easton.
- 10.7 The Cabinet Member for Highways, Infrastructure and Transport noted the key benefits of the road which were: boost Norfolk's economy and support its businesses by reducing transport costs; open up new markets and increase productivity; increase access to job growth sites such as Norwich Airport, Food Enterprise Park and Norwich Research Park; improve road safety with around 500 fewer accidents involving a motor vehicle over 60 years; take traffic off unsuitable local roads, with reduction of approximately 80% traffic through Weston Longville leading to improved air quality and encouraging people to walk, cycle and use public transport; reducing journey times to the west of Norwich, halving some journeys and improving emergency vehicle response times; create habitats across the west of Norwich including green bridges. These benefits would outweigh the negatives that had been raised by opposers of the project.
- 10.8 The Chair believed the Government knew that Norfolk could deliver the project; this was an ideal piece of work to relieve villages to the West of Norwich and Norwich would be left behind if this was not completed. The Long Stratton Bypass was being waited for and would benefit residents as when air quality testing was done, this was the area with the worst air quality in South Norfolk due to congestion. The Ringland Hills had been damaged by large vehicles travelling on small roads. This was a sensitive area to build a road, but the council could build it in an environmentally sensitive way. The Chair challenged opposers to put forward a way to address the issues in a way other than building this road. The council would continue to lobby Government for an outcome.
- 10.9 Cabinet **RESOLVED** to:
1. Note the outcomes from the pre-application consultation and the changes to the project that have resulted from the consideration of the responses received to this consultation.

2. Note the design development of the NWL scheme that has allowed planning application documents to reach an advanced stage of preparation, but the application documents cannot be finalised until a date for submission of the application has been agreed.
3. To agree that a decision to submit a planning application and to make and submit statutory Orders to the Secretary of State for confirmation (where confirmation is required), should not be made until OBC approval has been announced by Government.
4. Note that whilst awaiting a decision in relation to the OBC the project will reduce levels of activity (for a period of approximately 3 months), following which a further report will be brought to Cabinet.
5. Agree that as soon as OBC approval is received, a further report will be presented to Cabinet to seek approval to submit a planning application and to make, publish and submit the associated statutory Orders to the Secretary of State for confirmation (where confirmation is required).

#### 10.10 **Evidence and Reasons for Decision**

Please see section 4 of the report.

#### 10.11 **Alternative Options**

Please see section 5 of the report.

### 11. **Risk Management Quarterly Report**

- 11.1.1 Cabinet received the report setting out the latest corporate risks for Cabinet to consider and agree following officer review of the Council's corporate risk level risks.
- 11.1.2 The Director of Strategic Finance introduced the report to Cabinet:
  - This was a quarterly update report with key changes shown in paragraph 2.1 and 2.2 of the report. The report showed that the Council continued to manage risks in an effective manner. Two of the risk changes were related to Children's Services and ICT.
- 11.2 The Chair noted that alternatives to how this report was presented were being looked at.
- 11.3 The Vice-Chairman highlighted the reduction in risk 31, "NCC Funded Children's Services Overspend", as a result of increased funding to Children's Services, although it still remained as a red rated risk. This was indicative of how the council was planning to deal with more difficult areas of its responsibilities.
- 11.4 Cabinet **RESOLVED** to agree:
  1. The key messages detailing key proposed changes to corporate risks since the last report to April 2023 Cabinet (paragraphs 2.1 and 2.2 and Appendix A of the report)
  2. The corporate risks as at July 2023 (Appendices B and C of the report)
- 11.5 **Evidence and Reasons for Decision**

Not applicable as no decision is being made.

## 11.6 **Alternative Options**

There are no alternatives identified.

## 12 **Risk Management Annual Report 2022/23**

- 12.1.1 Cabinet received the report setting out the key messages for risk management from the last financial year and also looks at this current financial year for the Risk Management Function.
- 12.1.2 The Director of Strategic Finance outlined that this report looked back at the previous year; the key aspect of the report was that the council had appropriate risk management arrangements in place
- 12.2 The Chair noted that it was positive to have evidence that the Council was doing what it should and thanked officers for their work in ensuring that the council was a safe and improving council.
- 12.3 The Vice-Chairman endorsed these comments and noted that it was encouraging that this “healthcheck” had been passed. He thanked officers for their work.
- 12.4 Cabinet **RESOLVED** to agree these key messages from the Annual Risk Management 2022/23 Report (Appendix A of the report):
  - 1. The overall opinion on the effectiveness of Risk Management for 2022/23 is ‘Acceptable’ and therefore considered ‘Sound’ (part 3 of Appendix A of the report)
  - 2. The Risk Management Function complies with the Accounts and Audit (England) Regulations 2015 (as amended in 2020) and recognised Public Sector Internal Audit standards.
  - 3. The Annual Governance Statement for 2022/23 will refer to this report and will be reported to the Audit and Governance Committee for its approval.

## 12.5 **Evidence and Reasons for Decision**

Whilst there is no decision to make, evidence to support the Risk Management Function’s work over the last annual year is presented at Appendix A of the report. The key messages are reported in the Executive Summary above.

## 12.6 **Alternative Options**

As there is no decision to take from this report, there are no alternative options to put forward.

## 13 **Corporately Significant Vital Signs**

- 13.1.1 Cabinet received the report providing an update on the Council’s performance against its Corporately Significant Vital Signs.
- 13.1.2 The Cabinet Member for Corporate Services and Innovation introduced the report to Cabinet:

- The purpose of this report was to provide an update on performance against the vital signs, review and understand context, trends and performance risks, and allow for early interventions and opportunities for improvements.
- Vital signs were made from an array of performance measures, some based on workload or output measures and some on timelines for productivity. Where possible, focus was on outcomes but sometimes things were affected by things outside of the Council's control.
- It was important to understand the challenges impacting service delivery and key strategic outcomes while monitoring trends and demand.
- The council continued to operate in a period of challenge. The number of measures rated green had increased by 5, and the number of measures rated red had reduced by 9.
- The areas of underperformance had narratives with actions to improve performance and the expected return to the target which would be discussed at executive leadership level.

13.2 The Cabinet Member for Adult Social Care acknowledged that the Council was a way from having 75% care homes rated at good and outstanding by the Care Quality Commission. There was a description in the report discussing the challenges around this, which included that the Care Quality Commission would not be able to re-inspect care homes at the pace required. Page A8 of the report showed the actions of the team to address this, including audits and work with providers showing quality concerns, training and development and international recruitment. Some care homes may have improved practice but not yet be re-inspected, impacting on the measure.

13.3 The Vice-Chairman noted that it was important that this report was closely linked to Better Together for Norfolk and thanked officers for their work in updating this to bring clarity to the issues.

13.4 Cabinet **RESOLVED** to:

1. Review and comment on the end of quarter 4 performance data.
2. Review the considerations and next steps.
3. Agree the 26 highlighted actions as set out.

#### 13.5 **Evidence and Reasons for Decision**

N/A

#### 13.6 **Alternative Options**

Information Report.

### 14 **Adult Learning – Community Delivery**

14.1.1 Cabinet received the report setting out progress of the Adult Learning service to expand services into Communities across Norfolk and enable easier access, and to withdraw from Wensum Lodge.

14.1.2 The Cabinet Member for Communities and Partnerships introduced the report to Cabinet:

- Adult Learning Services welcomed over 8000 people each year across Norfolk and was working hard to make it easier for more people to access opportunities. Over a third of courses were available to access online making them accessible to a wider range of people.
- The service was working on delivery of courses in more communities, as many people preferred to access courses closer to home so they could travel less and spend less on petrol. This was successful so far, with 65 courses being delivered in communities and more were planned including two new construction training hubs in Hellesdon and Kings Lynn and work with Borough Council Partners to invest in multi-user hubs in King's Lynn and Great Yarmouth.
- Because of the plans to increase community-based delivery, Wensum Lodge no longer fit the vision for the future; it had limited parking, no access by bus and the road had tailbacks at peak times. Courses were already delivered at the Norman Centre, Millennium Library and the construction training hub in Hellesdon, with more places being sought in the City.
- Wensum Lodge was the largest and most appropriate location when it was set up in the 1960s but it no longer provided what the adult learning service needed and it was time to move out; the service had done what it could to make the site suitable for providing courses but continuing to do so would disrespect the heritage of the site.

- 14.2 The Cabinet Member for Public Health and Wellbeing had received emails from public who believed that adult education was being ceased with the withdrawal from Wensum Lodge. He clarified that this was not the case; adult education was being invested in to help more people benefit from it than before. The building was not fit for purpose and would be declared surplus to requirements as the services were being delivered elsewhere in a fairer way in a more geographically spread way and online. A new use would be found for the building.
- 14.3 The Cabinet Member for Corporate Services and Innovation added that Wensum Lodge was not kind to residents with accessibility challenges; relocating services would mean that people with blue badges or reliant on public transport would be able to access adult education services.
- 14.4 The Deputy Cabinet Member for Highways, Infrastructure and Transport shared that she had attended a course at Wensum Lodge; due to the layout of the building she had to be escorted from the gate to the room as she could not access the building independently showing that the building was not fit for purpose for disabled people.
- 14.5 The Chairman had attended a course at Wensum Lodge and recognised the issues with accessibility in the building were an issue. Wensum Lodge was a fabulous building and could be put to a good use in the future, but it was no longer suitable for use by adult education.
- 14.6 Cabinet **RESOLVED** to continue to progress opportunities to increase community based delivery across Norfolk, and to withdraw from the Wensum Lodge location as it no longer supports our ambition for community service delivery

## 14.6 Evidence and Reasons for Decision

This proposal builds on the existing approach to increase education and learning opportunities for all Norfolk residents through community based delivery.

The volume of courses delivered from the Wensum Lodge location is reducing. As a result, the Wensum Lodge site is significantly under-utilised and increasingly cost inefficient

## 14.7 Alternative Options

Wensum Lodge could continue to deliver Adult Learning courses. However, the site is already inefficient as it is under-utilised (with utilisation of available space consistently below 30%). In addition, the site is generally in need of repair and the cost of making this complex site more environmentally friendly would be significant.

## 15 Disposal, acquisition and exploitation of property

- 15.1.1 Cabinet received the report setting out proposals aimed at supporting Norfolk County Council priorities by exploiting properties surplus to operational requirements, pro-actively releasing property assets with latent value where the operational needs can be met from elsewhere and strategically acquiring property to drive economic growth and wellbeing in the County.
- 15.1.2 The Cabinet Member for Corporate Services and Innovation introduced the report to Cabinet:
- The report set out 7 buildings identified as surplus to council requirements and one lease acquisition.
  - The Cabinet Member for Corporate Services and Innovation discussed the lease acquisition; she had visited the Palmers Building in Great Yarmouth where the new library and adult education provision would be built. She was keen to see adult education being provided where learners needed it and this was an exciting opportunity to address this.
- 15.2 The Vice-Chairman noted that Cabinet had agreed to the well evidenced proposal to deliver adult education services to residents more effectively across the County; it was therefore clear that Wensum Lodge should be disposed of so someone could make use of the building. He was already aware of one proposal for use of the building being worked on which would provide a cultural benefit for residents and visitors.
- 15.3 The Chair noted that it was important to provide the best possible services which were as accessible as possible; sometimes this meant disposing of buildings so that other services could be invested in. The Palmers Building in Great Yarmouth was a good example of this; it would be a great facility in the centre of Yarmouth providing adult education and a library, with discussions being held about a possible dentistry school in the building.
- 15.4 Cabinet **RESOLVED:**
1. To formally declare Cobholm Field, Great Yarmouth (6009/012) surplus to Council requirements and instruct the Director of Property to dispose of the property on the best terms possible either through freehold or leasehold



disposal. In the event of a disposal receipt exceeding delegated limits the Director of Property in consultation with the Director of Strategic Finance and Cabinet Member for Corporate Services and Innovation is authorised to accept the most advantageous offer.

2. To approve to the acquisition of a lease from Great Yarmouth Borough Council for parts of the lower ground (basement) and ground floors shown edged purple on plan at 37-39 Market Place, Great Yarmouth NR30 1LX on the terms agreed.
3. To formally declare Land at Meadow Way, Hellesdon (5032/011) surplus to Council requirements and instruct the Director of Property to dispose of the property. In the event of a disposal receipt exceeding delegated limits the Director of Property in consultation with the Director of Strategic Finance and Cabinet Member for Corporate Services and Innovation is authorised to accept the most advantageous offer.
4. To formally declare Wensum Lodge Complex, 169 King Street NR1 1QW (4109/041) (excluding the adjacent site comprising the Sports Hall and Squash Court) surplus to Council requirements and instruct the Director of Property to dispose of the property. In the event of a disposal receipt exceeding delegated limits the Director of Property in consultation with the Director of Strategic Finance and Cabinet Member for Corporate Services and Innovation is authorised to accept the most advantageous offer.
5. To formally declare Land at Edge Bank, Outwell (2107/101) surplus to Council requirements and instruct the Director of Property to dispose of the property. In the event of a disposal receipt exceeding delegated limits the Director of Property in consultation with the Director of Strategic Finance and Cabinet Member for Corporate Services and Innovation is authorised to accept the most advantageous offer.
6. To formally declare Land at Parkfield Farm, Downham Road, Outwell (2107/103) surplus to Council requirements and instruct the Director of Property to dispose of the property. In the event of a disposal receipt exceeding delegated limits the Director of Property in consultation with the Director of Strategic Finance and Cabinet Member for Corporate Services and Innovation is authorised to accept the most advantageous offer.
7. To formally declare Land at Broomhill Lane, Reepham surplus to Council requirements and:
  - (i) Instruct the Director of Property to dispose of the property to the developer of the adjacent field, or
  - (ii) In the event of no satisfactory agreement instruct the Director of Property to dispose of the property on the open market.

In the event of a disposal receipt exceeding delegated limits the Director of Property in consultation with the Director of Strategic Finance and Cabinet Member for Corporate Services and Innovation is authorised to accept the most advantageous offer.

8. To formally declare Nelson Road Field, Sheringham (1087/011) surplus to Council requirements and:
  - (i) Instruct the Director of Property to dispose of the property to a Registered Housing provider, or
  - (ii) In the event of no satisfactory agreement instruct the Director of Property to dispose of the property on the open market.

In the event of a disposal receipt exceeding delegated limits the Director of Property in consultation with the Director of Strategic Finance and Cabinet

Member for Corporate Services and Innovation is authorised to accept the most advantageous offer.

#### 15.5 **Evidence and Reasons for Decision**

Declaring the sites and land holdings surplus to County Council use means that the Corporate Property Team can consider options for the disposal and exploitation of these sites.

Leasing the site at 37-39 Market Place, Great Yarmouth is a key aspect of the joint project.

#### 15.6 **Alternative Options**

Declaring sites and land holdings surplus is a result of the sites no longer being required for service delivery. The alternative would be to retain resulting in incurring holding costs for an asset that is not contributing to service delivery.

There is no viable alternative option to leasing the site at 37-39 Market Place, Great Yarmouth.

### 16 **Health, Safety and Well-being Annual Report 2022-23**

- 16.1.1 Cabinet received the report providing data and analysis on the Health, Safety and Well-being mid-year performance of NCC as an employer so that members have the information necessary to satisfy themselves of the effectiveness of the NCC health and safety management system, or where necessary to identify actions for Executive Directors and others to improve the performance against the 3 key outcome goals set out in the report.
- 16.1.2 The Executive Director of Transformation and Strategy introduced the report to Cabinet:
- Health and Wellbeing was related to the Council's legal obligations and wellbeing was related to how the council managed culture.
  - This was an annual report covering training, compliance, incidents and how people responded to them, as well as proactive intervention work.
  - The report was published publicly via this meeting and circulated internally
- 16.2 The Chair noted that health, safety and wellbeing of staff was even more important than ever as staff found themselves isolated during the Covid-19 pandemic. It was important to ensure staff who worked from home for extended periods of time had their wellbeing considered.
- 16.3 Cabinet **RESOLVED** to:
1. Consider and comment on the performance report
  2. Champion employee and Member health, safety and wellbeing through demonstrable leadership and advocacy of the guidance and services available
  3. Endorse and support the ongoing focus to improve health, safety and wellbeing management through Executive Director and management leadership and delivery of health, safety and wellbeing services.
- 16.4 **Evidence and Reasons for Decision**

N/A

## 16.5 **Alternative Options**

N/A

## 17 **Finance Monitoring Report 2023-24 P2: May 2023**

17.1.1 Cabinet received the report giving a summary of the forecast financial position for the 2023-24 Revenue and Capital Budgets, General Balances, and the Council's Reserves at 31 March 2024, together with related financial information.

17.1.2 The Vice-Chairman introduced the report to Cabinet:

- At this stage of the financial year a balanced revenue budget outturn was being forecast. Cost pressures around cost of care by adult social services were being mitigated by the department.
- Although there were higher utility inflation costs built into projections these had to be uplifted further due to sustained increases in electricity and gas. This forecast overspend related to utilities was offset by higher than expected interest receivable on cash balances.
- Pressures for Children's Services were listed in paragraph 2.6 of the report
- Adult Social Services had reduced the backlogs which built up in the pandemic and there had been a reduction in the forecast in the year end reserves for schools MLS balances.
- Reserves were used to mitigate risks through the year. Treasury cash balances remained strong. If the council borrowed the full £65m as set out in the Medium-Term Financial Strategy the closing balances would be £256m. Borrowing no money in the current year would reduce the balances to £191m at year end.
- The decision on the level of borrowing would depend on fluctuations in the public loan board rates.
- When delivering the budget, rising interest rates demand a different strategy when spending to strengthen infrastructure than when rates were below 2%. The Director of Strategic Finance had been asked to develop a review of capital spend and his preliminary findings had been produced. This review included £142.5m being reprofiled from 2023-24 into future years from slippage in capital schemes from 2022-23. The council continued to review the forecast for capital schemes and would extend the review into 2024-25 to improve the accuracy of phasing capital projects
- The council borrowed £377m over the past 5 years at an average rate of 2%. This was fixed for up to 50 years and was the correct approach as it allowed the council to invest while rates were low. The cost of borrowing was allowed for on a continuing basis and stayed steady at a percent of around 6-7% of net revenue expenditure during this period.
- Planning for capital expenditure was based on an era of low interest rates and it was important to respond to the new situation, including stopping adding significantly to new debt, deferring expenditure to when rates are forecast to fall and removing schemes where appropriate
- The Vice-Chairman expected to see a reduction in the capital programme following the next capital review board

- £50m of additional borrowing would cost 1% additional council tax and was therefore a reasonable limit to additional capital spending for the life of the Medium-Term Financial Strategy, or unless rates fall again significantly.

17.2 The Chair thanked the Vice-Chairman for keeping an eye on the finances, recognising that things were difficult related to interest rates.

17.3 Cabinet **RESOLVED:**

1. To approve the addition of **£0.535m** to the capital programme to address capital funding requirements funded mostly from various external sources as set out in detail in capital Appendix 3, paragraph 1.4 of the report as follows:
  - Increase Children's Services funding from S106 contributions of £0.461m
  - £0.074m increase in Libraries funding from S106 contributions
2. To recommend to Council the addition of **£26.895m** to the capital programme for the following new scheme as set out in Capital Appendix 3, paragraph 4.2-4.3 of the report as follows:
  - Approval of £26.895m King's Lynn Sustainable Transport and Regeneration Scheme (STARS) supported by £24.7m external funding and £2.025m NCC Borrowing as set out in Appendix 3 note 4.3
  - And, to note the inclusion of the £16.7m Corporate Property Retrofitting Plan approved at the 5<sup>th</sup> June 2023 Cabinet meeting, subject to Council approval.
3. Subject to Cabinet approval of recommendation 1 and Council approval of recommendation 2 to delegate:
  - 2.1) To the Director of Procurement authority to undertake the necessary procurement processes including the determination of the minimum standards and selection criteria (if any) and the award criteria; to shortlist bidders; to make provisional award decisions (in consultation with the Chief Officer responsible for each scheme); to award contracts; to negotiate where the procurement procedure so permits; and to terminate award procedures if necessary.
  - 2.2) To the Director of Property authority (notwithstanding the limits set out at 5.13.6 and 5.13.7 of Financial Regulations) to negotiate or tender for or otherwise acquire the required land to deliver the schemes (including temporary land required for delivery of the works) and to dispose of land so acquired that is no longer required upon completion of the scheme;
  - 2.3) To each responsible chief officer authority to:
    - (in the case of two-stage design and build contracts) agree the price for the works upon completion of the design stage and direct that the works proceed; or alternatively direct that the works be recompeted
    - approve purchase orders, employer's instructions, compensation events or other contractual instructions necessary to effect changes in contracts that are necessitated by discoveries, unexpected ground conditions, planning conditions, requirements arising from detailed design or minor changes in scope
    - subject always to the forecast cost including works, land, fees and disbursements remaining within the agreed scheme or programme budget.
    - That the officers exercising the delegated authorities set out above shall do so in accordance with the council's Policy Framework, with the approach to Social Value in Procurement endorsed by Cabinet at

its meeting of 6 July 2020, and with the approach set out in the paper entitled “Sourcing strategy for council services” approved by Policy & Resources Committee at its meeting of 16 July 2018.

4. To recognise the period 2 general fund forecast revenue **of a balanced position**, noting also that Executive Directors will take measures to reduce or eliminate potential overspends where these occur within services;
5. To recognise the period 2 forecast of 100% savings delivery in 2023-24, noting also that Executive Directors will continue to take measures to mitigate potential savings shortfalls through alternative savings or underspends;
6. To note the forecast General Balances at 31 March 2024 of **£25.410m**.
7. To note the expenditure and funding of the revised current and future 2023-28 capital programmes including the significant reprofiling of £142.507m since April 2023 and the reduction in the capital programmes of £20.137m.

#### 17.4 **Evidence and Reasons for Decision**

Three appendices are attached to this report giving details of the forecast revenue and capital financial outturn positions:

Appendix 1 of the report summarises the revenue outturn position, including:

- Forecast over and under spends
- Changes to the approved budget
- Reserves
- Savings

Appendix 2 of the report summarises the key working capital position, including:

- Treasury management
- Payment performance and debt recovery.

Appendix 3 of the report summarises the capital outturn position, and includes:

- Current and future capital programmes
- Capital programme funding
- Income from property sales and other capital receipts.

Additional capital funds will enable services to invest in assets and infrastructure as described in Appendix 3 section 4 of the report.

#### 17.5 **Alternative Options**

To deliver a balanced budget, no viable alternative options have been identified to the recommendations in this report. In terms of financing the proposed capital expenditure, no further grant or revenue funding has been identified to fund the expenditure, apart from the funding noted in Appendix 3 of the report.

### 18 **Reports of the Cabinet Member and Officer Delegated Decisions made since the last Cabinet meeting**

#### 18.1 Cabinet **RESOLVED** to **note** the Delegated Decisions made since the last Cabinet meeting

The Chair invited Cabinet Members to attend Adult Social Services’ co-production week being held in the foyer.

The meeting ended at 11:20

**Chair of Cabinet**

**Cabinet**  
**3 July 2023**  
**Public & Local Member Questions**

	<b>Public Question Time</b>
6.1	<p><b>Question from Elisabeth Traverse</b>  The Council is having to destroy at least 3,000 trees on our roads because of ash die back and other diseases. What is the council doing about replacing these trees with more suitable ones?</p> <p><b>Response from the Cabinet Member for Environment and Waste</b>  Where necessary we make safe or, regrettably, have to fell trees along the highway to keep property and people safe. The vast majority (82%) of these felled trees are located on land not owned by the County Council, and as part of our work we establish with our own Highways/Property Services and other landowners whether they can be replaced. Where tree replacement is not possible, we are working through the Forestry Commission funding stream, Local Authority Treescapes, to secure ways to increase tree numbers in other more appropriate locations. This includes planting tree species resistant to disease and resilient to climate change. This tree planting is additional to our 1 million trees pledge.</p> <p><b>Supplementary question from Elisabeth Traverse</b>  Is the Council setting up a tree replacement fund?</p> <p><b>Response from the Cabinet Member for Environment and Waste</b>  There is no tree replacement fund as such. However, we have applied for Local Authority Treescapes funding last year and this year. This money, with some match funding from the Council and other partners, seeks to address the net loss of trees from ash die back and other diseases.</p>
6.2	<p><b>Question from Richard Adcock</b>  With the increase &amp; push towards Electric Vehicles, have the fire service been overlooked for their personal safety/ training &amp; equipment to cope with any situation they may be confronted with &amp; to protect the public?</p> <p><b>Response from the Cabinet Member for Communities and Partnerships</b>  Thankfully, incidents involving electric vehicles are rare. These vehicles have lots of internal safety measures to try and prevent issues occurring, however they can still happen. We continue to work closely with the National Fire Chief's Council to make sure that we are ready to deal with this type of incident. Current firefighting techniques would protect fire fighters and members of the public and we have suitable training and PPE in place but the current approaches may result in more defensive firefighting tactics in certain situations.</p> <p>Things we are doing in Norfolk include proper questioning at the time of call so we can adequately resource an incident quickly. We have an increased "pre-determined attendance" (how many resources we send) from a confirmed EV car fire and this includes an additional appliance, level2 officer and HAZMAT officer, for specific advice, as well as consideration for our environmental protection unit.</p> <p>Our teams have a good operational understanding about what specific hazards are involved. In addition, our new risk and policy group manager will be reviewing our overall response to this type of incident.</p> <p>Our Fire safety teams work with local planners to make sure that firefighting</p>

	<p>arrangements are considered when charge points are being put into new builds. But current legislation needs to be updated around this fast paced technology, which we have raised with some local MPs.</p>
6.3	<p><b>Question from Prof. David Evans</b> The recent acceptance of Norfolk County Council's Climate Strategy by Cabinet is welcome. Its implementation within an urgent timeframe is required. Following the analysis and knowledge learned to produce the Strategy, is it not now timely for Norfolk County Council to recognise and declare a Climate Emergency?</p> <p><b>Response from the Cabinet Member for Environment and Waste</b> Thank you for welcoming the new strategy, which has achieved widespread support.</p> <p>In April 2019, the Council unanimously adopted a declaration that "Norfolk County Council recognises the serious impact of climate change globally and the need for urgent action".</p> <p>The council committed to supporting the delivery of the Government's 25 year plan to improve the environment, welcomed the introduction of the Environment Act and committed to reducing unnecessary use of resources, minimising waste, reducing our impact on the world, and shaping a more efficient, sustainable and competitive economy.</p> <p>The Council agreed to lead by example and demonstrate our actions and responsibilities in tackling climate change and recognised that taking action now can help to achieve long-term sustainable economic growth from low carbon and green industries in Norfolk.</p> <p>Making a further declaration four years on would not serve any useful purpose. Our emphasis must be on continuing to take action to mitigate emissions and adapt to changing weather patterns.</p> <p><b>Supplementary question from Prof. David Evans</b> At Cabinet it has been said that the Council "walks the walk, not talks the talk". How will Councillors on the Cabinet evidence the success of their "walk" and that it is not just "talk"?</p> <p><b>Response from the Cabinet Member for Environment and Waste</b> It is imperative that the Council translates its Climate Strategy into practical actions with the means in place for councillor and public accountability over its delivery.</p> <p>At present, a dashboard for reporting our estate emissions that count towards our 2030 net zero estate target is available on the Council's climate change webpage. The dashboard shows the Council's annual estate emissions broken down across key categories such as those from fossil fuel heating, building electricity, streetlight electricity, and vehicle fleet emissions.</p> <p>Updates have also been given to Cabinet on progress towards the Council's Environmental Policy (which includes the Council's existing commitments around climate change). The last of these was the Net Zero and Natural Norfolk Progress Update delivered to Cabinet in April 2022.</p>



	<p>Looking ahead, an annual report will be prepared for the relevant select committee to review delivery progress towards the new Climate Strategy as a whole. While many of the Council's activities relevant to the strategy will be brought to members separately through the relevant committees, the role of this item will be to consider the range of initiatives related to the Climate Strategy all together. This will enable members to assess progress, identify gaps to delivery and introduce any changes needed going forward.</p>
6.4	<p><b>Question from Tessa Gee</b> How will Norfolk County Council influence others, for example schools, to ensure buildings and operations are zero-carbon?</p> <p><b>Response from the Cabinet Member for Environment and Waste</b> In terms of school construction, we are in the process of letting a new framework for contracting school builds over the next four years. The design specification of schools built under this framework will go beyond building regulations in terms of energy performance, the installation of low carbon heating systems and on-site renewables - aspiring towards net zero in operation. Furthermore, contractors who join that framework will need to have a carbon reduction plan in place for their business operations that aligns with the UK's net zero 2050 commitment.</p> <p>There are around 200 schools in Norfolk where we still have a role in long-term maintenance through a funding arrangement with the Department for Education (known as 'maintained' schools). Where schools have become academies, formal leasing arrangements are in place for the land and buildings to the academy trust who are fully responsible for operating and maintaining the schools. Large Academy Trusts are within scope of regulations requiring disclosure of energy and carbon information with their directors' (trustees') report with narrative of measures to improve energy efficiency.</p> <p>Decarbonising the Council's maintained school building stock is a significant challenge. As a recent National Audit Office report highlighted, there has been limited funding available to local authorities from central government for the refurbishment and maintenance of school buildings. Furthermore, covid restrictions and infection control has been the overriding recent priority for schools .</p> <p>The Council is also deploying some of the maintenance funding it receives to commission surveys of school buildings to understand the works required to improve energy efficiency and cut carbon emissions. These can support bids to the Public Sector Decarbonisation Scheme to secure external finance towards carbon reduction works. A programme of wider engagement with schools is also in planning, with Cabinet in May resolving that the Council will undertake workshops with schools specifically with the purpose of re-engaging on the theme of how to progress with carbon reduction.</p> <p>Our priorities and focus on the wider built environment where we have less direct influence is outlined in the Climate Strategy on pages 69 to 75.</p>
6.5	<p><b>Question from Mary Curzon</b></p>

	<p>Norfolk County Council plans to plant one million trees by 2025. It appears that this number also will include hedge plants. So far, 276,293 trees and hedge plants have been planted, of which 112,064 are on Norfolk County Council owned land. How many of these newly planted trees and hedge plants are still alive?</p> <p><b>Response from the Cabinet Member for Environment and Waste</b> Of the 276,293 trees, some 180,000 have just been planted and therefore it is not yet possible to know the survival rate. But we will be monitoring these closely this current growing season. The survival rate for previous years has been high and where we have seen losses, we ensure that these trees are replaced as agreed from the outset when we fund the work.</p> <p><b>Supplementary question from Mary Curzon</b> What processes do Norfolk County Council have in place to ensure that the trees are maintained and survive?</p> <p><b>Response from the Cabinet Member for Environment and Waste</b> Where trees are planted on County Farms, agreement is reached with the tenants to maintain these trees. In other locations, working with communities and partners, we evaluate all proposals in the round, including agreeing the establishment and the long-term future maintenance of the trees. Our decision to proceed with planting is conditional on agreeing with communities and partners how they will ensure that the trees are cared for in the future. This includes replanting, if necessary.</p>
6.6	<p><b>Question from Sarah Eglington</b> Many Norfolk residents were forced to choose between heating and eating as a result of skyrocketing gas prices last winter. At the same time, we watch as the climate crisis escalates. All the while, Norfolk CC continues to back the culprits responsible by investing pensions in fossil fuels. Climate breakdown and energy insecurity are both symptoms of an unstable and unjust energy system, founded on fossil fuels. The crisis will only intensify if we don't divest from fossil fuels. There is no mention of divestment in Norfolk CC's Climate Strategy. What steps are being taken by Norfolk CC to divest all their investments in fossil fuels?</p> <p><b>Response from the Cabinet Member for Environment and Waste</b> The Norfolk Pension Fund is independent of Norfolk County Council and believes in voting and engagement with investee companies to improve their performance and requires its fund managers to holistically embed Environmental, Social and Governance (ESG) considerations in their investment approaches. It does not adopt a policy of exclusion for any mainstream industrial sector. This approach is fully documented on its website <a href="http://www.norfolkpensionfund.org">www.norfolkpensionfund.org</a>. The Fund takes a holistic approach to considering carbon emissions across its portfolio. Third party benchmarking is published every six months. This shows that the carbon emissions and climate risk metrics are materially better than benchmark global indices. In addition, the Fund invests in renewable and energy transition assets through its real asset portfolios as part of its diversified investment portfolio securing the pensions of around one hundred thousand current and former local government employees.</p>

	<p><b>Supplementary question from Sarah Eglington</b> What is Norfolk CC's target date for full divestment from fossil fuel investments?</p> <p><b>Response from the Cabinet Member for Environment and Waste</b> As stated previously the Fund does not have a policy of exclusion for any industrial sector.</p>
6.7	<p><b>Question from Graeme Gee</b> Can Norfolk County Council directly, or by influence, ensure that artificial grass is not used in schools, play areas, and anywhere on their own estate?</p> <p><b>Response from the Cabinet Member for Environment and Waste</b> Outside of the school estates the Council does not use artificial grass on properties where it is the freeholder and occupier.</p> <p>The Council would be able to use its influence to discourage the use of artificial grass on the schools' estate. However, it cannot enforce this position even on sites where the Council is still the Responsible Body. Local Authority Maintained schools' governing boards run their own sites and have responsibility to ensure it supports learning. Schools frequently install artificial grass to ensure there is suitable access for children to outside curriculum especially for early years and foundation stage. Usually, it is in areas where real grass is difficult to maintain and all year round access is often compromised.</p> <p>Larger 3G pitches are almost exclusively only on high school sites. All but one of these in Norfolk are part of an academy trust, and the remaining one is a foundation school where the governing board is the freeholder. The standard academy lease terms do not allow the Council to add any conditions of this nature. There are other bodies such as Sport England, which encourages the provision of sporting pitches on school sites.</p>
6.8	<p><b>Question from Verna Salter</b> Norfolk CC's Climate Strategy recognises the importance of decarbonisation of the transport sector and as the Local Highways Authority NCC has an important role in supporting the decarbonisation of the transport sector through the provision of sustainable infrastructure. How is that consistent with the construction of the unnecessary, and environmentally destructive, Norwich Western Link Road?</p> <p><b>Response from the Cabinet Member for Highways, Infrastructure and Transport</b> Reducing our impact on the environment and climate is a priority for the Council, and it is a key consideration in what we do. But there are other things we need to consider to do the best we can for Norfolk and its residents and businesses. These include ensuring our county can cope with population and housing growth, supporting the local economy and acting on existing transport problems by making sure Norfolk has the infrastructure it needs.</p> <p>Improvements to our transport infrastructure support all kinds of journeys, including walking and cycling, public transport, emergency services and deliveries of goods and services. Removing traffic congestion from local roads and communities</p>

	<p>makes these safer and more pleasant places to live, walk and cycle, and improves air quality close to people's homes.</p> <p><b>Supplementary question from Verna Salter</b></p> <p>Other than EV charging points, what sustainable infrastructure will be provided?</p> <p><b>Response from the Cabinet Member for Highways, Infrastructure and Transport</b></p> <p>The report presented to Cabinet today on the Transport for Norwich update sets out the broad range of projects and improvements that have been delivered across the Norwich area. The Council has been highly successful in bidding for external funding through the Transport for Norwich strategy. Over the last five years, the authority has secured more than £150m for sustainable transport improvements in and around the city, which have cut bus journey times, increased active travel, improved air quality and reduced carbon emissions.</p>
6.9	<p><b>Question from Charlotte Chamberlain</b></p> <p>Warm words don't make warm homes.</p> <p>We've had small helpings of alphabet soup – promised warmth of a HUG here, chance to catch a BUS there, be a LAD and SHDF for those in social housing: each promised little and delivered less.</p> <p>The East of England had 30% of all retrofit measures installed under HUG1. 773 measures out of a national total of 2611. That's measures, NOT individual homes. At this rate how will the 432,500 homes in Norfolk be upgraded by 2050?</p> <p><b>Response from the Cabinet Member for Environment &amp; Waste</b></p> <p>Domestic homes account for around 20% of Norfolk's emissions and you rightly point out that accelerating retrofitting is a significant challenge for moving to a low carbon future. Domestic energy performance certificates show that 62% of dwellings across Norfolk have an energy rating of D or less ( Energy Performance of Building Certificates in England and Wales: July to September 2022) As a local authority we will seek the right funding opportunities to support our partners in the retrofit agenda. We do not directly own domestic housing stock so our influencing power to decarbonise domestic buildings across Norfolk is significantly limited but support for residents can be secured through the <a href="#">Norfolk Warm Homes</a> website.</p> <p><b>Supplementary Question from Charlotte Chamberlain</b></p> <p>What local level of funding and skills provision does this Council believe would enable Norfolk to meet the government's 2050 Net Zero Carbon Strategy target on retrofitting homes?</p> <p><b>Response from the Cabinet Member for Environment &amp; Waste</b></p> <p>The Council is currently carrying out a comprehensive workforce analysis of the Retrofit sector, assessing the skills and training requirements of sector to meet Net-Zero objectives. This work programme includes clarity on the current deployment rate of retrofit measures across County and District areas (Air/Ground source heat pumps, heat insulation included), Annual installations required in</p>

	<p>domestic/non-domestic properties to meet Net-Zero objectives, in addition to workforce, skills and qualification demands in the sector.</p> <p>In addition to the current Council investment in the skills infrastructure, we continue to work closely with Norfolk further education (FE) and private training providers, establishing the training provision to meet current and projected workforce requirements. We aim to maximise funding opportunities for the county through national programmes, securing ongoing resources for retrofit training, most recently exhibited through the securing retrofit funding through the Department of Education Skills Bootcamp and Local Skills Improvement Partnership programmes – currently being delivered across the County.</p>
6.10	<p><b>Question from Sarah Burston</b></p> <p>It is recognised that extreme weather events, that will occur more often due to climate change, have a more significant effect on vulnerable people. What tangible plans do Norfolk County Council have in place to protect and support this community?</p> <p><b>Response from the Cabinet Member for Environment &amp; Waste</b></p> <p>This risk is considered by the Norfolk Resilience Forum and by key services such as Norfolk Fire and Rescue Service as part of their overall planning process. An example of the approach being taken by the Council is detailed by the response from the Cabinet Member for Adult Social Care.</p> <p><b>Response from the Cabinet Member for Adult Social Care</b></p> <p>Thank you for your question.</p> <p>We receive notification of extreme weather alerts from the Met office which is shared across the health and social care system. Our older people, physical disability and learning disability services are integrated with community NHS services and our mental health service is co-located with NHS mental health provision and we work in cooperation with the NHS and other partners such as District Councils on adverse events, such as periods of extreme weather. There are also robust resilience and emergency plans in place to support our vulnerable people and communities as a wider NCC offer. The plans are constantly under review and updated regularly. Examples of the support NCC have provided and have plans to support in future occurrences include:</p> <p>Flood risk – working with Norfolk Police, other agencies, and families to safeguard vulnerable local people at home including staffing rescue centres, assisting relocation of Care Home residents, visiting, and assessing people at home who may be unable to keep themselves safe or assess the risk, arranging additional support and services or transport to safe spaces. NCC officers from North and East locality have been involved in this activity on several occasions.</p> <p>Extreme heat/field fire – in West Norfolk in 2022 supporting vulnerable people whose properties were affected by fire from a field blaze due to extreme heat. NCC officer support with assistance to link with agencies around temporary housing and emotional and practical support provided.</p>

	<p>Power Outage – identifying vulnerable people and working with community health providers to ensure timely responses are planned and support available should people need to live without power for any period of time to reduce the risk to their vulnerability and safety.</p>
6.11	<p><b>Question from Jonathan Smith</b> Did the research underpinning the Council's Climate Strategy include an analysis of the benefits of CO<sub>2</sub>?</p> <p><b>Response from the Cabinet Member for Environment &amp; Waste</b> No, as a local authority, we do not hold our own evidence base relating to climate change. However, as a guide to the evidence we have drawn on, I would refer you to the publications of the UK's independent, Statutory Climate Change Committee.</p>
6.12	<p><b>Question from Tina Johnson</b> Despite South Norfolk and Broadland District Councils declaring their participation in "No Mow May", Norfolk County Council proceeded with a cutting regime of verges and other areas. This destroyed pollinator plants and decimated habitats at a critical time of year. The cutting was in breach of your policy that "We only cut grass verges for safety reasons, not appearance". Norfolk CC states "Roadside verges are cut for road safety purposes to maintain visibility at junctions and to provide room for people to walk on the pavement", in the recent regime this did not apply at a multitude of places. Why does Norfolk CC act in breach of these conditions?</p> <p><b>Response from the Cabinet Member for Highways Infrastructure &amp; Transport</b> The Council did not participate in "No Mow May" as the timing for grass cuts to the highway verges varies each year. This timing is dependent on growing conditions and ensures that highway safety is maintained.</p> <p>A report, titled "Greenways to Greenspaces - Green Travel and Green Networks along our Highways Corridors" was discussed at the Infrastructure and Development Committee on 18<sup>th</sup> January 2023. This outlines previous commitments, as well as progress updates. Part of the commitments outlined include developing a new Roadside Verge Management Policy and the cutting policy is being reviewed as part of this work.</p> <p>A change was made to the second rural cut (usually carried out in August/September) to cut only junctions and visibility splays for C &amp; U class roads, while A and B roads are cut as usual. This not only provided a financial saving, but helps support our pollinator ambitions.</p> <p><b>Supplementary Question from Tina Johnson</b> How does this recent excessive and unnecessary verge cutting comply with Norfolk County Council's Biodiversity and Climate Strategy policies?</p> <p><b>Response from the Cabinet Member for Highways Infrastructure &amp; Transport</b> There is a fine balance between ensuring highway safety and supporting the environment. Each year the growing season is subtly different. The weather this</p>

	<p>year caused significant early year growth of the roadside verges, which is why the cutting could not be delayed further.</p> <p>However, our grass cutting operations are only one aspect of the Council's work in this area. Roadside Nature Reserves (RNRs) are cut later in the year to allow the rare species to both flower and seed for the next season. The Council's Pollinator Action Plan was reviewed at the Infrastructure and Development Committee on 14th July 2021. As part of this, a commitment has been made to increase the number of Roadside Nature Reserves (RNRs) across the county to 300 sites with the purpose of improving the environment for pollinators.</p> <p>In addition to the above which contributes towards the Council's Biodiversity and Climate Strategy policies, the Greenways to Greenspaces - Green Travel and Green Networks along our Highways Corridors report outlines previous commitments, as well as progress updates and how grass cutting is a key component of the delivery of this strategy.</p>
6.13	<p><b>Question from Daniel Douglas</b> First Bus is withdrawing a council tendered service 37B on the 23 July 2023 which serves Lakenham and Mulbarton on Evening and Sundays. Will this be replaced with a similar level of service from the 24th of July?</p> <p><b>Response from the Cabinet Member for Highways Infrastructure &amp; Transport</b> The service 37B is a commercial service, not a council tendered service, although the Council does provide some financial support in terms of a de minimis payment. First have submitted 2 registrations – one to cancel the 37B but then also another one that re-registers it within the core 37 service, therefore there will be no change to service they are just tidying up the paperwork.</p>
6.14	<p><b>Question from Willem Buttinger</b> How are Norfolk County Council maintaining council-owned land and road verges to increase biodiversity?</p> <p><b>Response from the Cabinet Member for Environment &amp; Waste</b> Roadside Nature Reserves (RNRs) are cut later in the year to allow the rare species to both flower and seed for the next season. The Council's Pollinator Action Plan was reviewed at the Infrastructure and Development Committee on 14th July 2021 and as part of this, a commitment was made to increase the number of Roadside Nature Reserves (RNRs) across the county to 300 sites with the purpose of improving the environment for pollinators. Combined with a reduction in the frequency of grass cutting over the past decade, these measures help increase biodiversity across the county.</p> <p><b>Supplementary Question from Willem Buttinger</b> Has Norfolk County Council stopped the use of glyphosate on its estate and road verges?</p> <p><b>Response from the Cabinet Member for Environment &amp; Waste</b> The Council is committed to minimising the use of herbicides, including those containing glyphosate, to control weeds or other undesirable plant species on its</p>

	<p>managed land, whilst still maintaining safe and healthy spaces fit for purpose and appropriate use by its communities.</p> <p>A new glyphosate policy and Integrated Weed Management Plan (IWMP) has been put in place for this year which has seen a significant reduction in the amount of Glyphosate being used. The Council continues to use glyphosate for treating of kerb lines and footways, in order to keep the highway safe, for example to reduce the risk to the public of trips and falls. Glyphosate is not used on roadside verges. Glyphosate usage will be closely monitored over the course of the summer in line with the policy. Any new developments in alternative products this area will also be explored.</p>
6.15	<p><b>Question from Frances Martin</b> The proposal does not address the issue of art courses where both equipment and technical support are needed - please can the cabinet reconsider this wholesale sell off and look again at how a creative hub can be established to continue the courses at Wensum Lodge?</p> <p><b>Response from the Cabinet Member for Community and Partnerships</b> The previous proposal for a creative hub did not progress due to increasing costs and changing habits of adult learners. The initial design estimates undertaken by external consultants had a cost of £20 million, which will have increased significantly due to inflation, particularly of building materials. Also, with a significant shift towards adult learners accessing courses online or in their local community, the proposed usage for the building has become unviable.</p> <p>We remain committed to delivering a range of learning opportunities and courses will continue. We know that some courses need specialist equipment and our work to secure suitable locations for future courses is well progressed and, should Cabinet agree the recommendation in the report, we will confirm new locations to learners as soon as possible. In the meantime, courses will continue to be delivered from Wensum Lodge until the end of this calendar year.</p> <p><b>Supplementary Question from Frances Martin</b> The issue of how to continue to employ tutors in the arts area is not explained, with reference to above, how can these popular courses still run?</p> <p><b>Response from the Cabinet Member for Community and Partnerships</b> We remain committed to delivering a range of learning opportunities and courses will continue. Our work to secure suitable locations for future courses is well progressed and, should Cabinet agree the recommendation in the report, we will confirm new locations to learners as soon as possible. In the meantime, courses will continue to be delivered from Wensum Lodge until the end of this calendar year.</p>
6.16	<p><b>Question from Kate Vogler</b> The proposal to declare Wensum Lodge Complex, 169 King Street NR1 1QW (4109/041) surplus to Council requirements is short sighted.</p> <p>The workshops there are already equipped with specialist tools; they offer access to skills which are not available elsewhere , nor are they easily transferrable to another local venue. They would be lost to the county and its residents.</p>



	<p>Has the council fully explored how investment and correct management of Wensum Lodge could be hugely beneficial for Norfolk residents financially, creatively and in mental well being?</p> <p><b>Response from the Cabinet Member for Community and Partnerships</b> The previous proposal for a creative hub did not progress due to increasing costs and changing habits of adult learners. The initial design estimates undertaken by external consultants had a cost of £20 million, which will have increased significantly due to inflation, particularly of building materials. Also, with a significant shift towards adult learners accessing courses online or in their local community, the proposed usage for the building became unviable.</p> <p>We have invested in two new specialist construction training centres, where there is a high need for specialist tools and equipment. Our new Hellesdon centre opened earlier this year and is successfully running courses, and our King's Lynn centre opens later this year.</p> <p>We remain committed to delivering a range of learning opportunities and courses will continue. We know that some courses need specialist equipment and our work to secure suitable locations for future courses is well progressed and, should Cabinet agree the recommendation in the report, we will confirm new locations to learners as soon as possible. In the meantime, courses will continue to be delivered from Wensum Lodge until the end of this calendar year.</p> <p><b>Supplementary Question from Kate Vogler</b> This site has a high resale value. Is the council's proposal to sell this beautiful riverside building driven by monetary gain rather than recognition of the educational value to both city and county?</p> <p><b>Response from the Cabinet Member for Corporate Services and Growth</b> The decision to cease services at Wensum Lodge is set out in the paper presented by Cllr Dewsbury. It notes the decrease in the number of learners at the site, as the Council delivers Adult Education in more accessible locations within communities across the County.</p>
6.17	<p><b>Question from Kay Pringle</b> To ask Norfolk County Council why they are choosing to fail and abandon, without democratic public consultation, their 2019 commitment to sustain, as per their duty, the historic long-standing public amenity building of Wensum House, King Street by pursuing their pre-agreed viable creative hub business model and reinvigorating this valued creative and learning asset within the city centre, and which Norwich citizens were expecting through that promise?</p> <p><b>Response from the Cabinet Member for Corporate Services and Growth</b> The previous proposal for the Wensum Lodge did not progress due to increasing costs and changing habits of adult learners. The initial design estimates undertaken by external consultants had a cost of £20 million, which will have increased significantly due to inflation, particularly of building materials. Also, with a significant shift towards adult learners accessing courses online or in their local community, the proposed usage for the building has become unviable.</p>

	<p><b>Supplementary Question from Kay Pringle</b> Does the council accept their proposed about-turn will significantly harm local citizens' creative and learning needs, especially those with special needs - note the site has the only adapted river mooring for wheelchair enabled boats for disabled people to access the Wensum</p> <p><b>Response from the Cabinet Member for Community and Partnerships</b> The Wensum Lodge site is not accessible or suitable for many of our learners. Delivery of Norwich based courses from locations other than Wensum Lodge will enable us to secure space with greater physical accessibility, easier access to parking (including for blue badge holders) and closer access to public transport. We want all our learners to be able to access suitable learning space that can meet their needs. This is not possible at Wensum Lodge.</p>
6.18	<p><b>Question from Stephanie Northern</b> Why is the council considering adding to King Street's woes by handing yet another precious asset - Wensum Lodge with the historic Music House - to the private sector? King St is already blighted with three large sites that have been supposedly under development for years. One - St Anne's Wharf phase 2 - is stalled, its fate unknown. Two - the Ferry Boat Inn - is proceeding at the pace of a very slow snail. Three - Bennetts Building next to Dragon Hall - has yet to apply for planning permission. Rather than becoming another decaying building site, Wensum Lodge should become the cultural jewel in the crown that the city and county were promised.</p> <p><b>Response from the Cabinet Member for Community and Partnerships</b> The decision to cease services at Wensum Lodge is set out in the paper presented to Cabinet today. It notes the decrease in the number of learners at the site, as the Council delivers Adult Education in more accessible locations within communities across the County.</p> <p>The previous proposal for the Wensum Lodge did not progress due to increasing costs and changing habits of adult learners. The initial design estimates undertaken by external consultants had a cost of £20 million, which will have increased significantly due to inflation, particularly of building materials. Furthermore, with a significant shift towards adult learners accessing courses online or in their local community, the proposed usage for the building has become unviable.</p>
6.19	<p><b>Question from Helen Davis</b> how are you planning to improve rural bus services in Norfolk in order to encourage more people to utilise them? Thank you</p> <p><b>Response from the Cabinet Member for Highways, Infrastructure and Transport</b> Since receiving nearly £50m in funding for our Bus Service Improvement Plan in November 2022, we have already improved and added services from and within rural areas. For example, new Sunday and evening services have been added between Swanton Morley and villages into Norwich, Sunday services have been introduced in Grimston, Gayton and West Winch into King's Lynn, and services have been increased in frequency in several other locations.</p>

Any service improvements require funding and we were fortunate to be awarded the £50m for our Bus Service Improvement Plan, unlike many other local authorities. We are continuing to develop further plans for improved services, ensuring that this short-term funding is directed to the right locations where services have a high chance of being commercially sustainable in the long-term.

**Cabinet**  
**3 July 2023**  
**Local Member Questions**

	<b>Member Question Time</b>
7.1	<p><b>Question from Cllr David Sayers</b> What is the estimated expenditure on education provision for permanently excluded children, considering the need for specialist tuition or specialist places. What measures or efforts are implemented to facilitate the successful reintegration of these pupils back into mainstream education?</p> <p><b>Response from the Cabinet Member for Children's Services</b> Funding related to the education of children who have been permanently excluded is provided or within the High Needs Block budget, within the overall Dedicated School Grant. There are two main elements of our expenditure. One of these relates to the commissioning of specialist provision within the 'Short Stay School for Norfolk' who provide education across their 4 bases within total annual funding of £7.8 million for up to 350 full time equivalent places each year. In addition Children's Services provides further support, through tuition and e-learning, to help ensure needs are met, with an annual cost of approximately £1.1m. Our approach to reintegration is facilitated through the Norfolk Fair Access panels. All secondary schools are active members of these panels and primary schools are included as necessary. Successful reintegration is based upon effective partnership working between the receiving school, the Short Stay School for Norfolk and Children's Services. Existing arrangements on reintegration are being reviewed as part of our Local First Inclusion programme and importantly strengthening our partnership approach to support children and young people earlier to reduce exclusion happening in the first place.</p> <p><b>Supplementary question from Cllr David Sayers</b> What measures will Norfolk County Council take to address the significant exodus of under 40s from the teaching profession, as revealed by recent Department for Education statistics, and how will the council ensure that children in Norfolk receive a high quality education despite the shortage of qualified teachers, especially in critical subjects like maths and physics?</p> <p><b>Response from the Cabinet Member for Children's Services</b> All schools in Norfolk are either Local Authority Maintained (community, voluntary aided or voluntary controlled) or part of an Academy Trust as an academy (a school that has converted or been sponsored by an academy trust) or free school (a new academy school).</p> <p>Governing bodies and academy trust boards are responsible for the recruitment and retention of staff. The local authority can take an advisory role and has a legal entitlement to do so in some cases.</p> <p>For community, voluntary controlled and maintained nursery schools the Local Authority is the employer of staff and has a legal entitlement to provide advice to schools in relation to the appointment of teachers at the school.</p>

	<p>For foundation and voluntary aided schools, the foundation trust (usually one of the three dioceses in Norfolk) is the employer. The dioceses do not have the same legal advisory rights as the local authority, but in most cases an agreement will be in place.</p> <p>For academies and free schools, the academy trust is the employer. Academy trusts can choose to control recruitment centrally or delegate this to individual academies.</p> <p>NCC work closely with the local Teaching School Hubs, The Julian Teaching School Hub and the Inspiration Trust Teaching School Hub to support the promotion and signposting of key professional development, such as the opportunities provided by Angles Maths Hub and the Cambridge Maths Hub (which serves Kings Lynn &amp; the West of Norfolk)</p> <p>In response to the significant challenges in recruitment and retention facing Norfolk schools, NCC allocated capacity during this year to map out the current position and challenges with regards to the school workforce, with an initial focus on LA maintained schools. This was with a view to better understanding the local challenges</p> <p>Working inside the parameters of factors within NCC's realm of influence the priorities identified include:; the creation of <b>teacher talent pools</b> (including a recruitment focus on attracting teachers into the county); Early Career Teachers; developing &amp; promoting the benefits of flexible working, better enabling access to relevant professional development; and the development of coaching programmes and improved Headteacher induction to support recruitment and retention of leadership.</p> <p>Recruitment and retention of capacity have been recognised as key priorities for the system in the framework published recently by NCC for a new Learning Strategy for Norfolk. Through that strategy we will deliver sustained action alongside education leaders over the coming years.</p>
7.2	<p><b>Question from Cllr Rob Colwell</b> What action is this council taking over the concerns at Heacham beach being designated 'poor' and the 'no bathing advisory' notice, with citizen science results showing very high levels of E coli?</p> <p><b>Response from the Cabinet Member for Environment and Waste</b> This is not a County Council responsibility.</p>
7.3	<p><b>Question from Cllr Lucy Shires</b> Last month, there was a national outage that restricted people from making emergency calls. This council tweeted that residents should report in-person to a fire station to report an emergency. Will this council review its contingency plans and community resilience in case such an outage occurs again?</p> <p><b>Response from the Cabinet Member for Community and Partnerships</b> Norfolk Fire and Rescue Service has internally reviewed the actions it took following the unexpected 999 outage on 26/06/23. We are also feeding our learning into the multi-agency reviews facilitated by the Norfolk resilience forum</p>

	<p>and nationally by BT. We have developed an initial action plan should a 999 outage occur again at short notice. This will be further supplemented by learning from our partner agency reviews. Our external public messaging process is included within the action plan to provide alternative contact number arrangements and to reassure the communities of Norfolk should the 999 facility fail again.</p>
7.4	<p><b>Question from Cllr Brian Watkins</b></p> <p>A report to Cabinet this morning recommends that no further work on the Norwich Western Link should be carried out for three months, in order to reduce the costs of the project. With increasing doubts about whether the funding from the DfT will ever be forthcoming, shouldn't the Council use this period of time to 'bite the bullet', and start considering alternative measures for tackling traffic and congestion problems on the western side of the city?</p> <p><b>Response from the Cabinet Member for Highways, Infrastructure and Transport</b></p> <p>The report does not recommend that no further work should be carried out on the Norwich Western Link (NWL) for three months, but rather that activity on the project be reduced while we await a decision on the Outline Business Case.</p> <p>The report also sets out that we're aware that other local authorities are in a similar position to us in awaiting funding commitments for their infrastructure projects and that we have a strong business case that demonstrates the NWL will provide high value for money, according to Department for Transport criteria. So I disagree that there are increasing doubts that this commitment will be made, and it's important that we are well-placed to respond and to finalise the planning application documents when a decision is made.</p> <p>Assessments carried out by the project team have shown that a new road link between the A47 and Broadland Northway is the most effective way of tackling the transport issues to the west of Norwich, and meeting the project objectives which were agreed with input from local communities. I am committed to doing everything I can to get this important project for Norfolk delivered.</p> <p><b>Second question from Cllr Brian Watkins</b></p> <p>The public of Norfolk will no doubt welcome new Government legislation to remove charges for DIY household waste at recycling centres. However, this will undoubtedly come at a cost to the Council with the county's council taxpayers likely to bear the brunt. Does the Cabinet member for the Environment agree with me that this is yet another example of the Conservative Government giving with the one hand and taking away with the other?</p> <p><b>Response from the Cabinet Member for Environment and Waste</b></p> <p>We await further clarification on this matter from Government so that we can make a detailed assessment on the future requirement and associated costs. However, in the meantime it is useful to clarify that the recent proposal presented by Government is not to remove charges for DIY waste, but is instead to require a weekly free allowance of up to two 50 litre rubble bags or one item a week such as a bathtub or shower screen, at a frequency of four visits over a four-week period.</p>

7.5	<p><b>Question from Cllr Dan Roper</b> Members have recently been receiving complaints concerning the frequency of overgrown verges. As much as we support pollinators, has this council stretched things too far to achieve savings?</p> <p><b>Response from the Cabinet Member for Highways, Infrastructure and Transport</b> There is a fine balance between ensuring highway safety and supporting the environment. In addition, each year the growing season is subtly different. The weather this year caused significant early growth of the roadside verges and we are aware this led to a number of complaints. However, to ensure highway safety the rural grass cut started in mid-May and is now largely complete. The timing of the next cut will be dependent on weather conditions and growing condition, but this usually will start in August.</p> <p>This strategy balances highway safety with promoting biodiversity along our environmentally important highway corridors.</p>
7.6	<p><b>Question from Cllr Tim Adams</b> Has this council met its pothole repair targets for 2022/23?</p> <p><b>Response from the Cabinet Member for Highways, Infrastructure and Transport</b> For 2022/23, the authority's target to repair 96% of priority A defects with 2 hours (Transport Asset Management Plan policy) was achieved with a figure of 99.4%. The performance figures for the other category of repairs (PB, PC &amp; PD) were also all above their target levels</p>
7.7	<p><b>Question from Cllr Emma Corlett</b> Will the Cabinet Member for Highways, Infrastructure and Transport use the time between now and October to produce the much-needed sustainable Plan B to tackle rat running in communities west of Norwich and a costed and impact assessed risk route to manage the potential £40m or more revenue effect when the Norwich western link scheme is abandoned? With increasing, delays, costs and prospects of the scheme not going ahead residents in the area need reassuring they are not going to be victims of the NWL failing.</p> <p><b>Response from the Cabinet Member for Highways, Infrastructure and Transport</b> The approach that has been recommended over the next three months is a sensible one, enabling us to reduce spending while meaning we will still be well-placed to finalise the planning application documents when we do receive approval from central government.</p> <p>It is the Norwich Western Link that is much needed and, with our strong business case, there is no reason to think we won't receive a funding commitment from central government. We are in regular contact with representatives of the communities worst affected by traffic congestion to the west of Norwich and they remain keen for us to get the Norwich Western Link delivered as soon as possible – and that's what we're focused on doing.</p>

	<p><b>Supplementary Question from Cllr Emma Corlett</b></p> <p>It has been a year since the last update of the overall scheme costs for the NWL were published. In the light of delays and raging inflation in the construction sector will the Cabinet Member for Highways, Infrastructure and Transport spell out how much of the contingency built into that last estimate that has been committed, for what purposes, and what proportion remains available, or explain why he is not releasing that information?</p> <p><b>Response from the Cabinet Member for Highways, Infrastructure and Transport</b></p> <p>We have stated in the July Cabinet report that an updated financial position, which will include any re-assessment of risk ('contingency'), will be presented to Cabinet following receipt of the Outline Business Case (OBC) decision or, if this is not received in the next three months, in the next report to Cabinet.</p>
7.8	<p><b>Question from Cllr Alison Birmingham</b></p> <p>The administration insisted they needed to spend £2m on consultants to find £17m in saving from duplication and additional layers of management. As Cabinet Member for Strategy and Governance, can the Leader confirm how you will find the additional £10m now you have dispensed with their services?</p> <p><b>Response from the Cabinet Member for Strategy and Governance</b></p> <p>Organisations use consultants for a number of reasons - sometimes to enhance expertise, sometimes to provide capacity that isn't available and sometimes for their third party perspective. It was a combination of those reasons why we used consultants in this case. As we plan for future efficiencies we are in a different position - as a result of last year's activity we have improved our own internal capability and identified opportunities that we would work through in subsequent years alongside the Budget Challenge process.</p> <p><b>Supplementary Question from Cllr Alison Birmingham</b></p> <p>Does the Leader agree that future procurement of consultants on contracts that cost more than £50k should in future be subject to specific decisions by Cabinet or decisions made under delegated powers by Cabinet members or senior officers and published so they can be publicly scrutinised?</p> <p><b>Response from the Cabinet Member for Strategy and Governance</b></p> <p>The Council rarely makes use of management consultants – most consultancy is technical in nature. Decisions to use consultants are already taken either by Cabinet or individual Cabinet Members [where they are key decisions] or by senior officers under delegated powers. The Council publishes contract awards for consultancy as for other forms of contract on the Contracts Finder website, as required by law.</p>
7.9	<p><b>Question from Cllr Mike Sands</b></p>



	<p>Complaints about the condition of roads, verges, roundabouts and street trees continues in Norwich since the county council unilaterally ended the long-term successful Highways Agency Agreement in 2020 with Norwich City Council. Will the Cabinet Member for Highways, Infrastructure and Transport set out exactly what responsibilities the county now has that were once carried out by Norwich City Council under that agreement and the changes in the budget and service standards that have been made compared to those applied before the change?</p> <p><b>Response from the Cabinet Member for Highways, Infrastructure and Transport</b></p> <p>One of the main drivers for terminating the historic agency agreement was to bring consistency of approach to the county. The following work types are carried out by the Council:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Bridge Maintenance,</li> <li>- Traffic signals maintenance and repair</li> <li>- Main road Streetlights</li> <li>- Highway Maintenance – including routine works, pothole repairs, surface dressing and resurfacing schemes</li> <li>- Highway Improvements</li> <li>- Streetworks / Permitting</li> <li>- Winter service delivery</li> </ul> <p>In terms of the budget changes, the Council always used to set the city budget for delegated activities and funded the works. These budgets have changed marginally since 2020, in line with the rest of the county maintenance budgets. The city agency fee that the Council used to pay was a significant saving which have been delivered. In terms of the standards, these are now consistent with the rest of the county in order to provide consistency in approach to highway maintenance.</p>
7.10	<p><b>Question from Cllr Julie Brociek-Coulton</b></p> <p>Social supermarkets serve only a small proportion of those communities in need and food banks are struggling with demands they can't meet. Summer holiday provision is not accessible to all families that might benefit and families include affordability barriers including transport to the provision. The rate of food inflation has dropped marginally but cheaper ranges price increases are out stripping average increases. In short, a lot of families are going to be struggling this summer and the agencies that try to help them are struggling to meet demand. What more will the administration do to help?</p> <p><b>Response from the Cabinet Member for Finance</b></p> <p>We are playing our part to provide support to those people most in need. Last year (2022/23) we supported over 83,000 households, and our support continues this year, funded by the Household Support Scheme. In the last year alone we have provided food vouchers to around 30,000 school children throughout the year, including during the summer and Christmas period. Working with the VCSE sector, 17 new food hubs have been opened, supporting 18,000 people. We have directly supported over 19,000 families struggling with unexpected and day-to-day costs through our Norfolk Assistance Scheme and issued over 15,000 grab and go bags containing essential supplies through our 47 libraries. All of this support is available throughout the year, including the summer period.</p>

7.11	<p><b>Question from Cllr Chrissie Rumsby</b> Published plans and a report agreed by the Communities Committee offered an exciting vision for the future of Wensum Lodge as an economic drive for the county based around a cultural and community hub. Since then, the case has been strengthened by the emergence of the East Norwich regeneration scheme.</p> <p>The report to Cabinet fails to mention the potential of Wensum Lodge to celebrate our history in a way that contributes to our success in the future. Will the Leader pull the report to give us the chance to discuss opportunities for the site and reflect on the wisdom of disposing of such an historic asset?</p> <p><b>Response from the Cabinet Member for Community and Partnerships</b> The previous proposal for a creative hub did not progress due to increasing costs and changing habits of adult learners. The initial design estimates undertaken by external consultants had a cost of £20 million, which will have increased significantly due to inflation, particularly of building materials. Also, with a significant shift towards adult learners accessing courses online or in their local community, the proposed usage for the building became unviable.</p>
7.12	<p><b>Question from Cllr Maxine Webb</b> Last week I attended the SEND Reform protest outside Parliament, with over 1000 other parents of disabled children.</p> <p>This week, the Children's Commissioner expressed concerns that "it's becoming ever harder for children to get the help they deserve", that "It is essential that we get the right support in place for children with SEND" and that "The SEND system should be set up to help these children achieve their dreams".</p> <p>Is the Cabinet Member for Children's Services confident that Norfolk's Local First Inclusion plan will give Norfolk's children with SEND the help and support they deserve and enable them to achieve their dreams?</p> <p><b>Response from the Cabinet Member for Children's Services</b> We are confident that our Local First Inclusion programme will lead to real change for children and young people who have special educational needs and disabilities, and for their families, due to it's equal focus on improving local mainstream inclusion alongside the development of more specialist provision. Our confidence is based on the fact that our Local First Inclusion programme is the result of a detailed negotiation with the DfE which led to Secretary of State approval for a joint DfE and NCC investment of £100million over a six year period. In agreeing our local plan it was clear that the DfE recognised it's alignment to the government's SEND &amp; Alternative Improvement Plan. However, in Norfolk we are also ensuring that in addition to the Local First Inclusion programme we continue to develop our Area SEND &amp; AP Strategy, using feedback from young people, families and the professionals who support them, to ensure that we are</p>

	<p>continually adapting to changing need. We also have the recognition from Ofsted/CQC within last years Area SEND Inspection Re-visit that we have improved services and we are confident that when we are inspected within the new Ofsted/CQC framework that we can demonstrate further improvements in outcomes for children. We will never be complacent and acknowledge the challenges that still exist nationally and locally. We must all continue to have SEND improvements as a priority, however, it is of equal importance that we all celebrate the wonderful support that does exist across our county and I was particularly pleased to hear of the great success, evidenced by the parental feedback received, of the recent SENDfest event held at Easton College and created by all of the partners working to improve SEND day in day out.</p>
7.13	<p><b>Question from Cllr Brenda Jones</b> Can the Cabinet Member for Adult Social Care confirm the current number of vacancies across the social care system that Norfolk County Council is involved in, e.g. social workers, assistant practioners, practice consultants, occupational therapists and care workers in social care settings.?</p> <p><b>Response from the Cabinet Member for Adult Social care</b> Thank you for your question</p> <p>We currently have a 3% vacancy rate in the Assistant Practitioner role (10.77FTE.); a 20% Social Worker vacancy rate (41.35 FTE.); a 12% practice consultant vacancy rate (4FTE); a 4% Team manager vacancy rate (2 FTE) and a 15% Occupational Therapist rate (6.87%). Our total vacancy rate for front line roles is 10%. We have seen a significant improvement in our recruitment position over the past 6 months due to our new data led and targeted recruitment approach. The impact of this will continue to be seen in coming months. Of the 41 social worker vacancies, we have successfully recruited to 19 of these vacancies. There is a long lead in time for recruits, particularly for international recruits, which can take up to 6 months to onboard.</p> <p>In terms of the external care sector, Skills for Care collect and publish vacancy rates through their annual return – to which there is a proportionately high response from Norfolk care providers. We estimate that there are 23,850 social care jobs in the Norfolk care market and based on the Autumn 2022 Skills for Care report there was an 8.7% vacancy rate in 2021/22 and turnover of 33.6%. This is below the national vacancy rate for the same period, which was 10.7%. Regionally the current vacancy rate is 10.9% and nationally 9.7%. The highest point nationally was a vacancy rate of 11.2% in October 2022. Registered managers and registered nurses continue to be the posts that are the hardest to fill, followed by care workers. There are less vacancies for senior care workers. A survey undertaken in April 2023, showed that recruitment numbers were 62% higher than leavers across respondents, suggesting an improving position.</p> <p>The Council continues to offer a range of support to promote recruitment and retention in the sector including our Norfolk recruitment campaign. Recently, Norfolk has also led the approved application for £2.4m from the Department of</p>

	Health and Social Care International Recruitment Fund on behalf of the Eastern Region, to establish a Centre of Excellence to provide support to the care market with safe and successful international recruitment.
7.14	<p><b>Question from Cllr Paul Neale</b></p> <p>The Conservatives proposed in February to cut £46.2m from the 2024/25 budget, which will directly affect demand-led services of Adult and Children's Services at a time when demand is increasing, provision costs are increasing leading to the perfect storm. At this month's Scrutiny Committee it has been announced that more 'adjustments' are needed to the MTFS to cover a further £18.7m gap. The Cabinet Member for Finance has repeatedly told me that he has lobbied his government for better funding and a clear MTFS plan. Does he now accept despite his valiant efforts that his government is not competent to manage our country's finances?</p> <p><b>Response from the Cabinet Member for Finance</b></p> <p>Thank you for your question. There are however a number of misconceptions within it, which I would like to address.</p> <p>The MTFS in February did not propose £46.2m of "cuts" for 2024-25. Rather, Full Council in February agreed the 2023-24 Budget and Medium Term Financial Strategy (MTFS) which set out the forecast gap in budgets up to 2026-27, including a forecast gap of £46.2m for 2024-25 in the context of the net budget required being forecast to increase to £567.337m. It is the need to protect service delivery which means we are seeking to find service improvements and efficiencies to live within our forecast council tax net budget of £521.121m for 2024-25. It is therefore premature to assume that the entirety of this £46.2m gap will be closed through budget "cuts", as an element may be found (for example) through additional income, or transformation. The budget gap position itself is kept under close review throughout the annual budget setting process, which is now underway.</p> <p>You are correct to note that budget changes for 2024-25 will impact on Adults and Children's Services, and indeed <a href="#">Cabinet in June</a> has agreed the target savings to be sought from each area of the Council's budget. It is of course inevitable that the largest departmental budgets will have to contribute to closing the budget gap given their size in relation to the overall budget – but the detail of where and how any specific new savings will be delivered remains to be considered and agreed as part of the 2024-25 Budget process. Clearly a key focus for budget setting remains to maximise efficiency savings and transformation in order to minimise the impact of savings on service delivery and service users. Furthermore, budget savings are only one element of the budget setting process and any savings therefore should not be viewed in isolation from the budget growth pressures which will be provided for as part of developing a robust, balanced and deliverable Budget position for next year.</p> <p>I would emphasise that the additional £18.7m gap you mention has been added to our financial planning as part of Cabinet's consideration of the update to the MTFS in June 2023, and relates to the 2027-28 financial year. This future year gap is in line with the gap set out in the long term financial forecast budget position as part of the MTFS considered by Full Council in February 2023. The</p>

	<p>extension of the MTFs by a year is a normal part of the budget setting process at this stage, and reflects a prudent financial management approach.</p> <p>Finally, in terms of lobbying, the Council continues to engage with Government around our key financial priorities:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• A long term financial settlement for local government.</li> <li>• An increase in the quantum of funding available to the sector.</li> <li>• Delivery of fair funding reform, recognising the costs of rural service delivery.</li> <li>• A fully-funded solution to the funding challenges facing social care.</li> </ul> <p>Although <a href="#">Ministers have indicated that they have heard local government's calls for long-term funding</a>, I have previously expressed my disappointment at the delays to some of these vital reforms. However, I would also note that as a sector we have successfully lobbied Government for additional funding, for example in the inflationary uplift to Rural Services Delivery Grant achieved for 2023-24, and the substantial additional funding provided for social care pressures over recent years. We have also received indications of the funding settlement basis for 2024-25 in the Government's <a href="#">Policy Statement</a>. This represents a step in the right direction, even if it is not the full multi-year settlement we would hope for.</p> <p>You can be assured that I will continue to argue the Council's case for additional funding, and a long term settlement at every opportunity.</p> <p><b>Second Question from Cllr Paul Neale</b></p> <p>The NWL OBC is as far from being agreed as it has ever been and work has been paused for at least three months, while inflation pushes the costs up with every passing day. Will the cabinet member undertake a review of the costs of delivering the NWL and provide up-to-date figures, as it has been two years since the last costs were produced, before any work on the project is restarted?</p> <p><b>Response from the Cabinet Member for Highways, Infrastructure and Transport</b></p> <p>Work on the project has not been paused, but rather officers are recommending that activity on the project be reduced while we await a decision on the Outline Business Case. It also has not been two years since the project budget was reviewed – this is reviewed regularly by the project team. The last time the budget was updated was a year ago, when the revised budget of £251 million was agreed by Cabinet in July 2022. As stated in the current Cabinet report, that budget is unchanged. If it were to change, this would be reported to Cabinet.</p>
7.15	<p><b>Question from Cllr Jamie Osborn</b></p> <p>Residents have frequently requested signage or other measures to discourage motorbikes and mopeds speeding over St Miles Bridge in Mancroft, which is a frequently-used pedestrian route, including by children going to school. Despite several years of discussions with the county council, those measures have not materialised. Will the Cabinet Member help me to get these simple measures in place to protect pedestrians from speeding motor vehicles?</p>

	<p><b>Response from the Cabinet Member for Highways, Infrastructure and Transport</b></p> <p>This administration has increased the local members highways budget to £11k and it is the responsibility of the local member to prioritise their residents' requests.</p> <p>St Miles Bridge is a footbridge and use by motorised vehicles is illegal. There are already several bollards in place to discourage and make it clear to the public that car and motorcycle use is not permitted. Any additional physical restrictions such as barriers could impact on accessibility, including people using wheelchairs or with sight impairments for example. A legal process has to be followed to implement a formal restriction before any additional signs can be erected, Officers will contact the local member to discuss whether any of their local highway member budget could be allocated to these proposals.</p> <p><b>Second Question from Cllr Jamie Osborn</b></p> <p>Last year saw record-breaking wildfires in Norfolk, driven by climate change. Fire scientists are predicting even worse wildfires in the UK this year, and warning that fire services are underprepared. What is the county council's emergency plan ahead of what is now, due to climate change, becoming wildfire season in Norfolk?</p> <p><b>Response from the Cabinet Member for Communities and Partnerships</b></p> <p>Norfolk Fire and Rescue Service commissioned a full review of last summer's heat emergency and has driven forward with improvements should we face the same challenges again. We have developed an action plan to track progress and have secured funding to be more resilient responding to wildfires. The improvements in our wildfire response have been significant, NFRS senior leaders are available to discuss our future plans and response activities.</p>
7.16	<p><b>Question from Cllr Ben Price</b></p> <p>In 2019, this council unveiled proposals to transform Wensum Lodge into a creative hub. Plans were made for upgraded rooms for adult education, along with rental space for start-up creative and arts organisations to bring in money to help pay the centre's running costs. This proposal would have helped safeguard a historic site in the heart of the cultural quarter for generations to come and is supported by the local community. The public outcry against the proposed rationalisation of the site is unparalleled. Will the leader of the council please reject today's recommendation and instead ask officers to look for new funding streams to deliver the creative hub proposal?</p> <p><b>Response from the Cabinet Member for Community and Partnerships</b></p> <p>The previous proposal for a creative hub did not progress due to increasing costs and changing habits of adult learners. The initial design estimates undertaken by external consultants had a cost of £20 million, which will have increased significantly due to inflation, particularly of building materials. Also, with a significant shift towards adult learners accessing courses online or in their local community, the proposed usage for the building became unviable.</p> <p><b>Second question from Cllr Ben Price</b></p>

	<p>Thorpe Hamlet residents are pleased to see the new 35 bus route introduced. The service is funded by money secured from the DfT to improve bus services across the county and crucially runs hourly throughout the day. Residents in the Quebec road area would like to see more buses operate on the 32 and 132 bus routes. Will the cabinet member work with me to seek ways to secure funding to improve this service?</p> <p><b>Response from the Cabinet Member for Highways, Infrastructure and Transport</b></p> <p>All service enhancements using Bus Service Improvement Plan funding need to have a high chance of being commercially sustainable once this short-term funding runs out otherwise the service improvement would have to be withdrawn at the end of the funding period. We are therefore carefully evaluating all requests such as this before agreeing to them, or otherwise. Officers will work with the bus operators and look into your request for the Quebec Road area.</p>
7.17	<p><b>Question from Cllr Colleen Walker</b></p> <p>Cllr Plant's comments about parking outside schools made the EDP front page.</p> <p>Will he clarify his attitude towards the settled policy of the council for speed restrictions, parking restriction and school streets, as any lack of clarity could encourage drivers to believe they need not follow rules intended to keep children safe, together with an explanation of why he allowed discussion of this item in a body that has no decision making role in parking outside schools?</p> <p><b>Response from the Cabinet Member for Highways, Infrastructure and Transport</b></p> <p>We have already have clear guidance in our new Norfolk Speed Management Strategy, recently approved by this Cabinet earlier this year. This Strategy explains the criteria for setting and implementing 20mph speed limits and how these are enforced. The Strategy also covers the policy around schools and we are continuing with the School Streets trial to see how we can improve safety and encourage more walking and cycling on the journey to and from school</p>
7.18	<p><b>Question from Cllr Steffan Aquarone</b></p> <p>Families across Norfolk are still facing delays of months if not years for Autism Spectrum Disorder (ASD) assessments for their children. Other than resourcing to clear the backlog of cases, what alternatives have been considered to increase the chances of young people getting the support they need in education? For example: amending aspects of EHCPs pending assessment where a setting and the parents or guardians agree that additional support is urgently needed?</p> <p><b>Response from the Cabinet Member for Children's Services</b></p> <p>EHCPs are produced based on specific advice and information from a range of professionals including the child's school / educational setting, an Educational Psychologist and medical professionals who are involved with the child. Reports from professionals detailing that advice and information are appended to the EHCP as a formal Section (Section K) of the plan.</p> <p>A diagnosis does not describe the individual needs of a child nor how they are best individually supported, and so an EHCP is not dependent nor predicated</p>

upon medical diagnosis such as ASD. An EHCP can be amended following an Annual Review based on the recommendations of relevant professionals supporting and working with the child, which is considered as part of an Annual Review meeting which is usually led by the child's school or setting. Amendments to an EHCP would need to be based on evidence that the child's needs have changed and different provision is required to meet those needs. Special educational provision within educational settings in Norfolk, including resources, support and funding can all be accessed without reliance upon an EHCP.

**Second question from Cllr Steffan Aquarone**

For the current proposed new Household Waste Recycling Centre, on an Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty in Sheringham, what do Norfolk County Council estimate to be the ongoing annual costs for the site, including specifically the ground rent? And what are the total estimated decommissioning costs for the current site?

**Response from the Cabinet Member for Environment and Waste**

A Cabinet Report on 31 January 2022 clearly set out details of the lease terms for the proposed replacement Sheringham Recycling Centre, which included clarification that the annual rent of £20,000 (which would be index linked and subject to reviews with an annual cap and collar between 2% and 4%) was subject to acquiring planning permission and an environmental permit for the new site.

That Cabinet report also clarified that if the replacement recycling centre went ahead then the existing site would be sold by open market sale through auction or by tender, meaning that beyond caring for the site any decommissioning costs are expected to only relate to any requirements of the Environment Agency as part of the process to surrender the site permit for the existing site, requirements which due to the nature of operations and the site are not expected to be significant if any.



# Cabinet

Item No: 8

**Report Title: Hunstanton Independent Living**

**Date of Meeting: 7th August 2023**

**Responsible Cabinet Member: Cllr Alison Thomas (Cabinet Member for Adult Social Care)**

**Responsible Director: Gary Heathcote, Director of Commissioning**

**Is this a Key Decision? Yes**

**If this is a Key Decision, date added to the Forward Plan of Key Decisions: 6th June 2023**

## **Executive Summary / Introduction from Cabinet Member**

Norfolk County Council (NCC) is committed to supporting people to be independent, resilient, and well. The Adult Social Care (ASC) Promoting Independence strategy identified a requirement for a range of housing options to help people maintain their independence. Having appropriate housing available in the right locations, at the right time and with the right characteristics, will go a long way to fulfil our vision of keeping people independent.

The creation of Independent Living (also known as Extra Care) units across the county will provide older people with an alternative housing option that recognises their growing care needs and allows them to continue living independently in their local communities. Less expensive than residential care, Independent Living has been identified as a way of reducing unnecessary residential care admissions. Evidence has demonstrated that a significant proportion of residential care admissions in Norfolk are for people with relatively low care needs, suggesting alternatives to residential care would be more appropriate. Increasing provision of Independent Living to match future demand will deliver circa £6m gross revenue saving per year

As part of a case for investing capital now to save on-going revenue later, in October 2018, Council approval was given to establish a dedicated programme to facilitate the development of Independent Living in Norfolk and agreement to fund capital investment up to £29m over the life of the programme. Extensive analysis of needs in conjunction with Public Health, local councils and social care data fed into this investment programme. As well as on-going revenue savings, new developments bring significant investment into Norfolk. For every £1 capital spent by Norfolk County Council, seven times worth of development value is brought into Norfolk. In addition, new schemes generate jobs in construction, on-going jobs in care and housing as well as reducing revenue costs for the council.

The current provision of Independent Living housing for older people in the county is low. Demand analysis for the programme has shown that Norfolk requires 2,842 Independent Living units (all tenures) by 2028. King's Lynn and West Norfolk has an unmet need for 552 units of Independent Living by 2028. Additional work completed in 2022 with all district councils has demonstrated that by 2041, Norfolk needs 5,130 units of Independent Living, 906 of these in Kings Lynn and West Norfolk. The proposed Hunstanton development will contribute 61 units to this demand.

Our first Independent Living site at Fakenham opened in May 2021, our second site in Acle opened in November 2022 and our third and fourth schemes in Stalham and Harleston obtained cabinet approval in August 2021 and March 2023 respectively. This fifth site at Hunstanton will also form part of the programme to meet this demand. With construction set to begin in Winter 2023, this scheme will send an important signal to the market that Norfolk is committed to fulfilling its ambitious plans.

This report summarises the business case for approving £2,958,500 capital funding from the existing Independent Living capital programme to Places for People Living Plus to support the development and secure nomination rights for NCC for 61 apartments in a new Independent Living scheme for older people in Hunstanton, King's Lynn and West Norfolk district.

## **Recommendations:**

### **Cabinet is recommended:**

- a) To approve £2,958,500 of capital contribution funding from the existing £29m Independent Living capital programme to Places for People Living Plus to support the development and secure nominations rights for 61 apartments in a new Independent Living scheme for older people in Hunstanton, King's Lynn and West Norfolk**
- b) To approve an exemption under paragraph 10(a)(iii) of contract standing orders**
- c) To delegate the responsibility to the Director of Commissioning to complete the relevant contract(s) with Places for People Living Plus**

## **1. Background and Purpose**

- 1.1 In October 2018, Adult Social Care Committee approval was given to establish a £29m dedicated programme, Independent Living, to facilitate the development of Independent Living housing in Norfolk. The creation of Independent Living units across the county will provide many older people with an alternative housing option that recognises their growing care needs and allows them to continue living independently in their local communities. Council agreed the principles of the programme, which are contained in the 2018 paper presented at Committee (page 60)<sup>1</sup>
- 1.2 Independent Living provides a new housing option for people as they get older, is less expensive than residential care and is identified as an effective way of supporting people to remain independent in their local communities. As well as bringing over £200 million of development into Norfolk, increasing provision of Independent Living to match future demand will deliver circa £6m gross revenue saving per year.

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<sup>1</sup> [2018 paper presented at Committee](#)

## **2. Proposal**

- 2.1` This report recommends Cabinet approve the use of capital from the existing programme to support the development of a new Independent Living scheme for older people in Hunstanton, King's Lynn and West Norfolk Borough Council which achieved planning permission in April 2023.
- 2.2 Cabinet is asked to approve £2,958,500 capital contribution funding from the existing Independent Living capital programme to Places for People Living Plus to support the development and secure nomination rights for 61 apartments in the development of a new Independent Living scheme for older people in Hunstanton, King's Lynn and West Norfolk, and to approve an exemption to contract standing orders for this direct award.
- 2.2.1 The scheme is a 61-unit Independent Living development in Hunstanton, within the King's Lynn and West Norfolk Borough Council area. This is made up of 11 two-bed flats and 50 one-bed flats on a 1.48-acre site. This land is part of a wider site which will include 60 general needs homes, 39 'care ready' bungalows for the over 55s alongside the 61 Independent Living units.
- 2.3 All Independent Living units will be wheelchair accessible.
- 2.4 All the 61 Independent Living units will be affordable rent, made up of a mixture of one and two bed apartments. There will also be 39 'care ready' designed bungalows on the wider site which will benefit from the care and communal facilities available at the scheme; six of these will also be affordable rent.
- 2.5 The scheme will be run and managed by Places for People Living Plus, as a not-for-profit Registered Social Landlord. On-site domiciliary care will be provided by a CQC registered care provider from the NCC Independent Living Care Framework. Tenants, as they are in their own homes, will retain the right to purchase care from any provider they wish. Securing nomination rights to the scheme will ensure delivery of revenue savings to adult social care.
- 2.6 The scheme will provide new housing options for older people whose current home may no longer suit their needs due to frailty or growing care needs and help to avoid unnecessary residential care home admissions. Priority for tenancies will be given to residents of the local district or with a family connection within the local district
- 2.7 The scheme is an ideal location for Independent Living, as it is located close to many amenities including Hunstanton GP Surgery and the local high street with a several supermarkets, a bus stop is also located close to the scheme providing regular services to other local areas.
- 2.8 As it is part of a larger housing development, construction on the Independent Living scheme is set to begin Winter 2023 and completion expected by Spring 2025.
- 2.9 A Dynamic Purchasing System (DPS) was set up by NCC in 2021 to provide a compliant procurement route for landlords wishing to apply for capital. Registered Social Landlords on the DPS have already been through quality and governance checks. Places for People Living Plus were successfully admitted onto the DPS following those checks

### **3. Impact of the Proposal**

- 3.1 On completion of the site, Hunstanton Independent Living will deliver on-going revenue benefits to NCC by reducing the need for residential care admissions.
- 3.2 Once open, Hunstanton Independent Living will provide more choice for individuals about how their housing and care needs are met as they grow older
- 3.3 There are also numerous studies which demonstrate the benefits of Independent Living community environments for people, including reduction in number of GP visits, reduction in falls and improvements in general health and wellbeing.
- 3.4 This new development will bring in significant investment into Norfolk. For every £1 capital spent by Norfolk County Council on this scheme; £7 of development value is created, including funding from Homes England. This new scheme will generate jobs in construction and on-going jobs in care and housing including managerial and leadership roles.

### **4. Evidence and Reasons for Decision**

- 4.1 Formal committee approval was given to NCC to set up a £29m capital programme of work to facilitate affordable Independent Living developments with capital contributions in exchange for nomination rights. Affordable rental schemes are not financially viable for the market to provide but they allow vulnerable people to live independently for longer and they reduce need for placements in residential care homes. This decision is to support an affordable scheme as per the aims agreed by Committee in setting up this long-term capital programme.
- 4.2 Based on the original 2018 programme demand data, there is an estimated total requirement for 552 Independent Living housing units in King's Lynn and West Norfolk by 2028. Additional work completed in 2022 with all district councils, has demonstrated that by 2041, Norfolk needs 5,130 units of Independent Living, 906 of these in Kings Lynn and West Norfolk.
- 4.3 Places for People Living Plus have provided a range of information about the scheme which has been assessed and validated against the criteria set out by the programme, including design standards (including accessibility), communal space, location, assistive technology provision and commitment to the planned and unplanned care model. The outcome of these assessments is that the programme recommends the scheme as meeting the criteria for an Independent Living capital contribution.
- 4.4 There will be a fifty-year Nomination Agreement between NCC, Places for People and Kings Lynn & West Norfolk Borough Council which will give NCC the right to nominate older people with eligible care needs as potential tenants for the 61 affordable rent units. Priority will be given to residents of the local district or with a family connection within the local district.
- 4.5 Potential tenants for affordable rent units will be identified by adult operational teams, approximately six months before completion. This will support the fill of the scheme as it starts to near completion.

## **5. Alternative Options**

- 5.1 The decision on this paper is to proceed or not with the development.

## **6. Financial Implications**

- 6.1 Places for People Living Plus have applied for additional funding from the Independent Living Programme to deliver the scheme. Places for People Living Plus have provided information on the total costs of developing the scheme and the level of grant funding provided from Homes England. Accounting for this funding, Places for People Living Plus have set out a request for funding of £2,958,500.
- 6.2 The application has been reviewed and the scheme delivers against our Programme objectives. Financial information provided has also been reviewed and it is considered that the request for funding of £2,958,500 is appropriate and proportionate to the overall costs of the scheme.
- 6.3 The provision of funding of up to a maximum of £2,958,500 funding to Places for People Living Plus for the Hunstanton Independent Living scheme is a one-off requirement and there is no ongoing requirement to provide any further capital funding to this scheme. The legal agreement states that the capital contribution is capped and therefore NCC has no liability for any increases in developing costs or reductions in funding from other sources. If the final construction costs are less than calculated, NCC has the provision to reduce the final capital payment in line with this reduction.
- 6.4 This is an invest to save scheme. This scheme enables a shift from the high care cost environments, and it is expected to deliver on-going revenue benefits.
- 6.5 When the Hunstanton scheme is complete and fully occupied, based on current year figures, it will generate revenue savings of at least £342k to NCC per year.
- 6.6 Repayment on capital borrowing will mean revenue savings from each scheme are diluted by repayments until borrowing is repaid. However, even during the repayment period, revenue savings are still achieved.
- 6.7 Whilst a net revenue saving, care costs associated with the scheme for the on-site domiciliary care will be provided by a CQC registered care provider from the NCC Care Framework to be agreed at the prevailing rate when the site opens.

## **7. Resource Implications**

### **7.1 Staff:**

- 7.1.1 There are no staff implications, other than business as usual for the programme team and a new scheme for operational staff to become familiar with, supported by the programme.

### **7.2 Property:**

7.2.1 None identified.

7.3 **IT:**

7.31 None identified.

## **8. Other Implications**

### **8.1 Legal Implications:**

8.1.1 This proposal would see NCC making a capital contribution for the purposes of the recipient social housing activity. In accordance with contract standing orders paragraph 10(a)(iii) a contract of this nature may be directly awarded with the agreement of Cabinet.

8.1.2 As part of its application, Places for People Living Plus has provided an opinion that the award is in line with the subsidy control rules established by the UK-EU Trade and Cooperation Agreement. Reliance on this will form part of any contractual terms entered into.

### **8.2 Human Rights Implications:**

8.2.1 Not applicable to this paper.

### **8.3 Equality Impact Assessment (EqIA) (this must be included):**

8.3.1 An equality impact assessment has been completed and is included at Appendix A.

### **8.4 Data Protection Impact Assessments (DPIA):**

8.4.1 Not applicable to this paper.

### **8.5 Health and Safety implications (where appropriate):**

8.5.1 Not applicable to this paper.

### **8.6 Sustainability implications (where appropriate):**

8.6.1 Not applicable to this paper.

### **8.7 Any Other Implications:**

8.7.1 Not applicable to this paper.

## **9. Risk Implications / Assessment**

9.1 A risk to the project is that the units of Independent Living are not occupied. Part of the role of the Independent Living programme is to manage a workstream with both operational teams and corporate communications team to promote and actively engage the public in promotional and marketing activity.

- 9.2 As set out in Section 6 above, the capital contribution from NCC is capped and NCC is not liable for increases in costs.

## 10. Select Committee Comments

- 10.1 Not applicable to this paper.

## 11. Recommendations

### 11.1 Cabinet is recommended:

- (a) To approve £2,958,500 of capital contribution funding from the existing Independent Living capital programme to Places for People Living Plus to support the development and secure nominations rights for 61 apartments in a new Independent Living scheme for older people in Hunstanton, King's Lynn and West Norfolk
- (b) To approve an exemption under paragraph 10(a)(iii) of contract standing orders
- (c) To delegate the responsibility to the Director of Commissioning to complete the relevant contract(s) with Places for People Living Plus

## 12. Background Papers

[Adult Social Services Committee \(ASSC\) on 8 October 2018](#) (page 60) – proposal and business case for development of Independent Living housing in Norfolk.

[Policy and Resources Committee in October 2018](#) (page 3) – approval of NCC funds capital investment up to £29m over the life of the programme.

[Independent Living Strategy and Position Statement](#)

### Officer Contact

If you have any questions about matters contained within this paper, please get in touch with:

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# Independent Living

## Equality Assessment: Findings and Recommendations

June 2023

**Gary Heathcote, Director of Commissioning  
Adult Social Care**

This assessment helps you to consider the impact of service changes on people with protected characteristics. You can update this assessment at any time so that it informs ongoing service planning and commissioning.

For help or more information please contact Neil Howard, Equality & Accessibility Officer, email [neil.howard@norfolk.gov.uk](mailto:neil.howard@norfolk.gov.uk), Tel: 01603 224196



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10.	Further information and contact details	6

## The purpose of an equality assessment

1. The purpose of an equality assessment is to enable decision-makers to consider the impact of a proposal on different individuals and communities prior to the decision being made. Mitigating actions can then be developed if adverse impact is identified.

## The Legal context

2. Public authorities have a duty under the Equality Act 2010 to consider the implications of proposals on people with protected characteristics. The Act states that public bodies must pay due regard to the need to:
  - Eliminate discrimination, harassment, victimisation and any other conduct that is prohibited by or under the Act<sup>1</sup>;
  - Advance equality of opportunity between people who share a relevant protected characteristic<sup>2</sup> and people who do not share it<sup>3</sup>;
  - Foster good relations between people who share a relevant protected characteristic and people who do not share it<sup>4</sup>.
3. The full Act is available [here](#).

## The assessment process

4. This assessment comprises two phases:
  - **Phase 1** – evidence is gathered on the proposal – looking at the people who might be affected, the findings of related assessments and public consultation, contextual information about local areas and populations and other relevant data. Where appropriate, engagement with residents, service users and stakeholders takes place, to better understand any issues that must be taken into account.
  - **Phase 2** – the results are analysed. If the assessment indicates that the proposal may impact adversely on people with protected characteristics, mitigating actions are identified.
5. When completed, the findings are provided to decision-makers, to enable any issues to be taken into account before a decision is made.

## The proposal

6. The Independent Living programme sets out an ambitious programme of work to increase and accelerate the development of Independent Living (previously known as extra care) homes across the county. The Independent Living programme is part of a wider programme which also develops and delivers specialised supported housing for a wide range of working age adults with differing levels of need across Norfolk.

Independent Living is a type of accommodation available to people over the age of 55 who find that their current accommodation no longer suits their needs and would benefit from having care delivered on site, and the extra peace of mind from having

cover for any unplanned care element also on site and available 24/7. Independent Living is not a residential care home nor is it sheltered housing. The provision of unplanned care on site and the fact that residents live in their own flat, with their own front door means that it sits somewhere between the two, allowing residents to maintain their own independence with on-site care provision.

The purpose of the project is to accelerate and promote development of this type of housing in Norfolk. Analysis of demand has demonstrated that there is approximately 2,800 units needed by 2028 and the project would aim to meet this demand.

King's Lynn & West Norfolk district has unmet need for 486 units of Independent Living (extra care) by 2028. The 61 units at Hunstanton will contribute to this demand. This meets demand in the area as detailed in the programme level business case

## Who is affected?

7. The proposal will affect adults, children and staff with the following protected characteristics:

<b>People of all ages</b>	<b>No</b>
<b>A specific age group (please state if so): Over 55's</b>	<b>Yes</b>
<b>Disability</b> (all disabilities and long-term health conditions)	<b>No</b>
<b>Gender reassignment</b> (e.g. people who identify as transgender)	<b>No</b>
<b>Marriage/civil partnerships</b>	<b>No</b>
<b>Pregnancy &amp; Maternity</b>	<b>No</b>
<b>Race</b> (different ethnic groups, including Gypsies and Travellers)	<b>No</b>
<b>Religion/belief</b> (different faiths, including people with no religion or belief)	<b>No</b>
<b>Sex</b> (i.e. men/women/intersex)	<b>No</b>
<b>Sexual orientation</b> (e.g. lesbian, gay and bisexual people)	<b>No</b>

## Analysis of the people affected

8. By 2028 there will be approximately 261,000 people aged over 65. The analysis of need suggests that 3,540 of these will require and benefit from Independent Living Housing. In addition to age, within this projected group it can be expected that a range of protected characteristics will fall, including sexual orientation, disability, marital status, religious beliefs and multiple ethnic backgrounds.

This will vary by district and ultimately by site.

King's Lynn & West Norfolk district has unmet need for 486 units of Independent Living (extra care) by 2028. The 61 units at Hunstanton will contribute to this demand. This meets demand in the area as detailed in the programme level business case

District of Norfolk	By 2028 Programme <sup>1</sup> : need for affordable rental units*	2041 Norfolk older peoples housing study <sup>2</sup> : all tenure need
Breckland	207	900
Breckland	143	831
Great Yarmouth	124	596
King's Lynn and West Norfolk	220	906
North Norfolk	164	794
Norwich	55	285
South Norfolk	144	818
<b>Norfolk total</b>	<b>1,057</b>	<b>5,130</b>

\*Adjusted since programme start to take account of schemes open and/or on-site, accurate October 2022

<sup>1</sup> Norfolk County Council 2018 Programme Business Case using Housing LIN SHOP tool, overlaid with current provision of home support.

<sup>2</sup> Three Dragons and all Norfolk councils (county and district) 2022: Study of Demand for Specialist Retirement Housing and Accessible housing for older people in Norfolk including related planning and viability issues, using Retirement Housing Group model to forecast demand.

## Potential impact

- The current provision of Independent Living across the county is low compared to projected need. This project aims to increase the numbers of units across the county, matching the demand in each district. The increase in provision of Independent Living also contributes to statutory requirements placed on local authorities in relation to the provision of housing and care.

The position statement has already set out that accommodation must be suitable to accommodate those living with disabilities, have provision for married couples (whatever their sexual orientation) and by law be accessible to all. The provider must have due regard for ethnic, sexual and religious differences. The project will also set out minimum design requirements for build in relation to accessibility and supporting Independent Living (provision of equipment/ technology).

Eligibility for tenancy on each site where Norfolk County Council retains nomination rights will be based on care needs. A person must agree to the accommodation being suitable for them and to put themselves forward for tenancy.

The tenure mix, i.e. whether the flat is bought or rented, will be site specific. For Hunstanton there is a mix of one and two beds apartments all at affordable rent.

Unit numbers	One-bed	Two-bed	Total
Number of affordable units (NCC nominations)	50	11	61
Number of shared ownership	0	0	0
<b>Total number of units at the site</b>			<b>61</b>

The programme cannot yet plan or predict in which locations schemes will be brought forward first and it will be an ongoing managed risk to ensure that development is

consistent across the county, and where there are districts with no schemes in the pipeline to work across partners to unlock the barriers to schemes being developed.

The scheme at Hunstanton contributes to meeting demand in King's Lynn & West Norfolk district.

## Accessibility considerations

**Describe here how accessibility will be incorporated into the proposal.**

10. Accessibility is a priority for Norfolk County Council.

The project has also set out minimum design requirements for build in relation to accessibility and supporting independent living (provision of equipment/ technology).

It is also expected that all units will adhere to the 16 Lifetime Homes Criteria.

The scheme at Hunstanton has been rigorously assessed against this criteria and it has met the Lifetimes Homes standard. It will also be suitable for those people living with dementia and/or a disability and will also be suitable for couples.

## Recommended actions

11. If your assessment has identified any adverse impact, set out here any actions that will help to mitigate it.

	Action	Lead	Date
1.	Ensuring that all units developed meet lifetime homes criteria, the expected equipment and technology provision and are accessible to all (within the care banding criteria).	Sera Hall	Ongoing
2.	Ensuring that demand across the county is met, on a district by district basis.	Sera Hall	Ongoing.

## Evidence used to inform this assessment

- Equality Act 2010
- Public Sector Equality Duty
- Norfolk County Council Independent Living Strategy 2018

## Further information

12. For further information about this equality impact assessment please contact Gary Heathcote ([Gary.Heathcote@norfolk.gov.uk](mailto:Gary.Heathcote@norfolk.gov.uk)).

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<sup>1</sup> **Prohibited conduct:**

Direct discrimination occurs when someone is treated less favourably than another person because of a protected characteristic they have or are thought to have, or because they associate with someone who has a protected characteristic.

Indirect discrimination occurs when a condition, rule, policy or practice in your organisation that applies to everyone disadvantages people who share a protected characteristic.

Harassment is “unwanted conduct related to a relevant protected characteristic, which has the purpose or effect of violating an individual’s dignity or creating an intimidating, hostile, degrading, humiliating or offensive environment for that individual”.

Victimisation occurs when an employee is treated badly because they have made or supported a complaint or raised a grievance under the Equality Act; or because they are suspected of doing so. An employee is not protected from victimisation if they have maliciously made or supported an untrue complaint.

2 The protected characteristics are:

**Age** – e.g. a person belonging to a particular age or a range of ages (for example 18 to 30 year olds).

**Disability** - a person has a disability if she or he has a physical or mental impairment which has a substantial and long-term adverse effect on that person's ability to carry out normal day-to-day activities.

**Gender reassignment** - the process of transitioning from one gender to another.

**Marriage and civil partnership**

**Pregnancy and maternity**

**Race** - refers to a group of people defined by their race, colour, and nationality (including citizenship) ethnic or national origins.

**Religion and belief** - has the meaning usually given to it but belief includes religious and philosophical beliefs including lack of belief (such as Atheism).

**Sex** - a man or a woman.

**Sexual orientation** - whether a person's sexual attraction is towards their own sex, the opposite sex or to both sexes.

3 The Act specifies that having due regard to the need to advance equality of opportunity might mean:

- Removing or minimizing disadvantages suffered by people who share a relevant protected characteristic that are connected to that characteristic;
- Taking steps to meet the needs of people who share a relevant protected characteristic that are different from the needs of others;
- Encouraging people who share a relevant protected characteristic to participate in public life or in any other activity in which participation by such people is disproportionately low.

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4 Having due regard to the need to foster good relations between people and communities involves having due regard, in particular, to the need to (a) tackle prejudice, and (b) promote understanding.

# Cabinet

Item No: 9

**Report Title: Norfolk Fire and Rescue Service Statement of Assurance 2022/23**

**Date of Meeting: 07 August 2023**

**Responsible Cabinet Member:** Cllr Margaret Dewsbury (Cabinet Member for Communities and Partnerships)

**Responsible Director:** Ceri Sumner, Chief Fire Officer

**Is this a Key Decision? No**

**If this is a Key Decision, date added to the Forward Plan of Key Decisions:**

## **Executive Summary / Introduction from Cabinet Member**

Fire and Rescue authorities are accountable for their performance, and they should be open to evaluation by the communities they serve. Performance information should be accessible, robust, and fit-for-purpose, accurately reporting on effectiveness and value for money.

One of the principal aims of the statement of assurance is to provide an accessible way in which communities, Government, local authorities and other partners may make a valid assessment of their local fire and rescue authority's performance.

The information provided within the draft statement is clear, accessible, and user-friendly and, where information is provided in existing documents, extracts and links to these documents have been included.

The annual statement must provide assurances on **financial, governance, and operational** matters for the previous year and show how the service has had due regard to the expectations set out in their Community Risk Management Plan (CRMP), formally [Integrated Risk Management Plan \(IRMP\)](#) and the requirements included in the [Fire and Rescue National Framework 2018](#).



## **Recommendations:**

- 1. Note the assurances that financial, governance and operational management of Norfolk Fire and Rescue Service meet statutory requirements.**
- 2. Consider and approve the Norfolk Fire and Rescue Service Statement of Assurance 2022/23. (Appendix A).**

### **1. Background and Purpose**

- 1.1. Under the Fire and Rescue Service National Framework 2018, Fire and Rescue Authorities must provide annual assurance on financial, governance and operational matters and show how they have had due regard to the expectations set out in their CRMP and the requirements included in the Framework.
- 1.2. To provide the assurance, fire and rescue authorities must publish an annual statement of assurance.
- 1.3. The Norfolk Fire and Rescue Authority Statement of Assurance 2022/23 (Appendix A) has been devised as a short, accessible summary document that draws together a wide range of information on performance, finance, governance and planning that is already in the public domain. Instead of reproducing all of this material, we have provided internet links to previously published documents.

### **2. Proposal**

- 2.1. There is minimal guidance on what Statements of Assurance should cover, with authorities able to judge for themselves on what to include according to local need and circumstance. However, there is an expectation that it should include:
  - Financial information
  - Governance arrangements
  - Operational matters
  - Future improvements
- 2.2. The Statement of Assurance outlines detail against these four areas to provide requirements under the FRS National Framework.
- 2.3. There is no requirement for the statement to be subject to internal or external consultation, but it should be published and widely available.

### **3. Impact of the Proposal**

- 3.1. The information supplied will be in the public interest and outlines the performance of Norfolk Fire and Rescue Service. The Norfolk Fire and Rescue Service and the Fire Authority can be held to account against the performance data supplied.

#### **4. Evidence and Reasons for Decision**

- 4.1. Publishing an annual Statement of Assurance is a legal requirement. The fire Authority agrees on the format and content.

#### **5. Alternative Options**

- 5.1. Publishing this document is a legal requirement, so there is no alternative.

#### **6. Financial Implications**

- 6.1. The process of producing and publishing the annual Statement of Assurance has no significant financial implications.

#### **7. Resource Implications**

- 7.1 Staff:**  
None.

- 7.2 Property:**  
None.

- 7.3 IT:**  
None.

#### **8. Other Implications**

- 8.1 Legal Implications:**  
None.

- 8.2 Human Rights Implications:**  
None.

- 8.3 Equality Impact Assessment (EqIA) (this must be included):**  
Our Statement of Assurance has been designed to create access and equality of opportunity for our staff and service users with protected characteristics.

We are proud that our work to promote equality and keep our diverse communities safe has been recognised by two national awards and one award nomination – but we are not complacent about the level of transformation still required, and this is set out in this report.

In order to ensure that we are discharging our responsibility to give due regard to the public sector equality duty in designing our Statement of Assurance, a comprehensive range of evidence has been gathered and analysed. This has involved reviewing data about people and services affected, contextual information and commissioned research about local areas and populations - and crucially, the findings of public consultation.

This includes our Local Government Chronicle award-nominated research with over 200 residents from seldom-heard backgrounds in Norfolk – on barriers to employment and services. It also includes staff surveys and engagement.

In addition, we have completed around 850 equality impact assessments of all NFRS policies, which includes our Community Risk Management Plan (CRMP).

Our CRMP guides everything we do as a fire and rescue service – and specifically this Statement of Assurance.

The equality impact assessment of our CRMP is published on [www.norfolk.gov.uk](http://www.norfolk.gov.uk) [our Norfolk Fire and Rescue webpages](#) and sets out our approach to keeping our diverse community as safe as possible; how we consider all potential risks and how we aim to respond to them.

**8.4 Data Protection Impact Assessments (DPIA):**

Not required.

**8.5 Health and Safety implications (where appropriate):**

Not required.

**8.6 Sustainability implications (where appropriate):**

None.

**8.7 Any Other Implications:**

None.

**9. Risk Implications / Assessment**

9.1 None.

## **10. Select Committee Comments**

10.1. Not applicable.

## **11. Recommendations**

- 1. Note the assurances that financial, governance and operational management of Norfolk Fire and Rescue Service meet statutory requirements.**
- 2. Consider and approve the Norfolk Fire and Rescue Authority Statement of Assurance 2022/23. (Appendix A).**

## **12. Background Papers**

12.1. Appendix A - Norfolk Fire and Rescue Authority Statement of Assurance 2022/23.

### **Officer Contact**

If you have any questions about matters contained within this paper, please get in touch with:

**Officer name:** Anthony White

**Telephone no.:** 01603 537395

**Email:** [anthony.white2@norfolk.gov.uk](mailto:anthony.white2@norfolk.gov.uk)



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# Norfolk Fire & Rescue Service

## Statement of Assurance

2022 to 2023

Chief Fire Officer  
Ceri Sumner  
June 2023





## STATEMENT OF ASSURANCE

## INTRODUCTION

### PURPOSE

Fire and Rescue Authorities must provide both local communities and the Government with an annual statement of assurance on financial, governance and operational matters. Norfolk Fire and Rescue Service (NFRS) must demonstrate it is doing what Government expects, as laid down in the [Fire and Rescue National Framework for England](#), and that it is delivering the local [Community Risk Management Plan \(CRMP\)](#) formerly known as the Integrated Risk Management Plan (IRMP). This statement of assurance covers the period April 2022 to March 2023.

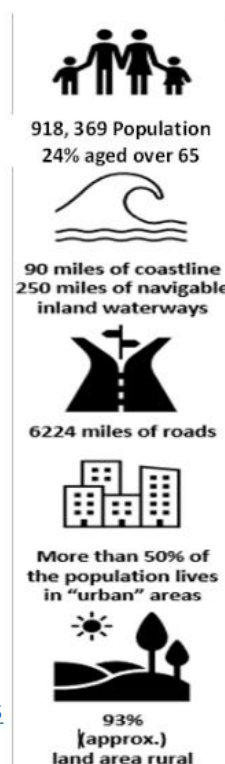
### NORFOLK'S CONTEXT

In Norfolk, the Fire and Rescue Authority is Norfolk County Council which governs and operates the Fire and Rescue Service as a service in the council's Community and Environmental Services Directorate. Our Chief Fire Officer is a member of the CES Departmental Management Team with the responsibility for the Fire and Rescue Service and Trading Standards (since May 2023). The type of fire and rescue service that is operated is influenced by the nature of the area in which it works.

Norfolk is the fifth largest county in England, the second most rural county with one of the lowest population densities in England. Norfolk has the second largest road network in the UK (after Devon) and large inland bodies of water (126 miles). Norfolk is a relatively flat county prone to flooding and coastal tidal surges. It has a strong agricultural sector with a growing renewable energy sector. The county has a changing emergency call profile - as well as fires we also attend a wide variety of incidents like rescues from water and road traffic collisions.

Norfolk has an increasing and ageing population. Norfolk's population could rise by an estimated 113,129 over the period to 2043 - this is an increase of 12.3%. Norfolk's population is projected to exceed one million by 2036. Projected population of persons aged 65 and over, as a percentage of all persons is projected to be 30% by 2043. Norfolk's ethnic make-up is characterised by a predominantly White English, Welsh, Scottish, Northern Irish, British or Irish population (94.7%). (A further 0.1% are Gypsy/Irish Travellers). The proportion of people with an ethnic group other than White is 5.3%, (including 0.1% Roma) and this varies between local authority districts. There are around 160 languages spoken in Norfolk. English is not the first language of around 12,400 school children in the county.

An extensive profile of Norfolk can be found in Norfolk's Story. [Download "Norfolk's Story" from the Norfolk Insight website.](#)



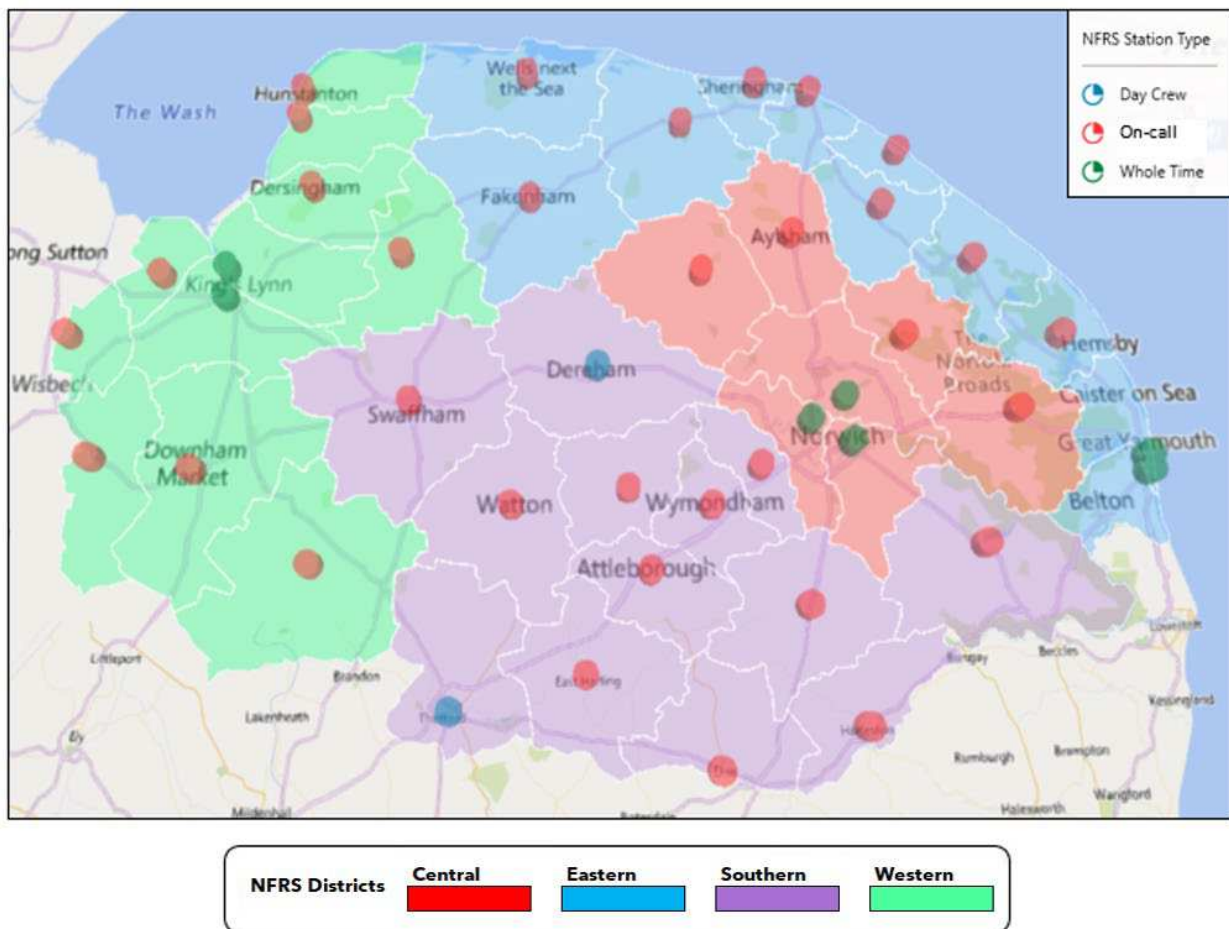
### NORFOLK FIRE AND RESCUE SERVICE RESOURCES

There are 42 fire stations across the county. Carrow and Sprowston in Norwich, and King's Lynn South are wholetime stations crewed by firefighters 24/7. Four stations have a mix of wholetime and on-call firefighters (Earlham, Great Yarmouth, Gorleston and King's Lynn North), two stations have a mix of Day Crew and on-call firefighters (Dereham and Thetford), and 33 stations are crewed by on-call firefighters in market towns and villages. On-call firefighters are staff whose main job is outside the Fire and Rescue Service, but they are available on-call to respond to emergencies in their area.



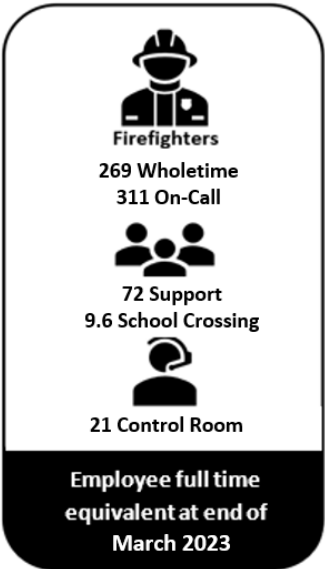
## STATEMENT OF ASSURANCE

## SCOPE OF RESPONSIBILITY



The service has a variety of fire engines to tackle a range of different emergencies. For example, Heavy Rescue Pumps (HRPs) are equipped to respond to road traffic collisions and Technical Rescue Units (TRUs) attend water rescue and large animal rescue incidents. The off-road 4x4 fire engines are used for flooding incidents, heathland/forest fires, firefighting and rescues at height.

Our fleet of specialist vehicles also includes, four Heavy Rescue Pumps, two Environmental Protection Units (EPUs), an Incident Command Vehicle, two Water / Foam Carriers (WFCs), three Aerial Ladder Platforms (ALPs), five Wildfire Water Misting Units, two Drones, a High-Volume Pumping (HVP) Unit, four Water Rescue / Animal Rescue units, a Mass Decontamination Unit and driver training vehicles. The Service also hosts a team of Urban Search and Rescue (USAR) personnel, with a range of specialised equipment and vehicles, who are trained to respond to major incidents that may occur regionally or nationally. The capability also includes a K-9 unit. This specialist team make up a national response capability, who can also respond to a terrorist threat should such an incident occur.





## STATEMENT OF ASSURANCE

### OUR VISION AND MISSION

Norfolk Fire & Rescue Service is at the heart of protecting communities.

**We exist to make our county as safe as possible.**

**Our mission is to make Norfolk a safer place through:**

**PREVENTING** fires and other emergencies

**PROTECTING** people, buildings and the environment

**RESPONDING** to fires and other emergencies when they arise

**We will deliver our vision by...**

Having a service that remains relevant, capable and agile to protect Norfolk as best it can

Supporting our communities to reduce risk by educating and advising them

Responding to incidents, ensuring we have the best people, equipment and technology to be able to do this

**We will support Norfolk by...**

- ✓ Educating adults, children, partners and businesses so they all better understand the part they can play in reducing risk.
- ✓ Understanding the diverse needs of our communities, using local knowledge and risk mapping based on current data.
- ✓ Being prepared for the unexpected, through continued staff training opportunities, investment in our service and flexibility to take on different duties with utmost professionalism.
- ✓ Supporting our people so they are in they are physically and mentally safe and uphold the highest professional standards.
- ✓ Being a trusted voice. We will work with businesses and residents to help them reduce the risk of incidents occurring, whether at work, at home, in public places or on the move.
- ✓ Taking enforcement action where attempts to work with people have not resulted in the safest course of action being followed to ensure the ongoing safety of everyone.

**Our priorities and action will be driven by...**

- ✓ Doing what matters - we will have clear strategic priorities and plans, based on evidence, risk, presenting and emerging need.
- ✓ Doing the right thing - we will dynamically use our expertise and resources to take the right course of action to achieve the best outcomes, whatever the circumstances.
- ✓ Promoting and adhering to the national core code of ethics and values as well as our own Cultural Framework to ensure positive behaviours and actions, showing compassion and empathy with our audiences, supporting them in the most appropriate ways.

**The future of Norfolk  
will be safer through the work that we do.**





## IRMP

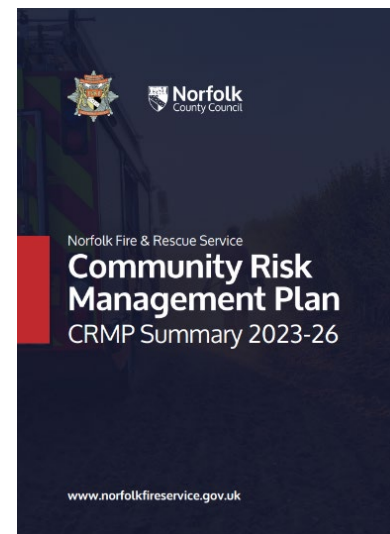
### Integrated Risk Management Plan (IRMP)



The IRMP20-23 set out the risks and challenges Norfolk Fire and Rescue Service needed to respond to over the three years from 2020 to 2023.

Through 2022-23 we carried out the process of drafting, engaging, and consulting on the Community Risk Management Plan 2023-26 (CRMP - the new

name for IRMP). The CRMP is the single most important document for the Fire and Rescue Service as it shows what the Service will be doing and why. It is also one of the means by which the public can hold the Service to account.



We engaged internally and externally through 2022 and then consulted on a draft CRMP 2023-2026 plan from October 2022 to December 2022. Elected members reviewed and approved our proposals and we published and adopted our new CRMP 2023-2026 in April 2023. [Download our CRMP 2023-26 from our community risk management plan webpage.](#)

### Collaborative working

We have an established record of working in partnership to deliver an effective and efficient services. This includes:

- Fulfilling our duties outlined in the Civil Contingencies Act 2004 by working as part of the Norfolk Resilience Forum (NRF) to maintain and develop Norfolk's Community Risk Register, plan the response to major incidents and emergencies in the county, and carry out Multi-Agency training exercises as part of the preparation of an effective response.
- Participating in over the border mutual aid agreements via the National Resilience Programme, which shares specialist response assets across the country. Alongside these wider arrangements, we have local agreements in place with neighbouring fire and rescue services (Lincolnshire, Cambridgeshire and Suffolk) to ensure the fastest response to emergency calls and to share specialist assets.
- Working with other Fire and Rescues Services to improve interoperability. We are part of the East Coast and Hertfordshire Control Room Consortium (EHCRC), a group of fire and rescue services that are working together to standardise control room practices so that we can support each other in the event of major incidents. We make use of national operational and tactical guidance. We will be changing our communication systems as part of the national emergency services mobile communications programme (ESMCP). The EHCRC is reaching its natural conclusion. We are continuing with this arrangement until late 2025 (possibly early 2026) and have entered into procurement discussions (in collaboration with Hertfordshire Fire and Rescue Service) to scope a replacement system and partnership control room delivery.



## STATEMENT OF ASSURANCE

- Demonstrating JESIP principles when faced with new and emerging situation, most recently our multi-agency approach to support vulnerable adults in the county's asylum hotels, ensuring their safety and addressing community risks
- Increasing our collaboration with other emergency services. Our shared Communication and Control Room with Norfolk Constabulary allows us to share information directly with our emergency service partners. We can also share operational intelligence and information on a daily basis directly between the two organisations. Managers are able to quickly offer advice and support to each other and share joint situational awareness with immediate effect due to working in the same building. We have recently developed a Persons in Crisis memorandum of understanding between Fire and Police, the first of its kind in the UK. Further evidence of our collaborative work can be found in the annual Police and Fire Collaboration Report. [Download this report from our collaboration webpage.](#)

## Our intentions, ethics, and values

As well as our own Cultural Framework (which includes ethical behaviours) we also aligned ourselves in 2022-23 with the National Fire Chiefs Council's (NFCC) Core Code of Ethics:



In October 2022, a review of our People Strategy (including wellbeing and mental health initiatives) indicated a number of opportunities for improvement to support our workforce. We recognised a gap in our approach and realigned what we need to do. We identified new resource and have planned to implement a comprehensive approach to culture and staff wellbeing:

- Appointed a Head of People, Equality and Inclusion to lead on People Strategies
- Clarified and invested in a more coordinated range of practices such as TRiM, OK9 and Mental Health champion training to ensure these will be clearly understood and consistently utilised
- Reviewed Norfolk County Council wellbeing team's offer (support for critical incidents) to ensure suitability for NFRS needs



## STATEMENT OF ASSURANCE

- Reviewed the well-recognised TRiM process to be more proactive and enable it to be offered at the correct point of need and not just in response to a traumatic incident
- Commenced a programme of training to expand supervisory managers experience / capability to provide sufficient support to our staff
- Develop and promote understanding of the skills and capability that various training courses provide

Through our refreshed People Strategy, we aim to:

- Improve our offer for everyone across the service and as they transition out of the service
- Support personal resilience and provide a diverse offer which is co-designed with our people
- Better support our people to recover from sickness and injury, helping people to return to work more effectively
- Monitor secondary employment to ensure we are proactively monitoring working time with adequate rest time

We will adopt a strategic approach by cohort of need:





## STATEMENT OF ASSURANCE

Our "Plan on a Page" summarises our service delivery model. For 2022/23 it was:

### What we will do:

Our outcomes:

- Preventing fires and other emergencies
- Protecting people, buildings and the environment by
- Responding to fires and other emergencies when they arise.

Our priorities:

- Being a trusted voice, educate adults, children, partners and businesses so they all better understand the part we all play in reducing risk.
- Being evidence based, understand the diverse needs of our communities by building on local knowledge and risk mapping to target our delivery outcomes.
- Being prepared through continued staff training opportunities, investment in our service and flexibility to take on different duties with utmost professionalism.
- Take enforcement action where attempts to work with people have not resulted in the safest course of action being followed to ensure the ongoing safety of everyone.
- Continue to develop our organisational culture by caring, engaging and investing in our people.
- Feed our Concept of Operations into the development of our CRMP 2023-26.

How we will do it:	How we will know if we have made a difference:
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Preventing fires and other emergencies:               <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ by reducing fires, improve home, road and water safety.</li> <li>○ by working with partners to support vulnerable people and reducing the risk and effects of fire.</li> <li>○ by promoting the installations of smoke alarms.</li> <li>○ by working with the Police to reduce arson.</li> </ul> </li> </ul>	<b>PREVENTION</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• We have attended fewer               <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ accidental domestic dwelling fires, injuries and deaths.</li> <li>○ killed or seriously injured people on the roads.</li> <li>○ arson incidents.</li> <li>○ Drownings.</li> </ul> </li> <li>• We have reduced the percentage of fires attended with no smoke detector fitted.</li> <li>• We can evidence our targeted Home Fire Safety Visits against our developing Community Risk Profile.</li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Protecting people, buildings and the environment:               <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ by providing advice to organisations on how to reduce the risk and impact from fire and enforce fire safety legislation.</li> <li>○ by working with other enforcement agencies to share information on risk and to take joint enforcement action.</li> </ul> </li> </ul>	<b>PROTECTION</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• We have attended fewer               <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ accidental non-domestic dwelling fires.</li> </ul> </li> <li>• We have evidence of feedback from               <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Businesses and community engagement.</li> </ul> </li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Responding to fires and other emergencies when they arise:               <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ by ensuring operational readiness and firefighter safety.</li> <li>○ by improving the availability and response times of our fire engines.</li> <li>○ by learning from operational incidents.</li> </ul> </li> </ul>	<b>RESPONSE</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The percentage of time first fire engines are available is greater than 90%.</li> <li>• Our attendance times at 'Fires where life may be at risk' will be better than 80% within 10 minutes*.</li> <li>• Our attendance times at 'Other emergencies where life may be at risk' will be greater than 80% within 13 minutes.</li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Developing our service:               <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ by caring for and investing in our people.</li> <li>○ by engaging and listening to all voices in our service.</li> <li>○ by improving the diversity of our workforce.</li> <li>○ by keeping our staff safe and well</li> <li>○ by reducing our impact on the environment.</li> </ul> </li> </ul>	<b>SERVICE</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The diversity of applications has improved.</li> <li>• The number of over 7-day RIDDOR events has reduced.</li> <li>• Service progress reflects the intent of our 5-year plan.</li> </ul>



## STATEMENT OF ASSURANCE

## FINANCIAL ASSURANCE

### NFRS Budget & Financial Management

NFRS operates on a revenue budget which in 2022/23 was £29.3 million net, 5.9% of the Council's overall net revenue budget. This equates to £31.90 (£30.76 2021/22) per head of population including capital charges, £29.96 (£28.17 2021/22) per head excluding capital charges. Within the £29.3 million allocation an additional £420k was provided for emerging burdens, to allow for the development of identified improvement priorities related to training, communication's, strategic planning team, prevention and protection objectives.

The service has an approved capital programme of £31.5m over 3 years, 22/23 £5.2m, 23/24 £13.9 and 24/25 £12.4m, with the largest spend relating to fire appliances to be phased in over 23/24.



£23.43 NFRS

Firefighter cost per  
person per year

(£25.22 National cost)

NFRS service cost per head of the  
population is £31.90

### Financial Management

The Council's [Constitution](#) sets out the Council's decision-making framework, including delegation arrangements. The Constitution includes Contract Standing Orders and Financial Regulations which set out how decisions are made and the procedures to be followed. Updated Financial Regulations were approved by Cabinet in April 2019. All Responsible Budget Officers/ Management of NFRS are made fully aware of their duties with checks and oversight by the Fire Services Procurement Manager and Finance Officer.

The County Council is legally required to provide an annual report, the Statement of Accounts, on how it spends its money. As the Fire Authority, the Council includes in the Statement of Accounts details of the NFRS financial position. The accounts, along with the Fire Fighters Pension Fund Accounts, are audited to confirm their accuracy.

Following the signing of the Statement of Accounts and the conclusion of the annual audit, our external auditors write an Annual Audit Letter to the Council. The letter summarises the findings of the auditors and formally concludes the audit.

The latest Statement of Accounts and audit letters are available on the [County Council's website](#). These confirm that the budget has been managed in accordance with the law and proper standards and that public money is being used economically, efficiently and effectively.

If you would like further details about where the Service spends its money, such as expenditure on staff and expenses and where we spend over £500, this is available on the [Council's Open Data website](#).



## GOVERNANCE ASSURANCE

### National Governance

In January 2016 responsibility for Fire and Rescue Services moved from the Department of Communities and Local Government to the Home Office. Fire and Rescue Authorities (FRAs) operate with a range of different locally determined governance arrangements including an individual – either a police, fire and crime commissioner (PFCC) or a mayor – having sole responsibility for being the fire and rescue authority for an area.

Each FRA will appoint an individual – commonly known as a Chief Fire Officer – who has responsibility for managing the fire and rescue service. This role does not have to be operational but includes managing the personnel, services and equipment secured by the fire and rescue authority for the purposes of carrying out functions conferred on it by the Fire and Rescue Services Act 2004, Civil Contingencies Act 2004, and other enactments. Each fire and rescue authority must hold this person to account for the exercise of their functions and the functions of persons under their direction and control.

In 2022 the Home Office published a consultation White Paper (May 2022). The White Paper explains that government want to build on a legacy of reform introduced by the Home Office over recent years to make FRS's more efficient and effective and adapt to public safety challenges and emergencies. The White Paper provides a further opportunity to continuously improve what fire and rescue services do – following a public consultation the results of the white paper are due to be published in July 2023.

HMICFRS provides an inspection regime for Fire and Rescue Service and in addition to the individual reports set for each service, a further Values and Culture spotlight report was published in spring 2023 setting out a range of recommendations for services to adopt to ensure improvements in culture and professional standards.

### Democratic Accountability

Norfolk Fire and Rescue Service is one of the services provided by Norfolk County Council (NCC) which acts as the Fire and Rescue Authority. The County Council has a [Constitution](#) which sets out how the Council operates, how decisions are made and the procedures which are followed to ensure that these are efficient, transparent and accountable to local people. It includes clear communication protocols and clearly defines roles and responsibilities.

On a regular basis, the County Council's Cabinet review the performance of the Fire and Rescue service, its financial position and risks that have been identified. County Councillors also play a key role in shaping the long term development of the Service including approving the [Integrated Risk Management Plan \(IRMP 2020/23\)](#) and its successor, the Community Risk Management Plan (CRMP 2023/26).

Since May 2019, under the Cabinet system of Governance, day to day oversight is the responsibility of the Cabinet Member for Communities and Partnerships, Cllr Margaret Dewsbury who acts as the Chair of the FRA. The Infrastructure and Development Committee also has a role in reviewing and developing policies and strategies.

A Scrutiny Committee also forms a key part of the democratic checks and balances of the Cabinet system of governance. The Committee is able to review or scrutinise decisions taken by the Executive and to make reports to the Cabinet or Full Council. The roles of Cabinet, Full Council, Scrutiny Committee and Select Committees are set out in the Council's Constitution. An additional Strategic



## STATEMENT OF ASSURANCE



Development and Oversight Group, comprised of cross-party representation and chaired by the cabinet portfolio holder, has also been established.

The CRMP forms part of the Council's Policy Framework and therefore is considered and approved by Full Council. The CRMP for 2023/26 was subject to scrutiny before final Cabinet approval in March 2023.



### Service Management

The Director of Fire and Rescue (Chief Fire Officer) is accountable to the Executive Director of Community and Environmental Services, who in turn reports to the Chief Executive. Under the Council's scheme of delegated powers, the Chief Fire Officer has authority to exercise the council's functions relating to fire prevention, firefighting, fire safety, explosives and petroleum licensing and the functions conferred on the local authority under Article 25 of the Fire Safety Order 2005.

The Chief Fire Officer is supported by a Senior Leadership Team comprised of senior officers from the Fire and Rescue Service. Decisions are taken in accordance with the scheme of delegation set out in the Council's Constitution.

### Governance Standards

Norfolk County Council is responsible for putting in place effective systems for the governance of its affairs, ensuring services are delivered properly and legally and that any associated risks are managed. The [Code of Corporate Governance](#) sets out the governance standards.

### In-Year Challenges

For NFRS, 2022-23 has been a year of change with critical legislative, organisational and operational challenges including:

#### Governmental / Regulatory Changes:

- White paper consultation (May 2022)
- Fire Safety Act came into effect (May 2022)
- Fire Safety England Regulations (Jan 2023)
- HMICFRS Cause of concern re-inspection
- New Fire Standards were published
- Challenges caused by government leadership turmoil
- HMICFRS Values and culture recommendations (March 2023)

#### Organisational Challenges:

- There were two transitions in the position of Chief Fire Officer
- Changing (unstable) leadership structure
- Strategic review by NCC
- Restructuring of the Prevention workstream
- Shared services impact (HR and Communications reviewed)
- Mental health and wellbeing issues with loss of 3 firefighters within a 6 month period

#### Operational Challenges:

- Firefighter Industrial Action preparation



## STATEMENT OF ASSURANCE

- Supply challenges affecting procurement of fleet vehicles, PPE, and workwear
- Impact of ability of workshops to complete work on time affecting maintenance schedule
- Rising cost of red fleet workshop contract with NORSE
- Training all staff to level 2 safeguarding (ops crews)
- Face mask fitting all operational staff (still ongoing)
- Replacement of our training towers- new 21 towers commissioned and in service

### External Events:

- Wildfires/heatwaves
- National USAR capability reviewed by Home Office resulting in a decision to reduce revenue grants by removing 4 teams...one of which was NFRS. This decision was overturned following lobbying.
- HRH Queen Elizabeth II's passing
- Impact of Ukraine / Russia war (Feb 2022) affecting fuel prices, cost of living
- We were still in covid transition (test centres didn't stop 1st April 2022)
- London Fire Brigade (LFB) culture report (Jan 2023) and the HMICFRS spotlight report on culture (March 2023)

### Additional Adhoc Pressures:

- Completion of the concept of operations project through to June 2022.
- EEAST asking us to undertake EMR across the service due to high amounts of ambulances stacking (March 2022). We did this for several days in through to April 2022.
- CRMP consultation process, finalisation of the plan and final publishing.

## Summer 2022 Wildfires

Summer 2022 proved to be one that broke records in terms of high temperatures, low rainfall and continued hot, sunny and sometimes windy conditions. These conditions over a prolonged period of time increase the risk of Wildfires happening in our county.

The summer of 2022 was an incredibly busy for our service. Over the periods June/July/August 2022, NFRS took 8722 emergency calls and responded to over 3000 incidents. By way of comparison this is around a 100% increase on comparable months over previous years apart from 2018 which was a similarly busy year and similar weather conditions.

The service declared a "Major Incident\*" during the Heatwave of 19<sup>th</sup> July 2022. Everyone across the whole of NFRS worked tirelessly to protect their communities. There were examples of lives, properties and environment saved. There were however also some devastating impacts for communities across Norfolk with properties lost to fire.





## STATEMENT OF ASSURANCE



NFRS teams welcomed appliances and resources by way of mutual aid from Suffolk Fire and Rescue Service, Avon, Shropshire, Merseyside, West Midlands, Tyne & Wear, Warwickshire, RAF Lakenheath. Sincere thanks go to everyone who assisted our efforts within NFRS and the wider fire service family across the England including our Local Resilience Forum Partners.

In September 2022 NFRS commissioned an internal review to look at the response of our service over this period. The findings of this review have been used to drive organisational improvement across the whole service and led to a series of recommendations and actions to drive improvement.

The recommendations that emerged from the review included both immediate and longer-term improvements. There are a range of longer-term improvements continuing to be developed, but the immediate changes implemented included:

- Turning recommendations into actions and developing hypothesis through trials/pilot initiatives. We delivered a series of all staff briefings to all parts of the organisation. These outlined all areas of learning for consideration immediately in 2023 including policy, procedure, equipment, and training changes.
- Conducted a review and delivered enhanced training and development against National Operational Guidance requirements.
- Development of a progression plan to train Tactical Advisors in line with NFCC guidelines and review and enhance training and development against National Operational Guidance requirements.
- Reviewed mobilisation and crewing arrangements as part of a multi stakeholder approach to developing solutions.
- Assessed the utilisation of resources and reliefs to share workloads. This has been evaluated through the welfare stakeholder group.
- Procurement of specialist equipment and clothing to protect operational staff from over-heating (heat stress / heat stroke) as well as suitable welfare provision at incidents.





## STATEMENT OF ASSURANCE

## ORGANISATIONAL PERFORMANCE

### Performance Management Framework

NFRS operates within the County Council's corporate performance framework. A set of 'vital signs' for each service have been produced which provide transparency and assurance on the health of key services. The vital signs for NFRS in 2022/23 were 'Emergency Response Standards (ERS)', 'Percentage of high-risk home fire safety visits carried out' and 'Percentage of high-risk fire safety audits completed'. These are regularly monitored by department management teams and County Councillors through the democratic process.

In accordance with the corporate performance framework, our Service Leadership Team monitor a broader dashboard of indicators and escalate issues to County Councillors if required. Some of the indicators are former national indicators that we can compare with other fire and rescue services and others are locally determined. An overview of our performance over the past 4 years can be found in the next section.

### Performance 2019/20 to 2022/23

The Government collate [national statistics](#) about all fire and rescue services.

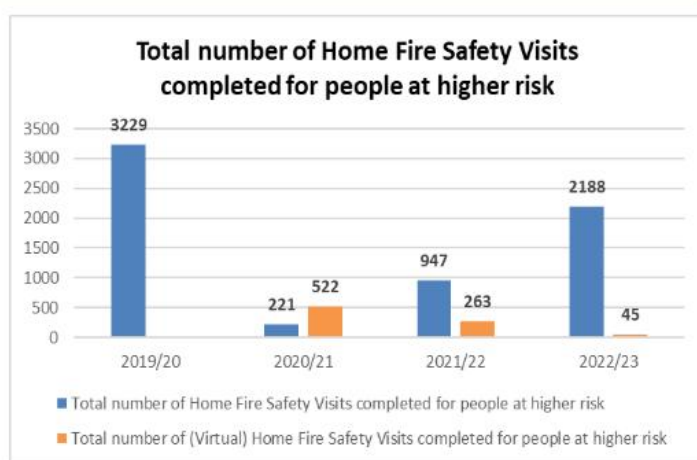
### Priorities

We publish an annual Service Delivery Plan which sets out targets which will deliver against our key priorities:

- Prevent & Protect: We will prevent fires and other emergencies from happening and reduce the impact of fires other emergencies on people
- Response: To respond efficiently and effectively to calls for assistance
- People: To build a diverse, skilled, safe and high-performing workforce
- Logistics: To maintain and manage resources and equipment efficiently and responsibly
- Planning: To ensure we meet our customer's expectations

### Prevent

Covid 19 saw us focus heavily on supporting local communities and wider public services (such as NHS) however it impacted on our ability to deliver the range of Prevention activities we had planned to do from 2020 through 2022. We amended our practices and conducted Home Fire Safety Visits via telephone where possible, but through 2022/23 we reduced this approach and resumed face-to-face visits. In an effort to drive performance we re-structured and expanded our Prevention Team in 2022/23 and throughout 2023/24 we are upskilling our on-call workforce to carry out person centred home fires safety visits with the intent to increase our delivery. Now that the resources are in place, we will focus in improving productivity.





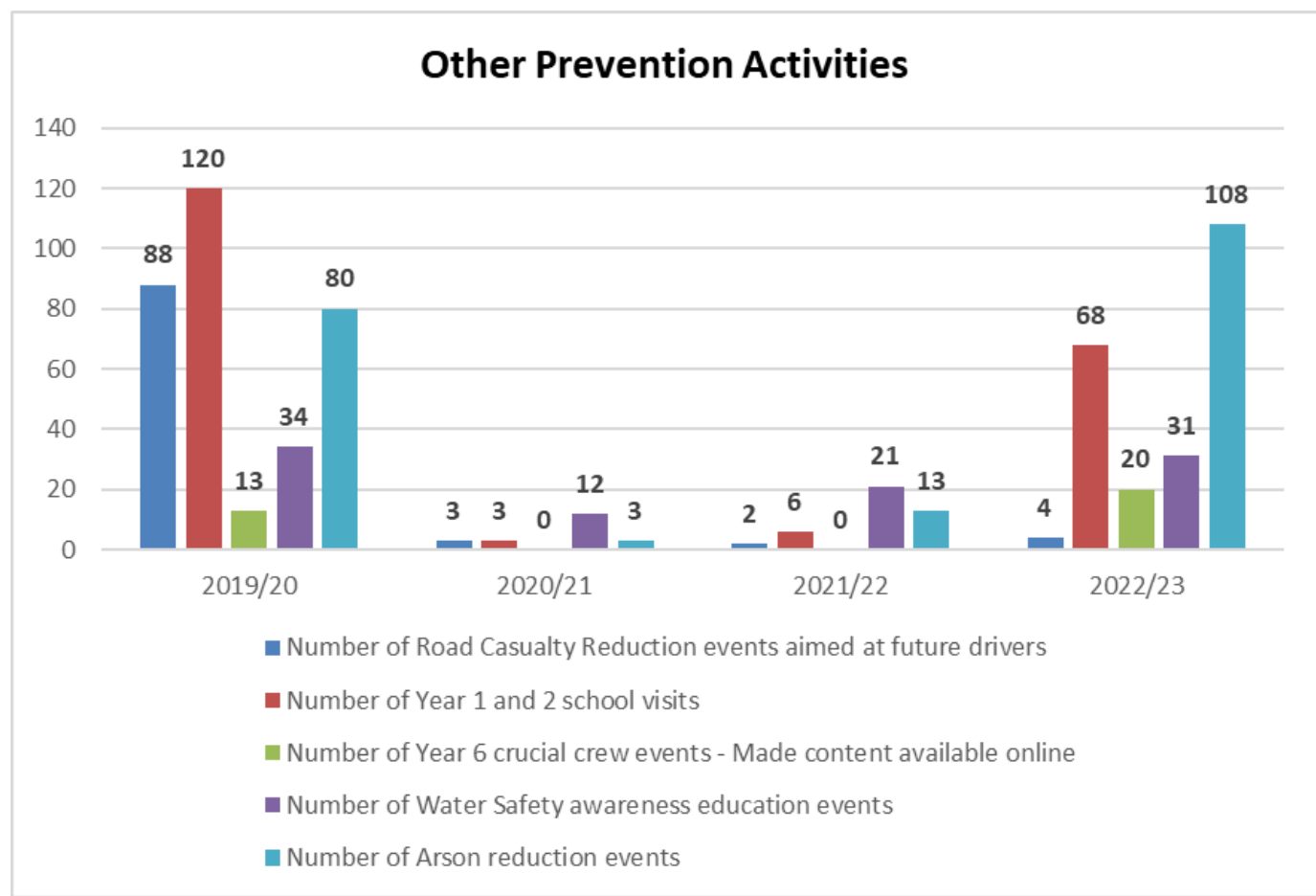
## STATEMENT OF ASSURANCE

Total number of home fire safety checks completed for people at higher risk:

- Year 2019/20: 3229
- Year 2020/21: 221
- Year 2021/22: 947
- Year 2022/23: 2188

Total number of virtual home fire safety checks completed for people at higher risk:

- Year 2020/21: 522
- Year 2021/22: 263
- Year 2022/23: 45



Number of Road Casualty Reduction events aimed at future drivers:

- Year 2019/20: 88
- Year 2020/21: 3
- Year 2021/22: 2
- Year 2022/23: 4

Number of Year 1 and 2 school visits:

- Year 2019/20: 120
- Year 2020/21: 3
- Year 2021/22: 6
- Year 2022/23: 68

## STATEMENT OF ASSURANCE



Number of Year 6 Crucial Crew events:

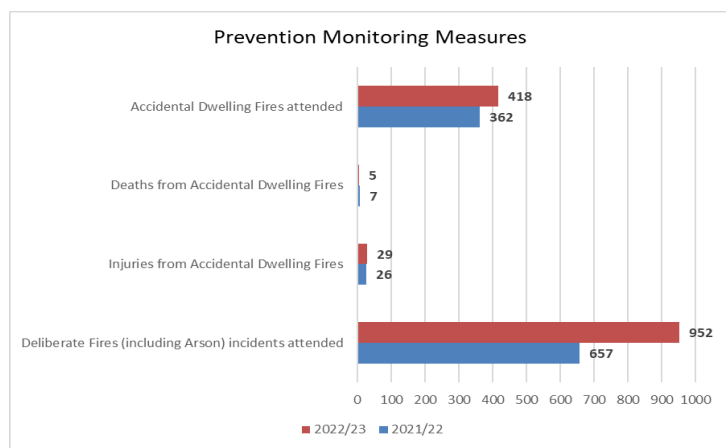
- Year 2019/20: 13
- Year 2020/21: 0
- Year 2021/22: 0
- Year 2022/23: 20

Number of water safety awareness education events:

- Year 2019/20: 34
- Year 2020/21: 12
- Year 2021/22: 21
- Year 2022/23: 31

Number of arson reduction events:

- Year 2019/20: 80
- Year 2020/21: 3
- Year 2021/22: 13
- Year 2022/23: 108



The number of other prevention activities increased slightly through 2021/22 however we continued to experience significant restrictions due to the Covid 19 Pandemic that impacted on the delivery of our services. Covid 19 may also have had an impact on the number of deliberate fires (including arson) incidents and the number of accidental dwelling fires.

Accidental dwelling fires attended:

- Year 2021/22: 362
- Year 2022/23: 418

Deaths from accidental dwelling fires:

- Year 2021/22: 7
- Year 2022/23: 5

Injuries from accidental dwelling fires:

- Year 2021/22: 26
- Year 2022/23: 29

Deliberate fires (including arson) incidents attended:

- Year 2021/22: 657
- Year 2021/22: 952

## STATEMENT OF ASSURANCE



We estimate that we reached approximately 7.1% of Norfolk's school-age children through our Prevention activities in 2022-23 (7833 against the Spring school census figure of 110299).

NFRS has also signed the NCC Flourish Pledge. Making a pledge is as simple as making at least one promise, or commitment, to something new that our organisation will seek to achieve over the next year to help children and young people in Norfolk to flourish.

By making our Flourish Pledge, we are joining organisations around Norfolk in:

- Directly improving children and young people's lives
- Raising the profile of your organisation or work
- Achieving corporate social responsibility
- Reaching a wider audience or customer base
- Making Norfolk a better place for young people and families to live and visit



By signing the Flourish Pledge, NFRS is taking its place among the organisations across Norfolk who are committed to helping our children and young people change their lives and truly flourish. NFRS works hard to protect all of Norfolk, and we have a role to play to in offering support to communities, including younger generations. As part of Norfolk's Children and Young People Strategic Alliance, NFRS will be working hard to ensure children and young people across our county have the information, support and the opportunities to flourish, both within the service - via our Fire Cadet programme and our ongoing work with the Prince's Trust and Crucial Crew - and as part of wider Norfolk partnerships.

[You can read about NCC's Flourish Pledge on the County Council webpage.](#)

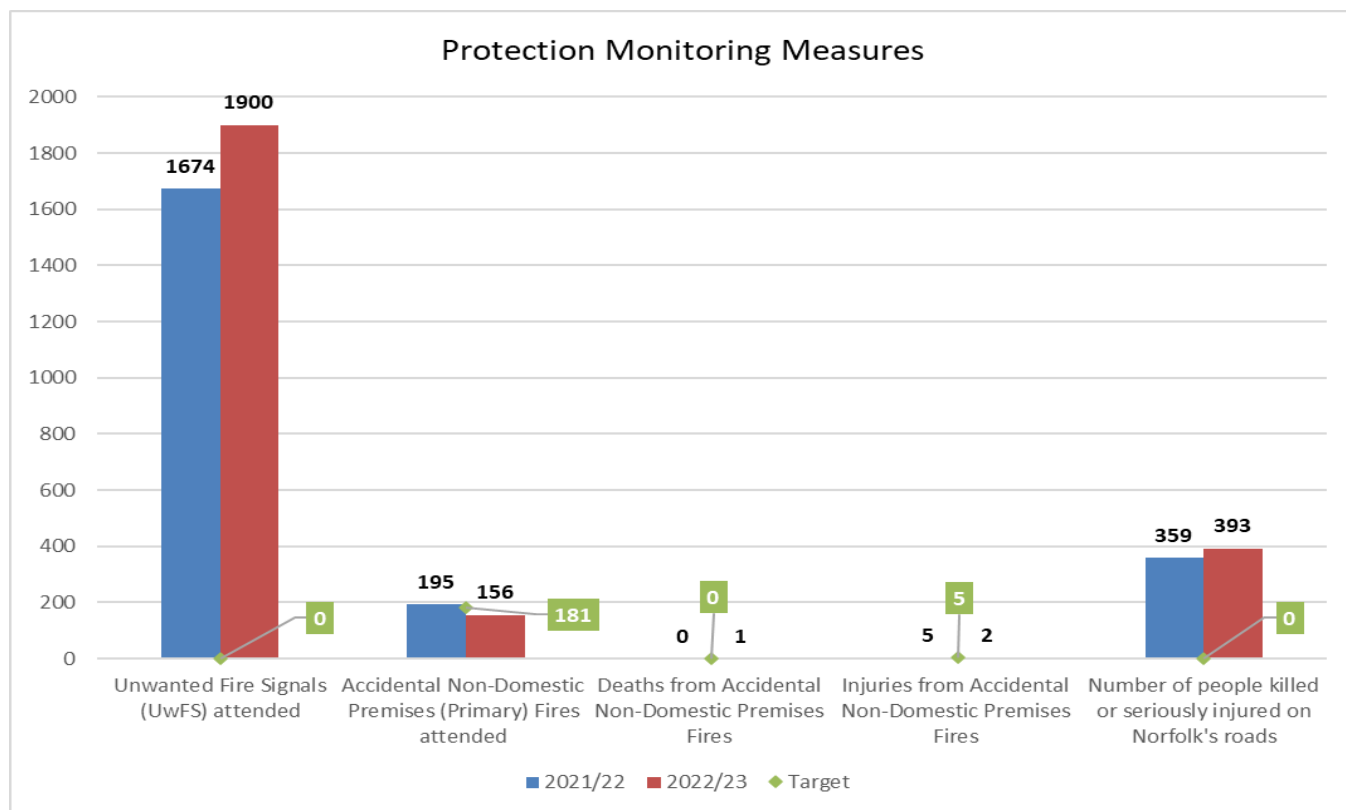




## Protect

Carried out 707 Fire Safety audit visits (643 full, 64 short and 1 telephone, incl. 22 high risk) of non-domestic premises to ensure compliance with fire safety regulations (2021/22 was 280).

- Carried out 96 post fire investigations (78 inspections and 18 audits), supporting business resilience, which includes enforcement and prosecutions for serious cases (2021/22 was 71).
- Maintained up-to-date files of the risks at over 650 non-domestic premises so that if an incident did occur, we would have the information needed to deal with the event as safely as possible, thus reducing the risks for our firefighters and the public.



Unwanted fire signals (UwFS) attended:

- Year 2021/22: 1674
- Year 2022/23: 1900

Accidental non-domestic premises fires attended (number):

- Year 2021/22: 195
- Year 2022/23: 156
- Target (less than): 181

Deaths from accidental non-domestic premises fires (number):

- Year 2021/22: 0
- Year 2022/23: 1
- Target (less than): 0





## STATEMENT OF ASSURANCE

Injuries from accidental non-domestic premises fires (number):

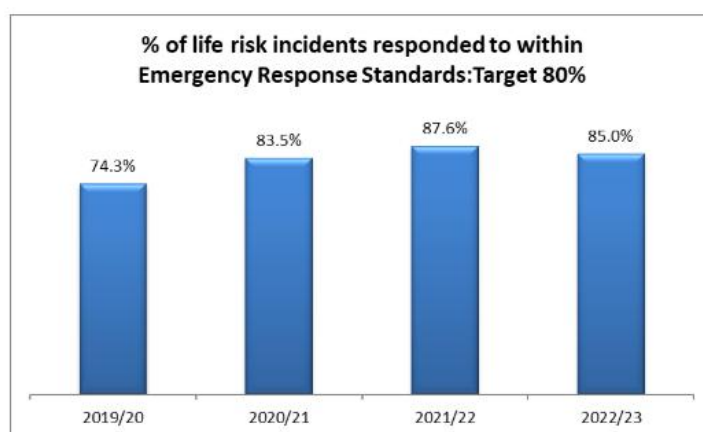
- Year 2021/22: 5
- Year 2022/23: 2
- Target (less than): 5

Number of people killed or seriously injured on Norfolk's roads (updated monthly):

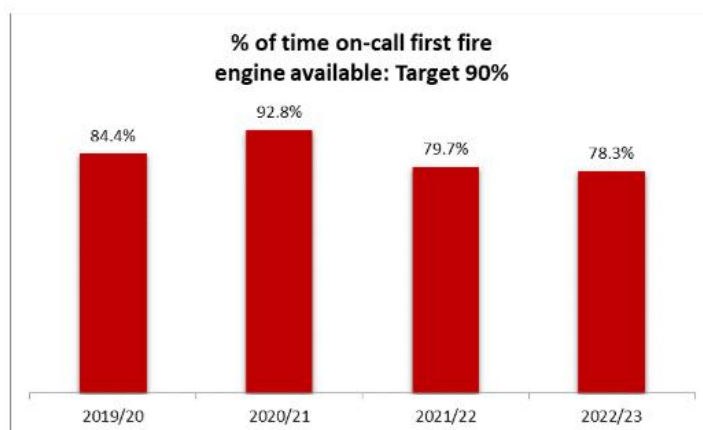
- Year 2021/22: 359
- Year 2022/23: 393

## Response

During 2022/23 we aimed to get to 80% of life risk incidents within our Emergency Response Standards (how quickly we should attend an incident) and achieved this on 85%\* of occasions. We reviewed our methodology for reporting on this in 2020/21 and as a result we were able to better evaluate risk mitigation activity for more remote locations through our performance framework and this was reflected in our target setting for 2022/23.



Our on-call first fire engines were available and ready to respond to an emergency 78.3% of the time against a target of 90%. This is a slight decrease on last year's figure of 79.9%. Following on from our Concept of Operations review and as an outcome of our CRMP development we have recommended reviewing our availability methodology and target setting in 2023/24.



*The ERS measure was a Vital Sign and reported through the corporate reporting system to Norfolk County Council.*

How did the summer 2022 heatwave affect our response? Our response time was impacted over the summer months: May 75.2%, June 75.5%, July (the hottest weather) 78.1%, August 75.8%, following this there was a general improvement towards 81.6%. So, although July was lower than what we achieved by March 2023, it was higher than the surrounding months. This measure of availability really reflects our crews' availability. The data demonstrates how our crews made themselves more available during the spate period.

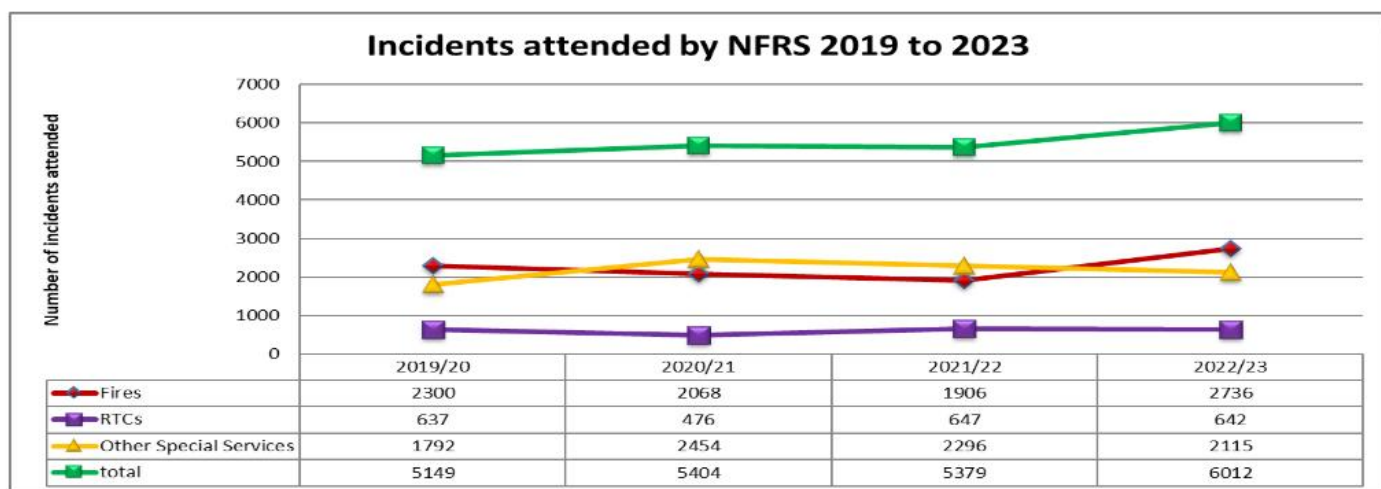




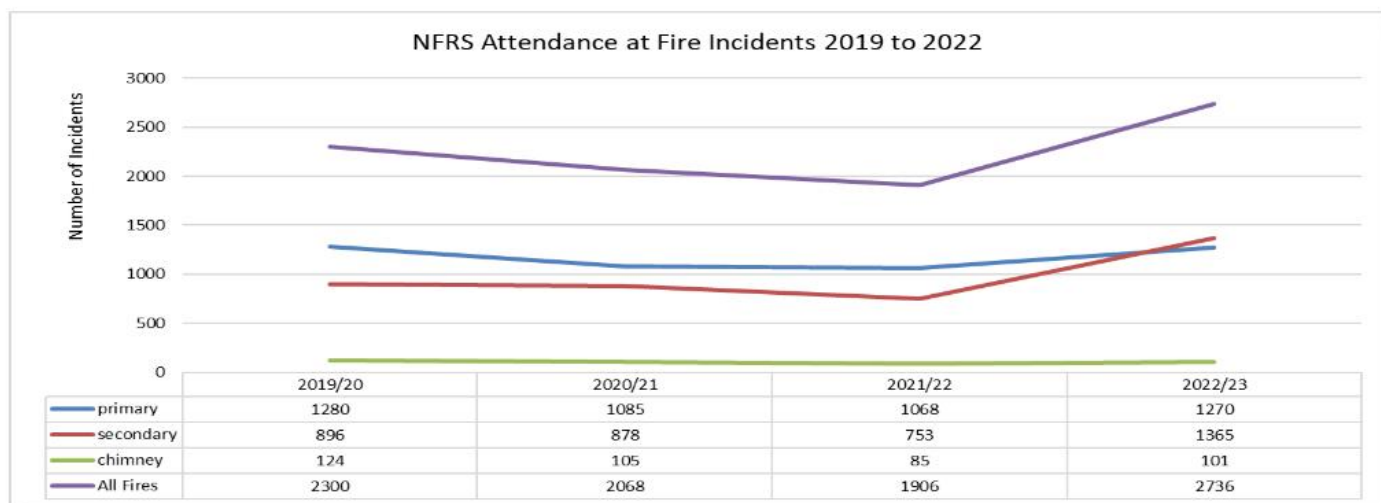
## Incident Attendance

	2019/20	2020/21	2021/22	2022/23
Attendance to AFA non-domestic False Alarms (BVPI 149i)	420	406	530	519
Attendance to Fires	2300	2068	1906	2736
Attendance to RTC's	637	476	647	642
Attendance to Other Special Services (not RTC's)	1792	2454	2296	2115
Total (Fire, RTC and Other Special Services)	5149	5404	5379	6012
Total attendances of all types	7131	7517	7554	8785
RTC Extractions (number of incidents, not number of people)	196	134	168	195

NOTE the number of non-domestic AFA False Alarms attended now uses data reported to Home Office IRS system.



	2019/20	2020/21	2021/22	2022/23
Non-domestic AFA False Alarms	420	406	530	519
Fires (All)	2300	2068	1906	2736
Fires (Primary)	1280	1085	1068	1270
Fires (Secondary)	896	878	753	1365
Fires (Chimney)	124	105	85	101
RTC's	637	476	647	642
Other Special Services	1792	2454	2296	2115





## STATEMENT OF ASSURANCE



We attended 2,736 fires – 816 more than last year (an increase of 42.5%). This included:

- 418 accidental dwelling fires in people's homes – 56 more than last year, resulting in five fatalities and 29 people being injured. This compares to seven fatalities and 26 injuries in 2021/22.

Year	Total accidental dwelling fires	Total fire related fatalities	Total fire related injuries
2019/20	425	3	34
2020/21	397	5	32
2021/22	362	7	26
2022/23	418	5	29

- 952 deliberate fires (potentially arson) incidents – an increase of 44.9% compared to 2021/22.

Year	Total deliberate fires (excluding not known)
2019/20	787
2020/21	646
2021/22	657
2022/23	952

- 39 fewer accidental non-domestic premises fires (156 in total) – a decrease of 20%. This resulted in 2 persons being injured.

Year	Total accidental fires (non-domestic premises)	Total accidental fires (NDP) related fatalities	Total accidental fires (NDP) related injuries
2019/20	246	0	4
2020/21	158	0	8
2021/22	195	0	5
2022/23	156	1	2

We attended a 2.1% decrease in non-domestic false automatic fire alarms against a backdrop of increasing false automatic fire alarms (13.5%).

We attended 642 road traffic collisions which involved the extrication and release of persons from their vehicles at 195 of those incidents.

We attended 2,115 other special service incidents such as flooding, freeing trapped people or animals and calls to assist other agencies (a decrease of 7.9% against 2021/22).



### Training & Development

We assure the quality of our operations by providing appropriate training, development and assessment for all staff, and carrying out audits and reviews of working practices to make sure that they are safe, efficient and effective. This includes performance reviews of how well our officers and firefighters manage incidents when they occur with advice and further training provided if required.

To ensure our firefighters maintain their competency in fighting fires we hone skills using our Fire Training Structure at Scottow Enterprise Park. The unit opened in August 2016 and enables our firefighters to train in live fire conditions. Firefighters also take part in regular Maintenance of Competency Breathing apparatus scenarios throughout the year.

In the context of the recommendations made in the CFOA Firefit review, together with the changes to the pension scheme meaning that operational staff will be working longer, the Service recognises the importance of effectively managing and promoting firefighter fitness and welfare. All personnel undergo an annual fitness assessment, and our Physical Training Adviser works proactively with individuals and stations to embed a culture of fitness and wellbeing. This will be supported by the Physical Fitness Policy which has been subject to detailed reviews and went out for consultation during early 2023. All operational personnel also undergo a 3 yearly medical assessment which includes assessment of eyesight, hearing and lung function.

NFRS offers a range of accredited courses and holds various accredited standards to support T&D delivery, including;

- Level 3 Initial Incident Command and Level 4 Intermediate Tactical Command; both accredited by Skills for Justice (SFJ)
- Wholetime new recruits are registered on the Level 3 Firefighter Apprenticeship Scheme: apprentices complete internal gateway assessments before passing the accredited End Point Assessment through external SFJ accredited assessors. On Call recruit firefighters are registered on the SFJ accredited development pathway.
- We offer managerial apprenticeships L3 through to L7 and tailored management development programmes through NCC adult learning and NFCC approved programmes.
- Driving instructors are accredited through DVSA and must hold suitable qualifications to instruct and assess/qualify.
- Water Rescue course provision is accredited through Rescue 3 - instructors must have all achieved the instructor pathway courses; accredited with Rescue 3.
- Rescue, Trauma and Casualty Care (RTACC) is accredited through The ATACC Group (TAG) and aligns with Level D on the Phem Framework - instructors must be trained to Level E which must be maintained through requalification.
- Breathing Apparatus Instruction courses are accredited through SFJ
- Instructors hold educational awards (levels 3 and 4) in Education and Training (formerly PTLLS) and assessor (AVA) qualifications.
- Internal Quality Assurance (IQA) on qualifications is undertaken by qualified personnel.
- We have secured new fitness equipment as part of our wellbeing focus which is in the process of being issued to all stations.





## STATEMENT OF ASSURANCE

### Health & Safety and other Legislation

NFRS, supported by NCC HSW Team aims to ensure Fire Sector needs are met and there is compliance with NCC requirements and expectations to reduce and manage risk (which applies to NFRS as part of NCC). We ensure that we monitor and review our performance and focus on areas of concern. During 2021/22 we commenced the transition of our Health & Safety support and advice to the wider Norfolk County Council HSW Team, thereby benefiting from shared service provision. This provision is currently under review to ensure compliance and a sustainable approach for the future. Further actions and analysis of resource requirements have been undertaken to ensure the model is fit for purpose, actively managed and implemented as part of this transition process.



### Improvements to accounting, governance and operational assurance

In reviewing our financial, governance and operational arrangements we continue to identify and incorporate improvements which will further strengthen our approaches and ensure that we are meeting our statutory obligations to best effect.

## ACCOUNTABILITY – EXTERNAL SCRUTINY (HMICFRS)

Her Majesty's Inspectorate of Constabulary and Fire & Rescue Services (HMICFRS) undertook their second inspection of Norfolk Fire and Rescue Service (NFRS) in late 2021. This detailed process involved a thorough inspection of our Service and their report and findings was published in 2022.

This was the second time that HMICFRS had inspected fire and rescue services across England. In carrying out the inspections of all 45 fire and rescue services in England, HMICFRS look to answer three main questions:

1. How effective is the fire and rescue service at keeping people safe and secure from fire and other risks?
2. How efficient is the fire and rescue service at keeping people safe and secure from fire and other risks?
3. How well does the fire and rescue service look after its people?

In all three areas, Norfolk FRS was rated as "Requires Improvement". Norfolk FRS was given the same rating in the 2018/19 inspection; within this were four detailed areas of service which were rated 'Good'.

The inspector noted particular concerns about the performance of Norfolk FRS in terms of prevention activity and understanding vulnerability. The report also recognised that some activities were affected by restrictions related to Covid lockdowns etc, and that alternative risk-based approaches had to be put in place.

NFRS produced and published an improvement action plan to track initial service progress against the HMICFRS areas of improvement identified. Oversight arrangements were set up to monitor progress against the HMICFRS actions. Cabinet also monitored progress regularly.

The Cabinet paper containing the improvement plan can be found [on the NCC Website](#).



We implemented robust arrangements to ensure Multi-Agency review and learning from fatal fires and serious incidents, secured additional capacity to deliver community safety activities, refreshed our prevention plan so that it clearly set out priorities for delivery within the capacity available, targeting resources to support those most at risk of fire and implemented targeted strategic governance arrangements to provide oversight, energy, and support to implement the Development Plan. (A Community Development Safety Board).

### **Specifically, we have:**

- Reviewed our Strategy documents to ensure these are linked to the risks identified in the CRMP23-26. The CRMP23-26 was used as a basis for all service and function plans developed in 2023, with clear focus on the risks identified.
- Robust arrangements have been put in place to ensure Multi-Agency review and learning from all fatal fires and serious incidents. A Multi-Agency fatal fire review policy has been implemented which provides a detailed review and generates significant learning opportunities which lead directly to effective actions.
- Our Community Risk Profile (refreshed yearly) demonstrates a clear methodology to identify individual risk and link this with delivery. It enables us to identify those most at risk from fire at a strategic level (Lower Super Output Areas - LSOA's) and proactively target the delivery of Prevention activity through an improved understanding of risk. Improved links with other agencies has also further increased our targeting of the most vulnerable.
- Improved safeguarding. We have improved our assurance that our staff have received, understood and act on training and guidance, particularly around vulnerability and safeguarding. Safeguarding training has been delivered to all staff, with supplementary guidance provided online and on posters. Staff confidence has been demonstrated by an increased rate of referrals and cause for concerns.
- We refreshed our Prevention plan so that it clearly sets out priorities for delivery within the capacity available, targeting resources to support those most at risk of fire. We have also secured additional capacity to deliver community safety activities. A funding uplift from NCC has led to an expanded Prevention team and an accountable management structure. A clear plan has been established to maximise output through these staff and Response staff in order to more effectively target risk utilising the CRP and referrals.
- Improved evaluation of Prevention activity. Evaluation measures have been established that enable a good understanding of how successful our Prevention activities are.
- Improved Protection engagement. The service is developing how we work with local businesses and large organisations to deliver a robust engagement strategy to lower all risk to our communities. A funding uplift has allowed for the appointment of senior fire safety inspectors (SFSI's) dedicated to business engagement and hazardous installations. Currently these SFSI's have been appointed to project roles.
- Improved site-specific risk information (SSRI). We are in the process of enabling more robust arrangements to ensure risk Information is gathered and shared as appropriate across NFRS and neighbouring services. The implementation of Web Risk Manager (WRM) software has allowed for better gathering and sharing of SSRI. A training package to better understand risk has been developed. Improved arrangements for cross border information sharing have been adopted.
- Improved operational assurance. We need to ensure we have an effective system for staff to use learning and debriefs to improve operational response and incident command. An effective programme for operational learning is in place. A fully NOG compliant



update has been prepared and is in the early stages of roll-out. An operational learning policy has been drafted and is being reviewed against updated national operational guidance (NOG) ahead of implementation.

- Improved competence and leadership. A Head of People role was identified and appointed to in order to oversee that all staff are appropriately trained and developed. We are working with NFCC implementation support team to implement and embed the leadership fire standards. We have also appointed a workforce planning manager who has commenced a programme of identifying skills needs and a review of competence recording systems to identify an appropriate system to procure.
- Improved culture and values. The Head of People will oversee a programme of work to ensure NFRS values and behaviours are understood and demonstrated at all levels of the organisation. Our staff survey results indicated that our cultural framework is embedded as a behavioural standard. We intend to embed the NFCCC Core Code of Ethics. We have recruited a culture and ethics manager and a small team to support the development of culture, engagement and EDI . We are also working with the NFCC implementation support to deliver against the fire standard in this area.
- Improved wellbeing. The recently recruited workforce planning manager is working to identify an appropriate system to record wellbeing information ahead of reviewing our policy. This will enable better monitoring of staff working hours including secondary contracts, to make sure working hours are not exceeded.
- Demonstrating alignment of resource to risk. We are ensuring that resources are appropriately allocated to support the activity set out in our CRMP23-26. Additional funding was secured in order to increase our Prevention and Protection teams. Some of this additional resource has been used to bolster Prevention activity in rural areas. All resourcing is allocated to support service and function plans, which are based on risk as identified in the CRMP23-26.

In late 2022, HMICFRS revisited NFRS to review progress against the action plan. They also explored whether the right levels of leadership and oversight were in place. HMICFRS provided feedback in January 2023. They found appropriate and robust governance arrangements were in place to monitor progress against our action plan. It was recognised that the service had put improvement plans in place and had made good progress against recommendations. HMICFRS noted the considerable work that had been carried out to support improvements: making prevention a high priority, a comprehensive action plan, and governance arrangements in place to oversee it, improvements made in response to all the recommendations, significantly in identifying vulnerability and safeguarding.

NFRS is also subject to governance review and scrutiny through the Council's Annual Governance Statement.

Blue light collaboration continues to be a key enabler for NFRS and improving our service to the community. We continue to benefit from well-developed and positive relationships across the blue light services – this is demonstrated through an active programme of collaboration including joint estates, a plan to co-locate our control function with Norfolk Constabulary and helping paramedics to gain access to premises in a medical emergency. In 2018 this relationship was further strengthened by the signing of a formal Memorandum of Understanding between Norfolk Police and Crime Commissioner, Norfolk County Council, Norfolk Fire and Rescue Service and Norfolk Constabulary on emergency services collaboration 2018/19 ([MoU between NFRS, NCC, Police and other emergency services](#)).



## STATEMENT OF ASSURANCE

Collaboration governance arrangements include the Strategic Oversight Board (chaired jointly by the CFO and NCC), as well as an officer operational group.

## OTHER IMPROVEMENTS

### Accounting

Our [Integrated Risk Management Plan 2020/23](#) set out our plans for the time period covered by this statement. We developed our Community Risk Management Plan 2023/26 (the replacement for the IRMP) during 2022/23.

A shared Finance Business Manager (FBM) oversees our financial management to ensure that expected income growth and expenditure is correctly identified.

### Senior Management

In September 2022 Ceri Sumner took up the permanent role as Director of Norfolk Fire and Rescue Service (Chief Fire Officer) with all statutory responsibilities (with the exception of incident command). Following her appointment, a period of recruitment was undertaken to strengthen the Senior Leadership Team with permanent appointments.

Our [principal officer overview](#) can be found on our website.

## STATEMENT OF ASSURANCE



## AUTHORISATION

Norfolk Fire and Rescue Authority provides assurance to the people of Norfolk that we are satisfied that the Authority's financial, governance and operational assurance arrangements are adequate, operating effectively and meeting statutory requirements detailed within the Fire and Rescue National Framework 2018 and subsequent updates.

This Statement of Assurance was approved by the Authority at the Cabinet meeting on X<sup>rd</sup> X 2023.

Margaret Dewsbury, Cabinet Member  
Ceri Sumner, Chief Fire Officer





## APPENDIX

### NFRS Activity Comparison Data

NFRS covers the geographical area of the county of Norfolk (and its borders), comprised of 7 districts: Breckland, Broadland, Great Yarmouth, King's Lynn and West Norfolk, North Norfolk, Norwich and South Norfolk.

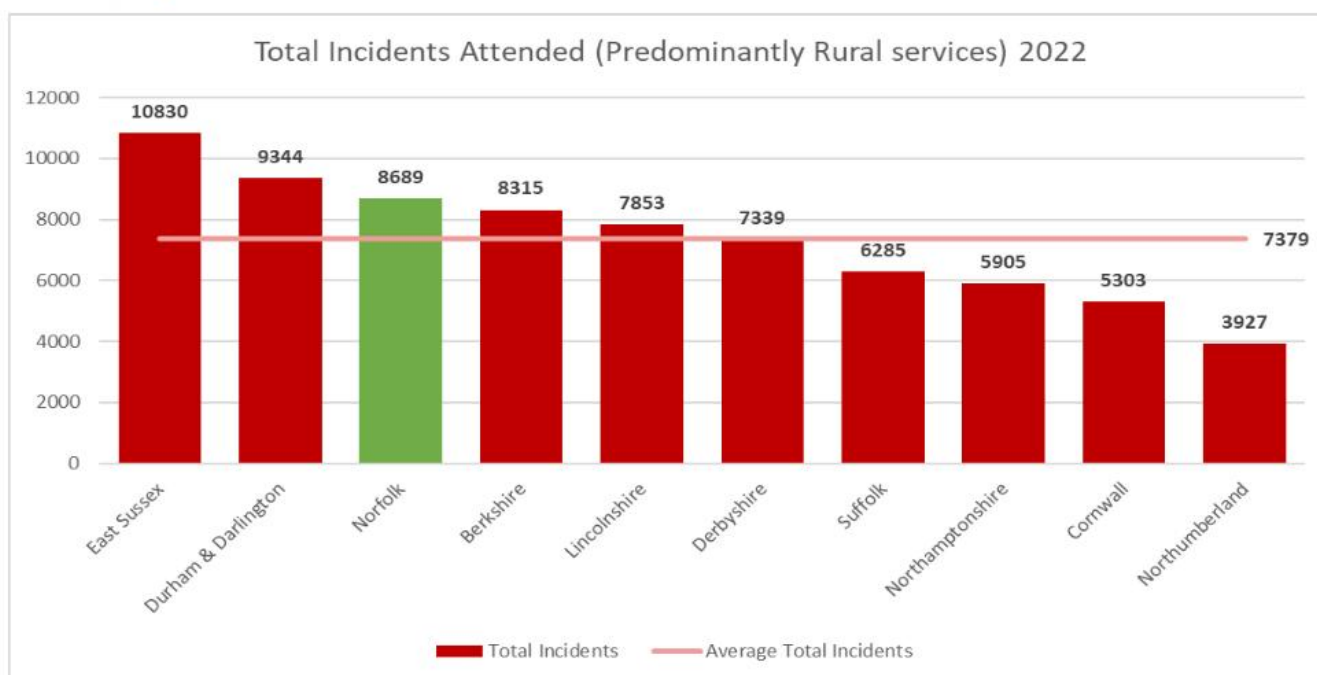
Norfolk is classified by the Home Office (and viewed by HMICFRS) as 'Predominantly Rural', along with 10 other geographical areas enabling us to compare our activities against other fire and rescue services that may face 'similar' geographical challenges. These include: Cornwall, Lincolnshire, Berkshire, Cornwall, Derbyshire, Durham & Darlington, East Sussex, Isles of Scilly, Lincolnshire, Northamptonshire, Northumberland and Suffolk.



Furthermore, in 2022 the UKFRS reviewed the 'Family Groups' and determined that NFRS was in Cluster 4 (Rural County with a Coastline) along with: Cornwall, East Sussex, Isles of Scilly, Lincolnshire, Northumberland and Suffolk. We use these services activity data in order to benchmark ourselves against comparable services and to inform our performance and target setting. This data is available on the [Home Office Fire Statistics webpage](#).

The most recent complete year of datasets is for the year ending 31<sup>st</sup> December 2022. As this covers three quarters of the period reviewed in this document, we have included some salient information from these datasets (we have excluded Isles of Scilly data due to it being a statistical outlier and therefore will distort statistical analysis).

In 2022 NFRS attended 8689 incidents:

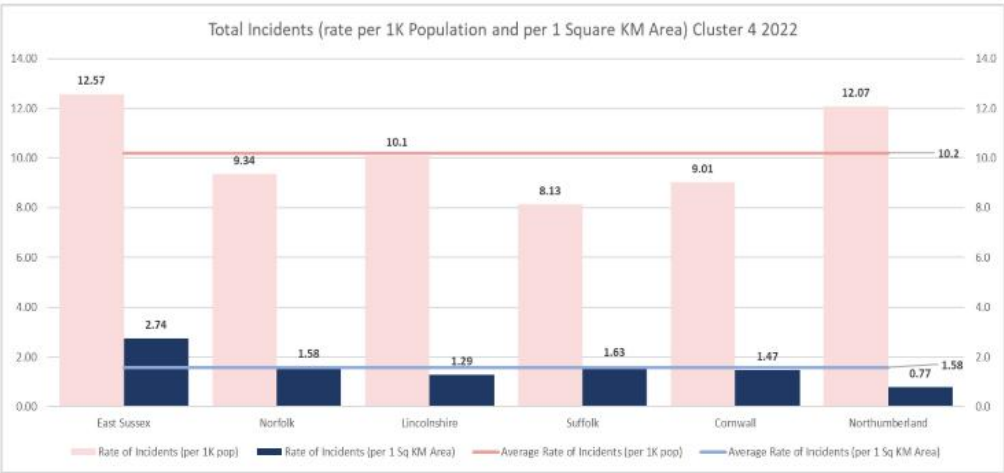
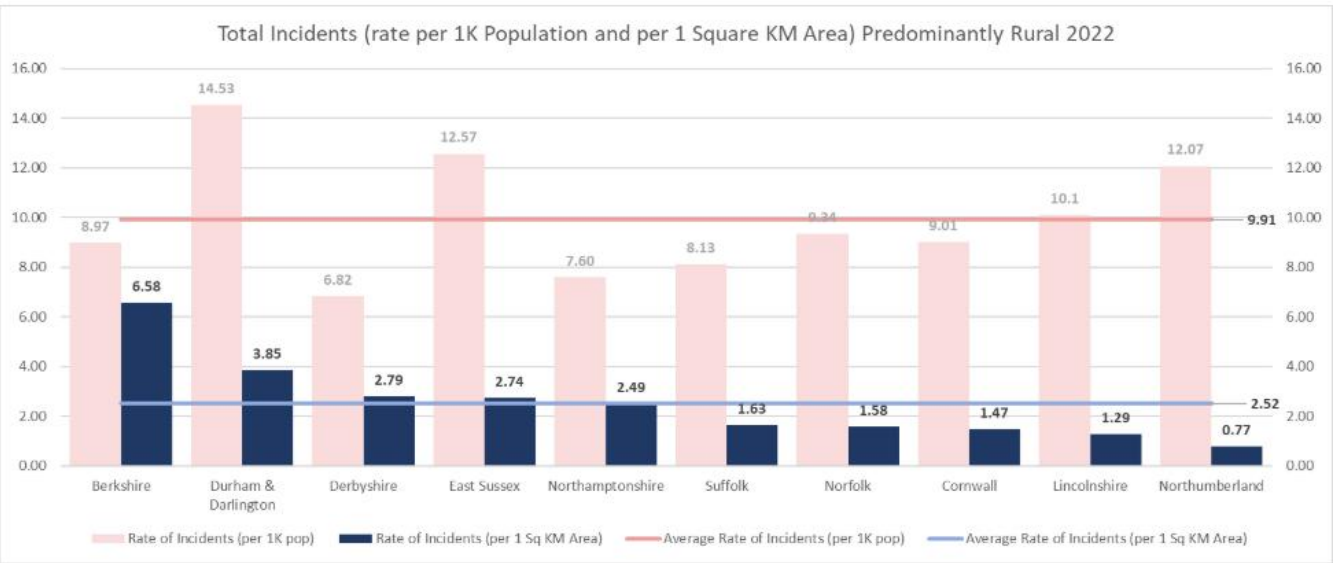
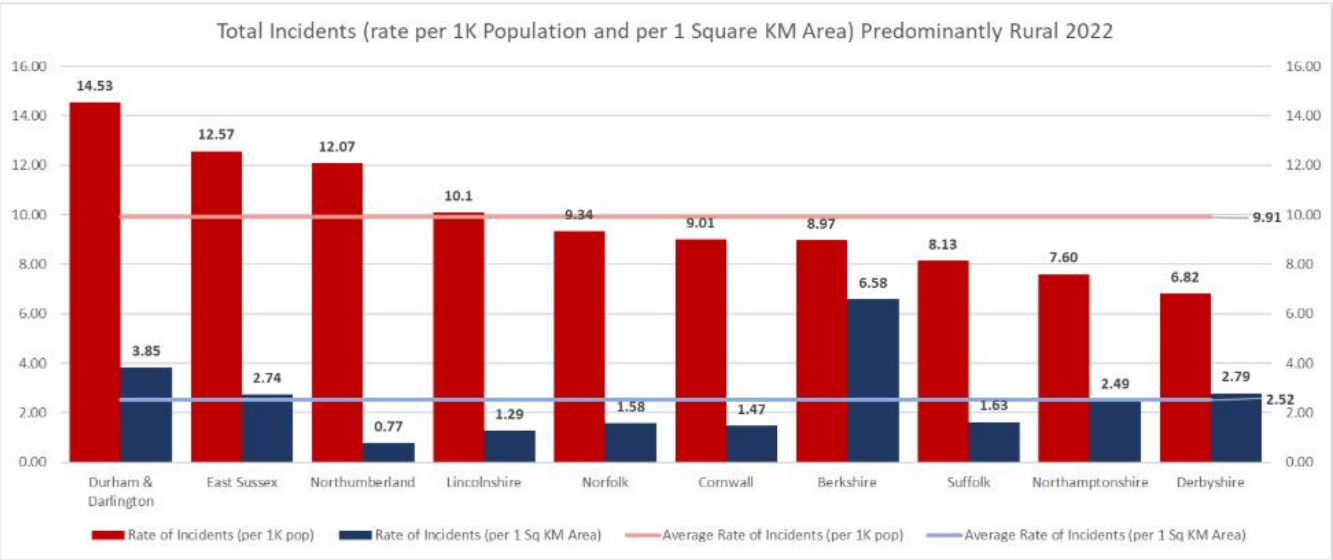






# STATEMENT OF ASSURANCE

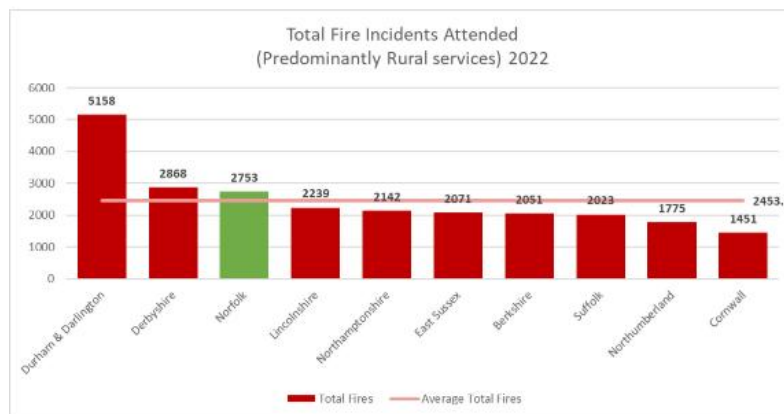
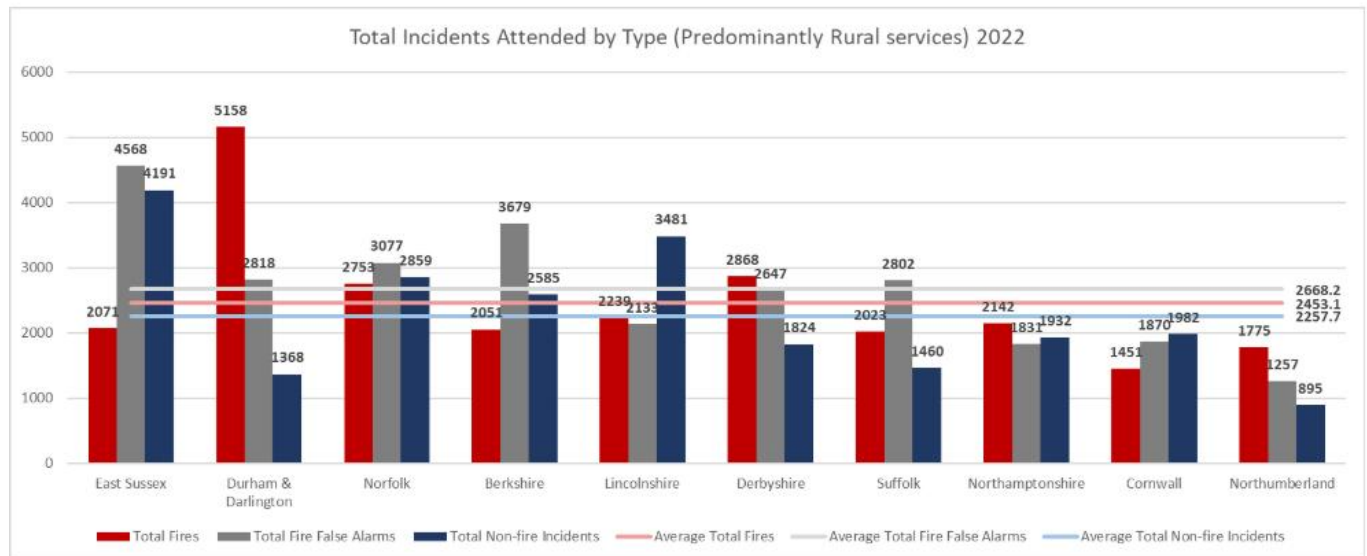
We can see that NFRS sits in the middle of the table for incidents attended with 8689 incidents, above the predominantly rural (PD) average of 7379. However, when we take into consideration the size of the population and geographical area, Norfolk is below average on both counts, with 9.34 incidents per 1,000 population (PD average is 9.91) and 1.58 incidents per square KM (PD average is 2.52):



When we consider ourselves against Family Group Cluster 4, we are below average against per 1,000 population with 9.34 (average is 10.2) and equal to the average against per square KM with 1.58 (average).

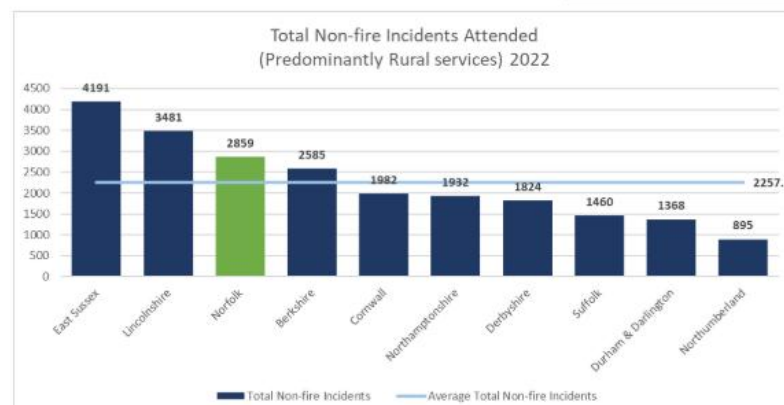
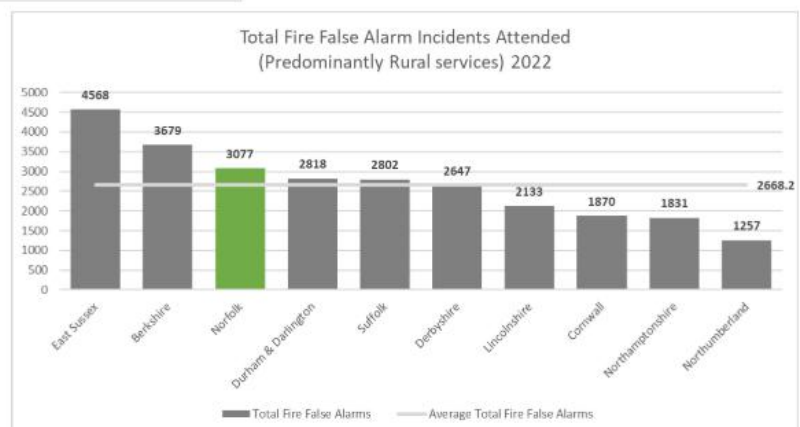


## STATEMENT OF ASSURANCE



NFRS has a higher than PD average number of Fire Incidents (2753 against a PD average of 2453.1).

Fire False Alarm incidents (3077 against a PD average of 2668.2).

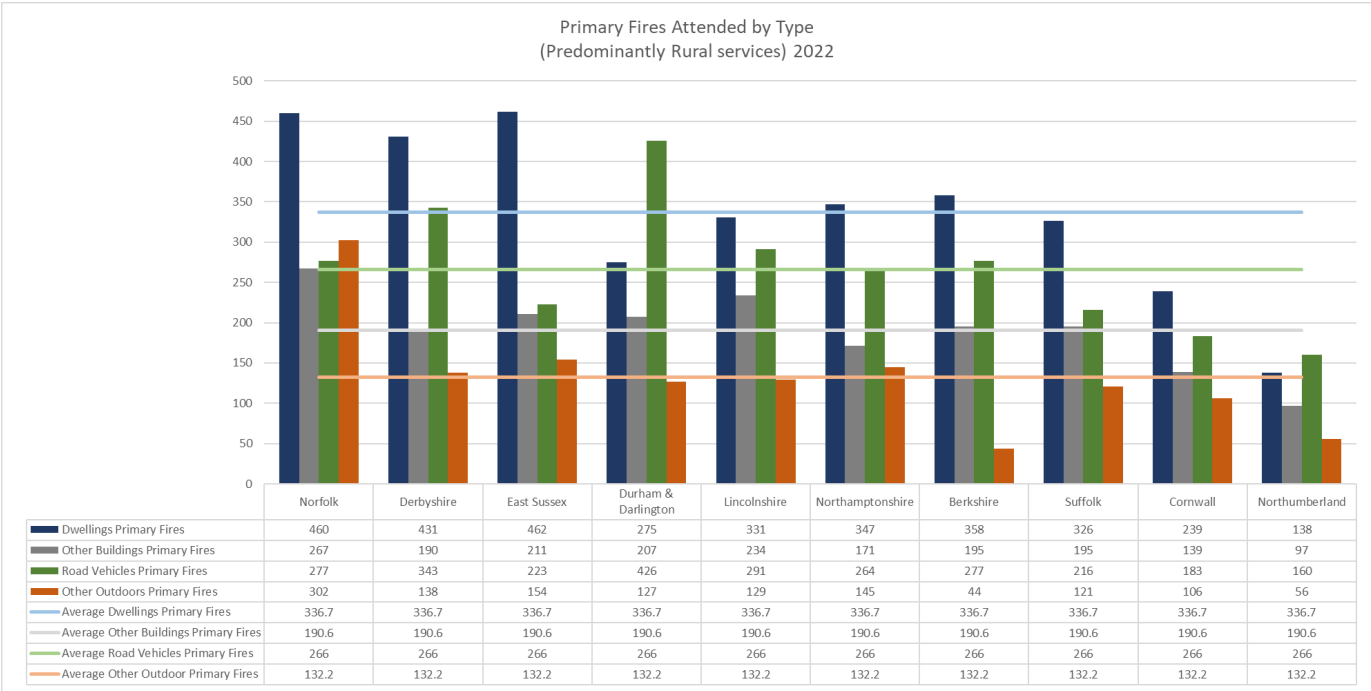
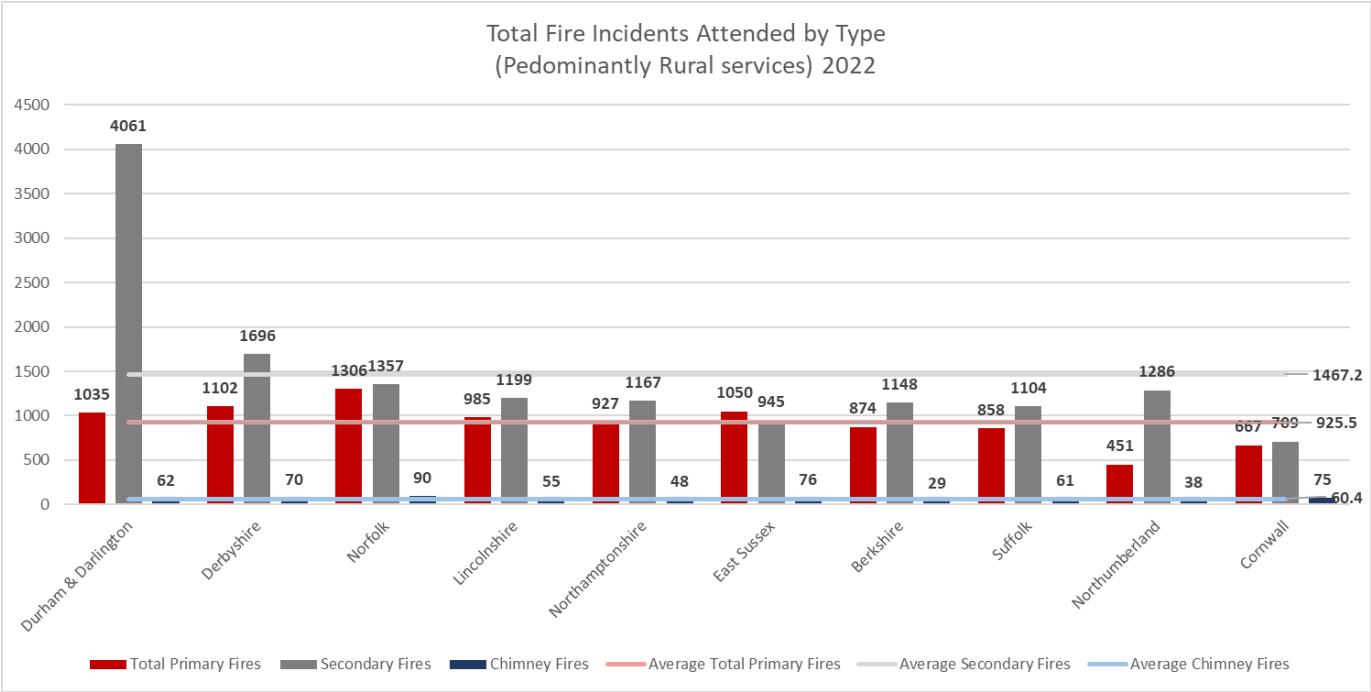


Non-fire Incidents (2859 against a PD average of 2257.7).

STATEMENT OF ASSURANCE

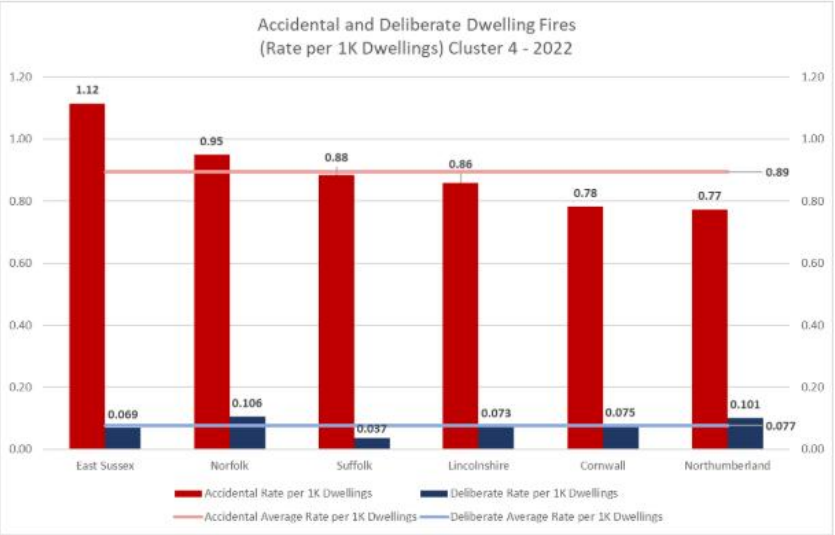
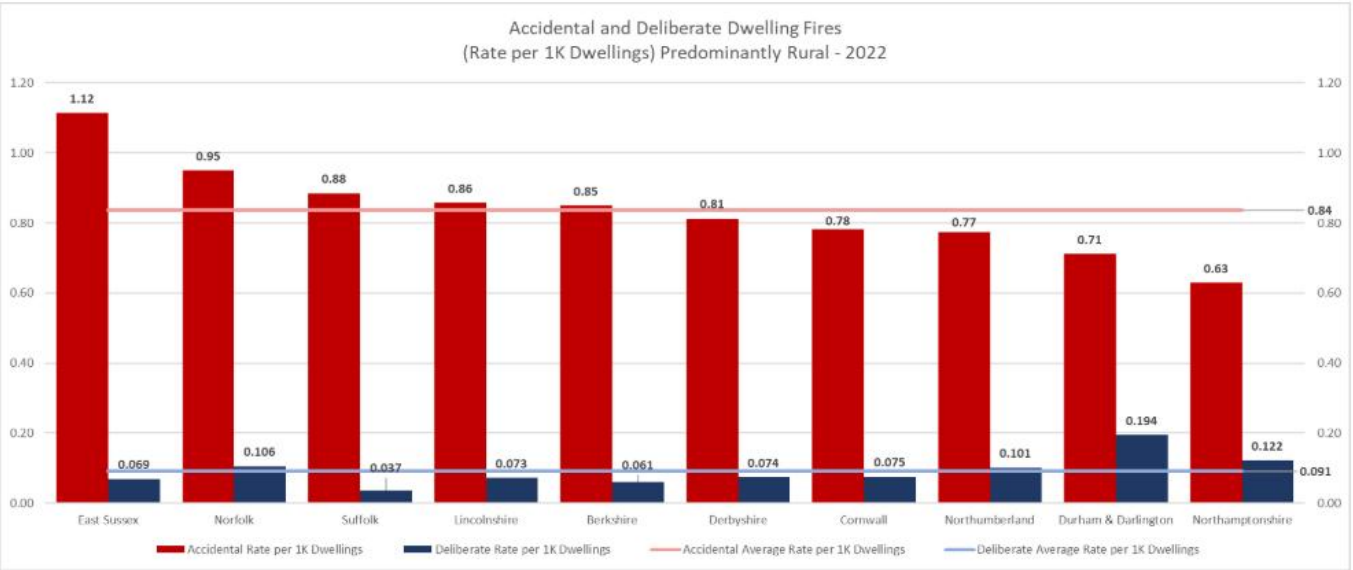
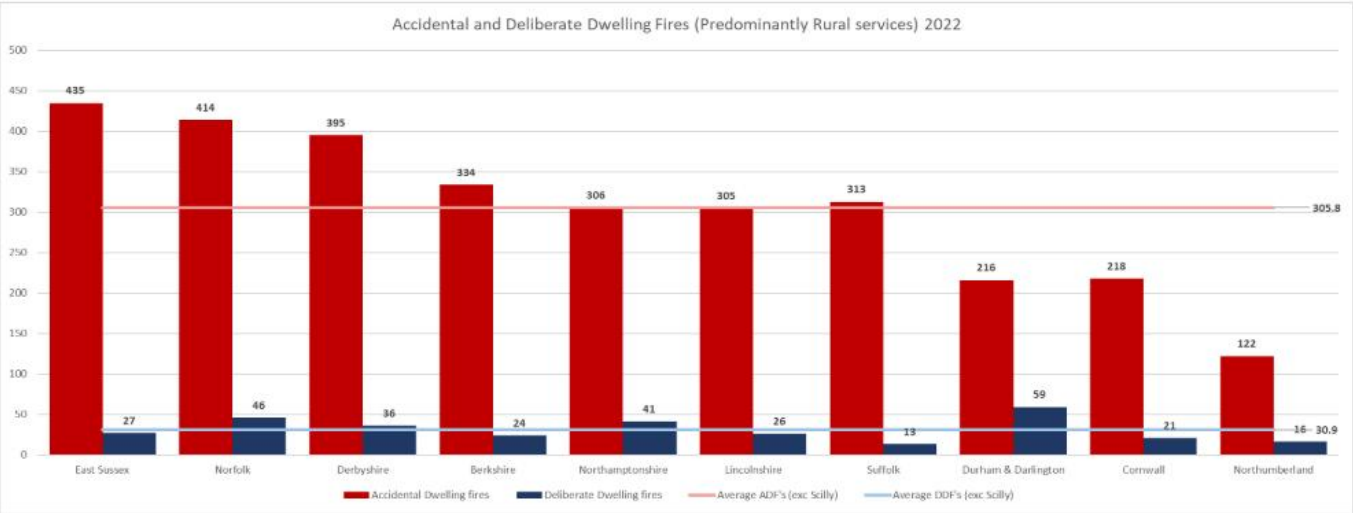


NFRS attended the greatest number of Primary Fires within the PD (and Cluster 4) groupings with 1306 (the PD average was 925.5). We attended the third greatest number of Secondary Fires within the PD group with 1357 (although this is below the average of 1467.2):

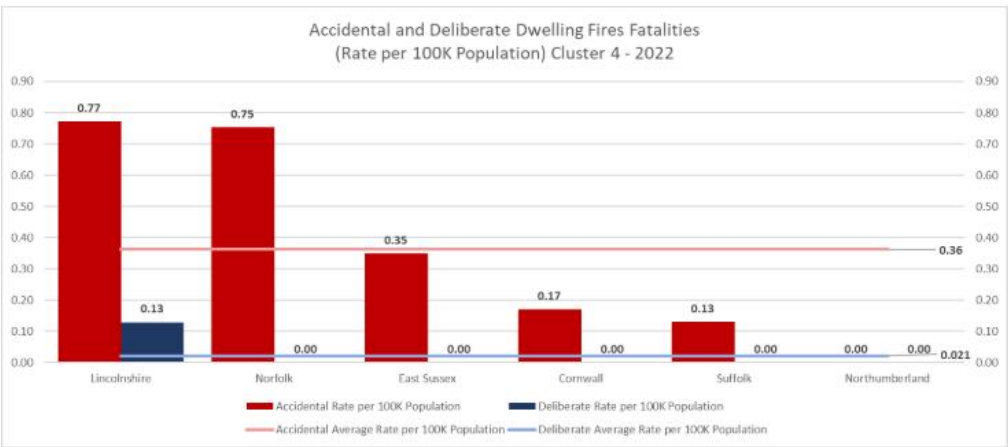
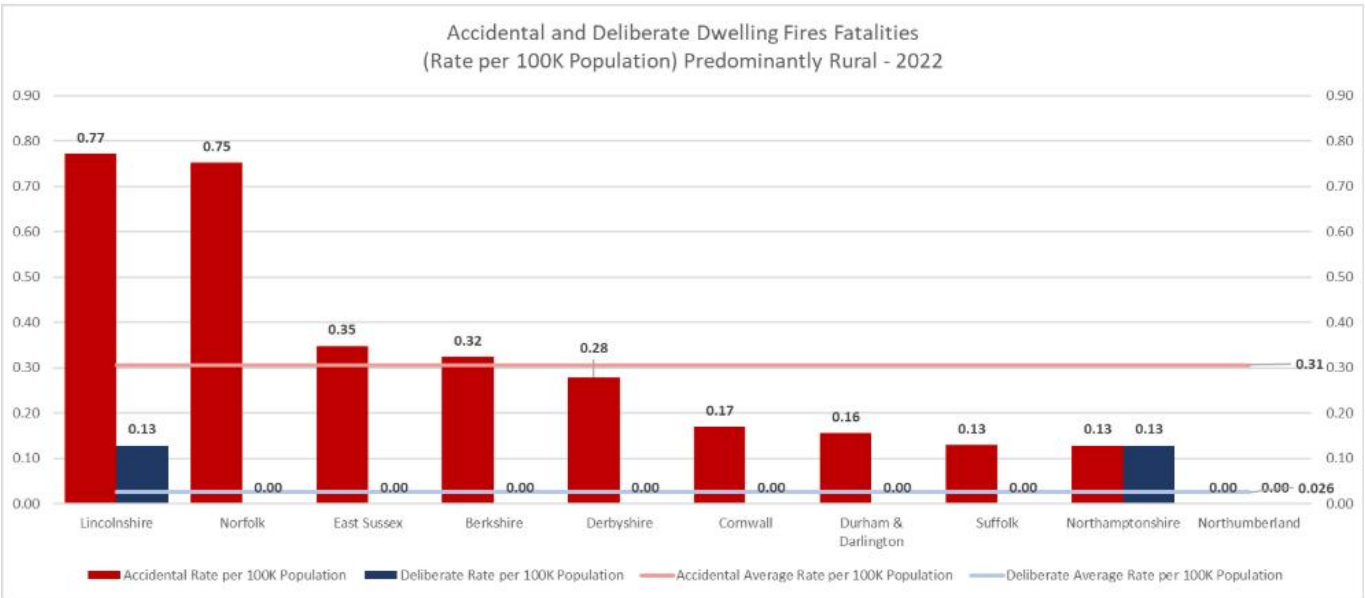
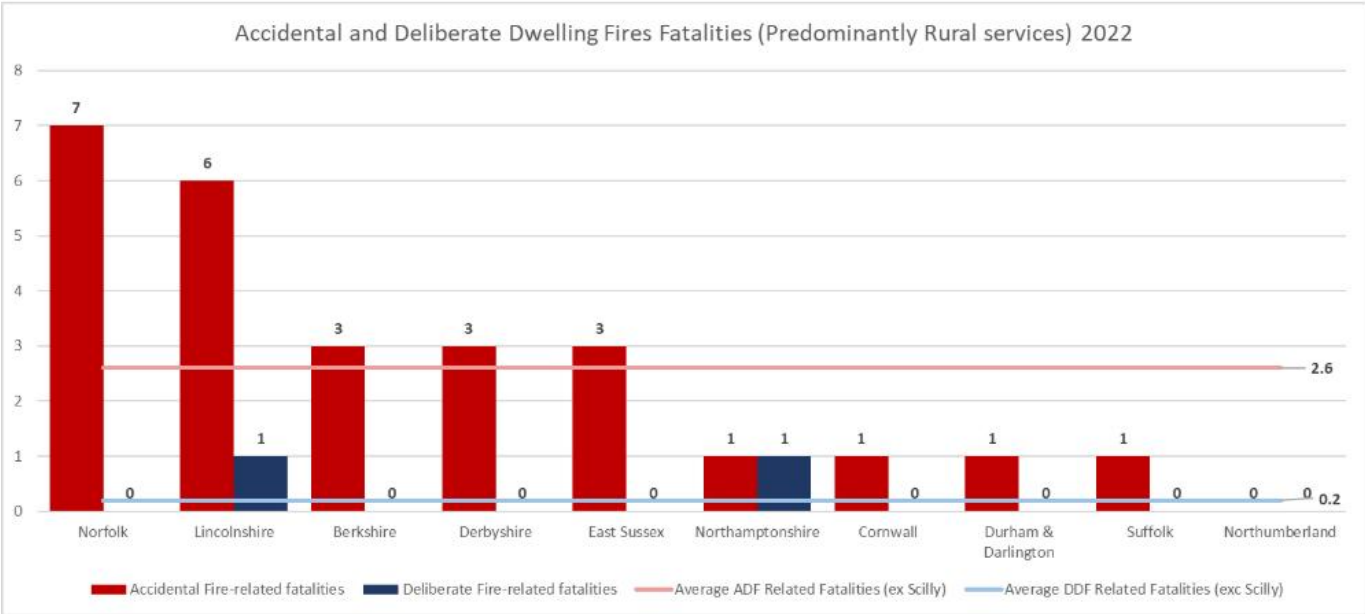




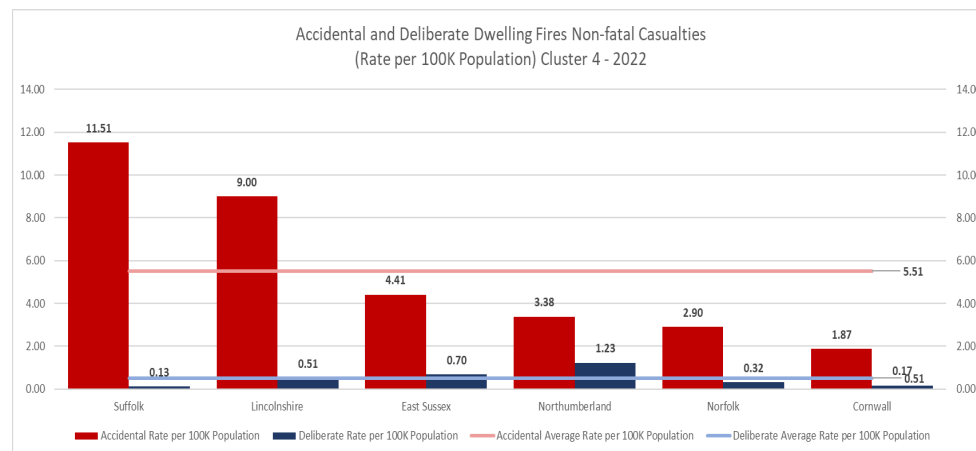
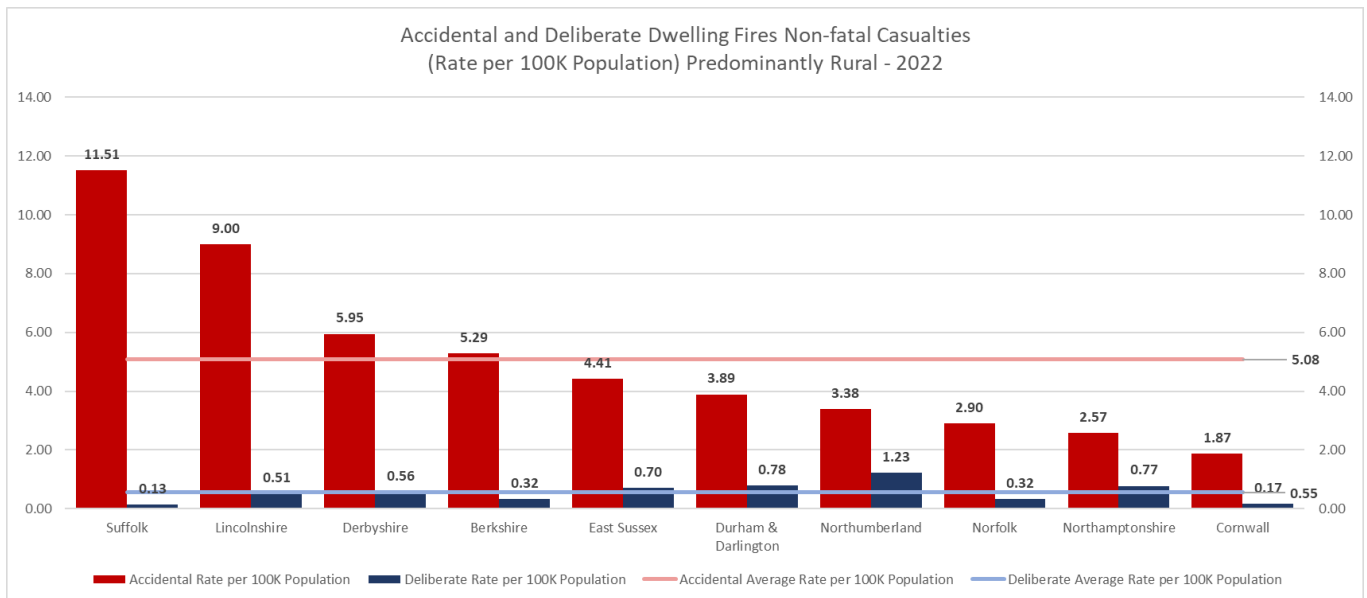
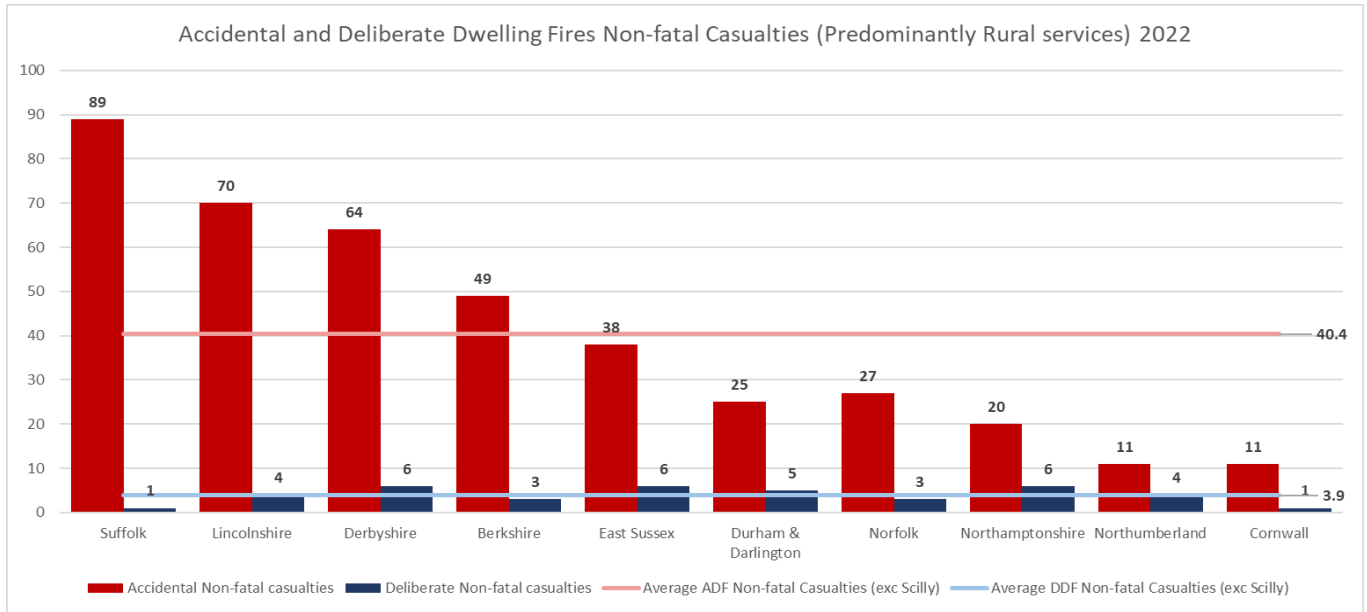
# STATEMENT OF ASSURANCE



NFRS attended the second highest number of Accidental and Deliberate Dwelling Fires within the PD group in 2022. Whilst rate per 1000 dwellings showed NFRS to also have the second highest rate for Accidental Dwelling Fires, we had the third highest rate for Deliberate Fires. Within Cluster 4, NFRS had the highest rate of deliberate fires at 0.106 (the Cluster 4 average was 0.077).



NFRS had the highest number of Accidental Dwelling Fire fatalities in 2022, although our rate per 1000 population (0.75) was slightly lower than Lincolnshire (0.77). The PD average was 0.31. There were no Deliberate Fire fatalities in 2022.

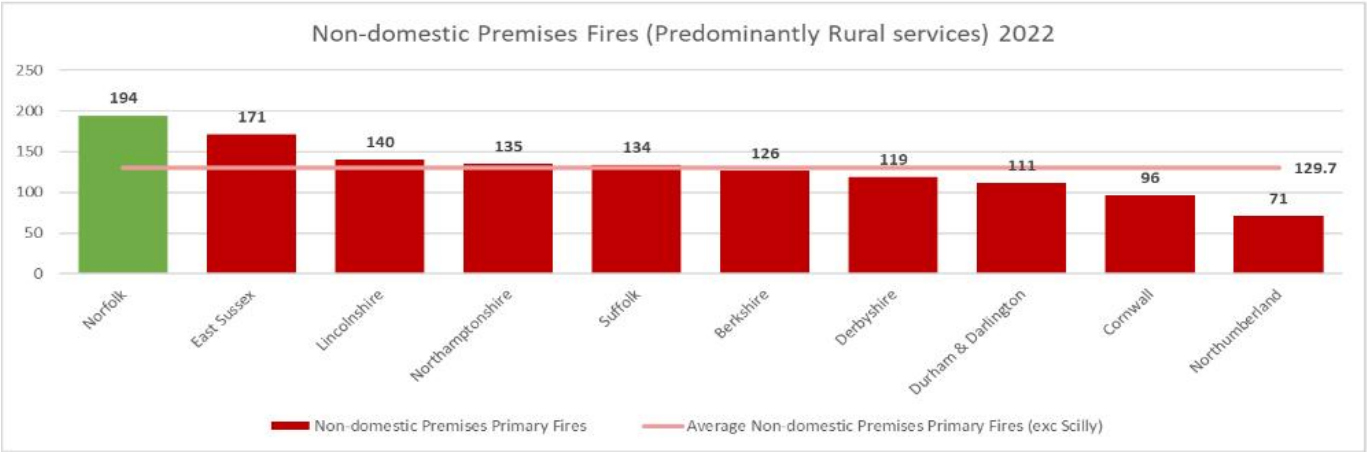


NFRS had the fourth lowest number of Accidental Dwelling Fire non-fatal casualties (27). The PD average was 40.4. Our rate per 1000 population of Deliberate Dwelling Fire non-fatal casualties was lower than both the PD average (0.55) and the Cluster 4 average (0.51) at 0.32.

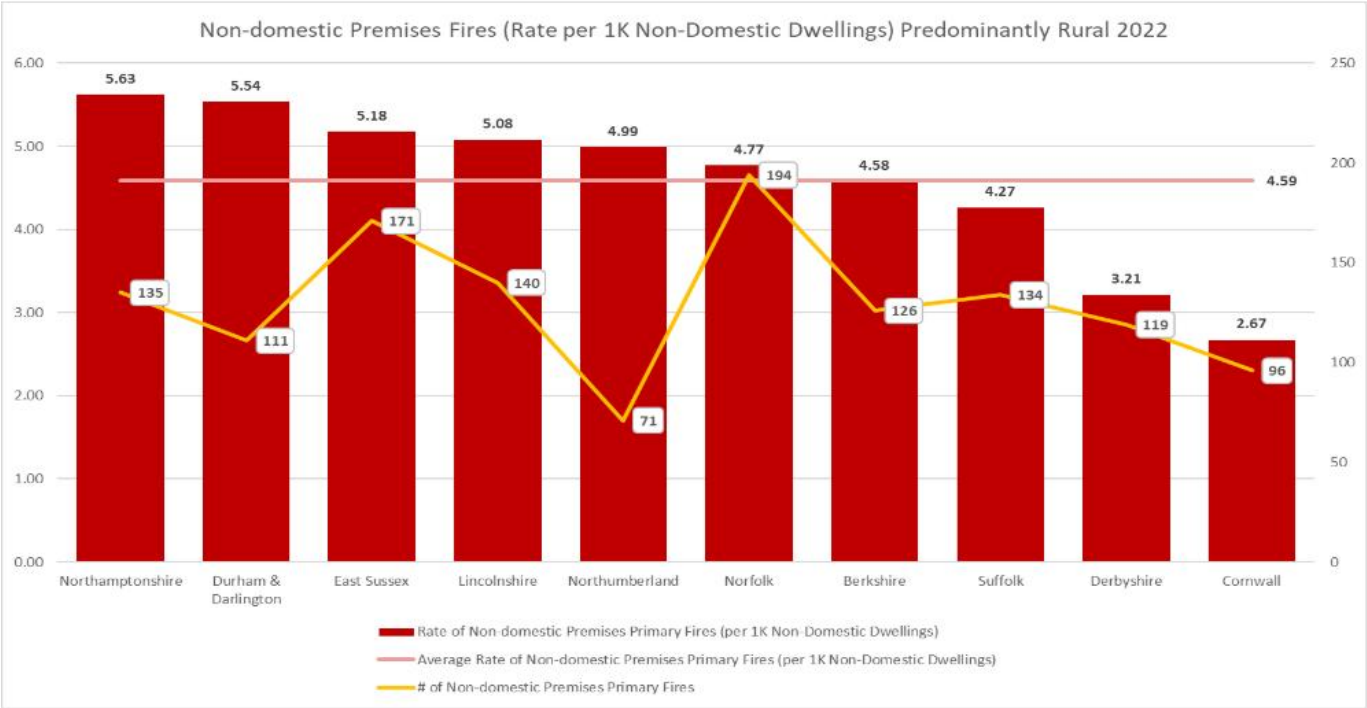




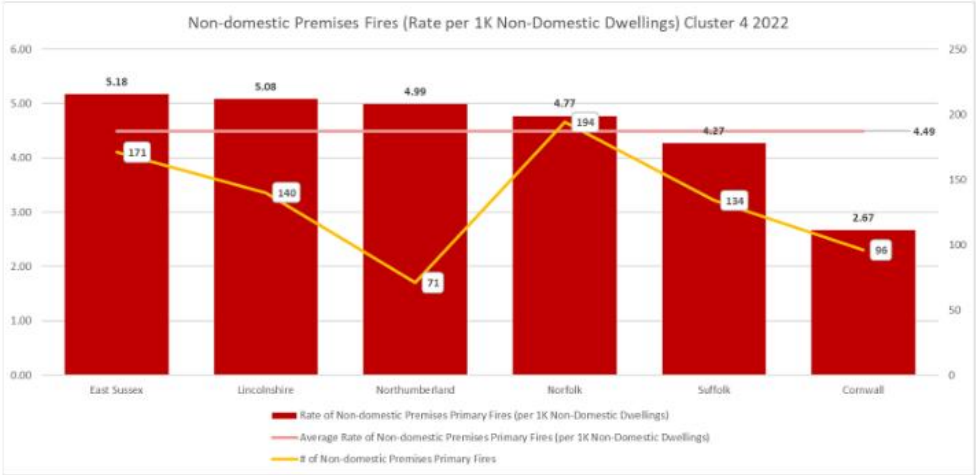
# STATEMENT OF ASSURANCE



NFRS had the highest number of Non-domestic premises Fires within the PD and Cluster 4 groups. This was considerably higher than the PD average of 129.7. However, when we consider rate per 1000 non-domestic dwellings, NFRS actually has the fifth lowest rate at 4.77 (just above the PD average of 4.59):

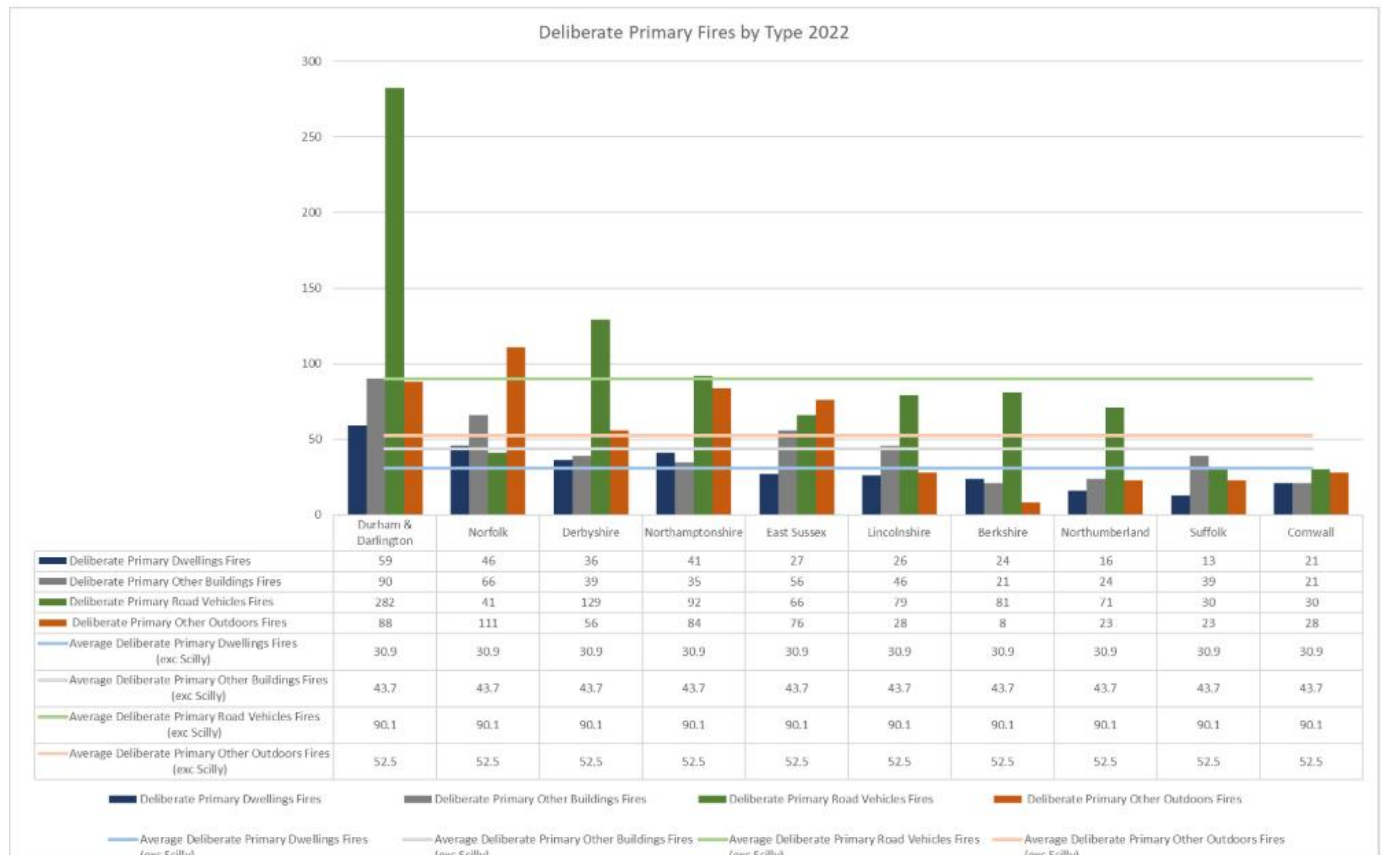


When considering against the Cluster 4 group, NFRS has the third lowest rate per 1000 of non-domestic dwelling fires (the Cluster 4 average being 4.49).

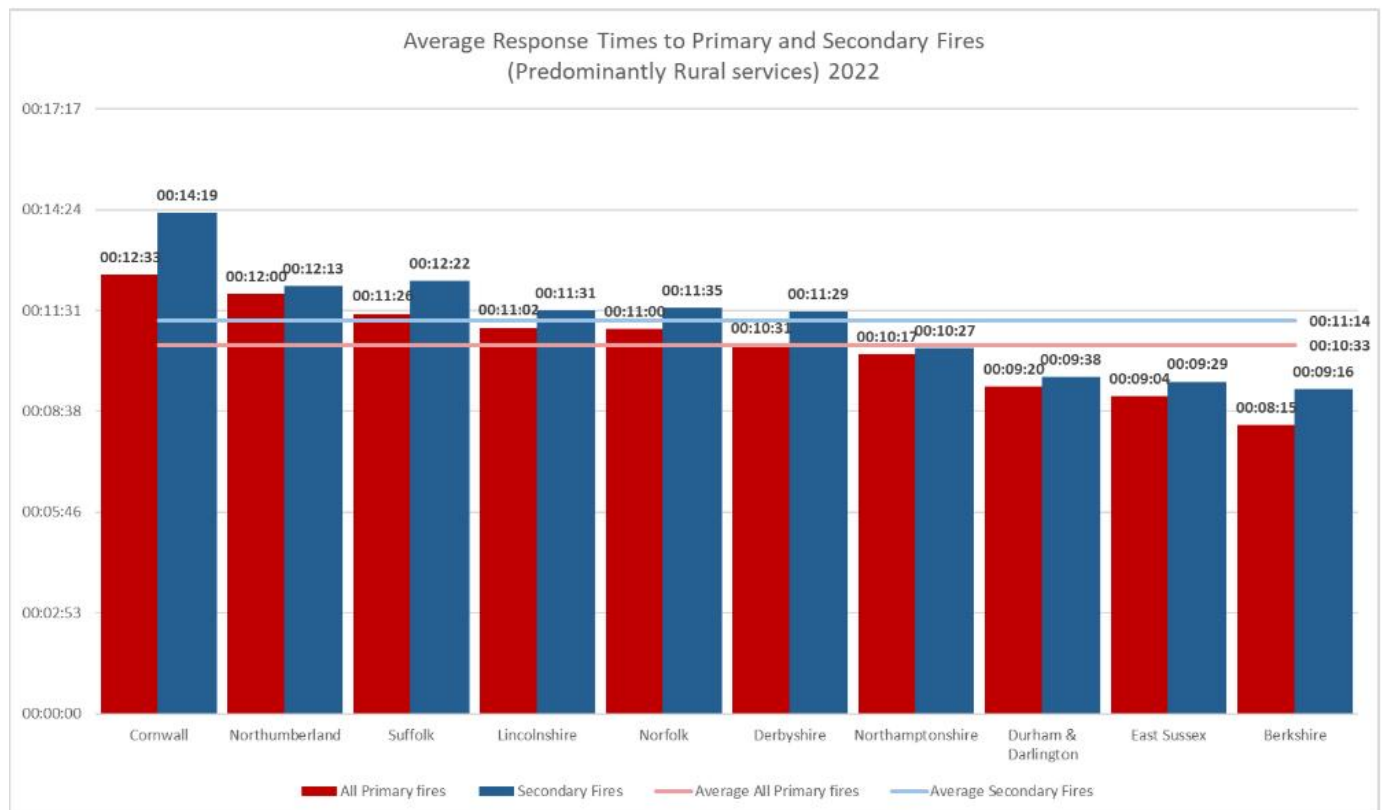




## STATEMENT OF ASSURANCE



NFRS average response time to Primary Fires in 2022 was 11 minutes (the PD average was 10:33). Four other services had higher average response times:

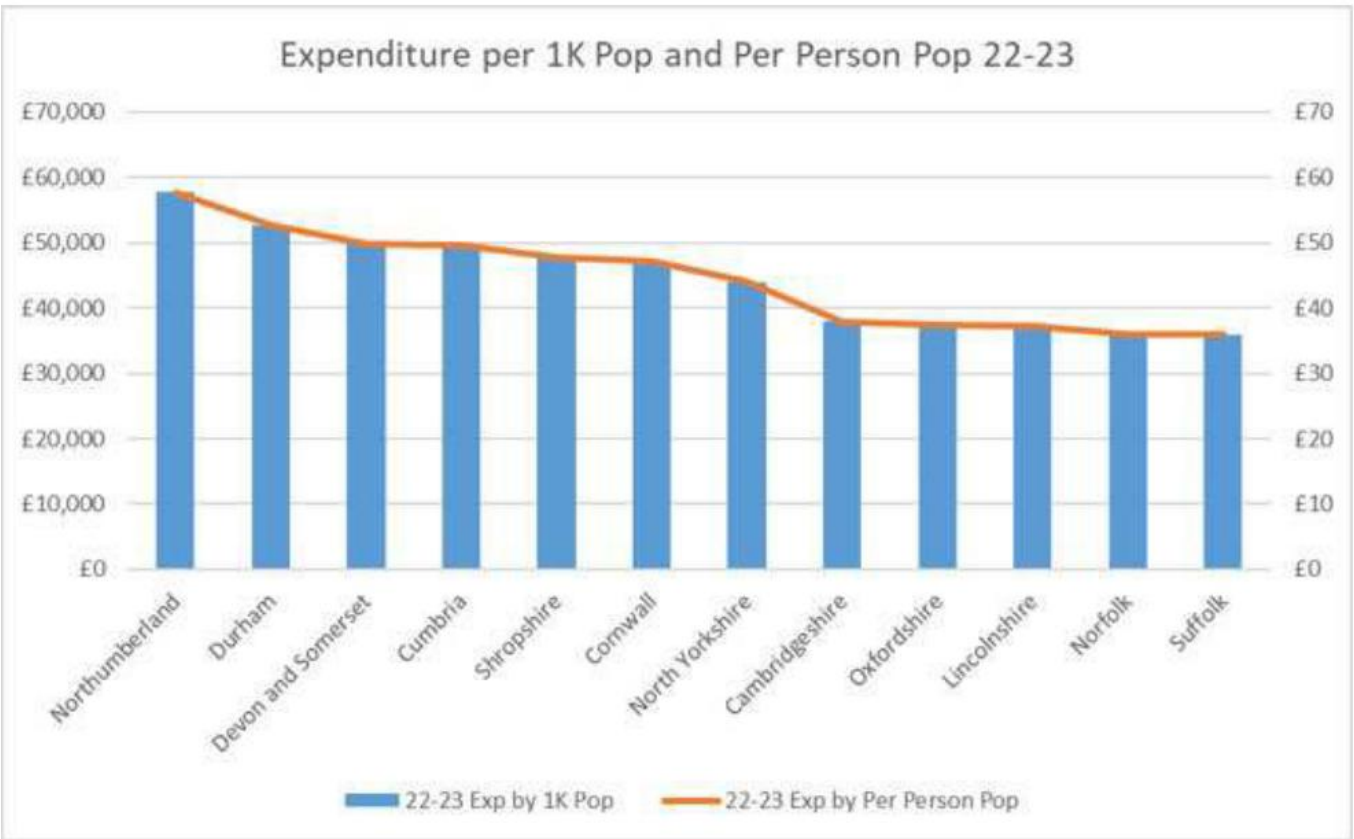
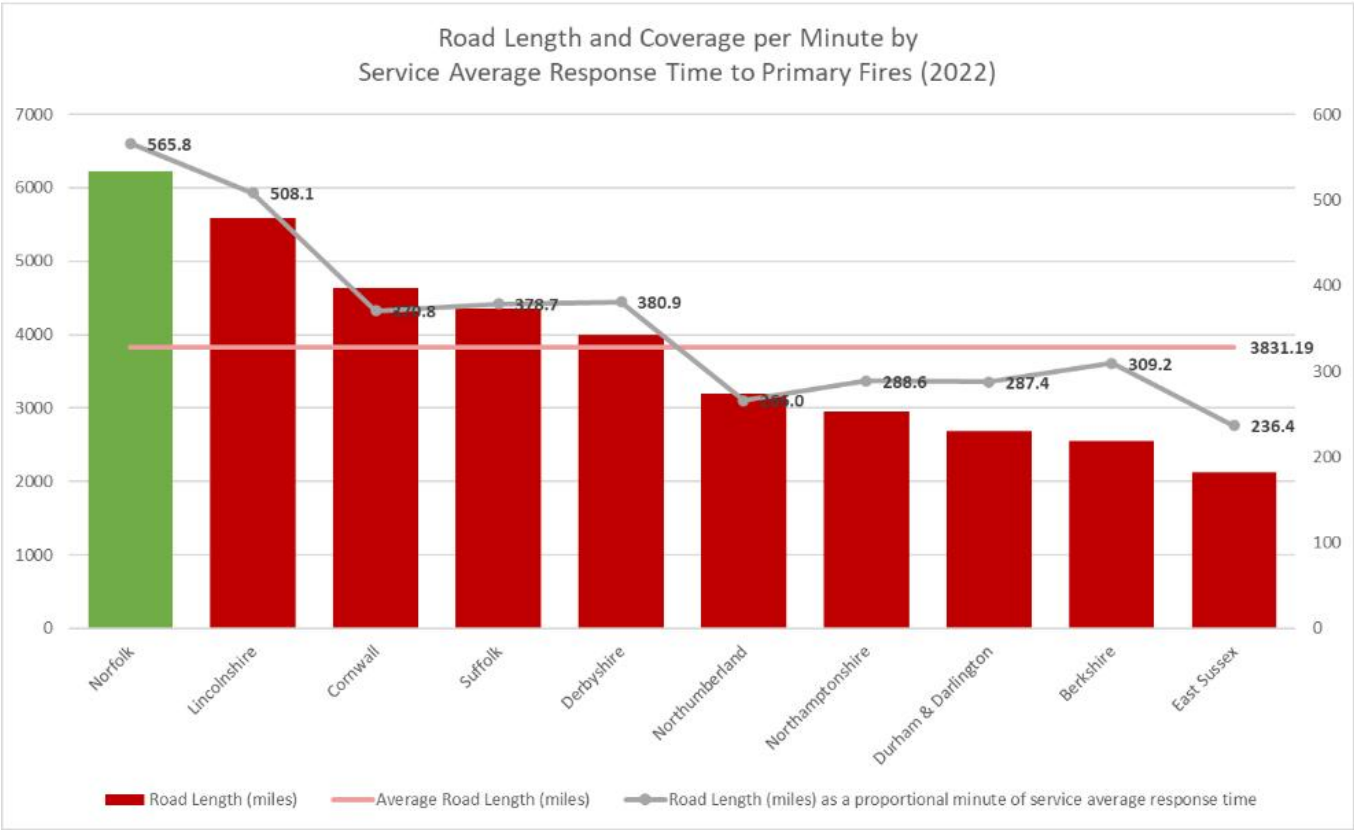






# STATEMENT OF ASSURANCE

Interestingly, when we divide the total road length of the PD areas by their average response times to Primary Fires, Norfolk is highest for coverage at 565.8 miles per average response time minute:



# Cabinet

**Item No: 10**

**Report Title: Norfolk Fire and Rescue Service – HMICFRS Improvement Plan Update**

**Date of Meeting: 7<sup>th</sup> August 2023**

**Responsible Cabinet Member: Cllr Dewsbury** (Cabinet Member for Communities & Partnerships)

**Responsible Director: Ceri Sumner, Chief Fire Officer**  
**Is this a Key Decision? No**

**If this is a Key Decision, date added to the Forward Plan of Key Decisions: n/a**

## **Introduction from Cabinet Member**

Since the last update to Cabinet in September 2022, Norfolk Fire and Rescue Service has continued to make good progress on its improvement journey, despite a number of difficult circumstances both locally and nationally.

The ability of Norfolk Fire and Rescue Service (NFRS) to respond to emergencies and incidents nationally and within our County, along with public confidence in the service, remains strong. However, the overall position for Norfolk's Fire and Rescue Service at the last inspection was rated as "Requires Improvement" with a "Cause of Concern" around our prevention activity. Whilst these findings were disappointing, they provided insight and focus for improvement. In our interim inspection on the cause for concern, the HMICFRS inspectors noted:

"The inspection team was pleased to see that the service had taken steps to address the cause of concern. We recognise the considerable work that has been carried out to support these improvements. The service is making prevention a high priority".

The new Chief Fire Officer is now fully embedded within the service and appointments have been made at senior levels to ensure a robust and capable leadership approach for NFRS. Additional analysis by the senior team have highlighted resource gaps in relation to the People pillar of the inspection, based on mental health and wellbeing concerns in the service, which have been addressed to

ensure the service has the capacity to move forward towards its aspiration of being a “Good” service.

## **Executive Summary**

This report updates on the progress of Norfolk Fire and Rescue Service in addressing the elements of the previous HMICFRS inspection, where it was rated as “Requires Improvement” across three key areas, with a cause for concern around prevention activities.

The latest round of HMICFRS inspections have seen the introduction of a new grade “adequate” where previously services could be rated as:

- Outstanding
- Good
- Requires improvement
- Inadequate

This could mean that some areas of Norfolk Fire and Rescue Service could move from a “good” to “adequate” without any deterioration in the provision, but more as a reflection of the change in approach to grading.

Norfolk Fire and Rescue Service continue to work through the improvement plans for the Cause for Concern, and Requires Improvement areas and are making progress in implementing the required actions. The majority of the actions related to the Cause for Concern are now complete.

Fire and Rescue Services nationally have been under scrutiny in relation to culture, values and their ability to uphold high professional standards. As a result, HMICFRS developed a Values and Culture spotlight report, published in March 2023, containing 35 recommendations all Fire and Rescue Services are required to adopt.

Norfolk Fire and Rescue Service have assessed the resources needed to implement Values and Culture report requirements, in addition to the previous inspection results, and have made progress in addressing them. A copy of the HMICFRS Values and Culture report can be found in Appendix C. NFRS are satisfied with progress made against the new recommendations and have identified the work required to ensure implementation.

## **Recommendations:**

- 1. Note the progress already made, and the further actions and priorities for the service**
- 2. To adopt in full the recommendations outlined in the HMICFRS Values and Culture Spotlight report and task the Chief Fire Officer to implement these**
- 3. To acknowledge the work already undertaken to strengthen the mental health and wellbeing approach of the service**



## 1. Background and Purpose

1.1 His Majesty's Inspectorate of Constabulary and Fire and Rescue Services (HMICFRS) undertook an inspection of Norfolk Fire and Rescue Service in October 2021. A partial reinspection was carried out in November 2022 to review our "cause for concern" related to prevention activity. The next full inspection is expected on 11 September 2023. In carrying out the inspection, HMICFRS looked to answer three principal questions:-

- How effective is the fire and rescue service at keeping people safe and secure from fire and other risks?
- How efficient is the fire and rescue service at keeping people safe and secure from fire and other risks?
- How well does the fire and rescue service look after its people?

A graded judgement is provided for each of these principal questions. The categories of graded judgement are: -

- Outstanding
- Good
- Requires improvement
- Inadequate

From this year, a new grade of adequate is being introduced. This could mean that some areas could see a grade of adequate against areas previously graded as good, without any deterioration in performance or capability.

1.2 Further to Norfolk Fire and Rescue's own People related inspection results, there has been national scrutiny of the professional standards and culture within UK Fire and Rescue Services, largely prompted by the outcomes of the London Fire Brigade Culture review. As a result, HMICFRS conducted a desktop analysis of its previous inspection round and in March 2023, published a Culture and Values spotlight report, setting out a wide range of recommendations with a range of implementation dates, some of which required immediate implementation.

This report updates on the priorities and progress of Norfolk Fire and Rescue Service in relation to the findings of the previous inspection, and also highlights some key progress against the HMICFRS Culture and Values recommendations.

## 2. Proposal Norfolk inspection outcomes

2.1 The outcome of our 2021 inspection was a graded judgement of 'Requires Improvement' for each of the three principal questions related to Efficiency, Effectiveness and People. Within this, four areas were rated as 'Good', one as 'Inadequate' and the six as 'Requires Improvement'. These are set out in [detail in the published inspection report HMICFRS inspection report 2019](#)

- 2.2 A short reinspection of the service in Autumn 2022, focused on our cause for concern areas, and demonstrated significant progress had been made with HMICFRS stating “The inspection team was pleased to see that the service had taken steps to address the cause of concern. We recognise the considerable work that has been carried out to support these improvements. The service is making prevention a high priority.”

In order to remove the cause for concern, the inspectorate will be looking for improvements to be embedded and sustained.

- 2.3 Our initial approach to improvement prioritised the “cause for concern”, as set out in the previous report. However, as result of reviewing the People pillar of the inspection regime, it became obvious this also needed prioritisation if improvements were to be made. In addition, NFRS staff experience demonstrated that mental health and wellbeing support was not sufficient and required immediate intervention.
- 2.4 A comprehensive programme has been developed to address wellbeing within the service, with the help of Public Health, and the formation of an external advisory panel on suicide prevention.

We have recently shared some of our work at the National Fire Chief’s Council to raise awareness and support the introduction of a national crisis line for Firefighters, as set up by the Fire Fighter’s Charity. Many elements of our programme also align to the recommendations in the HMICFRS Values and Culture Report. The high level strategic direction is shown below:



- 2.5 It is proposed that work to deliver the Community Safety Development Plan (latest version at Appendix A) continues to be a high priority in terms of service improvement activity. The vast majority of actions within this plan are now complete or close to completion.
- 2.6 Activity to address the actions identified in the Improvement Plan (set out in Appendix B) should continue to progress and work to further develop the plan in line with the CRMP and emergent risk should continue.
- 2.7 The Strategic Development Oversight Group, under the Chairmanship of the Cabinet Member for Communities and Partnerships, should continue to scrutinise the plans in Appendix A and B.
- 2.8 Norfolk Fire and Rescue Service remain committed to addressing all areas of the previous inspection report, the new Values and Culture report, as well as undertaking our own analysis of areas for improvement and innovation. It is the aspiration of Norfolk Fire and Rescue Authority (Norfolk County Council) to have a Fire and Rescue Service that continues to meet the needs of our communities and is ultimately rated as good by HMICFRS.

### **3. Impact of the Proposal**

- 3.1 The HMICFRS categorise their specific inspection findings as follows:-

- Innovative practice
- Cause of concern (these also include recommendations)
- Areas for improvement

#### **3.2 Innovative practice**

- 3.2.1 The inspection report highlights the service's work on equality, diversity and inclusion as innovative practice.
- 3.2.2 The Prevention team were successful in continuing early work and securing the "Partnership of the Year" award from the Asian Fire Service Association. This award recognised collaborative working with Norfolk County Council's Adult Learning team to provide innovative joint work to reduce fire risk and improve safety for people newly arrived in Norfolk from abroad who do not speak or write English. NFRS's community risk management plan (CRMP) identifies that people newly arrived in Norfolk from abroad who have low literacy skills, are particularly vulnerable to the risk of fire and face considerable barriers to accessing fire safety information.
- 3.2.3 We have also worked proactively with multi-agency partners to understand and address the safety aspect of Asylum Hotels and local communities. This

work is a strong demonstration of working with JESIP (Joint Emergency Services Interoperability Principles) for joint decision making, which was a key recommendation from the Manchester Arena Inquiry– our work has been shared nationally by the National Fire Chief's Council.

### 3.3 Cause of Concern

3.3.1 The HMICFRS defines a cause of concern as a 'serious, critical or systemic shortcoming in a FRS's practice, policy or performance'. In our last inspection, one cause of concern was identified for Norfolk, along with three recommendations to address this. The cause for concern highlighted that:

"The service hasn't made prevention activity a high enough priority and it isn't adequately identifying those most at risk from fire."

The associated recommendations were

- ensure that joint agency reviews take place after significant or fatal fire incidents; reviews should take place at an appropriate strategic level in the service and with other relevant organisations;
- target the most vulnerable, who are at greatest risk from fire; and
- ensure that all staff have a good understanding of how to identify vulnerability and safeguard vulnerable people.

3.3.2 The short reinspection report by HMICFRS, released publicly on Friday 20 January 2023, notes the following areas:

- good progress made by NFRS against some areas in the plan, supported by additional funding from Norfolk County Council.
- positive use of data and working with external partners.
- improvements in how the service targets the most vulnerable, who are at the greatest risk from fire (whilst recognising more still needs to be done).
- good governance in place to ensure the work set out in the action plan was being delivered.

3.3.3 However the inspectors also found that more work was needed to ensure firefighters undertake their statutory duties for prevention of deaths and injury by fire; this was particularly true for our on-call staff.

3.3.4 To address this, face to face prevention training is being rolled out across our on-call stations to supplement the 1000 on-call hours dedicated to prevention activity. Our new Head of Prevention and Protection is also reviewing the consistency and productivity of Home Fire Safety Visits to ensure best use of resource.

3.3.4 In relation to our fatal fire reviews, we have taken our learning, working in partnership with NASB, Adult Social Care and Telecare Services providers, culminating in a joint conference to identify learnings and improvements



across the sector. We have also prompted a review of the MOU between the Telecare Services Association and National Fire Chief's Council.

- 3.3.5 We have reviewed our approach to external communications and changed the overall resource model to ensure sufficient capacity to reach key audiences with critical, time relevant safety and prevention messages. This model will go live August 2023.

The report of January 2023 concluded: "The inspection team was pleased to see that the service had taken steps to address the cause of concern. We recognise the considerable work that has been carried out to support these improvements. The service is making prevention a high priority."

### **3.4 Areas for improvement**

- 3.4.1. The inspection identified a number of areas for improvement. These included some areas identified in our 2019 inspection that HMICFRS assessed as not yet completed. It also included two areas that were previously rated as good, which are now rated as requires improvement. These are around future affordability and getting the right people with the right skills.
- 3.4.2 As previously presented to Cabinet, comprehensive plans were developed to address all areas of concern and areas for improvement. The updated plans can be found in Appendix A and B. Progress is being made in the majority of areas, although some aspects will take a longer time frame to address and embed. We have also made strong progress with recommendations arising from the Grenfell tragedy and have commenced work on the initial recommendations from the Manchester Arena Inquiry.
- 3.4.3 Since Autumn 2022 a review has been undertaken to assess the People elements of HMICFRS inspection framework, based on our own experiences with staff mental health and wellbeing, later enhanced by the London Fire Brigade culture review and the recommendations outlined in the HMICFRS Values and Culture report. The report focuses on
- values and culture, including bullying, harassment and discrimination
  - training and skills
  - fairness and diversity
  - leadership
- 3.4.4 As a result we have added capacity and capability to the service to address wellbeing issues and implement HMICFRS recommendations. Most notably this included introducing an Area Manager (Head of Service) with accountability for the People pillar of the inspection framework and national standards. Resource has also been allocated to workforce planning, HR, culture and ethics, communications, community engagement (incorporating EDI) and wellbeing. The NCC Head of Equality currently sits on the senior leadership team for Fire to ensure an ongoing focus on EDI; data and reporting on EDI information for staff remains a concern.

3.4.5 HMICFRS requires regular updates on progress against the recommendations in the Values and Culture report, which are tracked and managed locally by the new Area Manager/ Head of People. NFRS is making strong progress against the recommendations although it should be noted that timescales are tight, and some recommendations require further clarification nationally. To date we have:

- Implemented a regular reporting mechanism to alert the HMICFRS of any employees accused of Gross Misconduct
- Implemented an external anonymous reporting line to supplement the NCC whistleblowing offer
- Strengthened support arrangements for those raising internal complaints or concerns, as well as those accused
- Issued a joint statement with Union Representative bodies to support culture improvements and encourage people to speak up
- Conducted 360 feedback for the senior leadership team
- Engaged the National Fire Chief's Council to support our implementation of the Leadership Standards
- Reviewed and simplified our approach to the Core Code of Ethics and NFRS values/ cultural framework
- Undertaken an additional staff survey aligned to the HMICFRS staff survey to track progress

3.4.6 NFRS has received short term investment from Public Health to strengthen the protective factors associated with wellbeing. This is evidenced by a recent academic study and endorsed by our external advisory panel on suicide prevention.

3.4.7 The development of a new Community Risk Management Plan (2023-2026) was signed off at NCC Full Council in March 2023, following public consultation and scrutiny. It contained plans for wildfire and summer heat conditions based on our review of Summer 2022. This plan is crucial to our ability to match resources to the assessed risk, and therefore should address a number of the findings in the previous HMICFRS report as well as new and emerging risk.

## **4. Evidence**

4.1. The Strategic Development and Oversight Group, chaired by the Cabinet Member for Communities and Partnerships (Chair of the FRA) and made up of representatives of the Conservative, Labour and Liberal Democrat Groups, alongside representatives of staff bodies (Fire Brigades Union, Fire and Rescue Services Association and UNISON), oversees the CRMP development, and is also kept up to date with improvements related to HMICFRS.

4.2 HMICFRS have clearly set out in their inspection report areas where they have assessed the service as performing well and the areas where improvement is needed. There is a statutory duty on the service to demonstrate efficiency and

effectiveness and therefore it is important to ensure that we address the areas identified by the HMICFRS in their report.

- 4.3 Our approach to mental health and wellbeing has been developed based on organisational context, academic research ([Mapping the Health and Wellbeing Across the Firefighting Career and Assessing the Current Demands Report NTU NFCC FFC HO](#)) and advice from an external expert advisory panel on suicide prevention.

## **5. Alternative Options**

- 5.1 Cabinet may wish to amend or make additions to the plans set out in Appendices A and B, or comment on the approach to mental health and wellbeing as set out in section 2.4

## **6. Financial Implications**

- 6.1 The additional resource requirements are built into the medium-term financial plan for 24/25 and will go through the impending budget setting process for member approval.

## **7. Resource Implications**

- 7.1 **Staff:** Previously agreed changes to the Prevention team staffing have now been implemented. The additional staff resource required to implement the HMICFRS Values and Culture report, and address staff wellbeing issue are now in place.
- 7.2 **Property:** There are no property implications.
- 7.3 **IT:** There are no immediate IT implications. Work with the County Councils Digital Team continues to implement the ICT plan, including improvements to our emergency software and systems, re-procurement of systems, reaching remote staff and modernisation of equipment.

## **8. Other Implications**

- 8.1 **Legal Implications:** Fire and rescue authorities must give due regard to reports and recommendations made by HMICFRS (section 7.5 of the Fire and Rescue National Framework for England 2018).
- 8.2 **Human Rights Implications:** None.
- 8.3 **Equality Impact Assessment (EqIA):**

Our HMICFRS Improvement Plan has been designed to significantly enhance access and equality of opportunity for staff and service users with protected characteristics in Norfolk.

We are proud that this work to embed equality into the core of the plan has been recognised by two national awards and one award nomination – but we are not complacent about the level of transformation still required, and this is set out in this report.

In order to ensure that we are discharging our responsibility to give due regard to the public sector equality duty in designing and implementing our improvement plan, a comprehensive range of evidence has been gathered and analysed. This has involved reviewing data about people and services affected, contextual information and commissioned research about local areas and populations - and crucially, the findings of public consultation.

This includes our Local Government Chronicle award-nominated research with over 200 residents from seldom-heard backgrounds in Norfolk – on barriers to employment and services. It also includes staff surveys and engagement.

In addition, as noted in the inspection report, we have completed around 850 equality impact assessments of all NFRS policies, which includes our CRMP.

Our CRMP guides everything we do as a fire and rescue service. The equality impact assessment of our CRMP is published on [Norfolk Fire and Rescue webpages](#), and sets out our approach to keeping our diverse community as safe as possible; how we consider all potential risks and how we aim to respond to them.

For more information please contact [equalities@norfolk.gov.uk](mailto:equalities@norfolk.gov.uk)

**8.4 Data Protection Impact Assessments (DPIA): N/A**

**8.5 Health and Safety implications:** Addressing the areas for improvement identified by the HMICFRS will improve the service, and therefore enable us to be better able to address the risks facing Norfolk communities. Specific risks associated with employee wellbeing are also being reviewed.

**8.6 Sustainability implications: N/A**

**8.7 Any Other Implications:** There are no other implications, other than those set out in this report, to bring to Members attention at this stage.

## **9. Risk Implications / Assessment**

**9.1** We have to address the findings of the HMICFRS so that we can assure ourselves, the Inspectorate, our stakeholders and communities that we are able to fulfil our crucial role in keeping Norfolk safe.

## 10. Select Committee Comments

10.1 N/A

## 11. Recommendations

1. Note the progress already made, and the further actions and priorities for the service
2. To adopt in full the recommendations outlined in the HMICFRS Values and Culture Spotlight report and task the Chief Fire Officer to implement these
3. To acknowledge the work already undertaken to strengthen the mental health and wellbeing approach of the service

## 12. Background Papers

- [Values and culture in fire and rescue services - His Majesty's Inspectorate of Constabulary and Fire & Rescue Services \(justiceinspectorates.gov.uk\)](https://www.justiceinspectorates.gov.uk/hmicfrs/)
- [HMICFRS inspection report – 2022](#)
- [HMICFRS Covid 19 inspection findings – 2021](#)
- [HMICFRS inspection report 2019](#)
- Cabinet report – May 2019 – NFRS Community Risk Management Plan (CRMP 2023-2026) Development Plan
- Cabinet report – July 2019 - Norfolk Fire and Rescue Service - Significant Incident Review Policy
- [Mapping the Health and Wellbeing Across the Firefighting Career and Assessing the Current Demands Report NTU NFCC FFC HQ](#)

### Officer Contact

If you have any questions about matters contained within this paper, please get in touch with:

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## Appendix A

### Norfolk Fire and Rescue Service

#### Cause of Concern Improvement Plan

During the recent HMICFRS inspection, the inspectorate identified several areas where improvements are needed, which were set out in a 'Cause of Concern' letter. In addition, several activities to further develop our Community Safety service were already being considered and progressed. This Development Plan brings together all those key activities into a single plan to enable a joined-up approach.

It is intended that this plan is dynamic to enable new activities to be added, and planned activities to be reshaped, as work progresses, and we have a better understanding of the impact and learning from our actions.

The below shows progress against each element of the improvement plan.

**Action complete - Quality Assurance/Evaluation/Monitoring phase.**

**Action plan agreed/outlined and timescales on track for completion.**

**Action plan outlined and timescales delayed/ unclear.**

**Action plan yet to be agreed.  
Action plan delayed/issue identified.**

**Priority Outcome A – Robust arrangements in place to ensure multi-agency review and learning from fatal fires and serious incidents.**

**HMI Recommendation:** ensure that joint agency reviews take place after significant or fatal fire incidents; reviews should take place at an appropriate strategic level in the service and with other relevant organisations.

Ref	Key actions	Progress made	Timescales	Lead	Further Work Planned
A.1	Fatal fire review policy published and embedded within the Safeguarding Adults and Children's process.	<b>June 2023:</b> The policy has been revised to acknowledge that this process can be used as an alternative to a Safeguarding Adult Review (SAR) and timelines reviewed.	Complete	Head of Prevention and Protection	Process established and embedded.  Standard review cycle and monitoring of effectiveness of policy.
A.2	Trend analysis of fire fatalities is informing future plans.	<b>June 2023:</b> 3-year trend analysis in fatal fires has been published.  County wide emollient cream campaign instigated following review. Refreshed hazards via bulletin.  Informed partnership work with domiciliary carers.  Work within assistive technology/telecare sector to reduce risk.	Complete	Head of Planning and Performance  Head of Prevention and Protection	From this point forward, we will publish an annual report.  This will be published September 23 for review of period April 22- March 23.  Working with partners and NFCC to reduce risk.
A.3	Fire Investigation process and officer handbook captures National Fire Chiefs Council Person Centred Framework lines of enquiry.	Additions made to Fire Investigation Handbook. Amended notebook complete. Fire Investigation staff trained in Person-Centred Framework.	Complete	Head of Prevention and Protection	Monitoring as BAU.

A.4	Quality Assurance process is undertaken for all fatal fire reviews	<p>The Significant Incident Review policy complements the wider Organisational Assurance Governance Policy Po/44.</p> <p>We conduct Significant Incident Reviews with Operational Assurance for internal reviews and Quality Assurance for external reviews.</p> <p>Resources are in place to manage the process</p> <p>We now sit on the National Fire Chiefs Council National Evaluation Group, which will guide our strategy.</p>	Complete	Head of Prevention and Protection	Embed Quality Assurance process and examine effectiveness.
A.5	Evidence of significant learning is informing reviews of policies and processes.	<p>Significant Incident Policy published, outlining the process for capturing learning and how this will be taken forward internally and externally.</p> <p>Process captured in Significant Incident Policy</p> <p>Action tracker will incorporate actions required and progress/changes made</p> <p>4 x Fatal Fire Reviews now completed</p>	Complete	Head of Planning and Performance	<p>Continue to influence learning locally and nationally through examples shown to date see A.1.</p> <p>Annual Report will summarise learning.</p>

**Priority Outcome B – Clear methodology to identify those most at risk from fire in place, linked to our delivery plans.**

**HMI Recommendation:** target the most vulnerable, who are at greatest risk from fire.

Ref	Key actions	Progress made	Timescales	Lead	Further work planned
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B.1	Effective identification and targeting of vulnerable persons and those most at risk within the community.	<p>Wholetime Duty System staff now targeted high risk Lower Layer Super Output Areas.</p> <p>Tools developed and disseminated to District Managers for targeting. Baseline Community Risk Profile developed.</p> <p>Mapped vulnerabilities through 3-year fatal fire analysis. Understanding of persons most at risk for person centred targeting.</p> <p>Developed SHERMAN so crews are aware of those most at risk. (Information also shared with key partners and Social Care)</p> <p>Smoking Hoarding Elderly or lives alone Reduced mobility or visual impairments Mental health issues Alcohol Misuse Needs care or support.</p>	Sep 2023	Head of Prevention and Protection	<p>Refresh Community Risk Profile (CRP) against findings. Need live risk profiling so outcomes can be visual and highest risk community can be targeted.</p> <p>Link prevention activity to CRP impacts and any change or lowering of risk within LSOAs.</p>
B.2	Effective evaluation of Home Fire Safety Visits generation.	<p>Collaborated with Norfolk County Council Public Health team to write an Evaluation Framework. Training planned for Community Safety Station Managers.</p> <p>We are part of the National Fire Chiefs Council Evaluation Group</p>	August 2023	Head of Prevention and Protection	Further develop evaluation process in line with Evaluation Framework document (which is currently under development by assurance team).

		On call support officer team to evaluate HFSV activity.			
B.3	Lower Layer Super Output Areas based Quick Strike process	Quick Strike process updated and published.  Level of Quick Strike decided by severity of incident and LSOA risk.	Sep 2023	Head of Prevention and Protection	Joint Prevention and Protection policy to be developed  Report Performance Indicator via Performance board.
B.4	Home Fire Safety Visits against National Fire Chiefs Council person centred framework	The core elements of the Person-Centred Framework are now within the Home Fire Safety Visits.  Person Centred Framework information shared within Prevention team  Wholetime Crews have received training on person-centred approach.  Service wide training underway – completed by April 2024.	April 2024	Head of Prevention and Protection	Crews to be allocated visits  Enable tablets or smartphones to transfer data into database at point of visit.  Consider sim cards in station laptops or tablets for live input.
B.5	Embed Fire Vulnerability principles into Norfolk Community Partnership and Norfolk Vulnerability Hub	SHERMAN principle developed and shared across NFRS.	Dec 2023	Head of Prevention	Share SHERMAN framework with partners.  Develop outline plan for fire vulnerability framework including high risk referral routes to Norfolk Fire & Rescue Service

B.6	Recruit Essential Resources for development of Community Safety Prevention Provision. Recruit the following posts:	<b>June 2023:</b> All practitioner positions have been successfully filled, and the organisational structure is now fully established.	Complete	Head of Prevention and Protection	Monitor and maintain full establishment.
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**Priority Outcome C – Assurance that our staff have received, understood and act on training and guidance, particularly around vulnerability and safeguarding.**

**HMI Recommendation:** *Ensure that all staff have a good understanding of how to identify vulnerability and safeguard vulnerable people.*

Ref	Key actions	Progress made	Timescales	Lead	Further work planned
C.1	Reaffirmed Safeguarding procedure	Instruction issued 02/02/22	Complete.	Head of Prevention	Monitor and consider future resourcing to maintain compliance.
C.2	Gap analysis of Norfolk County Council / Norfolk Fire & Rescue Service Safeguarding against Safeguarding Fire Standards from Fire Standard Board	Completed using National Fire Chiefs Council gap analysis tool.	Complete	Head of Prevention	Meeting with National Fire Chiefs Council Safeguarding Lead to determine best practice following gap analysis.
C.3	Cadre of competent Safeguarding trainers to deliver training across the Service.	Instructor training underway, with a cadre of trained staff currently delivering training. Training delivered.  Schedule of delivery to all staff agreed.	Complete	Head of Prevention	Continue training as per plan.  Ensure monitoring indicator and include in dashboard and SLT oversight.

		Norfolk County Council Development academy have provided Quality Assurance of learning outcomes.			Reaffirm levels of safeguarding competence required to fulfil requirements.
C.4	Established Quality Assurance process for all Prevention activity including Safeguarding.	<p>Collaborated with Norfolk County Council Public Health team to write an Evaluation Framework. Meeting with National Fire Chiefs Council Safeguarding Lead to determine best practice.</p> <p>Resource funding allocated to enable delivery</p> <p>MOC for all prevention staff now in place.</p> <p>QA process for prevention staff.</p> <p>Fire setters programme – all visits evaluated.</p> <p>Continue evaluation framework of 10 high risk visits per district per month.</p>	March 2024	Head of Prevention	<p>Develop Quality Assurance process in line with Evaluation Framework document being prepared by assurance team.</p> <p>Review initial QA activity to evaluate success.</p>
<b>Priority Outcome D – Targeted strategic governance arrangements put in place, to provide oversight, energy, and support to implement the Development Plan.</b>					
<b>Ref</b>	<b>Key actions</b>	<b>Progress made</b>	<b>Timescales</b>	<b>Lead</b>	<b>Further work planned</b>
D.1	Community Safety Development Board established	Board meetings commenced on 08/03/22 and are held monthly.	Complete	Deputy Chief Fire Officer	Board has moved to a permanent governance mechanism known as Prevention and Protection performance board.

<b>Priority Outcome E – Additional capacity secured to deliver community safety activities.</b>					
Ref	Key actions	Progress made	Timescales	Lead	Further work planned
E.1	On-Call Support Officers are delivering Home Fire Safety Visits and wider community safety support initiatives.	Home Fire Safety Visits now delivered by On-Call Support Officers.  On-Call Support Officers team to full capacity.  OCSO carry out high risk proactive LSOA targeting in form of home safety intervention.	Complete	Head of Response	All on call stations to be enabled to carry out HFSVs.
E.2	On-call staff are conducting Home Fire Safety Visits in homes of those most at risk of fires.	Expanding remit to include all staff and wider NCC via casual hours. CSA job descriptions approved which enable ability to engage casual hours staff in NFRS and NCC to complete Home Fire Safety Visits.  One third of on call staff are trained and are now delivering Home Fire Safety Visits.  Re-allocation of funding hours from on-call response budget.	March 2024	Head of Response	Recruitment and training of casual hours staff to deliver rural Home Fire Safety Visits.
E.3	Domiciliary care providers are conducting Home Fire Safety Visits increasing partner delivery of targeted Home Fire Safety Visits in homes of vulnerable older people receiving care packages.	Training package being developed. First training sessions being arranged with Domiciliary Care Providers for July.  Initial care provider engagement session complete.  Outline principles agreed with Adult Social Care.	Under Review April 24	Head of Prevention and Protection	Review suitability of measure to change to influencing partners to understand principles of risk reduction and suitable referral routes as opposed to carrying out HFSV on NFRS behalf.

		<p>Care provider meetings conducted in March and April. Further planned in May.</p> <p>Following this we will identify uptake from domiciliary care providers, and we will then be able to plan training.</p>			
E.4	Local volunteers are aligned to Community Fire Station/resilience hub project.	Initial discussions with Voluntary Norfolk undertaken.	Under Review April 24	<p>Deputy Chief Officer</p> <p>Head of Prevention and Protection</p>	SLT to review suitability, priority and resourcing of this measure.

**Priority Outcome F – Refreshed prevention plan that clearly sets out priorities for delivery within the capacity available, targeting resources to support those most at risk of fire**

Ref	Key actions	Progress made	Timescales	Lead	Further work planned
F.1	Refreshed Prevention plan to incorporate elements of Community Fire Protection development plan and revised resource allocation	Authorised and published	Complete	Head of Prevention and Protection	

**Priority Outcome G – Evaluation measures in place that enable a good understanding of how successful, or not, our prevention activities are.**

Ref	Key actions	Progress made	Timescales	Lead	Further work planned
G.1	Established Performance (Activity) Indicator	<p>Performance Outcomes in District Plans (based on Time-spent quality model). This has been agreed at Service Delivery Forum.</p> <p>Districts are now working towards these.</p> <p>Performance indicators at performance board.</p>	Complete	Head of Prevention and Protection	Monitor performance through Performance board.
G.2	Established expected outcomes and analysis of impacts on risk measured through Community Risk Profile or other methodology (KPi)	All Targeted visits are mapped to LSOA.	March 24	<p>Head of Prevention and Protection</p> <p>Head of Planning and Performance</p>	Evaluation tool still to be developed by NCC I&A as part of new analytical solution / resource being scoped / planned in collaboration with NCC I&A.
G.3	Established assurance and evaluation framework around all Prevention activity.	<p>Collaborated with Norfolk County Council Public Health team to write an Evaluation Framework for HFSV.</p> <p>We are working with Assurance and Planning to share the framework across all areas of Norfolk Fire &amp; Rescue Service.</p>	March 24	<p>Assistant Chief Officer.</p> <p>Head of Prevention</p>	<p>Assurance team will own this overarching piece of work going forward.</p> <p>Develop prevention assurance in line with evaluation framework</p>

## Appendix B

### Norfolk Fire and Rescue Service

#### “Areas for Improvement Plan”

During the recent HMICFRS inspection, the inspectorate identified several areas where improvements are needed.

This “Areas for Improvement Plan” brings together all those key activities into one document to enable a joined-up overarching approach to the related activities. It is intended that this plan is dynamic to enable new activities to be added, and planned activities to be reshaped, as work progresses once we have a better understanding of the impact and learning from our actions.

To fully understand the plan Official “Areas for Improvement” are in **BOLD**.

If the action is in normal text, it is addressing contextualised recommendations from within the report text.

#### Key for Reference Columns

- If it is in the Key Actions column in **BOLD**, then it is a 2021/22 AFI - Area for Improvement.
- If it was included in 2019 as an AFI then it is denoted - (Also 2019 AFI).
- If it is neither an AFI it is a contextualised recommendations included within the report text.

A Key as below shows progress against each element of the improvement plan.

**Action complete - Quality Assurance/Evaluation/Monitoring phase.**

**Action plan agreed/outlined and timescales on track for completion.**

**Action plan outlined and timescales delayed/ unclear.**

**Action plan yet to be agreed.**

**Action plan delayed/issue identified.**



*Note: Integrated Risk Management Plan (IRMP) is now referred to as Community Risk Management Plan (CRMP). You will see references to both within document. Community Risk Management Plan supersedes the IRMP going forward.*

Priority Outcome H – Robust arrangements to ensure risk Information is gathered and shared as appropriate across Norfolk Fire & Rescue Service and neighbouring services.					
Ref	Key actions	Progress made	Timescales		Further Work Planned
H1	<b>Area For Improvement</b>  <b>The service should ensure the risk information it gathers, and records are made readily available to all staff and that they are familiar with how to access it.</b>	<p>Premise specific risk information (shared through documents known as 'Risk Files') is collated and shared to responding fire crews via Mobile Data Terminals on every front-line fire engine.</p> <p>Response crews receive regular routine training on reviewing, updating and accessing risk files.</p> <p>A system known as web risk manager contains information accessible to crews at incidents.</p> <p>This training will be refreshed within 2023.</p>	<p>April 2024</p> <p>For completion of wider contexts project.</p>	<p>Assistant Chief Officer</p> <p>Head of Response</p>	<p>Risk and information systems/ processes should be sufficiently integrated through a systems approach to ensure information is shared and available for use within a timely manner.</p> <p>Introduction of an effective process of identifying, collating, sharing and reviewing additional risk information to support prevention, protection and response activities.</p> <p>Introduction of technology to allow the collating and sharing of risk information via mobile devices and other service systems.</p> <p>This work will encompass all sources of risk information to</p>

					be shared as required in wider contexts
H2	Firefighters must be able to share and access over the border risk file information.	<p>Work has been undertaken to reaffirm sharing of “riskfiles” within 10km of neighbouring services border.</p> <p>A draft Memorandum of Understanding on the process of sharing “riskfile” information 10km within each border has been written and agreed with other services.</p>	December 2023	Assistant Chief Officer/ Head of Response	<p>Clear engagement across regional services to share information via resilience direct. Monitor.</p> <p>Neighbouring services Memorandum of understanding to be formally signed and adopted.</p> <p>Continue to collaborate on best practice approach with regional services.</p>
H3	Operational staff require further upskilling/training and understanding in “hazard” spotting.	<p>Group Manager Assurance has met Head of Response and Head of Planning to address.</p> <p>A work package with dedicated resources have been allocated to deliver this training (see H1).</p>	December 2023	Assistant Chief Officer/ Head of Response	<p>The service will define what risks/information it should record and share via service Policy, procedures, and IT related systems.</p> <p>Clear updated policy and procedure to be written and training rolled out.</p>
H4	Outline what steps the service might take in response to any anticipated change to risk levels. For example,	Comment H4 – Links to J1 – this has been shared with the Community Risk Management Plan team and Head of Planning and Performance.	December 23	Assistant Chief Officer	Further work to examine and check how NFRS can articulate plans through all framework documents – CRMP has informed POAPS

	it isn't clear how the service plans to target those most at risk from fire, or how it will reduce the volume of, effects of, and harm from, emergency incidents.	<p>The Community Risk Management Plan outlines how risks will be managed.</p> <p>Risk and Policy Manager appointed to horizon scan and track/mitigate risk.</p>		Risk and Policy Manager	<p>for each function and also the SDP (Draft) - these in turn are reflected through lower-level delivery plans.</p> <p>Ensure it is clearly understood by staff and public: CRMP public and staff consultation.</p>
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**Priority Outcome i – Protection - The service will work with local businesses and large organisations to deliver a robust engagement strategy to lower risk in communities.**

Ref	Key actions	Progress made	Timescales	Lead	Further work planned
I.1	<p><b>Area For Improvement –</b></p> <p><b>(Also 2019 AFI)</b></p> <p><b>The service should ensure that staff work with local businesses and large organisations to share information and expectations on</b></p>	<p><b>June 2023:</b> The Service has employed a new engagement officer.</p> <p>We will have a business engagement plan and are looking for longer term to incorporate this work into BAU.</p> <p>Reviewed web content to ensure we have the correct information available to the public.</p> <p>Successfully piloted a Care Home fire safety engagement package.</p> <p>High risk installation officer appointed to engage with high-risk premises.</p>	March 2024	Head of Prevention and Protection	<p>Develop a business engagement policy that identifies engagement and frequencies.</p> <p>Complete engagement sessions, prioritising tall building managers</p> <p>Conduct care home engagement across the county.</p> <p>Implement MOU from Norwich council tall buildings across county.</p>

	<b>compliance with fire safety regulations.</b>				
I.2	<b>Area For Improvement –</b>  <b>(Also 2019 AFI)</b>  <b>The service should ensure it allocates enough resources to a prioritised and risk-based inspection programme.</b>	<b>June 2023:</b> The service has invested heavily since the last inspection and has changed its community fire protection provision.  It has upskilled 7 fire safety advisors to fire safety inspectors.  Recruited 4 Fire Investigation Protection officers and developed them to L4 cert fire safety auditors. Developed 3 team members to Fire Safety Level 5.  Commenced a Fire Safety training programme for all firefighters.	November 2023	Head of Prevention and Protection	Complete an analysis of numbers of employees against number of audits/activities carried out per year to demonstrate RBIAP is achievable.
I.3	The service should review arrangements to respond to building consultations to ensure a timely response.	Protection Lead has been briefed.	October 23	Head of Prevention and Protection	Check the statutory 15-day standard measurement and ensure there is an up to date KPI to monitor.  Review the service Building Regulations policy/process.
I.4	There is limited quality assurance of fire safety audits	Staff are assessed as part of pathway to competence and assurance processes are built into this.	April 24	Head of Prevention and Protection	Head of Protection to review Quality Assurance policy.

		The Protection Lead has an action to reaffirm/review the Quality Assurance Policy.  Internal QA in place.			Head of Protection arranging external QA/peer assurance with Hertfordshire.
<b>Priority Outcome J – Responding to fires and other emergencies. The service could do more to align resources to identified risks.</b>					
Ref	Key actions	Progress made	Timescales	Lead	Further Work Planned
J.1	The service's response plan needs to be clearly linked to the risks identified in its Community Risk Management Plan.	<p>Full review of Plan on a Page for Response. Work has been allocated to a District Manger to progress further.</p> <p>1.Crewing models and restricted mobilising arrangements discharged within BMO-7.</p> <p>BMO-7 is under review to refresh.</p> <p>2.Degradation Plan in place.</p> <p>3.Embedded process as part of resilience planning arrangements Robust relief strategy.</p> <p>New FF recall to duty policy.</p> <p>4.BMO-7 outlines over the border working elements.</p> <p>Embedded Action Plans and General Instructions (standard template used in control). National arrangements for 13/16 mutual aid.</p>	November 2023.	Head of Response	<p>Review Response Framework document to include links to more detailed plans/procedures for,</p> <p>1. crewing models,</p> <p>2. degradation of fire appliances,</p> <p>3. protracted incidents,</p> <p>4.over-the-border working,</p> <p>5.Management of the effects of a major or national incident.</p>

J.2	<p><b>Area for Improvement (Also 2019 AFI)</b></p> <p><b>The service should ensure it has an effective system for staff to use learning and debriefs to improve operational response and incident command.</b></p>	<p>Reaffirm organisational review policy across service.</p> <p>Policy needs final realignment against latest National Guidance changes.</p> <p>Will be formally adopted in July 2023.</p> <p>Sign off received for extra resources/capacity within the department as part of Fire growth bid.</p>	<p>April 2024</p> <p>Ongoing</p>	Assistant Chief Officer	<p>Train extra structured debriefers to enable policy adherence through the service and across departments.</p> <p>Adherence to policy from July 2023.</p>
J.3	<p>The service should make sure fire control staff are involved in command, training, exercise, debrief and assurance activity.</p>	<p>Extra post has been created in control to ensure crossover of this work through/in/out of control.</p> <p>Control room lead ensures an integrated programme of involvement through audit and review frameworks and service training and exercising arrangements/structures.</p>	Monitoring/BAU	Head of Response	<p>Develop, embed and quality assure systems set up for assurance processes.</p> <p>Monitor involvement as required.</p>
J.4	<p><b>Area For Improvement (Also, part of one 2019 AFI J4/J5)</b></p> <p><b>The service should make sure its mobile data terminals are reliable so that firefighters can readily</b></p>	<p>This has been discussed with Head of Response and IT have provided high reliability statistics</p>	September 2023.	Assistant Chief Officer Head of Response	<p>Reinforce reporting of Mobile Data Terminal issues through safety event reporting systems and/or other methodology.</p> <p>Collect reliability data and work with Performance to report monthly as an KP indicator and share with relevant departments to</p>

	access up-to-date risk information.				monitor and maintain functionality.
J.5	<p><b>Area For Improvement (Also, part of one 2019 AFI J4/5)</b></p> <p><b>The service should ensure its firefighters have good access to relevant and up to-date risk information. This should include cross border information.</b></p>	<p>Work has been undertaken to reaffirm sharing of “riskfiles” within 10km of neighbouring services border.</p> <p>A Draft Memorandum of Understanding on the process of sharing “riskfile” information 10km within each border has been written and adopted across neighbouring services.</p>	July 2023	Assistant Chief Officer Head of Response	<p>Clear engagement across regional services to share information via resilience direct.</p> <p>MOU to be signed.</p> <p>Work to update all “riskfile” premises within resilience direct has been undertaken.</p> <p>Monitor performance through collaboration with neighbouring services and local districts.</p>
J.6	More could be done to improve response standards.	Head of response to monitor and implement new national measurement when it is agreed by National Fire Chiefs Council.	<p>Timescale as per new national standard</p> <p>BAU for maintaining current response standards.</p>	<p>Head of Response</p> <p>Head of Planning and Performance</p>	<p>Head of response to monitor and implement new national measurement when it is agreed by National Fire Chiefs Council.</p> <p>Reaffirm the response standards and monitor our performance through performance board.</p> <p>Head of Response to work with stakeholders to maintain response standards through performance board, on call improvement plan and regional on call tactical group.</p>

J.7	Low staffing levels in the control room were negatively affecting call handling and appliance turnout times.	Recruitment and staffing of control have improved since the inspection.  Current staffing above agreed FTE as of July 2023 which allows staffing of Fire control collaboration.  Increased resilience of 7 fully training operators as casual hours resilience staff.	Complete BAU	Head of Response	Head of response to monitor staffing and arrangements within control to ensure robust and timely call handling.
J.8	The service's call-handling software also has problems, which sometimes results in the system dropping emergency calls.	Service works as part of a regional consortium. The consortium provides assurance and secondary means of mobilising resources as part of a "buddy" system.	Monitoring.	Head of Response	Monitor as required.  Procuring replacement system in 2025.
<b>Priority Outcome K -The service should ensure that resources are appropriately allocated to support the activity set out in its integrated risk management plan/ Community Risk Management Plan</b>					
<b>Ref</b>	<b>Key actions</b>	<b>Progress made</b>	<b>Timescales</b>	<b>Lead</b>	<b>Further Work Planned</b>
K.1	<b>Area For Improvement. (Also 2019 AFI)</b>  <b>The service should make sure that resources are appropriately allocated to support the activity set out in its Integrated Risk Management Plan.</b>	Head of Planning and Performance to consider with the Community Risk Management Plan team.  Head of Operations has met with Service Liaison Lead to discuss.  Work has been allocated to a District Manger to progress further.	November 2023	Head of Response  Head of Planning and Performance	Opportunity within this Community Risk Management Plan to have clear methodology of risk and resource allocation    Plans, policies, and procedures that need to be reviewed are,



		<p>1.Crewing models and restricted mobilising arrangements discharged within BMO-7.</p> <p>BMO-7 is under review to refresh.</p> <p>2.Degradation Plan in place.</p> <p>3.Embedded process as part of resilience planning arrangements Robust relief strategy.</p> <p>New FF recall to duty policy.</p> <p>4.BMO-7 outlines over the border working elements.</p> <p>Embedded Action Plans and GIs. National arrangements for 13/16 mutual aid.</p>			<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Information on crewing models,</li> <li>- degradation of fire appliances,</li> <li>- protracted incidents,</li> <li>- over-the-border working,</li> <li>- and the management of the effects of a major or national incident.</li> </ul>
K.2	Financial forecasting and planning are done on a short-term basis.	<p>Finance Business Partner has reviewed HMICFRS requirements over a 3-year plan and has developed with the CFO a robust model.</p> <p>Revenue budget set through until 2026-27.</p> <p>Interim pressures/growth are considered on annual basis process.</p>	July 2023	CFO Finance Business Partner	Finance Business Partner, CFO need to consider if there are any mechanism for longer term financial planning that conform to governance requirements and council constitution
K.3	The service doesn't plan far enough in advance for its fleet requirements.	A fleet replacement plan has been agreed which will see 30 fire engines replaced over the next 7 years.	Complete	Head of Capability	This year will see the introduction of hybrid emergency response cars for Norfolk Fire and Rescue Service, contributing to

		<p>This is in addition to 22 fire engines that are currently being built for delivery over the next 18 months</p> <p>Capital investment by Norfolk taxpayers in the new fleet and equipment is significant totalling over £26 million, with recent approval by the Council for funding for the next tranche of fire engines, an aerial appliance, water carriers and technical rescue units.</p>			Norfolk County Council Environmental Policy objective of net zero carbon emissions by 2030
K.4	The service doesn't have workforce plans linked or aligned to the Community Risk Management Plan, medium-term financial plans or risk analysis.	<p>Workforce planning and Competency manager appointed April 2023.</p> <p>Initial workforce plan in place by July 2023 with ongoing development.</p>	<p>July 2023 Initial Workforce plan.</p> <p>April 2024 in year cycle.</p>	Head of People	<p>Links to the action of "develop workforce plan" service framework documents and service plans.</p> <p>Review all documents that flow from Community Risk Management Plan are linked and aligned to plans as they flow through the organisation.</p>
K.5	The service's delivery plan lacks detail. The service has listed its strategic aims under the headings Prevent and Protect, Response, People, Logistics, and Planning, but it is unclear how it will achieve them.	Head of Planning/Performance has drafted the service delivery plan for next planning cycle.	July 2023	Head of Planning and Performance	<p>Join Delivery plan and framework documents together.</p> <p>SDP23-24 has been drafted and informed by the CRMP23-26. Currently being reviewed by CFO.</p>

K.6	The service has listed its strategic aims under the headings 'Prevent and Protect'; 'Response'; 'People'; 'Logistics'; and 'Planning', but it is unclear how it will achieve them.	All plans on a page are completed, published, and inform strategies. Strategies in place for each area	August 2023	Head of Planning and Performance	Clearly outline how the service will achieve aims/deliver against the framework document through either delivery plans or other mechanism.
<b>Priority Outcome L – Resources, Efficiency, Budgets. The service must make sure scenario plans for future spending reductions are subject to rigorous analysis and challenge, including the impact on services to the public.</b>					
Ref	Key actions	Progress made	Timescales	Lead	Further Work Planned
L1	<b>Area For Improvement.</b>  <b>(Also 2019 AFI)</b>  <b>The service should ensure that it makes best use of the resources available to it, including from elsewhere within Norfolk County Council, to increase resilience and capacity.</b>	<p>Complete review of shared service models with Norfolk County Council has been undertaken, including a robust review of IT, HR, Comms and Health and Safety. External consultancy was brought in to review the comms model.</p> <p>All working arrangements have been reviewed with dedicated resource allocated to Fire and HR Project role put in place to review systems and processes related to People.</p> <p>Public Health, Corporate Property and IMT have all provided strong support for the service.</p> <p>As part of the Strategic Review, Trading Standards have joined the Fire and Rescue Service which provides a more joined up</p>	April 2024	CFO	<p>Not all shared service models were fit for purpose and a review has provided a more robust structure going forwards.</p> <p>We would also like to review other contracts to ensure value for money</p> <p>Definitive SLAs need to be in place to ensure shared service offers are fit for purpose</p>

		approach to Protection and advice for businesses			
L2	<b>Area For Improvement</b>  <b>The service must make sure scenario plans for future spending reductions are subject to rigorous analysis and challenge, including the impact on services to the public.</b>	<p>Key principles agreed with Cabinet member in line with Norfolk County Council strategic priorities</p> <p>Efficiency will be driven through technology and process improvements</p>	Ongoing	CFO Finance Business Partner	
L3	Future Affordability: The service should assure itself it has effective budget management planning in place, with appropriate levels of financial management capability and capacity.	<p>The Fire &amp; Rescue Service works within the County Council finance framework for all departments, whilst the Service Leadership Team will when we budget setting consider the longer-term finance horizon to be able to inform Norfolk County Council of any longer-term finance issues, we meet the County Councils time plans.</p> <p>Within Action Plan for owners to consider</p>	Complete/ Monitoring	CFO Finance Business Partner	Finance Business Partner, CFO and the Service Leadership Team ensure appropriate BAU costings and management when interim arrangements come to an end
L4	<b>Area For Improvement</b>  <b>The service should assure itself it has effective budget management planning in place, with appropriate levels of financial management capability and capacity.</b>	<p>The Fire &amp; Rescue Service as a County Council department is not required or encouraged to maintain high reserve balances as the County will underwrite any unforeseen requirements.</p> <p>The County Council promotes and finances sustainable working business cases and is inbuilt to the ways of working for the County Council. The Fire &amp; Rescue Service access to</p>	Feb 2024	CFO Finance Business Partner	<p>Revenue budget set through until 2026-27.</p> <p>Interim pressures/growth are considered on annual basis process.</p>

	<b>The service should make sure it has sufficiently robust plans in place which address the medium-term financial challenges beyond 2024 and secure an affordable way of managing the risk of fire and other risks.</b>	<p>the capital programme over the years demonstrates this commitment.</p> <p>The Fire &amp; Rescue Service meets all best value policy and process and is subject to internal and external audit reviews on this. The Fire &amp; Rescue Service has many controls in place and is “gatekeeper” by the County Council to oversee, regulate and control these areas.</p>			
L5	<p>The service could do more to align the scenario planning to the Medium-Term Financial Plan and Community Risk Management Plan in order to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• identify changes in demand and risk.</li> <li>• understand costs.</li> <li>• benchmark against other fire and rescue services; and</li> </ul>	<p>Clearer accountabilities are now in place around overall financial planning via the ACFO role.</p> <p>We have also introduced a Head of Risk and Policy role to ensure alignment to CRMP (Start date 1 July 2023)</p>	April 2024	CFO/ ACFO Finance Business Partner	<p>Finance Business Partner, CFO and the Service Leadership Team need to consider what further actions required within Action Plan.</p> <p>Instigated earlier conversation related to resource implications of business decisions</p> <p>Key stakeholders within service work with Finance business partner to align risk to financial plans.</p>

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>identify areas where the service has performed well or was comparatively expensive.</li> </ul>				
L6	There is scope for the service to consider more sophisticated budget allocation models that would help it to do this.	<p>The Fire &amp; Rescue Service works within the County Council finance framework for all departments, whilst the Service Leadership Team will when we budget setting consider the longer-term finance horizon to be able to inform Norfolk County Council of any longer-term finance issues, we meet the County Councils time plans.</p> <p>Trading Standards joining department will allow for small savings associated with Protection activity</p> <p>External funding drawn in from Public Health (Suicide Prevention) and Highways (Electric Bus project)</p>	April 2024	<p>CFO</p> <p>Finance Business Partner</p>	Undertaking efficiency audits and ensure best value
L7	Norfolk Fire & Rescue Service must lessen the main financial risks linked to staff turnover, in particular at senior manager level.	The Fire & Rescue Service works within the County Council finance framework for all departments. The Service Leadership Team will, when budget setting consider the longer-term finance horizon. This to be able to inform Norfolk County Council of any longer-term finance issues, we meet the County Councils time plans.	April 2024	<p>CFO</p> <p>Head of People</p>	Workforce planning to address retention and succession planning

L8.	The service's arrangements for managing performance are weak and don't clearly link resource use to the Community Risk Management Plan and the service's strategic priorities.	<p>We have an existing Org Performance Dashboard (Power BI revitalised) but have also identified new measures from the CRMP which we will develop in-year.</p> <p>Performance Board and Performance Leads for all measures in place. Promotion of new Power BI dashboard to take place in July 2023.</p> <p>Reviewed arrangement with Insight and Analytics teams for expert input</p>	March 2024	<p>Deputy Chief Fire Officer</p> <p>Head of Planning and Performance</p>	Ensure "golden thread" through Community Risk Management Plan and service strategy and delivery plan documents
L9	We found a lack of effective prevention and protection performance management.	Board has moved to a permanent governance mechanism known as Prevention and Protection performance board.	Monitoring	<p>Deputy Chief Fire Officer</p> <p>Head of Prevention and Protection</p> <p>Head of Protection</p>	Monitoring. Focus on consistency and increasing productivity
L10	Staff are unaware of performance targets, and there is little corporate oversight.	<p>Performance Leads aware of targets and should be communicating to staff.</p> <p>Targets agreed within service delivery teams in consultation with Performance function. Corporate oversight has improved to monthly report to SLT.</p>	March 2024	<p>Deputy Chief Fire Officer</p> <p>Head of Comms</p> <p>Head of Planning and Performance.</p>	<p>Annual Refresh and Review of Performance management arrangements at service and department level.</p> <p>Communications team will help to engage staff on a wide range of issues including performance</p>

L11	On-call staff don't undertake prevention and protection activity, and wholetime staff do minimal prevention activity in comparison to others, and don't do protection audits.	<p>Targeted prevention activity increasing across the service.</p> <p>On call staff now carry out prevention activity.</p> <p>Wholetime staff are being upskilled in basic areas of protection.</p>	March 2024	Head of Prevention and Protection	Further develop the offer Norfolk Fire & Rescue Service in terms of workforce carrying out expanded roles or increased delivery/capacity and review effectiveness.
L12	The service could do more to make sure the workforce's time is as productive as possible, to carry out prevention, protection and response functions effectively and efficiently.	<p>The service has carried out a concept of operations review analysing areas where the service could consider more effective and efficient use of resources.</p> <p>The Community Risk Management Plan process will further enable this work to be considered.</p>	March 2024	CFO	Under continual review from SLT regarding service delivery and in phase CRMP.
L13	<p>The service would benefit from monitoring and evaluating its non-pay costs.</p> <p>We found limited monitoring and evaluation of the effect of these savings, (shared services) and there is a lack of scrutiny of the fleet management to make sure that it is gaining efficiencies and getting value for money.</p>	<p>Within Action Plan for owners to consider Audit commissioned on fleet management</p> <p>Wholistic review of value from shared services has taken place with associated changes in operating models</p>	April 2024	Service Leadership Team	Work with Finance Business Partner and departments to consider how the services various (shared services) arrangements and contractual arrangements of managing fleet and equipment are gaining efficiencies and value for money.



L14	The service could do more to consider changes in estate and fleet strategies for future service provision.	<p>A fleet replacement plan has been agreed which will see 30 fire engines replaced over the next 7 years.</p> <p>This is in addition to 22 fire engines that are currently being built for delivery over the next 18 months</p> <p>Capital investment by Norfolk taxpayers in the new fleet and equipment is significant totalling over £26 million, with recent approval by the Council for funding for the next tranche of fire engines, an aerial appliance, water carriers and technical rescue units.</p>	Monitoring	Service Leadership Team	<p>Monitor suitability of Fleet strategies and delivery going forward.</p> <p>Estate review of on-call stations underway to ensure gender equality in provision</p>
L15	The service's income generation is limited.	<p>We will always pursue funding options when available and are also keen to learn and exploit any opportunities that we are made aware of.</p> <p>Norfolk Safety CIC was created as income generation vehicle.</p>	April 2024	CFO, Service Leadership Team and Finance Business Partner	We will compare and investigate income generation models throughout UK Fire & Rescue Services.

**Priority outcome M: People - The service should ensure its values and behaviours are understood and demonstrated at all levels of the organisation.**

Ref	Key actions	Progress made	Timescales	Lead	Further Work Planned
M1	<p><b>Area For Improvement (Also, AFI 2019)</b></p> <p><b>The service should ensure its values and behaviours are understood and</b></p>	<p>We have invested significantly in a new People structure to address a variety of areas including a programme to address culture, wellbeing and mental health</p> <p>Simplified approach to Core Code of Ethics and Cultural Framework. Appointed Culture and Ethics manager</p>	September 23	CFO	<p>The Service Leadership Team need to digest this and consider actions required.</p> <p>Consider results of staff survey (both HMICFRS, Norfolk County Council)</p>

	<b>demonstrated at all levels of the organisation.</b>	<p>Appointed internal communications resource to ensure change messages are landing in organisation</p> <p>Staff Survey undertaken to help inform current situation and develop understanding on future areas of focus.</p>			Analyse information and feedback received form Service Leadership Team visits.
M2	National code of ethics is implemented effectively in the service.	<p>Head of Planning has done a gap analysis.</p> <p>Code of ethics are entwined within the NFRS cultural framework.</p> <p>Developed the Cultural Framework (inc. Code of Ethics and expected behaviours) and refreshed the disciplinary procedures to reflect these.</p> <p>Additional support being provided by NFCC standards implementation team.</p> <p>Appointed culture and ethics manager.</p>	September 23	<p>Head of People</p> <p>Culture and Ethics Manager</p>	Review and ensure that the national code of ethics can be clearly linked back to Cultural Framework and fully implemented.
M3	<p><b>Area For Improvement</b></p> <p><b>The service should assure itself that senior managers are visible and demonstrate service values through their behaviours.</b></p>	<p>Programme of watch/team visits to ensure visits to teams annually.</p> <p>Further engagement sessions with teams across the service.</p> <p>SLT members and staff are working from stations and locations around the county and SLT meetings are touring across the service.</p>	Monitoring	CFO/ SLT	<p>Engagement sessions with teams across the service.</p> <p>SLT members and staff are working form stations and locations around the county and SLT meetings are touring across the service.</p> <p>All managers role model service values through behaviours.</p>

		Teams engagement sessions also being used proactive to communicate and gather feedback			
M4	Our staff survey shows that 39 percent of staff (66 out of 171 respondents to the question) feel that senior leaders don't consistently model and maintain the service's values.	Review of comments and scores from most recent staff survey (July 23)  360 feedback mechanism in place via Real World Leadership for reflective feedback.	Monitoring	CFO/ SLT	Monitor staff views by recent staff and HMICFRS survey and other staff engagement methods.  CFO and the Service Leadership Team need to consider what is required going forward as part of action plan.  All managers role model service values through behaviours.
M5	We were told senior leaders don't always engage with staff on decisions that affect them, and they don't act as positive role models.  Staff feel there is a lack of visible senior leadership, and that	Service Leadership Team members hold a variety of ongoing briefing mechanisms through weekly briefings and communication.  Service Leadership Team members visit each team/department every year to engage and hold conversations with teams and to ensure visible leadership.	Monitoring	Deputy Chief Fire Officer	CFO and senior leadership team need to consider what is required going forward as part of action plan (picked up through suicide prevention etc)

	communication is one way.				
M6	<b>Area For Improvement</b>  <b>The service should monitor secondary contracts to make sure working hours are not exceeded.</b>	Workforce Planning and Competence Manager appointed:  Service is aware of how many staff have dual/tertiary contracts.  Service has reviewed NFRS policy on secondary employment.	October 2023	Head of People	Service needs to refresh knowledge of service personnel that have secondary contracts outside of direct NFRS employment.  Service is reviewing technology required to record and manage information.  Engage with HR shared service to ensure mechanisms/policies are embedded to effectively manage contracts and to monitor staff compliance.
M7	<b>Area For Improvement. (Also 2019 AFI)</b>	Overarching Workforce Planning policy in draft format and will be ready for consultation by mid July 23.	July 2023 for workforce plan draft	Deputy Chief Fire Officer	Link to Community Risk Management Plan work to define the risks and clearly state the resources and skills

	<p><b>The service should ensure its workforce plan takes full account of the necessary skills and capabilities to carry out the integrated risk management plan</b></p>	<p>Policy will include systems and mechanism required to plan and meet skills and capability requirements against CRMP objectives.</p>		<p>Head of Training /Development.</p>	<p>required and quantity of resources.</p> <p>Effective workforce planning mechanism to align to future requirements. Succession planning work being undertaken.</p> <p>Develop workforce planning to ensure it dovetails in with a clear recruitment strategy of numbers, skills, roles and timescales against a variety of planning assumptions.</p> <p>This work must link to Community Risk Management Plan, Financial Planning.</p> <p>Build clear development programmes linked to National Operational guidance and Fire Standards Board requirements.</p> <p>Build a talent management scheme to ensure personnel can experience a wide range</p>
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					of activities to highlight potential.
M8	<b>Area For Improvement</b>  <b>The service should assure itself that all staff are appropriately trained for their role.</b>	<p>Workforce competence and planning manager appointed</p> <p>Head of Training completes a training needs analysis annually across service departments linked to the community risk register, Community Risk Management Plan requirements and other legislative requirements.</p>	April 2024	<p>Deputy Chief Fire Officer</p> <p>Head of Training/ Development</p> <p>Workforce planning and competence manager</p>	<p>Review training and development programmes include how to specifically,</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- spot workplace stress.</li> <li>- how to manage absence.</li> <li>- safeguarding.</li> </ul> <p>These three topics are mentioned specifically within the report.</p>
M9	There are inconsistencies in the way staff undertake learning and development	<p>There are formal development programmes and maintenance of competence programmes up to but not including middle managers.</p> <p>Working towards implementing formal development programmes for all roles in the service. (Through from induction to acquisition, competent status and then maintenance of competence.)</p>	April 2024	<p>Deputy Chief Fire Officer</p> <p>Head of People</p>	<p>Working towards implementing formal development programmes for all roles in the service. (Through from induction to acquisition, competent status and then maintenance of competence.)</p> <p>Review green book staff learning and development offer.</p>

M10	<p><b>Area For Improvement (Also, AFI 2019)</b></p> <p><b>The service should assure itself that staff are confident using its feedback mechanisms.</b></p>	<p>NFRS has introduced the Crimestoppers speak up service as a fire specific reporting line with supporting comms/posters and guidance on raising concerns across all informal and formal routes.</p> <p>Email the chief address set up.</p> <p>Norfolk county council provides a whistleblowing line which is easily accessed via intranet and the public facing website.</p> <p>Clear guidance on all reporting systems available on myNet.</p> <p>NFRS website updated to include links to NCC complaints and the speak up line.</p> <p>Dedicated myNet page within FireCare has been set up with all reporting line info.</p>	Monitoring	Head of People	<p>Review results from recent staff survey and engagement sessions.</p> <p>Work with stakeholders and staff across the service to ensure feedback mechanisms introduced are embedded and have the confidence of staff throughout the organisation.</p>
M11	<p><b>Area For Improvement (Also, AFI 2019).</b></p> <p><b>The service should assure itself that it has effective grievance procedures</b></p>	<p>We have changed the grievance procedure to include recording of informal complaints:</p> <p>Grievance Policy reviewed in conjunction with Norfolk County Council grievance policy.</p> <p>Although there is now the provision for recording informal grievance cases very few are shown to have been recorded.</p> <p>NFRS has appointed a head of people and is building a "Culture and People" support team.</p>	Monitoring	Head of People	<p>Implement recommendations of HMICFRS "Spotlight" report</p> <p>NFRS has appointed a head of people and is building a culture and people support team.</p> <p>These will work with HR case workers to provide an oversight group.</p>

		These will work with HR case workers to provide an oversight group.			
M12	<b>Area For Improvement</b>  <b>(Also, AFI 2019)</b> <b>The service should ensure its selection, development and promotion of staff are open, transparent, and fair</b>	<p>The service has been piloting a “new style promotion” process.</p> <p>Following feedback from all staff/stakeholders it will look to refine the process through the people steering group to ensure continual improvement.</p> <p>Promotion system is being enhanced to incorporate the principles of talent management for all staff.</p> <p>The review of talent management and promotion portfolio will include all staff.</p> <p>Promotion within existing teams is managed under NCC policies to reduce inequality in opportunity.</p>	March 2024	Head of People	<p>Implement the policy, embed and monitor.</p> <p>Review through staff feedback and engagement.</p>
M13	<b>Area For Improvement</b>  <b>(Also, AFI 2019)</b> <b>The service should put in place an open and fair process to identify, develop, and support high-potential staff and aspiring leaders.</b>	<p>Promotion system is being enhanced to incorporate the principles of talent management for all staff.</p> <p>Promotion within existing teams is managed under NCC policies to reduce inequality in opportunity.</p> <p>Increase in protection and prevention teams has introduced more leadership roles with successful internal promotion.</p>	March 2024	Head of People	<p>Available leadership training through NCC and NFCC being reviewed.</p> <p>Awaiting review of the direct entry pilot scheme NFCC.</p> <p>Develop and implement a clear policy aligning to National Fire Chiefs Council</p>



		<p>Workforce planning and competence manager in place to support the development of this workstream.</p> <p>Recent fire staff promoted to supervisory management to be included in the NFCC Supervisory Leadership Development Programme. (SLDP) Sample of staff across service involved.</p>			<p>guidance that dovetails in with work on Personal Development Discussions, development plans, promotion process and talent management.</p>
M14	The service needs to do more to tackle bullying, harassment and discrimination	<p>Cultural Framework revised 2021 with an additional 'Our Journey' document and associated engagement sessions delivered remotely.</p> <p>Conducted workforce wellbeing questionnaires and interpreted responses to develop policy.</p> <p>Invited every team within Norfolk Fire &amp; Rescue Service to complete a wellbeing questionnaire by Sep 2021.</p> <p>High level results shared with Senior Leadership Team and People Steering Group to enable service level view.</p> <p>Appointed Culture and Ethics manager.</p>	Monitoring	<p>CFO</p> <p>Head of People</p>	<p>Implement recommendations of HMICFRS "Spotlight" report</p> <p>Consider results of staff survey (both HMICFRS, Norfolk County Council)</p> <p>Including the Service Leadership Team feedback from visits.</p> <p>Links to M1.</p>
M15	<p><b>Area For Improvement</b></p> <p><b>The service should assure itself it has an effective mechanism in</b></p>	<p>This action links to M7 and M13.</p> <p>A Workforce plan and planning mechanism/systems alongside a talent</p>	July 2023 for draft policy	<p>Head of People</p> <p>Deputy Chief Fire Officer</p>	<p>Publish and implement Policy for "Workforce development plan" and Talent management scheme.</p>

	<b>place for succession planning including senior leadership roles.</b>	<p>management scheme will be designed and implemented.</p> <p>Draft Policy ready for workforce planning by mid-July.</p> <p>NFRS have appointed a Workforce and Competence manager who is delivering these products.</p>			
M16	The management of individuals' performance is inconsistent	<p>This action refers to Personal Development Discussions linked to personal and organisational goals.</p> <p>Clear guidance issued and reiterated to staff regarding PDP process.</p>	October 2023	<p>Head of People</p> <p>Deputy Chief Fire Officer</p>	<p>Re-establish training requirements for managers.</p> <p>Gather performance management data on completion rates.</p> <p>Re-establish Performance Indicators.</p> <p>Undertake a review of the Personal Development Discussions system to examine its effectiveness and consistency.</p>

# Values and culture in fire and rescue services

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# Scope

This report focuses on the values and culture of all 44 fire and rescue services (FRSs) in England and draws on the evidence collected through our inspections of FRSs since 2018. We define values as principles or standards of behaviour, and culture as ideas, customs and behaviours. We define 'poor', 'unacceptable' and 'inappropriate' cultures and behaviours as those which have or have the potential to negatively affect others. These behaviours include bullying, harassment and discrimination.

We have particularly focused on issues that have been seen in more than half (at least 26) of FRSs and are having a detrimental impact across the sector. These include:

- bullying, harassment, and discrimination;
- lack of fairness and diversity; and
- reporting and handling of concerns, including allegations of misconduct.

We know that the culture in an FRS can be heavily influenced by the behaviour of individuals, including those in positions of senior responsibility. We have, therefore, reviewed the competence of leaders from station level to chief fire officers in all services. This includes how they are trained and developed and how they behave. We have reviewed the training given to managers and staff to help them perform their roles effectively. Those who oversee FRSs' performance – including elected members of fire and rescue authorities and police, fire and crime commissioners – have a responsibility for scrutinising services and making sure they promote positive cultures.

It is vitally important that services promote equality, diversity and inclusion in the workplace to make sure they are as fair and diverse as possible. When equality, diversity and inclusion are incorporated well into a service, staff feel included, valued and able to speak freely. This creates a positive professional culture in which staff can provide a safe and effective service for the public.

This report examines what is working well, what needs to change and the barriers to making improvements.

To help services to improve and learn from each other, we have highlighted some examples of promising and innovative practices we found during our inspections.

We use:

- [promising practice](#) to describe activities that we found to be working well in a service where there are positive measurable outcomes which have been observed or monitored;
- [innovative practice](#) to describe new ways of working in a service that may not have been formally evaluated but that have the potential to produce more positive outcomes but haven't been subject to any testing or monitoring.

# Foreword

Fire and rescue services (FRSs) carry out a vital public service, helping people in our communities every day. But since we started inspecting them in 2018, we have repeatedly found evidence of poor values, culture and behaviour, including bullying, harassment and discrimination, in many of the 44 FRSs in England.

While some services have made some improvements since our first round of inspections in respect of values and culture, too many need to do more. It is well documented that compassionate and fair working cultures are vital to staff well-being, productivity, efficiency, retention and motivation.

I, therefore, welcome the commissioning of this spotlight report by the Minister of State for Crime, Policing and Fire. It is an opportunity to pay much-needed attention to this area and to take action to improve the values, culture, fairness and diversity of FRSs which are still so clearly in urgent need of change.

We have repeatedly expressed concerns that the culture evident in too many FRSs is unacceptable and needs to change. This led us to recommend that the sector should have a code of ethics. The code was developed by the [Fire Standards Board](#) in partnership with the [Local Government Association](#) and the [Association of Police and Crime Commissioners](#). The Fire Standards Board published the code in May 2021.

Some individuals within the sector have argued that such behaviours are confined to ‘pockets’ of services. We disagree. In previous reports, we have described how some of what we found is toxic. We have been criticised by some for using this language. Again, we disagree. Our evidence shows that such concerns are widespread, and this report brings together evidence from a number of sources.

As an independent inspectorate, when we believe services or their senior leaders are failing to demonstrate and promote positive values and cultures, we will continue to bring this to the public’s attention.

Between February 2021 and August 2022, we carried out our second full round of inspections. Based on our findings on values and culture, we issued:

- [causes of concern](#) to five services;
- requires improvement or inadequate grades to 17 services; and
- 66 [areas for improvement](#) across 35 services.

On the basis of our findings on fairness and diversity, we issued:

- causes of concern to five services;
- requires improvement or inadequate grades to 26 services; and
- 72 areas for improvement across 32 services.

Even services that we have graded as good in these areas have some staff who behave inappropriately. Therefore, the service can still be issued with an area for improvement. Grades represent a snapshot of evidence that was available to us at a point in time. And, of course, inspection may not uncover every instance of inappropriate behaviour, such as bullying, harassment and discrimination. This spotlight report has helped us to review these issues in greater detail and in a more systemic way than individual FRS inspections ordinarily allow us to.

Between 28 June 2018 and 1 February 2023, we received 842 submissions to our [independent reporting line](#) from staff in every single service in England. A substantial number (218) of them related to these themes.

In February 2023, we asked every service to give us information about all allegations of gross misconduct currently under investigation or consideration from the last year. We also asked for cases of alleged misconduct and other grievances and complaints where the alleged behaviour of individuals calls into question the culture and values of the organisation.

The information provided shows that inappropriate language/behaviour and bullying and harassment associated with a protected characteristic accounted for more than half of the cases. Almost half of the case information shared by services related to closed cases. Investigations into some of these cases resulted in:

- approximately a quarter of individuals leaving the service, of which almost half left through retirement or resignation; and
- police involvement in one in ten cases.

Because the responses we received contained varying levels of detail, we aren't confident that this presents a complete picture. We also have concerns about the adequacy of reporting, investigation and outcomes in respect of the handling of conduct and misconduct matters. It is important to note that just because a service has misconduct cases, it doesn't necessarily mean its culture is poor.

Services must make sure that they are psychologically safe places to work in. This includes offering secure ways for staff to raise concerns and give feedback, without fear of repercussion and in the knowledge that concerns and allegations will be robustly investigated. We believe that further inspection is required in this area.

Our findings about two services (Gloucestershire Fire and Rescue Service and London Fire Brigade) were serious enough to contribute to their being placed in our 'engage' enhanced monitoring process. Our inspection reports for these services were



published in July 2022. In late 2022, London Fire Brigade published a report [Independent Culture Review of London Fire Brigade](#). The review's disturbing findings, as well as recent media disclosures, have quite rightly heightened public, sector and staff awareness and concerns about these issues.

Unacceptable behaviours sadly exist throughout society, and no workforce is completely immune to bullying, harassment and discrimination. But in those organisations with a responsibility to keep the public safe, and where public trust and confidence are so important, it is right that higher standards are demanded. There is no place in FRSs for any person who is unfit to fulfil a role that protects the public. Not only do communities need to be able to trust FRS staff, but in highly pressured scenarios and in a working environment where colleagues spend so much time together, staff need to be able to trust and depend on one another for their own safety.

In recent years, there have been increasing concerns about the extent of shocking behaviour by police officers. Much of this behaviour, including the investigation into allegations of bullying and harassment at Charing Cross police station ([Operation Hotton](#)) attracted adverse media reporting. These, and many other incidents, have led many to conclude that a police culture of misogyny and predatory and improper behaviour has been allowed to develop and thrive.

We reported on the link between organisational culture and 'prejudicial and improper behaviour' in policing in our 2022 report, [An inspection of vetting, misconduct, and misogyny within the police service](#).

The report defines prejudicial and improper behaviour as:

"Any attitude and/or behaviour demonstrated by a police officer or police staff that could be reasonably considered to reveal misogyny, sexism, antipathy towards women or be an indication of, or precursor to, [abuse of position for a sexual purpose](#)."

While this definition relates to misogyny, for our purposes, we apply prejudicial and improper behaviour more broadly to cover all [protected characteristics](#). The report contains examples of inappropriate behaviour, such as bullying, harassment and discrimination, towards both force staff and members of the public. It stated that:

"During the inspection, we heard numerous examples, mainly from female police officers and staff, of such attitudes and behaviour towards them. This was usually, but not exclusively, from their male colleagues. When police officers and staff don't treat colleagues with respect and courtesy, it suggests that they may be more likely to behave in a similar way towards the public and towards vulnerable women."

I have no reason to believe this link doesn't also apply to fire services. This report contains examples of inappropriate behaviour, such as bullying, harassment and discrimination, towards both service staff and members of the public.

Recent allegations against staff in several services, which have been featured in the media, are both shocking and saddening. These have only deepened my concern that we are looking at the tip of an iceberg.

Posts by popular, albeit unofficial, fire and rescue-specific social media accounts appear to portray misogyny, racism and homophobia as banter. One Instagram account had over 7,500 followers at the time of writing this report (though at the time of publication it appears to have been deleted). While there is no way of knowing how many of these followers are current FRS staff, the account was aimed at firefighters, so it is fair to assume a substantial number of them were from services. This is concerning, considering there are only 44,350 FRS staff in total in England, 34,960 of which are firefighters.

While following these accounts doesn't mean that all members hold such views, membership implies support (at least tacit support) for such behaviours. I urge staff to think carefully about the message that this sends to their colleagues and the public. Societal norms and 'laddish' cultures are no excuse – bullying, harassment and discrimination have detrimental effects on staff, services and the communities they serve.

The public trust emergency service staff with their lives and call for their support at times of greatest need; they have a right to expect a certain standard of behaviour from them. As Sir William Macpherson commented in the [\*Stephen Lawrence Inquiry\*](#):

“The argument that there is some excuse for poor behaviour because the culture of the Service can only be expected to mirror that of wider society and its behaviours, since that is from where we draw our personnel, is simply specious. We demand exemplary conduct from those we employ.”

It is evident that the development of informal subcultures has led to staff being sometimes expected to conform to certain ways of thinking and behaving. This has led to the prevalence of 'in groups' and 'out groups' – for example, in some [watch](#) arrangements. We explain this in more detail in our [section on subgroups](#). This need for conformity risks reducing space for or recognition of individual thought or personal preference; something we found aligns with the findings of our *An inspection of vetting, misconduct, and misogyny within the police service* report, where some female police officers and staff told us they felt they needed to acquiesce to prejudicial and improper behaviour. The findings also highlighted that people may be ostracised if they are seen to speak out against their peers. As we have said repeatedly, the culture across too much of the fire sector is stagnant and needs to be brought into the 21st century.

The lack of workforce diversity in every FRS throughout England also inhibits the ability to tackle these cultural issues. According to data gathered by the Cabinet Office in 2018, compared to other public sector staff, firefighters were the least ethnically diverse workforce. In the four years between 2014 and 2018, FRSs made the least improvement in diversity.

But FRSs should focus on more than just recruitment as a way of improving diversity. Making sure workplaces are inclusive for all and improving staff understanding of equality, diversity and inclusion will also help them to retain staff and to encourage those with talent and potential to progress through the organisation, irrespective of background. This is an essential building block to the cultural and behavioural improvements that are so clearly needed.

The public has a right to know that not only will they receive an effective service from those working in FRSs but that the staff they encounter are safe and suitable to work, not only in terms of operational competence but also in respect of conduct. Our report *An inspection of vetting, misconduct, and misogyny within the police service* found that effective background checks can help prevent a culture of misogyny and predatory behaviour from developing and thriving.

But currently, there are insufficient standards in relation to background checks for FRSs to follow, and there are no legal obligations for them to check new or existing staff. Although many FRSs do choose to carry out Disclosure and Barring Service checks, it is currently for services to decide if or how they conduct any background checks; this creates an unacceptable risk which must be addressed.

The [\*Independent Cultural Review of London Fire Brigade\*](#) contains a worrying number of examples of appalling behaviour towards members of the public, including searching through women's drawers looking for underwear and sex toys during [home fire safety visits](#). We currently have no way of knowing how many unsuitable people are in these trusted roles, especially those that are public-facing.

A recent review of FRS background check arrangements found that these varied from service to service. As a result, we have little assurance that all FRS staff, many of whom are working directly with some of society's most vulnerable people, are safe and suitable to carry out these roles. The [Fire Standards Board's safeguarding standard](#) states that FRSs must "implement appropriate and proportionate processes that minimise the risk of recruiting people who may be unsuitable to work with those who are at risk of harm". Chief fire officers and the [National Fire Chiefs Council](#) have, in the past, called on the Government to introduce, as a minimum, Disclosure and Barring Service checks for all new staff; this is no longer simply desirable, it is an essential first step.

Although consistent background check processes may not prevent all unsuitable individuals from working in FRSs, a statutory requirement and a background check standard are needed as a bare minimum to mitigate this issue and help services make informed decisions about who works for them.

Some staff told us that they didn't trust the processes for raising concerns and described a culture where they have been, or fear they will be, targeted because of reporting. This may mean that however good FRSs are at taking appropriate action to remedy concerns, including handling misconduct allegations appropriately, they might miss cases which should be investigated.

The recommendations made in this spotlight report are intended to assist FRSs to improve values, culture, fairness and diversity. Our recommendations are aimed at both national bodies that have the power to make changes and at FRSs. These recommendations and improved values and culture must also be supported by those organisations we don't inspect, such as fire and rescue authorities and trade unions.

I urge:

- leaders of FRSs to accept the findings set out in this report and our service reports in full;
- the relevant bodies to prioritise these recommendations;
- national organisations with influence to consider how they can work with and support FRSs to act on the findings set out in this report; and
- staff at every level of every FRS to reflect on our findings and take whatever personal steps necessary to treat those they work with, and members of the public, with the utmost dignity and respect.

To the FRS staff who have shared their experiences with us: thank you. While it isn't for the inspectorate to investigate specific allegations, without your insight, we wouldn't have been able to write this report. Such insight continues to be invaluable, including through our staff surveys and during our inspections.

I would also like to extend my thanks to those who are already doing all they can to improve the cultures nationally and in their services. To go against the grain can take real courage. Please continue; your efforts aren't going unnoticed.

There are many thousands of professional people working in fire and rescue who provide a great service to their communities. It continues to concern me that some members of the service don't treat each other or members of the public with respect and in some cases, have intentionally caused harm.

It is time for this behaviour to stop.



**Roy Wilsher OBE QFSM**

HM Inspector of Fire and Rescue Services

# Our recommendations

## Raising concerns

### Recommendation 1

By 1 October 2023, chief fire officers should make sure their services provide a confidential way for staff to raise concerns and that staff are aware of whistleblowing processes.

### Recommendation 2

By 1 October 2023, National Employers, the [Local Government Association](#) and the [National Fire Chiefs Council](#) should review any current independent arrangements whereby staff can raise concerns outside their FRS. They should then ensure that all FRS staff have access to an independent reporting line that can be used as a confidential way to raise concerns outside their own FRS.

### Recommendation 3

By 1 June 2023, chief fire officers should review the support available for those who have raised concerns and take any action needed to make sure these provisions are suitable.

### Recommendation 4

By 1 June 2023, chief fire officers should assure themselves that updates on how concerns are being handled are shared with those who have raised them. The updates should be given in an accessible way that encourages trust and confidence in the service response. Consideration should be given to creating a professional standards function to handle conduct concerns in service (or from an external service) to have oversight of cases, to make sure they are conducted in a fair and transparent way and to act as a point of contact for all staff involved.

### Recommendation 5

By 1 June 2023, chief fire officers should make sure they provide accessible information for all staff and members of the public on how they can raise concerns and access confidential support (including through external agencies). Chief fire officers should also make sure accessible information is provided on how concerns and allegations will be investigated in a way that ensures confidentiality and is independent of the alleged perpetrator.

## Background checks

### Recommendation 6

By 1 January 2024, the Home Office, working with the Ministry of Justice, should make sure that the Government incorporates fire and rescue authority employees within the [Rehabilitation of Offenders Act 1974 \(Exceptions\) Order 1975](#) so that they are eligible for the appropriate DBS checks.

### Recommendation 7

By 1 May 2024, the Home Office, working with the fire and rescue sector, should make sure that the [Police Act 1997 \(Criminal Records\) Regulations 2002](#), or a similar appropriate legislatively enabled solution, makes detailed provisions for fire and rescue services.

### Recommendation 8

By 1 December 2023, the [Fire Standards Board](#), in liaison with the [National Fire Chiefs Council](#), should review the existing relevant standard(s) and underpinning guidance. It should:

- clearly state the requirements for background checks undertaken by services;
- clarify the minimum requirements (including levels of DBS checks) for all roles, particularly roles where staff have access to vulnerable members of the public;
- define the standards required to embed a culture across fire and rescue services that empowers all members of staff and local communities to report concerns; and
- be subject to review following any legislative change.

### **Recommendation 9**

By 1 January 2024, chief fire officers should:

- immediately review their current background checks arrangements, and make sure that suitable and sufficient background checks are in place to [safeguard](#) their staff and communities they serve; and
- make sure that appropriate DBS check requests have been submitted for all existing, new staff, and volunteers, according to their roles as identified by the [Fire Standards Board](#).

### **Recommendation 10**

By 1 September 2023, chief constables should make sure they are appropriately using their Common Law Police Disclosure powers in circumstances involving employees of fire and rescue services.

## **Misconduct handling**

### **Recommendation 11**

By 1 December 2023, the [Fire Standards Board](#), in liaison with the [National Fire Chiefs Council](#), should review the existing relevant standard(s) and supporting guidance to clearly state how services should handle staff disclosures, complaints and grievances.

### **Recommendation 12**

By 1 March 2024, chief fire officers should provide assurances to HMICFRS that they have implemented the standard on staff disclosure, complaint and grievance handling.



### **Recommendation 13**

By 1 December 2023, the [Fire Standards Board](#), in liaison with the [National Fire Chiefs Council](#), should review the existing relevant standard(s) and supporting guidance to clearly state how services should handle misconduct and safeguarding-related allegations and outcomes. These should include requirements to:

- conduct and complete investigations, whether or not the staff member under investigation leaves;
- consider whether the incident requires immediate dismissal;
- provide training for staff who are carrying out investigations; and
- ensure the diversity/neutrality of the investigation panel/person.

### **Recommendation 14**

By 1 March 2024, chief fire officers should provide assurances to HMICFRS that they have implemented the standard on misconduct allegations and outcomes handling.

### **Recommendation 15**

By 1 October 2023, the Home Office should work with the [National Fire Chiefs Council](#) and fire and rescue service employers to make sure there is a process to handle misconduct allegations against chief fire officers. The Home Office should immediately notify HMICFRS of any allegations and outcomes that it is aware of.

### **Recommendation 16**

By 1 October 2023, the [National Fire Chiefs Council](#) should develop and manage a national barred list that holds details of staff who have been dismissed for gross misconduct (including staff who have already left services). It should ensure that this list is referred to in all appointment processes to prevent those who are barred from rejoining another service. After the College of Fire and Rescue has been established (see recommendation 25), it should take responsibility for managing the list.



### **Recommendation 17**

With immediate effect, chief fire officers should notify HMICFRS of any allegations that have the potential to constitute staff gross misconduct that:

- involve allegations of a criminal nature that have the potential to affect public confidence in FRSs;
- are of a serious nature; or
- relate to assistant chief fire officers or those at equivalent or higher grades.

### **Recommendation 18**

By 1 August 2023, chief fire officers should provide assurances to HMICFRS that all parties are supported in relation to ongoing investigations.

### **Recommendation 19**

By 1 July 2023, the Home Office should examine whether any appeal processes for fire and rescue misconduct cases are appropriate.

## **Leadership**

### **Recommendation 20**

By 1 June 2023, chief fire officers should have plans in place to ensure they meet the [Fire Standards Board's leading the service standard](#) and its [leading and developing people standard](#).

### **Recommendation 21**

By 1 June 2023, chief fire officers should make sure there is a full, 360-degree feedback process in place for all senior leaders and managers (assistant chief fire officer equivalent and above) in service.

### **Recommendation 22**

By 1 September 2023, chief fire officers should make sure there is a full, 360-degree feedback process in place for all other leaders and managers in service. The process should include gathering feedback from a wide range of sources including colleagues and direct reports.

### **Recommendation 23**

By 1 June 2023, chief fire officers should seek regular feedback from staff about values, culture, fairness and diversity, with due regard to the [leading and developing people standard](#). They should show how they act on this feedback.

### **Recommendation 24**

By 1 October 2023, chief fire officers should put plans in place to monitor, including through the gathering and analysis of staff feedback, [watch](#) and team cultures and provide prompt remedial action for any issues they identify.

## **Management and leadership training and development**

### **Recommendation 25**

By 1 January 2025, the Government should establish a College of Fire and Rescue, as proposed by the [White Paper Reforming our Fire and Rescue Service](#). There should be no further delay to its implementation.

### **Recommendation 26**

By 1 October 2023, as a precursor to the development of the College of Fire and Rescue, chief fire officers and the [National Fire Chiefs Council](#) should work with the Home Office to consider how they can improve the training and support they offer to staff in management and leadership development. This should include authority members in respect of their assurance leadership roles and should ensure that opportunities are offered fairly across all staff groups.

## **Diversity data**

### **Recommendation 27**

By 1 June 2023, chief fire officers should make sure their equality impact assessments are fit for purpose and, as a minimum, meet the requirements of the [National Fire Chiefs Council equality impact assessment toolkit](#).

### **Recommendation 28**

By 1 June 2023, chief fire officers should review how they gather and use equality and diversity data to improve their understanding of their staff demographics, including applying and meeting the requirements of the [National Fire Chiefs Council equality, diversity and inclusion data toolkit](#).

### **Recommendation 29**

By 1 December 2023, the Home Office should publish greater detail on the protected characteristic data it collects about FRS staff, including joiners and leavers, by rank and role.

### **Recommendation 30**

By 30 December 2024, the Home Office should align the data it collects on protected characteristics with the [Office for National Statistics harmonised standard](#) and publish this data.

### **Recommendation 31**

By 1 December 2024, the Home Office should collect and publish experimental statistics on public complaints and conduct matters in relation to FRS staff, similar to that which it currently publishes on police forces in England and Wales.

## **Improving diversity**

### **Recommendation 32**

By 1 June 2023, chief fire officers should, as a priority, specify in succession plans how they intend to improve diversity across all levels of the service. This should include offering increased direct-entry opportunities.

### **Recommendation 33**

By 1 August 2023, chief fire officers should develop plans to promote progression paths for existing staff in non-operational roles and put plans in place to reduce any inequalities of opportunity.

## The Core Code of Ethics

### Recommendation 34

With immediate effect, chief fire officers should review their implementation of the [Core Code of Ethics](#) and make sure it is being applied across their services.

## The Fire and Rescue National Framework for England

### Recommendation 35

By the end of this Parliament, the Government should consider the findings and recommendations in this report when refreshing the [Fire and Rescue National Framework for England](#).

# Summary

## **We have repeatedly expressed concern about values and culture in the fire and rescue service since we began inspections in 2018**

Since our first fire and rescue service (FRS) inspections in 2018, failure to demonstrate positive values as well as evidence of poor behaviours (such as bullying, harassment and discrimination) and culture have been a recurring theme throughout our reports. In 2018 and 2019, in our first round of inspections (Round 1), our findings were stark. We found long-standing and apparently deep-rooted issues relating to values, culture, fairness and diversity. The situation was described to us by some in the sector as an “old boys’ club”.

As a result, we recommended that England’s FRSs would benefit from a code of ethics. In May 2021, part-way through our Round 2 inspections, the [Fire Standards Board](#) in partnership with the [National Fire Chiefs Council](#), the [Association of Police and Crime Commissioners](#) and the [Local Government Association](#), established the [Core Code of Ethics for Fire and Rescue Services](#) and a [Code of Ethics Fire Standards Code](#). We are encouraged that many services are working to implement these.

## **Not enough progress has been made**

Everyone has a right to be treated with dignity and respect at work and to feel safe. While some progress has been made, it is clear that there is more to be done to improve values and culture in FRSs. The scale and pace of progress must improve.

From February 2021 to August 2022, we carried out our second full round of inspections (Round 2). We continued to find that:

- some services need to get better at promoting positive professional cultures;
- most services need to do more to improve equality, diversity and inclusion; and
- progression opportunities for staff aren’t equal, which is hindering the potential for greater diversity of thought in services’ leadership teams.

In our first round of inspections, we issued requires improvement or inadequate grades to half (22) of the 44 services in relation to our findings on their values and cultures. In our Round 2 inspections, although we found that around a quarter (12) of services had improved, we issued requires improvement or inadequate grades to just under half (17) of FRSs and to around a fifth (8) which had deteriorated.

Causes of concern are currently in place in relation to values and culture in five services.

In Round 2, we issued requires improvement or inadequate grades in relation to fairness and diversity to over half (26) of the services. In our first round of inspections, we issued these to roughly the same number (28) of services. Similarly, causes of concern are currently in place in relation to fairness and diversity in five services.

### **We continued to find examples of bullying, harassment and discrimination in some services**

We were deeply concerned by some of our findings in our Round 2 inspections. For example, staff survey results provided examples of bullying, harassment and discrimination in all services. This often included staff behaving towards each other in inappropriate and unacceptable ways.

In at least 11 services, we found evidence of racism, sexism and homophobia and a culture where staff, including managers, didn't always feel confident to challenge poor behaviour, such as bullying, harassment and discrimination. Many people we spoke to told us they felt they couldn't challenge ideas or poor behaviour without detriment and that staff were scared to speak out. We also heard that those who did speak out were sometimes victimised. However, this wasn't always the case – some services handled concerns appropriately.

Some examples of unacceptable behaviours include:

- a senior officer referring to a Black colleague using the 'n-word' and putting it down to "having a laugh";
- two male firefighters joking with a female firefighter that they were "going to rape her" and the three of them acting out the rape together;
- homophobic abuse written on a firefighter's locker;
- no action being taken by senior leaders against reported or witnessed discriminatory or bullying behaviour;
- inappropriate language about female members of staff;
- bullying new recruits and humiliating them; and
- staff feeling it is unsafe to report inappropriate behaviour.

Further examples are included in our detailed findings.

## **We moved two services into our engage phase of enhanced monitoring**

Our findings about the values, cultures, fairness and diversity at Gloucestershire Fire and Rescue Service and London Fire Brigade were serious enough to contribute to the services being placed into our engage process of enhanced monitoring. We will continue to monitor values and culture and other issues in these services.

# Defining the problem

## What do we mean by values and culture?

For this report, values are defined as principles or standards of behaviour and culture is defined as ideas, customs and behaviours in fire and rescue services (FRSs).

## What do we mean by equality, diversity and inclusion?

Equality, diversity and inclusion are closely linked to values and culture. In this report, it is defined as ensuring fair treatment and opportunity for all. It aims to eradicate prejudice and discrimination against an individual or a group of individuals' protected characteristics.

## Why are values and culture important?

It is well documented that staff well-being, productivity, efficiency and motivation are linked to compassionate and fair working cultures. It states in the [Fire and Rescue Service Equality and Diversity Strategy 2008–18](#) that:

“They [FRSs] must drive how we treat each other as members of the Service; how we treat each of our customers; how we interact with the diverse communities we serve, and how we deliver our services to those communities. To be an effective Service our policies, practices and procedures must be fair, providing equality of opportunity to all employees and an appropriate and effective service to all parts of the community.”

## Ensuring staff safety, well-being and productivity

Our evidence shows that some FRS staff have behaved poorly over many years and that this has negatively affected other staff and, in some cases, the public. Where these behaviours go unchallenged, there is a risk that they are accepted and normalised.

FRS staff at times work under pressure and in dangerous scenarios. They need to be able to trust and depend on one another for their own safety. In extreme examples, the effect of a poor culture can mean that individuals don't believe they can rely on colleagues to protect them.



## Providing a safe and effective service to the public

Values and culture have an effect on the quality of service provided. Research by NHS England has found evidence of a clear link between staff experience and patient satisfaction ([Links between NHS staff experience and patient satisfaction: analysis of surveys from 2014 and 2015](#)). And in 2011, [research funded by the Department of Health](#) showed:

“Good management of NHS staff leads to higher quality of care, more satisfied patients and lower patient mortality. Good staff management offers significant financial savings for the NHS, as its leaders respond to the challenge of sustainability in the face of increasing costs and demands.”

While such extensive research isn't available for the fire and rescue sector, it is reasonable to suggest there may be a similar link between services' effectiveness and their cultures.

In our second round of inspections, almost two thirds (12) of the 17 services that we issued a requires improvement or inadequate grade in relation to values and culture were also issued requires improvement or inadequate grades for their effectiveness. And a key finding of the 2015 [Independent review of conditions of service for fire and rescue staff in England](#) (the Thomas review) was that culture and trust are at the centre of many of the changes needed to create a high-performing service aligned with the needs of the people it serves.

The [Independent Cultural Review of London Fire Brigade](#) includes examples of firefighter behaviour towards members of the public that are completely inexcusable. As one member of staff in the review commented: “It's now reached a point with me that I tell my female friends not to let male firefighters in the house. I would advise any single woman not to let them in to check smoke alarms.”

Alongside the allegations recently covered in the media, it is clear why some members of the public might mistrust FRS staff and why the standing and reputation of services might be damaged. No one should feel they can't rely on or trust their FRS. Cultures must improve to make sure that the public trusts FRS staff to provide a quality and safe service for all.

## Services have legal obligations

All public sector organisations have a legal obligation to deal effectively with bullying, harassment and discrimination. As far as possible, they must prevent it and tackle it properly when it happens.

This obligation includes fostering good relations between those who have protected characteristics (as defined in the [Equality Act 2010](#)) and those who don't. FRSs are no different and penalties for breaking the law can be severe. Services should carry out this duty in everything they do. This includes making sure their equality impact assessments are fit for purpose.

## Culture is linked to discrimination

During our second round of inspections, all but one of the services that we issued a requires improvement or inadequate grade in relation to values and culture were also issued requires improvement or inadequate grades in relation to their fairness and diversity.

As Sir William Macpherson, who led the [1999 inquiry into the murder of Stephen Lawrence](#), pointed out, individuals tend to conform to the norms of occupational cultures.

We cover in the main body of this report how [watches](#), which operational staff in most services are a part of, can particularly lead to the development of subcultures, which in turn can foster unacceptable behaviours, such as bullying, harassment and discrimination. We have reported on the negative side of [watch cultures](#) in some FRSs (which is similar to the negative side of canteen culture referenced in the *Stephen Lawrence Inquiry*).

These cultures and subcultures can shape perceptions of certain communities or those with protected characteristics and negatively affect how they are treated, both as colleagues and as members of the public receiving a service.

This has been going on for far too long.

# Methodology

## Our approach

On 16 January 2023, we published the [terms of reference](#) for this review. We aimed for publication by April 2023. We adopted a targeted approach to researching, gathering and analysing evidence. As part of our terms of reference, we considered the following specific themes, which align with our inspection framework:

- values and culture, including bullying, harassment and discrimination
- training and skills
- fairness and diversity
- leadership.

We focused predominantly on evidence collected from our second round of fire and rescue service (FRS) inspections and prioritised the services which:

- were issued a cause of concern or area for improvement in these areas;
- were issued an outstanding grade in these areas; or
- have shown examples of innovative or promising practice in these areas.

We also reviewed evidence relating to:

- how services are using the [Core Code of Ethics](#);
- [watch cultures](#); and
- the influence of other factors or organisations.

We used the following sources of evidence:

- our service inspection reports
- our evidence gathering templates
- our independent reporting line
- our staff survey (to which we received 11,486 FRS staff responses)
- our national reports
- our policing reports on similar matters
- relevant external research in this area
- relevant literature sources, including evidence from other sectors
- publicly available evidence on how FRS cultures may be influenced.

This approach meant we could consider in detail and at a sector level both positive and negative cumulative evidence. It also supported the identification and analysis of trends and behaviours across services.

# Our findings

As set out in the [summary of findings](#), issues concerning values and culture in fire and rescue services (FRSs) aren't new. We have been reporting our concerns in this area since 2018 when we carried out our first round of inspections (Round 1), and we have described the culture in some services as toxic. While we found, in our second full round of inspections (Round 2), that some services' values and culture had improved since then, the grades and [causes of concern](#) we issued highlight a continued need for change.

In our second round of inspections, we were particularly concerned to find that there are still unacceptable levels of bullying, harassment and discrimination in some services.

## **Improvements in some services' values aren't always reflected in staff behaviours**

In Round 2, it was encouraging to find that many services have invested in attempts to improve their values and culture and that most do have a clear set of values.

Approximately a quarter of services (12) have made some progress with their values, communication with staff and visibility of leaders since our first round of inspections. The services that have made these improvements have seen these changes result in improved behaviours among staff.

In one service, staff talked positively about the service's approach to values and the introduction of a behavioural competency framework. For example, the main staff communications, including the intranet, staff magazine and manager information sheet, are based on the service values. In this service, the new behavioural competency framework and employee code of conduct had been sent to every employee. We saw behaviours that reflected the values at all levels in this service.

In Round 1, another service received a cause of concern for its values and culture. This was removed in Round 2. The progress it has made also translated into a grade improvement. This service fosters positive cultures, and we found limited examples of bullying and harassment.

But in many services, efforts to improve values and culture haven't always translated into improvements in staff behaviours.

This finding is reflected in the outcomes of our Round 2 staff survey, to which we received 11,486 FRS staff responses. The survey showed that 94 percent of respondents are aware of their service's statement of values, but only 52 percent of respondents thought their service was extremely or very effective at providing a positive culture that reflects the service's values.

Services need to find ways to bridge the gap between their values and how they proactively promote them to staff. To make improvements to cultures that staff can feel, services need to make sure that staff adhere to these values through regular use and demonstration by managers. If they aren't already, services might find helpful solutions by looking outside the sector, such as to NHS organisations that are performing highly in this area.

### **Bullying, harassment and discrimination are, to varying degrees, still problems in all services**

We identified examples of poor behaviour, such as bullying, harassment and discrimination, in all services we inspected in Round 2. The services with the worst examples and toxic cultures are the ones to which we issued causes of concern. But there are many other services with serious issues, ranging from examples of inappropriate behaviour, such as bullying, harassment and discrimination, to cases of gross misconduct and criminal conduct. Information shared by services in relation to misconduct, grievance and complaint cases shows that over half involved inappropriate language/behaviour and bullying and harassment associated with a protected characteristic. Some of the specific examples reported to us include:

- no action being taken against reported discriminatory behaviour. This includes a firefighter who reported a senior officer for a racist comment and felt that his account of events was questioned. He was then questioned and told the alleged offender "wouldn't behave in such a way". The senior officer then threatened "to make his life hell";
- a senior officer referring to a Black colleague using the 'n-word' and putting it down to "having a laugh";
- homophobic abuse found written on a firefighter's locker;
- men using women's toilets and women not feeling confident to challenge this;
- no action being taken by managers who witnessed bullying behaviour and inappropriate comments;
- a perception among staff that women are appointed due to their gender, rather than on merit. Several people expressed this view, with individual experiences described using inappropriate language, including "if you menstruate or have a vagina, you're more likely to get the job" and "you have to be a woman to get on";
- staff not wishing to work in specific areas of the service because of poor behaviours;
- humiliating staff during training sessions if they made mistakes;

- staff being ‘shouted down’ by senior teams if they challenged decisions;
- staff feeling it is unsafe to report inappropriate behaviour and that their concerns wouldn’t be listened to or acted on appropriately or confidentially;
- staff being reluctant to speak up about or challenge inappropriate behaviours as they felt that doing so would affect their prospects, have adverse consequences for them or lead to a ‘negative mark’ against their name and being told it would be “career suicide” to do so;
- staff being reluctant to raise issues with middle and senior management, as they were told they would be moved if they did; and
- a watch manager refusing to support positive action to promote the FRS as a career for under-represented groups.

The results of our Round 2 staff survey provide another indication that there is a problem in relation to staff behaviours.

- In the 17 services that we issued requires improvement or inadequate grades in relation to values and culture, we found that reports of bullying, harassment and discrimination were higher. Of the staff from these services who responded to our survey, 15 percent reported experiencing bullying or harassment and 20 percent reported experiencing discrimination, compared with 11 and 14 percent from those we issued good or outstanding values and culture grades to.
- These reports came from FRS staff at all levels but were most often about alleged cases of senior staff bullying more junior staff (75 percent of 1,478 reports of bullying and 85 percent of discrimination reports in the staff survey). This was also reflected in the information we received relating to misconduct allegations.
- Some groups of staff, such as those with under-represented protected characteristics, are more likely to experience bullying and harassment. (For more detail, see the section titled [Most services need to do more to improve their equality, diversity and inclusion](#) (EDI).)

Services need to do more to address these problems.

## **Subgroups, including watches, can foster unacceptable behaviours and poor cultures**

We have seen and heard the potentially damaging effects of subgroups and subcultures within FRSs leading to the development of significant ‘in groups’ and ‘out groups’. The example of [watch cultures](#) is covered below. Other examples identified during our inspections, such as the differences in staff experience between operational and non-operational staff are also highlighted elsewhere in this report.

Similarly, Fire Brigades Union slogans, such as ‘member with backbone’ printed on t-shirts and the term ‘scab’ used openly on social media, have the potential to also cause rifts. This undermines the positive effect that a strong staff association

can bring. These all risk harming the culture in a service by ostracising people who don't conform rather than supporting colleagues to, for example, raise concerns.

During our first round of inspections, we expressed concerns about the effect of watches on service cultures. Watches are common across services and are a long-standing workforce model.

The way watches operate is unique to the fire service and often results in staff working on the same team together for many years. Operational staff work, train and eat in close proximity to each other and often sleep at the station overnight. They are considered families by some operational staff, but they can exclude others and affect individuals not seen to fit in. We heard that it takes a strong leader to be a watch commander who doesn't become part of the watch subculture.

We found that, in some services, watches had created their own subcultures, which were contrary to service values and are impenetrable for new staff. As a result, we found some watches had normalised certain unacceptable behaviours, such as bullying, harassment and discrimination. They were resistant to change, and members of the watch were reluctant to seek professional support out of fear of being viewed as weak.

The [\*Independent Culture Review of London Fire Brigade\*](#) drew the same conclusion. Examples of this behaviour from brigade watches featured in the report include continually mocking people's religion, taking bets on who would be the first person in a team to sleep with a woman and filling people's helmets with urine. And, as pointed out in the foreword, there are similarities between watch culture and the canteen culture described in the [\*Stephen Lawrence Inquiry\*](#).

During our Round 1 inspections, we advised that FRSs should carefully review the future of watches and consider the advantages of alternative working arrangements. The [\*Independent review of conditions of service for fire and rescue staff in England\*](#) also found that watch cultures need to change – this report was published eight years ago and yet we are still finding problems in this area.

In our Round 2 inspections, at one service, a firefighter told us they had witnessed two male firefighters joking with a female firefighter that they were "going to rape her", and the three of them acted out the rape together. We also found instances where new recruits joined the service with a positive attitude and no apparent disposition to certain behaviours but soon felt the need to assimilate into the prevailing culture to "fit in".

In another service, staff told us that the culture in general was "toxic" and behaviours on watches were "pack-like". And they told us that on watches, people didn't always challenge inappropriateness towards race.



In another service, we heard of station managers making off-the-cuff comments and inappropriate banter about female and gay staff. There was an expectation that female staff should make the tea. Bullying of new recruits led to one on-call firefighter needing to move station.

We also found instances of:

- on-call firefighters being treated differently from wholetime firefighters;
- people who challenged inappropriate comments being shunned by colleagues who said their comments were banter; and
- watch managers refusing to support positive action.

Some services have revised their working arrangements with positive results. Other services would do well to consider whether watches are still the most appropriate way to manage teams. They should also consider how those teams can be made more inclusive and how behaviour of the type set out in this section of the report can be eliminated.

### **Staff can feel unable to challenge or report poor behaviours**

Non or under-reporting of bullying, harassment and discrimination is common in organisations with poor cultures. As a result of the subgroups and subcultures previously mentioned, we were told that a lack of action by some services in previous cases led to a belief that reporting wouldn't help. Some staff reported to us that they don't trust the processes and described a culture where they have been, or fear they will be, targeted as a result of raising concerns. When staff have challenged inappropriate behaviour, such as bullying, harassment and discrimination, they have been told they must have misheard or that it was merely banter.

One firefighter reported feeling that their "card would be marked" if they raised concerns. They told us that there was an "us and them" atmosphere between firefighters and senior managers. They felt that the service may not reach an appropriate outcome in response to a grievance.

In one service, a female firefighter reported bullying to the assistant chief fire officer, as she felt unable to formally report it through the correct leadership channels.

In several services, we found a worrying trend of staff not raising concerns if they felt they weren't part of an 'old boys' club'. We also heard from staff who felt others could get away with inappropriate behaviours, such as bullying, harassment and discrimination, "if they know the right people". Some groups of staff we met in some services reported that they didn't have the confidence to challenge poor behaviours, and we were told that managers dealt with reports either inconsistently or not at all. In another service, after a firefighter's reports regarding a senior officer making a racist comment were dismissed, he was threatened. He was told "friends investigate friends" in services and that it was "career suicide" to challenge the status quo.

In another service, the staff told us that on watches, people didn't challenge inappropriateness towards race: "So people lie and stick together in pack mentality, even though they know it's wrong, as they're afraid of being ostracised."

We found evidence of low trust in grievance processes in 13 services. In one service, we were told the main reasons for staff not raising grievances were concerns about being labelled as a troublemaker and feeling there would be no action taken.

In another, staff told us some senior leaders didn't try to identify and resolve workforce concerns. They detailed examples of raising concerns with senior managers, with no positive results for staff.

And in yet another service, staff told us that some longer-serving members of staff sometimes used language or displayed behaviours that didn't align with service expectations (we found this in more than one service). Newer members of staff told us that they were willing to challenge this, which has helped to change the organisational culture. Staff also told us that, while the service is trying to tackle the issue, they felt that the culture wouldn't really change "until the older generation retires". However, some watch cultures are so strong that they survive beyond the retirement of staff members who behaved inappropriately. Staff told us of racist, sexist and homophobic comments and behaviours which had gone unchallenged or been dismissed as banter.

Our Round 2 staff survey found that in services with good or outstanding grades around values and culture, staff felt more able to challenge than in services with requires improvement or inadequate grades. Similarly, in good or outstanding graded services, staff felt more confident about how to give feedback to all levels.

Staff from ethnic minority backgrounds who have experienced bullying or harassment are less likely to report it than White members of staff. The results of our staff survey showed that 62 percent of respondents from ethnic minority backgrounds didn't report it, compared to 41 percent of White respondents.

Many staff members who didn't report bullying or harassment said this was because they believed nothing would be done. Services need to make sure they understand why some staff believe this and take action to rectify the issue.

### **Some managers are unable to deal with or challenge inappropriate behaviours**

One potential reason why some staff might be reluctant to raise concerns is that they have little faith in their manager's ability to handle them in the right way. In our Round 2 inspections, we found that some managers didn't manage or challenge bullying or inappropriate behaviours, such as bullying, harassment and discrimination, even if they witnessed them.

One station (middle) manager told us that they didn't feel confident raising grievances, as they believed it would adversely affect their position and future career. Managers need to know that if they raise concerns, they will be supported and that they won't face adverse consequences. Support, including giving managers the necessary training and a zero-tolerance and early intervention approach to inappropriate behaviours, needs to come from the top. Unless managers receive support themselves, they can't effectively support their staff.

One service has heavily invested in openly discussing positive action and EDI-related topics. For example, it has established what it calls 'brave space talks', where sensitive issues can be discussed in a safe environment. As a result, staff are well engaged and have improved their understanding of positive action.

### **Staff need a secure way to raise concerns**

Services need honest staff feedback so they can identify areas for improvement and take appropriate action where misconduct allegations are concerned. If they ignore these problems, serious issues may go unnoticed and potentially get worse.

All staff – and particularly those in emergency service roles where the lives of both staff and members of the public are at risk – need reporting processes they trust as safe, without fear of any reprisals. They also need to know that their concerns will be taken seriously and investigated properly and that outcomes or sanctions will be appropriate.

Staff reporting certain matters are protected by law under the [Public Interest Disclosure Act 1998](#). These include:

- a criminal offence, such as fraud;
- that someone's health and safety are in danger;
- risk or actual damage to the environment;
- a miscarriage of justice;
- that the company is breaking the law (for example, by not having the right insurance); and
- that they believe someone is covering up wrongdoing.

Making a declaration covered by this legislation gives an employee certain protections.

There is no consistent process, policy or standard for FRS staff to raise concerns either nationally or locally. This means we don't have evidence of the efficacy of any current reporting processes, besides the fact that staff don't always feel comfortable raising concerns.

Given the particular cultural issues set out in this report and the reluctance of some staff to raise concerns, the sector is in need of such a process.

Other sectors with such processes have reported successes. For example, the NHS in England has [freedom to speak up guardians](#). The freedom to speak up initiative gives staff an alternative route to line managers and encourages a “positive culture where people feel they can speak up and their voices will be heard, and their suggestions acted upon”.

One FRS has introduced a ‘speak up champion’, and concerns have been brought to its attention this way. This initiative allows staff to raise concerns in an informal manner. It has helped the service to see and hear the challenges it faces with regard to embedding an understanding of EDI. The process is seen as complementary to the grievance procedure and provides an alternative/informal way of raising concerns without fear of recrimination. We will consider how well this approach is working in our next inspection.

The police service in England has the [Independent Office for Police Conduct report line](#). Police officers and staff can email or call the line to report concerns of wrongdoing, that a criminal offence has been committed or where there is evidence of conduct that would justify disciplinary proceedings. While a reporting method of this kind for FRSs would help, it alone isn’t the answer to the challenges that surround raising concerns.

### **Recommendation 1**

By 1 October 2023, chief fire officers should make sure their services provide a confidential way for staff to raise concerns and that staff are aware of whistleblowing processes.

### **Recommendation 2**

By 1 October 2023, National Employers, the [Local Government Association](#) and the [National Fire Chiefs Council](#) should review any current independent arrangements whereby staff can raise concerns outside their FRS. They should then ensure that all FRS staff have access to an independent reporting line that can be used as a confidential way to raise concerns outside their own FRS.

### **Recommendation 3**

By 1 June 2023, chief fire officers should review the support available for those who have raised concerns and take any action needed to make sure these provisions are suitable.

#### **Recommendation 4**

By 1 June 2023, chief fire officers should assure themselves that updates on how concerns are being handled are shared with those who have raised them. The updates should be given in an accessible way that encourages trust and confidence in the service response. Consideration should be given to creating a professional standards function to handle conduct concerns in service (or from an external service) to have oversight of cases, to make sure they are conducted in a fair and transparent way and to act as a point of contact for all staff involved.

#### **Recommendation 5**

By 1 June 2023, chief fire officers should make sure they provide accessible information for all staff and members of the public on how they can raise concerns and access confidential support (including through external agencies). Chief fire officers should also make sure accessible information is provided on how concerns and allegations will be investigated in a way that ensures confidentiality and is independent of the alleged perpetrator.

### **Background checks of fire and rescue service staff need to improve to reduce risk of harm to both staff and the public**

FRS employees hold positions of trust, especially given the role of the firefighter in prevention and protection activities. Each service has a duty to make sure that its staff and volunteers are equipped and trained to support and carry out their safeguarding work. They should also ensure that robust and rigorous checks are in place to make sure staff are suitable for their jobs.

Services also have a legal obligation to have appropriate safeguarding arrangements in place. These duties are underpinned by the standards set out in [section 11 of the Children Act 2004](#) and sections [42](#) to [46](#) of the [Care Act 2014](#).

But there are no consistent standards for FRSs to follow in relation to background checks, and there are no specific legal obligations for fire and rescue services/authorities to conduct particular checks on new or existing staff. Therefore, despite the above obligations, it is for authorities to decide if and how they conduct any background checks before appointing staff. Greater consistency of approach is needed.

A recent review of information provided by FRSs regarding their employee background checks showed that there is wide variation and inconsistency in approach.

As we said in our 2022 report, [An inspection of vetting, misconduct, and misogyny in the police service](#), police forces need effective systems to prevent unsuitable job applicants from joining. FRS staff are also in positions of power and have access to vulnerable individuals. We see no reason why FRSs shouldn't also have effective and robust background check processes, especially as FRS staff face less professional scrutiny than their policing peers, as there is no equivalent to the [Independent Office for Police Conduct](#).

We also see no reason why these processes can't be applied retrospectively to make sure not only that new recruits are suitable and safe to work but that the current workforce is, too.

The public deserves assurance that the FRS staff they come into contact with have been subject to background checks prior to carrying out these roles. This is particularly important when considering the link between effective background checks and cultures of misogyny and predatory behaviour seen in policing. It is also important in light of the examples of inappropriate behaviour from firefighters towards members of their communities set out in recent allegations.

We welcome the progress made by the Home Office and the [National Fire Chiefs Council \(NFCC\)](#) to incorporate members of FRSs in the [Rehabilitation of Offenders Act 1974 \(Exceptions\) Order 1975](#). This would mean staff must disclose any caution or conviction to the service.

We also encourage services and authorities to consider the need for an increased level of checks for those roles that carry out specific or regulated activities as defined by the [Rehabilitation of Offenders Act 1974](#), the Rehabilitation of Offenders Act 1974 (Exceptions) Order 1975, and the [Safeguarding Vulnerable Groups Act 2006](#).

Where there is a public protection risk and a pressing social need to share information, [Common Law Police Disclosure](#) gives police forces in England (and Wales) a power to pass information to the employer or regulatory body. However, it was beyond the scope of this report to examine the extent to which police forces are currently using this power to pass information to fire and rescue services about their staff. Chief constables should make sure they are appropriately using this power in circumstances involving employees of fire and rescue services.

### **Recommendation 6**

By 1 January 2024, the Home Office, working with the Ministry of Justice, should make sure that the Government incorporates fire and rescue authority employees within the [Rehabilitation of Offenders Act 1974 \(Exceptions\) Order 1975](#) so that they are eligible for the appropriate DBS checks.

### **Recommendation 7**

By 1 May 2024, the Home Office, working with the fire and rescue sector, should make sure that the [Police Act 1997 \(Criminal Records\) Regulations 2002](#), or a similar appropriate legislatively enabled solution, makes detailed provisions for fire and rescue services.

### **Recommendation 8**

By 1 December 2023, the [Fire Standards Board](#), in liaison with the [National Fire Chiefs Council](#), should review the existing relevant standard(s) and underpinning guidance. It should:

- clearly state the requirements for background checks undertaken by services;
- clarify the minimum requirements (including levels of DBS checks) for all roles, particularly roles where staff have access to vulnerable members of the public;
- define the standards required to embed a culture across fire and rescue services that empowers all members of staff and local communities to report concerns; and
- be subject to review following any legislative change.

### **Recommendation 9**

By 1 January 2024, chief fire officers should:

- immediately review their current background checks arrangements, and make sure that suitable and sufficient background checks are in place to [safeguard](#) their staff and communities they serve; and
- make sure that appropriate DBS check requests have been submitted for all existing, new staff, and volunteers, according to their roles as identified by the [Fire Standards Board](#).

### **Recommendation 10**

By 1 September 2023, chief constables should make sure they are appropriately using their Common Law Police Disclosure powers in circumstances involving employees of fire and rescue services.



## **Allegations of misconduct should be handled appropriately**

There is no room in any FRS for someone who behaves inappropriately or perpetuates toxic cultures. As we have reported in relation to police background checks, some individuals who are assessed as suitable when they first join a service may become unsuitable later in their career. When this happens, services need effective systems to identify these individuals and, if necessary, dismiss them.

We have seen a recent instance where, despite serious allegations amounting to gross misconduct being upheld following an investigation, a senior officer was able to retire rather than be dismissed. This sends the wrong message to staff, would-be perpetrators and the public.

Information shared by services in relation to a misconduct, grievance and complaint case shows that in the course of the associated investigations, approximately a quarter of individuals were dismissed, and almost half of those individuals were permitted to resign or retire. The proportion of staff who can apparently avoid sanction points to a significant flaw in current misconduct arrangements.

### **Recommendation 11**

By 1 December 2023, the [Fire Standards Board](#), in liaison with the [National Fire Chiefs Council](#), should review the existing relevant standard(s) and supporting guidance to clearly state how services should handle staff disclosures, complaints and grievances.

### **Recommendation 12**

By 1 March 2024, chief fire officers should provide assurances to HMICFRS that they have implemented the standard on staff disclosure, complaint and grievance handling.



### **Recommendation 13**

By 1 December 2023, the [Fire Standards Board](#), in liaison with the [National Fire Chiefs Council](#), should review the existing relevant standard(s) and supporting guidance to clearly state how services should handle misconduct and safeguarding-related allegations and outcomes. These should include requirements to:

- conduct and complete investigations, whether or not the staff member under investigation leaves;
- consider whether the incident requires immediate dismissal;
- provide training for staff who are carrying out investigations; and
- ensure the diversity/neutrality of the investigation panel/person.

### **Recommendation 14**

By 1 March 2024, chief fire officers should provide assurances to HMICFRS that they have implemented the standard on misconduct allegations and outcomes handling.

### **Recommendation 15**

By 1 October 2023, the Home Office should work with the [National Fire Chiefs Council](#) and fire and rescue service employers to make sure there is a process to handle misconduct allegations against chief fire officers. The Home Office should immediately notify HMICFRS of any allegations and outcomes that it is aware of.

### **Recommendation 16**

By 1 October 2023, the [National Fire Chiefs Council](#) should develop and manage a national barred list that holds details of staff who have been dismissed for gross misconduct (including staff who have already left services). It should ensure that this list is referred to in all appointment processes to prevent those who are barred from rejoining another service. After the College of Fire and Rescue has been established (see recommendation 25), it should take responsibility for managing the list.

### **Recommendation 17**

With immediate effect, chief fire officers should notify HMICFRS of any allegations that have the potential to constitute staff gross misconduct that:

- involve allegations of a criminal nature that have the potential to affect public confidence in FRSs;
- are of a serious nature; or
- relate to assistant chief fire officers or those at equivalent or higher grades.

### **Recommendation 18**

By 1 August 2023, chief fire officers should provide assurances to HMICFRS that all parties are supported in relation to ongoing investigations.

### **Recommendation 19**

By 1 July 2023, the Home Office should examine whether any appeal processes for fire and rescue misconduct cases are appropriate.

## **A positive culture is created in services where the leadership is visible, transparent and fair**

How individual leaders behave sets the tone for the rest of the service. In our Round 2 staff survey, 94 percent of respondents said they are aware of their service's statement of values. But only 27 percent of those respondents agreed that senior leaders consistently model and maintain service values. This apparent gap indicates a disconnect between policy intent and observed behaviour.

In our inspections, we have found that services with leaders who are visible to their staff, lead by example and are open to challenge appear to have fewer bullying, harassment and discrimination issues than services with less visible, autocratic leaders. For example, the new chief fire officer in one service has reportedly had a direct positive influence on the service culture.

In services with a clear understanding of discipline and grievances, promotions, retention and successful recruitment processes, a lower proportion of staff who responded to our staff survey indicated that they had experienced bullying, harassment and discrimination. These services provide good training, use equality impact assessments effectively and promote positive action while ensuring that staff understand it. Senior leadership teams are visible and consult with staff.

These services also have strong internal staff networks, clearly understood and demonstrated values and a positive health and safety culture. All of this helps to create a sense of inclusion, trust and support.

We found that staff were also more positive about the culture of the service when leaders were accountable for their behaviours. For example, in one service, staff told us managers admitted when they had made a mistake and were open and honest about it. And in another service, the deputy chief fire officer gave a personal apology to staff who had been subject to bullying and harassment. In both cases, staff felt that this was a positive demonstration of service values.

But these behaviours aren't reflected in all services. In one service, it was clear that limited senior leader visibility had led to mistrust across parts of the organisation. We saw a similar lack of visibility in several other services. This was often attributed to either an unwillingness to listen or to an autocratic style of management. Lack of visibility makes it difficult for senior leaders to create a positive culture where staff adhere to the values expected of them.

The British Army has also encountered cultural issues and inappropriate behaviours. As part of an independent audit of army culture, it is seeking to "reinforce the best and weed out the worst", including extending its reporting to include middle-ranking officers, to improve transparency and identify the very best contemporary leaders to drive cultural change throughout the organisation.

Leaders at all levels of all FRSs should know if they are meeting the needs of their staff, including how they respond to allegations of bullying, harassment or discrimination. They should use staff feedback to make improvements and continually assess how they can lead compassionately and improve the cultures in their services.

The [Fire Standards Board](#) has recently implemented two professional standards, called [leading the service](#) and [leading and developing people](#), which build on the [Core Code of Ethics](#). We discuss these further in the section titled [National work is supporting fire service improvements](#).

### **Recommendation 20**

By 1 June 2023, chief fire officers should have plans in place to ensure they meet the [Fire Standards Board's leading the service standard](#) and its [leading and developing people standard](#).

### **Recommendation 21**

By 1 June 2023, chief fire officers should make sure there is a full, 360-degree feedback process in place for all senior leaders and managers (assistant chief fire officer equivalent and above) in service.

### Recommendation 22

By 1 September 2023, chief fire officers should make sure there is a full, 360-degree feedback process in place for all other leaders and managers in service. The process should include gathering feedback from a wide range of sources including colleagues and direct reports.

### Recommendation 23

By 1 June 2023, chief fire officers should seek regular feedback from staff about values, culture, fairness and diversity, with due regard to the [leading and developing people standard](#). They should show how they act on this feedback.

### Recommendation 24

By 1 October 2023, chief fire officers should put plans in place to monitor, including through the gathering and analysis of staff feedback, [watch](#) and team cultures and provide prompt remedial action for any issues they identify.

## **Supervisors and middle managers need to be better trained in how to effectively manage, develop and support their staff**

Services generally focus heavily on maintaining the operational competence of their staff, but in too many services, we found little or no training about the leadership and management skills that are needed to effectively manage staff. Leadership and management training is an essential element of handling grievances, managing absences, conducting performance development reviews and supporting the development and progression of staff.

This lack of leadership and management training means that managers sometimes aren't equipped to appropriately challenge, or that they lack the confidence to address, poor behaviours, such as bullying, harassment and discrimination. This can be a particularly acute problem in watches, where poor behaviour often goes unchallenged. It can also be very difficult for newly promoted staff, as many services don't provide appropriate or timely training, instead expecting them to learn on the job.

In one service, staff reported that they felt managers aren't always able to empathise. We found that one watch commander hadn't had any training in relation to mental health, despite being in the role for 14 years.

Most services to which we issued good or outstanding grades in relation to this area have good performance development review processes and completion rates. We found that services with gateways for promotion processes showed the most

improvement between our inspections in terms of values and culture, and the processes were received positively by staff.

Also, formal and informal conversations about learning, development and performance are more likely to take place in services with positive cultures. Staff in these services are more likely to have had a conversation with their manager about their learning and development. Services with a positive culture have a better understanding of their workforce's skills and capabilities and how to manage them.

One service has a range of online learning resources. It also has access to external learning providers to help all staff (not just supervisors or managers) to do their jobs effectively. Clear training plans are in place, and it provides learning hubs where staff can access additional learning and development.

Aspiring and current managers would benefit from acquiring leadership and management skills to become more effective leaders. Training to improve these skills would improve the cultures within their services and could include the following:

- inclusive leadership training
- training on how to create compassionate working cultures
- training on how to handle difficult conversations for managers
- specific development opportunities for staff with protected characteristics.

The NFCC's leadership project was commissioned in response to the challenges facing current and future leaders in the fire sector. It consists of a suite of national products and tools that are being developed in line with the [NFCC leadership framework](#).

A lack of leadership and management skills isn't a problem unique to FRSs, and other organisations have found ways to mitigate it. For example, the [NHS leadership academy](#) develops NHS leaders at a national level through a variety of programmes, resources and activities.

The [Civil Service accelerated development schemes](#) aim to develop high-potential individuals to build a robust and diverse pipeline to the most senior and critical Civil Service roles. As part of this, the future leaders' scheme provides a leadership development curriculum, which supports civil servants in accelerating their development as well as learning more about their personal leadership effectiveness.

In May 2022, the Home Office published the [White Paper Reforming our Fire and Rescue Service](#), in which it set out a proposal for a College of Fire and Rescue. The college could provide a central, consistent source of learning and development resources for staff to use to help them become better managers and leaders. But progress towards its inception has been too slow.

### Recommendation 25

By 1 January 2025, the Government should establish a College of Fire and Rescue, as proposed by the [White Paper Reforming our Fire and Rescue Service](#). There should be no further delay to its implementation.

### Recommendation 26

By 1 October 2023, as a precursor to the development of the College of Fire and Rescue, chief fire officers and the [National Fire Chiefs Council](#) should work with the Home Office to consider how they can improve the training and support they offer to staff in management and leadership development. This should include authority members in respect of their assurance leadership roles and should ensure that opportunities are offered fairly across all staff groups.

## Most services need to do more to improve their equality, diversity and inclusion

Culture and inclusion go hand in hand, and greater diversity improves performance and innovation.

As set out earlier in this report, during our second round of inspections all but one of the 17 services that we issued a requires improvement or inadequate grade in relation to values and culture were also issued requires improvement or inadequate grades in relation to their fairness and diversity. This is no coincidence.

Throughout all 44 services, we issued requires improvement or inadequate grades to over half (26) and causes of concern to five in relation to fairness and diversity.

These problems are long-standing. In 1999 (19 years before we started inspecting FRSs), the then Fire Service Inspectorate carried out its *Thematic Review of Equality and Fairness in the Fire Service*. It issued 23 recommendations targeting greater equality and fairness for FRS staff. And since 2018, when HMICFRS started inspecting FRSs, we have highlighted the lack of fairness and diversity across all services in England.

Progress to improve EDI in FRSs is far too slow.

### There isn't enough diversity in fire and rescue services

It is important that FRSs reflect the diversity of the communities they serve to maintain public trust and provide a better service to the public.

But the workforce of England's FRSs still doesn't represent many of the communities that it serves.

In 2018, [according to data gathered for a government report](#), only 4 percent of firefighters were from an ethnic minority background compared to 16 percent of the working-age population. The FRSs were the least ethnically diverse workforce out of the 12 public sector workforces explored in the report.

The proportion of firefighters from an ethnic minority background increased from 3.8 percent in 2014 to 4.1 percent in 2018. This was the smallest increase out of the 12 public sector workforces. It is clear, therefore, that services must do more to recruit and retain people from diverse backgrounds.

One service has introduced a ten-week course which aims to give support, training and guidance to people from under-represented groups who are interested in joining the FRS. It is run at fire stations, before the formal recruitment process, and gives applicants a realistic understanding of the varied role of a firefighter.

Another service is investing in recruitment and using positive action to improve recruitment diversity. It has adapted and targeted how it approaches and interacts with potential candidates and has employed a positive action officer. The chief fire officer is also the 'positive action champion'. It makes sure its assessment panels are diverse so that all candidates can relate more to the service, including under-represented groups.

In 2017, another service implemented an effective and successful apprenticeship programme. The apprentices have been recruited to a variety of roles across the service. This has helped positively change the organisation's culture. In the last cohort, 50 percent were women and 25 percent were from an ethnic minority background.

### **Services need to be more inclusive to support and retain staff**

Our most recent public perceptions survey found that the diversity of a service was a prominent barrier to considering a career in the FRS for 23 percent of respondents from ethnic minority backgrounds compared to only 9 percent of White respondents. And inclusivity of the FRS was seen as a barrier for 19 percent of respondents from ethnic minority backgrounds compared to 10 percent of White respondents. Services need to promote EDI meaningfully to both current staff and potential joiners.

Some senior leaders have pointed to challenges in recruiting diverse workforces as being connected to the issues surrounding fairness, diversity and culture within their services. But representation of different walks of life alone isn't enough. Recruitment isn't the sole solution to improving services' values, cultures, fairness and diversity.

As an example, the NHS is very well represented by staff from ethnic minority backgrounds. In 2018, 46 percent of hospital doctors in England were from an ethnic minority background. But despite this representation, NHS staff still face discrimination. In more than three quarters (77 percent) of all NHS trusts, staff



with ethnic minority backgrounds reported higher rates of bullying, harassment and abuse from colleagues than White staff did.

Senior leaders who are focused on recruitment would do well to also consider if they are doing everything they can to improve the inclusivity of their organisational cultures. Their existing staff who should feel respected and valued are more likely to be positive advocates for others to join.

As a minimum, senior leaders should encourage staff to report discrimination and inappropriate behaviour, such as bullying, harassment and discrimination, and then act on these reports promptly and appropriately. This is one reason why the steps outlined earlier in this report, about raising concerns and handling misconduct allegations, are so important.

While some services have attempted to improve their EDI, including the production of EDI plans, these good intentions often don't lead to actual changes in the diversity of the workforce or to improvements that staff can perceive. This may mean potential staff don't join or current staff may leave services prematurely.

### Discrimination is prevalent

Failing to deal with issues of fairness and diversity may have a wider negative effect on services' cultures and if unchallenged, may in turn perpetuate unacceptable behaviours. Some groups of staff, such as those from ethnic minority backgrounds and those who are disabled, neurodiverse and/or from the LGBTQ+ community, are more likely to experience bullying and harassment.

In our Round 2 staff survey, we asked staff throughout England about their experiences of discrimination. We found:

- Of the 11,486 staff survey respondents, 17 percent (1,920) had experienced discrimination in the past 12 months.
- There were higher rates of reported discrimination from respondents from ethnic minority backgrounds than from White respondents: of the respondents from ethnic minority backgrounds, 20 percent had experienced discrimination compared to 16 percent of White respondents.
- Of the female respondents who had experienced discrimination, 41 percent said gender was a factor compared with 16 percent of the male respondents.
- Those who self-reported as disabled, neurodiverse or from the LGBTQ+ community were also more likely to report that they had experienced discrimination in the last 12 months.

In one service, staff told us of homophobic and racial slurs being dismissed as banter. They gave us examples of racist and sexist comments and behaviours which had gone unchallenged.



Previous reviews have found that bullying, harassment and discrimination were a daily feature of some female firefighters' lives. Some reviews have found that women, staff from ethnic minority backgrounds, LGBTQ+ and neurodiverse staff experience poor treatment and do less well in their careers. One review cited an example where a Black firefighter had had a noose put above his locker.

In November 2022, the Home Office published a report on [\*Pathways and barriers to leadership in fire and rescue services\*](#), based on research carried out in 2020. The report found:

“Many (predominantly female) staff consider the workplace a very male-dominant, macho environment with some hostility towards women’s place in the service. There were also a couple of reports of hostile comments towards the ethnicity of some staff; some participants, however, mentioned that the culture in their service had improved in recent years with the recruitment of new staff.”

### **Inclusive practices are crucial to give all staff a voice and influence**

Inclusive practices mean people from all backgrounds are able to influence key decisions and processes in their teams and organisations. This results in a wider range of experiences, perspectives and views being available, leading to more comprehensive decision-making and better staff attitudes. Services should take steps to make sure that the needs of staff more likely to be perceived as outsiders or under-represented are considered and that these staff have a voice and influence.

In eight services we inspected in Round 2, we found examples of innovative and promising EDI practice. In most cases, the services have invested in promoting EDI, with measurable strategies to improve diversity. Each service has introduced a broad range of new initiatives internally as well as positive action programmes to improve recruitment from under-represented groups.

One service has established a positive approach to EDI through several staff networks and an equality and inclusion working group. These groups organise a range of different activities in the service and are led by senior leaders. Staff are confident to address inappropriate language and behaviour. They also feel sure that the service will act on matters raised using the most appropriate and open approach.

### **Services should complete equality impact assessments to a high standard**

While services are generally completing equality impact assessments, their quality varies, and some don't seek staff input. By not involving their staff with the equality impact of their processes, services may exacerbate existing divisions relating to EDI. Services should understand the effect their work has on those with protected characteristics, both in their communities and at work.

## Recommendation 27

By 1 June 2023, chief fire officers should make sure their equality impact assessments are fit for purpose and, as a minimum, meet the requirements of the [National Fire Chiefs Council equality impact assessment toolkit](#).

### Staff aren't being trained well enough in equality, diversity and inclusion

Our inspections show that a lack of robust EDI training is directly linked to staff not properly understanding EDI. We found that too many services don't give staff enough ongoing and relevant EDI training. It is in these services that staff rarely understand the benefits of positive action. Some services rely heavily on e-learning rather than using face-to-face interaction and workshops which can be more beneficial for staff understanding.

Services often don't carry out training frequently enough. And, while most services provide some form of EDI training, in some it isn't mandatory and is focused on new recruits. As a result, it isn't always completed by the longer-serving staff, who invariably need it most. At one service, we found that formal EDI training hadn't been carried out in ten years.

Our local representative survey found that EDI training is offered more readily in services with good culture. In services that we issued a good grade in relation to this area, there is a big difference between those who are simply ticking a box by providing EDI training via e-learning every two or three years and those who are providing regular update EDI sessions through different learning platforms and methods, such as webinars, 'lunch and learns' or lived-experience discussions. When we spoke with staff on inspection at these services, we found strong evidence that this training was being well received by them. This is in contrast to other services where staff simply stated they have completed the expected mandatory learning.

As the staff in services aren't representative of the communities they serve, services must make sure they are receiving EDI training.

### Positive action is misunderstood by many staff, and can lead to division

We found that across many services staff didn't understand the benefits of positive action. In one service, many staff incorrectly believed that the service lowers its entry standards to recruit individuals with specific protected characteristics. And in another service, staff described positive action as "positive racism". This could lead to some feeling that diversity is 'being done to them'.

Some staff from ethnic minority backgrounds told us that positive action made them uncomfortable and felt that, rather than seeking high-calibre staff, services were trying to fill quotas. One group of staff we met said they felt the lack of understanding of

positive action wasn't just a service problem but a societal one, including a belief that women aren't strong enough to be firefighters.

Some services are doing well to improve staff understanding and appreciation of positive action, but awareness of the nature, purpose and benefit of positive action needs to improve across the sector.

At one service, new recruits are given positive action awareness training as part of their induction. The service has also provided a range of information (including 'myth-busting information') for existing members of staff to help improve understanding. This information is distributed through, for example, in-person visits by the executive team.

### **Services don't understand the diversity of their staff**

Services that view activities to support EDI as box-ticking exercises also tend not to recognise the value of equality impact assessments and gathering quality diversity data.

Many services don't have a good understanding of the diversity of their staff at all levels, including in senior leadership teams. And many aren't using their data or making it readily available. This means services aren't using diversity data to drive their EDI plans. And they aren't clear on what action they need to take to improve the diversity of their workforces. Therefore, EDI initiatives risk being aimless and lacking momentum. This also limits understanding of these issues nationally.

From our inspection evidence, we have found there are a few possible reasons for this, including:

- staff not understanding the reasons and benefits of declaring their diversity;
- staff not understanding the benefits of positive action;
- staff being actively hostile to declaring their diversity to the service; and
- services not effectively gathering the data, particularly at the employment stage.

One service encourages all staff to provide their diversity data, but the current level of declaration of this information throughout that service is consistently below the England level. As of 31 March 2021, 22 percent of the service's staff hadn't declared their ethnicity. This is higher than the England figure of 9 percent.

Another service doesn't have enough meaningful workforce equality data to inform its impact assessments. This means it can't effectively understand how potential changes may affect its workforce. It also can't accurately say how well its workforce represents the residential population, as it doesn't hold ethnicity data for a high proportion of its workforce. As of 31 March 2021, 38 percent of this service's staff members hadn't declared their ethnicity to the service.

This lack of understanding might prevent services from identifying and remedying problems. For example, there are still some services that don't have adequate facilities for female staff at operational stations. This includes female and male changing lockers located next to one another and beds in dormitories only separated by a row of lockers or a privacy curtain. At one station in a service, there are no changing facilities for females, so female firefighters have to get changed in the toilets.

More publicly available equality data is needed to better understand the challenges the sector faces. In particular, more published data is needed to understand the diversity of leadership in FRSs nationally.

### **Recommendation 28**

By 1 June 2023, chief fire officers should review how they gather and use equality and diversity data to improve their understanding of their staff demographics, including applying and meeting the requirements of the [National Fire Chiefs Council equality, diversity and inclusion data toolkit](#).

### **Recommendation 29**

By 1 December 2023, the Home Office should publish greater detail on the protected characteristic data it collects about FRS staff, including joiners and leavers, by rank and role.

### **Recommendation 30**

By 30 December 2024, the Home Office should align the data it collects on protected characteristics with the [Office for National Statistics harmonised standard](#) and publish this data.

### **Recommendation 31**

By 1 December 2024, the Home Office should collect and publish experimental statistics on public complaints and conduct matters in relation to FRS staff, similar to that which it currently publishes on police forces in England and Wales.

## **Not all staff are treated fairly**

We found that in many services, staff experiences of being treated fairly are dependent on their job type. Non-operational or on-call members of staff often report experiencing worse treatment than their operational or wholetime counterparts.

Negative behaviour towards certain groups of staff can adversely affect career progression and opportunities for them in the service. It can also lead to poor treatment from other staff groups and, in some cases, senior managers.

Compared to other staff groups, on-call staff reported greater levels of discrimination in services with requires improvement or inadequate grades for values and culture. All staff should be treated fairly and with respect. They should be given the same opportunities, regardless of their role or rank.

In one service, we found there are different recruitment arrangements in place in the fire protection team for operational and non-operational staff. In another, some non-operational staff told us they felt their career paths were limited and that they were pigeonholed. In another service, the chief fire officer excluded non-operational staff from a staff engagement session, perpetuating an 'us and them' culture.

In one service, non-operational managers can't investigate a grievance against an operational member of staff. In another, some staff told us they felt it was difficult for operational staff to raise grievances, as they felt "it creates an awkward atmosphere" in the station. They said that in stations there is a lot of mistrust around the grievance process. This may lead to fewer issues being raised and resolved, increasing the likelihood of a poor culture prevailing.

In another, some groups of staff told us that they felt they were treated differently. Some on-call staff felt ostracised in some locations, and some non-operational staff said they don't always feel valued.

But there are examples of services that are making sure there are opportunities for all staff.

In one service, there are good opportunities for non-operational staff to develop and progress. It gave us examples which included a staff member being given an opportunity to embark on a two-year management apprenticeship qualification. The service acknowledged that, given there isn't a gateway process for non-operational staff, these opportunities should be better advertised. A 'metro map' is being produced to show staff what development and qualifications are needed to get from one place (role) to another.

Since our last inspection, one service's fire prevention department has created non-operational line manager roles. Operational staff previously carried out these roles. This means there are more progression opportunities for non-operational staff, and the service can better select the right people for the job.

## Progression opportunities limit diversity in leadership teams

Effective understanding of workforce skills and capability is linked to culture. We have highlighted here, and in our annual and national reports, that progression opportunities aren't equally available for all staff – on-call and non-operational staff generally don't receive the same opportunities as their wholetime operational colleagues. This can lead to services failing to recognise and develop talent. It can also reduce opportunities to improve diversity in senior leadership teams; most female staff and staff from ethnic minority backgrounds work in non-operational roles so this affects them disproportionately.

Some leadership job adverts require incident command experience, which would generally be gained from operational roles. This experience should only be required if absolutely necessary for the role or to maintain operational rotas, particularly for senior management roles.

In one service, promotion processes aren't fair and accessible for all staff. We were told that if female members of staff who work flexible hours are offered a promotion, the service tries "to force [staff] back into normal shifts". One woman had to decline a promotion offer because she couldn't work the shift pattern.

But we did find some positive examples. One service runs a high development potential scheme which is open to internal and external applicants. The most recent intake was two female candidates who applied after seeing the posts advertised at their local rugby club.

In its research and analysis report, [\*Pathways and barriers to leadership in fire and rescue services\*](#), the Home Office found that staff felt there were few opportunities for promotion. It found that non-operational staff who participated in the research "felt especially aggrieved by limited opportunities, citing no visible pathway in their specialism". And it found that on-call staff and non-operational staff "believed they had fewer promotion opportunities compared with wholetime staff".

The Home Office also said that barriers to progression can include:

"Issues related to personal characteristics such as gender, ethnicity, family situation and age. Meanwhile, other wider barriers were linked to organisational cultures, such as issues related to perceived favouritism in leadership chains. These perceived barriers were typically considered to reflect the culture and attitudes within FRSs and leadership chains and were often seen to impede staff progression."

The Home Office points to several areas in which FRSs could focus their attention regarding talent management and progression. These include:

“Providing greater levels of consistency in the delivery of development programmes, which may be fostered through nationally backed programmes to increase the consistency in delivery and access.”

This is an area that some services have spent considerable time and effort improving, and the [NFCC’s talent management toolkit](#) was developed to support FRSs at every stage of the talent management cycle, making sure people with the right skills, behaviours and values are in the right roles at the right time. But when the career pathways for staff are ineffective, and when combined with poor succession planning, it isn’t surprising that staff in these services don’t think the process is fair.

We hope that the College of Fire and Rescue proposed in the [White Paper Reforming Our Fire and Rescue Service](#), when established, will give greater support to services and a more consistent approach to developing staff and nurturing talent.

### **Poor talent management, promotion processes and succession planning can lead to unfairness**

We found that most services have a fair and transparent promotion process, but many staff (49 percent of our Round 2 staff survey respondents) perceived them as unfair. Recruitment and promotion processes are perceived to be fairer by staff in services that are good or outstanding in relation to values and culture.

Some staff in one service described its promotion processes as “feeling corrupt”. They expressed this frustration after applying for promotions many times and, despite being unsuccessful, not receiving any feedback or support. They told us: “If your face doesn’t fit – you won’t get in.”

Some staff in another service talked about a “new club in town”. They commented that it was easy to predict who was going to be promoted based on who they socialised with.

Perceptions of nepotism are particularly apparent in services where there is no effective talent management in place and where staff development is limited.

In one service, we heard that the promotion policy is distorted or blatantly ignored when individuals are cherry-picked for senior roles. We were told some individuals are permitted to “leapfrog” through the promotion progress. This is despite them not having the necessary accreditations or even sitting the exams that are required.

A senior leader at another service was offered a temporary promotion while a replacement was found. Once this period ended, they were offered another senior position without needing to go through any promotion process. The role they were offered didn’t previously exist in the service.



## Some services need to improve their succession plans, particularly at a senior level

Perceptions of, and actual unfair, promotion processes are sometimes linked to poor succession planning. We found that some services didn't actively seek to diversify their senior leadership. This can lead to staff lacking confidence in the services' promotion processes.

One service has improved the way it manages succession planning for senior leadership roles. This service has signed a regional agreement to allow opportunities for the secondment of senior managers between services. This is to fill gaps while a full and open recruitment process takes place. The secondees gain experience of working as a principal officer, while the service benefits from a mutual exchange of knowledge and development.

### **Recommendation 32**

By 1 June 2023, chief fire officers should, as a priority, specify in succession plans how they intend to improve diversity across all levels of the service. This should include offering increased direct-entry opportunities.

### **Recommendation 33**

By 1 August 2023, chief fire officers should develop plans to promote progression paths for existing staff in non-operational roles and put plans in place to reduce any inequalities of opportunity.



# National work is supporting fire service improvements

## The Fire Standards Board recently introduced its leadership and people fire standards

In December 2022, the [Fire Standards Board](#) introduced two professional standards called [leading the service](#) and [leading and developing people](#). They build on the [Core Code of Ethics](#).

The leading the service standard sets out how senior leaders in the fire and rescue service (FRS) can make sure organisations provides excellent service to the community, built on positive relationships and trust.

The leading and developing people standard sets out how to establish, maintain and deploy a competent, diverse and motivated workforce. This includes carrying out robust workforce planning, having effective policies and processes and developing a variety of entry routes to attract and recruit a diverse workforce.

HMICFRS takes fire standards into consideration when conducting inspections but doesn't assess FRSs directly against these standards.

## The National Fire Chiefs Council is promoting values and culture

The [National Fire Chief Council's \(NFCC\) people programme](#) is committed to making sure that the public has the most capable FRSs and that their cultural values and behaviours make them great places to work. As the [NFCC](#) is a strategic organisation, it is the responsibility of the leaders in each service to implement NFCC guidance.

The programme's work includes promoting equality, diversity and inclusion in FRSs, highlighting the values of their services and encouraging open, flexible and inclusive cultures. It does this by working with FRS employers, the workforce and trade unions to identify and promote best practice.

The NFCC's people programme is in its second phase. It is focusing on cultural reform and strengthening leadership, including working on diversity and recruitment.

The NFCC produces tools and guidance for FRSs to use and has started to map the Fire Standards Board's standards against the programme.

A key development has been the introduction of the Core Code of Ethics. The code was developed by the Fire Standards Board in partnership with the NFCC, the [Association of Police and Crime Commissioners](#) and the [Local Government Association](#), in response to our recommendation in the [2019 State of Fire Report](#). The Fire Standards Board published the code in May 2021.

The code sets out five ethical principles:

- putting communities first
- integrity
- dignity and respect
- leadership
- equality, diversity and inclusion.

The NFCC suggested that services use the Core Code of Ethics to carry out a gap analysis of their existing behavioural frameworks, values, and cultural approaches, and to make sure that the principles of the code are incorporated into them. Everyone in every FRS in England is expected to follow the code.

### **Most services are adopting the Core Code of Ethics**

In our Round 2 inspections, we found most services are adopting the Core Code of Ethics, though to varying degrees.

One service has incorporated the Core Code of Ethics into its own ‘code of ethical conduct’, which has been signed by all staff. And members of the senior leadership team have signed up to a ‘senior code’. The service has also laid out a set of behavioural expectations in its initiatives ‘a customer promise’ and ‘a promise to each other’. We saw during our inspection that these initiatives have worked well. Staff gave us positive accounts, such as people being respectful of each other and feeling looked after by the service.

Another service has a workplace charter that incorporates the Core Code of Ethics. It sets out the standards of behaviour expected in the service. It was evident throughout our last inspection that there was a positive culture in the organisation. Senior leaders have a clear plan for the service. All staff understand that having a positive culture is a service priority. Positive behaviours are firmly in place, accepted, carried out and understood across the whole organisation.

In our Round 3 inspections, we hope to continue to see services taking the implementation of the code seriously.

### **Recommendation 34**

With immediate effect, chief fire officers should review their implementation of the [Core Code of Ethics](#) and make sure it is being applied across their services.

## The Fire and Rescue National Framework for England should be strengthened

The [Fire and Rescue National Framework for England](#) is prepared by the Secretary of State. It sets out guidance and priorities that fire and rescue authorities must comply with. The Government has a duty under the [Fire and Rescue Services Act 2004](#) to produce the framework and keep it current.

### Recommendation 35

By the end of this Parliament, the Government should consider the findings and recommendations in this report when refreshing the [Fire and Rescue National Framework for England](#).

# Conclusion

## Implementing the recommendations in this report is crucial for change

Some services have improved since our first round of inspections. And national efforts, including the [Core Code of Ethics](#), have certainly helped bring the issue of poor cultures in fire and rescue services (FRSs) into focus. We also understand that many people working in FRSs have made a significant effort to improve their values, culture and diversity. But the findings from our most recent inspections have shown that a great deal more work is needed to improve values and culture. Even some services that are good in this area have more to do. This isn't a time to be complacent.

The recommendations in this report are designed to guide the relevant individuals and organisations in the right direction. But they are the minimum of work that we expect those involved to carry out. Services and national organisations should continuously consider what more they can do to improve values and culture in FRSs.

Some changes may take time, but for others, there is no reason why they can't be implemented immediately. A joint, concerted effort is needed by every single person and organisation at every level of the fire and rescue sector and those aligned to it. Every single person working in an FRS, and every member of the public, deserves to be treated with respect and compassion.



# Report to Cabinet

Item No. 11

**Report Title: Finance Monitoring Report 2023-24 P3: June 2023**

**Date of Meeting: 7 August 2023**

**Responsible Cabinet Member: Cllr Andrew Jamieson ( Deputy Leader and Cabinet Member for Finance)**

**Responsible Director: Harvey Bullen (Director of Strategic Finance)**

**Is this a Key Decision? No**

**If this is a Key Decision, date added to the Forward Plan of Key Decisions: N/A**

## **Introduction from Cabinet Member**

This report gives a summary of the forecast financial position for the 2023-24 Revenue and Capital Budgets, General Balances, and the Council's Reserves at 31 March 2024, together with related financial information.

## **Executive Summary**

Subject to mitigating actions, on a net budget of £493.707m, the forecast revenue outturn for 2023-24 at the end of period 3 (June) is **a balanced budget**.

General Balances are forecast to be **£25.410m** at 31 March 2024 following transfers of £1m planned contribution from the revenue budget at the end of 2023-24. Service reserves and provisions are forecast to total **£146.840m**.

All significant cost pressures are taken into account in the forecasts in this report. Details of these pressures and progress on achieving savings are addressed in detail in this report.

## **Recommendations:**

1. To approve the addition of **£15.536m** to the capital programme to address capital funding requirements funded mostly from various external sources as set out in detail in capital Appendix 3, paragraph 1.4 as follows:
  - £9.158m grant funding received for the Disabled Facilities Grant from the Department of Health
  - £1m recognition of flexible use of capital receipts to fund the Adult Social Care Transformation programme
  - £5.861m Conditional Grant funding received from the Department of Education for Children's Services schemes in schools
  - £0.696m additional S106 developer contributions for the Children's Services schemes
  - (£0.466m) reduction in NCC Borrowing and other external funding for various completed Children's Services projects
  - £0.538m increase in Museums external funding received from 3<sup>rd</sup> parties

- £0.118m increase in Libraries funded through NCC Borrowing following a swap of funding sources
  - (£1.249m) adjustment to the Kings Lynn Library budget following an adjustment of funding sources and revised forecast
  - (£0.120m) reduction in various other schemes
2. To note that the Council approved the addition of £43.495m to the P4 capital programme on 18 July 2023 for the following new schemes as set out in Capital Appendix 3, paragraph 4.2-4.3 as follows:
- £26.795m King's Lynn Sustainable Transport and Regeneration Scheme (STARS) supported by £24.77m external funding and £2.025m NCC Borrowing as set out in Appendix 3 note 4.3 and approved by Cabinet on 3<sup>rd</sup> July 2023
  - £16.7m Corporate Property Retrofitting Plan approved at the 5<sup>th</sup> June 2023 Cabinet meeting as set out in Appendix 3 note 4.2.
3. Subject to Cabinet approval of recommendation 1 and following Council approval of recommendation 2 to delegate:
- 2.1) To the Director of Procurement authority to undertake the necessary procurement processes including the determination of the minimum standards and selection criteria (if any) and the award criteria; to shortlist bidders; to make provisional award decisions (in consultation with the Chief Officer responsible for each scheme); to award contracts; to negotiate where the procurement procedure so permits; and to terminate award procedures if necessary.
- 2.2) To the Director of Property authority (notwithstanding the limits set out at 5.13.6 and 5.13.7 of Financial Regulations) to negotiate or tender for or otherwise acquire the required land to deliver the schemes (including temporary land required for delivery of the works) and to dispose of land so acquired that is no longer required upon completion of the scheme;
- 2.3) To each responsible chief officer authority to:
- (in the case of two-stage design and build contracts) agree the price for the works upon completion of the design stage and direct that the works proceed; or alternatively direct that the works be recompleted
  - approve purchase orders, employer's instructions, compensation events or other contractual instructions necessary to effect changes in contracts that are necessitated by discoveries, unexpected ground conditions, planning conditions, requirements arising from detailed design or minor changes in scope
  - subject always to the forecast cost including works, land, fees and disbursements remaining within the agreed scheme or programme budget.
  - That the officers exercising the delegated authorities set out above shall do so in accordance with the council's Policy Framework, with the approach to Social Value in Procurement endorsed by Cabinet at its meeting of 6 July 2020, and with the approach set out in the paper entitled "Sourcing strategy for council services" approved by Policy & Resources Committee at its meeting of 16 July 2018.
4. To recognise the period 3 general fund forecast revenue **of a balanced position**, noting also that Executive Directors will take measures to reduce or eliminate potential over-spends where these occur within services;

5. To recognise the period 3 forecast of 99.5% savings delivery in 2023-24, noting also that Executive Directors will continue to take measures to mitigate potential savings shortfalls through alternative savings or underspends;
6. To note the forecast General Balances at 31 March 2024 of **£25.410m**.
7. To note the expenditure and funding of the revised current and future 2023-28 capital programmes including the significant reprofiling of £29.073m since May 2023 and the increase in the capital programmes of £15.536m.
8. To approve the appointment of directors to Norfolk County Council owned companies as set out in paragraph 2.2, as required by the Council's Financial Regulations.

## 1. Background and Purpose

- 1.1. This report and associated annexes summarise the forecast financial outturn position for 2023-24, to assist members to maintain an overview of the overall financial position of the Council.

## 2. Proposals

- 2.1. Having set revenue and capital budgets at the start of the financial year, the Council needs to ensure service delivery within allocated and available resources, which in turn underpins the financial stability of the Council. Consequently, progress is regularly monitored, and corrective action taken when required.
- 2.2. Limited companies owned by the County Council require the consent of the County Council before they can make certain decisions including the appointment of directors, and the County Council's [Financial Regulations](#) confirm that (5.10(f)) *"The appointment and removal of directors to companies, trusts and charities in which the County Council has an interest must be made by Cabinet, having regard to the advice of the Director of Strategic Finance."*

Following consideration of vacancies in Norfolk County Council appointed directors on company Boards, the Director of Strategic Finance has reviewed the below list of appointees and advises that they are suitable. The Director of Strategic Finance therefore recommends the following appointments to Cabinet for approval, which will support to ensure the continued effective management and oversight of the limited companies owned by the County Council.

- To appoint Cllr Greg Peck as a Director of the following companies:
  - NORSE GROUP HOLDINGS LIMITED (11875853)
  - NORSE CONSULTING GROUP LIMITED (09094748)
  - NORSE GROUP LIMITED (05694657)
  - NORSE TRANSPORT (04372409)
  - NORSE CARE (SERVICES) LIMITED (07445495)
  - NPS PROPERTY CONSULTANTS LIMITED (02888194)
  - NORSE CARE LIMITED (07445484)
  - NORFOLK ENVIRONMENTAL WASTE SERVICES LIMITED (02633546)
  - NORSE COMMERCIAL SERVICES LIMITED (02888808)
- To appoint Cllr Jane James as a Director of REPTON PROPERTY DEVELOPMENTS LIMITED (10887284)



- To appoint Cllr Daniel Elmer as a Director of HETHEL INNOVATION LTD (07534401)

### 3. Impact of the Proposal

- 3.1. The impact of this report is primarily to demonstrate where the Council is anticipating financial pressures not forecast at the time of budget setting, including the implications of the cost-of-living crisis, inflation and rising interest rates, together with a number of other key financial measures.

### 4. Evidence and Reasons for Decision

- 4.1. Three appendices are attached to this report giving details of the forecast revenue and capital financial outturn positions:

**Appendix 1** summarises the revenue outturn position, including:

- Forecast over and under spends
- Changes to the approved budget
- Reserves
- Savings

**Appendix 2** summarises the key working capital position, including:

- Treasury management
- Payment performance and debt recovery.

**Appendix 3** summarises the capital outturn position, and includes:

- Current and future capital programmes
- Capital programme funding
- Income from property sales and other capital receipts.

- 4.2. Additional capital funds will enable services to invest in assets and infrastructure as described in Appendix 3 section 4.

### 5. Alternative Options

- 5.1. To deliver a balanced budget, no viable alternative options have been identified to the recommendations in this report. In terms of financing the proposed capital expenditure, no further grant or revenue funding has been identified to fund the expenditure, apart from the funding noted in Appendix 3.

### 6. Financial Implications

- 6.1. As stated above, the forecast revenue outturn for 2023-24 at the end of P3 is a **balanced budget** linked to a forecast 100% savings delivery. Forecast outturn for service reserves and provisions is **£146.840m**, and the general balances forecast is **£25.410m**.
- 6.2. Where possible service pressures have been offset by underspends or the use of reserves. A narrative by service is given in Appendix 1.
- 6.3. The Council's capital programme is based on schemes approved by County Council in February 2023, including previously approved schemes brought forward and new schemes subsequently approved.

## **7. Resource Implications**

- 7.1. None, apart from financial information set out in these papers.

## **8. Other Implications**

### **8.1. Legal Implications**

In order to fulfil obligations placed on chief finance officers by section 114 of the Local Government Finance Act 1988, the Director of Strategic Finance continually monitors financial forecasts and outcomes to ensure resources (including sums borrowed) are available to meet annual expenditure.

### **8.2. Human Rights implications**

None identified.

### **8.3. Equality Impact Assessment**

In setting the 2023-24 budget, the council has undertaken public consultation and produced equality and rural impact assessments in relation to the 2023-24 Budget. An overall summary Equality and rural impact assessment report is included on page 341 of the Tuesday 21 February 2023 Norfolk County Council agenda. [CMIS > Meetings](#)

The Council maintains a dynamic [COVID-19 equality impact assessment](#) to inform decision making during the pandemic.

The Council's net revenue budget is unchanged at this point in the financial year and there are no additional equality and diversity implications arising out of this report.

### **8.4 Data Protection Impact Assessments (DPIA)**

DPIA is not required as the data reported in this paper does not drill down to the personal data level.

## **9. Risk Implications/Assessment**

- 9.1. Corporate risks continue to be assessed and reported on a quarterly basis to both Cabinet and the Audit Committee. The Council's key financial based corporate risk (RM002 - The potential risk of failure to manage significant reductions in local and national income streams) has been reviewed and refreshed in February 2023 to incorporate the 2023/24 budget and Medium-Term Financial Strategy 2023 - 2027 being set. Key risk mitigations include amongst others regular (monthly) financial reporting to Cabinet, working to the Medium-Term Financial Strategy and setting robust budgets within available resources.
- 9.2. Unlike many other parts of the public sector such as the NHS, local authorities are required by law to set a balanced budget. As part of their duties, the Director of Strategic Finance has a responsibility to report to members if it appears to him that the authority will not have sufficient resources to finance its expenditure for the financial year. The Director of Strategic Finance believes a balanced budget will be achieved in 2023-24.

## **10. Select Committee comments**

10.1. None

## **11. Recommendation**

11.1. Recommendations are set out in the introduction to this report.

## **12. Background Papers**

12.1. Summary Equality and rural impact assessment [CMIS > Meetings](#) page 341

### **Officer Contact**

If you have any questions about matters contained in this paper, please get in touch with:

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**Email address:** [j.fernandezgraham@norfolk.gov.uk](mailto:j.fernandezgraham@norfolk.gov.uk)



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## Appendix 1: 2023-24 Revenue Finance Monitoring Report Month 3

Report by the Director of Strategic Finance

### 1 Introduction

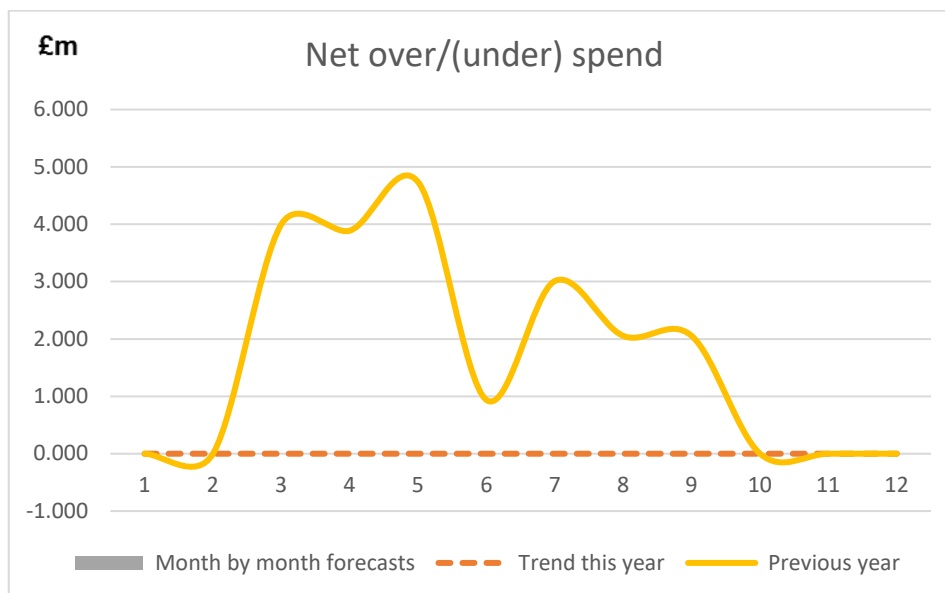
1.1 This report gives details of:

- the P3 monitoring position for the 2023-24 Revenue Budget
- additional financial information relating one-off funding, cost pressures and delivery of savings initiatives
- forecast General Balances and Reserves as at 31 March 2024 and
- other key information relating to the overall financial position of the Council.

### 2 Revenue outturn – over/(under)spends

2.1 **At the end of June 2023**, a balanced budget is forecast on a net budget of £493.707m.

**Chart 1: forecast /actual revenue outturn 2023-24, month by month trend:**



2.2 Executive Directors have responsibility for managing their budgets within the amounts approved by County Council. They have been charged with reviewing all their cost centres to ensure that, where an overspend is identified, action is taken to ensure that a balanced budget will be achieved over the course of the year.

- 2.3 Details of all under and overspends for each service are shown in detail in Revenue Annex 1 to this report, and are summarised in the following table:

**Table 1: 2023-24 forecast (under)/overspends by service**

Service	Revised Budget	Cost Pressures	(Under spends/ Savings)	Earmarked Reserves & Provisions Utilised	Net (under)/ overspend	%	R A G
	£m		£m		£m		
Adult Social Care	249.056	3.264	0	(3.264)	0	0%	G
Children's Services	232.500	0	0	0	0	0%	G
Community and Environmental Services	191.906	1.071	0	0	1.071	0.6%	G
Strategy and Transformation	24.087	0.709	(0.300)	(0.409)	0	0%	G
Finance	(203.841)	0.279	(3.713)	2.363	(1.071)	0.5%	G
Total	<b>493.707</b>	<b>5.323</b>	<b>(4.013)</b>	<b>(1.310)</b>	<b>0</b>	0%	G

Notes:

- 1) the RAG ratings are subjective and account for the risk and both the relative (%) and absolute (£m) impact of overspends.
- 2) Planned use of Earmarked reserves and provisions set aside in 2022-23 in order to meet and fund additional pressures in 2023-24 are built into the revised budget. The table above highlights the use of reserves over and above the plan.

- 2.4 **Children's Services:** The early forecast outturn as at Period 3 (end of June 2023) continues to be a balanced position, presuming use of budgeted reserves. There remain indications of cost pressures within demand-led budgets, due to the nature of the services alongside the medium-term impact of Covid-19, increased levels of inflation since the budget was set, and challenging market forces that continue to exist outside of the Council's control (and seen nationally). These act as key cost drivers for both demand-led social care placements and home to school transport, particularly for those with special educational needs and disabilities.
- 2.5 The number of social care placements for looked after children is higher than budgeted due to a small rise towards the end of the last financial year after the budget was set, following stability throughout the earlier part of 2022-23. At present, the number of placements remains relatively stable since the start of this financial year, though the average costs are experiencing some pressures due to a proportional increase in those placements exceeding £6k per week (for the most complex, external provision). These pressures are being carefully reviewed now that the first quarter's data is available enabling management action to be undertaken to minimise these pressures from crystallising into an over-spend position for the department.. We will continue to keep these under careful review throughout the year.
- 2.6 Key financial drivers the service experiences are in line with those pressures experienced last financial year. The factors previously identified have not eased off and, in many cases, have continued to increase, with many elements being unpredictable in nature and close review will be maintained of these:
- Market forces, beyond the Council's control, are significantly impacting our ability to purchase the right placements at the right cost;

- An unhelpfully rigid approach from the regulator (Ofsted) - challenging care settings in a way which makes them unwilling to work with young people with complex needs or drives a demand for very large packages of additional support;
- An unprecedented worsening of emotional wellbeing and mental health amongst children, young people and parents;
- A significant rise in 'extra familial harm', including county lines and exploitation of young people;
- An underlying trend of increasing special educational needs and disabilities, including some children with complex disabilities surviving into later childhood as a result of medical advances;
- An additional strain on families as a result of the pandemic and hidden harm with families locked down together;
- The demand-led aspects of placement and transport provision for children with special needs;
- The shortage in housing available for post-18-year olds;
- Ongoing shortages of staff in key professional specialisms

Furthermore, the cost-of-living crisis is an additional factor that emerged during the last financial year, and it is currently unclear what impact this may have upon demand as well as our own workforce.

- 2.7 Children's Services continues to undertake a substantial transformation programme to both improve outcome for children and young people as well as delivering financial savings. With the aim of mitigating emerging pressures, management action is being taken within the department to reduce these risks where possible.
- 2.8 **Adult Social Services:** The forecast outturn as at Period 3 (end of June 2023) is a balanced position. With Adult Social Care (ASC) being a demand led service, the budget to provide it always operates under a degree of uncertainty. The ASC service has a significant savings and transformation agenda it is seeking to deliver this financial year. In addition, within its recovery programme there is a significant emphasis on reducing the backlogs that had developed during the pandemic. We are pleased to have seen reductions in a number of these areas, with particular success in reducing our interim care list from 700 to 60 people in the last 12 months. A critical element of the financial position for the department will be the continued effective management of this work and the financial outcomes that ensue.
- 2.9 As over 70% of the ASC budget is spent with independent providers, it is only right to acknowledge the continued financial risk the current economic conditions place on these care markets. Whilst the Council was able to invest £30m into the market as part of its 2023/24 fee uplift, the continued economic uncertainty may well have a destabilising impact on individual providers. We are now experiencing upward pressure on price, in particular, those care packages supporting people with a Learning Disability in Residential Care. We continue to work with our care providers and the Care Association to understand the steps required to provide sustainability and quality improved, including our work on both the Market Position Statement and the Market Sustainability Plan.
- 2.10 The department continues to work with its partners in the Integrated Care System (ICS) to manage system pressures around hospital discharge both from acute hospital and the wider Transforming Care Programme. The ICS itself continues to operate in a challenging financial environment, with the Integrated Care Board (ICB) itself having to undertake a significant reduction in operating costs.

- 2.11 Both internally to the department, and within the wider care sector, availability of staff continues to be a challenge. Internally we have had more success recently in recruiting and retaining certain types of roles. Equally, a number of vacancies have been removed via the Strategic Review and therefore it is unlikely that the department will see the level of staff underspends that it has had in previous years. However, there are certain qualified roles that remain hard to fill at scale and therefore it is important we deliver on our longer term workforce plan.
- 2.12 Whilst recognising the uncertainties described above, the level of ASC departmental reserves to manage these risks in the short term remain strong. Longer term, the landscape of Social Care remains uncertain with elements of its reform delayed until at least October 2025. a newly introduced inspection/assurance regime, and no long term funding settlement.
- 2.13 **CES:** We are currently forecasting a £1.071m overspend position, this is wholly driven by the forecast overspend in Corporate Property related to utilities. Whilst significant inflationary uplifts were applied to the budgets for 2023-24 these were insufficient given the sustained price increases in both electricity and gas.
- 2.14 The other services within CES continue to be challenged by the level of inflation which places greater risk on achieving the budget across all services but particularly utilities and maintenance costs. We will continue to monitor this throughout the year and report the impacts once they become clearer.
- 2.15 Waste volumes at Recycling Centres and kerbside collections have been highly volatile over the last two years. The budget allows for an increase in waste volumes, we continue to monitor volumes closely and the long-term impacts on the budget.
- 2.16 Over the last two years we have seen significant pressures on income budgets due to the pandemic. We have addressed a number of risk areas through the MTFS, however we will continue to monitor income budgets closely.
- 2.17 **Corporate services:** The Strategy and Transformation and Governance directorates are forecasting a balanced position.
- 2.18 **Finance:** Finance forecast for P3 is a £1.071m underspend. Forecast underspends are due to interest payable costs being £0.417m less than budgeted due to the timing of borrowing and sustained low interest rates on borrowing undertaken in 2022-23. The same higher interest rates and cash holdings has contributed to an increased interest receivable forecasted of £2.370m over budget for both treasury and non-treasury investments held. In addition, the Minimum Revenue Provision for 2023-24 is £0.926m lower planned due to Capital Programme slippage from 2022-23. This is offset by £0.279m of miscellaneous cost pressures. £2.363m will be added to the Business Risk Reserve.
- 2.19 Further details are given in Appendix 1: Revenue Annex 1.

### 3 Approved budget, changes and variations

- 3.1 The 2023-24 budget was agreed by Council on 21 February 2023 and is summarised by service in the Council's Budget Book 2023-24 (page 19) as follows:

**Table 2: 2023-24 original and revised net budget by service**

Service	Approved net base budget	Revised budget P3
	£m	£m
Adult Social Care	249.526	249.056
Children's Services	232.593	232.500
Community and Environmental Services	191.754	191.906
Strategy and Transformation	22.941	24.087
Finance	(203.107)	(203.841)
<b>Total</b>	<b>493.707</b>	<b>493.707</b>

Note: this table may contain rounding differences.

- 3.2 The revised budgets at June 2023 reflect the changes arising from the transfer of whole services from the Finance and Commercial Services budget into other Departments from April 2023, following the departure of the Executive Director of Finance and Commercial Services.
- 3.3 It should be noted that there will be further budget changes as a result of the implementation of the Strategic Review and these will be completed as in-year 2023-24 budget adjustments as the implementation progresses. These adjustments do not change the overall County Council Budget for 2023-24 of £493.707m.

### 4 General balances and reserves

#### General balances

- 4.1 At its meeting on 21 February 2023, the County Council agreed a minimum level of general balances of £25.340m in 2023-24. The balance at 1 April 2023 was **£24.410m** following transfers of £0.570m from a contribution to General Balances and Finance General underspends at the end of 2022-23. The forecast for 31 March 2023 is **£25.410m**, taking into account the forecast balanced budget and a £1m contribution to general balances provided for in the 2023-24 budget.

#### Reserves and provisions 2023-24

- 4.2 The use of reserves anticipated at the time of budget setting was based on reserves balances anticipated in January 2023. Actual balances at the end of March 2023 were higher than planned, mainly as a result of grants being carried forward, including Safety Valve and COVID-19 grants and reserves use being deferred.
- 4.3 The 2023-24 budget was approved based on a closing reserves and provisions (excluding DSG reserves) of £162.995m as at 31 March 2023. This, and the latest forecasts are as follows.



**Table 3: Reserves budgets and forecast reserves and provisions (excluding LMS/DSG)**

Reserves and provisions by service	Actual balances 1 April 2023	Increase in March 2023 balances after budget setting	2023-24 Budget book forecast 1 April 2023	Latest forecast balances 31 March 2024
	£m	£m	£m	£m
Adult Social Services	56.058	10.860	45.198	23.088
Children's Services (inc schools, excl LMS/DSG)	13.951	7.533	6.418	10.584
Community and Environmental Services	65.691	13.179	52.512	60.669
Strategy and Transformation	5.669	0.204	5.465	5.360
Finance	44.235	11.460	32.775	38.037
Schools LMS balances	16.078	-4.549	20.627	9.102
<b>Reserves and Provisions including LMS</b>	<b>201.682</b>	<b>38.687</b>	<b>162.995</b>	<b>146.840</b>
<b>DSG Reserve (negative)</b>	<b>(45.877)</b>	<b>27.736</b>	<b>(73.613)</b>	<b>(61.247)</b>

- 4.4 Covid grants and other grants and contributions brought forward at 31 March 2023 resulted in reserves and provisions being £38.687m higher than had been assumed at the time of budget setting. The majority of these reserves will be used to address planned service provision during 2023-24. The latest forecast net total for reserves and provisions at 31 March 2024 has decreased by £54.842m when compared with the opening balance at 1 April 2023, down to £146.840m. The bulk of the movement in forecast relates to the reduction in the Schools LMS Balances projected for 2023-24 down to £9.102m. This is an early forecast and is expected to adjust further through the year bringing the forecast closer to the Budget Book forecast for 31 March 2024 of £162.995m.
- 4.5 **Dedicated Schools Grant (DSG):** The latest forecast DSG Reserve is based on the latest modelling of the Dedicated Schools Grant (DSG) Recovery Plan after the 2022-23 outturn and early data, including amendments for the timing of opening of new provision previously estimated. An in-year deficit of c. £26.869m is forecast, in £1.721m above the budgeted deficit of £25.149m, which is partially offset by contributions from NCC and DfE in line with the Safety Valve agreement of (£5.5m) and (£6m) respectively. This will increase the DSG Reserve to £61.247m by 31 March 2024 due to the invest to save element of the plan that will deliver significant savings (and subsequently a balanced in-year budget) in future years. It should be noted that this is an early forecast before the new academic year in September when there can be significant changes to placements.
- 4.6 Compared to the budgeted deficit, the areas of most significant cost pressure continue to be independent school placements (due to the cost of new placements increasing above inflation estimates rather than the number of placements, which was lower in 2022-23 than anticipated in the management plan), post-16 provision where there was a significant increase in the number of pupils supported by the end of this academic year, and provision for children and young people who are unable to access school provision for a variety of reasons including medical needs (this area has seen a

significant increase since the covid-19 pandemic disruption to learning with many young people struggling to access mainstream provision as a result.

- 4.7 All elements of the DSG budget will continue to be kept under close review given the demand-led nature of these budgets. In addition, further work is underway to seek additional mitigations in year to minimise the additional pressures above the budgeted deficit.
- 4.8 Officers have also raised concerns about the imbalance in the market with representatives of the DfE and requested support regarding regulation, to better support the control of costs and improving the outcomes for children and young people within these placements.
- 4.9 Despite the pandemic, significant work by NCC, Norfolk Schools Forum and the wider system continues to take place as part of the Children's Services Transformation Programme both to ensure that the right specialist provision is in the right place to meet needs (i.e. the capital investment), whilst also progressing work to transform how the whole system supports additional needs within mainstream provision.
- 4.10 NCC reports the forecast position each term to the Norfolk Schools Forum, in line with DfE expectations and feedback from the Forum continues to be sought. In addition, NCC will report tri-annually to the DfE in relation to progress with the Local First Inclusion programme, with the first report having been submitted in June 2023.
- 4.11 **Provisions included in the table above**
- The table above includes forecast provisions of £32.239m comprising:
- £11.708m insurance provision,
  - £12.818m landfill provision (this provision is not cash backed),
  - £5.845m provisions for bad debts,
  - £1.639m business rates appeals provision, and
  - £0.229m - a small number of payroll related provisions.

## **5 New/Confirmed Funding**

- 5.1 **Supported Accommodation Reforms:** On 28 April 2023 the government introduced new requirements for providers of supported accommodation for looked after children and care leavers aged 16 and 17. This new legislation will require all providers of supported accommodation to be registered and regulated by OFSTED from 28 October 2023. The Minister of State for Education announced an extra £14.550m funding to support local authorities in delivering these new requirements. Norfolk County Council's share of this funding is £0.787m, to be received in 4 quarterly instalments of £0.196m.

## **6 Budget savings 2023-24 summary**

- 6.1 In setting its 2023-24 Budget, the County Council agreed net savings of £59.703m. Details of all budgeted savings can be found in the 2023-24 Budget Book. A summary of the total savings forecast to be delivered is provided in this section.
- 6.2 The latest monitoring reflects total forecast savings delivery of £59.458m at year end.
- 6.3 The forecast savings delivery is anticipated as shown in the table below:

Table 5: Analysis of 2023-24 savings forecast

	Adult Social Services	Children's Services	Community and Environmental Services	Strategy and Transformation	Finance General	Total
	£m	£m	£m	£m	£m	£m
Budget savings	28.040	12.517	10.904	2.542	5.700	<b>59.703</b>
Period 3 forecast savings	28.040	12.462	10.714	2.542	5.700	<b>59.458</b>
Savings shortfall (net)	0.000	0.055	0.190	0.000	0.000	0.245

### Commentary on savings risk areas

- 6.4 The forecast savings for 2023-24 as at June 2023 is £59.458m against a budgeted savings target of £59.703m. A shortfall of £0.055m has been reported in Children's Services and £0.190m in Community and Environmental Services. Some saving programmes have highlighted risk areas which will need to be kept under review. Any updates to the forecast delivery of savings will be included in future monitoring to Cabinet.

### Adult Social Services

- 6.5 Adult Social Services has a significant £28.040m savings target in 2023/24 comprising additional benefits from existing savings initiatives such as the Connecting Communities Programme (ASS030), delivering market utilisation efficiencies through contract performance management (ASS031), continued implementation of the Learning Disabilities transformation programme (ASS032), ongoing benefits from use of Assistive Technology and substantial further use of reserves.
- 6.5 Our major departmental transformation Programme "Connecting Communities" continues to work at pace to embed the new ways of working across the service and to ensure that the benefits are sustainable.
- 6.7 At this stage of the year, any presenting savings risk is being managed and therefore full savings delivery are currently being reported. However, there are emerging risks which may mean in future periods adverse forecasts need to be applied. Our Norse Care contract has had a multi-year savings target to deliver a wholesale transformation of the offer and ensure it is fit for the future types of demand we expect to face. Due to delay to the transformation programme, it is unlikely that recurrent savings will be achieved this year. There is expected to be one off partial mitigation from contract refunds for units out of commission. There are also potential risks around the savings

associated with the Physical Disability service due to the timing of the creation of an 18-65 operational service which will support this saving once established.

### **Children's Services**

- 6.10 At this early stage it is anticipated that all budgeted savings within Children's Services will be delivered in 2023-24 except for S2324CS035 Post 16 transport: remove option to pay a daily fare (currently only available on local buses which charge fares) £0.055m saving which will no longer be delivered.
- 6.11 The forecast assumes that remainder of the savings will be delivered during the remainder of the financial year; significant deviation from these plans could result in an overspend forecast. Therefore, expected delivery of savings will continue to be kept under close review.

### **Community and Environmental Services**

- 6.12 At this early stage it is anticipated, unless stated separately, all budgeted savings within Community and Environmental Services will be delivered in 2023-24. One of the savings (S2324FCS021) relates to further income from commercialisation of property assets including County Hall. Given the new tenants were not utilising the space from 1 April there will be an estimated shortfall against the saving in 2023-24 of £0.190m due to rent not being charged for the full year.

### **2024-25 to 2026-27 savings**

- 6.13 Budget setting in 2023-24 saw the approval of further investment in essential services through both the removal of previously planned savings and the recognition of cost pressures. As such the savings plan assumes an increase in budget of £6.197m for 2024-25 followed by savings of £0.669m for 2025-26 and £2.285m savings in 2026-27. The deliverability of these savings, including any 2023-24 savings that are permanently undeliverable, will be considered as part of the budget setting process for 2024-28.

## Revenue Annex 1

### Forecast revenue outturn

#### Revenue outturn by service

The forecast net balanced budget is a result of a range of underlying forecast over and underspends which are listed below.

#### Revenue budget outturn by service – detail

	Revised Budget	Overspend	Under spend	Forecast net spend
		£m	£m	
<b>Adult Social Services</b>				
Purchase of Care		0.005		
Director of Commissioning		0.937		
Director of Community Health & Social Care		1.857		
Director of Community Social Work		0.465		
Director of Strategy & Transformation		0	0	
Public Health		0	0	
Management, Finance & HR			(3.264)	
<b>Net total</b>	<b>249.056</b>	<b>3.264</b>	<b>(3.264)</b>	<b>249.056</b>
<b>Children's Services</b>				
<b>Net total</b>	<b>232.500</b>		<b>0</b>	<b>232.500</b>
<b>Community and Environmental Services</b>				
Corporate Property Utilities inflation cost pressure		1.071		
<b>Net total</b>	<b>191.906</b>	<b>1.071</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>192.977</b>
<b>Strategy and Transformation</b>				
Net overspends		0.409		
Use of reserves			(0.409)	
<b>Net Total</b>	<b>24.087</b>	<b>0.409</b>	<b>(0.409)</b>	<b>24.087</b>
<b>Finance</b>				
Interest Payable – savings secured on borrowing undertaken in 22-23 at lower interest rates			(0.417)	
Minimum Revenue Provision – 22-23 capital slippage			(0.926)	
Interest Receivable			(2.370)	
Miscellaneous cost pressures and underspends		0.279		
Increase in Business Risk Reserves		2.363		
		2.642	(3.713)	
<b>Net total</b>	<b>(203.841)</b>		<b>(1.071)</b>	<b>-204.912</b>
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>493.707</b>			<b>493.707</b>

## Revenue Annex 2 – Dedicated Schools Grant Reserve

	<b>Reserve as at 31 Mar 23</b>	Revised Budget (A)	<b>Budgeted Reserve as at 31 Mar 24</b>	Forecast Spend (B)	(Over) / under spend A-B	Forecast Reserve as at 31 Mar 24
<b><i>Dedicated schools grant</i></b>						
High Needs Block		25.149		26.869	1.720	
DfE Safety Valve funding				-6.000	6.000	
NCC Safety Valve contribution				-5.500	5.500	
<b>Increase in net deficit to be carried forward</b>		<b>(25.149)</b>		<b>(15.369)</b>		
<b>Forecast (over) / under spend</b>					<b>9.780</b>	
<b>Net deficit (DSG Reserve)*</b>	<b>(45.877)</b>		<b>(73.613)</b>			<b>(61.247)</b>

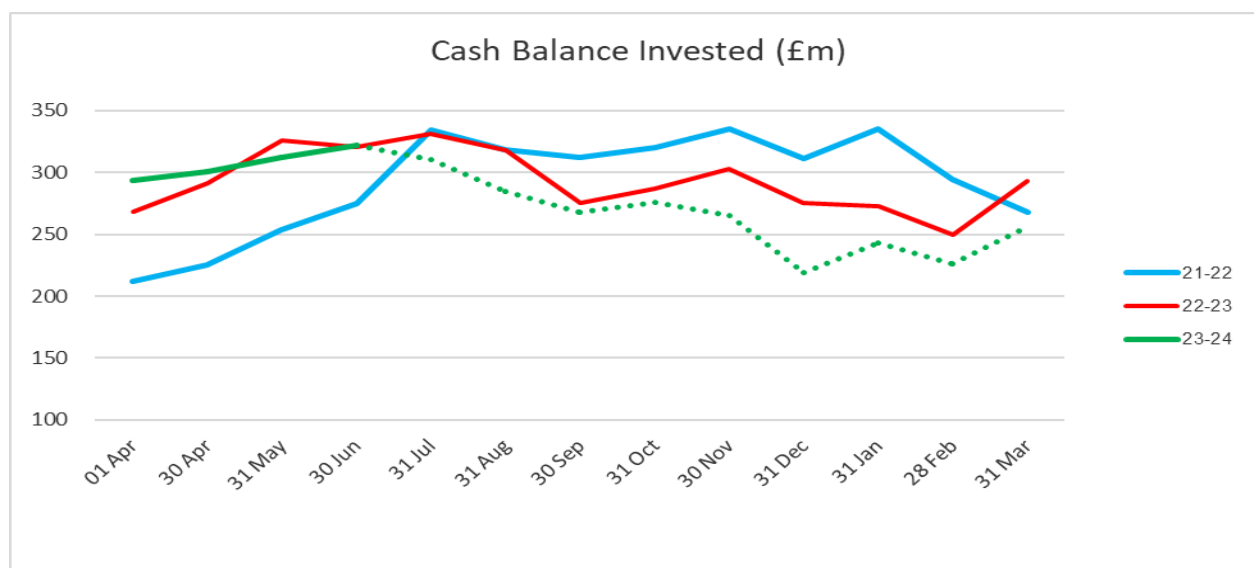
\*The Budget Reserve of (£73.613m) was set before the Safety Valve Agreement was confirmed and therefore does not include the £28m received from the Department for Education in March 2023.

## Appendix 2: 2023-24 Balance Sheet Finance Monitoring Report Month 3

### 1 Treasury management summary

- 1.1 The corporate treasury management function ensures the efficient management of all the authority's cash balances. The graph below shows the level of cash balances over the last two financial years to 31<sup>st</sup> March, and projections to March 2024.

**Chart 2: Treasury Cash Balances**



- 1.2 The Council's Treasury Strategy assumes that £65m may be borrowed in 2023-24 to fund capital expenditure in year. The forecast cash flow above assumes that this amount will be borrowed over the course of the financial year, resulting in a closing cash balance of approximately £256m. If, in order to minimise the cost of carrying unnecessary borrowing, no borrowing was to take place before 31 March 2024, then the projected year-end cash balances will be approximately £191m.
- 1.3 The Council has healthy cash balances for the immediate future with cash balances of £321.7m as at the end of June 2023. The P3 forecast of Interest receivable from treasury investments held by the Council is £1.883m; which is a £2.37m saving against the revenue budget.
- 1.4 PWLB and commercial borrowing for capital purposes was £842.455m at the end of June 2023. The associated annual interest payable on existing borrowing is £30.720m.
- 1.5 The forecast interest payable for 2023-24 for P3 is for a £0.417m saving against budget assuming the £65m planned borrowing takes place during Q2-Q4 in 2023-24.
- 1.6 In accordance with the guidance set out in the Prudential Code 2021 (139) and the Treasury Management Code 2021(1.6), the Council sets out its current and full year forecast Prudential and Treasury Management Indicators in Table 1 below.

Table 1: CFR and Net Borrowing Indicators

Prudential Indicators	30.06.23 Actual - YTD £m	2023/24 TM Strategy £m	31.3.24 Forecast £m
Capital expenditure	43.476	251.054	223.249
Gross borrowing	888.210	975.118	954.168
External debt	842.455	935.045	894.333
Investments	<b>321.697</b>	<b>218.203</b>	<b>256.000</b>
Net borrowing	566.513	756.915	698.168

- 1.7 To date the Council has not increased its PWLB borrowing and has repaid £6.461m of its external debt. As such the P3 Gross Borrowing and External Debt balances are below the 23-24 TM strategy estimates set out in Table 2,

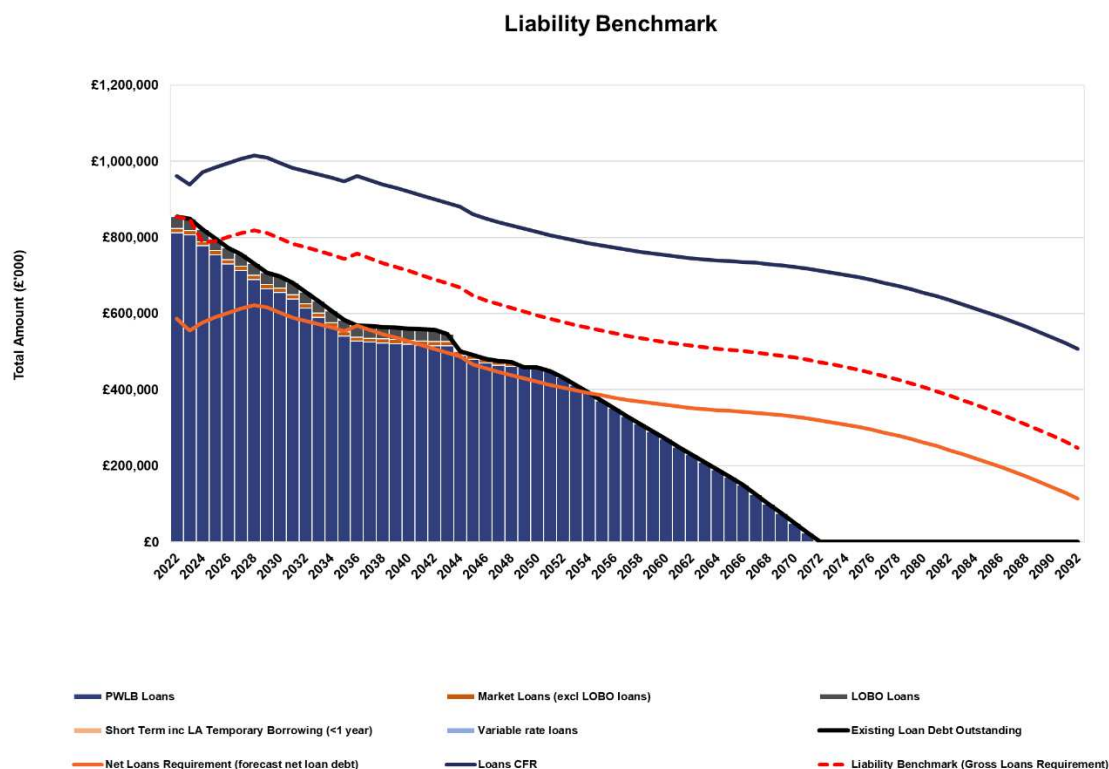
TABLE 2

Treasury and Prudential Indicators 2023/24	Q1 2023-24	23-24 Strategy	Forecast 2023-24
	£m	£m	£m
Authorised Limit		1082.735	
Maximum Gross Borrowing position during the year	894.171	934.618	895.510
Operational Boundary		1029.268	1,029.268
Average Gross Borrowing position	845.766	855.437	863.591
Financing Costs as a proportion of net revenue stream (£788.209)		9.12%	8.16%
Capital Financing Requirement		1,029.268	1,029.268

- 1.8 The forecast Prudential Indicators in Table 2 takes into account the P3 Capital Programme which includes £17.825m additional borrowing required for 2023-24 on top of the planned £65m. It assumes that Service Managers will close the £17.825m gap by actively working on rephasing their capital projects out to the future 2024-2028 and stay within the Operational Boundary Limit of £1,029,268m.
- 1.9 The Liability Benchmark (LB) as set out in Chart 3 is a new prudential indicator for 2023/24. As noted in the Treasury Management Strategy for 2023-24, this prudential indicator will be reported to Cabinet at the end of each quarter.
- 1.10 The Authority is required to estimate and measure the LB for the forthcoming financial year and the following two financial years, as a minimum.



Chart 3: Liability Benchmark



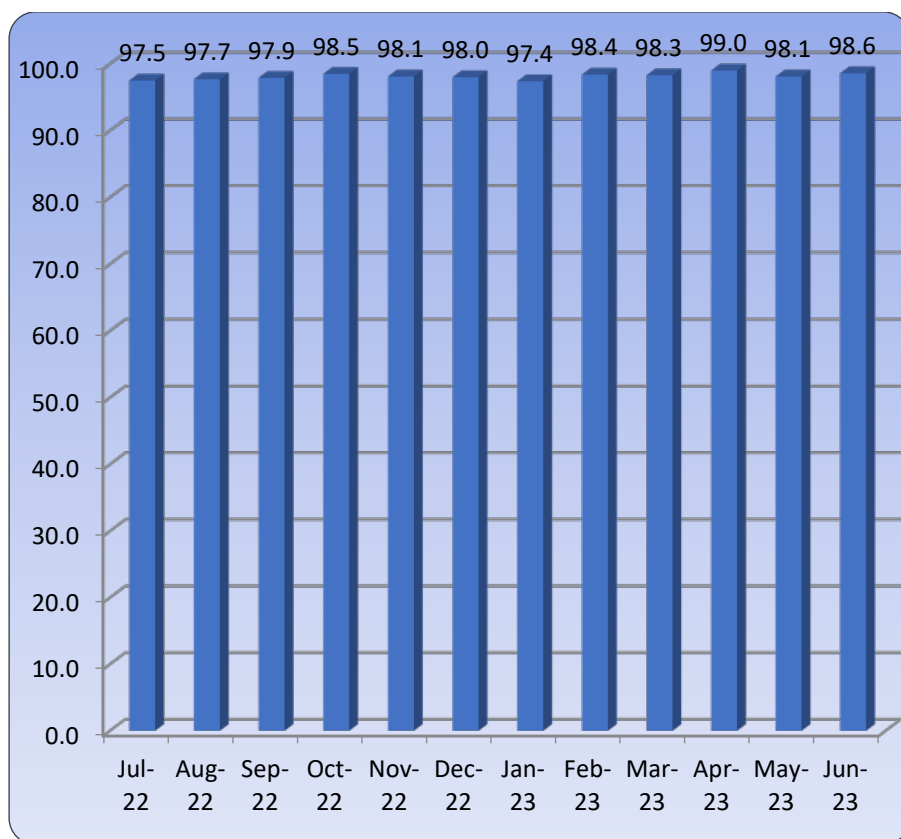
## 1.11 There are four components to the LB: -

- Existing loan debt outstanding: the Authority's existing loans that are still outstanding in future years.
- Loans CFR: this is calculated in accordance with the loans CFR definition in the Prudential Code and projected into the future based on approved prudential borrowing and planned MRP.
- Net loans requirement: this will show the Authority's gross loan debt less treasury management investments at the last financial year-end, projected into the future and based on its approved prudential borrowing, planned MRP and any other major cash flows forecast.
- Liability benchmark (or gross loans requirement): this equals net loans requirement plus short-term liquidity allowance.

## 2 Payment performance

- ### 2.1
- This chart shows the percentage of invoices that were paid by the authority within 30 days of such invoices being received. Some 470,000 invoices are paid annually. 98.6% were paid on time in June 23 against a target of 98%. The percentage has returned to above the target of 98% in the last 5 months.

Chart 3: Payment performance, rolling 12 months



Note: The figures include an allowance for disputes/exclusions.

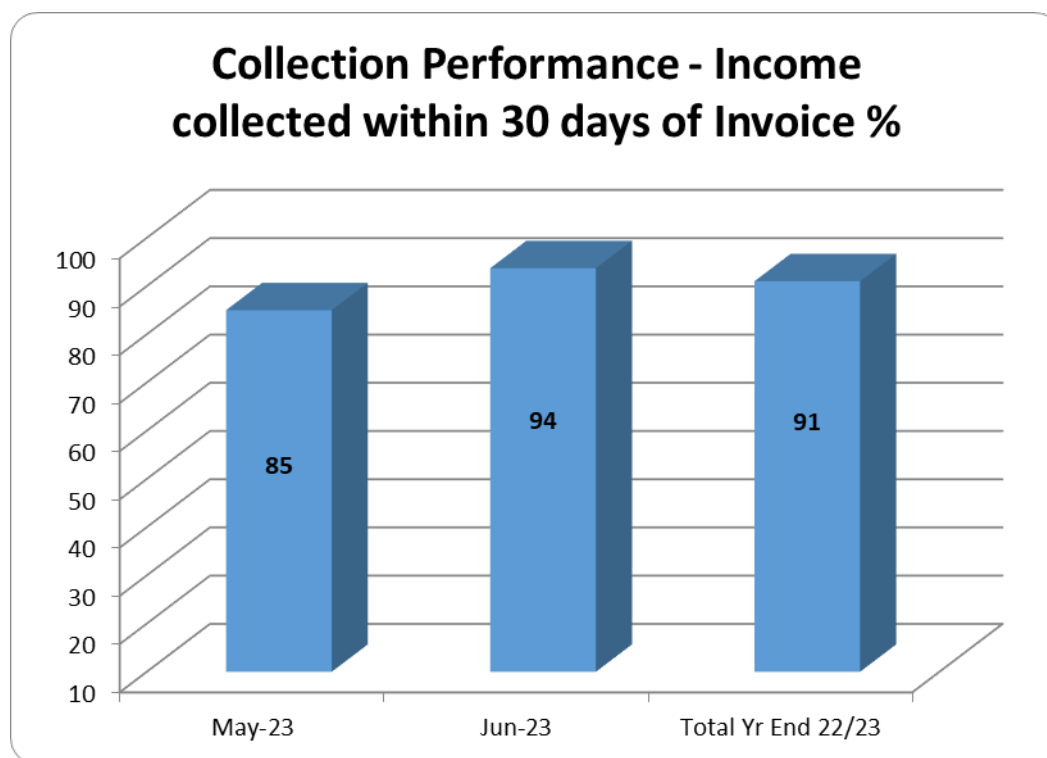
### 3 Debt recovery

- 3.1 **Introduction:** In 2022-23 the County Council raised over 126935 invoices for statutory and non-statutory services. These invoices totalled in excess of £1.197bn. Through 2022-23 91.2% of all invoiced income was collected within 30 days of issuing an invoice, with 98% collected within 180 days.

#### Debt collection performance measures – latest available data

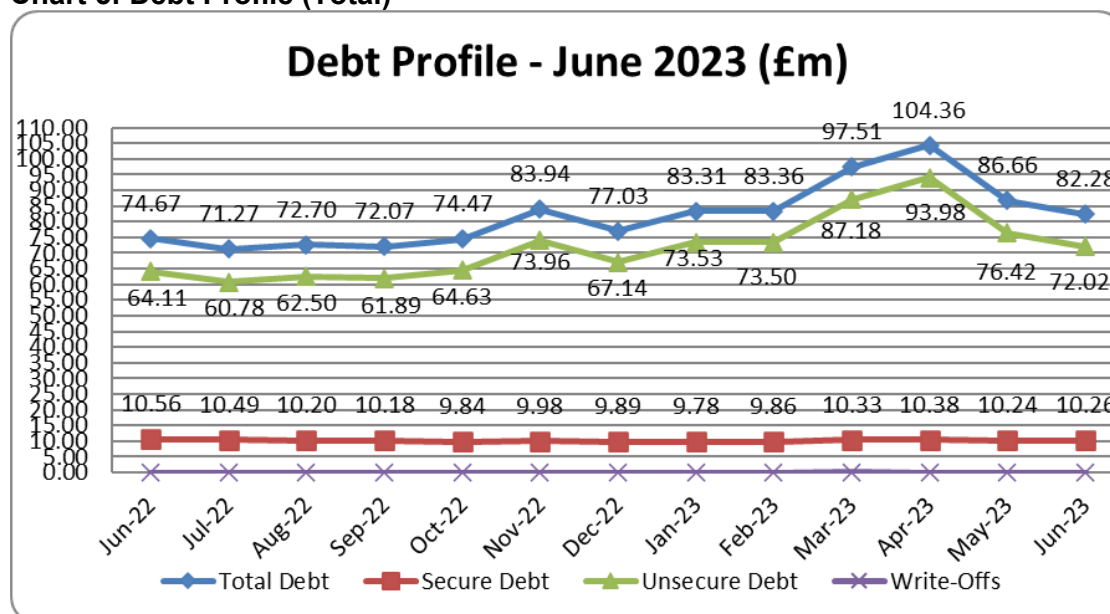
- 3.2 The proportion of invoiced income collected within 30 days for invoices raised in the previous month – measured by value – was 94% in June 23.

**Chart 4: Latest Collection Performance**



- 3.3 The value of outstanding debt is continuously monitored, and recovery procedures are in place to ensure that action is taken to recover all money due to Norfolk County Council. The level of debt is shown in the following graph:

**Chart 5: Debt Profile (Total)**



- 3.4 The overall level of unsecure debt decreased by £4.4m in June 2023. Of the £72.02m unsecure debt at the end of June 23; £14.87m is under 30 days, £1.80m has been referred to NPLaw, £1.1m is being paid off by regular instalments and £11.60m is awaiting estate finalisation. The largest area of unsecure debt relates to charges for social care, £55.56m, of which £9.47m is under 30 days and £18.17m is debt with the

CCG's for shared care, Better Care Pooled Fund, continuing care and free nursing care. The overall debt with the CCGs has decreased by £6.41m in June 2023.

- 3.5 Secured debts amount to £10.26m at 30 June 2023. Within this total £3.72m relates to estate finalisation where the client has died, and the estate is in the hands of the executors.
- 3.6 **Debt write-offs:** In accordance with Financial Regulations and Financial Procedures, Cabinet is required to approve the write-off of debts over £10,000. The Director of Strategic Finance approves the write-off of all debts up to £10,000.
- 3.7 Service departments are responsible for funding their debt write-offs. Before writing off any debt all appropriate credit control procedures are followed.
- 3.8 For the period 1 April 2023 to 30<sup>th</sup> June 2023, 65 debts less than £10,000 were approved to be written off following approval from the Director of Strategic Finance. These debts totalled £7,228.38.

## Appendix 3: 2023-24 Capital Finance Monitoring Report

### Report by the Director of Strategic Finance

#### 1 Capital Programme 2023-27+

- 1.1 On 21 February 2023, the County Council agreed a 2023-24 capital programme of £351.054m with a further £605.917m allocated to future years', giving a total of £956.971m. This was based on a forecast outturn for 2022-23 of £283.583m
- 1.2 The Capital Programme was increased by £62.938m in March 2023 following the receipt of various sources of external funding. The bulk of this additional funding was reprofiled into 2023-24 leaving a reported Capital Outturn of £217.273m for 2022-23 as reported to Cabinet on 5 June 2023.
- 1.3 £125.940m was moved from 2022-23 into 2023-24 and future years resulting in an overall capital programme at 1 April 2023 of £1,085.104m. This prompted a review of the capital programme – Review Round 1 to address the viability of delivering a £462.690m capital programme in 2023-24. Further in-year adjustments have resulted in the capital programme shown below:

**Table 1: Capital Programme budget**

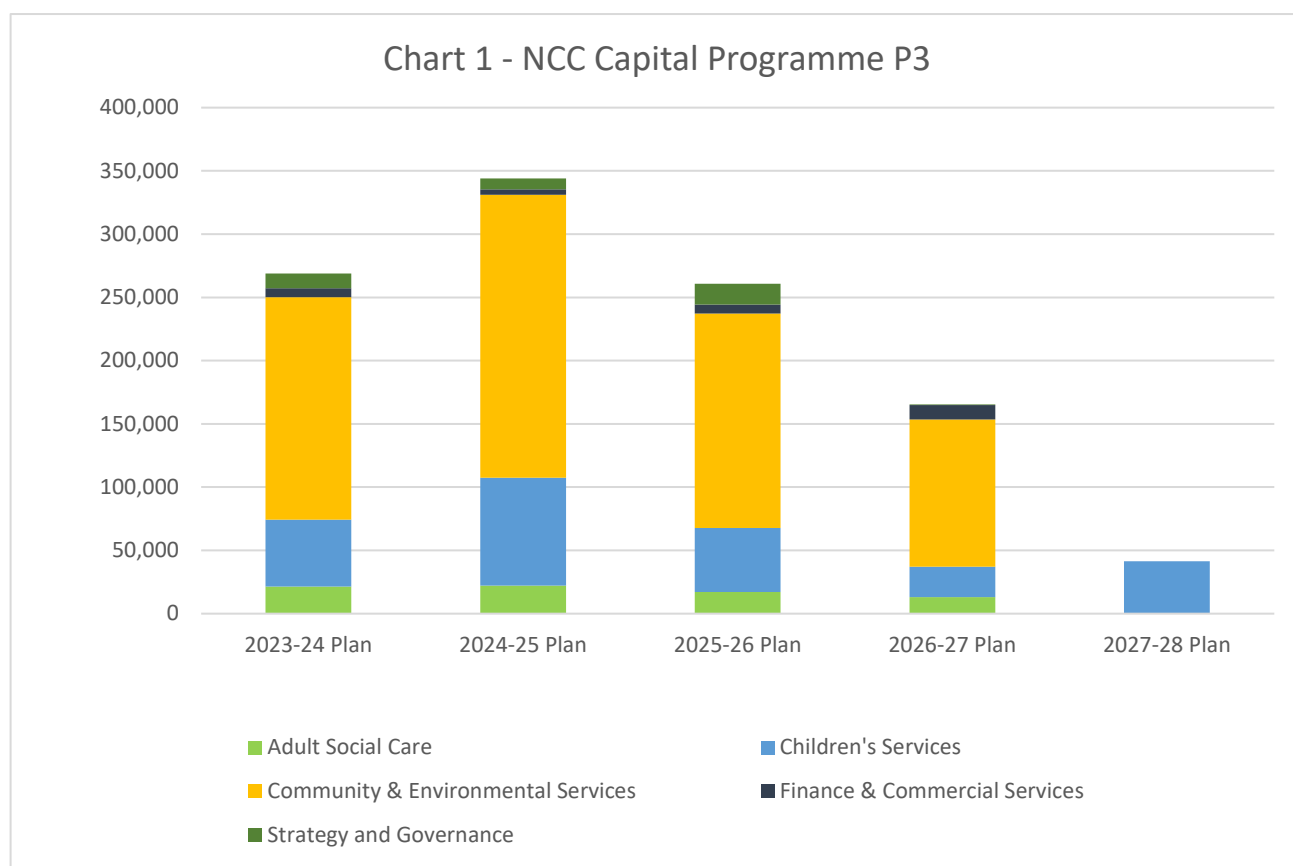
	<b>2023-24 budget</b>	<b>Future years</b>
	<b>£m</b>	<b>£m</b>
Uplifts to existing schemes approved in February 2023	1.219	4.548
New schemes approved in February 2023	13.685	20.737
Previously approved schemes brought forward	336.150	580.632
<b>Totals in 2022-27+ Budget Book (total £956.971m)</b>	<b>351.054</b>	<b>605.917</b>
Schemes re-profiled after budget setting (£125.940m)	109.443	16.497
New schemes approved after budget setting including new grants received	2.193	
<b>Revised opening capital programme (total £1,085.104m)</b>	<b>462.690</b>	<b>622.414</b>
Re-profiling since start of year	-171.579	171.579
Other movements including new grants and approved schemes	-22.290	17.689
<b>Total capital programme budgets (total £1,080.583m)</b>	<b>268.821</b>	<b>811.682</b>

*Note: this table and the tables below contain rounding differences*

- 1.4 Carrying on the review of capital profiles, the P3 review of all schemes identified a further £29.073m bringing the total reprofiled from 2023-24 into future years of £171.579m. The review also adjusted for changes in NCC borrowing required and updates for grant funded projects resulting in a net increase of £15.536m, made up of the following changes:

- £9.158m grant funding received for the Disabled Facilities Grant from the Department of Health

- £1m recognition of flexible use of capital receipts to fund the Adult Social Care Transformation programme
- £5.861m Conditional Grant funding received from the Department of Education for Children's Services schemes in schools
- £0.696m additional S106 developer contributions for the Children's Services schemes
- (£0.466m) reduction in NCC Borrowing and other external funding for various completed Children's Services projects
- £0.538m increase in Museums external funding received from 3<sup>rd</sup> parties
- £0.118m increase in Libraries funded through NCC Borrowing following a swap of funding sources
- (£1.249m) adjustment to the Kings Lynn Library budget following an adjustment of funding sources and revised forecast
- (£0.120m) reduction in various other schemes

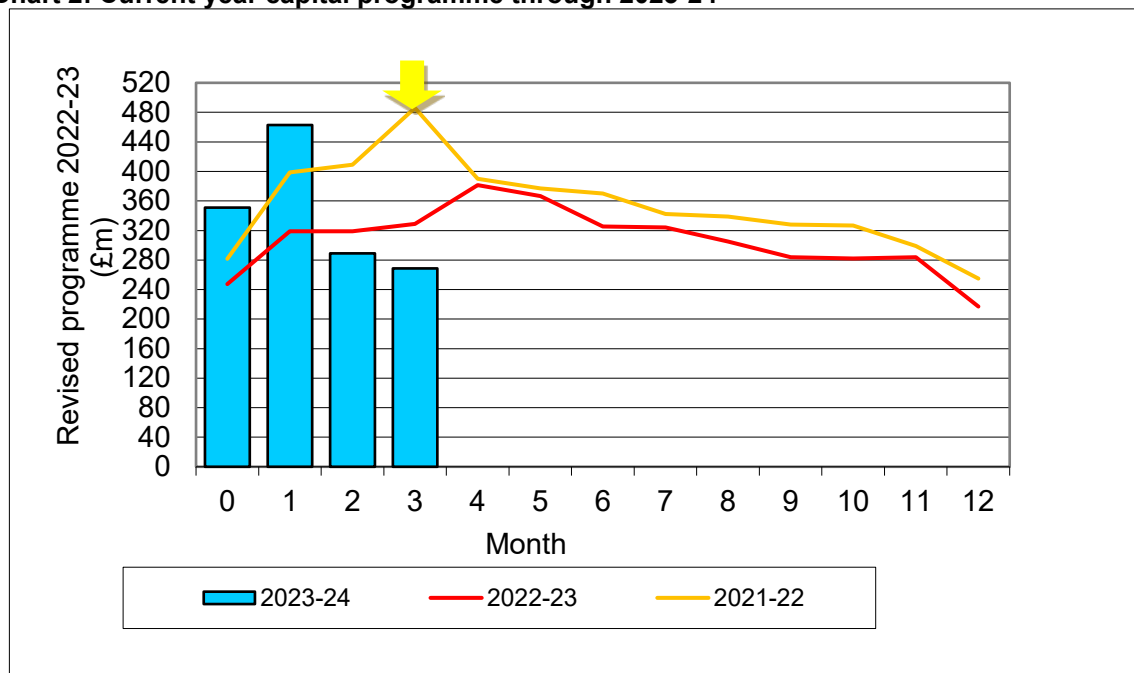


- 1.5 Chart 1 shows that the bulk of the reprofiling of capital budgets has transferred to 2024-25, bringing that year's total capital programme to £344.037m. This is over £80m higher than the Council's run rate from previous years. The Council is continuously reviewing the forecast for capital schemes in 2023-24 and will extend this review into the 2024-25 financial year to improve the accuracy of the phasing of capital projects.
- 1.6 The Capital Programme will also be updated for notifications of capital grant funding. The Council will adjust the profile of capital expenditure funded from NCC borrowing accordingly to accommodate the grant funded projects in the current year.
- 1.7 The full impact of Capital Review Board's scrutiny of schemes in the capital programme will be reflected in Capital Monthly Reporting to cabinet in future months.

## Changes to the Capital Programme

- 1.8 The following chart shows changes to the 2023-24 capital programme through the year. The current year capital programme tends to build up in the first half of the year as the Council receives notification of central government capital grants and then gradually settles down to a sustainable delivery level as projects are fled and reprofiled as schemes develop.

Chart 2: Current year capital programme through 2023-24



- 1.9 Month “0” shows the 2023-24 capital programme at the time of budget approval, with schemes reprofiled from the prior year after budget setting shown in month 1, followed by the most up to date programme. The current year programme will change as additional funding is secured, and when schemes are re-profiled to future years as timing becomes more certain.
- 1.10 The P3 Capital Programme of £268.822m is approximately £25m higher than the capital programme delivered in the last two years (£217.0m – 22-23 and £254.87m – 21-22). Therefore, we can expect a similar trend of reprofiling to occur in 2023-24
- 1.11 In P3 the Council departments continued its review to identify any reprofiling due and to release any budgets that are no longer deemed to be economically viable given the current climate of rising interest rates. This resulted in £171.579m being reprofiled into future years.
- 1.12 Following the Strategic Review restructure of services, the capital projects have been moved into their new service areas. The opening programme has been restated to reflect the new structure. The current year’s capital budget is as follows:

Table 2: Service capital budgets and movements 2023-24

Service	Previous reported Current Year Budget	Reprofiling since previous report	Other Changes since previous report	2023-24 latest Capital Budget

	£m	£m	£m	£m
Adult Social Care	12.670	-1.469	10.158	21.358
Children's Services	52.138	1.508	-0.679	52.968
Community & Environmental Services	205.647	-29.112	-0.592	175.943
Finance	7.092	0.000	0.000	7.092
Strategy & Transformation	11.460	0.000	0.000	11.460
<b>Total</b>	<b>289.007</b>	<b>-29.073</b>	<b>8.887</b>	<b>268.821</b>

*Note: this table may contain rounding differences.*

1.13 The revised programme for future years (2023-24 to 2026-27) is as follows:

**Table 3: Capital programme future years 2022+**

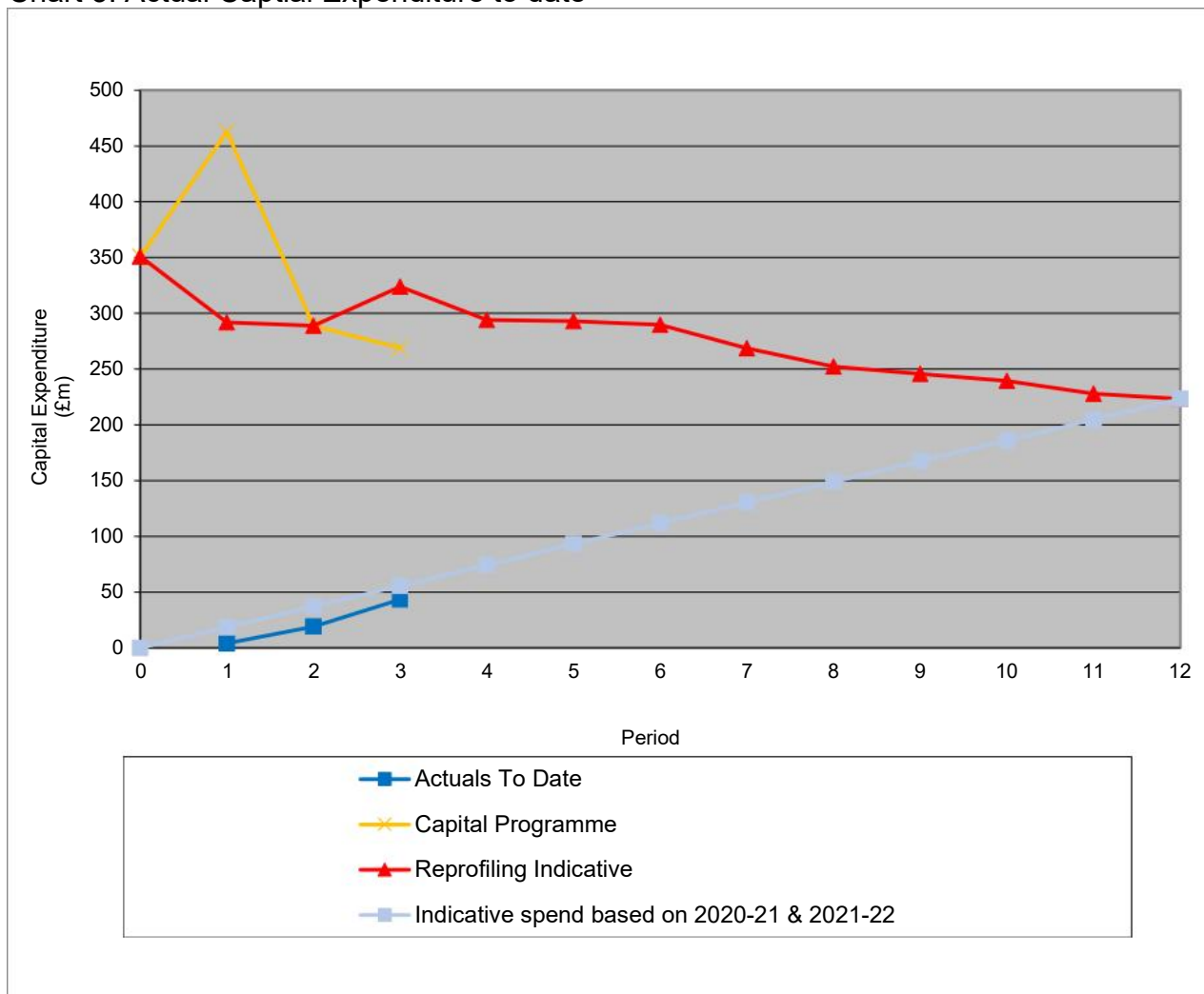
Service	Previously reported future programme	Reprofil ng since previous report	Other Changes since previous report	2022+ Future Capital Budget
	£m	£m	£m	£m
Adult Social Care	51.083	1.469	0.000	52.552
Children's Services	195.995	-1.508	6.770	201.256
Community & Environmental Services	480.693	29.112	-0.120	509.684
Finance	22.543	0.000	-0.000	22.543
Strategy & Transformation	25.646	0.000	0.000	27.926
<b>Total</b>	<b>775.960</b>	<b>29.073</b>	<b>6.649</b>	<b>811.682</b>

*Note: this table contains rounding differences*

1.14 Chart 3 below shows the movement on the current year capital budget and year to date capital expenditure:



Chart 3: Actual Capital Expenditure to date



- 1.15 The graph shows that actual year to date capital spend is ahead of the opening forecast, which was based on the opening capital programme and an indicative calculation based on previous years' expenditure. It also shows that expected reprofiling of budgets to future years as the progress on projects becomes clearer. As a result, capital expenditure 23-24 forecast at P3 is £223.249m.
- 1.16 Whilst the forecast takes into account the historical tendencies for capital slippage, it does not reflect recent inflationary cost pressures in the costs of construction. We are also currently seeing high levels of inflation on the cost of construction schemes and will continue to monitor this risk and review the potential pressures on the capital programme. The impact of cost pressures on the capital programme forecast will be picked up as part of the regular capital monitoring process.

## 2 Financing the capital programme

- 2.1 Funding for the capital programme comes primarily from grants and contributions provided by central government and prudential borrowing. These are supplemented by capital receipts, developer contributions, and contributions from revenue budgets and reserves.

Table 4: Financing of the capital programme

<b>Funding stream</b>	<b>2023-24 Programme</b>	<b>Future Years Forecast</b>
	<b>£m</b>	<b>£m</b>
Prudential Borrowing	110.438	368.665
Use of Capital Receipts (see note 2.2)	1.000	0.000
Revenue & Reserves	0.069	0.000
<i>Grants and Contributions:</i>		
DfE	29.592	69.078
DfT	89.066	343.015
DoH	9.348	0.000
DLUHC	0.000	0.000
DCMS	0.000	0.000
DEFRA	0.000	0.000
Developer Contributions	17.674	16.092
Other Local Authorities	1.510	0.100
Local Enterprise Partnership	1.109	3.800
Community Infrastructure Levy	2.087	1.824
National Lottery	3.039	0.000
Academies	0.166	0.000
Commercial Contributions	0.000	0.000
Business rates pool fund	0.000	0.000
Other	3.724	9.108
<b>Total capital programme</b>	<b>268.821</b>	<b>811.682</b>

*Note: this table may contain rounding differences*

2.2 For the purposes of the table above, it is assumed that all capital receipts will be applied directly to the re-payment of debt and transformation projects, rather than being applied to fund capital expenditure. Any proposals to utilise capital receipts to fund in-year capital expenditure are recommended to Cabinet for approval (see section 3 below) and will be applied in line with the Council's Minimum Revenue Provision Statement.

2.3 Developer contributions are funding held in relation to planning applications. Section 106 (Town and Country Planning Act 1990) contributions are held in relation to specific projects: primarily schools, with smaller amounts for libraries and highways. The majority of highways developer contributions are a result of section 278 agreements (Highways Act 1980).

### **3 Capital Receipts**

3.1 The Council's property portfolio is constantly reviewed to ensure assets are only held where necessary so that capital receipts or rental income can be generated. This in turn reduces revenue costs of the operational property portfolio.

3.2 The capital programme, approved in February 2023, gave the best estimate at that time of the value of properties available for disposal in the four years to 2026-27, totalling £18.744m.

**Table 5a: Disposals capital programme forecast**

<b>Financial Year</b>	<b>Property sales forecast £m</b>
2023-24	3.678

2024-25	4.640
2025-26	6.641
2026-27	3.785
	<b>18.744</b>

The timing of future year sales is the most optimistic case and may slip into future years if sales completions are delayed.

3.3 The revised schedule for current year disposals is as follows:

**Table 5b: Capital receipts and forecast use current financial year £m**

<b>Capital receipts 2023-24</b>	<b>£m</b>
Capital receipts reserve brought forward	21.947
Loan repayments – subsidiaries forecast for year	1.364
Loan repayments – LIF loan repayments to date	3.706
<b>Capital receipts to date</b>	
Capital receipts in year	0.553
Capital Receipts forecasted for asset disposals subject to contract	4.610
<b>Secured capital receipts to date</b>	<b>5.163</b>
Potential current year farms sales	0.977
Potential current year non-farms sales	0.360
Potential development property sales	2.225
<b>Potential capital receipts</b>	<b>3.562</b>
<b>Forecast available capital receipts</b>	<b>35.742</b>
<b>Forecast use of capital receipts</b>	
Maximum flexible use of capital receipts to support transformation costs	3.000
Repayment of CIL supported borrowing and Capital Loans	5.070
To fund short-life assets – IT and VPE	20.000
<b>Total Capital Receipts Utilisation</b>	<b>28.070</b>
Capital Receipts Reserve to carry forward	7.672
Norwich Western Link Reserve	5.061
<b>Remaining Capital Receipts Unutilised</b>	<b>2.611</b>

3.4 As can be seen from this table, enough capital receipts have been secured to support the use of capital receipts to support transformation costs, short-life capital expenditure and the Norwich Western Link project, previously approved by County Council.

3.5 Further sales will contribute to the capital receipts reserve which can be used to reduce the external borrowing requirement, fund debt repayments, flexible use of capital receipts or to directly fund capital expenditure, thereby reducing the Capital Funding Requirement (CFR).

3.6 On 10 February 2021, the DLUHC announced that the flexibility granted to local authorities to utilise capital receipts to support transformation costs has been extended for a further 3 years. Table 5b includes £3m earmarked for this in 2023-24..

#### **4 New capital budget in the pipeline**

- 4.1 The following schemes are new additions to the P3 Capital Programme which have been previously approved by Cabinet and received full council approval on 18 July 2023. These schemes will be added to the Capital Programme from P4 July 2023
- 4.2 At its meeting on 5<sup>th</sup> June 2023, Cabinet endorsed the recommendation to increase the Capital Programme by £16.7m NCC borrowing to fund first tranche of the Corporate Property Retrofitting Plan to deliver the Council's Net Zero Carbon pledge by 2030. This scheme was approved by Council on 18 July 2023.
- 4.3 At its meeting on 3<sup>rd</sup> July 2023, Cabinet endorsed the recommendation to increase the Kings Lynn STARS by £2.026m. Following a successful Levelling Up Fund bid, the King's Lynn Sustainable Transport and Regeneration Scheme (STARS) project was given conditional approval by government in January 2023, subject to further major scheme business case approvals from the Department for Transport (DfT). The cabinet member decision (27 May 22) approved the submission of a bid indicating that a 10% contribution from the County Council will be made, up to a maximum of £3m. The currently estimated NCC costs are £2.026m and this uplift will be added to the Capital Programme in P4 July 2023.

## ANNEX A: Movements in Capital Budgets – P3 June 2023

SERVICE AREA	SUB COMMITTEE	Funding Type	Project Code	Project Description	Budget movements in 2023-24			Future Years Budget	
					Reduction in 23-24	Increase in 23-24	Reprofile to Future Years	Future Years Movements	Reprofile to Future Years
Adult Social Services (Directorate)	Adult Social Care.	External Funding	SC8140	Disabled Facilities Grant		9.158			
<b>Adult Social Services (Directorate)</b>	<b>Adult Social Care.</b>	<b>External Funding Total</b>				<b>9.158</b>			
Adult Social Services (Directorate)	Adult Social Care.	NCC Borrowing and Capital Receipts	SC8156	Independent Living Programme			-1.842		1.842
Adult Social Services (Directorate)	Adult Social Care.	NCC Borrowing and Capital Receipts	SC8170	Supported Living Programme					0.261
Adult Social Services (Directorate)	Adult Social Care.	NCC Borrowing and Capital Receipts	SC8174	NCC.NCTB Project B			0.633		-0.633
Adult Social Services (Directorate)	Adult Social Care.	NCC Borrowing and Capital Receipts	SC8175	ASC Transformation Programme		1.000			
Adult Social Services (Directorate)	Adult Social Care.	NCC Borrowing and Capital Receipts	SC8195	SL Allington Smith Close TCP Core 4			-0.130		
Adult Social Services (Directorate)	Adult Social Care.	NCC Borrowing and Capital Receipts	SC8198	SL Norwich Complex TCP 1			-0.131		
Adult Social Services (Directorate)	Adult Social Care.	NCC Borrowing and Capital Receipts Total				1.000	-1.469		1.469
<b>Adult Social Services (Directorate) Total</b>						<b>10.158</b>	<b>-1.469</b>		<b>1.469</b>

SERVICE AREA	SUB COMMITTEE	Funding Type	Project Code	Project Description	Budget movements in 2023-24			Future Years Budget	
					Reduction in 23-24	Increase in 23-24	Reprofile to Future Years	Future Years Movements	Reprofile to Future Years
Children's Services (Directorate)	Children's Services	External Funding	EC3719	Programme Management		0.300			
Children's Services (Directorate)	Children's Services	External Funding	EC3815	Dereham Developer cont		0.232			
Children's Services (Directorate)	Children's Services	External Funding	EC4695	Basic need	-0.690			-3.902	
Children's Services (Directorate)	Children's Services	External Funding	EC4719	Children's Services SLA				0.180	
Children's Services (Directorate)	Children's Services	External Funding	EC4822	Condition Funding	0.071			3.632	
Children's Services (Directorate)	Children's Services	External Funding	EC4882	CM - Silfield New Primary				5.702	
Children's Services (Directorate)	Children's Services	External Funding	EC4966	Alderman Peel High SRB				0.450	
Children's Services (Directorate)	Children's Services	External Funding	EC4970	Acle Academy SRB				0.450	
Children's Services (Directorate)	Children's Services	External Funding	EC4981	North Walsham New SRB				0.450	
Children's Services (Directorate)	Children's Services	External Funding	EC4983	Sprowston Inf SRB expansion		0.469			
Children's Services (Directorate)	Children's Services	External Funding	EC4990	High Needs Provision Capital			0.176	-1.174	-0.176
Children's Services	Children's Services	External Funding		All other project budget movements	-1.138	0.431	0.000	0.978	0.000
Children's Services (Directorate)	Children's Services	External Funding Total			-1.757	1.432	0.176	6.766	-0.176
Children's Services (Directorate)	Children's Services	NCC Borrowing and Capital Receipts	EC4348	CM - Fakenham New SEN School	-0.069				
Children's Services (Directorate)	Children's Services	NCC Borrowing and Capital Receipts	EC4695	Basic need	-0.107		0.800		-0.800
Children's Services (Directorate)	Children's Services	NCC Borrowing and Capital Receipts	EC4724	AC - Arden Grove SRB	-0.030				
Children's Services (Directorate)	Children's Services	NCC Borrowing and Capital Receipts	EC4745	CS-Great Yarmouth SEMH School	-0.110				
Children's Services (Directorate)	Children's Services	NCC Borrowing and Capital Receipts	EC4747	CM - SEND		0.366	0.600		-0.600
Children's Services (Directorate)	Children's Services	NCC Borrowing and Capital Receipts	EC4822	Condition Funding			-0.068	0.004	0.068
Children's Services (Directorate)	Children's Services	NCC Borrowing and Capital Receipts	EC4844	Tunstead Modular Replacement	-0.001				
Children's Services (Directorate)	Children's Services	NCC Borrowing and Capital Receipts	EC4875	CM-Falcon Junior School	-0.003				
Children's Services (Directorate)	Children's Services	NCC Borrowing and Capital Receipts	EC4938	Sidestrand Hall HORSAs block	-0.400				
Children's Services (Directorate)	Children's Services	NCC Borrowing and Capital Receipts Total			-0.720	0.366	1.332	0.004	-1.332
<b>Children's Services (Directorate) Total</b>					<b>-2.477</b>	<b>1.798</b>	<b>1.508</b>	<b>6.770</b>	<b>-1.508</b>

					Budget movements in 2023-24			Future Years Budget	
SERVICE AREA	SUB COMMITTEE	Funding Type	Project Code	Project Description	Reduction in 23-24	Increase in 23-24	Reprofile to Future Years	Future Years Movements	Reprofile to Future Years
Community & Environmental Services (Directorate)	Highways	External Funding	PK1002	Ringland A47-A1067 Western Link Road			-7.384		7.384
Community & Environmental Services (Directorate)	Highways	External Funding	PKA018	GT YARM THIRD RIVER XING			-5.125		5.125
Community & Environmental Services (Directorate)	Highways	External Funding	PKA024	Long Stratton - Long Stratton Bypass			-0.896		0.896
Community & Environmental Services (Directorate)	Highways	External Funding Total				0.000	-13.405		13.405
Community & Environmental Services (Directorate)	Highways	NCC Borrowing and Capital Receipts	PBA015	Nch, St Stephens St/Red Lion St/Castle Meadow			-2.865		2.865
Community & Environmental Services (Directorate)	Highways	NCC Borrowing and Capital Receipts	PKA024	Long Stratton - Long Stratton Bypass			-2.732		2.732
Community & Environmental Services (Directorate)	Highways	NCC Borrowing and Capital Receipts	PKA018	GT YARM THIRD RIVER XING			-1.998		1.998
Community & Environmental Services (Directorate)	Highways	NCC Borrowing and Capital Receipts	PKA103	Countywide - Transforming Cities Fund Tranche 2			-0.388		0.388
Community & Environmental Services (Directorate)	Highways	NCC Borrowing and Capital Receipts	PMA202	Strumpshaw, Norwich Road - Drainage		0.120		0.120	
Community & Environmental Services (Directorate)	Highways	NCC Borrowing and Capital Receipts	PN9999	Default Project code for CES schemes				-0.240	
Community & Environmental Services (Directorate)	Highways	NCC Borrowing and Capital Receipts		Miscellaneous other budget virements across various Highways projects			-1.446		1.446
Community & Environmental Services (Directorate)	Highways	NCC Borrowing and Capital Receipts Total			0.000	0.120	-9.429	-0.120	9.429
Community & Environmental Services (Directorate)	Libraries	NCC Borrowing and Capital Receipts	LL1057	Replacement Library YAR			-2.000		2.000
Community & Environmental Services (Directorate)	Libraries	NCC Borrowing and Capital Receipts	LL1059	Libraries - Community Hub Programme			-1.000		1.000
Community & Environmental Services (Directorate)	Libraries	NCC Borrowing and Capital Receipts	LL1060	Electric Mini-Mobile		0.118			
Community & Environmental Services (Directorate)	Libraries	NCC Borrowing and Capital Receipts Total			-0.000	0.118	-3.000		3.000

					Budget movements in 2023-24			Future Years Budget	
SERVICE AREA	SUB COMMITTEE	Funding Type	Project Code	Project Description	Reduction in 23-24	Increase in 23-24	Reprofile to Future Years	Future Years Movements	Reprofile to Future Years
Community & Environmental Services (Directorate)	Museums	External Funding	MM0561	Museum Estate & Development Fund		0.538			
Community & Environmental Services (Directorate)	Museums	External Funding Total				0.538			
Community & Environmental Services (Directorate)	Offices	External Funding	CA2311	Multi Use Community Hub - Kings Lynn Library		0.750			
Community & Environmental Services (Directorate)	Offices	External Funding Total				0.750			
Community & Environmental Services (Directorate)	Offices	NCC Borrowing and Capital Receipts	CA2291	CH Monorail & Priory Hse Lift Replace (20/21)			-0.394		0.394
Community & Environmental Services (Directorate)	Offices	NCC Borrowing and Capital Receipts	CA2311	Multi Use Community Hub - Kings Lynn Library	-2.000		-1.651		1.651
Community & Environmental Services (Directorate)	Offices	NCC Borrowing and Capital Receipts	CA2314	NFRS Welfare Provision			-0.050		0.050
Community & Environmental Services (Directorate)	Offices	NCC Borrowing and Capital Receipts	CA2315	NFRS Introduction of LEV Systems			-0.236		0.236
Community & Environmental Services (Directorate)	Offices	NCC Borrowing and Capital Receipts	CA2318	Estate Buildings Decarbonisation			-1.300		1.300
Community & Environmental Services (Directorate)	Offices	NCC Borrowing and Capital Receipts Total			-2.000		-3.631		3.631
Community & Environmental Services (Directorate)	Scottow Enterprise Park	NCC Borrowing and Capital Receipts	PU0011	Scottow Enterprise Zone			0.353		-0.353
Community & Environmental Services (Directorate)	Scottow Enterprise Park	NCC Borrowing and Capital Receipts Total					0.353		-0.353
<b>Community &amp; Environmental Services (Directorate) Total</b>					<b>-2.118</b>	<b>1.526</b>	<b>-29.112</b>	<b>-0.120</b>	<b>29.112</b>
<b>Grand Total</b>					<b>-4.595</b>	<b>13.482</b>	<b>-29.073</b>	<b>6.649</b>	<b>29.073</b>



