



Northamptonshire
Fire and Rescue Plan
2019-2021
A Safer Northamptonshire





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Foreword by the Police, Fire and Crime Commissioner

I stood as Police and Crime Commissioner in 2016 to make Northamptonshire safer. I stated during the campaign in 2016 that I believed pursuing the change of governance of the fire and rescue service from Northamptonshire County Council to the Police and Crime Commissioner was in the best interests of the communities of the county. On taking office, I continued to work closely with the County Council and the Fire and Rescue Service to develop a business case to change the governance and therefore, after a lot of hard work by all involved, I am delighted to be presenting to you the very first Fire and Rescue Plan for Northamptonshire.

I want to make it very clear that the change of governance is not about merging with the police, nor is it about building an empire. I truly believe that through closer working between the two services, better service can be delivered to keep our communities safe. I know that view is shared by our Chief Fire Officer.

The County Council have performed the role of the Fire and Rescue Authority admirably in very trying financial circumstances. Nonetheless, the legacy I inherit is one of underinvestment in the service, both in terms of firefighting and in the necessary infrastructure such as buildings and vehicles that enable an effective service to be delivered. This legacy is not one that I can change overnight but is something that I will address over the life of this plan.

My key first priority is to stabilise the budget of fire and rescue, stopping the further cuts that would have been inevitable within the county council environment. I will also begin to invest in the necessary capital programme to ensure that the equipment and buildings that firefighters use to keep you safe is fit for purpose. I believe that the service have done an amazing job in keeping the public safe through years of cuts to their budget. I will, over time, begin to reinvest in the service to ensure that the performance of the organisation continues to go from strength to strength.

I will also be working with the Chief Fire Officer and the Chief Constable of Northamptonshire Police to begin to develop opportunities for closer working between the services. Notably I intend to have a single estates strategy for the two organisations, wish to see a joint enabling services covering aspects such as finance and human resources, and also wish the two chiefs to bring forward operational opportunities to better share information and deliver services to the communities we all serve.

Yours

Stephen Mold

Police, Fire and Crime Commissioner for Northamptonshire

Foreword by the Chief Fire Officer

I am very proud to be writing this introduction as the first Chief Fire Officer of Northamptonshire Fire and Rescue Service under new our Governance arrangements. This significant and historic change is the culmination of 3 years of hard work by officers within the Office of the Police, Fire and Crime Commissioner (OPFCC) and Northamptonshire Fire and Rescue Service (NFRS). As such I am very much looking forward to working with the Police, Fire and Crime Commissioner and his office in order to deliver our strategic vision of “Making Northamptonshire Safer”.

The change of Governance aims to provide NFRS with a stable financial basis on which to plan for the long term whilst also increasing transparency and accountability to the public in line with the Governments Fire reform agenda, all of which will help us to provide a better service to the people of the County. Therefore the focus of this plan will be to develop a Fire Service for the future.

In order to do this we need to take into account the changing nature of the County both in terms of growth and infrastructure and also in terms of the proposed new local government structure. In addition a key focus of this plan will be partnership and in particular working with Northamptonshire Police in order to work on ways in which we can share buildings and services in order to provide a more efficient service to the public. All of which will allow us to re-invest in front line services, an area that has seen significant cuts in recent years under the previous Fire Authority.

In addition we will also need to deliver continuous improvement taking into account the outcomes of Her Majesty’s Inspectorate of Constabulary and Fire and Rescue Services (HMICFRS) inspection of the service, which was completed in late 2018 with the final report being available in June 2019.

This will be challenging and will involve some significant change to the way we operate and do our business. However it also presents us with a once in a generation opportunity to re-shape our organisation to better serve the communities of Northamptonshire.

This is an incredibly exciting time and working together with the PFCC, our staff and partners we are confident that we can develop a Fire Service for the future and deliver on our aim of “Making Northamptonshire Safer”.

Darren Dovey

Chief Fire Officer

Statement of Intent

1. The key focus for Fire and Rescue will be stabilisation of budgets and activities to begin to reinvest in frontline service delivery for Fire and Rescue to best meet current and emerging risks, as well as providing funding for investing in a sustainable capital programme to ensure that Firefighters have the equipment they need to perform their roles.
2. Ensure that Fire and Rescue can continue to be community-focused and have the appropriate resources to ensure delivery of their core emergency role.
3. Review the estate for Fire and Rescue in conjunction with the policing estate with the view to sharing buildings to maintain and increase emergency services presence in localities. This will include a new shared Headquarters at Wootton Hall.
4. Seek to bring together support services for police and fire and rescue to improve the effectiveness of the support to the frontline.
5. Build on existing collaborations between fire and rescue and other organisations in relation to community prevention and protection to help make communities safer.
6. Respond to and invest in to the areas of greatest risk outlined in the Integrated Risk Management Plan to better protect communities.
7. Explore the opportunity to bring fire and rescue and police control rooms together over the medium term.
8. Develop opportunities for income generation within Fire and Rescue to reinvest in frontline service delivery.
9. Engage with the public on matters related to the fire and rescue service to help shape better services for the communities we serve.
10. Northamptonshire Fire and Rescue Service and Northamptonshire Police will not merge. Each will retain their separate skills, uniforms and leadership including separate Chief Officers.

Mission

The mission for this Plan is to:

- Prevent fires and other emergencies to keep people safe
- Protect the public
- Stabilise the organisation

Underpinning this should be a culture of continuous improvement that fosters learning within and between organisations to best serve the people of Northamptonshire.

We should ensure the wellbeing of staff who do a difficult job so that they are better able to protect the public and deliver what is required of them.

Financial Outlook

The Fire and Rescue Plan is supported by a detailed Medium Term Financial plan as considered by the Police, Fire and Crime Panel at their meeting in February 2019. This plan highlighted that whilst there was a balanced budget for 2019-20, without savings or increased funding moving forwards, there would be shortfalls in future years.

The Police Fire and Crime Commissioner will work closely with the Chief Fire Officer to identify and realise any savings moving forwards, focusing on improved sharing of arrangements with the Police to reduce costs and not only meet savings but also to identify opportunities for future investment in the Fire Service.

This commitment is balanced with building a sustainable financial base, building the level of general and earmarked reserves to prudent levels to support the Fire Service and mitigate financial risks moving forwards.

The medium term Financial Plan is reviewed regularly and updated for pay, price and inflation changes in addition to revising the assumptions for grant and precept.

The Medium Term Financial plan and the Reserves Strategy are formally reviewed in line with the budget and precept and is included in the annual budget and precept report and is available on the Police, Fire and Crime Commissioner website.

Plan on a Page

Our Vision

Making Northamptonshire Safer

To save lives, reduce risk and contribute to the health and wellbeing of the communities in Northamptonshire
Working together to provide an excellent Fire and Rescue Service that everyone can be proud of



Our Values



Our Strategic Objectives

Keeping Our Communities Safe and Well

Keeping Our Staff Safe and Well

Making the best use of our Resources

Effectiveness

People

Efficiency

We will adapt our response to emergency incidents to meet changing demand

We will value our staff and provide health and wellbeing support

We will work with others to ensure efficient and effective use of funding

We will reduce fires and accidents in the home by educating and supporting people to be safe

We will continually develop our staff to ensure they are able to do their job

We will develop modern and flexible ways of working to meet community needs

We will minimise the likelihood and impact of fire in high risk premises through our inspection and enforcement work

We will commit to being a learning and listening organisation

We will work with our communities to improve diversity of our workforces and services

We will work with others to broaden our prevention activities to improve the wellbeing of our communities

We will provide suitable facilities to ensure our staff are able to do their job

We will communicate clearly and give people the opportunity to influence our service

We will make responding to medical emergencies part of our normal business so we can help more people

We will provide suitable vehicles, equipment and systems to support staff to do their job

We will work with volunteers to improve community safety

We will look for opportunities for income generation to support community safety

Our Priorities



Keeping Our Communities Safe and Well

The activities under the areas of focus will be driven by the risk information within the Integrated Risk Management Plan and the ambition to improve service to the public. The latest Plan is found here.

Our Areas of Focus	What we will do
Adapt response to meet changing demands	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The service will publish minimum standards of operational response that the public can expect from their Fire and Rescue Service. The PFCC expects these standards to improve over time. New models of resourcing will be considered to best match demand, resource levels and risk.
Reduce fires and accidents in the home	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Preventative activities will be targeted to communities and locations most at risk of fire and other accidents. This will include targeting specifically older age groups. Increase educative approaches to young people, reducing risk in these groups.
Minimise the likelihood and impact of fire in high risk premises	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Inspection work will be targeted to areas of highest risk including houses of multiple occupation. Increase the levels of enforcement work undertaken by the service to better protect the public from harm.
Broaden prevention activities to improve wellbeing of communities	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Consider the broadening of the current Home Fire Safety Checks to be a broader 'Safe and Well' approach to prevent harm to our communities whether through fire, accidents or crime. Increase educative programmes focussed on young people to build more resilient communities for the future.
Respond to broader public safety emergencies to help more people	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Embed the approach to responding to medical emergencies where the ambulance service are unable to do so, preventing loss of life. Consider opportunities for other forms of response support including helping to search for high-risk missing people.

Making the Best Use of Resources

Our Areas of Focus	What we will do
Ensure value for money through efficient and effective use of funding	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Hold the service to account for the use of money that is delegated to them, ensuring that the service is the most efficient and effective it can be, including measuring the service against a set of agreed outcomes. • Stabilise the service with longer term planning, building up reserves and the ability to invest in new capital schemes. • The current medium term financial plan can be found here
Develop modern and flexible ways of working to meet community needs	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Develop ways to enhance day time availability of crews to meet the risks outlined in the Integrated Risk Management Plan. • Develop the technology strategy for the service to be cloud-based enabling greater sharing of information within the service and across partners. • Review the requirements for the fire estate, in conjunction with the police but ensuring that operational need drives decisions. • Seek to build volunteering into the service as appropriate, notably building on existing youth engagement activities such as the Emergency Services Cadets. The Service will produce a Volunteering Strategy for approval by the PFCC.
Work with communities to improve diversity of our workforce and services	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Expect the Chief Fire Officer to bring forward by May 2019 a plan to embed the values within the culture of the organisation, ensuring the service is inclusive and fair to all sections of our communities and workforce. • Expect the Service to bring forward a plan to increase the diversity of the workforce within the first year of this Plan. • Engage diverse communities in the county to understand their views and requirements from the Service.
Communicate clearly and give people the opportunity to influence our service	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • An engagement and consultation strategy will be developed to ensure that the public have a more regular say in the fire and rescue service they receive than ever before. • The Service will produce a Communications Strategy to better explain to the public what they do.
Look for opportunities for income generation to support community safety	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Develop an Income Generation Strategy for approval and publication by the PFCC in the first year of the Plan.

Emergency Services Integration

There is a statutory duty to collaborate for the three emergency services. This means that the services should be actively seeking opportunities to work together to deliver more efficient and effective public services. In Northamptonshire we have gone further by bringing police and fire and rescue under my governance as the Police, Fire and Crime Commissioner.

My business case to take on the governance for fire and rescue was clear that I expected to see integration between police and fire and rescue to reinvest in frontline services. It is my expectation that the following areas will be delivered during the life of this plan:

Shared Enabling Services

It does not make sense that both police and fire and rescue have their own support services such as finance, human resources, ICT or facilities management. These services are essential to any organisation but do not require separate functions. I believe that by bringing enabling services together I can ensure a more effective service is provided to the frontlines of both organisations, providing them with the information they need, when they need it to make better decisions. I expect to see significant progress over the life of this plan.

Shared Estates Strategy

Together police and fire and rescue have in excess of 50 buildings. In many cases the two buildings are located in the same town within metres of each other. Every penny that is spent on maintaining the buildings is not spent on frontline services. Therefore it is my intention to develop a shared estates strategy that will reduce the duplication of buildings in the same locations so that police and fire colleagues increasingly share buildings.

A key part of the strategy will be to redevelop the Wootton Hall headquarters site to be a fit for purpose headquarters for both services, including seeking to develop a shared control room. Included in this redevelopment will be opportunities for ambulance to also co-locate.

Shared Prevention Approaches

The most vulnerable in our communities are vulnerable to more than one thing. I want to see the Chief Constable and Chief Fire Officer bring forward a new prevention strategy and plan across the two organisations to best support the most vulnerable in our communities.

Interoperability

Police, fire and rescue and ambulance have been working on various interoperability matters since 2013. I want to see this activity increased over the life of the plan and expect to see further ideas brought forward by police and fire and rescue, involving ambulance as appropriate, to provide more efficient and effective services to the public.



Collaboration

Whilst there will be a presumption over collaborating with police and/or ambulance as a starting point, this does not preclude other collaborations.

Other agencies in Northamptonshire

Fire and Rescue will continue to play an active role in the Local Resilience Forum and community safety partnerships in the county working with local authorities and other agencies to keep people safe.

The service will also work with partners to best prepare for local government reorganisation to ensure that the communities we serve receive the best possible service.

Collaboration with other Fire and Rescue Services

Whilst over the medium term there is a desire to bring police and fire and rescue control rooms together in Northamptonshire that will be considered and planned so that it has the least impact on the existing collaborations. Nothing will be done without working closely with Warwickshire Fire and Rescue, with whom there is a fallback relationship and it is intended that, in the medium term, that will continue.

National Perspective

Northamptonshire Fire and Rescue already plays a role in matters of national emergency. Existing mutual aid relationships (whereby services support each other in the event of a major incident) will be retained to ensure that Northamptonshire plays its part in national emergencies and has support from other services when they need it.

The government produces a National Framework for Fire and Rescue and this Plan both responds to and reflects the requirements of that Framework. Locally the developments in the service will also be mindful of the national fire reform agenda and seek to ensure that the very best practice is brought to the county.

Holding to Account and Scrutiny

The Police, Fire and Crime Commissioner is required, on behalf of the public, to hold the Chief Fire Officer to account for the delivery of an efficient and effective fire and rescue service.

Holding the Chief Fire Officer to Account

I meet regularly informally with the Chief Fire Officer to provide oversight and to discuss the strategic direction of the organisation. I formally hold the Chief Fire Officer to account through a bi-monthly Accountability Board. The meetings are minuted and this information will be put onto my website to ensure transparency of this formal process.

A detailed performance framework will be developed based on the outcome measures expressed within the Integrated Risk Management Plan. I will publish this information on a quarterly basis.

In addition, I use national assessments including Her Majesty's Inspectorate of Constabulary and Fire and Rescue Services reports to assess relative performance of the service. I will also ensure that the service adheres to the duties described in the Equality Act 2010, including the need to publish specified information.

I will have a similar process and set of expectations for the Chief Constable in my role as Police, Fire and Crime Commissioner.

Scrutiny of My Role

The Police, Fire and Crime Panel are there to scrutinise decisions I take. I will ensure that I work positively with the Panel to ensure that decisions and the reasons for them are transparent and that the Panel has the opportunity to scrutinise my decisions. I will continue to build on the positive working relationship I have with the Panel as I take on the additional responsibilities in relation fire and rescue.



Stephen Mold

Police, Fire and Crime Commissioner
for Northamptonshire