

NORTHAMPTONSHIRE POLICE, FIRE & CRIME PANEL
REPORT TO THE POLICE, FIRE & CRIME COMMISSIONER
FOR NORTHAMPTONSHIRE

5TH AUGUST 2020

Subject:	Review of the Police, Fire & Crime Commissioner for Northamptonshire's Fire & Rescue Statement for 2020
Recommendations:	That the Police, Fire & Crime Commissioner: a) Considers this report by the Police, Fire & Crime Panel arising from its review of his Fire & Rescue Statement carried out in accordance with the Fire & Rescue Services Act 2004 Schedule A2 Section 5. b) Provides the Panel with a response to this report and its recommendations set out in section 4 in accordance with the Police Reform & Social Responsibility Act 2011 Section 12 Paragraph 4(a).

1. Purpose of Report

1.1 The report is intended to set out the results of the review by the Northamptonshire Police, Fire & Crime Panel of the Police, Fire & Crime Commissioner for Northamptonshire's Fire & Rescue Statement for 2020.

2. Background

2.1 With effect from 1st January 2019 the Police, Fire & Crime Commissioner for Northamptonshire took responsibility for the governance of Northamptonshire Fire & Rescue Service, as the Northamptonshire Commissioner Fire & Rescue Authority.

2.2 The Fire & Rescue Services Act 2004 requires the appropriate Secretary of State to produce a Fire & Rescue National Framework setting out the priorities and objectives for Fire & Rescue authorities in connection with the discharge of their functions. Every Fire & Rescue authority must have regard to the National Framework in carrying out its functions and must publish an annual statement (the Fire & Rescue Statement) outlining how the authority and its Fire & Rescue service have had regard to:

- a) the National Framework
- b) the Integrated Risk Management Plan (IRMP) agreed by the authority
- c) the Fire & Rescue Plan, or similar strategic plan, agreed by the authority

2.3 The Fire & Rescue Statement must also provide assurance to the community and to the government on financial, governance and operational matters.

- 2.4 Schedule A2 Section 5 of the Fire & Rescue Services Act 2004, as inserted by the Policing & Crime Act 2017, specifies that when a Police, Fire & Crime Commissioner (PFCC) produces a Fire & Rescue Statement it must be sent to the relevant Police, Fire & Crime Panel as soon as practicable.
- 2.5 The Police, Fire & Crime Panel must arrange a public meeting of the Panel to be held as soon as practicable after the Panel receives the Statement.
- 2.6 The PFCC must attend the Panel meeting to present the Statement and to answer such questions from the Panel about it as Panel members think appropriate.
- 2.7 The Panel must review the Statement and provide a written response outlining any recommendations to the PFCC. The report or recommendations of the Panel must be published. The PFCC must provide a response to the Panel and must also publish that response.

3. Review of the Fire & Rescue Statement

- 3.1 The Northamptonshire Police, Fire & Crime Panel met in public on 16th July 2020 to review the Police, Fire & Crime Commissioner for Northamptonshire's Fire & Rescue Statement for 2020.
- 3.2 In presenting the Statement the Commissioner noted that it was the second he had produced since taking responsibility for the governance of Northamptonshire Fire & Rescue Service (NFRS). The Commissioner highlighted that NFRS had been subject to revisits by Her Majesty's Inspectorate of Constabulary and Fire & Rescue Services (HMICFRS) in June 2019 and March 2020 to review progress in addressing specific areas of concern resulting from inspection in November 2018. HMICFRS had recognised improvements made and concluded that no further revisits were required. The Commissioner also drew attention to the work being done by NFRS personnel as part of the continuing response to COVID-19. The Statement identified that the Northamptonshire Commissioner Fire & Rescue Authority had assurance arrangements in place that were considered to meet the requirements of the Fire & Rescue National Framework. The Commissioner commended the Statement to the Panel.
- 3.3 The Panel then considered the position reported in the Fire & Rescue Statement and questioned the Commissioner on the level of assurance it provided, with particular reference to operational assurance.
- 3.4 Panel members welcomed the improvements in NFRS performance reflected in the fact that HMICFRS would not be carrying out further revisits. Improvements in fire engine availability should give reassurance to Northamptonshire residents. Better performance against the community outcome measures for NFRS staff sickness and sickness absence was also welcome. These developments indicated that NFRS was rebuilding its capacity again after the challenges experienced in recent years. A lot of hard work had been done since the governance transfer and those involved should take pride in the progress made in a relatively short time.
- 3.5 A Panel member subsequently expressed concern that the Fire & Rescue Statement referred to HMICFRS writing to the Chief Fire Officer to state that staff were not all up to

date with safety-critical training and questioned the impact of this issue on operational effectiveness. The Commissioner clarified that this reference related to an outcome of the original inspection in 2018. At that point NFRS had not been effective enough at documenting that safety-critical training had been done. This matter had since been addressed and HMICFRS no longer saw it as an area of concern. Panel members proposed that this section of the Statement should be amended to make it clearer that the concerns raised by HMICFRS were not current.

3.6 A Panel member noted that the information on performance against community outcome measures included in the Fire & Rescue Statement showed that the number of accidental fires in dwellings, the number of deaths and injuries arising from accidental fires in dwellings and the number of non-domestic fires had all increased in 2019/20 compared to 2018/19. It was questioned whether the causes of these increases were understood and whether an action plan was in place to address the situation. The Commissioner advised that he would pursue this matter with the Chief Fire Officer through the set accountability process. At the same time, Panel members acknowledged that the reported change in performance reflected that there had been one death due to an accidental fire in 2019/20 compared to none in the previous year. Population growth could also have an effect on performance.

4. Outcomes of the Review

4.1 At the conclusion of discussion the Panel agreed the following resolutions:

- a) **That the Panel recognises and commends the improvements in Northamptonshire Fire & Rescue Service’s performance achieved during 2019/20.**
- b) **That the Panel recommends that the wording of paragraph 6.10 of the Fire & Rescue Statement for 2019/20 be revised to make it clear that Her Majesty’s Inspectorate of Constabulary and Fire & Rescue Services no longer have cause for concern regarding recording of safety-critical training by Northamptonshire Fire & Rescue Service.**

Author:	Name: James Edmunds Team: Democratic Services, Northamptonshire County Council
Contact details:	Tel: 07500 605276 Email: jedmunds@northamptonshire.gov.uk
Background Papers:	Police Reform & Social Responsibility Act 2011 Policing & Crime Act Act 2017 Northamptonshire Police, Fire & Crime Panel Rules of Procedure