



Hereford & Worcester  
Fire Authority

# Fire Authority Statement of Assurance

## 2017-18

## Foreword

This year's Statement of Assurance comes at a pivotal moment for the Fire and Rescue Service. At the national level, the new Policing and Crime Act 2017 was published putting a duty on all emergency services to keep opportunities for collaboration under review and enabling Police and Crime Commissioners (PCCs) to assume governance of Fire Authorities, where considered appropriate. The Fire Minister also introduced a new Fire Reform programme aimed at making all fire and rescue services more efficient, accountable and professional. The programme includes the creation of a new independent fire inspectorate, a new professional standards body, a national fire website and a full rewrite of the Fire and Rescue National Framework.

Locally, we have continued to implement our transformation programme and collaboration projects, which are designed to help ensure the Service remains sustainable in delivering its range of

## What is a Statement of Assurance?

A Statement of Assurance is a short report designed to give our staff, partners and local communities an assurance we are doing everything we can to keep them safe and that we are providing value for money.

The Statement covers three main areas: our governance, our finances and our frontline response (operational) services. This gives an overview of how we make sure everything we do is done

prevention, protection, response and resilience services into the future. We have also launched our overarching Saving More Lives vision, which sets out how we can make more of a difference every day for the communities of Herefordshire and Worcestershire.

In June 2017, the PCC for West Mercia published a consultation document outlining his proposal to undertake the governance of the Fire and Rescue Service alongside Shropshire Fire and Rescue Service and West Mercia Police.

More information about our plans can be found on the [Service website](#), in our [Fire Authority Annual Report 2017-18](#) and details of the West Mercia PCC proposal can be found at his [website](#).

properly, efficiently and effectively, how we manage the money we receive and how we conduct our business.

The Statement includes a short directory with links to a wealth of information, which will also help you assess our performance and value for money. Our [website](#) is also full of facts and figures about everything we do, which will also help you judge how well we are doing.

We trust the Statement of Assurance gives you confidence that the Fire Authority maintains the highest standards in all aspects of its work and that the Service continues to deliver its frontline and support services to the best of its abilities for the communities of Herefordshire and Worcestershire.



Councillor Roger Phillips,  
Chairman of the Fire Authority



Nathan Travis, Chief Fire Officer/  
Chief Executive

## Governance

The counties of Herefordshire and Worcestershire cover a largely rural area of around 1,500 square miles (390,000 hectares) and are home to over three-quarters of a million people (320,000 households). By 2030, the population of the two counties is projected to grow to over 800,000 people, with people aged 65 and over likely to represent close to one in three of the total.<sup>1</sup>

To serve this very large area, we have 27 fire stations mostly located in the main towns, with 41 frontline fire engines supported by 28 specialist vehicles. At the end of March 2017, the stations were crewed by 237 wholetime and 390 part-time firefighters.

In 2016-17 we attended 6,749 incidents, about 130 each week. This was an increase on the previous year, though the majority of incidents were false alarms (3,302 incidents). In terms of potential life risk incidents, there were fewer accidental dwelling fires and we also attended fewer road traffic collisions than we did in 2015-16.

More details on population, Service resources and incidents attended can be found in the [Fire Authority Annual Report 2017-18 and](#) in the pages of our [website](#).

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<sup>1</sup> Population projections for Herefordshire and Worcestershire can be found at the following website links: [Herefordshire projections](#), [Worcestershire projections](#).

The Service's overall governing body is Hereford & Worcester Fire Authority, which is made up of 25 local councillors, six from Herefordshire Council and 19 from Worcestershire County Council. They make sure the Service carries out its duties in relation to fire prevention, fire safety, firefighting and rescues, including from road traffic collisions and other emergencies such as flooding, as set out in the [Fire and Rescue Services Act 2004](#).

The Authority sets the budget and approves the overall direction for the Service. It also appoints the Chief Fire Officer and makes sure the Service has the right people, equipment and training to deliver their services effectively and efficiently in the best interests of the communities of Herefordshire and Worcestershire. The Police and Crime Commissioner (PCC) for West Mercia also attends Fire Authority meetings and participates in discussions as a non-voting member.

The Authority meets four times a year and is supported by three committees. Full details of all meetings and decisions can be found on the [Service website](#).

The Fire Authority has a responsibility to ensure that its business is conducted in accordance with the law and proper standards, and that public money is safeguarded and properly accounted for. The Authority must have in place proper arrangements for the governance of its affairs and ensure it is doing the right things in the right ways for the right people in a timely, inclusive, open, honest and accountable manner.

Each year the Authority prepares an Annual Governance Statement setting out how it meets these responsibilities. It comprises the systems and processes, culture and values by which the Authority is directed and controlled and through which it accounts to and engages with its communities. This includes maintaining a sound system of internal control and ensuring robust arrangements for managing risk are in place. This is supported by a [Code of Corporate Governance](#) setting out how the Authority promotes good governance.

The main elements of the governance framework are as follows:

- Constitution – defines the roles and responsibility of the Authority, Committees, Members and Officers.
- Audit and Standards Committee – reviews arrangements for identifying and managing the Authority’s business risks and the approval of policies in respect of the governance framework.
- Monitoring Officer – provides advice on the scope of powers and responsibilities of the Authority, and has a statutory duty to ensure lawfulness and fairness of decision making.
- Chief Financial Officer (Treasurer) – ensures the sound administration of the financial affairs of the Authority as required by the statutory duties under the Local Government Act 1972, the Local Government Finance Act 1988 and the Accounts and Audit Regulations 2015.

- Ethical Framework and Code of Conduct – in place for all staff and familiarisation is included in the local induction.

Following the Worcestershire Internal Audit Shared Service audit of Risk Management 2015/16, the Strategic and Departmental Risk Registers (and management systems) have now been revised and amended to reflect the results and recommendations of the audit.

Audit reviews in three key risk areas were carried out during the year; Safeguarding, Training Centre and Technical Fire Safety. No fundamental weaknesses were identified in the areas audited and there were no ‘high priority’ recommendations where further action is needed.

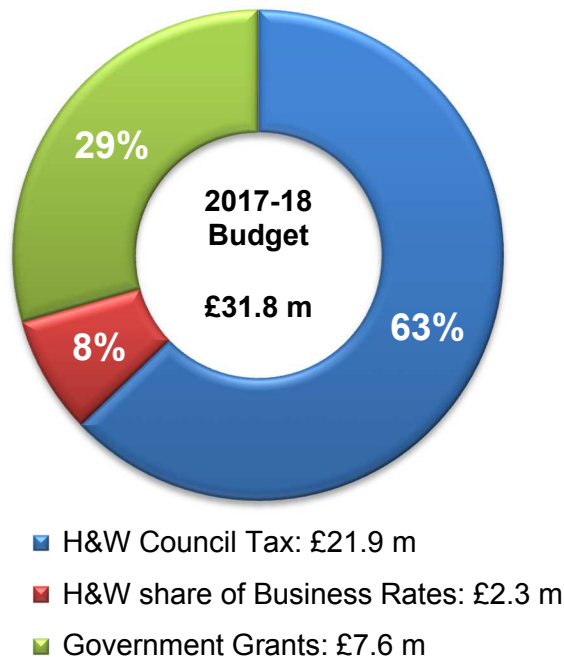
The Head of Worcestershire Internal Audit Shared Service concluded that the audit plan delivered in 2016-17 has provided an assurance level of ‘full for the core financial areas.

This means that the system of internal control meets the organisation’s objectives with all of the expected system controls tested are in place and are operating effectively.

## Finance

Funds available to the Fire and Rescue Service continue to reduce. The budget for 2017-18 is £200,000 less than last year. Our funding comes from three main sources, the majority of which comes from Council Tax as shown in the following chart:

**How the Service is paid for: 2017-18**



The cost to the average household in Herefordshire and Worcestershire in 2017-18 (Council Tax Band D) is £79.53,

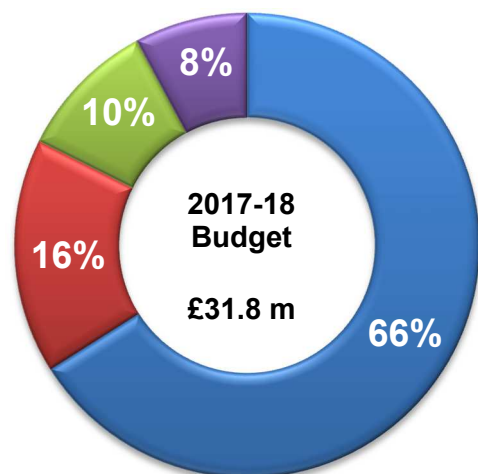
representing less than 22p per day. This is above the £72.80 average for comparable Fire Authorities in 2017-18, but considerably less than the highest cost of £97.65.

To make sure we spend this properly, we have robust financial monitoring processes in place. The Fire Authority requires the Treasurer to prepare an annual Statement of Accounts, which is designed to provide a true and fair view of the financial position, including a statement on income and expenditure. In preparing the statement, the Treasurer follows the CIPFA Code of Practice on Local Authority Accounting in the United Kingdom.

This year we have also agreed a four year Efficiency Plan with Government. This Plan guarantees a level of grant up to 2019-20, which enables the Fire Authority to plan ahead with more financial certainty and maintain its services while managing with reduced real-terms funding levels. Full details of the financial arrangements set out in the [Efficiency Plan](#) can be found on the Service website.

The Authority approves a Medium Term Financial Plan each year, which sets out the resources needed to deliver our services, and agrees an annual budget as shown in the chart below.

### How the budget is spent: 2017-18



- Employees
- Fleet, equipment, ICT, property
- Capital financing \*
- Other running costs \*\*

\* capital financing is interest and provision to repay loans

\*\* other running costs include training costs, community safety material, payroll services, legal costs, Fire Authority costs and insurances

To provide further assurance, every year a structured programme of internal audit reports is carried out, supported by an independent annual external audit. The internal audits are currently carried out by the Worcestershire Internal Audit Shared Service in line with the Public Sector Internal Audit Standards 2013. These audits examine key aspects of how the Service conducts its business including:

- the adequacy and effectiveness of internal controls and risk management,
- compliance with legislation and the Service's own objectives, policies and procedures,
- how well the Service's assets and interests are protected and managed,
- investigation of any allegations of fraud and irregularity,
- advice on the control and risk implications of new systems or other organisational changes.

Six audits of key financial systems and governance provided 'full' assurance with no high priority recommendations or significant risk areas to report.

The audits covered the following areas: Budgetary Control & Reconciliations, Creditors, Debtors, Payroll & Pensions, VAT and Corporate Governance.

The external audit is currently undertaken by Grant Thornton UK LLP and provides an independent assessment of the Fire

Authority's arrangements to secure economy, efficiency and effectiveness in its use of resources. It focuses on arrangements for securing financial resilience and prioritising resources within tighter budgets.

In the latest annual audit review letter, for 2015-16, the auditor concluded that the Authority's financial statement gave a true and fair view of the financial position and was satisfied that the financial statements were sound.

The auditor was also satisfied that, in all significant respects, the Authority put in place proper arrangements to secure economy, efficiency and effectiveness in its use of resources for the year ending 31 March 2016.



## Frontline response (operational) services

Making sure our firefighters and communities are kept as safe as possible is at the heart of everything we do. We aim to provide the best training and equipment for our firefighters to do their jobs safely and ensure they have the best command and leadership available. We constantly assess the level of risk across the two counties and use this to help organise how we target our prevention and protection services.

The [Community Risk Management Plan 2014-2020](#) (CRMP) is our overall strategy for planning how to improve community safety, reduce the number of incidents we need to attend and, above all, save lives. It sets out what we do to tackle risks to our communities, to our firefighters, and to the effectiveness and efficiency of our services.

Building on the aims and outcomes highlighted in the CRMP and as a central part of our transformation programme, we have introduced Saving More Lives, our overarching vision for the future direction of our Service. It provides a guide for everything we want to achieve as a vital and trusted organisation working for the communities of Herefordshire and Worcestershire.

Saving More Lives is about improving the lives of everyone in the community, building on our success and securing our future as a Service that makes even more of a difference every day.

The latest [Fire Authority Annual Report 2017-18](#) describes the Saving More Lives vision in more detail and sets out how we are putting it into practice in our reviews of progress in delivering our

plans and services over the previous year. It also includes our CRMP Action Plan for 2017-18, which sets out the services we will be delivering over the forthcoming year, including how we organise our fire and emergency cover arrangements in the light of changing risks and resources.

The [Annual Report](#) also provides an update on our major transformation and collaboration projects designed to help secure the sustainability of our services in the future. Among the many developments underway or completed in the year were the completion of a new fire station and strategic training facility at Evesham, the commencement of a new Operations and Communication Centre at West Mercia Police headquarters in Worcester, approval for the development of a new Wyre Forest Emergency Services Hub to replace the ageing fire stations in Bewdley, Kidderminster and Stourport, and the extension of the flexible Day Crewing Plus shift system at Hereford and Worcester fire stations.

The [Transparency](#) pages on the Service website help to make as much information about how our organisation delivers its responsibilities as freely available as possible. We also publish a quarterly [Performance Snapshot](#) giving information on operational assurance and performance covering firefighter safety, community safety and quality services.

Continuing the focus on the safety critical aspects of our work, in 2016-17 the Operational Assurance audit programme included testing practical skills and station assurance in tactical ventilation,

Breathing Apparatus, Incident Command, road traffic collision hazards, trauma care and casualty decontamination. Overall findings were positive and local action plans have been agreed where development needs were noted.

## Directory of assurance documents

The following directory provides links to documents available on the [Service website](#) and to others held on external websites.

### A. Governance

The Fire Authority is fully committed to supporting the Government's transparency initiative, promoting openness and accountability through reporting on local decision making, public spending and democratic processes. The Service website lists all the relevant information through its [Transparency Code of Practice](#), including:

- [Draft Annual Governance Statement 2016-17](#)
- [Code of Corporate Governance](#)
- [Fire Authority Constitution](#)
- [Fire Authority and Committees](#)
- [Transparency](#)
- [Performance Snapshot](#)

Links to national legislation and other guidance:

- [Fire and Rescue National Framework for England 2012](#) – provides guidance on assurance and accountability
- [Local Government Transparency Code 2015](#)

## B. Finance

Details of the Fire Authority's finances and budgeting arrangements can be found in the following documents:

- [Provisional Annual Statement of Accounts 2016-17](#) *[to be updated when available]*
- Link to previous [Statements of Accounts](#)
- [Budget and Precept 2017-18 and Medium Term Financial Plan](#) and [Appendices](#)

Reports of internal audits and external audit reviews can be found at the following links:

- [Internal Audit Annual Report 2015-16](#) *[to be updated]*
- [Annual Audit Review Letter 2015-16](#) *[to be updated]*

The Service website has further information on spending and links include:

- [Council Tax](#)
- [Invoice payments over £500](#)
- [Pay Policy Statement 2017-18](#)

Links to national legislation and other guidance:

- [Local Government Act 1999](#)
- [Accounts and Audit Regulations 2015](#)
- [Local Government Finance Act 1988](#)
- [Local Government Act 1972](#)
- [Chartered Institute for Public Finance and Accountancy \(CIPFA\) Codes of Practice](#)
- [Public Sector Internal Audit Standards](#)

Previous Statements of Assurance can be found at the following link:

- [Statements of Assurance](#)

## C. Operations

The Fire Authority publishes reports on all its services, including the overall strategy, operational performance, policies and financial plans. Key documents include:

- [Fire Authority Annual Report 2017-18](#)
- [Community Risk Management Plan 2014-2020](#)
- [Annual Performance 2016-17](#)

The Service website provides a wide range of information about the Fire Authority and the Fire and Rescue Service, with five main sections:

- [About Us](#)
- [Safety and Advice](#)
- [Your Right To Know](#)
- [Join Us](#)
- [News and Events](#)
- There is also a [Publication Scheme](#), which sets out what information we make publicly available.

Links to national legislation and other guidance:

- [Policing and Crime Act 2017](#)
- [Fire and Rescue Services Act 2004](#)
- [Civil Contingencies Act 2004](#)
- [Regulatory Reform \(Fire Safety\) Order 2005](#)
- [Fire and Rescue Services \(Emergencies\) \(England\) Order 2007](#)
- [Localism Act 2011](#)
- [Health and Safety at Work etc. Act 1974](#)
- [Fire and Rescue National Framework for England 2012](#) and [Addendum 2014](#)

## Your right to know: access to information

Hereford & Worcester Fire and Rescue Service collects and maintains information and data to enable it to carry out its statutory duties. A great deal of information on the Service is already available in the public domain through our Publication Scheme and [Transparency](#) webpage. Service staff will help you obtain the information you want unless disclosure would be against the law.

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

## What do you think of our Statement of Assurance?

We welcome any views you may have on the content of this Statement of Assurance.

If you have any comments or would like to contact us about any issue, please visit our website at [www.hwfire.org.uk](http://www.hwfire.org.uk) where you will find full contact details along with links to further information about our services and activities.

If you have any general enquiries, please call 0345 122 4454 or email us at [info@hwfire.org.uk](mailto:info@hwfire.org.uk).



You can also follow us on

**Twitter** [www.twitter.com/hwfire](http://www.twitter.com/hwfire)



or find us on

**Facebook** [www.facebook.com/hwfire](http://www.facebook.com/hwfire)

Alternatively you may write to:

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Charles Hastings Way,  
Worcester  
WR5 1JR.

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