

## **Commissioner's response to Staffordshire Fire & Rescue Service (SFRS) Public Performance Report**

Staffordshire Police, Fire & Rescue and Crime Commissioner Ben Adams' tenth Fire Public Performance Meeting, on 7 May 2026, was an opportunity to discuss publicly current pressures facing the Service, and progress made since the last meeting against the priorities in his Fire & Rescue Plan and the Chief Fire Officer (CFO)'s Safety Plan.

The Commissioner thanked CFO Rob Barber for his dedicated service, recognising his leadership and contribution ahead of his retirement in June. Glynn Luznyj was welcomed as Acting CFO, ensuring continuity, and Sarah Wilkes was welcomed as Director of Finance, Assets and Resources, bringing valuable expertise to support delivery of the Community Safety Plan.

### **1. Current areas of priority**

#### **1.1. Chief Officer's Foreword**

The Commissioner welcomed the CFO's clear and confident foreword, recognising both the strength of current performance and the Service's forward focus during a period of change. The emphasis on leadership, partnership working and continued commitment to prevention, protection and response provides assurance that the Service remains well-placed to deliver against the Community Safety Plan, support national threats through the Local Resilience Forum and meet future challenges.

The Acting CFO highlighted a clear focus on accountability and an ambition to save more lives than ever. The Commissioner recognised the significant change ahead across local government and policing. With the move toward fewer councils, new governance arrangements and the transition from PFCC oversight, the importance of maintaining strong scrutiny and a consistent focus on community safety was emphasised. The Commissioner noted the extensive preparation underway to ensure a smooth transition to forthcoming shadow governance arrangements.

Looking ahead, the Commissioner noted the wider reform landscape, including potential changes to policing structures and the need to maximise collaboration through shared services and place-based working. Assurance was taken from the Service's strong foundations, including joint working, investment in people, and the closure of all HMICFRS recommendations, positioning Staffordshire well for the forthcoming inspection and future challenges

#### **1.2. His Majesty's Inspectorate of Constabulary & Fire and Rescue Service (HMICFRS)**

The Commissioner noted the clear direction of the HMICFRS 2025–27 inspection framework, particularly its strengthened focus on leadership, culture, governance and financial resilience. Assurance was taken from the Service's proactive and structured preparation, including early engagement with inspectors, comprehensive staff support, and clear internal arrangements to capture areas of good practice and improvement.



The Commissioner welcomed the successful completion of all previous Areas for Improvement and national recommendations, demonstrating a strong commitment to continuous improvement and organisational learning. This progress, alongside transparent reporting and workforce engagement, provides confidence that the Service is well prepared for inspection and continues to strengthen performance and accountability in line with public expectations.

## **7. Finance Performance Update**

The Commissioner noted the strong financial position, with an improved forecast, reduced reliance on reserves, and a better-than-balanced outturn driven by in-year efficiencies and robust financial management. While recognising ongoing pressures on pay due to increased operational demand, assurance was taken from favourable non-pay performance and stronger-than-expected income. While recognising that the current year position is stable, the Commissioner acknowledged the tighter outlook ahead, including national pressures on pay, inflation and funding, with both the Commissioner and Chief Finance Officer actively engaged in national discussions.

Support was given to strengthening reserves as a prudent safeguard, alongside continued investment in estates, firefighter safety and contamination measures, acknowledging that some improvements may need to be phased. The Commissioner welcomed proactive capital programme management and delivery of transformation savings, providing confidence in financial resilience.

Looking ahead, the Commissioner recognised the more challenging outlook, including national funding, pay and inflation pressures. Assurance was taken from strong financial planning, scenario modelling and workforce considerations, alongside an inclusive approach to delivering further efficiencies, engaging staff and representative bodies to maintain service delivery and community safety outcomes.

The Commissioner noted the challenges in progressing joint working with health partners, recognising the complexity of navigating systems and the need for greater national alignment to unlock further benefits. The importance of continued progress on fire reform and sensitive national discussions around firefighter terms and conditions was also acknowledged.

Support was expressed for the development of a National College of Fire as a means of strengthening leadership, training and competence, and ensuring the sector has a stronger collective voice nationally. The Commissioner welcomed Staffordshire's active contribution to national roles and influence, reinforcing its position as a forward-thinking service. It was also recognised that future workforce expectations will evolve, with increased skills and responsibilities appropriately reflected over time.

## **2. An Outstanding Fire & Rescue Service**

### **2.1 Incidents Attended**

The Commissioner noted the increase in incidents attended, driven by a range of external factors including seasonal impacts and a rise in special service calls such as road traffic collisions, flooding and hazardous materials.



Despite this increased demand, the Commissioner recognised the strong and resilient response from the Service, with crews continuing to maintain high performance standards. Particular acknowledgement was given to the flexibility and commitment of both wholetime and on-call firefighters in managing higher levels of activity.

Acting CFO Glynn Luznyj emphasised the importance of continued analysis of emerging trends, especially around road traffic collisions and special service incidents, to strengthen preventative activity and partnership working. Overall, assurance was taken that the Service is responding effectively to growing demand while maintaining a clear focus on public safety.

## **2.2 Service Availability**

The Commissioner welcomed the continued strong performance in service availability, noting the stable and consistent provision of fire cover across the county. This was recognised as a key indicator of the Service's resilience and its ability to respond effectively to emergencies.

Particular assurance was taken from improvements in on-call availability, reflecting sustained investment in recruitment, training and more flexible working approaches. Overall, the Commissioner commended the commitment of crews and managers in maintaining availability at a time of increased demand and emphasised the importance of sustaining this momentum to ensure reliable and effective service delivery for communities.

## **2.3 Service Response Times and Standards**

The Commissioner noted the Service's continued strong performance against response standards, with 80% attendance targets consistently achieved and an average response time of 9 minutes 23 seconds over the last six months, despite increased demand. This provides assurance that communities continue to receive a timely and effective emergency response.

The Commissioner welcomed the sustained improvements in on-call availability, including innovative approaches such as crewing models to improve response times and provide development opportunities for firefighters. It was recognised that investment in recruitment, training and modernising the on-call system is beginning to show positive results, although continued focus is required to ensure long-term stability and resilience.

## **2.4 Transformation**

The Commissioner welcomed the continued delivery of transformation and efficiency savings, recognising strong progress to date alongside maintained service performance and community safety.

Looking ahead, the Commissioner acknowledged that Phase Three represents a more challenging stage, requiring careful implementation and a clear balance between affordability, operational effectiveness and workforce capacity. Acting CFO Glynn Luznyj emphasised the importance of strong engagement, communication and shared ownership key to delivering sustainable efficiencies and protecting frontline services and the Commissioner took assurance from this approach.

## **2.5 Collaborative Shared Estates**

The Commissioner welcomed the continued development of shared estate arrangements, recognising the strong benefits already being realised through co-location between fire, police and other partners. These collaborative approaches were noted as improving efficiency, strengthening partnership working and enhancing local service delivery.

Looking ahead, the Commissioner highlighted further opportunities to maximise the use of estate assets, particularly in the context of local government reorganisation, and emphasised the importance of maintaining a place-based approach that supports community safety and operational effectiveness.

## **3. Protecting**

The Commissioner welcomed the strong and balanced approach to protection activity, noting increased delivery of Fire Safety Audits and a significant rise in licensing consultations, demonstrating effective targeting of risk and support to business and public safety. Assurance was taken from the implementation of the Risk-Based Inspection Programme, ensuring resources are focused on higher-risk premises while maintaining proportionate oversight across lower-risk settings.

The Commissioner further recognised the positive contribution of trained operational crews in undertaking compliance checks, strengthening prevention and protection capacity and helping to maintain performance. The Service's maturing approach to enforcement was also welcomed, with a clear emphasis on working with businesses to achieve compliance, underpinned by a robust and consistent enforcement pathway where required.

## **4. Preventing**

The Commissioner welcomed the continued strong delivery of prevention activity, with Safe and Well Visit targets achieved across the reporting period despite some short-term staffing challenges. The refinement of future targets and transition to improved recording systems were recognised as positive steps to better align resources with demand and strengthen performance oversight.

The Commissioner acknowledged the clear value of the Fire and Health Partnership work, particularly the Falls Response and Home from Hospital services, which deliver positive outcomes for vulnerable residents while reducing pressure on health services. The Commissioner was delighted to see the extension of both services, recognising their significant impact.

While noting the challenges of securing longer-term funding within a complex and changing NHS landscape, the Commissioner reaffirmed strong support for this collaborative approach and encouraged continued efforts to secure sustainable funding for these valued programmes.



## 5. Emerging Issues

Covered in the CFO's foreword. The Commissioner noted the clear articulation within the Public Performance Pack of the impacts of governance transition, local government reorganisation, police reform and shared services on Staffordshire Fire & Rescue Service and welcomed the transparency in setting out both risks and opportunities for the Service.

The Commissioner noted the importance of Local Resilience Forums (LRFs) as a multi-agency partnership bringing together emergency services and key organisations to plan, respond and recover from major incidents. It was recognised that LRFs play a vital role in ensuring preparedness for a wide range of risks, from severe weather to more complex national threats.

The Commissioner welcomed the strong leadership role of the Fire & Rescue Service within this partnership and emphasised the importance of effective joint working to protect communities, while recognising that such arrangements are in place to provide reassurance and are only called upon when needed.

## 6. Enabling Services

The Commissioner welcomed the continued focus on enabling services, recognising the importance of investing in people, culture and capability to support frontline delivery. Positive progress in recruitment, training and on-call availability was noted, alongside a clear commitment to building a more diverse and representative workforce. Overall, assurance was taken from the Service's strong focus on leadership, wellbeing and professional development, which underpin long-term performance and organisational resilience.

The Commissioner thanked both attendees for everything they and the service do to keep Staffordshire safe.