

Annual Report and Statement of Assurance for Cambridgeshire and Peterborough Fire Authority 2023-2024

Welcome to the Statement of Assurance and Annual Report for Cambridgeshire and Peterborough Fire Authority.

The report covers the financial year 2023/2024 and summarises our performance over the 12 months, including how we spent public money in delivering priority services. It features highlights of the year, case studies and information about how we are working in collaboration with partners to improve our service to you.

The report also incorporates the Fire Authority's Statement of Assurance. Under the Fire and Rescue National Framework for England, fire and rescue authorities must provide annual assurance on financial, governance and operational matters.

This document is designed to be read electronically and as such has been checked to ensure it is accessible for as many readers as possible. Links to other documents and websites should be clearly identifiable (however these links will be lost if the report is printed).

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1. The year at a glance

Here are some highlights from the year 2023/2024.

April

The Service hosted a school challenge for young people themed around STEM (science, technology, engineering and mathematics). Groups from schools across the county were given three months to design and build their version of a fire engine, which would deliver water to a model of a house. The teams came together at Huntingdon Fire Station to see who could deliver the most water through their fire engines. They also had to deliver a presentation to a panel about their design. The event also saw the participants take part in a variety of activities including learning about the Service's drone and incident command unit, using a thermal imaging camera to find hidden objects in a training building. They also learnt first aid from the co-responder team at RAF Wittering and received a talk from Cambridgeshire Constabulary.

Two on-call firefighters ran the London Marathon wearing their fire kit, to raise money for The Fire Fighters Charity. Littleport firefighter Tom Bridge-Street and Crew Commander Roland Rimmer from Manea Fire Station tackled the 26-mile run, donning their firefighting personal protective equipment and breathing apparatus, which weighs around 20kg. Together they raised more than £3,000 for the charity.

May

A Cambridgeshire fire officer celebrated four decades of dedicated service to the community. Station Commander Clive Allen reached the incredible milestone of 40 years as an operational firefighter and celebrated with officers and staff at Chatteris Fire Station.

June

As the Service began to look ahead and draft its plan for the next five years, residents and business owners were encouraged to give their views around risk and response to help shape the next Community Risk Management Plan (CRMP). A consultation was launched giving people across the county the opportunity to have their say on the future priorities of the Service. More than 1,000 responses were received during the consultation.

A campaign to recruit more wholetime firefighters was launched. Those interested were encouraged to attend information workshops and events to have a go at different firefighting activities, as well as finding out more about the role of a modern-day firefighter.

Messages urging people to take care when charging lithium-ion batteries were promoted following a tragic house fire in Cambridge in which a mother and her two children lost their lives when a charging e-bike battery exploded and caused a fire which spread rapidly.

July

Working with the Cambridgeshire and Peterborough Vision Zero Partnership, the community fire safety team hosted seminars aimed at Driving for Better Business. The initiative provides tools and resources to help businesses improve their management of work-related road risk and educate their staff about general road safety.

Hundreds of young people were welcomed to fire stations as Safety Zones were held for the first time since the pandemic. More than 300 school children visited St Neots Fire Station over several days, where they were educated on a variety of topics including road safety, CPR, fire safety and staying safe online. A similar event was held in Cambridge a few weeks later.

August

Following an inspection earlier in the year, His Majesty's Inspectorate of Constabulary and Fire and Rescue Services (HMICFRS) assessed the Service as Outstanding in one of eleven criteria categories. The inspection team gave the Service the highest score possible for how it manages its resources, highlighting innovative practice for its 'comprehensive financial and resourcing plans'. The Service also received six Goods, three Adequates and one Requires Improvement. More information about the inspection can be found on page 39.

September

The Service stepped up its campaign to encourage residents to charge lithium-ion batteries safely by launching a Take Charge and Be Safe campaign to help keep people's homes and families safe from fire. The campaign encouraged people to take some simple safety steps when using electrical devices, especially those with Lithium-Ion batteries, including only charging when awake and alert.

Changes in fire safety legislation were highlighted to local businesses by the Service's Fire Protection team. Officers connected with business owners around the county to explain how the changes to the Fire Safety Order impacted them and what actions they needed to take.

October

Storm Babet hit the county with heavy rain causing a huge spike in 999 calls. The Service's Combined Fire Control received more than 1,500 calls in a 24 hour period across Cambridgeshire and Suffolk, their busiest ever period, which exceeded the summer heatwave of July 2022.

November

Her Royal Highness The Princess Royal officially opened the new Huntingdon Fire Station and Service Training Centre with the unveiling of a plaque. More than 100 people, including colleagues, contractors and local civic dignitaries attended the opening, which included a tour of the facilities and demonstrations by firefighters and training centre instructors showing rope rescue, road traffic collision and large animal rescue techniques.

December

A group of Fenland young people benefitted from fire service training to help develop team working skills, increase self-esteem and confidence, and understanding the consequences of risk-taking decision making as they took part in a Firebreak course. Led by the Service's Community Development Instructors, the group learned first aid skills as well as how to use hose reels, ladders and breathing apparatus, through workshops and drill yard activities. The programme ended with a pass out parade in front of their families, carers and school representatives and well as local councillors and dignitaries.

Cambridge firefighters had a busy Christmas Day as they were called out to several house fires. The crews from red watch responded to a fire in the roof of a house and a fire involving cooking.

January

It was a busy start to the new year with two large house fires in Peterborough and March, both of which needed over 20 firefighters to tackle the fires. Fortunately, there were no casualties involved in either incident.

Excellence and long service were celebrated at the Service's annual awards evening, which took place at the Delta Hotel, Marriott, in Huntingdon. Around 160 people attended and celebrated the achievements of colleagues from across different areas of the Service, highlighting outstanding accomplishments throughout the year.

February

The Service's Training Centre hosted the county's first wholetime firefighter recruits course. The group of six was the first to be trained in the county, saving on travel time and making use of the excellent new facilities at the Training Centre.

More than 50 firefighters from across the county tackled a fire involving solar panels on the roof of a Lidl distribution centre in Peterborough. Thanks to the fast actions of the crews, they not only made sure everyone working on site was kept safe, but also minimised the damage to the building, enabling operations to continue the same day. Lidl was so pleased with the quick and effective actions of the crews, they made a generous donation to The Fire Fighters Charity to show their appreciation.

March

More than 20 firefighters tackled a well-developed fire involving a derelict building in Cambridge. The former Working Men's Club was deliberately set alight, with crews working hard to contain the fire and prevent it from spreading.

2. Forward

Welcome to our annual report and statement of assurance for 2023/2024.

This report looks back over the past financial year, highlighting how we have performed and some of our achievements during that time.

We always enjoy looking back and reflecting on what our employees have achieved across all areas of the Service. We're very proud of the dedicated people we have working for us and it is due to their hard work, continual drive for improvement and commitment to our Service that we continue to be one of the highest-performing fire and rescue services in the country.

Welcoming inspectors from His Majesty's Inspectorate of Constabulary and Fire and Rescue Services (HMICFRS) at the end of the previous financial year gave us the opportunity to showcase our achievements and continuous improvement journey, and the subsequent report we received in August 2023, is testament to the hard work of everyone who works here. To achieve an 'Outstanding' for the use of resources category was high praise indeed. We are all proud of another positive report and we are already making improvements to the few areas highlighting where we can give more attention and focus to further improve. You can read more about our inspection report on page 39.

A particular highlight of the year for many was welcoming Her Royal Highness The Princess Royal to officially open our new Huntingdon Fire Station and Training Centre in November. It was a fantastic opportunity for everyone who had worked so hard on the project, and those that now work there, to show off the new facilities and some of our equipment and talk about what they do. The visit ended with the unveiling of a plaque by Her Royal Highness to commemorate the occasion. It was a huge honour to receive a royal visit and a fitting reward for everyone involved.

Our new Training Centre has given us greater opportunities to run different courses in-house, saving money in not needing external providers and enabling delegates to stay in county rather than needing to be away from their families for days at a time. For the first time in the Service's 50-year history, we welcomed to the training centre our very first cohort of new wholetime firefighters to receive their initial training course and it was a special moment to watch them pass out on home soil.

Being an emergency service, our crews have to deal with difficult and sometimes tragic incidents. We were all affected by a resident's heartbreaking loss of his wife and their two young children following a house fire in Cambridge in June 2023. The fire was caused by a charging e-bike battery and we have since made the safe charging of lithium-ion batteries a key focus for our community safety messages. The Service also wrote to the coroner too highlight the need for legislation changes, which have been discussed in Parliament and the House of Lords.

As the weather turned in the autumn, our combined fire control colleagues proved yet again that the service they provide is second to none as Storm Babet hit the county. Heavy rain led to a huge increase in 999 calls, with more than 1,500 calls received in a 24-hour period across Cambridgeshire and Suffolk. Once again, our colleagues stood up to the test as they faced their busiest ever period, exceeding the summer heatwave of July 2022.

This year was the last year of our Integrated Risk Management Plan and so a key focus has been data-crunching and researching for a new plan for the next five years. This also involved an engagement exercise with people living and working in Cambridgeshire to help us understand people's expectations with response times, what potential risks concern people more and how much

people know about our services. This information was then used to help inform our final plan. We had over 1,000 responses from the public and partner agencies which was a fantastic response and really helpful for us. Our new Community Risk Management Plan (CRMP) for 2024-2029 is now published on our website and future annual reports will show how we have progressed against this new plan.

Although this annual report looks back at the financial year 2023/24, it would be remiss of us not to include a special thank you to former chief fire officer Chris Strickland who retired in June this year, while we were compiling this report. Chris had served a commendable 40 years in the fire service and will be sorely missed for his exemplary and inspiring leadership to the Service, driving improvement with courage and empathy during some challenging times. We wish him all the very best for the next chapter of his life.

Thank you to everyone that has supported us over the past year. Whether you've helped by passing us information about a vulnerable resident, sharing a social media post, sent us a thank you message, supported an open day or charity event or made a cup of tea for a hard-working crew at an incident, we are extremely grateful and we really value that support.

We are always looking to celebrate what we do and keep people informed of the great work going on in all parts of the Service. Our social media channels are updated regularly with stories, as well as important safety advice and information. We're across Facebook, X, Instagram, LinkedIn, TikTok and Nextdoor so follow us to keep up to date with all our latest news and seasonal safety messages.

We hope you enjoy reading this annual report.

Councillor Edna Murphy - Chair of Cambridgeshire and Peterborough Fire Authority

Matthew Warren - Chief Fire Officer/Chief Executive Officer

3. Statement of assurance

Context

The Fire and Rescue National Framework for England sets out a requirement for fire and rescue authorities to publish a statement of assurance. It says the statement should:

“...outline the way in which the authority and its fire and rescue service has had regard – in the period covered by the document – to this National framework, the Integrated Risk Management Plan and to any strategic plan...prepared by the Authority for that period. The authority must also provide assurance to their community and to government on financial, governance and operational matters.”

One of the principal aims of the statement of assurance is to provide an accessible way in which communities, government, local authorities and other partners may make a valid assessment of their local fire and rescue authority’s performance.

Purpose

The purpose of this statement of assurance is for Cambridgeshire and Peterborough Fire Authority to formally confirm the adequacy of arrangements for the effective management of financial, governance and operational matters in Cambridgeshire Fire and Rescue Service. The statement has been prepared and published in accordance with the guidance published by the Home Office.

Statement of Assurance

Cambridgeshire and Peterborough Fire Authority is satisfied that its business during the financial year 2023/24 was conducted in accordance with the law and proper standards and that public money was properly accounted for and used economically, efficiently and effectively. The Authority is further satisfied that the requirements of the Fire and Rescue National Framework for England have been met.

Evidence to support this judgement can be found within this report, specifically:

Integrated Risk Management Plan - page 13

Financial and governance matters - page 33

4. Governance arrangements

Cambridgeshire and Peterborough Fire Authority

The Fire Authority is the governing body responsible for delivering a fire and rescue service to Cambridgeshire and Peterborough.

The main responsibilities of the Authority are set out in the Fire and Rescue Services Act 2004. The Authority makes decisions about how the local fire and rescue service operates and how it reviews performance and policies. It also sets the budget each year and agrees the strategic direction and priorities set out in the new Community Risk Management Plan (CRMP).

In some counties, delivery of the fire and rescue service is the responsibility of the county council, however in counties such as Cambridgeshire, where unitary authorities exist, a separate Authority is set up to run the Service and this is made up of councillors from both the county and unitary council.

As well as the Fire Authority there are a number of committees made up of smaller groups of Authority members, which look at certain aspects of the Service.

The political make-up of the Fire Authority reflects the number of members from the political parties on each of the appointing county and unitary authorities.

The Fire Authority records its appreciation for the contribution of councillors Bryony Goodliffe, John Howard, David Over and Scott Warren during the past year.

We also remember with fondness and respect, Councillor Mac McGuire who sadly passed away in January. Mac had served on the Fire Authority for many years, including as its chair between 1998 and 2007.

More information about the Fire Authority, including details of Authority and committee meetings, together with the dates, agendas and minutes for these meetings, [can be found on our website](#).

Current members of Cambridgeshire and Peterborough Fire Authority

Councillor	Council	Party	District
Edna Murphy (Chair)	Cambridgeshire County Council	Liberal Democrat	South Cambs
Mike Black	Cambridgeshire County Council	Labour	Cambridge
Andrew Bond	Peterborough City Council	Liberal Democrat	Peterborough
Neil Boyce	Peterborough City Council	Peterborough First	Peterborough
Simon Bywater	Cambridgeshire County Council	Conservative	Huntingdonshire
Douglas Dew	Cambridgeshire County Council	Liberal Democrat	Huntingdonshire
Wayne Fitzgerald	Peterborough City Council	Conservative	Peterborough
Ian Gardener	Cambridgeshire County Council	Conservative	Huntingdonshire
John Gowing	Cambridgeshire County Council	Conservative	Fenland
Ros Hathorn	Cambridgeshire County Council	Liberal Democrat	South Cambs
Mohammed Jamil (Vice Chair)	Peterborough City Council	Labour	Peterborough
Sebastian Kindersley	Cambridgeshire County Council	Liberal Democrat	South Cambs
Catherine Rae	Cambridgeshire County Council	Labour	Cambridge
Kevin Reynolds	Cambridgeshire County Council	Conservative	Huntingdonshire
Philippa Slatter	Cambridgeshire County Council	Liberal Democrat	Cambridge
Mandy Smith	Cambridgeshire County Council	Conservative	South Cambs
Simone Taylor	Cambridgeshire County Council	Independent	Huntingdonshire

Our structure

Directors:

Name	Role	Responsibilities
Matthew Warren	Chief Fire Officer and Chief Executive Officer	Ensuring the Service performs all of its statutory duties, along with: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Communication and Engagement - Executive Support - Finance
Jon Anderson	Deputy Chief Fire Officer (Acting)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Business Intelligence and Performance - Business Support - Combined Fire Control - Commercial - Democratic Services - Digital Transformation - Equality, Diversity and Inclusion - Fleet and Equipment - Health and Safety - Learning and Organisational Development - Legal - Operational Support - People and Recruitment - Programme and Project Management - Safeguarding - Training
Stuart Smith	Assistant Chief Fire Officer (Temporary)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Application Support Group - Community Fire Safety Prevention - Fire Protection - Information Governance - Occupational Health - Operational Response (wholtime and on-call) - Payroll - Property - ICT - Resilience - Resource Management

5. How we serve our community

Our Service

We currently operate from 27 fire stations across Cambridgeshire and Peterborough. Our Service Headquarters is in Huntingdon, hosting our Combined Fire Control, leadership team and many of our support departments.

[See a map showing our fire stations.](#)

We employ 250 wholetime firefighters, including up to principal officers (establishment is 241) and 226 on-call firefighters. A total of 37 employees (establishment/full time equivalent is 36) operate our Combined Fire Control, taking emergency calls from Cambridgeshire, Peterborough and Suffolk residents. We have 153 colleagues working in professional support roles across different areas of the Service.

We have a fleet of 35 fire engines, two rescue vehicles, two turntable ladder aerial appliances and several other specialist vehicles.

[Read more about our vehicles and the equipment we use.](#)

[Read more about the make-up of the communities and area we serve.](#)

Everything we do is aligned to our **vision and strategic aims** and the way we deliver our services is reflective of our values – welcoming, respectful and professional.

Our priorities and how we target our resources are set out in our Integrated Risk Management Plan (the plan for April 2024-2029 will be referred to as a Community Risk Management Plan). The annual report describes what we have achieved in the previous financial year against what we said we would do in the IRMP.

Integrated risk management plan (IRMP)

Our IRMP is our corporate plan which focuses on our key aims and how we plan to achieve them. It identifies the key risks to us achieving our strategic aims and the opportunities that may help us get there quicker.

From this, our corporate priorities emerge, which we list under the strategic aim they most relate to (many also impact on one or more other areas). We deliver these through a detailed action plan which sits alongside the IRMP and updates are discussed every three months by directors and the strategic leadership team. Progress against the plan is presented to the Fire Authority on a regular basis.

Risk modelling is used to assess the likelihood of fire and rescue related incidents using performance data from the past six years. The information enables us to compare performance year on year and assess the impact of change and events such as weather, legislation changes and situations such as Covid-19. The more we can understand about these impacts on our demand, the more we can improve our Service.

The period 2023-2024 was the last year of this plan.

[Read the plan in full.](#)

Going forward, our new Community Risk Management Plan (CRMP), which was launched in April 2024, will be our plan for the next five years. Further information about this can be found on page 39.

Achievements against our IRMP 2020-2024

The next few pages outline what we delivered in 2023/24 against the priorities in the IRMP, set out under each of the four strategic aims:

- People
- Community safety excellence
- Operational excellence
- Value for money

Each section starts by explaining what we are aiming to achieve for that strategic aim heading and then explains what we have done during the past year, how we have performed in key areas and includes a case study to evidence this.

People

Working with our managers and staff to ensure our people are safe and the Service is accessible to everyone, meeting their needs and expectations, we planned to:

- Continue work to develop our organisational culture and to enhance staff engagement, including ensuring mechanisms are in place to properly feedback to staff and facilitating opportunities for colleagues from across different areas of the Service to engage and work with each other more.
- Develop and improve the ways in which we support the mental health and wellbeing of our staff.
- On-going work to improve the diversity of our workforce, including continuing to build long-term relationships with our diverse communities through our community engagement and positive action programmes.
- Expand our programme of development activities to prepare staff for future roles and opportunities, including:

- collaborative development programmes with other fire services and partner organisations,
- building leadership and management skills for the future,
- strengthening opportunities for staff to be responsible for their own learning, balanced with growing managers' accountability for facilitating development of their staff.
- Continue to embed an understanding of the value of quality conversations to enhance personal performance and development.
- Strengthen the ways in which we understand our succession planning needs and identify and match an individual's potential to those needs, including;
 - exploring the introduction of a shadowing programme to help give greater insight into and understanding of more senior roles,
 - considering and evaluating our provision of apprenticeship schemes within the Service, offering greater opportunities for formal qualifications which support the careers of existing staff and promote the different professions available within the Service to those looking to start a career with us.
- Continual review of our recruitment and promotion processes to provide equality of opportunity and remove any unnecessary barriers to people joining or progressing their careers within the Service.

To achieve this in 2023/24:

- We discussed the positive insights from the 2022 employee engagement survey with managers in culture seminars in May and June 2023, in the context of the national picture of culture in the fire and rescue services. The leadership team also held workshops with wholetime colleagues to listen to their views about a variety of topics in the engagement survey and we held a women's development day to further explore some of the outcomes from the survey.
- We completed an equality and inclusion maturity model self-assessment tool, created by the National Fire Chiefs Council (NFCC) in partnership with Deloitte, to reflect on our current work and identify next steps. The actions from this became part of our people plan.
- We reviewed the spotlight report on culture that was published by His Majesty's Inspectorate of Constabulary and Fire and Rescue Services (HMICFRS) at the end of March 2023 and integrated the actions into our people excellence plan. The progress against these actions has been published on our website. We reviewed and completed gap analysis on other fire and rescue services' independent reports on culture and any agreed actions have been built into our people plan.
- We refreshed our values and behaviours in consultation with colleagues and with due consideration to the national code of ethics. Through workshops and surveys, we gathered feedback and modernised and simplified the language whilst keeping the core values that make our service culture positive and inclusive.
- We reviewed the channels in place should colleagues need to raise a concern and in addition to the internal procedures we have in place to support colleagues, we introduced an external independent reporting line and have received positive feedback about its introduction in the event that colleagues may need to use it in the future.
- We completed an annual equality and inclusion benchmarking assessment with the Employers Network for Equality and Inclusion and are proud that we were given a silver award.
- We reviewed our internal engagement channels post-pandemic to ensure that we have the most appropriate channels in place to give all managers and colleagues the opportunity to speak with the leadership team on a regular basis.

- Using feedback from colleagues, we reviewed and relaunched our recognition channels to bring nominations into one simple process, overseen by a new recognition group.
- We appointed a Psychological Wellbeing Practitioner which has enabled the provision of low-level counselling within the Service. This continues to be supplemented by a contract with a provider for specialist counselling where required.
- Online training courses continue to be delivered by The Fire Fighters Charity, which are well received by colleagues.
- Work is ongoing with our medical insurance provider to raise awareness of offerings available to colleagues to support their mental health and wellbeing.
- We have started a project to review our post traumatic incident support for operational colleagues.
- We reviewed how we can further support the wellbeing of colleagues who, due to our shift patterns, have secondary contracts of employment. We put in place an updated policy and procedure to give leaders greater visibility and oversight of total hours worked per person, including internal and external secondary contracts. This has enabled managers to have meaningful, supportive wellbeing conversations.
- We reviewed the latest census data and updated our station community engagement dashboards for watches to focus their engagement activity on all groups in our community.
- We created and launched an online community engagement forum to ask members of the community their views on a variety of topics; we received good interest and feedback through promotion of this on social media. We used this channel, as well as social media, local media and partner networks as part of our Community Risk Management Plan (CRMP) 2024 to 2029 risk consultation with the community and received feedback from over 1,000 members of the community, from a diverse range of backgrounds. We will use information collected from the CRMP survey to enhance our external communicational channels for future communication about our services and recruitment.
- We reviewed our provision for colleague neurodiversity support and put in place a new provider for specialist coaching and a process to engage further with 'Access to Work' for enhanced advice and support, in addition to the existing neurodiversity support procedure. We reviewed our process to enhance collaboration between occupational health and our people team to provide holistic support. We worked with an external training provider to create a new workshop on managing neurodiversity at work that has been well attended.
- In addition to the menopause workshops and risk assessment that we launched last year, we reviewed our menopause guidance and developed menopause training that is now being rolled out to all colleagues in the organisation. We reviewed our menopause support and introduced period protection provisions in all toilets and portable toilets on appliances for use at longer incidents. We have led the setting up of a national network of menopause champions and secured agreement and support from the NFCC to hold a national 'Menopause in Fire' conference which took place in September 2023 with excellent feedback.
- We developed a face-to-face inclusive leadership training session for all managers with an external provider, the content was based on feedback from managers, our values and current case studies. This has been rolled out to all full-time managers and is now being delivered to on-call managers. We also developed values and inclusion training sessions that are now being rolled out to all employees focused on our inclusive values.
- We reviewed and updated our safeguarding policies and introduced a new eLearning module for all employees and new starters.
- We started a review of our training records system, which included a survey to all employees and meetings with stakeholder teams. This review has led to us starting a project to look at the options of how we improve our training records system, starting with the reporting of operational training.

- We reviewed and relaunched our leadership development programmes including our effective leadership programme with Hertfordshire and Bedfordshire fire and rescue services and the NFCC Supervisory Leadership Development Programme.
- We reviewed our approach to 360 feedback and researched a range of tools available, choosing one that is based on the FACET personality profile that nearly all employees have completed in previous years. The new 360 tool is now being rolled out to all leaders and managers with the purpose of raising self-awareness and enhancing personal development.
- We reviewed our suite of skills workshops, including a survey to all colleagues, to ensure that the topics being covered are current and meeting the needs of those who wish to develop in their current roles or for progression. We relaunched the new suite of workshops; they were well attended and received positive feedback.
- We reviewed the content of our leavers conversation to ensure that it encourages a broad conversation about our culture and service delivery so that we can review the feedback from these conversations and identify any areas for improvement.
- We reviewed the development portfolios we launched last year for wholetime and Combined Fire Control progression from firefighter through to crew commander, watch commander and station commander, based on national operation guidance, our values and leadership attributes. We created the second version, based on feedback from colleagues and relaunched them with the aim of continuing to support progression to meet our succession planning needs.
- We reviewed our approach to talent and succession, including coaching and mentoring and have scoped a project that will commence in the next CRMP year.
- We took the opportunity to bring in three new apprentices across the Service, into fleet and digital learning.
- We have created a new attraction strategy for the Service that includes promoting our good culture and approaches to equality and inclusion. This initiative has now been scoped with stakeholders and the actions will continue into the new CRMP year. The aim is to remove any unnecessary barriers, perceived or process, to people joining the organisation.
- We have created a pool of external assessors who have started to take part on interview panels for senior leadership roles. External assessors are people in our community who are in senior leadership roles outside of our organisation, who can provide an independent view to the internal interview panels which mitigates unconscious bias.
- We also refreshed our pool of community assessors for our wholetime recruitment assessment days. Community assessors come from a range of backgrounds and are given training in assessing so that they can provide an independent view to the internal interview panels which mitigates unconscious bias.
- In our last wholetime campaign, in addition to our general information sessions and “Have a Go” days we also offered women only sessions to the community for positive action.

Case study – Service rolls out inclusive leadership training for managers

To help ensure managers across the Service understand inclusive Leadership and their own pivotal role in further developing our positive culture, a bespoke training package was designed and delivered for us by equality, inclusion and dignity and work specialists, Diversity McKenzies.

The course helps managers understand what an inclusive culture looks like, giving them the tools they need to lead inclusively and manage any behaviour that goes against our values.

Deputy Chief Fire Officer Jon Anderson explained: “We are very proud of the culture we have within our Service and it is something we have been consciously focusing on over the past 15 years when we introduced People Excellence as one of our core strategic aims. We are also proud of the fact we have received a ‘Good’ for the culture and fairness categories of all three of our past HMICFRS

inspections. This hasn't happened by coincidence, when we set our vision back in 2007, we stated that people were at the heart of everything we do and that was both people in our community and the people that work for us. We have since concentrated our effort on embedding our values and a set of expected behaviours to ensure everyone feels safe at work and is treated with dignity and respect by others.

"We are never complacent though and recognise that having a positive culture is a continual journey and we need to maintain focus in this area. The inclusive leadership training we rolled out was designed after speaking with managers about what they felt they needed to help them deal more confidently with any behaviour that falls short of our expectations, whether that be intentional or misguided."

Jon concluded: "Every manager has attended the training and it has had excellent feedback. Next year's focus will be delivering sessions around values and behaviours to everyone in the Service, as a reminder about the responsibility everyone has in ensuring our workplace is a welcoming and inclusive place for everyone. These will be run together with a mandatory menopause awareness training sessions to build on the work we have already done in this area to become a menopause friendly employer."

Community safety

Working in partnership with agencies such as local authorities, district councils, police and health authorities, we aimed to:

- Further collaboration with health, social care and other partners to refine ways to identify and reach those most at risk of fire.
- Develop our Fire Break Programme to support the safety, health and personal development of identified young people.
- Explore opportunities to offer early intervention and positively influence children and younger people.
- Work with partners and local authorities to support businesses to comply with regulation and ultimately create safer places to live, work and visit.
- Continue to lobby and work with developers and local authorities to increase public safety through the fitting of sprinklers where relevant.
- Continue to work with partners from the road and water safety partnerships to reduce the number of people killed or injured on our roads and waterways.
- Develop and embed systems to effectively evaluate our activity to keep the community safe.
- Bring together expertise from protection, prevention, and community resilience to reduce risk to people, places, and events.

To achieve this in 2023/24 we have:

- Continued to refine the use of partner data sets to target prevention activities to the most vulnerable in our community. Data sharing agreements with Anglian Water and NSR (hospital bed data) are allowing us to better target vulnerable people. Last year 84% of all Safe and Well visits were to our higher risk groups. More intelligent use of data has also increased the times our crews are getting across the doorstep, up to 76.4% from 70.2% the previous year. Last year we delivered safe and well visits to over 6,445 vulnerable households compared with 6,244 the previous year. We continue to improve the referral pathways used by our partners using our online home fire safety tool.
- Continued to deliver and evaluate our Fire Break offering to vulnerable young people. The introduction of the Serious Violence Duty, in which fire services are a specified duty holder,

has led to us delivering two Fire Break courses using Home Office funding. These are specifically targeted at vulnerable young people at risk of knife crime and has involved us establishing fruitful new networks with diversionary teams in Peterborough. We have also included knife awareness in the continuous professional development training received by our instructors delivering Fire Break. This allows them to better support young people in this vulnerable group.

- We continue to focus our early intervention efforts on Fire Break and Firesetters. We also promote the NFCC 'Stay Wise' programme. To reach reception and key stage 1 children, we have developed a character called Jet the Dragon. Jet has been designed specifically to deliver safety messages to early learners. To date, there have been four stories from Jet, covering general fire safety, inland water safety, coastal water safety and Halloween safety. Jet the Dragon also features on the 'Stay Wise' virtual resource available nationally. We have also re-introduced 'Safety Zone' which brings local schools and partners together to educate young children on subjects including emergency first aid, road, water and fire safety.
- We have continued to engage with businesses through seminars and webinars as well as targeting businesses that are more likely to have a fire in a non-domestic premises. The attendance at these events has not been as successful as in previous years. Therefore, listening to feedback, moving forward we are looking to create digital videos and infographics to help support businesses with fire safety matters.
- Days of action across the county have taken place regularly throughout the year to ensure non-domestic premises are compliant with the fire safety order. We will continue to work with the local authority building control and partners to ensure the built environment is safe for the public who may live, work or visit, as well as the newly formed building safety regulator (BSR) that will oversee new planning applications and current tall buildings across the county. We also sit on the Police Serious Organised Crime group (SOC Fusion) which involves sharing risk information and joint visits to disrupt criminal activities.
- We continue to engage with developers and local authorities to recommend the fitting of sprinklers where legislation does not require it. The plan is to deliver a sprinkler conference in 2024/25. With the introduction of new legislation and the forming of regional multi-disciplinary teams (who work for the BSR) there will be far better consultation when buildings are being planned and designed allowing us to have a greater voice at an early stage of planning.
- We have recruited a dedicated community road safety officer. This role is hosted by us and funded by the Office of the Police and Crime Commissioner (OPCC). This partnership approach ensures the police and fire and rescue service are aligned with the community casualty reduction focus set out by the OPCC, through the Vision Zero Road Safety Partnership. Our road and water safety team have delivered several initiatives to the public, successfully delivering 20 Biker Down sessions to 200 members of the public and Be Water Aware sessions to approximately 4,500 students in schools throughout Cambridgeshire and Peterborough, specifically to key stage 2 and 3 students.
- Last year we supported the NFCC in the development of its home fire safety visit (HFSV) and competency framework. Our intention in our new CRMP is to rebrand our existing safe and well visits to HFSVs and update the training all colleagues receive to align with the new offering.
- We continue to use expertise from across the Service to help understand and reduce risk to our communities. The community risk awareness group (CRAG) continues to act as a conduit for managing complex risk information and ensures the correct actions are taken when existing risk sites are updated or new ones are identified. We have also established a Battery Energy Storage Group (BESS). This is in recognition of the growing risk of sites within our county that are identified as using energy storage systems.

- We continue to play an active role in partnership groups such as community safety partnerships, county safety advisory groups and the new high harm board. These include our role in the local resilience forum where we have been working with partners and communities to build resilience through the use of the new www.cpprepared.org.uk website.

Case study – Partnership with ambulance service introduces community wellbeing officers

A new pilot has been launched which introduces new community wellbeing officers working across Cambridgeshire responding to calls from people who have fallen.

The 12-month pilot is a collaboration between regional fire and rescue services and the East of England Ambulance Service Trust (EEAST). Our two community wellbeing officers completed a three-week emergency responder training with EEAST to learn the skills required for their role and started responding to calls in February this year.

Falls can account for up to 20% of the ambulance service's calls and although some patients will require hospital treatment, many simply need to be helped to their feet and checked over to make sure they are safe to be left at home.

Currently, if a person falls at home and has no injuries, they could have a long wait for an ambulance to become available. The new partnership aims to get help quicker to people who have fallen and free up ambulance crews to attend the most seriously ill people in Cambridgeshire. The new initiative aims to have a community wellbeing officer to someone who has fallen within an hour of the call. The officers are employed by CFRS but funded by EEAST. When not attending calls, the community wellbeing officers complete safe and well visits to identified vulnerable people.

CFRS Station Commander Scott Fretwell, Community Risk Manager, said: "We are excited to be working in partnership with the ambulance service to introduce community wellbeing officers.

"The collaboration will enable a quicker response to people who have had a fall in their home, help to save lives, enhance patient experience and subsequently improve community welfare. Having extra capacity to deliver more safe and well visits to vulnerable people who we know are at greater risk from fire is also enabling us to keep more people safe in their homes. We are looking forward to seeing the positive impact of this new partnership over the coming months."

Tom Barker, EEAST Community Response Manager said: "We're delighted to be part of this collaboration with Cambridgeshire Fire and Rescue Service which aims to improve the speed of response and increase support for people who have fallen in their homes. I am confident that this programme will see real benefits for everyone involved."

Operational Excellence

Working with everyone in the Service, we aimed to ensure the highest standards of operational response by:

- Aligning operational resources to our risk and demand, understanding our response model options and the number of resources required to achieve them.
- Developing the use of our on-call crews to improve our operational service to the public.
- Exploring and implementing improvements to support the working experience for our on-call employees.
- Reviewing the structure and resourcing in our Combined Fire Control to ensure the continual provision of a high quality, sustainable control function.
- Ensuring our emergency vehicles and equipment meet our identified risks.

- Aligning service procedures with national operational guidance to improve firefighter safety and our ability to work with other fire and rescue services.
- Developing our central training facility to support the delivery of risk critical operational training.
- Reviewing current arrangements for operational training to ensure they meet the needs of operational staff.
- Developing further our assurance across all operational areas to ensure a high level of performance and support the continued development of our staff.

To achieve this in 2023/24 we have:

- Continued the Operational Risk Review Project, which is in its final stages and delivered outcomes and recommendations that will help us to better understand our resourcing requirements across the county, to ensure we are as productive and efficient as we can be and therefore, providing the best possible level of service to the public.
- Negotiated and consulted on two new trials across the on-call duty system. This will see two additional fire engines available on a Saturday and Sunday, as well as giving some flexibility and better remuneration back into the on-call duty system.
- Improved our 4x4 response by purchasing two new vehicles, as well as enhancing our specialist skill sets across the county to help mitigate the need for our city fire engines from having to attend calls in rural areas, leaving them available to cover the risks in the city more often.
- Consulted on a new way of working across weekends. This will see two on-call fire engines on a Saturday and Sunday become wholetime status (available fulltime) across those days from 8am until 6pm, providing flexible fire cover across the county whilst also delivering prevention and protection activities.
- Continued responding with crews of three, which has provided approximately 1,100 additional hours of fire engine availability per month and seen an increase in mobilisations for most on-call stations. We have also seen a quicker average attendance time to rural incidents over the last reporting period. We will continue to strive to ensure we have fire engines that are mobilised with crews of four or more, but where we can't, crews of three will be utilised.
- Continued to offer additional training sessions and exercises at our new training facility in Huntingdon to allow on-call colleagues an opportunity for better realistic training scenarios.
- Continued to work hard developing our new mobilising system, which will improve our resilience and efficiency managing 999 calls.
- Completed and updated our strategy to include sustainability within our identification and procurement of vehicles and equipment, alongside maximising lifespans to support financial efficiencies.
- Seven new fire engines with the latest technology and specialist rescue equipment have been brought into the Service with three more coming in the next financial year. We have procured and are developing with our manufacturer a concept fire engine to meet our future needs, reduce contamination risk for firefighters and that aligns to our sustainability strategy.
- Continued to work through our plan to fully adopt and align to the National Operational Guidance (NOG). This sees us working collaboratively with all fire services within the eastern region to share resources and peer review the information being provided to ensure, where appropriate, standardisation in response.
- Continued to proactively review the current arrangements for operational training. The new shift system we have implemented for our training instructor team ensures a seven day and evening provision to meet the needs of our wholetime and on-call firefighters. We have introduced two posts for an initial period of two years to support additional training delivery

for our on-call colleagues and provide oversight and support of our new wholetime firefighters from recruitment to the end of their probationary period.

- Delivered a flexible bridging course programme to best recognise the skills and attributes of our on-call firefighters who have moved into the wholetime service through our recruitment programme. We have also created and delivered our first internal wholetime firefighter training course, which saves money on external venues and instructors, and enables our recruits to stay in county rather than be away from their families for weeks at a time.
- Put in place a programme to provide external verification and learning of our operational skills. This supports ongoing assurance of our operational training and development. We work within a newly established regional operational assurance group to benchmark against others in the sector. A key area of this is incident command where, through external verification, we can ensure robust assurance of our commanders. We continue to use our operational assurance programme at incidents to collect and share operational learning information nationally and internally. We have launched a project to review and deliver an improved training and competence recording system which will improve the management and oversight.

Case study – Service’s training centre hosts first wholetime recruits course

For the first time in its history, Cambridgeshire Fire and Rescue Service has been able to host its own wholetime (full time) firefighter initial training course thanks to our new training centre in Huntingdon.

The group of six firefighters began training in January and completed all their course modules at the new facility. To celebrate their achievement, the new recruits were able to invite their families to see them in action, showcasing their new skills in a pass out parade, having successfully finished the course.

Among the areas the group covered on the training programme were water rescue, working at height, animal rescue and road traffic collision handling. They were also able to learn and practice tackling fires and rescues in the various purpose-built buildings, with controlled live fire burns now being possible.

Previously, wholetime firefighters attended other training venues around the country for their initial training, as the former training centre site was not a suitable venue, nor did it have all the necessary facilities.

The training centre moved to the new site on Percy Road in 2022, when the fire station relocated. The multi-million-pound investment in facilities includes multi-level buildings and containers for live fire burns to give firefighters a wholly realistic training experience. There is also a large road traffic collision compound and facilities to replicate water filled ditches for practicing rescues. The site was officially opened by Her Royal Highness The Princess Royal in November last year.

Deputy Chief Executive Matthew Warren said: “This is a fantastic milestone for our training team and the Service as a whole. In our 50th year, we are very proud to celebrate our first in-house trained cohort of wholetime firefighters.

“The investment in our state-of-the-art facility allows us to spend more time with our recruits, as we save many hours travelling out of county. Not only does this allow the recruits to spend more time on the incident ground practicing their techniques, but it also means they are not away from their families for weeks at a time. The expansive site provides far more opportunity to provide the necessary training to ensure all our firefighters are competent in the variety of skills needed for the role and the many different incidents they could be called to.”

Following the ceremony, the group got together with some of their instructors to take on a charity challenge to raise money for The Fire Fighters Charity. Donning full firefighting PPE and breathing apparatus, they walked the 12-kilometer Kinder Scout route of the Peak District, raising more than £900.

Matthew concluded: "It was a proud moment to attend a pass out parade at our own venue. The new recruits did an excellent job on the day demonstrating everything they had learned and it was fantastic to see that teamwork extend to a charity walk they organised themselves to mark the end of their time together as a cohort before joining their new watches. I congratulate them on that achievement as well as passing their initial training and I wish them a very successful career with us."

Value for money

Working with our managers and all colleagues to ensure we deliver high quality, value for money services, we aimed to:

- Introduce the replacement national emergency service communication system.
- Deliver new emergency mobilising technologies into operational service as well as review existing technologies to deliver enhancements to these.
- Deliver efficiencies by the automation and improvement of business processes, reducing manual intervention and freeing up resources from administrative tasks to focus on value adding activities.
- Ensure technology delivers opportunities for more efficient and effective ways of working, with a particular emphasis on ensuring our software provides value for money while enabling better mobile working and joint working opportunities.
- Review spend across departments and contractual arrangements to inform enhancements and improvements to our procurement processes.
- Ensure that financial awareness and greater accountability for budgets are in place to ensure efficiency and effectiveness.
- Ensure that the digital drivers across the Service are understood, scoped and prioritised, reviewing digital capacity to ensure that they are sufficient to meet our needs.
- Ensure that the Service has sustainability strategies in place and mechanisms by which to measure and evaluate these.

To achieve this in 2023/24 we have:

- Made positive progress and working towards an end of summer 2024 'go live' for the new mobilising system.
- Introduced an automated system to process payments for on-call firefighters.
- Completed collating the requirements for the health and safety accident and near miss reporting and investigation processes. This will replace an existing Microsoft form. The proposed solution will involve development of new database integrations to improve data movement between third party systems, support data reuse and centralise internal and external reporting on the information gathered.
- Additional tools have been implemented to enhance our cyber security.
- Work is continuing to complete the rollout of the new mobile data terminals (MDTs) to improve the accessibility of information on the fireground.
- Implemented a new finance system, which allows the team to interrogate spend data to assist with procurement planning and enabling contracts, eventually leading to supplier rationalisation. With the new procurement act expected in the autumn, this should support the transparency requirements. The new system has also enabled the Service to improve financial controls and streamline several processes.

- Continued to provide insight and valuable information in relation to our spend data across the Authority, highlighting collaboration opportunities.
- Ensured our sustainable procurement strategy is an integral part of our procurement and tendering process along with modern slavery checks, social value requirements and ethical procurement.
- Continued financial awareness training has been provided throughout 2023/24 and is included in the onboarding of new heads of departments. A high-level session has also been provided to the middle management group so they can support their managers in managing their financial resources.
- Encouraged managers to identify any in-year savings which can be put into a tactical reserve which was established at the beginning of 2022/23 so that any in-year budget pressures can then be covered by this reserve.
- Carried out a zero-based budgeting approach to build the 2024/25 budget meaning that budget holders were encouraged to do a detailed review of their current spend and expected future spend.
- Built resilience in the digital teams by sharing skills and knowledge and removed single points of failure.
- Continued to develop and work towards our sustainability goals with key strands in place to support the strategy. We utilise the review of the key areas by the Carbon Trust with an action plan being developed to drive areas of good practice, and deliver the improvements identified. We are actively working in collaboration with other partners to further explore areas of shared improvement such as the sharing of hydrogenated vegetable oil or HVO fuel. This will support our drive to net zero by 2030.

Case study – Updated finance system helps improve efficiency

Following a two-year project, a new finance system was recently introduced bringing benefits to the Service and to colleagues needing to use the new system.

The introduction of the Connected Intelligence Anywhere (CIA) system followed an announcement by the previous software supplier that they were withdrawing support for their product at the end of 2023.

The project, involving the finance and commercial teams, had to move quickly to get a new system in place within the required timescales. It began with pre-market engagement and gathering user stories to help set out the Service's requirements. Working to an extremely tight deadline, the system was procured from TechnologyOne. Then came the significant task of cleansing and reviewing data in the legacy system to make sure only the relevant information was transferred across.

The new CIA system was introduced in two phases over the last year. The first began in March 2023, which included addressing the core financial applications previously held in the old system, and involved many workshops, configurations, training, testing and data migration. This was completed in November.

The second phase required more of the same intense designing and testing and included:

- Purchase card management
- Inventory, fixed asset accounting and budgeting
- Modules previously not held directly within the old system but in various other systems and spreadsheets.

This went live at the end of March 2024, with colleagues now using the system and seeing the benefits of it, including mobile functionality and a user-friendly interface.

The other key benefits of the CIA system include:

- Reduced printing requirements
- Automated email alerts for tasks to perform
- Automatic sending of documents direct from the system
- Reduced number of different systems, making the finance function more effective and efficient.

Assistant Director for Finance, Ursula Bird, who led the project, explained: “It has been months of hard work but we’re really pleased with the new system and already reaping the benefits. This had the potential to be a significant cost to the Service as many other organisations would buy in a project manager or even a team to do the work to design, configure and test the new system and move the data over, however we saved thousands of pounds by completing this in-house.

“It is a vital system for us in managing our budget and understanding where money is spent and so maintaining control at all stages of the project to ensure it was going to work in the best way for our Service was important for us. As budget pressures increase it is important that we know how much we spend on everything and can continually monitor and challenge what we do to ensure we offer the best value for money as a fire and rescue service.”

[Our performance](#)

We collect lots of data to help us understand how we are performing compared to previous years. Factors such as the long spells of hot weather we’ve experienced in previous years, prolonged periods of rain and the impact of covid restrictions for example can greatly impact the number of fires and other emergencies we attend each year, and year on year numbers of incidents in each of the categories can fluctuate.

We monitor our data carefully and report on it quarterly to seek to understand any underlying causes or factors that we are able to influence to reduce numbers or improve our service. Appreciating there will always be different factors that cause fluctuations year on year, we look at trends over a number of years as a better way of assessing our performance, aiming to achieve a downward trend in the number of incidents.

In our IRMP we set out the main performance areas we monitor that help us understand the progress we are making against the IRMP. Behind the scenes, we analyse much more data than this, but these are the headline data sets.

[How we performed in 2023/24](#)

[Attendance times](#)

We have three performance measures relating to how long it takes our fire crews to get to an emergency. These are:

- We will respond to the most serious incidents within an average of nine minutes in urban areas and 12 minutes in rural areas, for the first fire engine in attendance
- We will respond to all incidents in our authority area within 18 minutes for the first fire engine in attendance, 95 per cent of the time.

Over this year we have responded to the most critical incidents in urban areas in 7.48 minutes, which is 72 seconds quicker than our performance measure of 9 minutes.

Rural attendance times have exceeded our measure of 12 minutes by 4 seconds. This however is an improvement of 14 seconds from the previous year.

We have had a fire engine arrive at an incident within 18 minutes on 95.6 per cent of occasions, which meets our performance measure and shows an improvement on last year.

Number of incidents

There was a significant decrease in the number of fires over this call year compared to the previous year as well as a decrease in the number of primary fires and a significant decrease in the number of secondary fires. Outdoor fires, which make up a large proportion of secondary fires, has seen a decrease too. The reduced numbers of fires in these areas is most likely due to more persistent wet weather during this period and not experiencing the same hot, dry summer we saw the previous year (in which the number of fires rose).

There has been an 11 per cent decrease in the number of accidental non-domestic fires over the rolling five years.

- Total fires 2022-23 – 2273
- Total fires 2023-24 – 1685
- Total primary fires 2022-23 – 1008
- Total primary fires 2023-24 - 899
- Total secondary fires 2022-23 - 1227
- Total secondary fires 2023-24 - 745
- Total non-domestic fire 2022-23 – 131
- Total non-domestic fire 2023-24 – 98

Sadly, we have had 10 fire deaths this year. These occurred in seven separate incidents; three in Peterborough, two in Cambridge, one in Fenland and one in Huntingdonshire.

There has been no significant change in the profile of people affected over the past five years. People aged 65 years and over remain most at risk of not surviving if there is a fire in their home.

There were 78 fire casualties in the past 12 months. The majority of these occurred in Peterborough with the main injury type reported as requiring hospital treatment for minor injuries. We have seen the number of people sent to hospital increase over the past five years.

There has been a 1 per cent increase in the number of road traffic collisions that we have attended compared to the previous year (from 421 last year to 427). However, over the past five years figures show a decrease of 2 per cent.

We have seen a 39 per cent increase in special services over the past five years (1459 this year compared with 1047 five years ago). In the last quarter of 2023/24 releasing objects from people, road traffic collisions and effecting entry/exit were the largest growth areas in special service incidents.

Our workforce diversity

Of those applying for a role with Cambridgeshire Fire and Rescue Service, 8.5 per cent of applicants were from black and minority ethnic communities, an increase of 2 per cent over five years. This has resulted in 3.8 per cent of our workforce being from these communities, an increase of 0.7 per cent.

From the total of all applicants, 27.3 per cent were female and 11.8 per cent of applicants for firefighter roles were female.

Our workforce diversity has increased in all areas except for religion or belief. However, this has only seen a minor decrease.

The national average for operational women is 8.2 per cent, ours has increased by just over a percentage point to 8 per cent. The national average for women in fire control is 77 per cent, with ours being 78.9 per cent. Exactly half of our professional support colleagues are women compared to the national average of 54 per cent.

6. Equality, Diversity and Inclusion

We are committed to continuous improvement of equality, diversity and inclusion in both our service delivery and within the workplace.

To do this, and in compliance with our public service equality duty, we set ourselves objectives which are incorporated into our Integrated Risk Management Plan (IRMP) and the action plan that sits behind it (rather than having a separate plan).

Our achievements against these objectives have been included in the People and Community Safety sections of this annual report, found on pages 13 and 17.

Equality impact assessments

We continued to complete Equality Impact Assessments (EQIA) in 2023/24. This process helps identify potential discrimination by analysing policies, projects, practices, processes, procedures, services and decisions, to make sure they do not discriminate or disadvantage people and helps towards improving or promoting equality.

Carrying out equality impact assessments helps us meet our legal duties as well as bringing several benefits. They help us ensure that our decisions impact in a fair way, to make decisions based on evidence, to make decision-making more transparent and provide a platform for collaboration with the community and partners.

In this period, we improved the format and training of EQIAs to make them easier to complete and better understood.

Here are some examples of the EQIAs that were completed in this reporting period:

- Implementation of 4x4 vehicles
- Recruitment of community champions
- Neurodiversity process and support
- Working time regulations policy
- Transporting casualties policy
- Estates strategy
- Hoarding intervention
- Effective leadership programme
- Creation of the Community Risk Management Plan (CRMP)
- Managers guide to managing suicide risk in the workplace
- Phase one wholetime training delivery in-house
- Potential on-call rostering system.

[Read our annual Equality Compliance Report 2023/24.](#)

7. Sustainability

We are committed to embracing the broader sustainability challenges and seek to reduce our carbon footprint, with the ambition of achieving a net zero position by 2030. This is an extremely challenging aim and is underpinned by our sustainability strategy. This focuses on five key areas:

- People - we will focus on changing our behaviours and attitudes toward sustainability through communicating our intentions with our people.
- Transport - we will continue to reduce the emissions of our vehicles through the fleet replacement programme. This will be supported by the fleet strategy that will focus on how we use our vehicles, the size of our fleet, the fuel used within our vehicles and the move toward electric vehicles. From a wider transport perspective, we will seek to reduce the frequency of non-essential journeys.
- Property - we will focus on how we use the buildings we need. Technology will be essential in reducing data g our carbon footprint, with appropriate investment in these new technologies properly planned through the property capital programme.
- Offsetting - we will look at offsetting as a means for reducing our carbon footprint, where other solutions for reducing do not exist or are not effective.
- Procurement - our procurement process will consider the sustainability of the supply chain and consider procurement options should offset be an alternative contractual offer that is financially viable.

As a Service we are seeking to reduce our carbon footprint, with the ambition of achieving a net zero position by 2030. The Carbon Trust was brought into the Service in 2022 to evaluate and determine our carbon emissions and to support the development of our sustainability strategy.

What are our carbon emissions?

We provided data to The Carbon Trust to analyse to calculate our emission sources, hotspots and focus areas. Our top five sources of carbon emissions were found to be:

- Purchased goods – 29 per cent
- Capital assets – 23 per cent
- Fleet – 14 per cent
- Electricity – 12 per cent
- Natural gas – 12 per cent.

These account for 90 per cent of our total emissions.

How are we decarbonising?

Behind each strategic area, we have developed a detailed plan to identify a route map for carbon reduction. The carbon emissions against each of our strategic areas are:

- People – 7 per cent
- Procurement – 53 per cent
- Buildings – 26 per cent
- Fleet – 14 per cent.

What are we doing?

People

We recognise that our greatest impact on reducing out carbon footprint is through our people.

- Ideas sought to reduce our carbon footprint. We will engage with colleagues at fire stations who can help us develop new ideas to help us on our sustainable journey.
- Hydration at incidents - operational colleagues were recently invited to compete a 'hydration at incidents' survey asking for feedback and suggestions to reduce our use of single use plastics. As a result, a business case has now been approved with several solutions allowing us to remove single use water bottles.

Transport

Reducing our carbon footprint with our fleet has centred on trials using HVO (Hydrotreated Vegetable Oil) in fire engines and replacing petrol vehicles with hybrid models.

- Peterborough area - the HVO fuel trial in the Peterborough area continues and has been certified for use in a substantial portion of our fleet of fire engines.
- Huntingdon area - the HVO trial in Huntingdon and surrounding area has been extended and is in partnership with Huntingdon District Council (HDC) and Cambridgeshire Police. Our fire engines and other vehicles have access to an HVO fuelling station based at HDC's depot.
- Hybrid vehicles - in addition to the electric vehicles we already have, we have taken delivery of the first batch of hybrid cars for officers who respond to incidents. These are a Hyundai Tucson model and replace the current fleet of Volkswagen Passats. They have a longer lifespan – a minimum of four years - at which point they will be reviewed.

Property

Improvements across the CFRS estate continue to be introduced to reduce carbon emissions and save money.

- Building Management Systems (BMS) are now being used to manage heating systems in our newer fire stations. Automatically controlling heating systems will be more efficient and cost effective, particularly when a large number of fire stations are not used 24/7. We will soon be able to manage these systems remotely from a laptop.
- Building insulation - our mission to improve building insulation continues with doors, windows and walls being upgraded.
- Electric Vehicle (EV) charging points - EV charging points have been installed with more planned.
- Air source heat pump - these will reduce heating costs. One has been installed and a second is planned.
- Solar panels - surveys are planned for the installation of solar panels.
- St Neots refurbishment – the refurbishment of St Neots Fire Station in 2024/25 will result in our first truly 'green' fire station.

Offsetting

We are actively looking at solutions to reduce our carbon footprint first before offsetting.

Procurement

As part of our strategy to reduce single use plastics across the service, we have introduced initiatives that cut down on plastic waste created by cleaning products. These include:

- Recycle and refill - we are purchasing larger quantities of certain cleaning products and introducing bottles that can be refilled.

- Zero waste cleaning products - going forward, we will be purchasing many essential cleaning products from a supplier with a product range based on refillable bottles and sachets of dissolvable cleaning products.

8. Partnerships and collaborations

We recognise that we are better able to achieve our aims and objectives across all areas of the Service by collaborating and working in partnership with other agencies with similar aims and goals – these include other emergency services and public sector organisations, charities, voluntary groups and other fire and rescue services.

Not only does this improve the service we each deliver, but in tough economic times it makes financial sense to remove duplication and share resources.

Partnership working is embedded across the Service in all departments, from how we investigate fires and drive down arson and road traffic collisions, to planning for big events and dealing with disasters and day to day incidents.

We have many active collaborations ongoing across the Service. Some of them save us money, others help provide resilience or bring additional benefits we wouldn't otherwise have been able to achieve. Other collaborations may cost us more but may have additional benefits to us or to the wider community which makes it a worthwhile investment.

Examples of some of our collaborations are:

Combined Fire Control with Suffolk Fire and Rescue Service

Working in partnership with Suffolk Fire and Rescue Service, we became the first fire and rescue service to prove that the concept of a combined control room works, which has proven to be successful for the past 12 years. All 999 calls for both Suffolk and Cambridgeshire are answered by control operators based at our headquarters in Huntingdon and operators mobilise fire engines and resources for both fire and rescue services. Through this agreement, each service saves approximately £400,000 each year.

Mutual Aid Agreements

The Fire Authority has mutual aid agreements with each of the seven neighbouring fire and rescue services whereby:

- In the event of a significant emergency, Cambridgeshire and Peterborough Fire Authority can request additional resources from a neighbouring fire authority.
- Should the location of an emergency be closer to a fire engine from a neighbouring authority, a request will be made for that fire engine to attend the incident.
- Specialist equipment and trained personnel can also be requested from other fire and rescue services to attend significant emergencies in Cambridgeshire and Peterborough.

In the event of a national emergency elsewhere in the country, Cambridgeshire and Peterborough Fire Authority has a high volume pump, to support a large-scale flooding incident, that can be deployed to assist those in need. We also jointly manage a third vehicle, which is the Eastern Region's Detection, Identification and Monitoring (DIM) vehicle which provides a 24/7 response capability for deployment in the early stages of a major incident involving chemical, biological, radiological or nuclear materials. This vehicle is operated by Essex Fire and Rescue Service but the specialist officers who run the equipment come from both Cambridgeshire and Essex fire services.

Cambridgeshire and Peterborough Local Resilience Forum (LRF)

Local Resilience Forums aim to plan and prepare for localised incidents and catastrophic emergencies. They work to identify potential risks and produce emergency plans to either prevent or mitigate the impact of any incident on their local communities. Our senior managers are actively

engaged in the Cambridgeshire and Peterborough Local Resilience Forum. The Service has fully supported and participated in the development of an agreed risk profile for the local area through the community risk register, in partnership with police and ambulance services, local authorities, NHS England, Public Health England, the Environment Agency and the military.

[Shared ICT Service with Bedfordshire Fire and Rescue Service](#)

Our ICT Shared Service provides ICT support to both Cambridgeshire and Bedfordshire fire and rescue services. The shared service brought together staff from both services' ICT teams, who started working as one team from July 2013, to bring resilience and improved ways of working to both services.

[Cambridge Water Safety Partnership](#)

Cambridgeshire Water Safety Partnership was established in December 2018, initially funded by CFRS and the Office of the Police and Crime Commissioner (OPCC). The partnership has been set up with the vision of reducing all preventable water related deaths and injuries through education, training and engagement. Other partners include Peterborough City Council, Cambridge City Council, Conservators of the River Cam, Great Ouse Boating Association, Beds, Cambs and Herts Joint Protective Services, East of England Ambulance Service, MAGPAS Air Ambulance, Environment Agency, the Royal National Lifeboat Institution (RNLI), the Royal Life Saving Society (RLSS), and the Samaritans.

[Safeguarding provision with Essex County Fire and Rescue Service](#)

The Service has an agreement with Essex County Fire and Rescue Service to utilise its provision for safeguarding. This gives extra support to the in-house safeguarding officer, providing the staff infrastructure and experience in place at Essex, meaning the Service has a resilient and robust safeguarding structure.

[Sharing facilities with ambulance service](#)

Fire crews can now utilise facilities in Melbourn, South Cambridgeshire thanks to a collaboration with the East of England Ambulance Service Trust. Crews in the area will be able to use the Hazardous Area Response Team base to stop off or be based if needed. We have also introduced new Community Wellbeing Officers in partnership with the ambulance service, which you can read more about on page 19.

[Data sharing with Anglian Water](#)

A partnership agreement with Anglian Water allows the Service to access vulnerable residents in the community that are signed up to a Priority Services Register, offering a wide range of practical support from help in the event of an incident to extra protection against bogus callers and scams. The agreement involves sharing data to support residents with fire safety advice, as well as general safety and wellbeing to help reach out to those most vulnerable in the community. The partnership generated more than 100 referrals leading to safe and well visits to the most vulnerable residents in the county.

9. Financial performance and governance

Ensuring we have an efficient service that offers value for money, underpins everything we do. Although the pressures on our budget through a continued reduction in government grant since 2010 have been felt across the Service, with innovative thinking and more collaborative working, as well as the support from our communities and staff, we have managed to find the necessary savings each year to ensure a balanced budget.

Where our money comes from and how much we spent

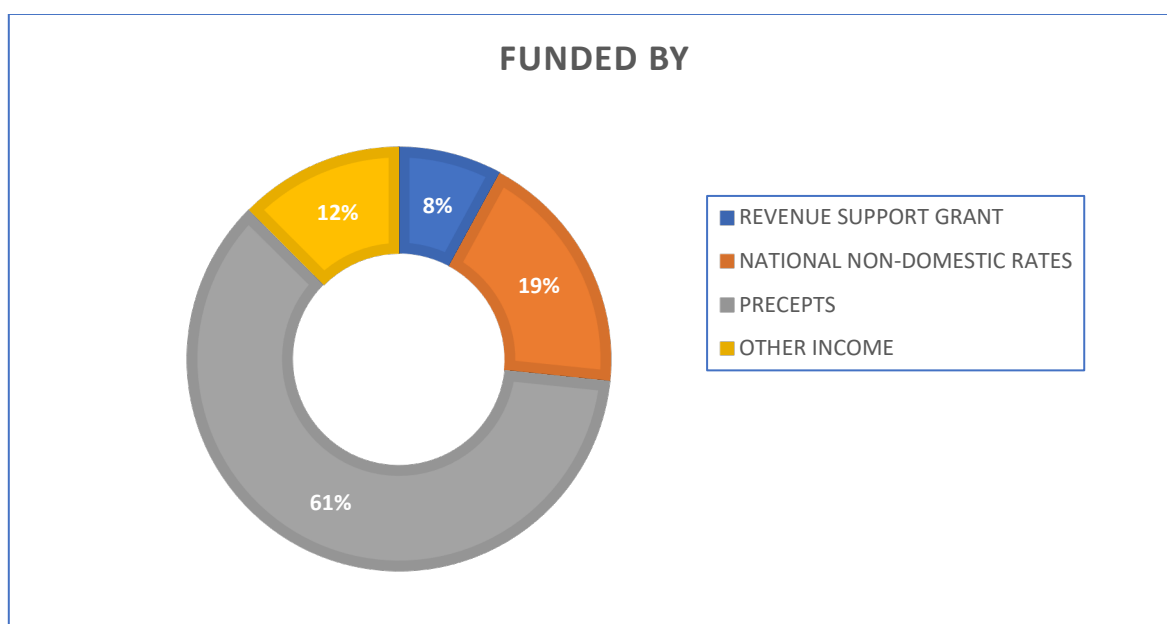
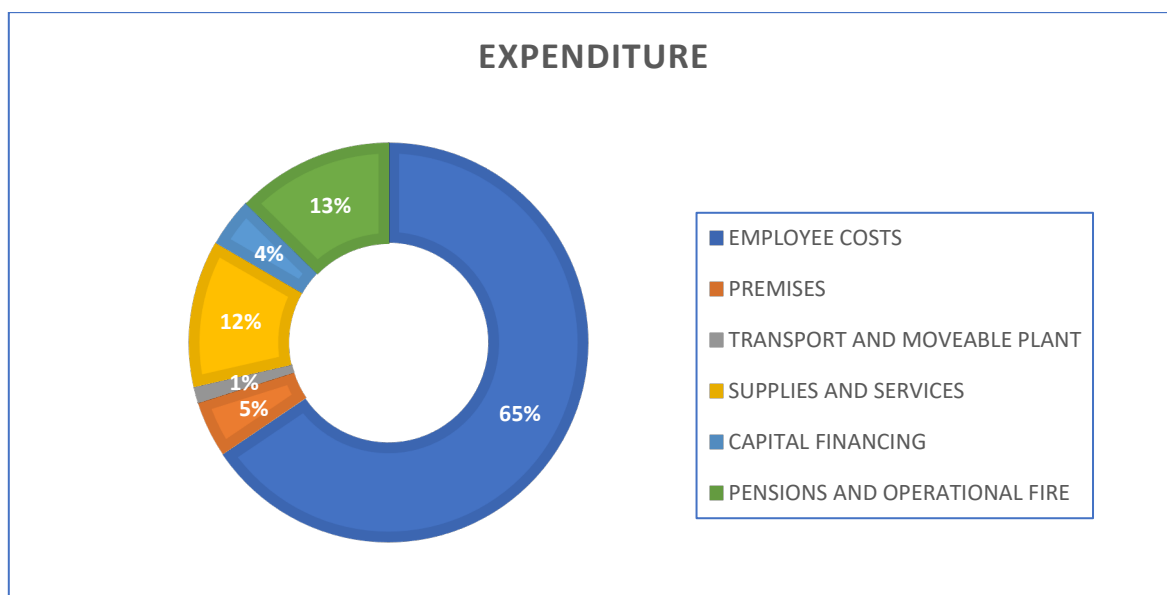
The Fire Authority's total net expenditure was £35,600,000. This is made up of £40,030,000 (expenditure) less £4,430,000 (other income). £25,242,600 was collected from council tax payers, which amounted to £82.26 a year for a Band D council tax household. This equates to £1.58 a week – a similar cost to a four-pint carton of milk.

The table below shows the breakdown of where our funding comes from and how we spent it.

Description	Original budget	Revised budget	Actual to date	Variance	Variance
	£'000's	£'000's	£000's	£000's	%
Operational Wholetime	14,233	14,682	14,807	125	1%
Operational On-Call	3,297	3,373	3,152	-221	-7%
Operational Control	1,860	1,909	1,934	25	1%
Operational Other	871	871	1,131	260	30%
Support Mgt & Admin	7,302	7,495	7,139	-356	-5%
Support Mechanics	260	265	291	26	10%
Support Caretakers/Handymen	206	211	211	0	0%
Other Employee Costs	1,513	1,829	1,549	-280	-15%
EMPLOYEE COSTS	29,542	30,635	30,214	-421	-1%
Property Maintenance	466	505	566	61	12%
Building Insurance	45	45	41	-4	-9%
Energy Costs	619	619	702	83	13%
Cleaning	17	12	15	3	25%
Rents & Rates	759	759	956	197	26%
Other Property Expenditure	35	28	33	5	18%
PREMISES	1,941	1,968	2,313	345	18%
Equipment Expenditure	290	320	325	5	2%
Vehicle Running Expenses	703	706	658	-48	-7%
Vehicle Insurance	129	129	117	-12	-9%
TRANSPORT AND MOVEABLE PLANT	1,122	1,155	1,100	-55	-5%
Office Expenses	164	226	168	-58	-26%
IT & Communications Equip.	2,082	2,354	2,244	-110	-5%
Fire Equipment	59	59	16	-43	-73%
Insurance	24	24	34	10	42%
Other Supplies & Services	1,556	2,429	1,088	-1,341	-55%
SUPPLIES AND SERVICES	3,885	5,092	3,550	-1,542	-30%
Debt Charges	188	188	188	0	0%
External Interest	-70	-70	-339	-269	384%
Capital Financing	450	450	2,665	2,215	492%
CAPITAL FINANCING	568	568	2,514	1,946	343%
CONTROLLABLE EXPENDITURE	37,058	39,418	39,691	273	1%
Other Income	-1,387	-1,584	-1,942	-358	23%
Other Government Grants	-1,863	-1,881	-1,958	-77	4%
Secondments	-137	-234	-191	43	-18%
CONTROLLABLE INCOME	-3,387	-3,699	-4,091	-392	11%
NET CONTROLLABLE EXPENDITURE	33,671	35,719	35,600	-119	0%
Grant/Precept Income	-33,671	-35,671	-36,175	-504	
Reserve Movements	0	-48	604	652	
CONTRIBUTIONS	-33,671	-35,719	-35,571	148	

CONTRIBUTION FROM GENERAL RESERVE	0	0	-29	-29	
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This information is also shown below in two pie graphs:



Key Budget points

The Service has managed to add £575,000 to its reserves in 2023/24, which will help support our medium-term capital programme and potential medium-term financial pressures.

What we own

Our assets include (as of March 2024):

Buildings

1. Fire headquarters and operational buildings	28 (1 held for sale)
2. Staff houses	4 (all for sale)
o Total	32

Vehicles and Plant

1. Fire engines	35	
2. Aerial appliances	2	
3. Rescue vehicles	2	
4. Other special appliances	7	
5. Reserve and training appliances		8
6. Other vehicles	116	
o Total	170	

Capital Spending

The Service has purchased three new fire engines, along with battery operated rescue equipment and 11 silver fleet vehicles, costing £960,000 in total.

Improvements have been carried out to existing properties, including enhancements to buildings, costing £1,486,000. Additionally other plant and equipment have been purchased costing £128,000.

Investment has been made to the ICT network infrastructure and software, totalling £554,000. This includes a new finance system.

Financial governance

Each year we publish sets of accounts for public consumption. These documents explain our financial performance over a given financial year which always runs from April 1 to March 31.

[Read our accounts.](#)

External audit

The Fire Authority has external auditors appointed by central government to assess its financial standing. The Authority has appointed auditor Ernst & Young for 2023/24 to undertake an annual audit of the financial standing of the Fire Authority. The auditors are required, under the Code of Audit Practice, to highlight all issues of significance arising from an audit, in the form of an annual audit letter.

Due to the significant backlogs with external audits in the public sector in recent years, only Value For Money audits were completed for financial years 2021/22 and 2022/23 by the backlog date set by government and therefore, a disclaimer of opinion given. For 2023/24 the external audit has been substantially completed, but due to the prior year audits having not been completed, the auditors are still unable to provide an audit opinion. The auditors plan to address this for the next audit.

Governance matters

Cambridgeshire and Peterborough Fire Authority has arrangements with an external auditor to audit the governance arrangements of the Authority. The Authority undertakes an annual assessment of the governance arrangements using the principles of the Chartered Institute of Public Finance and Accountancy (CIPFA)/Society of Local Authority Chief Executives (SOLACE) framework 'Delivering Good Governance in Local Government'. The external auditor also undertakes their assessment of compliance against these standards.

Internal audit

The Fire Authority appoints internal auditors to ensure their internal systems of control are appropriate. Reports and recommendations arising from these audits are taken to the Fire Authority Overview and Scrutiny Committee before being presented to full Fire Authority for consideration and approval.

Financial transparency

The Local Government Transparency Code 2015 is a tool to embed transparency in local authorities, which includes fire and rescue authorities and sets out the minimum data that local authorities should be publishing, the frequency it should be published and how it should be published. To streamline and simplify access to this information, [our website includes a specific Transparency section](#) - a link for which can be found in the footer of each webpage.

10. How we compare nationally

All public bodies must now make difficult decisions about priorities and find more efficient and innovative ways of delivering their responsibilities.

The table below shows an estimate of how much each fire and rescue service costs to operate per head of population over the past financial year. Note not all services are included in the table. The figures are provided by the Chartered Institute of Public Finance and Accountancy (CIPFA). It shows that we are the second lowest cost fire authority at £37.02 per head of population.

Authority	2023-24
Northamptonshire	£29.93
Cambridgeshire	£37.02
Staffordshire	£37.27
Merseyside	£38.03
West Sussex	£38.43
Dorset and Wiltshire	£39.95
West Midlands	£39.96
Hampshire and Isle of Wight	£40.15
North Yorkshire	£40.90
West Yorkshire	£40.93
Berkshire	£41.09
Lancashire	£41.52
Avon	£41.69
Derbyshire	£42.00
Nottinghamshire	£42.59
Cumbria	£43.25
Leicestershire	£43.83
Greater Manchester	£44.00
South Yorkshire	£44.88
Cheshire	£45.21
Cornwall	£45.90
Essex	£45.98
Kent	£46.35
Devon and Somerset	£46.43
Bedfordshire	£46.57
Cleveland	£48.55
Durham	£49.22
London (LFC)	£50.35
Tyne and Wear	£50.74
Northumberland	£51.33
Humberside	£52.60
East Sussex	£54.27
South Wales	£55.32
Mid and West Wales	£65.33
Shropshire	£76.06

11. Our inspection results

We were inspected by His Majesty's Inspectorate of Constabulary and Fire and Rescue Services (HMICFRS) in Spring 2023, with our report being published in August 2023.

We were assessed in 11 categories, all of which are scored separately. We received one Outstanding, six Goods, three Adequates, one Requires Improvement (no 'Inadequate'). This is shown in the diagram below:

Outstanding	Good	Adequate	Requires improvement	Inadequate
Best use of resources	Understanding fire and risk	Responding to fires and emergencies	Managing performance and developing leaders	
	Preventing fire and risk	Responding to major incidents		
	Public safety through fire regulation	Right people, right skills		
	Future affordability			
	Promoting values and culture			
	Promoting fairness and diversity			

In addition, innovative and promising practice was identified with our sustainability strategy, involvement of external assessors in recruitment of wholetime firefighters, our fitness equipment for firefighters and menopause and maternity provisions. We were also highlighted for being a neurodiversity friendly employer and having a 'positive working culture where staff feel valued and listened to'.

[Read our full report and response.](#)

12. Planning and future priorities

In April 2024 the Service launched its Community Risk Management Plan for 2024-2029. This provides our strategic direction and how we are planning for the next five years.

The draft plan was consulted on in the summer of 2023, with more than 1,000 responses received from people across the county. The plan was presented to the Fire Authority in February 2024 and approved.

Next year's annual report will summarise our performance against the first year of this plan.

[Read our Community Risk Management Plan and corporate priorities for 2024-2029.](#)

13. Letters of appreciation

Each week we get letters, cards and posts on our social media sites thanking our staff for the many great things they do including attending incidents and events, visiting homes to provide safety advice and delivering awareness sessions.

Our staff appreciate every letter, card and comment they receive and it is always heart-warming to see the difference our people and the service we provide makes to others.

Here is a small selection of some we have received this year:

Just a note to say a really big thank you to the team who came out in the early hours and assisted the ambulance crew to get my poorly husband down our stairs. Hubby left in an ambulance thanks to your swift actions and was operated on later that morning.

A resident in East Cambs

I cannot find enough superlatives to express how fantastically the crew worked as a team. I took a lot of pics and videos, which I have shared with my sisters to show what really happens in a serious fire. They are all heroes!

A resident in Peterborough

The PTA Team and everyone at Brampton Village Primary School wanted to say a huge thank you for coming down to our Summer Fayre. The day was a great success and it was so nice to see all the children having so much fun (despite the rain) and coming away with their haul of winnings.

They absolutely loved seeing the fire engine!

A school in Huntingdonshire

Just want to say how amazing the crews were in attending a house fire in Werrington. I was absorbed at my bedroom window close by but safe. They were so thorough inspecting every inch, especially the chimney stack, which stubbornly remained a threat from what I could see. We are so grateful to all of you.

A resident in Peterborough

Thank you so much to you, and your crews, for giving up your valuable time to come and talk to NFU members yesterday. Your session, along with the practical one in the workshop next door to you, were the greatest hits with members, and so I am sure members have learned something from your wise words.

Many thanks once again for all your planning, time, support and enthusiasm.

A representative from the National Farmers Union

A big thank you to Stanground Red watch, for hosting my Guide unit and teaching them all about fire safety and showing them around the pump etc. I've had lots of messages from parents saying how much the girls enjoyed it.

Thank you for having us!

A resident in Peterborough

I attended the Biker Down course and am writing to express how much I enjoyed it. The course was extremely well presented, in an engaging and professional manner by the two trainers and I found the content interesting, practical and 'real world' relevant. Full marks!

A resident attending a Biker Down session

We love and appreciate that you put your time aside to help us. There is no kinder act than helping others. As organisers we were so proud of all the educators and you exceeded our expectations to an extent that we were blown away with the enthusiasm, involvement and support that everyone gave on the day.

What a day it was! The event reached 3,000 children from five counties this year. Some 43 schools were present, coming together to learn where their food comes from, the importance of agriculture and our countryside.

Once again, please accept my heartfelt thanks for your invaluable help and support contributing to such a fantastic day that without the input of all you wonderful exhibitors this year's events wouldn't have been anywhere near as much fun!

Keep up the great work guys!

An organiser of an event in Cambridgeshire

I was unfortunate enough to come across an incident on the A1198 involving a car that had struck a lorry.

One occupant within the car was injured, so whilst I gave first aid, and kept them reassured, two of your appliances arrived quickly, and soon got to work, while I was in the rear of the vehicle ensuring minimal movement of the injured driver.

The teamwork involved, and the removal of the doors and roof around me, opened my eyes to how much public rely on the emergency service of the fire and rescue.

Very impressed with everything, from arrival, during and after, just wanted to say thanks for all the hard work and professional service these firefighters did today.

Thanks for all you do on the frontline and behind the scenes!

A resident from Huntingdonshire

14. Your feedback

We would very much welcome any comments you may have about this document to help us improve the way we report back to you on what we have done and what we plan to do. We would be very grateful if you could take the time to provide us with any comments and send them to us at the address below:

Fire Service HQ

Hinchingbrooke Cottage

Brampton Road

Huntingdon

Cambs

PE29 2NA

Alternatively, you can share your thoughts via email at feedback@cambsfire.gov.uk, via our website [through the 'contact us' section](#), or post a message on our social media channels.

If you require a response, please don't forget to include details of how we can contact you.

Thank you for your time.