



Making Cheshire Safer

Our plans for 2019-20

www.cheshirefire.gov.uk

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Foreword

Fire and rescue services across the country are undergoing a significant period of change. The Government's fire reform agenda, outlined in more detail further in the document, sets out a clear direction of travel and challenges for the sector to ensure services are effective, accountable, transparent and reflective of the diverse communities it serves. This is underpinned by a new statutory inspection regime and a refreshed national framework that sets out the overall strategic direction for fire and rescue authorities, alongside certain expectations and requirements.

One such requirement is for fire authorities to produce an Integrated Risk Management Plan (IRMP), which assesses local fire and rescue related risks and details how these will be addressed. This draft IRMP outlines the key risks and influences facing Cheshire and how the Authority is currently structured to address them.

The draft IRMP also highlights the work which is currently underway to review how the Authority can be best placed to provide fire and rescue services to the community of Cheshire in the future. The outcomes of this review will be subject to consultation and outlined in future plans.

We are keen to ensure you get involved and let us know your views on how your fire and rescue service is provided. Please use the details on page 17 to get in touch and share your comments.

Mark Cashin
Chief Fire Officer and Chief Executive

Councillor Bob Rudd
Fire Authority Chair

Your Service

Overview

Cheshire Fire Authority is the publicly accountable body consisting of 23 elected councillors from the four council areas of Cheshire East, Cheshire West and Chester, Halton and Warrington. The Fire Authority oversees the fire and rescue service on behalf of the communities of Cheshire. You can find details of the Fire Authority Members via the following link: www.cheshirefire.gov.uk/about-us/fire-authority

Cheshire Fire and Rescue Service is led by the Chief Fire Officer/Chief Executive and the Service Management Team. You can find out about the Service Management Team through this link www.cheshirefire.gov.uk/contact-us/management-information. The Service is split into four different functions and is supported by support services provided by Cheshire Constabulary. Details are outlined over the page.

The Service operates from 28 fire stations across Cheshire, staffed in a number of different ways to reflect local risks and demands. The centre spread of this document contains a map showing where our stations are located across Cheshire.

The Service also operates three community safety centres; three fire protection offices; a joint headquarters with Cheshire Police, a training centre and workshops in Winsford, and a new safety and life skills centre in Lymm called Safety Central.

The Service's emergency call handling function is provided by North West Fire Control, based in Lingley Mere in Warrington. This is a collaboration between four fire and rescue services providing a control room function for Cheshire, Cumbria, Greater Manchester and Lancashire.

Service Delivery

The department encompasses the organisations' frontline emergency response functions and fire stations. Further details on how the emergency cover is provided across Cheshire can be found on pages 8-9, at the centre of this document or on our website www.cheshirefire.gov.uk

Operational Policy and Assurance

The department provides operational and incident command training to our firefighters and develops operational policies, plans and procedures. It also manages and maintains our fleet of vehicles, tests and develops new equipment and oversees the provision of health, safety and wellbeing for the organisation.

Protection and Organisational Performance

The department is responsible for the Service's fire protection activities and ensuring non-residential premises comply with fire safety legislation. The department also investigates the causes of fires; works to reduce the impact of deliberate fires on the community and leads on organisational performance and our work with Her Majesty's Inspectorate of Constabulary and Fire and Rescue Services (HMICFRS).

Joint Corporate Services

All of the functions provided by the Service are assisted by a range of corporate services including human resources, communications and engagement, finance, procurement, stores and legal services. Most of this is delivered to both Cheshire Police and Cheshire Fire and Rescue Service through joint teams based at the shared Police and Fire headquarters at Clemonds Hey, Winsford.

Our Risks and Influences

The Service uses its Community Risk Management model (CRM) to assess all foreseeable fire and rescue related risks that could affect its communities and then puts in place arrangements to mitigate these risks, either through adjusting existing provision, more effective collaboration and partnership working, or building new capability.

The CRM model involves detailed risk analysis, using a range of information to generate a risk profile across Cheshire, such as incident and response data; national and local statistics; site-specific risk information, local intelligence, feedback and the results of computer simulations and modelling. Officers consider all of the information then apply professional judgement to decide upon the optimum provisions and services required to reduce the risks, which are then delivered through the Service's prevention, protection and response departments.

Effective response to some of the risks requires a partnership approach between other emergency services, local authorities, health providers and partner agencies. These partners are brought together through Cheshire Resilience Forum (CRF) to prepare and plan for responding to a range of emergencies. We regularly test these plans with partners through joint training exercises.

Local resilience forums such as the CRF are required to produce a Community Risk Register (CRR), which highlights potential risks facing the area. The CRR for Cheshire can be accessed via the CRF website <http://cheshireresilience.org.uk>. The risks outlined over the page include some of those identified within the CRR, as well as more specific fire and rescue risks and influences.

The Risks We Face

The service responds to a wide range of risks, from local fires and road traffic collisions to terrorist attacks and major disasters.

The risks facing the service are diverse. Cheshire has an ageing population. At present, 21% of residents in Cheshire are aged over 65 and the elderly population is expected to continue to increase; with more than double the current number of residents aged over 80 by 2030. There is a clear link between old age and vulnerability, particularly from fire. In fact, those over 80 are significantly more likely to die in the event of a fire than other age groups.

Flooding is a major risk facing some areas of Cheshire. Parts of major conurbations in Warrington and Chester lie within a flood warning zone. Two major rivers (Mersey and Dee) traverse the North of Cheshire and other rivers such as the Weaver, Dane and Bollin feature across the rest of the county.

The impact of climate change increases the likelihood of extreme weather events, such as significant rainfall. As well as affecting coastal areas, rivers and canals, this can lead to surface water flooding impacting upon people and property. Climate change can also contribute towards the other extremity of heatwaves and prolonged dry weather. Such circumstances could lead to fires involving grass, heath and moorland; which can lead to large scale incidents that require significant resources over an extended period of time.

The transport networks change and develop. Four major motorway networks cross Cheshire, spanning the length and breadth of the county, as well as 877km of urban and rural 'A roads'. Cheshire's major road networks handles over 5.9bn vehicle miles per year. These are also supplemented by smaller country lanes and suburban streets. Cheshire is bordered by three international airports, with the second runway of Manchester Airport lying within Cheshire itself. In addition, the West Coast Main Line and other rail routes run through the county and there are canal networks stretching over 100km in length.

In addition to retail and heritage centres, Cheshire is also home to a range of industry. This includes major vehicle manufacturers and associated supply chains, pharmaceutical companies, logistics, warehousing and distribution and a variety of petro-chemical sites.

Certain industrial sites are subject to specific Control of Major Accident Hazard (COMAH) Regulations. Cheshire has 28 Upper-Tier COMAH sites, primarily centred around the petro-chemical industry on the banks of the River Mersey.

To manage these risks, the Service collects information on significant risks and uses this to develop pre-determined attendance standards to ensure the right number of fire engines and supporting resources are in place to respond dependent on the incident in question. In addition, the Service has in place a Cheshire standard to respond to life risk incidents (e.g. house fires and road traffic collisions) within ten minutes, on 80% of occasions. During 2017-18, the Service's performance against this standard was 88%.

Responding to Risks

The risks highlighted previously lead to the Service responding to a range of incidents, from house fires and road traffic collisions to rescues of people and animals or industrial incidents. The Service does this with its 35 fire engines operating from 28 fire stations across Cheshire. The infographic on the following page shows the expected annual demand on the Service in responding to a range of incidents.

Thankfully, most incidents attended by the Service (77%) are small and able to be dealt with by one fire engine. However the Service does plan for, and respond to, bigger incidents such as serious house fires; fires in commercial and industrial premises; road traffic collisions and other incidents including flooding or those involving hazardous materials. The most significant incidents - those requiring ten or more fire engines - occur relatively infrequently, over the last five years averaging at three such incidents per year.

The Fire Authority regularly monitors the performance of the organisation through its Performance and Overview Committee. Members of the Authority also monitor performance through Member/Officer buddying arrangements and the use of Member Champions for thematic issues such as health and safety or equality and inclusion. Performance is tracked using a mix of agreed performance indicators and local targets. The infographic below details our 2017-18 performance in some of our key areas.

Making Cheshire Safer

The Authority needs to balance the provision of fire and rescue services across the whole of Cheshire according to its resources and local risks. The map below outlines how emergency response functions are provided across the county.

In addition to its fire stations, there are three local community safety and fire protection offices across Cheshire. There is also a training centre, workshops and shared headquarters, all in Winsford. In addition, the Authority operates its interactive and immersive education and lifeskills facility at Lymm, Safety Central. Please visit www.safetycentral.org.uk for more information.

The Authority has mutual aid agreements with neighbouring fire authorities to provide assistance over the border or within Cheshire. For example, firefighters will assist in the Merseyside area when required, while Merseyside firefighters will provide cover into the Neston area.

Wholetime

A wholetime station is where firefighters operate on station 24 hours a day. There are currently nine fire stations operating this system across Cheshire.

On-Call

On-call stations are operated by firefighters who respond to emergency calls via an alerter. On-call firefighters will either live or work in the local community near to the station. There are currently 13 on-call fire stations across Cheshire. If you are interested in becoming an on-call firefighter, please visit www.cheshirefire.gov.uk/jobs/on-call-firefighter-recruitment

Day Crewing

During daytime the station is crewed by wholetime firefighters, who also live next to the station to provide emergency cover overnight. The day-crewing system currently operates in Congleton, Northwich and Winsford fire stations.

Nucleus

Stations operating the nucleus duty system are crewed by wholetime firefighters during day-time hours and then by on-call firefighters overnight. Currently, the nucleus duty system is operated at Birchwood, Macclesfield and Wilmslow fire stations.

Keeping Our Community Safe

The previous section outlined the key risks and issues facing the Service, and Cheshire as a whole. The following section will provide an explanation of how the Service is structured to address and mitigate these risks.

Service Delivery

The Service operates several duty systems across the county to balance its resources according to risk. The map of Cheshire on the previous page provides more detail on which duty system operates at each particular station.

Despite reduced funding from central government, the Authority has undertaken a significant programme of work over the last five years to transform the organisation in order to effectively and efficiently respond to the risks it faces; while maintaining the provision of its 35 fire engines across Cheshire. This programme of change has included:

The construction of four new fire stations to spread resources and improve response times across a number of areas in Cheshire. This has also enabled the Authority to relocate some of its specialist assets to strategic locations to access motorway networks and wider parts of the county more effectively.

Changes to crewing arrangements such as the duty system we use to crew some fire engines; riding with four firefighters on fire engines; introducing 12 hour shifts on our wholetime duty system and new agreements covering our nucleus and day crewing duty systems.

Increasing the number of firefighters trained to effect rescues from water, expanding the Authority's capability to respond to risks such as flooding and water incidents.

Investing in new kit and personal protective equipment to make our firefighters safer and improving the way in which we respond to emergencies; such as replacement helmets and more effective battery-operated cutting gear for road traffic collisions.

Prevention

To reduce the risk of fire and improve outcomes for residents across Cheshire, the Authority worked with partners to expand on its Home Safety Assessment programme to deliver health information to residents alongside traditional fire safety advice.

With the consent of residents, firefighters and advocates can also refer individuals on to particular agencies for support in areas including bowel cancer screening; reducing their alcohol intake; stopping smoking; preventing slips, trips and falls and testing for atrial fibrillation (a condition which can lead to cardiac arrests or strokes). Our programme has been recognised nationally on several occasions as an example of providing an innovative approach to improving outcomes for local residents.

The infographic below provides information on the outcomes of the Service's Safe and Well programme for 2017/18. The Service has targeted to complete 40,000 Safe and Well visits during 2018/19 and will also undertake an evaluation of the initiative.

The Authority is now in its 25th year of delivering the Prince's Trust TEAM Programme for 16 to 25 year olds. Alongside the Prince's Trust, the Authority also delivers RESPECT and Primary RESPECT programmes to encourage positive behaviours in schoolchildren at risk of exclusion. Cadet units are based at most fire stations across the county, providing young people with the opportunity to gain skills and qualifications.

The Authority has demonstrated its commitment to prevention by building an immersive safety and lifeskills centre, Safety Central, in Lymm. Through interactive learning, the centre equips young people and other groups - such as carers - with skills to lead safer lives, thus reducing demand on public services. More information can be found through the Safety Central website www.safetycentral.org.uk

The Prevention department coordinates the Authority's approach to delivering road safety advice. It delivers programmes such as Drive Survive; Biker Down and also Driver/Rider Engagement Days in conjunction with partners. Events are targeted at particular vulnerable groups such as young drivers or motorcyclists. Additionally, the Authority is commissioned by Cheshire East Council to deliver road safety education on its behalf.

The Authority also runs a successful volunteer programme, with volunteers assisting in a number of areas including maintain our heritage vehicles, working with young people and assisting in the delivery of safety events.

Protection

Our Protection department approaches its inspection and enforcement work using a nationally recognised risk based inspection programme. Inspection work is focussed on premises where the risk to life is greatest.

The Authority's focus is on helping businesses to fulfil their fire safety responsibilities. It has a dedicated Business Safety Team, which proactively supports businesses with advice to make their premises safe from fire. The team achieves this through working with local partners and regulators and through engaging with bodies such as chambers of commerce.

Where businesses fail to take their fire safety responsibilities seriously, the Authority will take formal action for breaches of the Regulatory Reform (Fire Safety) Order 2005. In considering taking legal proceedings, the Authority applies a public interest test to cases. This will take into account issues such as the seriousness of the breach of the Order, the potential risk to the public and whether prosecution would be a proportionate course of action. This approach has led to the Authority having a track record of successful prosecutions; resulting in a number of substantial fines and a custodial sentence.

The department also works to reduce the impact of deliberate fires on the community. The Authority works alongside Cheshire Police to investigate arson incidents and helps to gather evidence to enable the prosecution of offenders. It also works with other partner agencies to reduce anti-social behaviour, which is closely linked to incidents of arson.

The Protection department is also leading on a campaign to promote the use of sprinklers in commercial and domestic premises. The Sprinklers Save Lives campaign is a year-long initiative to encourage the use of sprinkler systems and highlight their benefits in protecting life and property.

Following the tragic fire at Grenfell Tower in June 2017, the Authority revisited each of the high rises premises within Cheshire to inspect fire safety measures and check for the presence of any aluminium composite material (ACM) cladding on properties. None of the premises inspected were found to have the same type of cladding as at Grenfell. It also re-emphasised its existing high-rise sprinkler initiative, which offers some funding to providers of high-rise residential premises to help install sprinkler systems.

The Authority is also conducting a review of the Protection department to ensure it is able to respond to future demands which may arise as a result of changes to fire safety legislation which follow the Hackitt Review and Public Inquiry concerning the Grenfell Tower fire.

Developing the Organisation

Throughout the coming year, key areas for taking the organisation forward will be through prioritising engagement with staff, progressing the development of a new training centre and embedding new collaborative arrangements for support services, which are being delivered by Cheshire Constabulary.

Our People

As highlighted through documents such as the Fire and Rescue National Framework, Thomas Review and the Local Government Association's Fire Vision 2024, a key challenge for the fire sector is workforce transformation. Key to this is to drive change through improving workplace culture; engagement with staff and ensuring organisations are reflective of their community.

During 2018/19, the Authority has been progressing action plans to address the outcomes of the 2017 staff engagement survey. In the coming year, a follow up staff survey will be launched to gauge progress on improving staff engagement and workplace culture.

July 2018 saw the Fire Authority undergo its first inspection from Her Majesty's Inspectorate of Constabulary and Fire and Rescue Services (HMICFRS). The outcomes from this inspection are due to be reported around October 2018, with a subsequent action plan to be developed to address findings and areas for improvement which have been highlighted by HMICFRS.

The Authority is committed to being an open, inclusive employer. It is proud to have been named in the Top 100 employers within the Stonewall Workplace Equality Index for the past six years and has been the best performing emergency service in the country for the past three years. This demonstrates its commitment to the lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender community. It will continue to support positive action and other community events to help encourage recruitment from under-represented groups, such as women and black and ethnic minority residents, to make the organisation more representative of the community.

Collaboration

The Policing and Crime Act 2017 places a duty on all emergency services to explore how they can better work together. Prior to this, Cheshire had already embarked upon significant collaboration with partners to establish North West Fire Control.

Additionally, the Fire Authority will continue to employ staff as part of multi-agency teams working with local partners under the Complex Dependencies Programme.

In Cheshire, the PCC and Fire Authority work closely together to foster greater joint working. This has already resulted in a major programme of collaboration to provide joint corporate service to both fire and police from a shared headquarters building. These new arrangements will be embedded during the coming year.

Further opportunities are also being explored, including the creation of a joint police and fire station on the existing site of Crewe Fire Station.

Training and Development

Subject to planning approval, during this year the Authority will begin construction work on its new operational training centre, based at its site in Sadler Road, Winsford.

While the success of our prevention work has led to a long-term reduction in fires, this does mean that firefighters are more reliant on training and simulation to develop their learning and experience instead of operational firefighting. The training centre, though a significant investment at £11m, will provide firefighters with realistic and immersive training to safely and effectively deal with a wide range of incidents that may occur across Cheshire.

Alongside the development of the new training centre, the Authority will review the duty system currently utilised by its operational training team. This will enable the Authority to ensure it can meet the training needs of firefighters across a range of duty systems and maximise usage of the new facility.

Our Finances

Cheshire Fire Authority is funded through two main sources of income: a grant from central government and through its share of council tax, called its precept. Council tax makes up around 65% of the Authority's funding with government grant comprising the other 35%.

For the last full financial year, 2017/18, this resulted in a budget of £41.2m. The graphic on the right of this page outlines how this budget is split between the Authority's various functions. Further detail can be found in the Authority's 2017/18 Statement of Accounts, accessible via our website www.cheshirefire.gov.uk

As part of its budget management, the Authority produces a Medium Term Financial Plan (MTFP), covering a five year period. The MTFP is updated regularly to reflect emerging, local, regional and national issues and makes informed assumptions about issues such as future pay, inflation, government funding and council tax levels. Current assumptions include an annual increase in its precept of 2.99%, an annual pay increase of 2% for staff and 2% for non-pay inflation. The MTFP can be viewed on our website.

Using the assumptions outlined above, the Authority will be required to make savings of approximately £1.4m up to 2020/2021. However, it is important to note that this figure may adjust dependent on factors such as government spending decisions or having to fund pay increases in excess of the assumed level, should they not be funded from central government.

In its 2018 Spring Statement, the Government announced that it will conduct a Spending Review to be published in Autumn 2019. This will outline the future direction of central funding for fire and rescue services beyond 2020/2021 and will help to inform the Authority's plans for the future.

To support these plans, the Authority has begun to develop a new approach to how it develops and manages its budgets so that it focuses on the key priorities of the organisation and activities which have the most significant outcomes for the local community. It will also consider establishing a separate trading company. This would enable the generation of income from the supplying of services to third parties, which in turn could help to fund certain activities currently provided by the Authority.

Our Future

The Authority has commenced work on a 'Whole Service Review' to align the provision of services to future resources and priorities. This review is currently ongoing and will set the future direction of the Service for the period 2020-2024. The review will be developed using our CRM model and will be informed by incident data, risks, statistics, information sources and feedback, as well as the outlook for public finances.

The whole service review will also incorporate and expand on previous reviews, including the crewing arrangements at Wilmslow and Penketh fire stations; the provision of the Authority's third aerial appliance and the second fire engine at Ellesmere Port. It will also include the outcomes of the review of the Protection department.

While work will progress this year, the outcomes of this review will feature in the draft IRMP for 2020/2021, which will be subject to public consultation during the Autumn/Winter of 2019.

During 2019/20, the Authority will continue its programme of work to improve the on-call duty system. This programme encompasses several themes including recruitment, retention and ensuring that procedures and processes are updated to reflect the needs of its on-call firefighters.

Alongside its revenue budget, the Authority has a significant capital programme which is being progressed. As well as regular capital spending on things like fire engines and equipment there are also particular programmes underway, such as the new training centre. Taken together, the training centre and projects outlined below will be funded using a significant amount of the Authority's reserves and also public borrowing, where necessary.

Subject to planning approval, during 2019/20 the Authority will commence work to replace the existing fire station at Chester, on the existing site on St Anne Street. It will also move to create a joint fire and police facility on the site of Crewe Fire Station, as outlined previously in the document. In addition, the Authority is planning to commence a multi-year programme of modernisation across its property portfolio to ensure its fire stations and other buildings meet the needs and requirements of a modern fire and rescue service.

Involving You

We are keen to know what you think about our plans and how we provide fire and rescue services across Cheshire.

We will be consulting on our draft IRMP for 13 weeks between Monday 1st October 2018 and Friday 4th January 2019. We will be holding consultation events in key locations across Cheshire, details of which will be posted on our website alongside further information and a link to an online survey.

The results of the consultation will then be presented for consideration at the meeting of Cheshire Fire Authority on Wednesday 13th February 2019. Subject to members consideration and approval in light of the feedback received, then the final Plan will take effect from 1st April 2019.

If you have any comments on the draft IRMP, please use one of the methods below to get in touch:

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Tel: 01606 868700
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