



Hereford & Worcester
Fire Authority

Fire Authority Statement of Assurance

2020-21

Foreword

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

It covers three main areas:

- making sure our governance arrangements are delivering our services effectively and efficiently,
- ensuring our financial arrangements are in order and providing good value for money, and
- organising our services to make sure risks are well understood and we have the right resources in place to tackle them effectively and safely.

The Statement includes a short directory of links to relevant documents published on the [Service website](#) and elsewhere, which will help you to assess our performance and value for money. More information about our plans can be found on the Service website and in our [Fire Authority Annual Report 2020-21](#).

The Statement primarily covers our work in the year to 31 March 2020, but we must also comment on the ongoing coronavirus pandemic. As a frontline response organisation, we continue to work with our partners to keep our communities safe and limit the spread of Covid-19. We are following Covid-19 guidance from the National Fire Chiefs Council and are implementing well-tested

business continuity plans to protect the ongoing health of our frontline and support teams, while maintaining our ability to respond effectively to any emergencies. At the time of writing, we have also closed our offices and enabled staff to work remotely, including using digital technology to help maintain our essential services.

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.

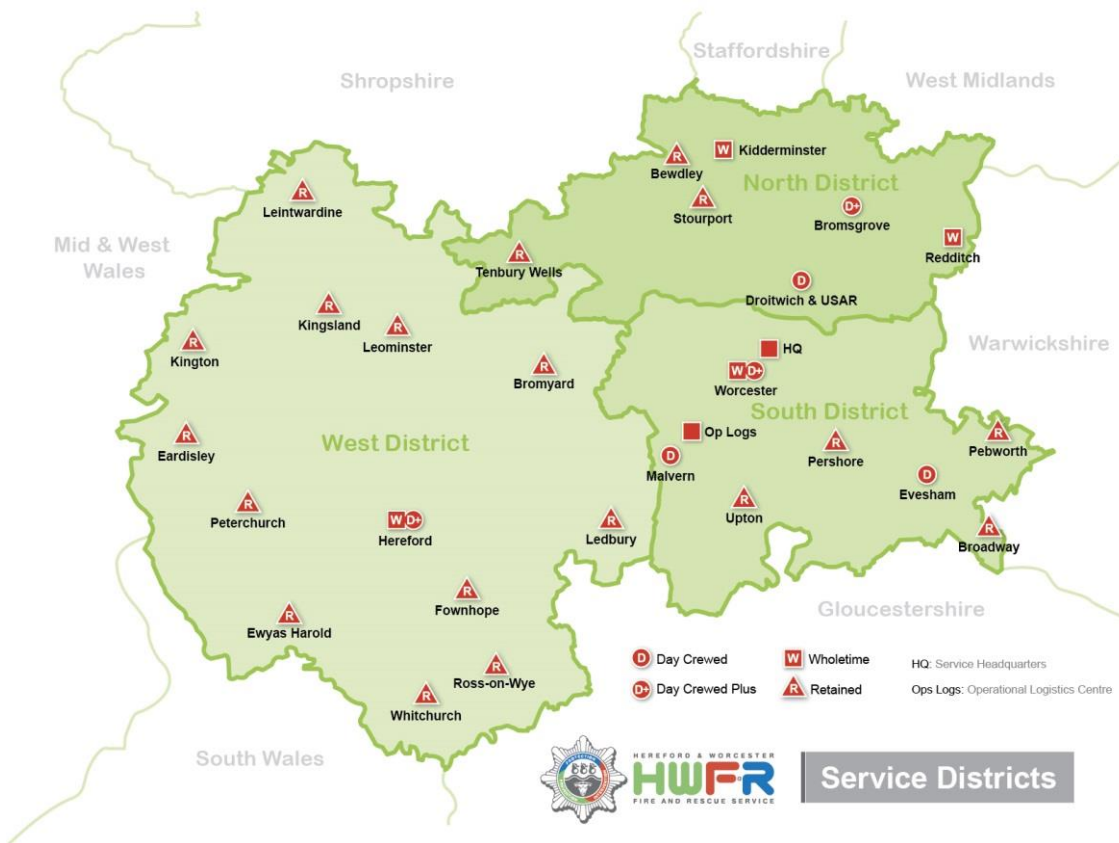


Councillor Roger Phillips,
Chairman of the Fire Authority

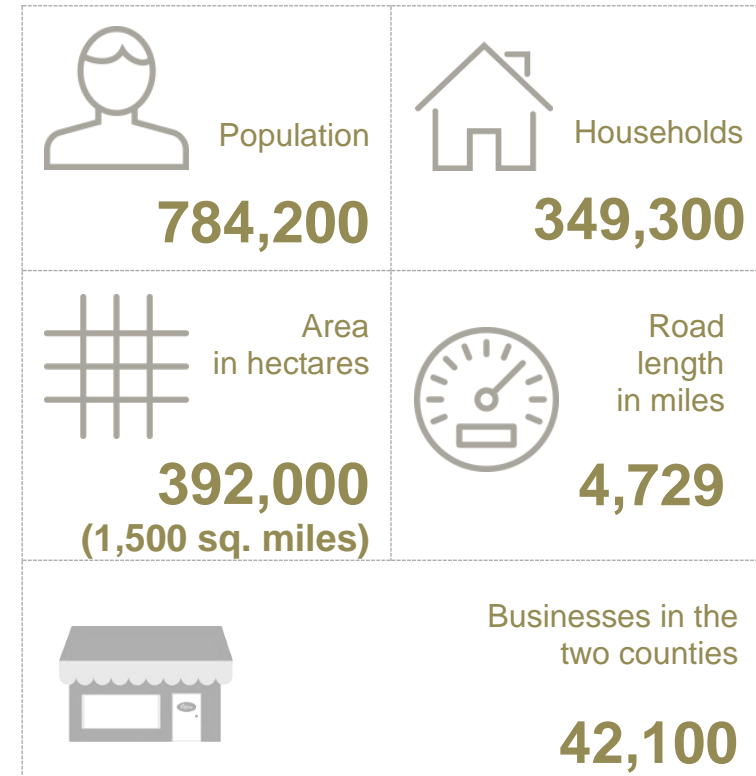


Nathan Travis,
Chief Fire Officer/ Chief Executive

About us



Hereford & Worcester Fire and Rescue Service (HWFRS) provides prevention, protection and emergency response services across Herefordshire and Worcestershire. The two counties cover a large, mostly rural area of 1,500 square miles and are home to over three-quarters of a million people. About three-quarters of the population live in Worcestershire, with around 100,000 people





living in the city of Worcester. Herefordshire is a much more sparsely populated rural area with just over 192,000 residents. The area is also crossed by over 4,700 miles of roads, including the M5, M42 and M50 motorways. Population projections suggest that by 2031, over 824,000 people will be living in the two counties, with people aged 65+ predicted to represent more than one in four of the total (27.6 per cent).

To cover this very large area, we organise our services around three Districts – North, South and West – which provides a balanced response to community risk. Within the area we have 25 fire stations mostly located in the main towns, with 41 frontline fire engines supported by 28 specialist vehicles. These are strategically placed to be able to respond effectively and in a timely manner whenever an emergency call is received.

Each fire station has an On-Call crew of firefighters, who live or work locally and are available within five minutes should they be needed. Eight fire stations also have Wholetime crews, who are immediately available under normal circumstances.

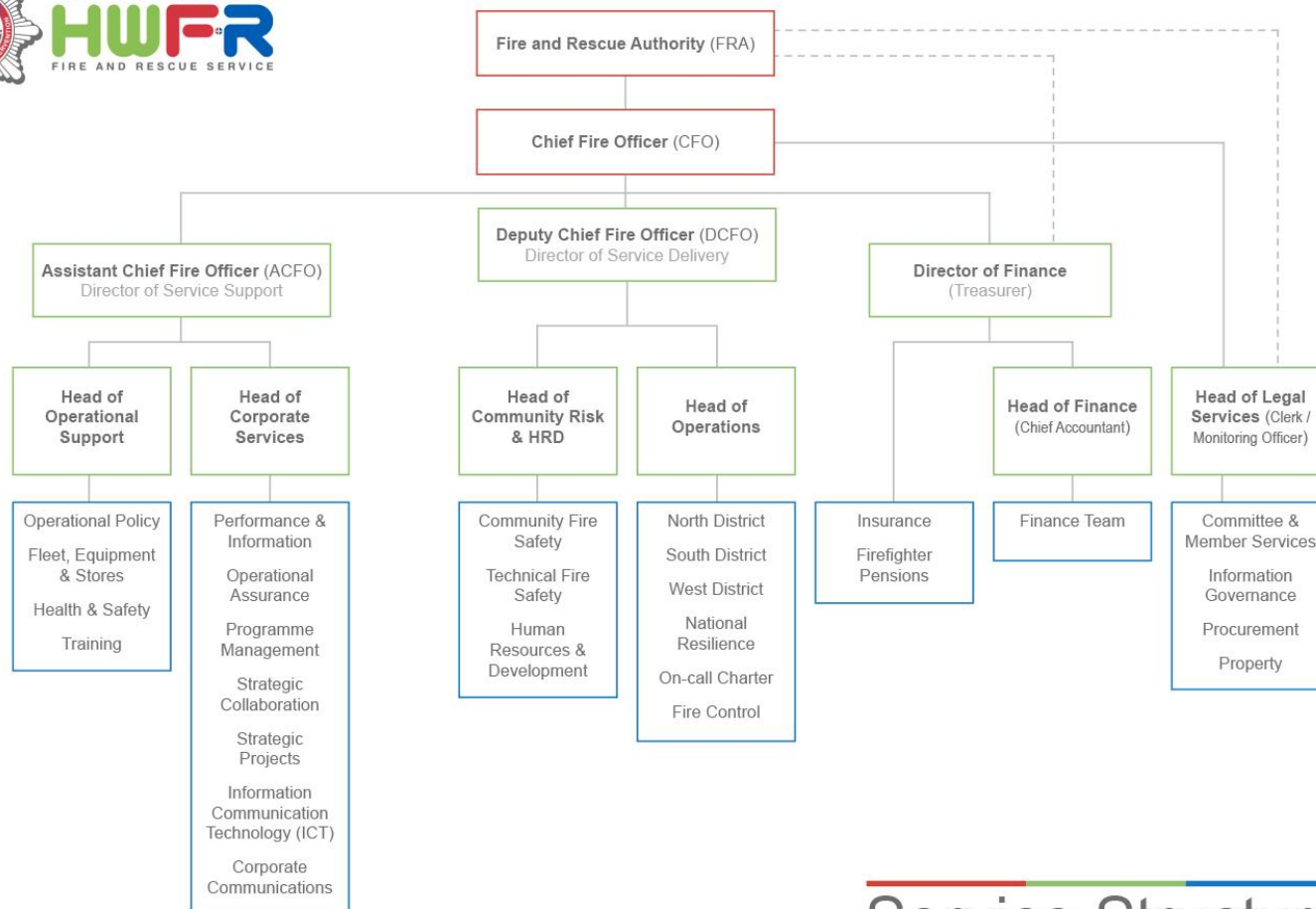
In addition to our fire stations, we have a Training Centre in Droitwich, a fleet maintenance and supplies centre called Operational Logistics in Malvern and a number of locally based training facilities. Our Service Headquarters is based at Hindlip Park, Worcester, which is also the campus for West Mercia Police Headquarters.

At the end of March 2020, we employed 748 members of staff (552 full time equivalent – FTE – because many of our staff work part-time hours). Firefighters make up approximately 80 per cent of the workforce, assisted by professional teams providing support and enabling services such as financial, human resources and legal services. There were also 22 Fire Control officers, who are the frontline for receiving emergency calls and deploying crews to incidents.

 HEREFORD & WORCESTER HWR FIRE AND RESCUE SERVICE Workforce*	228 Wholetime Firefighters (215 FTE)	379 On-Call Firefighters (222 FTE)
	38.9%	40.2%
 Assets	22 Fire Control Staff (17.25 FTE)	119 Support Staff (97.6 FTE)
	3.1%	17.7%
	Fire Stations	Fire Engines
	25	41

* all percentages based on FTE numbers (rounded)

The Service is structured into three directorates – Service Delivery, Service Support and Finance. Most staff are directly involved in delivering prevention, protection and response services. These services are designed to keep the communities of Herefordshire and Worcestershire as safe as possible by working with local people, partner organisations and businesses to try to make sure emergency incidents don't happen in the first place, as well as being able to respond promptly and effectively to any emergencies that do occur.







Service Structure

In 2019-20 we attended 7,901 incidents, about 150 each week. This was approximately 6 per cent more than the previous year, though almost half of this was accounted for by an increase in Special Service incidents, due to wide-area flooding in the storms of Oct 2019 and February 2020 and an increase in assisting other agencies.. A significant proportion of incidents were false alarms (3,451 incidents or 44 per cent of all incidents). There was also a small decrease in the number of road traffic collisions we attended, but assisting other agencies, flooding incidents, water rescues and animal rescues were up on last year.

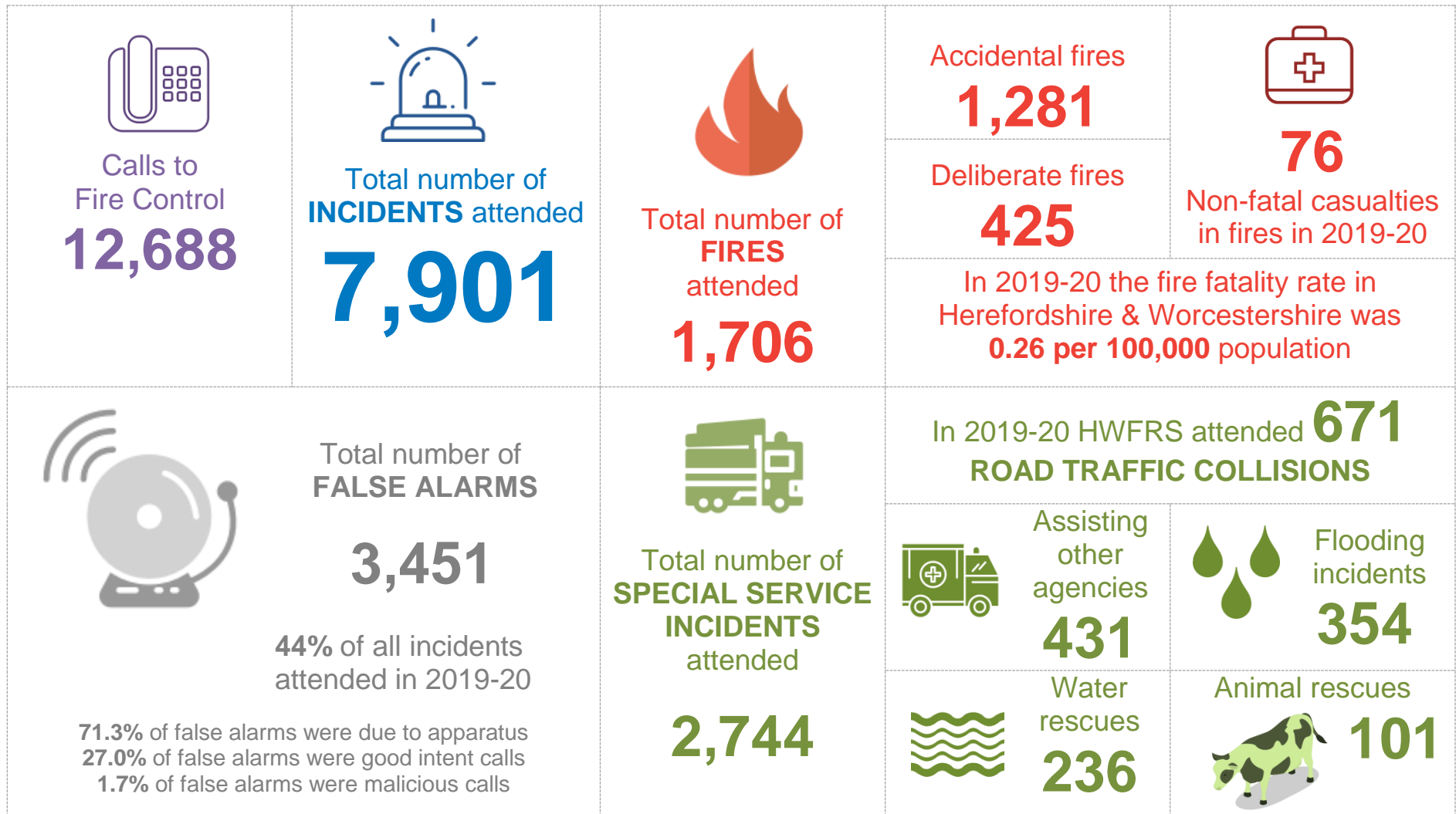
More details on population, Service resources and incidents attended can be found in the [Fire Authority Annual Report 2020-21](#) on our website. Further information on people and places, the economy, transport and the environment can also be found on the Service website by navigating to the [CRMP 2021-25 Consultation](#) page.

The following table gives a quick comparison between the rate of incidents in the HWFRS area and nationally across England.

		2019-20*	2018-19*	2018-19*
Total Incidents		10.1 incidents per 1,000 population local	9.6 incidents per 1,000 population local	10.3 national average
Fire		2.2 incidents per 1,000 population local	2.4 incidents per 1,000 population local	3.3 national average
Special Service		3.5 incidents per 1,000 population local	2.8 incidents per 1,000 population local	2.9 national average
False Alarm		4.4 incidents per 1,000 population local	4.4 incidents per 1,000 population local	4.1 national average

* Please note that there is one year difference between the incident data and the most recent mid-year population estimated value.

Our Performance in 2019-20 at a glance



Governance

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. Since October 2016, the Fire Authority has also included the West Mercia Police and Crime Commissioner (PCC) in a non-voting capacity.

The Authority makes sure 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](#). Due regard is also given to the terms and requirements for Fire Authorities as set out in the [Fire and Rescue National Framework for England](#), which was revised in 2018.

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 Authority normally meets four times a year and is supported by three committees. Since March 2020, all meetings have been disrupted following the onset of Covid-19 pandemic, with some meetings being cancelled or held virtually, which can be viewed on the [Fire Authority YouTube website](#). Full details of all

meetings and decisions can be found on the [Service website](#). Other documents explaining the processes and procedures of the Fire Authority can be found in the [Document Library](#) 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:

- [Constitution](#) – defines the roles and responsibility of the Authority, Committees, Members and Officers. The

Constitution also includes the Members Code of Conduct (Part 5a of the Constitution) updated in December 2019.

- 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 (England) Regulations 2015.
- [Ethical Framework and Code of Conduct](#) – in place for all staff, and familiarisation is included in the induction process.

The Authority’s Strategic Risk Register (SRR) is reviewed quarterly at the Service’s Senior Management Board and is reported annually to the Audit and Standards Committee. The SRR identifies risks to the success of the organisation and puts effective control measures in place to mitigate their effect. Examples of risks include severe weather, pandemic influenza and fuel shortages. A [summary of the latest Strategic Risk Register](#) was presented to the Committee in July 2020.

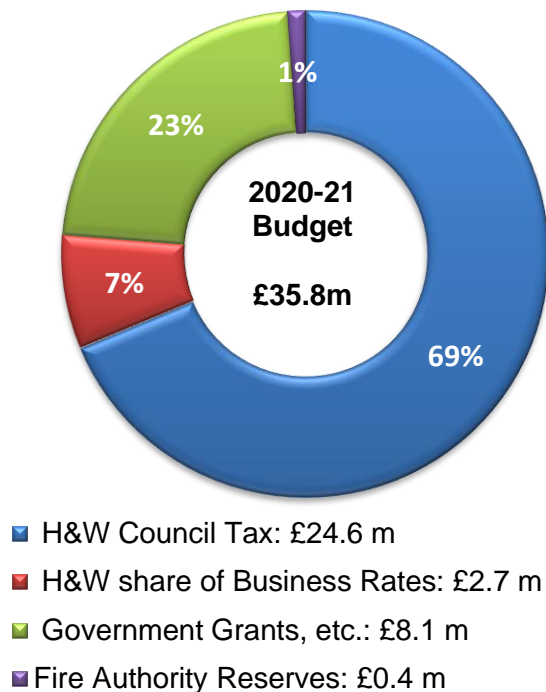
During the year, the Worcestershire Internal Audit Shared Service (WIASS) carried out a number of full audits in relation to Corporate Governance and System/Management Arrangements. The audits examined the Embedding of National Operational Guidance, Equality and Diversity, Human Resources and the Communications and Engagement Strategy, with each providing ‘significant’ or ‘critical review’ assurance in complying with the Accounts and Audit (England) Regulations 2018 and the terms of the Internal Audit Charter between WIASS and the Authority. Two audits (Business Continuity and Computer Audit) were deferring until a later time following the Covid-19 outbreak. The [full report](#) of the Internal Auditor is available in the Fire Authority section of the Service website.

As reported in previous versions of the Statement of Assurance, the West Mercia Police and Crime Commissioner (PCC) had been given the go-ahead from government to take on the role of the Fire Authority. However, the current Fire Authority, together with Shropshire & Wrekin Fire Authority, submitted a judicial challenge, arguing that the evidence did not support the proposed move to the PCC on the grounds that it would not realise overall value for money for the public, when compared to what the existing Fire Authorities could achieve together. The judicial review hearing was held in June 2019 and it upheld the Home Secretary’s decision to approve the PCC’s business case. Over the following months, in the light of changing circumstances, the legal proceedings have concluded. As a result, the Home Office has said that it would not consider any business case until after the PCC elections in May 2021. For further details see the [Judicial Review – Update](#) report to the Service’s Policy & Resources Committee in September 2020.

Finance

Funds available to the Fire and Rescue Service continue to reduce. The revenue budget for 2020-21 is £35.8 million, 14 per cent less in real terms than in 2010-11. 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: 2020-21



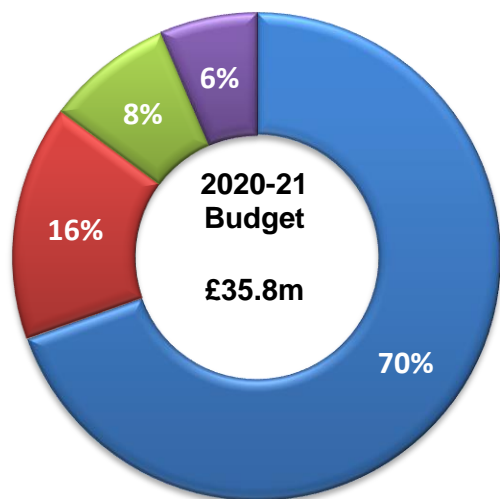
The cost to the average household in Herefordshire and Worcestershire in 2020-21 (Council Tax Band D) is £85.99, representing about 24p per day. This is above the £78.56 average for comparable Fire Authorities in 2020-21, but significantly lower than the highest cost of £105.48. One of the reasons for this is relatively low level of central government grant received compared to other Fire and Rescue Services, because of the way the national funding formula works. Further details on Council Tax can be found on the [Council Tax](#) page of the Service website.

To make sure we spend our budget 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.

The latest [Statement of Accounts](#) covers the Authority's financial year ending 31 March 2020 and is available on the Service website along with the External Auditor's audit opinion. The Statement of Accounts also includes the [Annual Governance Statement for 2019-20](#), pages 73-67 of the Statement of Accounts.

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. A Budget Monitoring report is also presented to the Fire Authority quarterly.

How the Budget is spent: 2020-21



- Employees £24.9m
- Fleet, equipment, ICT, property £5.6m
- Capital financing* £3.0m
- Other running costs** £2.3m

* Capital financing is interest and provision to repay loans.

** Other running costs include: training costs, community safety materials, payroll services, legal costs, Fire Authority costs, and insurances.

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

- the adequacy and effectiveness of internal control 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, and
- advice on the control and risk implications of new systems or other organisational changes.

Four audits of Accountancy & Finance Systems were carried out by WAISS during the year and they found 'full' assurance for Creditors and Debtors, and 'significant' assurance for the Main Ledger (incl. Budgetary Control and Bank Reconciliation) and the Payroll and Pensions areas. No 'limited' or 'below assurance' areas were reported, nor any high priority recommendations. The [full report](#) of the Internal Auditor is available in the Fire Authority section of the Service website.

The annual 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. This year's [External Audit](#) found that the Authority continues to have proper arrangements in place to ensure it delivers value for money in its use of resources and that the Annual Governance Statement (AGS) *'fairly reflects the Authority's risk assurance and governance framework and we confirm that we are not aware of any significant risks that are not disclosed within the AGS.'*

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 incident command and operational 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.

During the year, work began on a new CRMP for 2021-2025. Following the establishment of the [Strategic Fire Alliance](#) with Shropshire Fire and Rescue Service in 2018, the potential to align our approach to preparing the new risk management plans was identified as a priority project. Officers from both Services have engaged in several workshops to examine the most effective ways of identifying and assessing risks, to consider key priorities in delivering prevention, protection and emergency response services, and to propose appropriate key performance indicators to help to measure progress in delivering the aims of CRMP and the Integrated Risk Management Plan (IRMP) as it is termed by Shropshire FRS.

The culmination of this joint work was the drafting of the new plans for public consultation, which ran for 12 weeks from 6 July 2020. The draft CRMP 2021-25 consultation document and other supporting documents can be viewed on the [Consultation](#) page of the Service website.

Note that the current CRMP 2014-20 was extended by one year to include the 2020-21 period. This helps to ensure that both Services' new risk management plans for 2021-25 will become live on the same date - 1 April 2021.

Also available on the Service website are the 2018 [Midpoint Review of the CRMP](#), the [Demographic Profile](#) and an updated [CRMP Risk Review 2018](#). Each local Fire Station also has its own Station Risk profile, updated annually. The profiles can be found in the [Fire Stations](#) section of the Service website by following the links to individual Fire Stations.

The latest [Fire Authority Annual Report 2020-21](#) provides more detail on progress made in delivering our plans and services over the previous year. It also includes our current CRMP Action Plan for 2020-21, 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.

Highlights from last year (1 April 2019 – 31 March 2020) include the opening of the new Wyre Forest Station, which replaces the former stations at Bewdley, Kidderminster and Stourport, and the

deployment of our high volume pump at the major national operation to reduce pressure on the dam at Toddbrook Reservoir in Derbyshire, which was in danger of collapse during last summer's heavy rain.

During with year, we also formally launched our revised Purpose, Vision, Mission and Values across the Service, details of which were reported in last year's Statement of Assurance (see also page 16 of this Statement), and also launched the [People Strategy 2020-22](#) to continue the work set out in the 2017-20 People Strategy. The Strategy sets out a range of actions to support and value our workforce and will be overseen by the Service's Organisational Development and Challenge (ODC) Group.

In February 2020, the two counties experienced the full force of Storm Dennis with major widespread flooding. Fire engines from every single fire station were involved at some point during the two-day storm, dealing with 182 flooding and water rescue incidents, 127 flooded homes and over 50 cars and other vehicles stranded in floodwater. The highly-effective response to the crisis was a credit to our operational staff, their training and management, and their ability to coordinate and direct the multi-agency response alongside emergency service partners.

By March 2020, the UK was in the grip of the global coronavirus pandemic. As a frontline response organisation, we are working around the clock with our [Local Resilience Forum](#) partners to keep our communities safe and limit the spread of Covid-19. We are also following [Covid-19 guidance from the National Fire Chiefs Council](#), as well as implementing our well-tested business continuity plans to protect the ongoing health of our frontline and

support teams while maintaining our ability to respond effectively to any emergencies. As part of our plans, we have closed our offices and enabled staff to work remotely, including using digital technology to help maintain our essential services.

One consequence of the ongoing Covid-19 crisis has been the suspension of [Her Majesty's Inspectorate of Constabulary and Fire & Rescue Services](#) (HMICFRS) inspection programme until early 2021, though they will be carrying out an assessment of the overall fire sector response to the Covid-19 crisis in late-2020.

In response to the 2018 HMICFRS inspection, the Service is implementing an Improvement Plan to address areas highlighted in their [inspection report](#). Progress reports are presented to the Fire Authority quarterly, and the Improvement Plan and updates can be found on [Publications](#) page of the Service website.

The Service's programme of Operational Assurance audits continued throughout the year to help ensure firefighter practical skills, along with fire station and fire control processes, meet safety critical requirements. The Practical Skills Audits covered key safety critical areas including Breathing Apparatus procedures, Compartment Search skills and other core skills such as ladder pitch, knots and ties. Areas covered in the Station Audits included the Active Incident Monitoring process, Competency Training Records, Driving, Equipment, National Operational Guidance, Operational Policy and Personnel Management Findings continue to be very positive in relation to practical and technical abilities demonstrated during the audits, and any actions needed are noted and followed up.

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.



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

Saving More Lives: 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.

Values

What we believe in

Integrity

We will do the right thing and show fairness and consistency in our approach, taking responsibility for the decisions we make and the actions we take.

Teamwork

By working collaboratively, we can exceed expectations and go beyond the achievements of individuals.



Honesty

We will be truthful in our actions and duties to build trust amongst our colleagues and within the communities we serve.

Openness

We will act in a way that is transparent and open to review and will welcome new or innovative ways of thinking.

Respect

We value the differences between individuals and create an inclusive environment which recognises everyone's experiences and opinions.

Who We Are

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:

- [Annual Governance Statement 2019-20](#) (pages 73-76 of the Statement of Accounts 2019-20)
- [Code of Corporate Governance](#)
- [Fire Authority Constitution](#)
- [Fire Authority and Committees](#)
- [Transparency](#)

- [Performance Snapshot](#)
- [Ethical Framework and Code of Conduct](#)
- [Strategic Risk Register \(summary\)](#)

Links to national legislation and other guidance:

- [Fire and Rescue National Framework for England 2018](#)
- [Fire and Rescue Services Act 2004](#)
- [Local Government Transparency Code 2015](#)
- [Her Majesty's Inspectorate of Constabulary and Fire & Rescue Services \(HMICFRS\)](#)
- [West Mercia Police and Crime Commissioner business case](#)

B. Finance

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

- [Annual Statement of Accounts 2019-20](#)
- Link to previous [Statements of Accounts](#)
- [Budget and Precept 2020-21 and Medium Term Financial Plan, Precept Appendices 1-9 and Appendix 10 - Statement of Prudential Indicators](#)

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

- [Internal Audit Annual Report 2019-20](#) (including Internal Audit Charter)
- [External Audit Findings Report 2019-20](#) and [Letter of Representation 2020](#)

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

- [Council Tax 2020-21](#)
- [Invoice payments over £250](#)

- [Pay Policy Statement 2020-21](#)

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](#)
- [Local Audit and Accountability Act 2014](#)

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 2020-21](#)
- [Community Risk Management Plan 2014-2020](#)
- [Community Risk Management Plan 2021-25 – draft for public consultation and supporting documents](#)
- [Midpoint Review of the CRMP](#)
- [CRMP Demographic Profile 2018](#)
- [CRMP Risk Review 2018](#)
- [Annual Performance 2019-20](#)
- [Link to Strategies](#)

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 2018](#)

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 our 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 [Access to Information](#) 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 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.



You can also follow us on

Twitter www.twitter.com/hwfire



or find us on

Facebook www.facebook.com/hwfire

Alternatively you may write to:

Hereford & Worcester Fire and Rescue Service Headquarters,
Hindlip Park,
Worcester
WR3 8SP

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.