



NORFOLK FIRE AND RESCUE SERVICE

STATEMENT OF ASSURANCE 2019/20

Chief Fire Officer
Stuart Ruff

August 2020

INTRODUCTION

Purpose

Fire and Rescue Authorities must provide both local communities and the Government with an annual statement of assurance on financial, governance and operational matters. This means that Norfolk Fire and Rescue Service (NFRS) must demonstrate that it is doing what the Government expects of it, as laid down in the [Fire and Rescue National Framework for England](#) and that it is delivering the local Integrated Risk Management Plan (IRMP). The National Framework was last updated in 2018.

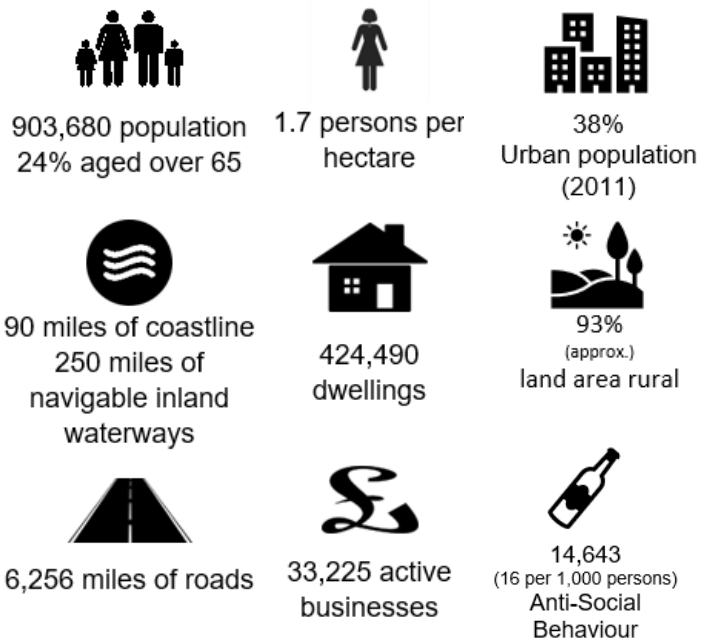
This statement of assurance covers the period April 2019 to March 2020.

Norfolk's Context

In Norfolk the Fire and Rescue Authority is Norfolk County Council which governs and operates the Fire and Rescue Service as a service in the Council's Community and Environmental Services Directorate. Our Chief Fire Officer is a member of the Departmental Management Team with the responsibility for the Fire and Rescue Service and is a Director of Norfolk Safety CIC.

The type of fire and rescue service that is operated is influenced by the nature of area in which it works. In Norfolk's case, some of the key characteristics considered are:

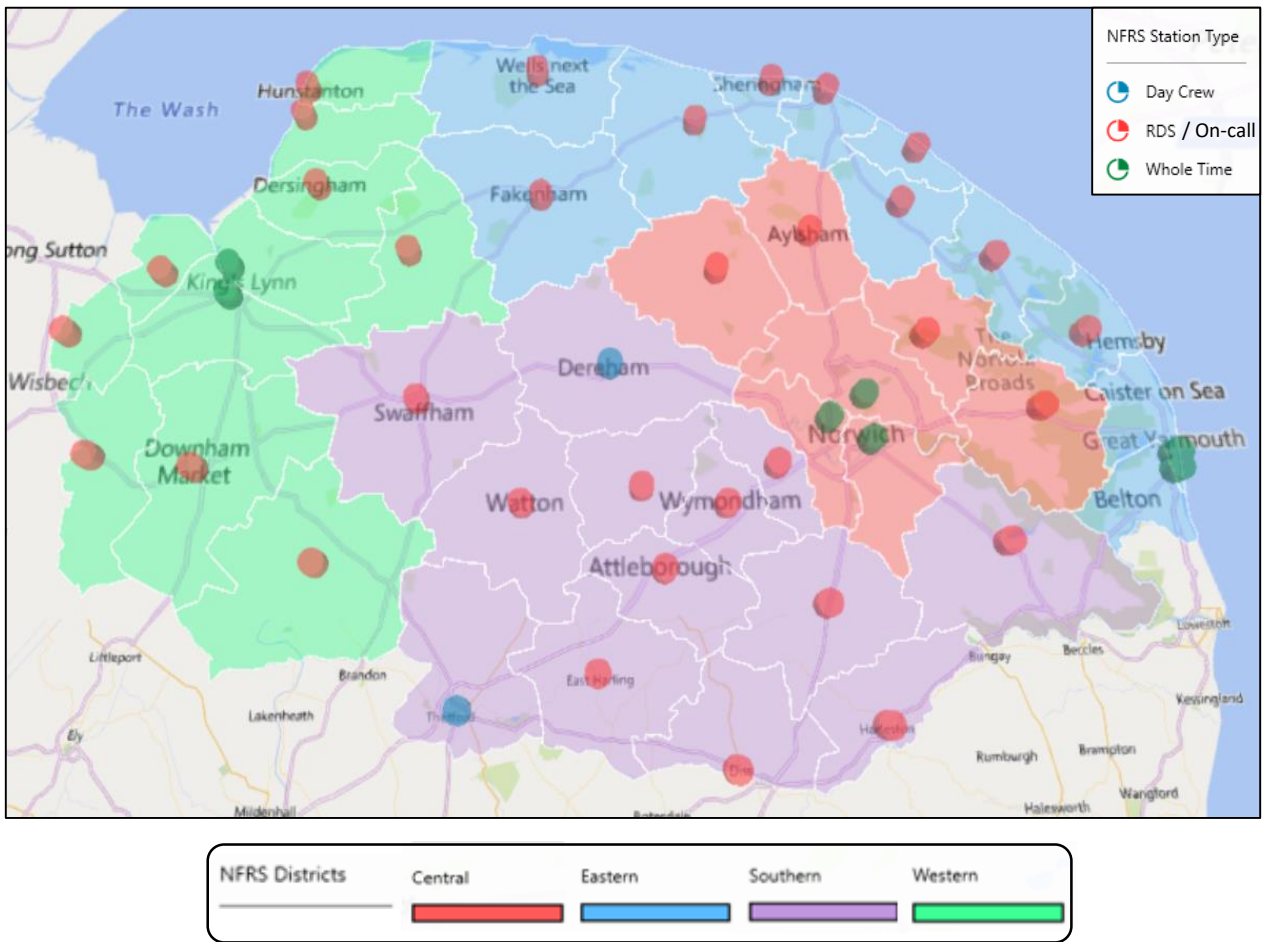
- Increasing and ageing population
- Fifth largest county in England
- Second most rural county with one of the lowest population densities in England
- Relatively flat county prone to flooding and coastal tidal surges
- Changing emergency call profile- as well as fires we also attend a wide variety of incidents like rescues from water and road traffic collisions



Norfolk Fire and Rescue Service Resources


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

Coverage




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


Our fleet of specialist vehicles also includes two environmental protection units, a control vehicle, a water foam unit, three aerial ladder platforms and a driver training vehicle. The Service also hosts a team of Urban Search and Rescue (USAR) personnel and vehicles that are trained to respond to national, regional or major incidents. We are also one of the few services that have a specialist team to respond to a terrorist threat should such an incident occur.



Firefighters
273 Wholtime
451 On-call



86 Non-uniformed



24 Control room

**Employee full time
equivalent at end of
March 2020**

GOVERNANCE

National Governance

In January 2016 responsibility for Fire and Rescue Services moved from the Department of Communities and Local Government to the Home Office. The Home Office are also responsible for policing and the move supports the Government's commitment to deliver greater joint working between the police and fire and rescue services. This commitment is further underpinned by The Policing and Crime Act (2017), this legislation now places a statutory duty on emergency services to consider closer working where it represents best value. This act also introduced new provisions for a Police and Crime Commissioner (PCC) to act as a fire and rescue authority for that area. During 2019/20, NCC and NFRS was subject to consideration from the PCC to take on fire governance in Norfolk, however, following public consultation the PCC decided not to submit its business case.

Democratic Accountability

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

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

During 2019/20, the Council's governance arrangements changed from a Committee system to a Cabinet system of governance. Up May 2019, oversight of the Fire and Rescue service was the responsibility of the Communities Committee. Since May 2019, under the Cabinet system of Governance, day to day oversight is the responsibility of the Cabinet Member for Communities and Partnerships, Cllr Margaret Dewsbury. The Infrastructure and Development Committee also has a role in reviewing and developing policies and strategies.

A Scrutiny Committee also forms a key part of the democratic checks and balances of the Cabinet system of governance. The Committee is able to review or scrutinise decisions taken by the Executive and to make reports to the Cabinet or Full Council.

The roles of Cabinet, Full Council, Cabinet Members Scrutiny Committee and Select Committees are set out in the Council's Constitution.

The IRMP forms part of the Council's Policy Framework and therefore is considered and approved by Full Council. The IRMP for 2020-2023 was finalised during 2019/20. As a result of Government lockdown restrictions for Covid-19, and the subsequent pausing of the Council's public meetings, the IRMP was approved by the Head of Paid Service using powers set out in the Constitution. This followed on from discussions at public meetings of Cabinet and Select Committee.

GOVERNANCE

Service Management

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

The Chief Fire Officer is supported by a Senior Management Team comprised of senior officers from the Fire and Rescue Service. Decisions are taken in accordance with the scheme of delegation set out in the Council's Constitution. The scheme of delegation allows officers to take decisions on behalf of the fire authority.

Governance Standards

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

External Scrutiny, Audit and Review

Her Majesty's Inspectorate of Constabulary and Fire & Rescue Services (HMICFRS) undertook a week long inspection of Norfolk Fire and Rescue Service (NFRS) starting 4 February 2019.

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

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

External Scrutiny, Audit and Review (continued)

HMICFRS found that Norfolk Fire and Rescue Service is good in the way it responds to fires and other emergencies and good in the way it responds to national risks such as terrorism. The inspectorate also concluded that the service is good at making the service affordable now and in the future and that it is good at getting the right people with the right skills.

Although inspectors found the service is good in how it responds to emergencies, it concluded improvements are required in how the service understands the risk from fire and other emergencies, how it prevents these risks from occurring and how it protects the public through fire safety regulation.

HMICFRS also found that the service is good at ensuring it is affordable, but improvement is required in how it makes the best use of the resources available to it. Inspectors concluded that the service is good at ensuring it gets the right people with the right skills. Improvement is required in how the service promotes its values and culture, ensures fairness and equality, and how it manages performance and develops its leaders.

Based on their findings HMICFRS have provided an overall graded judgement of requires improvement against their 3 main questions of efficiency, effectiveness and people. An [improvement action plan](#) has been developed and is used to track service progress against the HMICFRS areas of improvement. Oversight arrangements are in place to monitor progress against the HMICFRS action plan. Cabinet are reviewing progress regularly and the Cabinet Member has a monthly meeting with the CFO to monitor and review progress.

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

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

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

Norfolk Safety Community Interest Company (CIC)

[Norfolk Safety Community Interest Company \(CIC\)](#) (NSCIC) is a subsidiary company limited by guarantee of the County Council that operates in partnership with Norfolk Fire and Rescue Service. Norfolk Safety provides a range of risk management, training and development and other services to public bodies, third sector organisations and businesses.

The articles of association outline the composition of the Board of Directors who are responsible for the operation of the Company and the Cabinet Member is one of the directors. The Directors were changed in August 2019.

NSCIC is required to report annually to the Regulator on how they are delivering for the community and how they are involving their stakeholders in their activities. The company is subject to legislation and external audit and has to complete a return to the shareholder (NCC) as part of the annual governance statement process. In relation to profits generated these are asset locked into community interest projects by the Board and Regulator (an independent statutory office-holder appointed by the Secretary of State).

Details on the composition of Norfolk Safety CIC and filed accounts can be found on [Companies House website](#).

FINANCE

NFRS Budget

NFRS operates on a revenue budget which in 2019/20 was £27.4 million, 7% of the Council's overall net revenue budget. This equates to £32.96 (£31.41 2018-19) per head of population including capital charges, £28.88 (£29.04 2018-19) per head excluding capital charges.

NFRS cost per head
of the population is
£32.96

NFRS continues to operate within a challenging public services financial climate and has to manage service delivery against budget restrictions. Value for money continues to be a major driver in all spending and operational decisions.

Financial performance for the year resulted in a £0.426m overspend at 1.6% of budget and was mainly attributed to increased training requirements to meet new recruit and maintain fire fighter competencies.

The service has an approved capital programme of £9.7m to be spent over the next 3 years to 2022 and will enable the service to undertake major purchase of new fire services vehicles, fire fighter training facilities and a number other projects.

Financial Management

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

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

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

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

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

PERFORMANCE

Performance Management Framework

NFRS operates within the County Council's corporate performance framework. A set of 'vital signs' for each service have been produced which provide transparency and assurance on the health of key services. The vital signs for NFRS are 'Emergency Response Standards (ERS)' and 'Percentage of time that retained (on-call) first fire engines are available to respond to emergencies'. These are regularly monitored by department management teams and County Councillors through the democratic process with reports published on our website ([link](#)).

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

Performance 2016/17 to 2019/20

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

Priorities

We publish an annual [Service Delivery Plan](#) which sets out targets which will deliver against our key priorities:

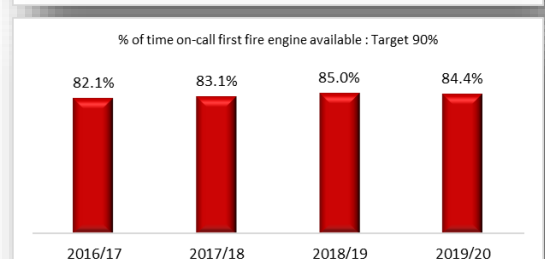
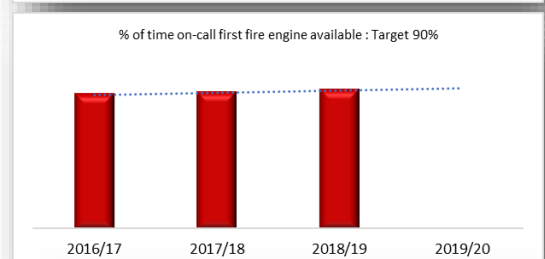
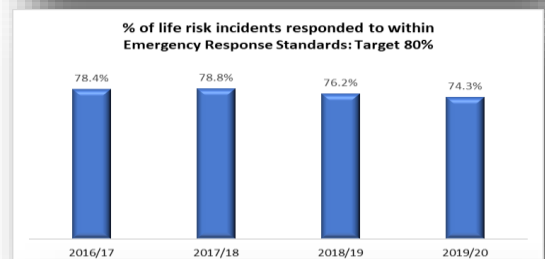
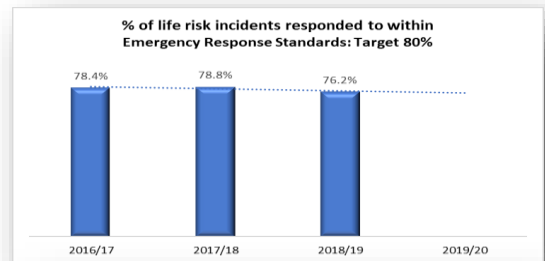
- Reduce fires, improve road and water safety
- Ensure operational readiness and firefighter safety
- Improve the availability and response times of our fire engines
- Develop a diverse and high performing workforce

Vital Signs

During 2019/20 we aimed to get to 80% of life risk incidents within our Emergency Response Standards (how quickly we should attend an incident) and achieved this on 74.3%* of occasions. We know that the changing nature and location of calls (fewer in urban areas and a larger proportion in rural areas) and a shortage of on-call firefighters is affecting our ability to meet this target and are looking at this in our performance framework and target setting for 2020/21.

Our on-call first fire engines were available and ready to respond to an emergency 84.4%* of the time against a target of 90%. This is a slight decline on last year's figure of 85%. We know we have some stations where more firefighters are needed and we are actively recruiting in these areas.

**This figure is based on 10 months data to January 2020 due to issues with the data reporting system at the time of writing.*

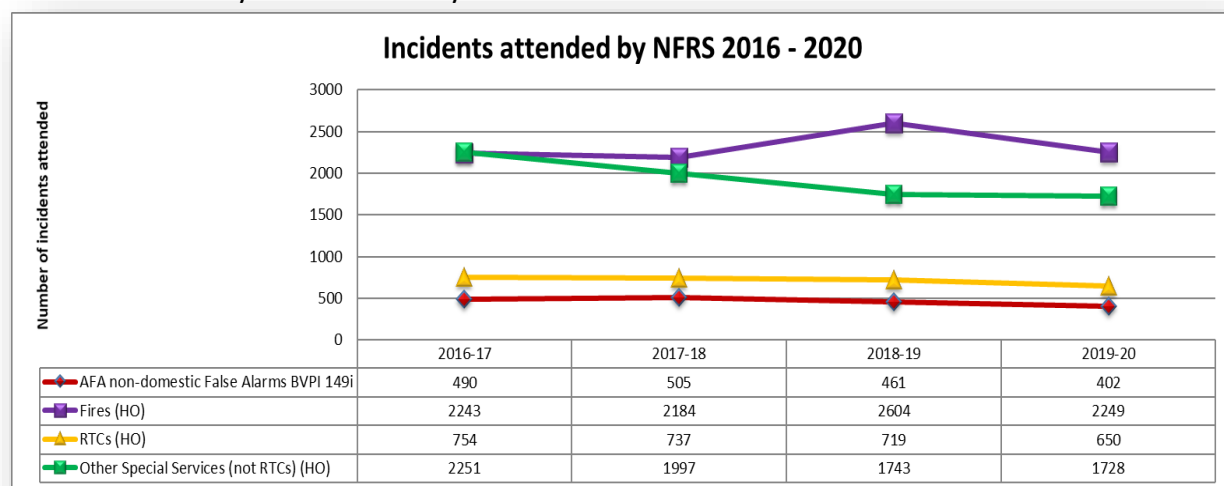


PERFORMANCE

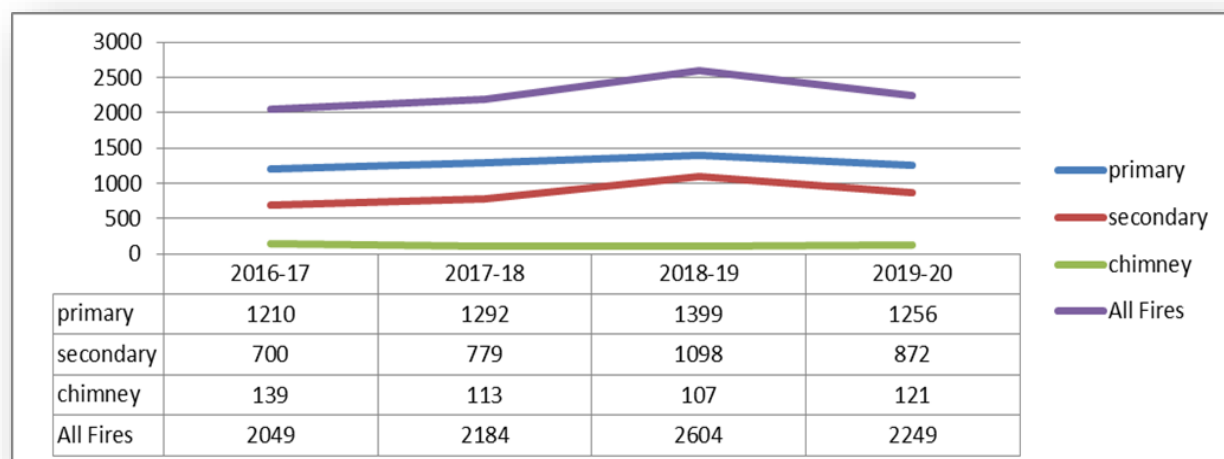
Incident Attendance

TYPE OF INCIDENT	2016-17	2017-18	2018-19	2019-20
AFA non-domestic False Alarms	490	505	461	402
Fires	2243	2184	2604	2249
RTCs	754	737	719	650
Other Special Services (not RTCs)	2251	1997	1743	1728
Total (Fire, RTC & Other Special Services)	5738	5423	5527	5029
RTC Extrication and release of persons incidents:	213	215	199	185

NOTE the number of non-domestic AFA False Alarms attended now uses data reported to Home Office IRS system. Previously it used Vision data which was not accurate.



Fires:	2016-17	2017-18	2018-19	2019-20
Primary	1210	1292	1399	1256
Secondary	700	779	1098	872
Chimney	139	113	107	121
All Fires	2049	2184	2604	2249
Previous year fire totals	2173	2049	2184	2604
Difference	-124	135	420	-355



PERFORMANCE

Incident Attendance

We attended 2249 fires – 355 less than last year (a reduction of 13.6%). This included:

- 418 accidental dwelling fires in people’s homes – 9 less than last year, resulting in three fatalities and 27 people being injured. This compares to three fatalities and 50 injuries in 2018/19.

- 785 deliberate fires (potentially arson) incidents – a decrease of 8.6% compared to 2018/19.

- 6 less accidental non-domestic premises fires (184 in total) – a decrease of 3.2%. However, 4 persons were injured.

We attended a 4.2% increase in non-domestic false automatic fire alarms against a backdrop of declining false alarms.

We attended 650 road traffic collisions which involved the extrication and release of 185 persons from their vehicle. The reduction in our attendance at road traffic collisions can be attributed to a return to the mobilising criteria we used in 2012-13. This brings us in line with other fire and rescue services and focuses our support to the incidents where our specialist skills are most needed.

We attended 1728 other special service incidents such as flooding, freeing trapped people or animals and calls to assist other agencies.

PERFORMANCE

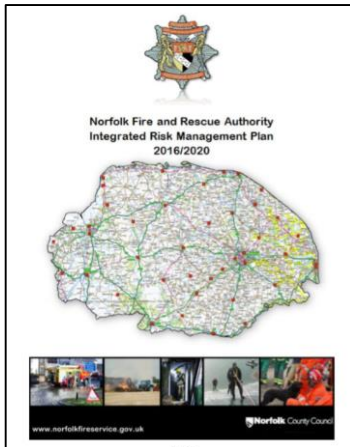
Prevention and Protection

To help prevent incidents from occurring and to protect people and property when they do happen in 2019/20 we:

- Carried out 3,929 Home Fire Risk Checks (2018/19 was 4,054). These fire safety visits, usually with vulnerable people, are designed to help make people safer in their home, whilst promoting and increase in smoke alarm ownership across our communities. We have also continued shaping “Safe and Well” checks - a broader review of risks and safety issues in the home, including falls prevention, smoking cessation and wider wellbeing themes in partnership with Public Health. This targets resources at the greatest level of vulnerability and adds value to each visit.
- Carried out 975 Fire Safety audit visits of non-domestic premises to ensure compliance with fire safety regulations (2018/19 was 665).
- Carried out 47 post fire investigations (35 inspections and 12 audits), supporting business resilience, which includes enforcement and prosecutions for serious cases.
- Maintained up-to-date files of the risks at over 600 non-domestic premises so that if an incident did occur we would have the information that we need to deal with the event as safely as possible, thus reducing the risks for our firefighters and the public.
- Carried out 7 Crucial Crew year 6 education visits to over 6,000 children, covering a wide range of safety themes, Road, Home, Water safety and first aid.
- Carried out over 400 separate educational community safety events targeted at Road, Water and Home Safety. Including targeted arson prevention events and audits:
 - Arson Reduction Events – 80
 - Water Safety Awareness Event – 34
 - Road Safety Education - 88
 - Other Community Education Activities - 255
- Carried out youth engagement ‘Leadership’ programmes to 130 young people (16 – 25yrs), including work experience and community safety and projects, resulting in 3 of every 4 delegates moving on to employment, education or further education.

OPERATIONAL ASSURANCE

Integrated Risk Management Plan (IRMP)



The IRMP sets out the risks and issues that the Fire and Rescue Service will need to respond to over the next three years and how it will do it. The IRMP is the single most important document for the Fire and Rescue Service as it shows what the Service will be doing and why. It is also one of the means by which the public can hold the Service to account.

Full Council approved the [IRMP 2016-20](#) on 22 February 2016 when the County Council's 2016/17 budget was approved.

Through 2019/20 we continued and completed the process of drafting and consulting on the new IRMP 2020-23, with approval being agreed within the period. NFRS consulted on a draft plan from October 2019 to December 2019 (through a Member Reference Group and public consultation) and considered all the responses received. Elected members made decisions about which proposals to adopt and our [IRMP 2020-2023](#) was approved in January 2020.

Collaborative working

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

- Fulfilling our duties outlined in the Civil Contingencies Act 2004 by working as part of the Norfolk Resilience Forum to maintain and develop Norfolk's Community Risk Register, plan the response to major incidents and emergencies in the county, and carry out multi-agency training exercises as part of the preparation of an effective response.
- Participating in over the border mutual aid agreements via the National Resilience Programme, which shares specialist response assets across the country. Alongside these wider arrangements, we have local agreements in place with neighbouring fire and rescue services (Lincolnshire, Cambridgeshire and Suffolk) to ensure the fastest response to emergency calls and to share specialist assets.
- Working with other Fire and Rescues Services to improve interoperability. We are part of the East Coast and Hertfordshire Control Room Consortium, a group of fire and rescue service that are working together to standardise control room practices so that we can support each other in the event of major incidents. We make use of national operational and tactical guidance. We will be changing our communication systems as part of the national emergency services mobile communications programme (ESMCP).
- Increasing our collaboration with other emergency services. Our shared Communication and Control room with Norfolk Constabulary allows us to share information directly with our emergency service partners. We can also share operational intelligence and information on a daily basis directly between the two organisations. Managers are able to quickly offer advice and support to each other and share joint situational awareness with immediate effect due to working in the same building. We already had a strong working relationship with Norfolk Constabulary which has been built up over many years and since the move into the one Control room this has helped to strengthen that relationship and provides a better service for the communities of Norfolk and other partners. Further evidence of our collaborative work can be found in the annual [Police and Fire Collaboration Report](#).

OPERATIONAL ASSURANCE

Training and development

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

To ensure our firefighters maintain their competency in fighting fires we have built a live fire training unit at Scottow Enterprise Park. The unit opened in August 2016 and enables our firefighters to train in live fire conditions.

In the context of the recommendations made in the CFOA Firefit review, together with the changes to the pension scheme meaning that operational staff will be working longer, the Service recognises the importance of effectively managing and promoting Firefighter fitness and welfare. Our Physical Training Adviser is working proactively with individuals and stations to embed a culture of fitness and wellbeing.

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

- Level 3 and 4 BTEC technical certificates in Incident Command
- WDS new recruits are registered as Apprentices completing internal Gateway assessments before passing the accredited End Point Assessment through external accredited assessors
- Driving instructors are accredited through DVSA and must hold suitable qualifications to instruct and assess/qualify.
- Water Rescue course provision is accredited through Rescue 3 – instructors must be accredited to deliver various courses.
- Trauma Care (IEC) is accredited through Trauma Rescue Services – again, instructors must have accreditation that must be maintained through requalification.
- Instructors hold educational awards (levels 3 and 4) in Education and Training (formerly PTLLS)
- Assessors (AVA) and internal quality assurance (IQA) on formal qualifications is undertaken by qualified personnel.

Health and safety and other legislation

NFRS continually seek to comply with the Health and Safety at Work Act 1974 and other applicable health and safety legislation. Active health and safety management at all levels in the Service combined with routine performance monitoring and review are at the core of maintaining safe working, training and practices in place to respond effectively and safely. t environments for Service staff and those we assist and support. This is achieved through a combination of operational performance review and periodic pre planned audit of the Service's health and safety management system via regional peer challenge using the Royal Society for the Prevention of Accidents (RoSPA) Quality Safety Audit tool kit. This helps the Service to ensure that it has the right equipment.

In 2019/20 there were 13 reportable health and safety absences lasting more than 7 days – 8 more than last year

Improvements to accounting, governance and operational assurance

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

FUTURE DEVELOPMENTS

Accounting

Our [Integrated Risk Management Plan 2016-20](#) set out our plans for the time period. A dedicated Finance Business Manager (FBM) oversees our financial management to ensure that expected income growth and expenditure is correctly identified. The FBM is also a Director of Norfolk Safety (CIC) but does not have any specific responsibility around finances. The CIC uses an external company to audit and file accounts.

Senior Management

Following the permanent appointment of our Chief Fire Officer in 2019, an interim senior management team structure was established to manage the service whilst consultation was undertaken on a new structure. The selection of our Chief Fire Officer and our subsequent senior manager posts follow the requirement of the framework to ensure it is open to competition nationally.

Our [principle officer structure chart](#) can be found on our website.

Strategic Organisational Review

In part as a result of the HMICFRS inspection and report, we have set out a programme of service improvements (improvement action plan) and a strategic organisational review will be undertaken.

Following the HMICFRS inspection we have published an [improvement plan](#) which can be found on our website: [Link](#).

Ongoing Operational Assurance

With an ageing workforce and a number of senior officers due to retire in the coming years, **workforce and succession planning** continues to remain important. We will be looking at our plans for recruitment and retention of retained firefighters with a view to improving the availability of our emergency response resources.

AUTHORISATION

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

This Statement of Assurance was approved by the Authority at the Cabinet meeting on 3rd August 2020.

Margaret Dewsbury, Cabinet Member

Stuart Ruff, Chief Fire Officer