



Statement of Assurance

2025-26

HEREFORD & WORCESTER
HWFR
FIRE AND RESCUE SERVICE



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OUR CORE CODE OF ETHICS

We follow the [Core Code of Ethics for Fire and Rescue Services \(FRS\)](#) in England which guides everything we do.

Putting our communities first

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

Integrity

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

Dignity and respect

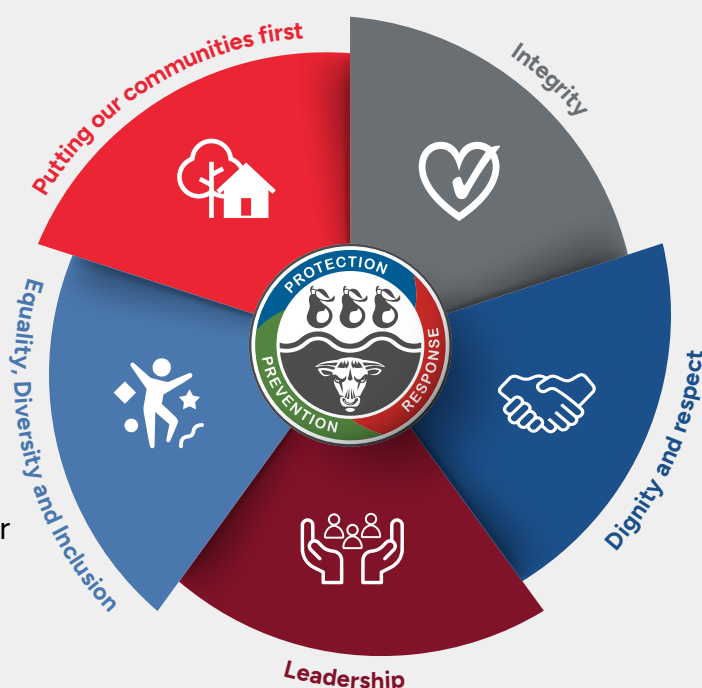
We make decisions objectively based on evidence, without discrimination or bias.

Leadership

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

Equality, Diversity and Inclusion

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



Foreword

The Statement of Assurance is an annual publication designed to provide assurance to the communities of Herefordshire and Worcestershire that Hereford & Worcester Fire and Rescue Service (HWFRS) is delivering efficient, effective and well-governed services. It demonstrates how we meet our statutory responsibilities, manage public resources and continuously improve the services we provide.

This Statement follows the requirements of the Fire and Rescue National Framework for England and provides assurance in relation to governance, finance and operational delivery. It also demonstrates how the Service delivers against the priorities set out within the Community Risk Management Plan (CRMP) 2025-30.

During 2025-26, the Service continued to evolve and respond to an increasingly complex risk environment. We attended 8,665 incidents across Herefordshire and Worcestershire, representing a 5.5% increase in operational demand. This increase was largely driven by unusually hot and dry weather conditions which resulted in a significant rise in outdoor fires. Despite this increased demand, our firefighters, fire control staff, support staff and volunteers continued to provide a professional and resilient service to our communities.

We remain committed to organisational and operational excellence through investment in our people, estate, technology and equipment. Throughout the year we continued to strengthen our Prevention, Protection and Response activities while developing a modern, inclusive and professional working environment aligned with the Core Code of Ethics.

Based on the evidence presented in this Statement, we are satisfied that appropriate governance, financial and operational assurance arrangements remain in place and continue to support delivery of a safe, effective and sustainable Fire and Rescue Service.



Jonathon Pryce
KFSM

Chief Fire Officer /
Chief Executive



Councillor
Roger Phillips OBE

Chairman of the
Fire Authority

OUR PURPOSE, VISION AND MISSION

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

PURPOSE

Why we are here

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

VISION

What we want to do

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

MISSION

What we do every day

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

The Service 2025-26

HWFRS provides prevention, protection and emergency response services across Herefordshire and Worcestershire.

The Service covers approximately 1,500 square miles and serves a population of 812,407 people. The area contains 342,751 households, approximately 36,550 businesses and over 4,755 miles of road network.

The Service is organised across three operational districts: North, South and West, enabling resources to be deployed proportionately to local risks and the needs of our communities.



25

Fire Stations



34

Fire Engines



689 (754 roles)
Staff Members



£44.7 million
Budget



392,000
Area in Hectares



4,755[†]
Road length in Miles



812,407*
Population



342,751*
Households



36,550*
Businesses

* Office for National Statistics 2025-26

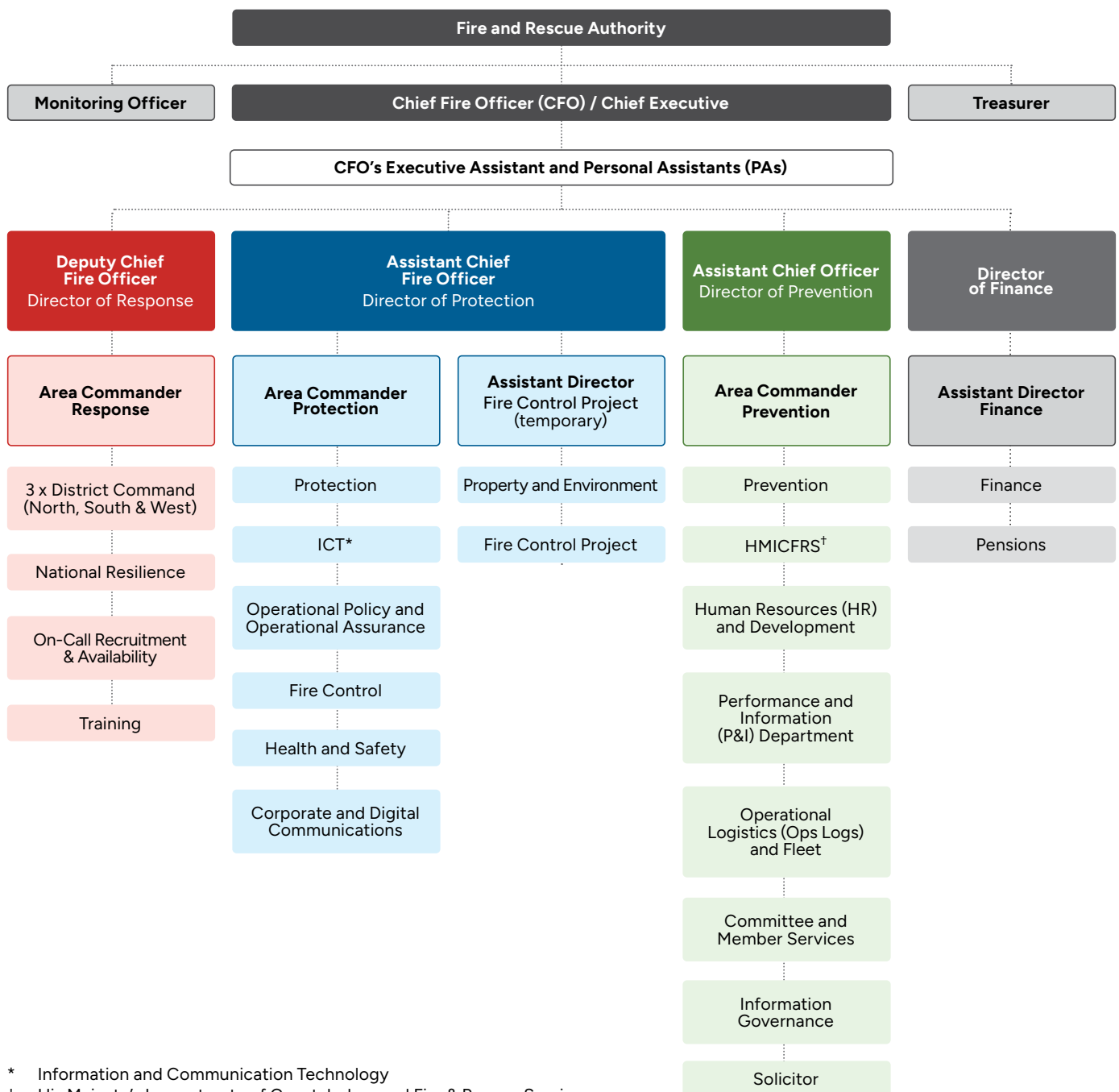
† Department for Transport 2024-25

The Service 2025-26 continued

Service Structure

The Service is led by the Chief Fire Officer and Strategic Leadership Board. The structure has continued to evolve through the continued development of a wider senior leadership cohort of more than 50 members of staff, encompassing middle managers. This approach strengthens organisational resilience, accountability and leadership capacity across the Service.

A significant development during the year was the introduction of the Step Framework, providing a clear and inclusive approach to personal development, succession planning and leadership progression for all staff. The framework recognises both career progression and professional growth within existing roles.



* Information and Communication Technology

† His Majesty's Inspectorate of Constabulary and Fire & Rescue Services

The Service 2025-26

Our People

The Service employs 689 members of staff working across 754 established roles. Firefighters comprise approximately 79% of the workforce and are supported by dedicated teams delivering finance, legal, ICT, communications, human resources, information governance, fleet and property services. The 28 Fire Control Firefighters are the frontline for receiving emergency calls and deploying crews to incidents. There are also 20 active volunteers supporting community safety activities.

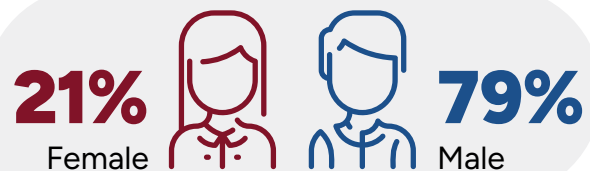


The Service remains committed to developing a diverse workforce which better reflects the communities it serves.

As of March 2026:

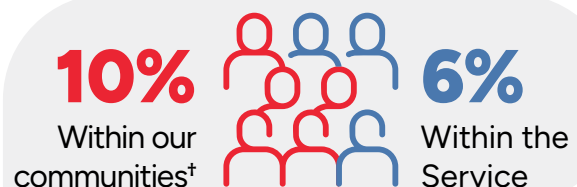
Gender Balance

The female – male ratio remains the same as the ratio recorded in March 2025.



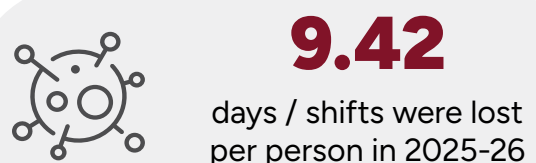
Ethnic Minority Representation

Ethnic minority representation in the Service remains the same as the percentage recorded in March 2025.



Staff Sickness

Staff sickness reduced reflecting continued focus on wellbeing, support and occupational health interventions.



* A full-time Firefighter, regardless of rank.

† Census 2021

Our Work in 2025-26



Focus on Operational and Organisational Excellence

The Service has continued to enhance operational and organisational excellence through improved digital performance monitoring, targeted recruitment, intelligence-led risk management and investment in training, equipment and leadership development.



During 2025-26, our 24/7 emergency response service dealt with fires, road traffic collisions, flooding and many other emergencies.

This year, the total number of incidents attended increased by 5.5%, rising from 8,213 in 2024-25 to 8,665 in 2025-26. Fire incidents rose by 44%, largely driven by the weather conditions, with lower rainfall and higher average daily maximum temperatures during the summer months compared to the previous year. The impact of these weather conditions was evident in the number of outdoor fires, which more than doubled from 632 incidents to 1,299. Special service calls* were broadly in line with the number in the previous year, decreasing slightly by 1%.

* An incident attended by the fire service that is not a fire, false alarm, or fire-related emergency.

Our Work in 2025-26 continued

Response



8,665

Total Incidents Attended

↑ 5.5% Increase
(452 incidents)



732

Road Traffic Collisions

↓ 0.3% Decrease
(2 incidents)



19,274

Calls to Fire Control

↑ 13.3% Increase
(2,265 calls)



149

Flooding Incidents

↓ 20.3% Decrease
(38 incidents)



2,286

Fires

↑ 43.6% Increase
(694 incidents)



68

Rescues from Water

↓ 46.0% Decrease
(58 incidents)



2,286

Fires

↑ 43.6% Increase
(694 incidents)



58

Non-Fatal Casualties
from Fire Incidents

↑ 13.7% Increase



3,677

False Alarms

↓ 5.7% Decrease
(221 incidents)



6

Fire Fatalities*

* To note: the fire fatality rate in Herefordshire and Worcestershire remained low at **0.74 per 100,000** population which lies within the typical range of other Fire and Rescue Services with similar geography and demographics.

Our Work in 2025-26 continued

In responding to emergencies and other incidents, we are committed to making the most effective use of our people, resources and funding to deliver the best possible service to the communities of Herefordshire and Worcestershire. Our Response Strategy is built around three core foundations: availability, competence and intelligence. This ensures that the right resources are available at the right time, operated by well-trained and competent firefighters who have access to accurate, relevant and timely operational risk information.



A key element of our approach is the use of data and evidence to inform decision-making. We continually analyse incident, availability and performance data to better understand demand, identify emerging risks and assess how effectively our resources are being deployed. Through the development of enhanced dashboards and performance monitoring tools, managers have access to timely information that supports informed operational and strategic decisions, helping to maintain resilience and improve service delivery.

We use evidence-based performance measures to monitor emergency response activity, including attendance times and appliance availability. By reviewing and analysing this information, we can identify areas of good practice, understand trends in performance and target improvements where outcomes fall below expected standards. This intelligence-led approach enables us to continually refine our deployment strategies and ensure resources remain aligned to community risk.

The use of data-driven insight supports safer, more efficient and more effective emergency response. Achieving an early arrival at incidents helps reduce the impact on people, property, businesses and the environment, while providing firefighters with the opportunity to implement appropriate firefighting and rescue tactics at the earliest possible stage. Through the combination of operational intelligence, performance analysis and professional judgement, we continue to strengthen our ability to protect our communities and respond effectively to changing risks.



Our Work in 2025-26 continued

Protection

Protecting people, property and businesses from fire remains a key priority for the Service. Through a combination of risk-based inspection activity, enforcement, business engagement and operational intelligence, we work to improve fire safety compliance and reduce the likelihood and consequences of fire within our communities. Our Protection Strategy is focused on promoting fire safety, increasing compliance and using intelligence to target resources where they can achieve the greatest impact.

During 2025-26, the Protection Department exceeded its annual inspection targets, completing 1,103 Fire Safety Inspections of higher-risk and more complex premises against a target of 1,000. In addition, operational personnel trained to the Level 3 Fire Safety Certificate standard completed a further 356 inspections of less complex premises, exceeding their annual target of 350. Together, these activities form an

important part of our Risk Based Inspection Programme, ensuring that resources are directed towards premises and locations where risk to life is greatest.

Our protection activity is increasingly informed by data, intelligence and evidence-led decision-making. Information from inspections, incidents, partner agencies and operational crews is used to identify emerging risks, target inspections and prioritise enforcement activity. During the year, the Service completed 1,459 Risk Based Inspection Programme interventions, ensuring that available resources were focused on those premises presenting the highest level of risk to occupants, firefighters and the wider communities.

Building on the Promising Practice identified during the His Majesty's Inspectorate of Constabularies and Fire and Rescue Services (HMICFRS) inspection process, the Service continued to strengthen its collaborative approach with partner agencies through

Our Work in 2025-26 continued

Multi-Agency Targeted Enforcement (MATE) activity. During 2025-26, 139 MATE inspections were completed, a significant increase from previous years, helping to identify non-compliance, safeguard vulnerable occupants and improve public safety through coordinated enforcement and regulatory action.

The Service remains committed to supporting businesses to achieve compliance while taking proportionate enforcement action where necessary. During the year, Protection teams completed 107 enforcement interventions, undertook 174 post-fire inspections, responded to 494 building regulation consultations and processed 292 licensing consultations. In addition, fire safety concerns reported by members of the public and partner organisations were responded to within five working days on 98% of occasions, exceeding Service performance targets.



A new Protection Strategy 2025-30 was introduced during the year, reflecting both current and emerging risks. This includes increased focus on areas such as Battery Energy Storage Systems, illegal waste sites and evolving fire safety legislation, including Residential Personal Emergency Evacuation Plans. Through continuous monitoring, performance management and intelligence-led activity, the Service seeks to ensure that its protection resources remain aligned to community risk and continue to contribute to safer buildings, safer businesses and safer communities across Herefordshire and Worcestershire.



1,459

Risk-Based Inspection Programme (RBIP)



139

MATE Inspections



107

Enforcements (inc. Enforcements, Prohibitions and Alterations Notices)



174

Post Fire Inspections



494

Building Regulation Consultations



292

Licensing Applications Completed

Our Work in 2025-26 continued



Prevention

Preventing emergencies from occurring remains a fundamental part of our approach to keeping our communities safe. Our Prevention Strategy focuses on reducing risk, increasing awareness and delivering targeted interventions that help protect those most vulnerable to fire and other emergencies. Through evidence-led activities, strong partnership working and community engagement, we continue to direct resources towards those individuals and groups at greatest risk.

During 2025-26, the Service completed 7,505 Home Fire Safety Visits (HFSVs), exceeding the annual target of 7,500. Approximately 93% of these visits were carried out with individuals identified as vulnerable or at increased risk, ensuring that prevention resources remain focused on those most likely to benefit from intervention. A significant proportion of this activity was supported through partnership

working, with 2,525 referrals received from partner organisations, helping us identify and support members of our communities who may otherwise be unknown to the Service.

Our prevention activity is increasingly informed by data, intelligence and risk modelling. Using information from partners, incident trends, demographic data and the Service's Definition of Risk for Dwelling Fires, we adopt a targeted, evidence-based approach to prioritise individuals, households and communities where intervention is most likely to reduce risk and improve outcomes. This intelligence-led methodology ensures that resources are deployed effectively and that prevention activity remains aligned to community risk.



Our Work in 2025-26 continued



The Service continues to work closely with safeguarding partners to support vulnerable individuals and improve wider community wellbeing. During the year, 147 safeguarding referrals were made, enabling additional support to be provided to individuals where concerns relating to welfare, vulnerability or safeguarding were identified. We also continued delivery of the Fire Safety Intervention Scheme, receiving 31 referrals involving young people displaying fire setting behaviours, allowing early intervention and education to reduce future risk.

Road safety remains an important area of prevention activity. Throughout 2025-26, we continued to expand our Your Impact road safety education programme, working collaboratively with partner organisations to reduce death and serious injury on our roads. A digital delivery model was introduced alongside traditional face-to-face sessions, increasing accessibility and enabling the programme to reach a broader audience, including home-educated young people. During the reporting period, the programme was delivered to 3,187 Year 10 and Year 11 students across 35 schools, helping young people better understand the consequences of risk-taking behaviour on the road.

The Service also continued to develop wider community prevention initiatives focused on preparedness and resilience. Working with local and national partners, we delivered campaigns

and interventions relating to flooding, severe weather, water safety and community resilience. This included targeted HFSVs in areas vulnerable to flooding, participation in Drowning Prevention Week and promotion of water safety messages through collaborative campaigns designed to reduce drowning risk and improve public awareness.

To ensure our prevention activities continues to deliver meaningful outcomes, the Service has further developed its evaluation processes in line with the National Fire Chiefs Council (NFCC) Person-Centred Framework. Evaluation Frameworks are now used across a range of prevention activities, including HFSVs, Fire Safety Intervention Schemes and community engagement events. These arrangements help us understand the impact of our interventions, measure behavioural change and continuously improve how prevention services are delivered across Herefordshire and Worcestershire.



7,505

Home Fire Safety Visits (HFSVs)



2,525

Partner Referrals



147

Safeguarding Referrals



31

Fire Safety Intervention Referrals (formerly Firesetters)

Our Work in 2025-26 continued



Valuing our Workforce – People

Everything we do is underpinned by the National Core Code of Ethics for Fire and Rescue Services. The principles of putting our communities first, integrity, dignity and respect, leadership, and equality, diversity and inclusion provide the foundation for how we work and make decisions. By consistently applying these values, we deliver professional, inclusive and high-quality services that maintain the trust and confidence of the communities we serve.

During 2025-26, the Service introduced a new People Strategy, recognising that our people are central to delivering organisational and operational excellence. The strategy supports the delivery of our CRMP 2025-30 and provides a framework for attracting, developing, supporting and retaining a skilled, diverse and professional workforce.

A significant development during the year was the introduction of the Step Framework, which supports personal and professional development for all staff, regardless of role or career aspirations. The framework recognises that growth is not solely linked to promotion, but also to the development of knowledge, skills, expertise and confidence within current roles. By providing clear development pathways and opportunities, the framework helps ensure that our workforce is equipped to meet both current and future organisational challenges.



Our Work in 2025-26 continued

THE STEP FRAMEWORK Unlock Your Potential



The Service also strengthened its focus on workplace culture through the establishment of a Culture Board, replacing the previous Culture and Ethics Steering Group. The Board provides enhanced strategic leadership and oversight of culture, inclusion, ethics and professional standards across the organisation. Its work is critical in helping to create and maintain an environment where all staff feel safe, valued, respected and able to contribute fully. By promoting positive behaviours, supporting organisational learning and providing constructive challenge where required, the Culture Board plays an important role in driving continuous cultural improvement and ensuring that the principles of the Core Code of Ethics are embedded throughout the Service.

We remain committed to empowering our workforce to do what is right, make responsible decisions and feel confident to raise concerns where necessary. During the year, the Service introduced a new Respectful Workplace training programme to reinforce expectations around professional behaviour and workplace standards. This complements existing policies and provides practical support to staff in creating a positive, inclusive and respectful working environment.

The Service has also worked collaboratively with staff and external specialists to develop a Diversity Framework, which will continue to evolve and support ongoing conversations, challenge and improvement in achieving a more diverse and representative workforce.

Building on the foundations established through previous leadership development activity, we will also continue our partnership with an external leadership and performance specialist to enhance leadership capability and support the delivery of organisational priorities.



Through continued investment in leadership, learning, wellbeing, culture and inclusion, we are working to ensure that HWFRS remains a supportive and inclusive place to work, where all staff can thrive, achieve their potential and contribute to delivering high-quality services to the communities we serve.

Our Work in 2025-26 continued



Value for Money – Assets

We are committed to ensuring that our resources, assets and infrastructure are managed efficiently and effectively, enabling us to deliver high-quality services while providing value for money to the communities of Herefordshire and Worcestershire. Our investment decisions are informed by operational need, community risk and long-term sustainability considerations, ensuring that resources remain aligned to the priorities set out within the CRMP 2025-30.

During 2025-26, the Service reviewed and updated its Asset Management Strategy, extending its planning horizon through to 2030. Supporting this, a series of delivery plans covering Property, Fleet, Equipment, ICT and Environmental Sustainability were refreshed to ensure that investment remains evidence-based, sustainable and focused on maintaining operational readiness and organisational resilience.



Our Work in 2025-26 continued

Significant investment has continued in our operational assets and infrastructure. Throughout the year, a comprehensive equipment improvement programme was delivered, including the replacement of key firefighting equipment and the introduction of enhanced operational capabilities. A Service-wide initiative has also ensured that all locations are equipped with water first responder capability, providing a more consistent and resilient response to water-related incidents across Herefordshire and Worcestershire.



The Service has continued to modernise its vehicle fleet to support both operational effectiveness and environmental sustainability. During the year, procurement was completed for the fire appliance replacement programme, with ten new fire engines entering the build phase ahead of delivery in 2026-27. In addition, the replacement of station cars has ensured that our fleet remains reliable, fit for purpose and capable of supporting operational and business needs across the Service. These investments form part of our long-term fleet replacement programme and support our commitment to maintaining efficient and effective service delivery.

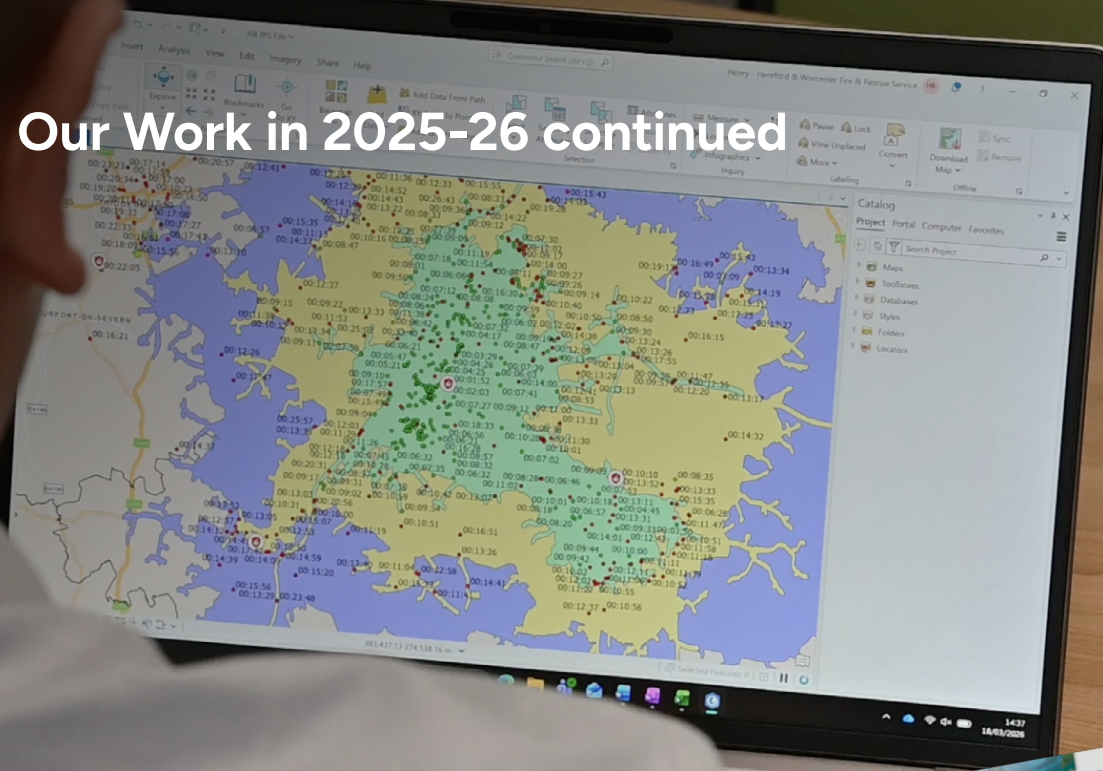


Investment in our estate remains a key priority. During 2025-26, refurbishment works progressed at Leintwardine Fire Station, while significant progress was made on the development of the new Hereford Fire Station. To ensure operational resilience throughout the construction period, a temporary fire station was successfully established and continues to support frontline service delivery. These projects will provide modern, efficient and inclusive facilities for staff while improving the Service's long-term operational capability.

Alongside physical assets, the Service continues to invest in technology that supports operational effectiveness and productivity. The rollout of modern digital devices and systems has improved access to information, enhanced collaboration and enabled staff to work more efficiently across Prevention, Protection and Response activities. This investment supports more informed decision-making, better use of resources and improved services for our communities.

Through careful stewardship of public funds, strategic investment and long-term planning, we continue to ensure that our assets, infrastructure and technology remain resilient, sustainable and capable of supporting the delivery of effective fire and rescue services now and in the future.

Our Work in 2025-26 continued



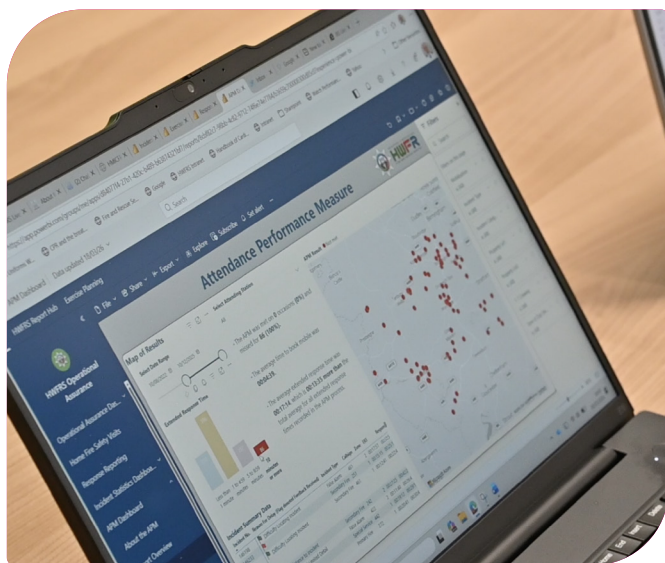
Digital and Data

Digital technology, data and innovation continue to play an increasingly important role in supporting the delivery of efficient, effective and evidence-led services across HWFRS. During 2025-26, the Service continued to strengthen its digital capability through the wider use of Microsoft 365, expansion of the Data Warehouse, such as personal issue iPads for all operational staff, delivery of the digital Operational Training Programme (OTP), business process automation and enhanced cyber security controls, including multi-factor authentication and cyber awareness training. These developments have improved access to information, strengthened collaboration and supported more efficient ways of working across the organisation.

A significant development during the year has been the success of the Data Science and Innovation pilot, which has now been adopted as an established organisational approach to support evidence-led decision making across the Service. The pilot demonstrated the value of bringing together operational knowledge, organisational expertise, data science techniques and digital technologies to better understand risk, demand, performance and resource utilisation. As a result, the Data Science and Innovation approach has been endorsed as a new way of working, helping managers and leaders make informed decisions based on robust evidence rather than assumptions or historic practice alone.



Our Work in 2025-26 continued



The Service has continued to invest in developing its data capabilities through the expansion of the organisational Data Warehouse and the creation of enhanced analytical dashboards. These tools bring together information from multiple systems to provide a more complete view of organisational performance, community risk, operational activity and workforce trends. By improving the availability, quality and accessibility of data, the Service is better able to identify emerging risks, evaluate outcomes and target resources where they can achieve the greatest benefit for our communities.

The newly established Data Science and Innovation Group provides oversight and governance for this work, ensuring that innovation, analytics and emerging technologies are applied responsibly, ethically and in alignment with Service priorities. Through collaborative working across departments, the Group supports the development of new analytical products, explores opportunities to improve productivity and promotes a culture in which data and insight are routinely used to inform operational, tactical and strategic decision making.

This evidence-led approach is already supporting improvements in areas such as appliance availability monitoring, resource deployment, recruitment planning, performance management and community risk analysis. By strengthening our ability to convert data into actionable insight, the Service is enhancing organisational learning, improving accountability and ensuring that decisions are based on objective evidence, enabling us to deliver safer, more efficient and more effective services for the communities of Herefordshire and Worcestershire.

These developments support more effective decision-making, performance management and operational delivery.

Governance Assurance

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

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

The Authority:

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

The Authority normally meets four times a year and is supported by three main Committees. Most meetings are held in public. Full details of the Authority, Committees, meetings, reports and decisions can be found

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

The main elements of the governance framework are:

Constitution

Defines the roles and responsibilities of the Authority, Committees, Members and Officers.

Audit, Scrutiny and Standards Committee and Policy and Resource Scrutiny Committee

Reviews arrangements for identifying and managing the Authority's business risks and the approval of policies.

Monitoring Officer

Provides advice on the scope of powers and responsibilities of the Authority and has a statutory duty to ensure lawfulness and fairness of decision making.

Director of Finance (Treasurer)

Ensures the sound administration of the financial affairs of the Authority as required by the statutory duties under the Local Government Act 1972, the Local Government Finance Act 1988 and the Account and Audit (England) Regulations 2015.

Code of Conduct

Including the Ten General Principles of Public Life.

Governance Assurance continued

Each year, the Authority prepares an Annual Governance Statement setting out how it meets its responsibilities. The [2025-26 Annual Governance Statement](#) provides assurance in relation to seven Core Principles:

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

The Annual Governance Statement is prepared in accordance with the 'Delivering Good Governance in Local Government Framework 2016' and the updated Addendum dated May 2025 published by Chartered Institute of Public Finance and Accountancy (CIPFA) and the Society of Local Authority Chief Executives (SOLACE). As part of this, the Audit, Scrutiny and Standards Committee of full Authority considers reviews of corporate governance arrangements

to ensure that the Authority's governance arrangements are working correctly and are relevant to the current environment. No significant governance issues have been identified at this time and the Annual Governance Statement was signed off by the Chairman of the Fire Authority and Chief Fire Officer on 23 June 2026.

Audit

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

The audits examined the Main Ledger, Procurement and Contract Management, Unwanted Fire Signals, Risk Management, Performance Management & Data Quality and Project Management. These audits found no limited or below assurance areas and no high priority recommendations were made. The Internal Audit Annual Report 2025-26 update link is available on the Service website for further information.

Information Governance

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

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

Financial Assurance

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

Provisional outturn (including reserve funded projects)

Funding sources included:

H&W Council Tax:	£30.3m
Funding Grants:	£9.0m
Business Rates, etc.:	£3.4m
Special Grants:	£2.4m
Reserves:	£0.5m
	£45.6m

Expenditure included:

Uniformed Staff:	£25.0m
Support Staff:	£6.2m
Fleet, ICT, Property and Equipment:	£8.5m
Fixed Costs:	£3.9m
Other Costs:	£2.0m
	£45.6m

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

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

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

The Authority's draft unaudited 2025-26 Statement of Accounts was available on our website on 30 June 2026 ensuring compliance with the statutory deadline of 30 June 2026. These accounts are now undergoing statutory audit by Bishop Fleming LLP (external auditors).

Audit

The Fire Authority's arrangements to secure economy, efficiency and effectiveness in its use of resources is subject to internal and external audit by Worcestershire Internal Audit Shared Service and Bishop Fleming LLP respectively. Our Internal Auditor worked with the external auditor to help to avoid duplication of effort and provide adequate coverage for the 2025-26 financial year so that an internal audit opinion can be reached and support external audit by carrying out reviews in support of the account's opinion work. The internal audit covered the core financial areas of Accountancy and Finance Systems: Main Ledger (including budgetary control and bank receipts), Creditors (accounts payable), Debtors (accounts receivable) and Payroll and Pensions. All areas examined provided assurance, including full assurance for three core financial areas and there were no limited or below assurance areas reported.

Financial Assurance continued

The Authority is satisfied that its financial management arrangements conform with the governance requirements of the CIPFA Statement of the Role of the Chief Financial Officer in Local Government. In addition, the key financial systems are continually reviewed by the Internal Auditor. There were no major weaknesses identified in the 2025-26 financial year.

Budget

Each year, the Authority approves a Medium-Term Financial Plan (MTFP) which sets out the resources needed to deliver our services and agrees annual budgets. Budget Monitoring reports have been presented to the Policy Resources and Scrutiny Committee throughout the year and have shown that the Authority's finances continue to be well controlled. The increased cost of pay settlements in 2025-26 is likely to lead to budget pressures in the medium term.

However, these are well understood and a report with options for future efficiencies will be brought forward for consideration at a future date.

The approved Fire Authority budget for 2025-26 was £44.7 million. Financial planning continues through the MTFP and supporting strategies and a summary of how it was spent is included in the [Annual Service Review 2025-26](#). The annual cost to the average Council Tax Band D household was £102.22 or 29 pence. Full details of the [budget and Council Tax](#) are available on the Service website.

Efficiency and Productivity Plan

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

The Efficiency and Productivity Plan sets out the ongoing financial challenge currently faced by the Authority and illustrates the recent transformation savings that have been delivered by the Service. Key areas covered in the Plan include the Budget and MTFP, Reserves, Precept, Collaboration, Asset Management and Investment in Technology, Resourcing, Efficiency and Productivity. The [Efficiency and Productivity Plan 2026-27](#) is available on the Service website.

Transparency

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

Operational Assurance

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

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

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

Our overall plans are set out in the [Community Risk Management Plan 2025-30 \(CRMP\)](#) and our Core Strategies; [Response](#), [Protection](#) and [Prevention](#). Together, they represent our five-year strategy for keeping people, their homes, communities and the environment safe. Supporting them are a host of enabling strategies and plans, including the [People Strategy](#) and the annual MTFP. The strategies and plans

are available on the Service website and the following diagram highlights the main areas of focus for our work.

External assurance is also provided through inspection by His Majesty's Inspectorate of Constabulary and Fire & Rescue Services (HMICFRS). HMICFRS independently assesses and reports on the effectiveness and efficiency of fire and rescue services, including how well services understand and manage risk, prevent fires, protect the public, respond to emergencies, use resources and look after their people. Its published reports provide an important source of independent scrutiny and evidence, helping the Service, Fire Authority and communities understand performance, identify areas for improvement and maintain confidence in the operational arrangements that support public and firefighter safety. The HMICFRS Report 2025-27 rated HWFRS as 'Good' in 9 out of 10 inspection areas which is an incredible achievement.

CRMP Aims	Responding to and dealing with fires and other emergencies promptly, safely and effectively.	Response	• Availability • Competence • Intelligence	Strategy Aims
	Protecting people, firefighters, property and the environment when fires, floods and other emergencies happen.	Protection	• Promoting Fire Safety • Increasing Compliance • Investigating and Enforcing	
	Preventing fires and other emergencies from happening in the first place.	Prevention	• Reducing Risk • Awareness and Education	
	Providing a supportive environment for our workforce to develop, be confident and be empowered to make a positive difference for our communities.	Valuing our Workforce 'People'	• Attract and Retain • Develop and Train • Recognise Success • Health & Well-being • Include and Collaborate	
	Using our resources efficiently and effectively to provide quality services.	Value for Money 'Assets'	• Balanced Budget • Sustainable use of Resources	
	Enabling a secure, data-driven organisation that enhances operational effectiveness and decision-making.	Digital and Data	• User-Centric Designed Systems • Data Intelligence • Connectivity & Mobility • Cyber Resilience	

Operational Assurance continued

In the [Annual Service Plan 2026-27](#), we set out a number of objectives we wanted to achieve over the year. The objectives were designed to provide a priority focus on what we were going to do towards delivering our CRMP 2025-30 and our Response, Protection and Prevention Core Strategies.

The [Annual Service Review 2025-26](#) sets out how we achieved objectives from the previous Plan, which covered a wide range of operational and organisational priority actions for the year.

Operational Audits

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

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

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

Further operational learning is gained through post-incident debriefs, maintaining knowledge of National Operational Guidance (NOG) and learning from safety events and exercises through National Operational Learning (NOL) and Joint Organisational Learning (JOL).

These often cover major operations with Ambulance, Police, other Fire and Rescue Services and other partners in a range of exercises such as counter terrorism, rail incidents, high-rise incidents and carbon monoxide incidents.

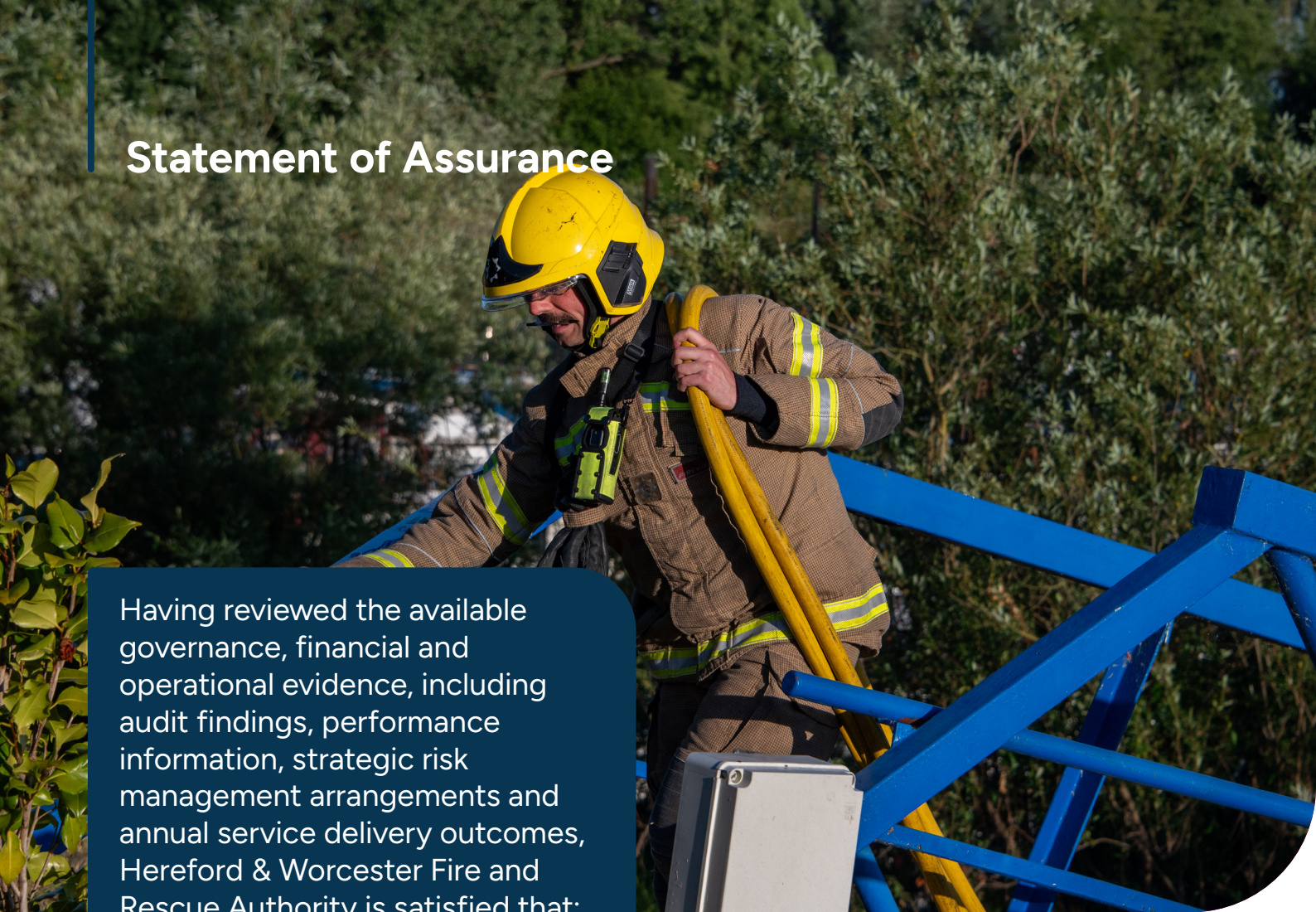
Findings continue to be very positive in relation to practical and technical abilities and in competencies demonstrated and any outstanding actions required are noted and followed up.

Risk Management Framework

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

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

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



Statement of Assurance

Having reviewed the available governance, financial and operational evidence, including audit findings, performance information, strategic risk management arrangements and annual service delivery outcomes, Hereford & Worcester Fire and Rescue Authority is satisfied that:

- Governance arrangements remain effective.
- Financial management arrangements remain sound.
- Operational arrangements remain robust and proportionate.
- Appropriate systems of internal control are in place.
- Statutory responsibilities continue to be met.
- Continuous improvement remains embedded across the organisation.

Accordingly, the Fire Authority is satisfied that the Service continues to provide appropriate assurance to its communities, staff, partners and stakeholders for the year ended 31 March 2026.

Directory of Assurance Documents

Governance

- [Annual Governance Statement 2025-26](#)

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

Key legislation includes:

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

Finance

- [Draft Unaudited Statement of Accounts 2025-26](#)
- [Link to previous Statements of Account](#)
- [Budget and Precept 2025-26 and Medium-Term Financial Plan, Precept Appendices 1-7, Appendix 8 Statement of Prudential Indicators](#)
- [Internal Audit Annual Report 2025-26](#)

- [Efficiency and Productivity Plan 2026-27](#)

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

Other legislation and guidance includes:

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

Operations

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

Links include:

- [Annual Service Review 2025-26](#) and the [Annual Service Plan 2026-27](#)
- [Community Risk Management Plan 2025-2030](#)
- [Cultural Audit 2023](#)
- [Cultural Statement of Intent 2024](#)

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

